GREEN POLITICS AND DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

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Abstract: As part of the self-reflective movement in which green politics has been engaged for the last decade, the construction of green democracy has been submitted to increasing scrutiny. Relationship between democracy and environmentalism has traditionally been problematic, but once green commitment to democracy has proven to be firm enough, the search for that model of democracy more suitable for the achievement of green goals is taking place. And it turns out to be deliberative democracy, a general overview of which is here presented. In the absence of any unified theoretical defence, several arguments emerge when deliberative principles and procedures are to be justified from a specific green standpoint –ranging from the inclusion of natural world into politics, to the development of ecological citizenship and the integration of lay and expertise judgement on environmental risks. This paper offers a critical assessment of the green case for deliberative democracy, showing that maybe deliberation is asked to deliver more than it is able to. However, it is suggested that it is the connection between sustainability, understood as a normative principle, and deliberative procedures, which may offer the best grounds for such a defence.

Keywords: Deliberative democracy, environmentalism, sustainability, nature.

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1. Deliberative democracy and the renewal of green politics.

The gradual opening showed during the last years by green political theory is an outcome of its natural evolution. The reflective maturity of green thinking has involved a slow detachment from both its naturalist foundation and radical dogmatism. From the second half of the nineties, a number of works begun to question some its traditional features – the influence of naturalism or the role of anarchism in shaping its political strategy (cfr. Hayward, 1998; Barry, 1999; Torgerson, 1999a). Hence the grounds for green politics have been increasingly submitted to criticism and internally re-examined. It is an inmanent criticism on the part of green theorists, of their own concepts, ideas and value commitments (Barry, 1999: 2; Humphrey, 2001: 2); in other words, a revolt “against the traditional authoritarian and dogmatic aspects of traditional green political thought” (Levy, 2004: 48). Andrew Dobson himself, in the introduction to the third edition of his seminal work, confirms this displacement of green theory, not so focused now on the ideological-political sides of environmentalism, as on traditional concepts of political theory, as democracy, justice or citizenship (Dobson, 2000: ix). It is from this standpoint that the formerly unthinkable green approaching to liberalism, in search of some kind of concurrence among them, makes sense (cfr. Wissenburg, 1998; Dobson [ed.], 1999; Vincent, 1998; Barry and Wissenburg, 2001; Wissenburg and Levy, 2004; or the dispute between Stephens [2001a, 2001b] and Wissenburg [2001]). Likewise, a debate has been opened on the construction of a green democratic model. Here, resistance opposed from the naturalist interpretation of green politics still clashes with the democratizing aims of its political theory, due to the contradictions provoked by the former’s pre-political grounding of values and principles such as sustainability (cfr. Mathews [ed.], 1995; Doherty and de Geus [eds.] 1996; De-Shalit, 2000; Dobson, 2003).

This comes to show that green self-rethinking does not guarantee the final extinction of naturalist green environmentalism, politically inclined to anti-statism and radical, essentialist communitarian. However, it seems clear that green political theory is now moving, through dialogue with other theoretical traditions, beyond the suffocating circle of naturalism. It is a move which should be welcome.

The beginnings of environmentalism have determined its later evolution, as philosophical thinking as well as political theory. Only the acute sense of crisis and the anti-rationalist appeal related to the criticism of modernity and industrialism, as main causes of the ecological crisis, help to explain the powerful influence exerted upon environmentalism by a dogmatic radicalism of a naturalist sign which only initially was to be strictly identified with political enviomentalism. The will to clash exhibited by the most radical strains of the green movement, derived from a programme based on the dismantlement of a failed modernity, finally drives it to a conception of politics where the latter becomes a mere epiphenomenon – of a naturalistic, scientific ethics: nature is translated into normative principles substracted to debate and aimed to be implemented by a politics instrumentally conceived. Politics is then to find its foundations in an outer sphere, precisely opposed to the conventional and the constructed. Such dependance on a mystic or cosmologic ontology, as represented by deep ecology and its satellites, produces a spiritualized view of green politics, son long as it comes to depend upon a previous epistemological understanding of the natural
world and our relationship to it (cfr. Barry, 1993: 47). Ontologization of environmentalism ends up in its depolitization. The influence of radicalism that provokes such displacement from politics to ethics, and from ethics to metaphysics, also explains the absence of any real conversation between environmentalism and those theories more interested in a true recognition of the political and the contingent, hence of democracy. Such conversation is finally possible, once environmentalism has begun to refuse naturalism and the related arcadian conception of nature, hence accepting the primacy of the political over the ideological.

The connection of politics to a given conception of nature has been a traditional feature of environmentalism. A peculiar object of concern is, through mystification of reality, honoured in the axiological level. But this is a mistaken interpretation of the function nature is to perform within environmentalism, because the priority of its protection does not necessarily drives to prescriptive preeminence. It is not enough, however, to adopt the cautious approach Robert Goodin pioneeredly defended, according to which a “green theory of value” should be told from a “green theory of agency”, the former defining the source of value, the latter selecting the means for environmental protection: they cannot only be logically separated, but must be grounded on different arguments (cfr. Goodin, 1992: 119). This is a first step out from naturalism, but remains short. And it does so because green theory of value keeps a primacy over politics that Goodin himself recognizes for any conflict between the ends of green theory of value and the means of green theory of agency (cfr. Goodin, 1992: 120). Hence consequentialism threatens to pollute every effort to democratically articulate an environmentalism more ethical than political. On the contrary, environmentalism should not be conceived as a moral doctrine, or just subsequently: it is a politics. Such moral orientation may be explained by the attribution to nature of an intrinsic value which produces its automatic ontologization. The claim for independence of nature’s value is not so aimed to unsuccessfully mask the human origin of such attribution, as to mask the moralization it provokes. Protection of natural gomods, it should be noted, is based on the respect to that independent value –ethically founded and then depolitized.

However, green politics are not to be about natural world, but rather about the environment. Not only because nature greens have traditionally referred to does not exist anymore, but also because it never existed. Nature is dynamically and reciprocatedly related to society, and the outcome of such interaction, whose origin is the material and cultural process of human appropriation of nature, has turned out to be human environment. Therefore, it is not the protection of natural world which should be emphasized, but sustainability of society-environment relationships. Latter’s normative condition is, as we shall see, directly related to its politization and democratization, hence to the debate around the conservation of the remaining natural world. A moral discussion, politically framed and mediated, submitted to democratic criteria for deliberation and decision. This is to stress the political nature of the problems at stake for a renewed environmentalism. Personalization provoked by metaphysical and spiritualist approaches prevent due recognition to such circumstance (Pepperman Taylor, 1991: 581); besides, moralization of green thinking has not only provoked a neglect of politics, but an erosion of its vitality and flexibility (Torgerson, 1999a:}

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Politics is not a part of ethics, rather something different and wider (Ankersmit, 1996: 10). On the other hand, radical environmentalism has usually adopted an utopian approach, where a retrospective arcadian view on nature is projected onto the future in the form of sustainable society. Now green politics is democratized as well in the sense that it admits its own fallibility: ecological thinking has not any monopoly on the definition of green values and scope (Barry, 1999: 5). Consequentialism is therefore refused in favour of democratic principles –to which environmentalism has set ambiguous relationships so far, a reflection in turn of its also ambiguous normative foundations. That is why modernisation of green politics leads to its full democratization.

Such democratization of green political theory has taken place, from the outset, under the sign of deliberative democracy. When inquired about the kind of democracy best suited for dealing with green concerns, the consensus seems obvious: some version of deliberative democracy (cfr. Jacobs, 1997; Eder, 1995; Barry, 1999; Dryzek, 2000a; Eckersley, 2000, 2004). Such deliberative turn has paralleled that of democratic theory, so there is nothing to be surprised of –it is part of a larger picture. Yet there is a subtle paradox here. For it is the modernization of environmentalism what lies behind this move towards deliberation in green thinking: the same current underlying its convergence with liberalism, in an ambiguous relationship serving both to greening liberalism and making environmentalism more liberal. To many, this critical rethinking of the principles of early environmentalism, which have so pervasively determined its historical evolution, might lead to a theoretical pacification and eventually to the very end of environmentalism (cfr. Levy and Wissenburg, 2004). An end which can be interpreted either positively or negatively –as a proof of success and penetration into liberal values, or as their assimilation and thereby neutralization within liberal system. Either way, the question here is the extent to which existing liberal democracies can lead to the achievement of environmental sustainability. The reason is clear:

“If liberal democracy is the only appropriate model of articulation for environmental politics, then environmentalists no longer have a reason to be (radical) environmentalists as a fundamental challenge to liberal democratic norms is no longer necessary (Humphrey, 2004: 115).

What has this to do with deliberative democracy? Acceptance of a democratic path for the realization of green programme, refusing then any prospect of radical change, is a remarkable, not finished turn in environmentalism. In this context, is not deliberative democracy a link to radical politics as traditionally defended by greens? As long as deliberative democracy poses a participative challenge to representative democracy, does it not represent the last opportunity for greens to avoid the end of environmentalism, understood as a neutralization of the old core values, hence keeping alive their clash with liberal dominant values? To some extent, it is.

However, green defence of deliberative democracy should not be limited to the goal of deepening democracy, for that is a widespread ideal which does not need environmentalism as a spokesperson; democratic theorists are already doing that. Therefore, either to accept or to refuse deliberative democracy for the construction of a green democracy would more properly depend on specifically green arguments on
its behalf. We do not look for a *democratic* justification of deliberative democracy, which can be found outside green theory, but rather for a *green* one. Hence the radical appeal of deliberative democracy seduces greens *as long as* it helps to spread ecological values and awareness –greater openness on the part of deliberative procedure being the difference compared to another models of democracy. Instead of accepting representative institutions and the liberal neutralization of the environmental agenda through an administrative, technocratic approach, a modernised green politics would foster a politization of nature and environmental risk *through* the defence of deliberative principles and decision-making procedures. Although reasons offered in favour of this deliberative turn are not always the right ones, frequently lacking a comprehensive frame (as we shall see, the one that only a normative conception of sustainability can offer), the forementioned end of environmentalism would on the contrary be its renewal, once the naturalist and arcadian flaws of early environmentalism are dismissed. A deliberative articulation of green politics it is then serving the cause of its modernization, in spite of the grounds on which it is sometimes defended.

This work will explore the case for deliberative democracy from a green perspective –an exploration from which more general problems in deliberative procedures and principles will emerge. Before that, however, a brief account on deliberative democracy is offered, so long as green problems with deliberation are sometimes general flaws of deliberative rules and practices. A conclusion will finally assess the general case for deliberative democracy in green theory, suggesting a stronger way of linking deliberative and green politics.

2. The promise of deliberative democracy.

During the last decade of twentieth century, democratic theory experienced a meaningful movement towards a democratic model able to be normatively opposed to the dominant liberal one: deliberative democracy. This conception of democracy is founded on reason rather than power, and it relies on the deliberative procedure as an ideal of political justification. Democratic legitimacy does not derive anymore from the principle of majority nor from popular sovereignty, for justification of political power proceeds on the basis of a properly institutionalised free public reasoning among free and equal citizens. Naturally, to deliberate is to participate: deliberative democracy is a variant of the democratic-participative ideal. Here, democracy is not a vehicle for representation and aggregation of interests, but a way of creating a public arena in which conflicts can be solved through dialogue rather than through pre-established forms of power (Giddens, 1994: 16; Cohen, 2001: 231). The essence of democracy does not rely on voting, aggregation of interests or self-government, but on the very deliberation as a collective and open decision-making procedure. As John Dryzek has stated, this deliberative turn in democratic theory represents a renewal of the forgotten compromise with its autenticity, namely, with the degree in which democratic control is substantial and not just symbolic (Dryzek, 2000a: 1). But it is also expressive of wider processes of transformation in society and politics. The increasing difficulty in separating formal and unconventional aspects of political activity, and the public from the private, together with the end for any rigid distinction
between formal political representation and citizen participation in civil society, are to be found in its origin (Bang and Dyrberg, 2000: 149-150). Therefore, the emergence and development of deliberative democracy is supposedly also a reflection of the *democratic* limits of liberal democracy.

Far from coming out of the void, traces of a deliberative approach can be found in the history of democratic theory. Deliberation oriented to collective decision lies in itself in the very source of democratic ideal. Hence, deliberative democracy is not a novelty inasmuch as a development: Greek democracy, with its equal right to free speech in the Assembly; refusal of imperative commitment for representatives in American and French constitutional conventions; defence of deliberation on the basis of human fallibility by Stuart Mill or John Dewey’s theories, are some of the historical backgrounds for the current deliberative model (cfr. Elster, 2001a; Manin, 1997). More recently, hermiasian theory of communicative action helps undoubtedly to give rise to a theoretical movement in which seminal contributions by Manin (1987) and Dryzek (1990) stands out, later reinforced by works such as those by Elster (1997, 2001a), Benhabib (1996), Bohman and Reg (1997), Gutmann and Thompson (1996). The influential works by Rawls (1996) and Habermas (1996) strengthened the theory of deliberative democracy as faced from their respective theoretical approaches; since then, the literature has experienced but a continuous increase.

Deliberative democracy is founded on the procedural legitimacy provided by a collective decision-making method. This method is based on the equal participation of citizens in a public-oriented and bounding deliberation. Any definition of deliberative democracy distinguishes in it a *democratic* constituent, which requires that collective decision-making involves everybody affected by decision or their representatives, and a deliberative constituent, which establishes rational and impartial debate as the criterion for political decision (Elster, 2001b: 21). Democracy is then an intersubjective dialogue among free and equal citizens, defined by their equal ability to political participation and public debate, derived in turn from their equal political and moral competence, and not therefore from their technical or strategic skills. Equality and rationality are then formal conditions for the procedure, and therefore also for legitimacy (Rättilä, 2000: 44). The legitimacy of decisions is not based here on the majority principle, seen as perverse, but rather on deliberation itself (Barber, 1984: 198; Manin, 1987; De-Shalit, 2000: 151).

However, this foundation does not merely drive into proceduralism, for deliberation has its own substantive value. Deliberation does not only possess an instrumental value derived from the production of more rational outcomes, which on the other hand is no guarantee of efficiency, but its value comes, above all, from the way in which decision is constantly subordinated to debate (De-Shalit, 2000: 153). The source for legitimacy is not the pre-determined will of individuals, but the deliberation process which comes to *give shape* to that will: a legitimate decision is not an expression of the general will, but the outcome of collective deliberation (Manin, 1987: 352): the possibility that individual preferences are transformed in the course of deliberation is essential to deliberative model. It is also grounded in the fact of value pluralism and subsequent moral disagreement: as we cannot create a community on the basis of a lost ethical homogeneity, the deliberative model tries to found it on a form of legitimacy which expresses in itself equal membership of everyone (Gutmann and Thompson, 1996; Cohen, 1996: 102). Justification for deliberative
democracy is then not exclusionarily procedural, but dialogical, for deliberation possesses an intrinsic value non exhausted in its supposed rationality (Bohmann, 2000; Christiano, 1997: 251). Procedural legitimacy is also inescapably substantive.

However, the value of deliberation goes beyond democratic legitimation. At the same time, it has an instrumental value regarding the operation and outcomes of the political process. Requests for more deliberation are also requests for a more rational political order, in which decision-making involves public use of reason (Bohmann, 2000: 2). This public use of reason, embodied in a debate, can in turn increase fairness of laws and social institutions, inasmuch as it enhances citizens’ understanding of society and its regulative principles (Christiano, 1997: 309). The very quality of decision can be affected in several ways, ranging from obtaining wider consensus on any decision to the general perception of them as more legitimate, including as well the attribution of greater protection to the weaker groups and a better distribution of information among participants (Gambetta, 2001: 39, 41). Equally, public deliberation on issues concerning the whole citizenry is more efficient, given the grounds on which those decisions are adopted (Gutmann and Thompson, 1996: 41-43). When resources are scant, the legitimacy provided by deliberation is specially valuable, for it is impossible to adopt a decision able to satisfy everybody; so that legitimacy is favoured by the greater inclusion and cohesion which deliberative model is meant to produce. On the other hand, the limited generosity of citizens, from which a sudden moral transformation in a deliberative context is unlikely, can be confronted creating forums where they are forced to adopt a wider perspective on public issues and policies. The public condition of deliberation does not only attains to the way in which citizens debate and act, but also to the type of reasons they are allowed to display (Bohmann, 2000: 25). Besides, although the existence of competing moral values cannot be suppressed, deliberation can cast light on moral conflicts, then contributing to its political solving. Therefore, deliberative democracy does not only give place to more legitimate decisions, but also to more efficient ones.

Rational and open nature of deliberative process, together with its public condition, points out an essential feature of it, which serves to distinguish it very clearly from aggregative model of collective decision: namely, its conception of individual preferences and their interaction in the deliberative frame. Instead of preferences shaped in the private sphere be incorporated into collective decision-making process with an strategic aim, and then not subdued to any real interaction with everybody else’s ones, deliberative theory enhances the transformation of individual preferences through their translation into public language in the deliberative process, and through their subjection to debate. It is not that the goal of deliberation be transformation of preferences in itself, for it is no other than collective decision-making; but the very public reasoning of those preferences may help to reduce the number of preferences with political relevance, because they are shaped and even born in that very public deliberation process (Cohen, 2001: 251). Deliberative democracy has thus a tendency to moralization of preferences (Nino, 1996). For this to be true, of course, the premise is that the citizen adopts a public perspective: that he behaves as a citizen and not solely as an aggregator of preferences. The comparison proposed by Elster is here to stay: if, according to the distinction between the behaviour peculiar to the market and the one peculiar to the forum,
the former is based on the sovereignty of the individual as a consumer, being that sovereignty acceptable inasmuch as the individual is choosing among options which differs just in the way they affect him, on the contrary the citizen at the forum must express his preference on issues which also differs in the way they affect others (Elster, 1997). However, differences between the forum and the market does not end there: on the one hand, individuals at the market do experience more quickly and straightly the effects of their decision, whereas at the forum effects are more diffuse and dilated on time; on the other hand, individuals get into the market knowing their needs, whereas citizens are ignorant of what they want or need when they get into the forum (Manin, 1987: 356). The very form of interaction differs then: the one is communicative, the other is strategical (Mackie, 2001: 99). Even individual identity is bound to experience transformations, for its non-exhaustible nature provokes that, in a democratic context, individuals are opened to their own diversity, yet if it is only in order to negotiate with other participants (Warren, 1996: 255). Hence, deliberative model of democracy is aimed to create an institutional context in which deliberation can serve as real interaction among citizens and their different points of view. In fact, the possibility of individual preferences be shaped and transformed in the course of the public deliberative process is a precondition for a deliberative politics to exist: immobility of preferences condemns deliberation to ineffectiveness, depriving it of any meaning.

The right operation of deliberative model, the fulfilment of its promises, is then based on very specific premises about the political behaviour of citizens and the prevalence of a certain kind of rationality. Individual claims must be submitted to public scrutiny, so that the reasons underlying them show a minimum intersubjective validity (Muguerza, 1990: 130). The prevalence of a communicative kind of rationality, to which no preference is definitely given and to which individual needs and public interests can be discovered and debated, is then presumed. And it comes to be that the need for a reasonable and educated public is solved within the deliberative process itself, also a learning process for citizenry (Manin, 1987: 354); as Pateman famously wrote, it is participating that we learn how to participate (Pateman, 1970: 105). Deliberative process, if conducted according to the rules that make it possible, feeds himself. Besides, deliberative institutional frame influences the outcomes, whatever the motives of participants be, for its rules restrict participants avoiding certain decisions, specially those grounded on self-interest (Elster, 2001c: 137-138). These rules have been proposed by Cohen (1996):

1. Deliberations take place in an argumentative fashion, through the ordered exchange of reasons and information among counterparts that make proposals and submitt them to criticism.
2. Deliberations are inclusive and public, and all the potentially affected by their decisions must have equal oppportunities to paticipate and to decide in them.
3. Deliberations are free of inner coercions able to undermine the equal position of participants, and everyone must have the opportunity to be heard, to introduce new issues, to make proposals and to criticize them. The coercion without coercions of the best argument is the only rule for accepting or refusing an argument.
4. Deliberations are generally oriented to reach a rationally grounded agreement, and can in principle be continued or resumed in any given moment, yet the need for decision demands them to have an agreed final point.

5. Political deliberations reaches all those issues that can be regulated on behalf of the public interest, but that is not to say that issues traditionally judged as ‘private’ must forcefully remain out of discussion.

6. Political deliberations are also extended to the interpretation of needs and to changes in pre-political attitudes and preferences.

The fourth rule reminds us the political nature of deliberative process, whose goal is decision-making. Therefore, the need for voting devices in the deliberative frame comes to recognize the limits for a consensual politics. In a pluralist world, after all, consensus is unattainable, unnecessary and undesirable (Dryzek, 2000a: 170). In turn, there exist a tension between the need for decision and the institutionalization of deliberation, for the latter is continuous and indefinite (G. Smith, 2000: 37). At last, the political and democratic constraints on deliberation results in aggregation (Przeworski, 2001: 185). However, this is not meant to denaturalize deliberative democracy: it simply states its political character. Deliberation within a democratic context cannot become a mere conversation, yet it is, above all, decision. Argumentation and debate can be seen, not pejoratively, as preliminaries for the voting that solves the conflict (Knight and Johnson, 1994: 286). However, deliberative processes are strongly oriented to consensus; the very nature of deliberation tends towards agreement on values and interests among participants. It is then too narrowed to consider deliberation as a preliminar for decision, for it is at the very least a qualified preliminar for a voting which only will takes place in absence of any consensus. The result of voting is more valuable as the culmination of a deliberative process, for so long as the conflicts at stake has clear answers, deliberation increases the possibilities of those answers to emerge and then be reflected in the voting results (Wertheimer, 1999: 181). In addition, far from spoiling deliberation, voting serves to practical purposes, avoiding unanimity be the product of a majority pressing a minority to advert dissension. Nevertheless, it is also true that the horizon of voting influences the debate and hardens the agreement, for the participants can consciously reject other participant’s reasons, in spite of its persuasive force, hoping that the final voting may favour their interests.

However, there are not only limits to consensus, but also to the potential contents of deliberation. In a deliberative democracy, not everything is debatable, not much for substantive restrictions as for practical reasons. There is no need for deliberating each and every law or policy, while there are good reasons of economy and competence against an universal deliberation (Gutmann and Thompson, 1999: 245). Deliberation is appropriate for decisions of great relevance, or which cannot be decided in other way (Dryzek, 2000a: 174). To Benhabib, deliberation itself will determine wether an specific issue has public or private nature (Benhabib, 1996). However, this rule menaces with circularity and redundancy, suggesting on the contrary the previous constitutional or legal definition of subjects to be included into deliberation,
provided that proper devices are established for reviewing of that definition. This is an important aspect when weighing the real practical possibilities of a deliberative democracy: this partial and selective character comes to answer to those criticisms based on its lack of realism.

Idealization of both deliberative procedure and behaviour of citizens whithin it is as dangerous as frequent. Several sides of deliberative model of democracy are, at different levels, certainly open to criticism. And most of them point out the distance between deliberative ideal and the political and social reality in which the former is supposed to function. However, the pertinence of these criticisms does not cancel the validity of the model against which they are directed; instead, they help to correct it. On the one hand, doubts are expressed on the real political usefulness of deliberation, that is, on the degree in which moral disagreement can be solved through deliberation (Shapiro, 1999: 29; Knight, 1999: 161). On the contrary, it is argued, deliberation can exacerbate the conflict, for once the issue at stake is analysed in more detail, the reasons for disagreement may just appear to be more clear and strong (Knight and Johnson, 1994: 286). The tension between discursive rationality demanded to participants in deliberative process, and their real motives and ways of reasoning, is then stressed (Rättilä, 2000: 44). The public orientation of deliberation cannot be taken for granted.

Deliberative democracy, against its own foundations, contains a strong potential for exclusion, due to the nature of the very practice that constitutes its center: deliberation. To presume that all citizens are free and equal to deliberate publicly in order to take more legitimate and rational collective decisions seems to ignore that deliberation itself is an excluding practice. To deliberate is to build up arguments and to defend them through speech and persuasiveness: it is not just to talk, but something else. It might occur that not every citizen has the same ability to apply those principles (cfr. Bell 1999: 74; Hardin, 1999: 116); to emphasize rational argumentation can exclude those who have more troubles in adopting that mode of communication. Then, an equal deliberation should require not only the guarantee of equal opportunity to articulate persuasive arguments, but also something that cannot be at all guaranteed: equality in “epistemological authority”, so that everyone has the chance to persuade others and is not discarded from the outset due to her rhetorical inabilities (cfr. Sanders, 1997: 349). On the other hand, as Iris Marion Young suggests, rules for deliberation are not neutral, for the assertive and confrontational discourse is best valued than the exploratory or conciliatory ones, eventually revealing how the rule of the best argument reintroduces power into democratic debate, giving place to an agonistic vision of the public sphere: “deliberation is competition” (Young, 1996: 123). Hence, deliberation tends to adopt an exclusionary and hierarchical character, punishing those individuals or groups less able to develop a certain kind of argumentation, or whose ways of understanding and expression does not fit those privileged in the deliberative frame. This problem has not been truly addressed by deliberative advocates, because at the end it can only be solved by weakening the prevalence of rationalistic standars, opening the debate to other forms of personal expression. In which case, the decision-making process itself would hardly continue to be a reasonable arena for reaching the best possible solutions.
Furthermore, empirical experiences also suggest that it is not possible at all to talk of deliberation as an unified process or as an universalizable dynamic: the different aims and attitudes of participants rather portray it as an inherently multifarious process (cfr. Button and Mattson, 1999: 633). These shortages can help to sustain that deliberation, rather than a procedure for decision-making, is a method just helping along that process, in the shaping and justification of policies and constitutional principles (cfr. Hardin, 1999). After all, democracy cannot be just deliberation: it also requires constitutional structures, formal organizations, aggregative devices (Saward, 2000: 77); political parties, for instance, are not even mentioned in deliberative theory (cfr. Budge, 2000). Therefore, deliberation would have an important role in democratic politics, a role not of its own but dependant on other processes and activities not controlled nor constituted by it (Walzer, 1999: 67-68). To this, the foreseeable citizens’ resistance to cooperate, used as they are to a liberal understanding of politics, must be added: the latter is commonly perceived as the task of professional politicians who, doing their job, provide them with the time and psychological relief required for the attainment of their private aims. The “romantic dogma” of the natural attractiveness of participation must be questioned in the light of the burden it imposes on citizens (Warren, 1996: 243). However, deliberative theory is currently far from being naively utopian regarding participation and citizen’s proneness to embrace it. Deliberative politics does not entail the submission of any political process to public debate, nor the dismantling of any institutional representative form in favour of a radical participative decentralization. The aim is not to turn all political activities into deliberative ones, but rather to evaluate them according to deliberative principles (Gutmann and Thompson, 1999: 255). Deliberative theory is then realist and is aware of its own limitations. To my view, it is to be considered a normative and practical correction of liberal democracy rather than its complete rejection.

Moreover, the forementioned idealization comes directly from the normative nature of the deliberative ideal, constituted as an aspiration, as a tension towards deliberative political forms operating then as an inmanent criticism of current ones. This does not mean deliberative models proposed in the literature be utopian products alien to reality (cfr. Schauer, 1999: 24); it rather emphasizes their prescriptive character, explicitly rejecting the reduction of politics and decision to mere instrumental and strategic rationality. Defenders of deliberative democracy do not deny that current political practices do possess a deliberative dimension, but they propose deliberative constructions and schemes from which to evaluate the existent democracy (Knight and Johnson, 1994: 285). Its force as a counterfactual ideal derives from the way in which it provides an important standpoint from which to unmask current power relations, to identify issues excluded from public agenda and to distinguish the real public interest from the private one (Eckersley, 2000: 124). It is not an utopia projected onto future, but a means to improve the deliberative existing practices (Bohman, 2000: 241). This very normative approach allows us to identify a deliberative dimension within liberal democracy, whose recognition may be specially useful when we are to modify it to give shape to a more deliberative democracy.

Notwithstanding that, connection between liberal and deliberative democracy is more likely to be found in specific readings and conceptions of the former, focused on particular dimensions of its normative
foundations or institutional practice. Thus the late Rawls (1996), whose idea of public reason involves a democratic political community based on the recognition of shared political principles, not just on basic constitutional ones. To him, public reason is a way of reasoning on political values shared by equal and free citizens, which nevertheless does not intrude their conceptions of a good life, provided they are compatible with a democratic polity. The rawlsian concept, however, seems to be dependant on an epistemological willingness, prone to purify reality in order to pull out of it a description compatible with an specific normative orientation. Anyway, public space in Rawls differs from that of deliberative democracy in an essential side, normative as well as practically, namely, that pointed out by Habermas (1996) and accurately explained by Vallespin: in rawlsian public space citizens are already aware of their identities and interests, so that

“... it is not appropriate then to intersubjectively generate, redefine or meet those principles through debate, but only to restrict the way in which arguments are to be presented in order to defend pre-determined interests and ideas and to find the wider support for them” (Vallespin at Rawls, 1996b: 28; my translation).

Such limitations are also to be found in the pragmatic position of Richard Rorty, inheritor of Stuart Mill’s deontological liberalism, according to which the institutions of liberal democracy exemplify a politics based on the model of conversation, so long as it allows the recognition of citizens qua citizens and the balance between plural and competing interests (cfr. Rivero, 1999: 91). What separates the deliberative dimension of liberal democracy from a deliberative model of democracy is then the normative orientation of the latter, which stands in contrast with how these readings of liberal democracy just put a normative seal on existing practices. This is not to say that liberal democracy completely lacks a deliberative dimension, for it has one indeed. However, it remains too restricted to representation as the only way of structuring valid decision-making processes; unconventional conversations among citizens lacks any bounding force in the presence of aggregative devices of balancing interests. This in turn weakens any feeling of public membership, and therefore reduces the scope of any deliberative dimension.

Liberal ways of public deliberation, among which we find the constant juridical conversation along which the judge permanently adapts the social momentum to the legal system through his decisions, can be supported by some liberal basic principles. This is the socratic liberalism as portrayed by Bilbeny (1999). Liberal constitutions themselves can be considered as a protection for a deliberative sphere (cfr. Dryzek, 2000b: 80). The disposition of private sphere within political liberalism, however, recommends a cautious acceptance of such reading; even more now that the forms of global consumption capitalism are strongly influencing individual values and attitudes. The promise of liberal deliberative democracy, then, finds a denial in its very inside.

3. The green defence of deliberative democracy.
The following are the arguments that can be collected for a green defence of deliberative democracy. All of them are presented and discussed, though common issues are grouped in separate reflections. General problems of deliberative democracy meets those specifically produced by the green approach to deliberation –most of them derived from the substantial aims of environmentalism, as opposed to a decision-making procedures unable to guarantee any given outcome.

1. *Green values will emerge more easily in a deliberative context.* The open nature of deliberative procedure, whose argumentative and rational orientation facilitates the persuasive and ordered exposition of all values and preferences, would suppress the distortions of liberal political process and give way to the emergence of green values –thanks to their objective rational appeal. This is the epistemological-pragmatic argument: deliberation widens the falible and limited standpoints of participants, making good use of the knowledge, experiences and abilities of the others (cfr. Smith, 2001: 73). Discursive democracy is intrinsecally more open to the kind of ethical reasoning we find in green thinking (Smith in Mills and King, 2000: 135); deliberation would perform a *releasing* function for environmental concerns which, however strong, usually remain latent (Niemeyer, 2004: 348). In fact, those options aimed to preserve ecological integrity are best placed in the ideal speech situation, as an obvious generalizable interest, for human survival depends on it (cfr. Dryzek, 1990a: 55; 1994: 416). Preconditional quality of the environment is then invoked. We find the presumption here that the supposed greater reasonableness of a deliberative frame equals to the acceptance of environmental protection once human dependance on it is stated. But protection of the environment is an interest which once *admitted*, would have to be *discussed* –and nothing guarantees that, in spite of being a generalizable interest, will really be adopted. This unavoidable limitation concerns all green values in the deliberative frame: the priority which environmentalism place on them is not different from that placed on their own conceptions of the good by others participants. There is no guarantee that ecological values will have to be embraced as a result of free and equal conversations, for that very process can drive as well to their banishment: it is fair to say that this wariness has become usual in late green thinking (cfr. Dobson, 1993: 198; B. Hayward, 1995; Zwart, 2003; Smith, 2004; Mills and King, 2004: 81). Nevertheless, it is also true that the very nature of deliberation increases the possibilities for those values to be considered and rationally weighed, so that deliberative democracy is, in principle, a favourable frame for their social acceptance.

2. *Deliberative procedure fits the public nature of environmental goods.* The defence of deliberative democracy as the most adequate decision-making process on environmental goods would be required by their peculiar public nature. Protection should be considered as a virtue in a model which privileges generalizable interests over private ones. This argument has been explained in detail by Michael Jacobs (1997), as follows. In spite of the public character of most environmental goods, the resolution of conflicts attaining them is usually achieved through methods of contingent evaluation or cost-benefit analysis, the equivocation being the belief that methods valid for the articulation of values and preferences around
private goods can also work in dealing with public goods. On the contrary, environmental evaluation, as a value articulation method based on cost-benefit analysis, simply restricts the emergence and articulation of attitudes oriented to public good concerning the environment. It should not be forgotten that this kind of processes does not reveal pre-existing values, but actively build them up. People lacks a given set of preferences, the shaping of which depends on the institutions and processes whithin which they are framed—and there are not neutral frames. Moreover, the formation of attitudes towards public goods entails a different kind of process than that which shapes preferences on private ones; it is essentially a public activity. When dealing with public goods, hence, the right institution for the articulation of values is some kind of public arena in which a debate previous to the decision takes place, that is, a deliberative institution. At this point, Jacobs acknowledges that it is by no means guaranteed that attitudes oriented towards the public good are to emerge, but at least such emergence would be facilitated. The link thus set is grounded in the full correspondance between the object of decision and the procedure chosen for its making. Leaving aside the fact that Jacobs only refers to conflicts around environmental goods, instead of to the more general principle of sustainability, his foundation seems to be restricted to the public nature of environmental goods—as it could have been refined by reminding that environmental problems are essentially uncertain, thus acquiring a normative character and not accepting mere technical solutions. Because deliberative procedures arguably enhance public reasoning and point argumentation towards definition and protection of the common interest, but the forementioned nature of environmental problems requires the more open, reflective and inclusive public participation for its collective definition—for its normative character to be satisfied through a fully legitimate decision. An additional problem in Jacobs is that, in not considering sustainability as a general principle and as a set of partial policies, the former cannot be strongly linked to the wider deliberative model, taking besides for granted that environmental goods will be included in the deliberation process. More cautiously, Hayward proposes to protect, for instance through constitutional provisos, those interests which are rendered legitimate before the process of exchange and transformation of preferences and interests begins (cfr. Hayward, 1998: 164). It would certainly be a safer way of protecting environmental goods. However, the very election of public interests qua public concerns the deliberative process itself: Hayward’s restriction is done according to an specific conception of the good, hence becoming a restriction to deliberation. It is not that any restriction is excluded, yet this one fails to have the generic and general character of the constitutional devices which would be accepted without betraying the aims of the deliberative process.

First excursus: the problem of preferences. Both the two first arguments are based on the premise that deliberative model goes beyond preference aggregation, to enhance their discussion and transformation in the course of deliberation—a presumption not without some problems. Its normative character is undeniable: deliberative theorists expect such transformation to take place, but they have probably taken it for granted too easily. Defence of democratic deliberation should pay attention to the current knowledge on practical reasoning and political motivation: it is not reasonable to expect citizens to change massively their
preferences through deliberation (Johnson, 2001: 222). Thereby, citizens should open their preferences to a process of comparison, discussion and, if rational valuation recommends it, transformation; however, it is uncertain if they will do so. The possibility that the public conflict of subjective preferences is reproduced in the deliberative frame cannot be discarded, thus hindering the achievement of consensual outcomes (Mills and King, 2000: 141). This is not necessarily a problem in itself, as long as the need for a final agreement and the practical impossibility of extending the debate forever already demand the existence of voting in deliberative procedure. But the possible resistance of citizens to really expose their preferences to debate and interaction is more problematic –and only the educative potential of deliberative process can be reluctantly trusted here.

As mentioned, a different problem is the social and institutional context in which those preferences are born, so long as they are not spontaneously given in every individual (cfr. O’Neill, 1997: 83). That contextual origin of preferences later incorporated into the deliberative process drives us in turn to one of the “pathologies of deliberation” as described by Susan Stokes (2001): induced preferences. According to this old suspicion, citizens would never be aware of their own choices –imposed to them from above and pre-determined in some social discourses they adopt ignoring their true selves. However, induction of preferences potentially takes place in any moment and direction. We should expect well-informed citizens, involved in processes of public deliberation, to be able to reflect upon the nature and origin of their own preferences. Moreover, that those preferences are or are not originally induced is not relevant if their real interaction and transformation, through their translation to public language and reasoning, subsequently takes place. Paradoxically, there is a final aspect of preferences which may affect greens in the course of their intervention in deliberative processes. Politics provides groups the opportunity to define and constitute themselves as groups by the affirmation of their principles and the formulation of their claims –hence, the rhetorical egalitarianism that distinguishes deliberative processes may give place to a psychological disbalance which distorts the perception that the group have of their own interests and abilities (cfr. Simon, 1999: 51). In other words, the shaping-identity function performed by the moral and political foundations and principles of a group or individual can be a restraint for others when asked for the exposition of their values and preferences, hence hindering the free unfolding of public dialogue. Moreover, the visionary pose often showed by greens indicate that they would surely offer that very kind of psychological resistance. After all, deliberation does not equal disapparition of power and the struggle for it. Not too much expectations would then be posed on the transformations of preferences as a way to solve conflicts of value and interest.

3. The inclusive character of deliberative democracy makes possible the incorporation of traditionally excluded actors and voices into the democratic process. The equality ruling the deliberative procedure entails that everybody enjoys the same opportunity to be listened throughout it, so that the approaches and perspectives within deliberation can be multiplied –hence giving room to actors and intereses underrated or underrepresented in liberal political process. To Hayward, discursive democracy is
a necessary condition for the realization of green values, for only in a culture where humans are used to listen to each other there will be any hope of paying also attention to nature’s complains (Hayward, 1995: 209). The communicative rationality which guides participants not only entails the renunciation to strategy and manipulation, but increases the possibilities of understanding among individuals representing different sides of complex problems (Dryzek, 1994: 415). Inclusiveness of deliberative procedure and the very nature of debate foster an “enlarged thinking”, able to incorporate to deliberation the interests of natural world, so long as it is referred to the “imaginative representation” of situations and perspectives of others, in the process of formulating, defending or discussing the proposed collective norms (Eckersley, 2000: 121). The argument goes like this: moral considerability of the natural world is not derived from its linguistic competence, but from its self-ruling ability, the former considerability requiring that its inability for communication is complemented by human individuals who internalize nature’s interests: discursive democracy not only allows vicarious representation of underrepresented agents, but actually insists on it (Eckersley, 1998; cfr. Whitworth, 2001). Such vicarious representation is supposed to find an adequate vehicle in a model of democracy which does not restrict in advance nor issues to be debated nor actors able to participate. The larger the number of people who are to intervene in the debate, the greater the probability that any of them is able to internalize nature’s interests. Discursive democracy creates a situation in which those initially distant interests are listened to and hence given consideration (Goodin, 1996: 847). Participants would be forced to consider the effects of their decisions on social and ecological communities, “within as well as beyond the formal demos” (Eckersley, 2004: 133). However, the argument is flawed again by the unpredictable character of the debate and its possible outcomes: to listen to is not to embrace. The inclusion of interests and voices previously excluded from the political process does not drives to their automatic acceptance –even though the political and institutional context is more favourable. Therefore, inclusiveness of deliberative democracy cannot be taken for granted, nor the actual equality in debating nor among various arguments, given the different rethorical abilities of participants and the fact that debate undeniable takes place within a culture, with their dominant values and moral inclinations. Nevertheless, this problem will be further discussed below, for being common to the fourth green argument in favour of deliberative democracy.

4. Deliberative democracy permits the enlargement of the political community, embodying natural world into it. This argument has been defended, among others, by John Dryzek, to whom it is the indefinite character of political community’s borders which allows deliberative politics to dismantle the greatest one: that which separates human and non-human world –because discursive democracy deals better with undefined, contested and porous borders (cfr. Dryzek, 1996: 146). Deliberative democracy would not be affected by the limitations posed by a conventional public discourse which excludes everything that cannot be stated clearly and explicitly, nor supported in a recognisable way (cfr. Torgerson, 1999b: 201). To achieve that enlargement, communication as well as communicative rationality is to be extended to entities able to perform as agents, in spite of their lack of the self-conscience bound to subjectivity. The recognition
of nature’s agency guarantees due respect for natural goods and ecological processes, yet natural signs should be treated with the same consideration we agree for human ones; verbal communication cannot be extended to natural world, but non-verbal ways of communication can be more than enough, especially if silence is paid so attention as words in the deliberative process (cfr. Dryzek, 1995: 21; 2000a: 149). Be that as it may, the natural signs Dryzek is alluding to are perceived and interpreted by mankind, and discussed by men when incorporated into deliberative frames: otherwise nature’s voice would hardly be audible. Absence of a common language entails an unavoidable distance from nature and animals, leading to their exclusion (cfr. Berger, 2001: 11). It is man who gives meaning to the silence of nature. Let us remind Valéry: “There always exist a surmise making sense of the strangest language” (Váler, 1993: 238). Human mediation does not work here as a simple transmission of information: to a great extent it produces a set of valuations later subjected to deliberation. Mediation is not just unavoidable, but also decisive. Social system cannot communicate to natural system: communication is possible just within social system about that other natural system (cfr. Luhmann, 1989). Democracy, as a discursive practice, is inexorably human (Weale, 1999: 342). Such an emphasis in communication, rather than deliberation, points to further problems in deliberative democracy, precisely related to deliberation – in two ways: on the one hand, its potential for exclusion; on the other, the subsequent need for complementing it with devices and procedures aimed to facilitate true communication.

Second excursus: deliberation, exclusion, decision. Deliberative democracy, against its own foundation, contains a strong potential for exclusion. Paradoxically enough, it is due to the nature of that practice which lies in its very center: deliberation. To presume that all citizens are free and equal for publicly deliberating in order to achieve collective decisions more legitimate and rational, is to ignore that deliberation is in itself an exclusionary practice. To deliberate is to build up arguments and to defend them through speech, persuading others of their value by rhetorical means, together with a proper understanding and assessment of everybody else’s arguments: it is not just to speak nor to converse, but something else. It might then be that not all citizens have the same ability to do so (cfr. Bell 1999: 74; Hardin, 1999: 116). If rational argumentation is stressed, those who have trouble in limiting themselves to this kind of communication might be excluded. In the same way, as Iris Marion Young has denounced, norms of deliberation are not neutral – assertive and confrontational discourse is much more valued than temptative, exploratory or conciliatory ones, revealing at last how the rule of the best argument re-introduces power into democratic debate, leading to an agonistic view of public sphere: “deliberation is competition” (Young, 1996: 123). As a consequence of this competitive bias and of the former rationalistic inclination, deliberation adopts an elitist and exclusionary character for those individuals or groups with less capacity for developing a given type of discourse, or whose ways of understanding and expression are not the ones privileged in the deliberative frame. On the other hand, communicative rationality which is to rule every deliberation is contested, for its desiderability should not be mistaken with the very presupposition of its existence. Moreover, to introduce arguments in terms of public language in the deliberative context does not
necessarily mean they are free of instrumental motivation (Elster, 1997: 17); it is more reasonable to think that communicative and strategic rationalities work together in every social sphere (Cortina, 1997: 21). After all, linguistic expression does not lead necessarily to the suppression of strategical attitudes—specially when public reasoning can just disguise them (Cohen, 2001: 250). These strategical residues contaminate deliberation, producing a distorted communication. However, the truth of such criticisms has not been empirically tested so far; some field researches have underlined the existence of a different degree of knowledge among participants, as well as differences in the way of understanding deliberation and its goals (cfr. Button and Mattson, 1999). Experimental as they are, these investigations are developed outside the wider cultural and political context within which deliberative politics, if it is to emerge, has to be tested—so that definite conclusions should not be drawn from them.

Anyway, the need to correct that exclusionary bias of deliberation has given place to proposals aimed to reinforce inclusion, as well as oriented to an actual communication beyond deliberation—the former being, after all, condition of the latter. Thus Young defends the addition of a principle of inclusion to the general principles of deliberative democracy, according to which a deliberative procedure would be legitimate only if all the interests, opinions and perspectives present in the political community are included in deliberation, provided they are compatible with the principle of reciprocity (Young, 1999: 155). Its implementation will require larger support to excluded groups and greater economic equality. Nevertheless, equal deliberation for all would also require something that cannot be guaranteed at all: equal “epistemological authority” in rational and persuasive formulation of arguments, so that everybody has the same opportunity to convince others, not being then disadvantaged from the outset due to their rhetorical unabilities (cfr. Sanders, 1997: 349). This is an unsolved problem in deliberative theory. Rational appeal of deliberative democracy surely fascinates theorists, inasmuch as it fits their particular skills; it is not that clear, on the contrary, that citizens would find it so attractive: deliberative theorists, as well as greens, should accept that citizens can simply refuse to debate indefinitely on political matters. The historical origins of representation have to do with this feature of modern life, in which the activities in the private sphere deprive people of time required for political involvement. This is usually contested by pointing out how a different cultural and political education, in a different context, will generate a different citizenry. Even accepting such a tremendous conditional, the imbalance of intellectual skills among people remains as an obstacle to equal deliberation. Is that something which can be solved through education, or is just an unavoidable human feature? How can the outcomes of a debate in which some individuals dominates others through rhetoric and persuasiveness be considered legitimate? In a representative frame, decisions are taken by a group of individuals previously elected—supposedly possessing similar epistemological authority. The different rhetorical abilities of citizens would not be reflected in their representatives. If deliberation is in turn restricted to a representative context, maybe that problem can be, if not suppressed, at least softened.

Taking a different path, Young (1996, 1997) and Dryzek (2000a) propose a communicative correction of deliberation which, after all, is but the introduction of an inclusive device into the deliberative procedure. It is aimed to guarantee that deliberation turns out to be real communication among participants,
avoiding any form of discrimination – for instance, those ways of deliberation which can distort deliberative process, hence also a decision whose legitimacy is founded on the right use of the former. The exclusionary effect produced by a deliberation narrowly understood fails to recognise, according to Young (1993), advantages linked to difference. Far from producing divisions, difference might be valued as a resource for taking wiser and fairer decisions. Such plurality of perspectives move participants to introduce their proposals as apelations to justice rather than as expressions of their self-interest – the clash with different interests and cultural meanings shows participants the partiality of their own perspective, revealing their experience as simply another point of view. For deliberative democracy to be constituted as communicative democracy and democracy of difference, Young (1993) and Dryzek (2000a: 68 ss.) suggest to include, together with deliberation, different forms of expression and communication: acceptance and welcome, storytelling, rhetoric or testimony. Forms not to be considered as alternatives to rational discourse, but as complementary additions to it (Dryzek, 2000a: 5). This critical correction of deliberation is useful for a green conception of democracy based on deliberative politics and on a normative and open view of sustainability, helping to underline how the dominant way of dialogue can be unappropiate for some participants: different contexts may require different ways of communication. Unlike deliberation, this one is attentive to social difference, cultural perspective and the existence of not so rigidly rational ways of expression. So far, so good.

Still, this critical correction does not pay enough attention to the fact that deliberation and communication perform different functions in different contexts. A distinction must be drawn between deliberation, oriented to decision in the frame of political institutions, and unconventional communication in several social spheres. Decisions can hardly be taken in the absence of some standards of equity and impartiality ruling the deliberative process, being otherwise impossible to judge the force or validity of a given argument (Benhabib, 1996: 82). Deliberation is communication, but also something else: argumentation, justification, decision. Benhabib herself is as clear as acute when discussing the utility of those supplementary ways of communication: although they can have their place within the unformally structured process of daily communication among individuals sharing a social sphere, yet they cannot become part of the public language of democracy – because its institutions ask for the grounding of actions and policies in a discursive language able to appeal to reasons publicly accepted and commonly shared. Deliberative institutions process and translate unconventional communication, turning it into public language and argumentative grammar, for political deliberation and decision-making to be viable. In that sense, argumentation should be stressed as the characteristic way of expression in political debate, inasmuch as this is, above all, a contest about values and norms whose validity cannot lastly be proved, but simply justified (Manin, 1987: 353-354). Thereby, it is true that democracy has to do with real communication, as Dryzek states (cfr. Dryzek, 1997: 200). But it cannot be just about communication: it has to go beyond it as political system. Within the political frame, communication must be oriented toward decision.
5. Deliberative democracy is the best institutional arrangement for developing ecological citizenship. Attention paid in the last years to traditional political concepts by green theory is aimed to their re-interpretation in an ecological key, as a means to move towards a sustainable society. This is why the convergence with liberalism takes place: the greening of institutions essential to liberal democracy would equal the greening of society –hence green criticism turns onto rights, autonomy, representation. As well as citizenship, of course. Though the growing attention lastly paid to the latter is explained by several reasons, all of them point to the same direction: the intermediate position it occupies in the relationship between individuals and the state. Sustainability has to do both with the state and citizens: the general management of the former requires the involvement of the latter in its formulation and practice. Yet it is not only a matter of citizen cooperation in the implementation of environmental policies: sustainability is a normative principle which should be submitted to public and democratic definition –instead of being left to a pre-determined technocratic or ideological constitution (cfr. Arias Maldonado, 2000, 2001). Therefore, the reinforcement of citizenship leads to the recognition of something that pervasive early environmentalism has usually failed to see: how sustainability and the reshaping of social-environmental relationships are political rather than moral questions (cfr. Barry, 1999: 67). The normative condition of sustainability asks for the constitution of democratic frames of deliberation and decision, where citizen participation makes possible a decision-making process about issues whose uncertainty hinders the adoption of any technocratic or ideological approach. Deliberative institutions appears then to be the most adequate political arrangement for ecological citizenship. Thus Dobson has recently stated that ecological citizenship is a way of improving the opportunities for democracy to produce sustainable outcomes (cfr. Dobson, 2003: 7). However, this view runs deeper than the traditional view of a merely formal citizenship, which cannot serve as a standpoint for any participative politics: only by linking citizenship to democratic deliberation processes a material content is provided. Civic virtue nowadays has to do with debate, rationality, democracy and plurality (cfr. Gunsteren, 1994: 45). The defence of an active and material citizenship is consistent with the necessary link that green politics should establish between sustainability and political participation. Inasmuch as the normative definition of sustainability is to be done in a frame of decision oriented not towards the mere aggregation of individual and unchangeable preferences, but to a real debate among citizens about their preferences and values, in which, as we will see below, expertise judgement can also be weighed in order to decide on the technical feasibility of sustainability, the chosen institutional context and decision procedures should foster deliberation and the exchange of points of view. This deliberative frame requires an active view of citizenship, in which citizens’ experiences and judgments are incorporated into public domain, as well as a mutual respect and understanding among them is encouraged (Smith, 2000: 32). Ecological citizenship cannot then exist without deliberative politics –and green politics cannot achieve sustainability without the two of them, if its normative condition is given due recognition.

Third excursus: the institutionalization of ecological citizenship and its limits. The vindication of a citizenship more related to active participation in decision-making and formulation of public policies is not
at all exclusionary of greens. On the contrary, is a classic claim in the history of political thinking –as well as a dominant feature of contemporary political theory, sometimes even from within liberal philosophy itself. That is why a green conception of citizenship cannot simply defend a deepening of democracy, but must do so in connection with its political goals: it should defend a truly green citizenship. The democratization of sustainability offers that connection. The normative condition of the latter requires its public definition, made possible by the participation of citizens in democratic deliberations: green politics, deliberation and citizenship are then linked. We will come back to this below. However, ecological citizenship does have an additional dimension –whose fit into deliberative politics comes to be more difficult: its emphasis on duties and responsibilities (cfr. Dobson, 2003). Liberal view of citizenship can be seen as related to the individual satisfaction of preferences in the private sphere, given that liberal citizens claim for rights in the public sphere but fulfill their obligations and actively participate in the private one –thus embracing an strategic understanding of citizenship, in which their belonging to the public sphere is employed in the benefit of their private interests. Therefore, duty and obligation stem from contractual logic, any apparition of them apart from maximization of individual interest and cost-benefit dynamic being only attributed to an isolated action of care (cfr. Fraser and Gordon, 1994: 101). Ecological citizenship turns this scheme upside down. Sustainability does not only require political participation, but also cooperation on the part of citizens. This cooperation, however, is not limited in ecological citizenship to a proper practice of sustainability –that is, to a responsible behaviour according to public environmental policies. What distinguishes ecological citizenship is the relationship between citizens and the natural world. The nature of nature excludes any possible reciprocity as a foundation for that relationship: we cannot expect any contractual logic to be applied. The same goes for the often invoked bond between citizens and future generations. We cannot expect nothing in return from our restraining consuming habits or from a greater concern for the protection of wilderness; nothing, at least, in private terms. Therefore, it is a relationship necessarily based on duties more than rights: we humans would be obliged to a natural world incapable of answering back. So liberal and ecological citizenship are rooted in a different social ontology –contractualism and reciprocity versus non-contractual obligations and non-reciprocal duties. When the duties and obligations at stake are not legally enforced as part of environmental policies, their assumption by citizens can only be morally founded. And the resulting moralisation of citizenship poses some problems as far as its institutionalization, hence also deliberation, is concerned.

The main problem with this side of ecological citizenship is that it cannot be directly incorporated into deliberative institutions: the natural room for moral duties and obligations toward nature is outside the political system. Only that dimension of ecological citizenship having to do with the definition and implementation of sustainability, normatively conceived, can be included in deliberative procedures. Even responsibilities closely related to the practice of sustainability, that is, legal duties and obligations embodied in the law, remain outside deliberative politics. On the basis of their institutional or non-institutional character, Mills (2001) draws an useful distinction between duties of being, whose fulfillment obliges all in virtue of equal moral value, and duties of association, related to and demanded by citizenship
itself. As environmental ethics are not shared by a majority, greens would be willing to turn most duties of being into duties of association –so that their fulfillment be not simply desirable, but legally enforced. However, the very absence of social agreement on the green conception of the good averts such identification. Duties toward nature cannot be conceived as duties of citizenship unless an ecocentric conception of the good becomes socially accepted: they must remain as duties of being. Their moral, pre-political nature is not enough for translating them into legal obligations. Therefore, ethical dimension of ecological citizenship, wether related to cooperation for the implementation of environmental policies or to moral duties toward nature, is not a reason for defending deliberative procedures –it is not the right link between green politics and deliberative democracy. Nevertheless, the fact that it is the participation of citizens in the process of defining sustainability which provides such a link, deliberative procedures can arguably serve as an indirect means to the end of the forementioned moralisation of citizenship. If citizens do defend the interests of the natural world or future generations, hence incorporating them into the political process, deliberation becomes an arena for those duties and responsibilities to be, at least, publicly expressed. The outcome of that public debate is, once again, uncertain. And this leads to an aspect of the relationship between deliberation and citizenship which poses problems for a non-revised view of green politics –that is, for green politics as a consequentialist conception of the good.

Although an active view of citizenship, in which political participation means participation in conventional as well as unconventional processes of shaping and transformation of preferences through deliberation and decision, may contribute to the adoption of those environmental policies preferred by greens, together with a definition of sustainability they can accept, there cannot be any guarantee for it to happen. As we can see, this is a recurring problem in any green defence of deliberative politics. Deliberative model of democracy provides a procedural legitimation for decision, without linking it to any conception of the good nor prescribing any given outcome. In the absence of a greater social acceptance of their views, greens can only wish that a deeper citizenship may in the end produce greener citizens (cfr. Barns, 1995). Is that hope and the ground on which is founded too naive, however? As Graham Smith has recently put it,

“If we are looking for decisive evidence that the institutionalization of deliberation will lead to the end of environmentalism –the greening of liberal democracies and, in particular, the emergence of an environmentally enlightened citizenry– we will be disappointed. The evidence to date is no more than suggestive” (Smith, 2004: 150).

As greens cannot impose their conception of the good on a democratic society, they can only trust that choosing the right institutional body will lead to the right collective definition of sustainability and to an environmentally enlightened society. It is not sure they are ready to face that people well might refuse to be more environmentally aware –that people, before the evidences and the arguments, might prefer not to care for the natural world. The cultural context is generally invoked at this point, because a more favourable one
would surely help to the advance of the green values. In this very sense, a deliberative frame gives more room for a different practice of citizenship to emerge.

On the other hand, green politics pays attention to the shaping of preferences outside the political system, directly related to the possibility of a deeper citizenship. Defenders of the latter insist on the limitations suffered by political action in the liberal institutional body, calling in turn for a new conception of it. The influence of Hannah Arendt (1998) is visible: political action is a value in itself when the citizen appears in the public arena to defend his arguments through a competitive dialogue with others. It is political participation that frees men from the realm of necessity as represented by the private sphere. However, it is another, coexisting view of public space in Arendt which is at stake here –that described by Sheila Benhabib as associational, according to which the public space emerges whereas men act in common, honouring the intersubjectivity that makes them men; it is any space where freedom may appear (cfr. Benhabib, 1992: 93). This view of public sphere is specially fruitful for any redefinition of citizenship which tries to encourage political participation. Participation would not then be an obligation, but an spontaneous action coming from an extension of the political. Hence citizenship could be defined as the activity of the citizen self operating in a variety of places and spaces (Barry Clarke, 1996: 4). The critical point here is that public sphere then ceases to be a topographical or institutional space, for the nature of the space would be determined by the political action itself. More that where does the debate takes place, what counts is what it is debated and which is the meaning of the action. The liberal distinction between public and private spheres is of course then blurred. It is obvious that such a conception of public space and political action is related to ecological citizenship. Duties and obligations as stressed by greens would be political actions in spite of their unconventional nature. However, it is more interesting to relate this to the role of deliberations which also take place outside the institutional body, so long as it shows the limits of deliberation itself –then warning of any exaggerated hope on the part of radical democrats and greens alike.

Even though a deliberative institutional body would serve as an arena for debating preferences among citizens in a way that liberal political system is not, the previous shaping of preferences outside the political system would retain its importance. More active political citizens would shape their preferences inside and outside the institutional frame, because the deliberative opening of the latter would not prevent this single fact: shaping of preferences cannot only take place in the formal political arena. Their constitution takes primarily place outside it, along with the processes of unconventional creation of opinion—the complexity of social life and the existence of multiple simultaneous communities to which the individual belongs helps to explain so. If shaping of preferences is in itself political (Barry, 1999: 227), should we not also recognise the political nature of those unconventional spaces where ecological citizens deliberate and operate? Should we not institutionalise their outcomes? These are relevant questions not only for the role of ecological citizenship and its connection to deliberation, but also for envisaging the general shape of any possible deliberative democracy.

To be sure, deliberative democracy does not necessarily entails the whole transformation of society into a deliberative frame for debate, though its normative orientation indeed asks for the social spread of
deliberative principles. Balance between formal and unconventional spheres of deliberation is essential to a deliberative democracy. Habermas himself has warned of the possible swelling of deliberative politics and its transformation into a structure shaping the totality of society—asking instead for a distinction between deliberations oriented to decisions, which take place in so called contexts of justification ruled by democratic procedures, and unconventional and unregulated procedures which shape opinion in the context of discovery that public sphere is (Habermas, 1996: 307). Thus the political nature of everyday deliberation and decision is recognised (Mansbridge, 1999: 214). Deliberation, indeed, does not only possess an institutional origin: we have to recognise the importance of the one that takes place within public sphere, whose unconventional nature does not equal to absence power—for the public opinion so created can be translated into administrative decisions by several ways (Dryzek, 2000a: 171). This interaction between institutions and the public is crucial to a deliberative model of democracy, because it fosters innovation and democratic change and makes the institutions which organizes deliberation more accountable and efficient (Bohmann, 2000: 239). The action of citizens is then more flexible and crosses several institutional and social boundaries. Multifarious ecological citizenship, being at the same time political participation, cooperation with environmental policies and moral fulfillment of duties and obligations toward nature, would then be well served by this institutional model.

However, the continuity among formal and unconventional spheres of deliberation must also lead to the recognition of their differences. The enlargement of deliberative system allowed by public sphere might not hide the important differences existing between a kind of deliberation oriented to produce bounding decisions, and another one which is to produce effects on private relationships (Gutmann and Thompson, 1999: 275). What Jane Mansbridge calls “everyday talk” exhibits features of its own: it is not always reflective or self-aware, therefore either deliberative, producing collective but not harmonized outcomes (cfr. Mansbridge, 1999: 211-212). It is the context that makes the difference. Thus Habermas when explaining how the public spaces within parliamentary bodies, structured predominantly as contexts of justification, are not only dependant of previous administrative work, but also of that context of discovery not ruled by procedures, namely, public sphere (Habermas, 1996: 312). Yet habermasian differentiation between spaces of justification and spaces of discovery seems to restrict too much the number and character of the former regarding the latter, thus confined into the public sphere and condemned to some kind of discursive circularity—whose spontaneous outcomes are transmitted to the formal system of justification, decision and implementation through political but not institutional devices, namely, as public opinion. To limitate spaces of justification to a formal political context does restrict the range of institutional possibilities for deliberative democracy. Normative orientation provided Habermas seems then to be just some sort of rationalization of reality: an scheme according to which the shape of public opinion generates an influence that, turned into communicative power by elections and into administrative power by law, describes, after all, a very conventional democratic model (Dryzek, 2000b: 82). After all, protection of unconventional spaces of deliberation from a rigid institutionalization is fully compatible with an extension of spaces of justification in the form of discursive communities, related to each other and to higher levels of
decision by representatives in charge of coordinating decisions. Therefore, this model of democracy privileges a “plurality of ways of association”, ranging from political parties to social movements, in which all the affected have the right to express their point of view: it is through the intertwined network of these associations that an anonymous “public conversation” comes to life, so that a deliberative democracy is to foster such a public sphere of mutually overlapped and intertwined networks and deliberative associations (Benhabib, 1996: 73-74). In a deliberative democracy, however, those communities should be oriented not only to debate and production of opinion, but also to decision, being thus formalized.

The description of society that so emerges is not incompatible with the way in which functionally differentiated societies work, rather it elucidates logics and principles implicit in the already existing democratic practices (cfr. Habermas, 1996: 312; Benhabib, 1996: 84). This way, ecological citizenship and any other variation of a deeper view on citizenship does possess an institutional frame to operate within. The spontaneous and extra-institutional nature of political action should not be too stressed, however, for it might lead to an idealistic belief in which despise of deliberation and decision-making procedures can make political system less efficient. Not every political action outside institutional frame is to have political translation. It is the institutionalization of citizen debate and its interaction with the formal political arena what is to be designed –so that a legitimate final decision which is in itself, so to speak, the outcome of a sum of legitimacies, can be achieved.

6. Deliberative democracy is the best way to combine expertise judgement and citizen participation in decision-making process, in the light of the technical side of environmental problems. Sustainability and the very environmental problems it is committed to control offer two contrasting sides, which need to be adequately weighed if a democratic articulation of them is to be found. On the one hand, sustainability is undeniably normative, for it cannot be ideologically or scientifically pre-determined, but defined according to value judgement; on the other, any definition of sustainability requires technical implementation through science and technology, which in fact also provide the background for the proper understanding of society-nature relationships. Therefore, a balance must be kept between democratization of sustainability and the application of technical standards to decision-making. This is, by far, one of the main problems faced by any democratic approach to sustainability: to make expertise judgment on complex and technical issues compatible with lay judgement, whose technical incompetence is however balanced by the contribution of different points of view and personal experiences on the environmental risk at stake. Deliberative democracy is well suited for dealing with this critical features of sustainability, because it facilitates the politization of risk without neglecting its technical dimension. A political approach to environmental problems must recognize their essentially normative nature: their dependance of an external source of definition and control, which regards their technical side simply as another source for assessment and decision. It is important to underline, however, that society-environment relationship is internal to society: it is not established anymore between an inner society and an outer nature, but between the former and a nature already adapted and transformed as human environment. Hence institutional frames and everyday
contexts are not merely *expressions* of the society-nature relationship which lies at the origin of the production of environmental problems, but contexts and processes *essential* to the constitution, representation and practice of that relationship (Irwin, 2001: 11). Open and inclusive character of the deliberative model seems to fit here, so long as it makes possible a communication around environmental problems and risks which is diverse and ordered and reflective. The variety of contexts in which deliberation *might* take place, formally and unconventionally, reinforce decentralization of judgement and decision, required in the light of the multifarious nature of environmental risk and perception. In fact, the kind of reflective judgement projected onto an environmental risk which refuses any objective definition also leads to discursive processes; the very nature of the process of environmental risk *unveiling* and *construcion* mirrors that of deliberation. For social construction of environmental risk does not take place out of the blue, nor is simply left to imagination: ecological problems are *revealed* in the very process of their construction (Adam and Van Loos, 2000: 2). To institutionalize that process in a deliberative context does not only lead to recognition of the *political* character of environmental risk construction –also to its very *democratization*. After all, in this context deliberation is about social perception of ecological risk, about the way in which it should be defined and faced, and about the political and technical solutions to be applied. The right of the citizen to be heard is not just deduced here from an extended democratic principle: so long as nobody possesses an objective knowledge on sustainability nor can claim an ultimate truth on it, participation enriches the process of knowledge production –for the latter is created through communication itself. Deliberative democracy, emphasizing communicative rationality and deliberation serving to an open and rational communication among participants, seems to be well suited for helping in the social definition and management of environmental sustainability.

7. Deliberation and inclusion lead to more legitimate and efficient decisions on sustainability. Social origin of environmental problems, ultimately produced by that human appropriation of nature which turns it into *human* environment, provide supplementary reasons for adopting a deliberative model in green politics: namely, more legitimacy and efficiency. In spite of its fortuitous appearance, ecological risk production is socially originated, not only in a general sense as a side-effect of the autonomous dynamics of modernity, but also as the upshot of several social practices and institutions. Democratization of deliberation on sustainability averts citizens to see environmental problems and ecological risks as fortune, inclining them to adopt an attitude based on the premise that it is possible to control and run them (cfr. De-Shalit, 2000: 169). It is to be noticed that complexity and functional differentiation of society, which lays at the origin of social production of ecological risks, increases the contingency of any social action: the greater the possibilities for action, the greater also the interdependence of the chosen courses of action (cfr. Eder, 2000: 230). Social responsibility is then extended to every sphere; uncertainty is socially shared. In such context, the introduction of deliberative politics does increase the legitimacy of a decision bound to have effects on any social agent. A greater inclusion in the decision-making process, specially of those affected by an specific risk, diminishes the delegitimazing effects of a decision that finally would happen to be
mistaken. Although discourse can contribute to reducing risk, its primary function would be to redistribute responsibility, by binding society members through relationships of reciprocal control (Eder, 2000: 242). The goal is to produce more legitimate decisions, rather than more efficient ones: legitimacy is, in this context, a function of co-responsibility. However, the introduction of deliberative devices for the definition and management of sustainability can result not only in more legitimate, but also in best decisions—more efficient and rational. Deliberative schemes are then to provide some advantages compared to other decision-making devices: the nature of the procedure matching the nature of its subject. In this sense, deliberation on environmental sustainability can improve the outcome on several grounds. Flexibility and plurality of participants permits them to make decisions able to be adapted and self-corrected in the light of new or supervised circumstances, information or arguments. This is something likely to occur when dealing with sustainability—so that the social learning process in which identification and management of ecological risks consist of fits well into that institutional structure (cfr. Eckersley, 2000: 122). And though it is also true that deliberation can increase the conflict among participants, thereby obstructing decision-making, deliberation is not meant to last forever: temporal limitations for reaching a decision and voting mechanisms would put an end to the process. Likewise, the open nature of debate averts the rhetorical sedimentation of problem definitions grounded on private interests, for it is possible at all time to ask for explanations, weighing carefully the reasons offered by others; in a deliberative context it is easier to unmask the ideological covering of risk discourses. Finally, so long as the perception of a given ecological risk as an acceptable risk depends, above all, of its distribution be perceived as fair by the affected people, democratization of decision through deliberation makes it easier to balance such distribution, thanks to the open nature of deliberative procedures (Mills and King, 2000: 142). The communitarian character of these problems is reinforced by their political and socially emerging nature (cfr. Hiskes, 1998: 10); a deliberative model of democracy, creating a political community through deliberation and collective decision, would serve to its recognition. Therefore, increased rationality happens to be the outcome of increased legitimacy.

Fourth excursus: deliberation and expertise judgement. In spite of the aforementioned possibilities opened by deliberative institutions, the relationship between expertise, democratic decision and participation are not easy to arrange. That between citizenry and expertise, which is also the relationship between issues that require a scientific or technical judgement and the prospect for a democratic decision on them through citizen participation—faces different problems, with the same source: the divergence between technical and lay discourses, using incomparable languages that can only possibly understand each other by being denaturalized. The legitimacy of any decision can be undermined in the absence of citizen judgement, but leaving expertise aside might in turn lead to unefficiency. If citizens are to accept judgements made by scientists without being able to evaluate their foundations, is that compatible with individual autonomy and democratic polity? (cfr. O’Neill, 1993: 5). The answer would be that compatibility of autonomy and democracy regarding expertise judgement, whose foundations cannot be assessed by citizens, will be
dependant on those mediations chosen to help participants to deliberate and decide –by bringing those technical foundations closer to their understanding.

However, for scientific issues to be opened to citizen participation science itself should be perceived according to its supposed real position: not an objective exploration of reality, but a subjective discourse on certain facts. This is at least the position usually supported by radical democrats and greens alike, to which expertise judgement should be deprived of its almost sacred condition, by pointing out its social and ideological substratum. Both citizen and expertise judgement would be dependant of value and normative judgements. It is then stressed that relationships between science and citizenry are not only hindered by the absence of adequate structures of mediation among them, but also by a deeper incongruity between the needs of citizens and institutional and cognitive structure of contemporary science (Irwin, 1995: 161). But this is to reduce two questions into just one: the believe that both citizen needs and scientific goals are pre-determined and cannot be modified. On the contrary, it can be argued again that this gap may somehow be filled by the articulation of a deliberative institutional frame and by the use of reflective decision-making devices open to citizen participation, in which expertise judgement is incorporated and submitted to an essentially political deliberation on issues traditionally beyond any democratic control. The main problem here is the way in which the opening of science to democratic participation seems to entail the defence of a downgraded model of science. Some kind of participatory science would then be conceived “as an instrument to dethrone science or to deprive scientific knowledge of its authority and legitimacy conferred by modern society” (Bäckstrand, 2004: 109). Likewise, knowledge is to be democratized and abstract science to be challenged in the outcoming political process (cfr. Dickens, 1999: 120). The face of a new civic science is supposed to spring from these theoretical developments –though it is not clear what this science amounts to, nor how useful it might be. Democratization of science does not mean lay experiences having the same weight in the decision-making process than expertise judgement: the limits of politization are the limits of participatory science itself.

This is not to dismiss public participation and decision on scientific issues, but rather to be careful about its institutionalization. Claims in favour of participatory science frequently express an exaggerated optimism in the ability of citizens to understand complex subjects in differentiated societies where expert knowledge is not easily accessible for the majority –not to mention that their will to do so is somewhat taken for granted. This gap is, of course, the heart of the matter. It is the depolitization of issues involving technical judgement what should be carefully avoided –given the easiness by which the latter simply masks ideological or material interests. But the fact that citizens have to accept expertise judgement in areas beyond their understanding is hard to avoid. The public condition of science should have reflection on a greater accountability, as well as in a more reflective decision-making process and implementation practices (cfr. Lee, 1993: 161). Sustainability is in itself a process of social learning, whose implementation does require citizenship cooperation on a daily basis. A better public understanding of science is then necessary, for citizens to be able to make judgments on technical issues. But lay judgement on science does not equal a new, more reliable science –as mere closeness to facts does not mean a better understanding or
explanation of them. Politization of science means a more enlightened citizenship and more opened processes of decision making in a number of spheres traditionally excluded from any public control –just in case citizens do agree to be involved. The dangers of populism are to be avoided, the complexity of decisions related to science not underrated.

This way, traditional understanding of citizenship is also challenged. By requiring new institutional frames and decision-making procedures, sustainability and environmental risks entail a redefinition of citizenship –not being a surprise that usual views on citizenship have not paid attention to the problems of knowledge and expertise so far (cfr. Irwin, 1995: 78). As Hiskes points out, modern risk demands not citizenship to be defined in terms of the privileges guaranteed by the State for the achievement of private interests, nor in terms of the general relationship of the individual with the latter, but rather as the unveiling of citizen’s identity through his relationship with others —an identity featured by actions in response to risk, defined as a public discourse which gives place to new responsibilities for individuals as virtuous persons. They are to become active participants in a public discourse on risk, given that only within that discourse decisions on risk can be taken (Hiskes, 1998: 147). Henceforth, democratic definition of sustainability and control of risks require greater citizen participation, according to greater political responsibilities. Sustainability is a revealing example, for such a comprising goal has much to say on the treatment of those very technical and scientific risks whose implementation inescapably produces, therefore demanding that the institutional frame and procedures chosen to decide on them do encourage public and democratic debate. In fact, the case for inclusiveness in collective decision-making procedures on risks finds in a relevant foundation in the latter. Thus Eckersley:

“all those potentially affected by risks should have meaningful opportunity to participate or otherwise be represented in the making of the policies or decisions which generate such risks” (Eckersley, 2000: 118).

Those affected constitute some kind of community of fate, grounded on the shared exposition to a given risk. Even though Eckersley is primarily referring to under-represented groups, such as the future generations and the natural world, her inclusive principle expresses the way in which latemodern risks exert their influence on the political process. In this sense, deliberative forms also appear to be the most adequate ones. The reason seems simple: whereas both expertise and citizen judgement contribute to social construction of environmental risk, the relationship between those two ways of knowledge may, in the absence of any proper interaction among them, remain useless. Deliberative democracy can avoid such divergence –especially as far as citizen understanding of scientific issues is concerned. And it does so because it relies on a flux of information that roam along center and citizens, and amongst citizens themselves, making easier for them to understand the problems at stake, scientific vocabulary used, attitudes showed by experts and potential solutions, then fostering their participation into deliberation (cfr. De-Shalit, 2000: 165). Deliberative democracy may favour the emergence of a new relationship between citizens, experts and politicians, but above all of a new culture sustained by a reasonable skepticism on
expertise judgement (Coote, 1998: 127). The interaction among expertise and lay judgement would be oriented to conciliation and consensus, enhancing the exchange of information and making possible the review of decisions in any time when new data are discovered. There is some degree of unanimity, then, about how deliberation and the discursive context in which it takes place might contribute to the inclusion of expertise judgement into the democratic decision-making process.

Nevertheless, demonopolization of scientific judgement is not meant to turn any citizen into an expert on technical issues. It rather tries to make feasible the control and reviewing of scientific arguments, denuded of any mask of neutrality, as well as the inclusion of lay arguments and approaches —specially when directly affected by the decision at stake. Everyday experience of risk is now recognised as relevant and included into decision-making. Dichotomy between scientific knowledge and participative democracy is thus properly redefined: dialogue between citizenry, politicians and scientists on environmental risks is not as much an obstacle to decision-making grounded on knowledge, as a means to achieve it (Lidskog, 2000: 218). Not surprisingly, there seems to be a perfect match between participative science and participative democracy:

“The participatory and deliberative vision of science-policy communication is largely compatible with the preference for deliberative democracy in green political theory. Furthermore, the deliberation model for science-policy communication is more congruent with recent constructivist accounts of scientific expertise. It recognizes the contingency and open-ended process of regulation of hazards. The policy process relies on principles and procedures such as precaution, reflexivity and openness” (Bäckstrand, 2004: 111).

The virtues of deliberative procedures may be mentioned again: if dialogue between citizens and experts is to be fostered, deliberative institutions, properly corrected by representative devices able to set specific arenas for debate and decision among representatives of those affected by risk, experts and member of the public administration, seems the most adequate means to that end.

Still, strong technical nature of many sides of environmental problems and sustainability should not be underrated. Exaltation of lay knowledge and local experience on the part of greens oftenly leads to a dangerous undermining of science and expertise knowledge. Yet it should not be forgotten that greater rationality provided by deliberative procedures vanishes without proper scientific assessments. Therefore, we need a model of deliberation able to balance the weight of every kind of knowledge. Their differences should not be dissolved —rather, a co-governance based on the reciprocal acceptance of them ought to be fostered (cfr. Bang and Dyrberg, 2000: 147). Greener outcomes are not, as usual, guaranteed. But the institutional flexibility of deliberative democracy may certainly help to achieve such delicate balance between lay citizenry and expertise, between different understandings of risk and the need for rational and legitimate decisions on it.

4. Conclusion: deliberative democracy and normative sustainability.
The case for deliberative democracy in green politics is strong enough to be seriously considered, in fact as the currently hegemonic approach to democracy within environmental thinking. In spite of being inspired by the larger support for deliberative decision-making procedures and principles to be found elsewhere in democratic theory, green reasons for adopting them are not scant nor weak. The sum of different theoretical efforts has ended up in the emergence of a green defence of deliberative democracy: green democracy itself is meant to be some kind of deliberative one. Yet not too much expectations should be placed on deliberative democracy as a vehicle for greening society, for there is not, nor can be, any guarantee of its realization. Such is the flaw at the heart of green endorsement of deliberative democracy: its potential uselessness for ecological purposes. It will always run the risk of being an imaginary solution for environmental problems, and the blind faith which can often be found in their proponents should alert about any excess of hope. Deliberation should not be asked more than it can deliver.

Echoes of an old problem in green relationship with democracy resonate here. The contradiction between democracy as a procedure and environmentalism as a conception of the good cannot disappear when coming to deliberative democracy. The latter is certainly not just a procedure, so long as it is founded in a series of substantive values –its main feature however being the procedural legitimation of decisions. Save those outcomes which pose a threat in democracy itself, any decision is legitimate if produced through a deliberation process opened to equal participation. To begin with, citizens might not be interested at all in a political system demanding more participation and involvement. Yet the contrary does not guarantee a greater concern with environmental problems: active and responsible citizens might just not share green values –or embrace a devalued version of them. Decisions following this pattern would not possibly be contested; not on democratic grounds. The problem is that green support for deliberative democracy, as we have seen, unavoidably take the latter precisely as a means to ecological ends: a given procedure whose political virtues eventually will deliver environmental advantages. Are deliberative procedures then only accepted as long as they contribute to the achievement of green goals –so that any other democratic, even political model showing more ecological efficiency would be chosen instead?

Although such instrumental perspective is not explicit on green accounts, it underlies the otherwise diverse arguments supporting deliberative democracy –and it is consistent with the temptation of consequentialism which has traditionally troubled green relationship to democracy. Yet language of suspicion is not fair to greens when coming to their defence of deliberative democracy, specially when their political theory is finally facing a long delayed critical rethinking. After all, environmentalism can only provide its commitment to democracy, not democracy’s commitment to green values. Therefore, once green commitment to democracy has been openly stated, they can only look for the most favourable model for ecological goals to be achieved. Their choice may be naive, but also consistent with their traditional inclination to participative politics. Moreover, there are not many other options within democratic theory to create the conditions for spreading green values within the institutional system: the politicization of nature through deliberation appears to be the only way for combining public participation and democracy. That is
why to stress the absence of any guarantee of success is somewhat superfluous: it is the nature of politics to deny them—a reflection in turn of the very uncertainty and contingency and conflict which life so constantly exhibits. The politics of nature cannot escape the nature of politics.

However, a firmer ground for the connection between environmentalism and deliberation might be found—and sustainability is to provide it. This would not assure greener outcomes, but would give place to a more comprehensive defence of deliberative procedures in connection to environmental sustainability. I have explored this connection in detail elsewhere (cfr. Arias-Maldonado, 2000). Sustainability, broadly understood as the balance between society and its natural environment, is the main goal for any green agenda. It is a principle whose normative condition excludes any previous determination of its content through scientific or ideological patterns—for the decisions about sustainability are ultimately decisions about values, given the many different views on it which can be held. Nor technocratic management nor ecological wisdom can claim a cognitive monopoly on sustainability. The constitution of green democracy explicitly adopts a normative principle of sustainability and submits it to democratic and public definition. Democratization of sustainability turns out to be part of the same movement towards modernization of green politics itself. It is the normative conception of sustainability which brings the necessary connection between green politics and democracy, the adoption of deliberative model helping democratization regarding sustainability. Hence, discursive shaping of sustainability and its later public control take place in the course of deliberative procedures which, properly limited by representative institutions, form the institutional frame of decision in a green democracy.

Normative condition of sustainability entails the acceptance of the principle as a regulative social ideal whose definition concerns to different discursive spheres and actors, in a continuing process of dialogue, evaluation, implementation and review of the politics of sustainability at a number of levels. As Barry has stated, such a politics is a complex combination of democracy, normative claims and counterclaims, as well as economic and scientific issues—hence linked to the democratic articulation of judgement matters, to a public and political discourse of citizens and, in a minor degree, to a largely private expertise discourse (Barry, 1996: 120). That is why, as democracy itself, sustainability would never be concluded: as a process of social learning, it is permanently submitted to public debate and scrutiny. Greater flexibility showed by deliberative institutions is specially useful for a debate in which different social spheres participate and different kinds of discourse converge. Deliberation would thereby be the means for definition and management of sustainability. Hence the two core principles of a renewed green politics, namely, democratization and sustainability, would be closely linked.

This is not to dismiss the green arguments explored above for adopting deliberative democracy. Rather, it is to link them to a central purpose, to which they contribute performing different functions. It also works the other way around: as long as the politics of sustainability works, different benefits more closely related to environmental awareness and the protection of nature might well be provided—for it is to be remembered that sustainability does not necessarily means more preservation of the remaining natural world, no matter how desirable it is privately considered. More specifically, the engagement of an active
citizenship in the public definition of sustainability is likely to be essential to any democratization of sustainability – so that would citizens decide not to participate, other solutions should be found. This stubborn hindrance to any prospect for deliberative democracy, be it green or not, drives us again to the problem of the inrinsical contingency of the relationship between sustainability and democracy. To put it bluntly: normative condition of sustainability may find in deliberative politics the best way of institutionalization, therefore the former demands the latter – but not quite the opposite, for does deliberative democracy demands in itself a politics of sustainability? Not at all.

The former connection ultimately depends on social consensus on the achievement of sustainability. There are no reasons to expect the right decision coming out a deliberative procedure (Wissenburg, 2001: 41). The very logic of democracy should prevent us of talking about better decisions – are not there only legitimate decisions in a participative democracy scheme? Normative conception of democracy embraces that rationale, thus preventing any consequentialism. It is “the paradox of democratic sustainability”, as presented by Jacobs: as long as the role for sustainability depends on its position as a social value, and given that it is not generally conceived as a bounding restriction on public decision-making procedures, the potential conflict between the procedural ethics of deliberative democracy and ethical outcome of sustainability might be acknowledged (Jacobs, 1997: 228). To defend a normative, hence more open and flexible conception of sustainability may facilitate its social acceptance, for the principle constitutes a general frame rather than a given set of specific restrictions and policies. Yet it does not guarantee it, and the same goes for a democratic process based on deliberation: the better procedure does not necessarily bring the wished outcome.

Hopeless as it might sound, greens can only wait until sustainability becomes a generalizable interest, thus opening itself to collective definition and democratic institutionalization. A further, final paradox arises here, however – one whose meaning is perhaps deeper than it seems. As we have seen, it is not only a matter of green values rising slowly in a society too easily distracted by different global topics: citizens might well refuse democratically to give priority to environmental concerns. The belief that citizens in a deliberative context will spontaneously acquire ecological enlightenment and will push for the greener decisions relies too much on an optimistic, naive view of human nature, so oftenly found in the utopian political movements. This will unlikely occur. For all the praise of deliberative democracy, it would probably be easier for representative institutions in the first instance to set sustainability as a social goal. As a general principle whose complexity affects all social spheres, it is likely to find a resistance more easily avoidable through the action of accountable yet not directly democratic political bodies. Representation is not any historical whim – rather the result of a logic. Henceforth, a combination of representation and deliberation would probably be more useful at the outset, fostering deliberation within representative institutions and enhancing greater representation of those social spheres which deserve a say on matters that affect them. Once the principle is introduced, democratization through deliberation might be pursued. It is maybe then that a somewhat imaginary solution turns out to be a more realistic one.
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- to assist graduate training and scholarly research by deepening the theoretical and methodological toolkit appropriate to understanding environmental concerns in an increasingly globalized world;
- to bring together constituencies of local and international scholars, activists, and policy makers for transnational conversations on environmental issues; and,
- to bring community activists and policymakers to Berkeley as Residential Fellows, thus providing synergistic possibilities for developing new learning and research communities.

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