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Should Ecological Citizenship Advocates Praise the Green State?

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the relationship between ecological citizenship and the green state and asks whether it is a productive one. First, I examine the political system of an ideal ecological state to assess how it could encourage ecological citizenship. Then, I turn my attention to how eco-states might emerge and be sustained, and the obstacles they may encounter. I show that the green state has a strong potential to develop ecological citizenship, albeit with a rather narrow focus on its deliberative dimension. However, my main point is that this potential may not be fully realised because the green state is grounded on a postliberal ecological democracy and an ecologically modernised economy. Since the green state cannot avoid the problems arising from the nexus between liberal democracy and capitalism, I claim that it is not the most appropriate locus for the cultivation of ecological citizenship.

KEYWORDS

Ecological citizenship, green state, ecological democracy, liberalism, capitalism

THE STATE AND CITIZENSHIP IN GREEN POLITICAL THEORY: A BRIEF HISTORY

The idea of an environmental account of citizenship emerged within the policy discourse before it entered the academic field of green political theory (Bell, 2005). In fact the term ‘environmental citizenship’ was first used in 1990 by a state body, Environment Canada (Szerszynski, 2006). The literature on ecological citizenship often presumes that states are, to a certain extent, responsible

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for creating the conditions and implementing the mechanisms for its practice (MacGregor and Pardoe, 2005; Dobson and Valencia Sáiz, 2005). Partly because most theorists of green citizenship live in liberal democratic states, partly because it is thought that any transformation of the political order will emerge from existing institutions, attempts have been made to demonstrate that current neoliberal states can and should encourage more sustainable forms of citizenship. There is a tendency to argue that states' resources and steering capacity can be used to promote green behaviours as a route to increasing ecological citizenship, for instance, using tools like legal and monetary incentives (Connelly, 2006; Barry, 2006), substantive and procedural rights (Bell, 2005; Hailwood, 2005) or school education (Barry, 2006; Hailwood, 2005; Dobson, 2003).

Despite the potential that state bodies have for the promotion of green views of citizenship, actually existing states are still far from endorsing a politics of environmental protection. State organisations are implicated in different ways in the process of ecological destruction. Political centralisation, bureaucracy, poverty, militarisation and the pursuit of economic growth all have devastating consequences for the natural world. This scenario makes it difficult for citizens to assume responsibility for their environments and constitutes an obstacle to ecological citizenship.

In the face of this, it has been argued that the promotion of ecological citizenship should be approached together with the ecological transformation of the state (Barry, 2006, 1999; Eckersley, 2004; Christoff, 2005, 1996). This position is consistent with the evolution in attitudes towards the state that has taken place within green political theory over the past twenty years. Although greens long held a conception of the state as being inherently authoritarian and responsible for the unsustainable socio-political reality, today there is wide consensus that rejecting the state would limit the options available in the quest for the environment (Paterson et al., 2006; Barry and Eckersley, 2005b; Eckersley, 2004; Hailwood, 2004; Barry, 1999). As a consequence, anti-statist ideas have been diluted within less radical approaches and gradually replaced by a growing concern for the concept of the green state.¹

The statist turn has had some implications for ecological citizenship and its promotion. Sherilyn MacGregor notes that it is within the anarchist and anti-authoritarian traditions of green political thought that one finds 'the longest-standing approaches to green citizenship, which favour political decentralisation and direct face-to-face democracy at the local or community level' (2006a: 86). This view is exemplified by Murray Bookchin (1982, 1980) who, opposing the state, defends a citizen politics based on a direct democracy in self-managed, co-operative communities.

1. Alan Carter's ecological anarchism (2010, 1999) and bioregional thought (Evanoff, 2011; Carr, 2004; Thayer, 2003) are exceptions to this trend.

ECOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP AND THE GREEN STATE

From the 1990s and throughout the 2000s, green writings on citizenship give more importance to the issue of institutionalisation. Attention has shifted towards the formal rights of the ecological citizen and the mechanisms for citizen participation in environmental deliberation and policy-making processes. In this picture, ecological citizenship is specifically tied to the reform of the state along green lines. The early writings of John Barry (1999) and Peter Christoff (1996) serve well to illustrate the transition towards a trend that has its most clear expression in the work of Robyn Eckersley (2004).

The notion of the ecological state is grounded on new values, functions, decision rules and forms of participation and representation. Ecological citizenship would be one of its core institutions. Just as a liberal state promotes liberal citizenship, green theorists of the state contend that an eco-state would use its resources to encourage ecological citizenship as one of the essential components of the sustainable society (Barry, 2006, 1999; Eckersley, 2004; Christoff, 1996). From this angle, the underlying assumption is that ecological citizens need ecological states.

Yet, at the same time, ecological citizens are regarded as the main actors in the process of greening state institutions. For environmental statist, progress towards ecological states requires the active involvement of green movements and ecological citizens acting together to trigger changes within state institutions, societies and the economy (Barry, 2006; Eckersley, 2004; Dryzek et al., 2003; Hunold and Dryzek, 2005). Political innovation in the history of Western modern states begins with social movements and the fact that they could attach their respective defining interests to an incipient state imperative². If environmental values were to be linked with both legitimation and economic imperatives, a green state with an environmental conservation imperative could be established. These ideas emphasize ecological citizens and groups as being the architects of the reforms that will culminate in green states. According to environmental state theorists and some ecological citizenship commentators, it appears then that ecological citizenship is both a precondition for the rise of green states and a key element to sustain them.

The above arguments illustrate a common position within green political theory: that there is a mutually reinforcing relationship between the consolidation of green states and the articulation of ecological citizenship. Too often some environmental thinkers assume that an eco-state will implement the conditions needed to strengthen ecological citizenship (which, in turn, will help maintain the green state itself). This stance is premised on two ideas: first, that a more participatory and reflexive model of democracy, deliberative democracy,

2. State imperatives are 'the functions that governmental structures have to carry out to ensure their own longevity and stability' (Dryzek et al., 2003: 12). They exist independently of public officials' will and override their preferences in case of conflict. These imperatives are five: domestic order, survival, revenue, economy and legitimation. See also Dryzek (2000: 83).

will lead to sustainable outcomes, among them an environmentally enlightened citizenry; second, that ecological modernisation will tame capitalism and, with this, some obstacles to ecological citizenship will be removed. The present contribution challenges this theoretical position (and the two premises it rests upon) not only because it constitutes circular reasoning but mainly because it is a form of wishful thinking. My purpose is to suggest instead that ecological citizenship and the green state do not need each other and, what is more, that a green state may be detrimental for the practice of ecological citizenship. With this, I also intend to question a trend in green political theory which views the state as a solution and no longer as a problem, and therefore as a privileged actor in environmental politics. I find this to be a very optimistic perspective, a pragmatic posture, grounded on the premise that states are the ‘basic building blocks of the global order’ (Opello and Rosow, 2004: 2).³ Yet this paper does not delve into the reasons explaining the pragmatist-statist turn in green politics, nor does it seek to reject or counteract those arguments. Rather, my intention is to confront the assumptions that a green state will be more conducive to ecological citizenship and that it is possible to reform the state along green lines within a capitalist economy. The critique of capitalism connects the two aspects of my argumentation, since my position is informed by the view that both ecological citizenship and environmental politics require opposition to capitalist relations.

The article proceeds as follows: First, I examine the concept of an ideal ecological state in view of assessing the ways in which it could encourage ecological citizenship. I argue that theorists have typically had a narrow focus on deliberative democracy and the political arena conceived in strict or traditional terms, and suggest that a broader perspective is needed. Second, I pay attention to how eco-states are going to emerge and be sustained and the obstacles they may encounter. This theoretical analysis helps me to question the view that a green state informed by ecological modernisation will be able to create the adequate conditions for the promotion of ecological citizenship, as some scholars assume too easily.

CONCEPTIONS OF THE GREEN STATE AND ECOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP

As Frank Fischer notes, ‘democratic participation has been a central theme in discussions of the ecological state from the outset of the environmental movement’ (2013: 2). Work by a number of scholars has extended this view (Barry, 2006, 1999; Christoff, 2005, 1996; Dryzek et al., 2003; Eckersley, 2004; Barry and Eckersley, 2005b). It is based on the estimation that a green state will

3. This point of view is expressed, among others, by Hurrell (2006: 180), Meadowcroft (2005a: 493), Barry and Eckersley (2005a: x; 2005c: 255–256) and Eckersley (2005: 159; 2004: 5).

ECOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP AND THE GREEN STATE

steer society towards environmental sustainability and enhance participatory democratic processes (often of a deliberative kind) that will shape (ecological) citizenship transformation. Environmental democracy and citizenship commitment to the formulation and delivery of public policy appear as an alternative to technocratic policy-making (Fischer, 2013; 2009; 2000; Skelcher, 2010). The idea of a green state is built upon this premise.

In order to challenge the relationship between the green state and ecological citizenship, I focus on what constitutes, in my view, the clearest expression of this approach: Robyn Eckersley's environmental theory of the state (2004). Drawing on Eckersley's work, I seek to question the very notion of the eco-state and its role in the promotion of ecological citizenship. Before embarking on this task, I offer a summary of the essential aspects of Eckersley's conception, as this will inform my analysis in the rest of the article. Although it is a comprehensive theory which covers a wide range of topics, I will present an oversimplified account that focuses only on those elements that I find most relevant to my own purposes.

The green state is, first and foremost, a democratic and constitutional state. It is governed by a 'green constitution' that instantiates an 'ecological democracy' and grants a series of environmental substantive and procedural rights to citizens. Second, the green state is a transnational body that has developed its sovereignty and identity beyond its own borders and assumes responsibility for citizens of other states whenever there are common, transboundary ecological problems. Third, it is not a neutral organisation but an 'ethical and democratically responsible state' (Eckersley, 2004: 12), informed by 'ecologically responsible statehood' (Eckersley, 2004: 228). Fourth, the green state assumes a new rationale and new competences to achieve communicative, social and environmental justice.

The main objective and one of the key functions of the green state is the articulation of an ecological democracy that renders the implementation of ecological citizenship possible. Ecological democracy is conceived as a deliberative democracy with a distinctively normative and ecological content – which results from the incorporation of environmental justice within communicative justice. Consequently, it has an expanded community of justice defined as the 'affected community' or 'community at risk'. What gives rise to the political and moral community of citizens is a 'common ecological embeddedness' and the 'common capacity to suffer serious ecological or biological harm' (Eckersley, 2004: 196).

Two central features define the promotion of ecological citizenship within the green state: it is a constitutional mandate, and it is accomplished through deliberative innovations. The decisive challenge for a green state seeking to implement an ecological democracy is to find the right mechanisms to enable ecological citizenship both within and beyond its borders, and to give expression to the cosmopolitan principle of affected interests. This principle

encourages ecological citizenship obligations: when engaging in democratic debate, citizens should incorporate the interests and possible objections of those absent but affected by the risk or question being debated (that is, citizens of other states, future generations and non-human animals).

Particular procedures for institutionalising ecological democracy and promoting ecological citizenship include unilateral initiatives complemented by multilateral cooperative agreements between states. Examples of unilateral mechanisms are tribunes for non-citizens, where members of the local or national community are responsible for speaking in the name of non-citizens, and assemblies where actors from environmental groups would be responsible for the proxy representation of non-humans and future generations. Together with these institutional designs, the green state incorporates other deliberative instruments like statutory policy advisory committees, citizens' juries, consensus conferences and public environmental enquiries, in line with participatory experiments implemented worldwide to bring citizens' concerns into policy-making (Fishkin, 2009; Gastil and Levine, 2005). Ecological democracy would also employ transnational mechanisms such as multilateral agreements between states which create transboundary rights and duties of ecological citizenship, deliberative forums with representatives of all the affected communities and cross-border referenda.

Now, how is this ideal state form going to flourish? The green state is developed from an immanent critique of social and political life. The main obstacles hindering the rise of green states at present are identified as liberal democracy, economic globalisation and the anarchic international system of states. Green states will, according to Eckersley, emerge from practices conceived to reduce the negative effects of those structural features of modern states that have long acted as obstacles to ecological sustainability. In this sense, deliberative innovations, weak ecological modernisation and environmental multilateralism are the points of departure that should be further deepened so as to result in ecological democracy, strong or reflexive ecological modernisation and a world order of post-Westphalian or Kantian transnational states.

In Eckersley's picture, economic transformation precedes the move towards greener states. She explains how neoliberal policies have triggered the emergence of the competition state, aimed at attracting capital and making national economies more successful in the international context. In a world of globalised capitalism and great economic inequalities, the consolidation of green states will take place only if states, especially the most economically powerful, internalise the strong ecological modernisation paradigm. But this process has to be achieved democratically. Nevertheless, liberal democracies do not seem to have the right tools to facilitate strong ecological modernisation and to institutionalise environmental justice, as they lack the free communicative framework that would enable the adoption of fair and unconstrained economic decisions. Therefore, liberal democracy should give way to an

ECOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP AND THE GREEN STATE

ecological and deliberative democracy that better suits the rationale of the green state. When reading Eckersley's work, it is clear that the transition to ecological democracy appears as a requisite for the implementation of reflexive ecological modernisation which, in turn, is a condition *sine qua non* for the genesis of a green state.

For changes in economic policy and democratic innovation to result in green states, they have to be reinforced by public debates about the conditions for ecological sustainability and how these may be incorporated into new state functions and roles. This debate, which aims to replace liberal democracy with ecological democracy, is to be initiated by civil society actors in the public sphere. Green movement organisations and ecological citizens have to create a multiplicity of green public spheres while, at the same time, using the party system to influence the conventional locus of politics. Hence the green constitution, ecological democracy, civil society and ecological modernisation are all complementary elements; they constitute a 'virtuous circle of change' that will not take place without a dynamic green public sphere (Eckersley, 2004: 246).⁴

In short, placed within Eckersley's theory of the green state, ecological citizenship is a means to achieve ecological democracy. Ecological citizens are to foster the reforms that will further democratise the state and culminate in the adoption of a green constitution. They have to strengthen the green public sphere, exercise their transboundary rights and make sure that adequate deliberative mechanisms are implemented. Eckersley's view, shared by other supporters of the green state as mentioned in the introduction, is that the success of the green state depends, to a large extent, on the degree to which citizens accept and commit to the new procedures of ecological democracy. The remaining sections of the manuscript show why this position is problematic.

ASSESSING THE POTENTIAL OF GREEN STATES AS FACILITATORS OF ECOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP

My analysis proceeds with a critical examination of the strengths and weaknesses of the green state–ecological citizenship nexus described in the previous section. Two issues become most relevant in this debate. One is the fact that an ecological democracy is a deliberative democracy. This democratic model offers the right setting for a deliberative understanding of citizenship and environmental issues, in contrast to aggregative conceptions. The second aspect relates to the normative or specifically environmental dimension of this particular notion of democracy, which institutionalises ecological citizenship responsibility. In what follows, I shall further elaborate these points.

4. There is another element in Eckersley's theory of change: an international community of transnational green states. My discussion omits this aspect because it relates to relationships between states, and I am concerned here with relationships between states and citizens.

Ecological citizens' main duty consists of the reduction of one's ecological footprint (Dobson, 2003). But the exact implication of this general mandate, what it means for each of us, living in different but interconnected societies, is a matter of conflict. Environmental knowledge can be produced and passed on to citizens via a top-down approach, as in some forms of state-sponsored deliberative initiatives, where the process of attitude formation and expression among citizens is determined by the chosen deliberative institution, the formal set-up of the procedure, the selection of questions for discussion (which takes place prior to the debate itself) and the experts invited to participate (whose information and technical judgments become more relevant than lay citizens' values and beliefs) (Aasen and Vatn, 2013; Drevensek, 2005; MacGregor and Szerszynski, 2003). Or rather, knowledge may be generated by citizens themselves through less guided and more spontaneous deliberation, reflecting in the course of political debate on one's place in the world and the way each of us uses resources. Citizens also need to learn the virtues related to acting according to justice-based motivations and taking into account the interests of others (Connelly, 2006). From this perspective, ecological citizenship is a learning process about its own meaning. It is deliberative democracy's educative potential that makes it appropriate for the cultivation of ecological citizenship.

Deliberative democracy can be described as 'the practice of public reasoning', in which 'participants make proposals, attempt to persuade others, and determine the best outcomes and policies based on the arguments and reasons fleshed out in public discourse' (Schlosberg et al., 2006: 216). According to liberal democratic theory, the role of democracy should be the aggregation of individual pre-given preferences into a collective choice, therefore 'contemporary liberal institutions are not designed to encourage engagement and the testing of preferences and value orientations' (Smith, 2003: 55). In this respect, deliberative democracy is different in that 'preferences and interests are not brought into the conversation as in a battle – with one person or group winning and others losing' (Schlosberg et al, 2006: 216). Ideally, when citizens take part in democratic debate, they are open and ready to have their preferences and values changed. This happens by virtue of the force of the better argument and not due to external motivation – as it occurs when policy tools like regulation and monetary incentives are used to encourage pro-environmental attitudes.

Within deliberative structures citizens' views are not assumed as self-evident. Instead, the institutions and contexts where these are formed are taken into consideration. Citizens' actions are moulded by the wider institutions, and this restriction can be an obstacle to the practice of ecological citizenship. A deliberative framework challenges the assumption that all citizens have the same opportunities to choose to act as ecological citizens. Time, knowledge, information, wealth and gender relations can sometimes be barriers to ecological citizenship (MacGregor, 2006a, 2006b; Luque, 2005; Seyfang, 2005).

ECOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP AND THE GREEN STATE

These limitations can be made visible in a deliberative setting. From this point of view, through the implementation of a deliberative democracy, the green state would be both removing obstacles to ecological citizenship and facilitating the internalisation of ecological citizenship motivations for action.

Advocates of deliberative democracy contend that communicative politics are likely to increase the effectiveness, sustainability and legitimacy of decisions. On the one hand, enhanced citizen participation shall lead to more democratic and authentic outcomes; this would generate more legitimate environmental politics and policy (Warren, 2007; Baber and Barlett, 2005; Schlosberg et al, 2006; Smith, 2003; Dryzek, 2000; Fischer, 2000). On the other hand, the normative indeterminacy, epistemological uncertainty and complexity of socio-environmental issues indicate that the sustainable society has to be built upon a dialogue between different points of view. The dividing line between science and politics, and between facts and values, is no longer clear-cut. Participatory science methods, like 'post-normal science', make us rethink the connection between scientific expertise and policy-making in the management of environmental-technological problems (Farrell, 2011a, 2011b).

Deliberative democracy is said to have the ability to democratise the making of environmental information: scientific knowledge can be complemented with other types of knowledge, giving rise to new forms of collaborative expertise, namely community-based research, participatory science, or extended peer review processes (Fischer, 2013, 2000; Farrell, 2011a, 2011b). These methods give authority to people to speak about complex issues that concern them, issues that would have otherwise been considered as specialist matters and thus excluded from public debate. This can help prevent situations where a politically unjust or scientifically dubious view is being advanced. Besides, as Barry argues, 'communicative rationality makes it less likely that the collective result will be ecologically irrational', since democracy conceived as communication 'provides some evidence that individuals can deliver enhanced environmental public goods and avoid or limit environmental public bads' (1999: 230). If we accept this line of argumentation, it seems reasonable to affirm that a deliberative ecological democracy renders the green state more inclusive and accountable, as it facilitates more genuine citizen input and control than the aggregative procedures of the liberal state. And this, arguably, will lead to more effective ecological citizenship.

Notwithstanding, these are contingent claims. An open procedure such as democracy cannot guarantee any given outcome, green or not. The thing is that contingency is common to all normative conceptions of democracy, not just environmental ones, although green political theorists have attempted to establish a non-contingent connection between the two. Yet as Mathew Humphrey contends 'the positing on a necessary relationship between green politics and democracy is mistaken' and implausible (2004: 116). In his view, 'if we accept that there are good reasons to hold green values ... and also good reasons to

be a democrat ... then the search for a non-contingent, watertight and necessary connection between ecology and democracy becomes redundant' (2004: 125). So, according to Humphrey, all that is left for ecologists is to embrace contingency and 'continue to make the case for green values', assuming that green arguments are good arguments and accepting the force of the better argument (2004: 125). If we focus more specifically on deliberative democracy, the conclusion is similar: there is no definitive evidence that debate and participation will produce changes in values, preferences and behaviours or bring about sustainable and risk-averse policies, as noted by many scholars (Bäckstrand et al, 2010; Baber and Barlett, 2005; Smith, 2003; Fischer, 2000). Deliberation has the potential to produce the transformation of non-ecological preferences through debate, but it cannot guarantee *per se* a better quality of social-environmental decisions. In fact, it can also lead to unsustainable and unfair arrangements. Nevertheless a discursive environment provides space for different conceptions of sustainable development to emerge and be compared by citizens. So even if the assumption that deliberative democracy will deliver environmental ends is just this, an assumption, it could still be argued that the openness and inclusiveness of the communication process would be a good platform to develop ecological citizenship.

It is possible to conclude then that in a deliberative green state, ecological citizenship is conceived as the assumption of responsibility for the impact that risk-generating activities have on others. In the course of debate citizens internalise their environmental duties by considering the interests of groups often excluded from political processes and reflecting upon their own beliefs. Hence the privileged space for the making of citizenship is the democratic process, and a connection is made between political participation and environmental sustainability. This view corresponds with the traditional notion of citizenship, where this is mainly exercised in the public sphere and concerned with activities such as reporting, condemning, lobbying, claiming and debating (Phillips, 2005). However, although being constitutive of ecological citizenship's aim to exemplify sustainability and oppose injustice, this understanding does not fully capture the nature of ecological citizenship responsibility and excludes other domains where this can be enacted. Even a prominent scholar of environmental deliberative democracy like Graham Smith acknowledges that 'the cultivation and expression of green citizenship needs to be a broader project than simply institutionalising deliberation within the political process' (2005: 274). Ecological citizenship is undeniably related to democratic politics, but it is also a form of lifestyle politics. It involves personal behaviours, quotidian habits, everyday interactions with nature by means of walking, gardening, consuming, travelling and working, through which citizenship duties are expressed. This dimension, neglected by Eckersley, embraces, but also transcends, democratic deliberation and the political public sphere in the strict sense.

ECOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP AND THE GREEN STATE

The practice of ecological citizenship seeks the reduction of the environmental impact of daily acts. This embodies the aim of living sustainably. And despite the vagueness of this purpose and the many problems it raises, I believe that it certainly would require a significant decrease in levels of production and consumption (beyond techno-fixes)⁵. Yet we should not forget that individual acts are shaped by social organisations. When analysing the lives led by green activists, David Horton highlights that ‘green infrastructures remain insufficiently developed to make the living out of green projects a wider goal. ... The behaviors [activists] are modeling are unattainable to the majority because the structures in which they depend are insufficiently developed’ (2006: 143–144). To me this means that ecological citizenship demands alternative systems of provision of goods that make sustainable forms of living possible and give cohesion to individual ecological citizenship behaviours (Melo-Escrihuela, 2008). Of course this implies debates about how to create and organise different socio-natural relations, so there is a deliberative dimension in these practices too. But beyond participation in democratic arrangements and deliberative politics, what facilitates ecological citizenship activity is the infrastructure that enables individuals to learn about socio-environmental relations and act as ecological citizens.⁶ There is some evidence that the experience of getting involved in the creation of this infrastructure contributes to ecological citizenship learning and not just the other way round (Travaline and Hunold, 2010; Horton, 2006; Seyfang, 2009, 2005; Smith, 2005; Phillips, 2005; Reid and Taylor, 2000). As Sarah Hards writes, ‘often the learning of new values occurs not through explicit teaching, but through interaction [with others engaged in similar practices] and contextual experience’ (2011: 34).

Put differently, the claim that knowledge or values are a precondition for practice or behaviour does not always hold. The values–action connection is bi-directional and complex. In some cases, social learning about environmental issues results from ‘hands-on participation’, that is, from the experience of getting involved in practices like urban agriculture projects (Travaline and Hunold, 2010), seed saving networks (Phillips, 2005), organisations within the social economy (Smith, 2005), or food supply chains and non-market exchange mechanisms such as community currencies (Seyfang, 2009, 2005).⁷

5. My position contrasts, for instance, with that of Rasmus Karlsson (2012), who argues that ecological citizenship does not necessarily require a reduction in consumption rates or any cuts in material welfare, as it aims at a future of universal affluence and natural restoration. For him, ecological citizens should favour new technologies that enable solutions like moving industrial production off the planet in order to reduce our carbon footprint.
6. The two dimensions of ecological citizenship are not exclusive but do complement each other. Debate can focus on alternative human–nature systems. And, at the same time, socioeconomic institutions can be the arenas where citizens learn the skills needed to participate in deliberative processes, as Smith (2005) suggests with particular reference to the organisations of the social economy.
7. I am not claiming that these initiatives always lead to environmental knowledge acquisition and produce those shifts in values associated with ecological citizenship. What I seek to

Engagement in these areas raises awareness of issues concerning citizens' daily lives and contributes to ecological citizenship. Through participation in practices that create alternative realities within which it is possible to live differently, the boundaries of what counts as political action are constantly re-defined (Phillips, 2005) and ecological citizenship transformation takes place, since knowledge, motivation and skills are gained as a result of lived experience (and not just as a result of discussion, as it happens in discursive accounts of ecological citizenship).

As this section should have outlined, a green state that grounds the promotion of ecological citizenship on participation in deliberative democratic processes neglects other important dimensions of ecological citizenship and domains where it can be practiced. This is the first point of my critique of Eckersley's theory of the green state.

THE DISTURBING EFFECTS OF CAPITALISM

So far we have established that the green state has a strong potential to develop ecological citizenship, albeit with a rather narrow focus on its deliberative dimension. However, recalling the ideas about how a green state is to emerge, it is my intention to argue that this potential may not be fully realised. The apparently productive relationship between ecological citizenship, ecological democracy and the green state may be disrupted by the entry of capitalism into the picture. A green state will emerge from a reform of liberal democratic institutions and procedures. Such reform accepts, rather than rejects, what are considered to be the positive achievements of liberalism so that they can be shaped in an ecological direction. Similarly, a green state adopts ecological modernisation, which is based on the idea that economic growth and sustainability can be made compatible, thus being a revised version of capitalism. And this (a postliberal ecological democracy and an ecologically modernised economy) may be an obstacle for the values and objectives of the green state – promising for the promotion of ecological citizenship – to unfold

Capitalism and (post)liberal democracy

In order to further elaborate these claims, let me start with democracy (and then I will concentrate on ecological modernisation). To assist me in this task, John Dryzek's analysis of different deliberative democratic models is insightful (2000, 1994). Dryzek alludes to a constitutionalist trend that seeks to instantiate deliberative processes within liberal democratic institutions. This position manifests itself in at least three different – but compatible – approaches. The

argue here is that they have the potential to facilitate the promotion of ecological citizenship outside the political arena of deliberative processes, in other domains of life.

ECOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP AND THE GREEN STATE

first one consists in using deliberative democracy's guiding principles to justify the existence of individual rights, particularly those rights needed for the exercise of democratic citizenship, and thus required to sustain deliberative democracy itself. A second perspective seeks to use liberal constitutions to create a public space for deliberation. In this view, constitutions should prescribe that one of the new functions and goals for the state is to promote deliberative democracy and establish new rules and mechanisms that consolidate deliberation. Finally, the constitution itself can be made through a deliberative process.

It is now appropriate to reintroduce Eckersley's conception of deliberative ecological democracy to make a few remarks. First, the use of constitutional provisions to secure political communication and implement ecological democracy defines, as we have seen, Eckersley's theory of the green state. The constitution establishes the state's responsibilities, functions and objectives. And one of these objectives is precisely to facilitate ecological democracy. Second, deliberative democracy is used to justify rights of participation and political equality, that is, those rights conceived as a precondition to maintain deliberative democracy itself. In other words, the rights and obligations of ecological citizens are defined in deliberative terms: they are realised within the deliberative process and aim at articulating ecological democracy. So the constitution (also made through a deliberative process) is used to implement deliberative mechanisms and ecological citizenship rights that make a green and deliberative democracy possible. This approach, I suggest, shows a certain similarity to the constitutionalist trend mentioned above.

If we believe Dryzek, then attempts to implement deliberative democracy through constitutional means may result in the assimilation of deliberative democracy by liberalism. In a capitalist economy, the health of liberal democracy relies on economic growth so that social and political inequalities remain hidden. If inequalities become more visible, social instability arises and threatens the very existence of liberal democracy. The fear of this scenario renders liberal democracies 'imprisoned by the market's growth imperative' (Dryzek, 1994: 180). Dryzek introduces a distinction between discursive democracy and deliberative democracy, where deliberative democracy corresponds with liberal constitutionalism – defined above – while discursive democracy questions liberal democracy and the political economy of liberalism. This more oppositional tendency concentrates on spaces other than state institutions where deliberative democracy can be articulated, such as civil society, the public sphere and the workplace. Yet a double focus on civil society and the public sphere are not enough – Dryzek argues – to confront liberalism and to demarcate discursive democracy from liberal constitutionalism. The celebration of civil society and the public sphere is common amongst liberal scholars of deliberative democracy, and both civil society and the public sphere have a liberal reading in the history of political thought (Habermas, 1996, 1989; Calhoun, 1992; Fraser, 1992). In fact, scholars of deliberative constitutionalism believe that one of

the main purposes of the constitution is to establish the necessary means for a public sphere for debate to be maintained.

So if the presence and inclusion of civil society and the public sphere are not enough for deliberative democracy to be critical and to address the shortcomings of liberal democracy, what else is needed? For deliberative democracy not to be undermined by state imperatives, it should be located in oppositional public spheres. According to Dryzek, the public sphere has to remain autonomous, so that there is a sharp distinction between the public sphere and the state. Opinion should move from the public sphere toward the state, but not the other way round. Discourses can and should affect public policy. However, the public sphere where such discourses are generated should be separated from the state, to avoid discourses being assimilated (which is different from discourses having an impact on state policy). As a result, political activity in civil society must seek the ‘democratic exercise of power over the state’, while being vigilant to avoid ‘the inclusion of civil society within the state’ (Dryzek, 2000: 102–103).

Eckersley’s account of ecological democracy is also oppositional and critical of capitalist relations. In fact, one of the features of her notion of democracy is the use of political institutions to control capitalism and make it fairer and sustainable – assuming that this is possible – hence neglecting the idea of the ‘relative autonomy’ of the state (Poulantzas, 1978, 1973).⁸ So the adoption of reflexive ecological modernisation depends on the further ecological democratisation of states. And ecological democratisation, in turn, relies on ecological citizens’ commitment. But, insofar as this democratic model departs from liberal institutions, there is no guarantee that those further steps – reflexive ecological modernisation – that will lead to controlling capitalism will in fact occur. As I will explain, the weakness of this conception is that the emancipatory potential of deliberation may be neutralised before it has a chance to develop.

A dual commitment to reforming the liberal state and strengthening civil society and the public sphere is found in Eckersley’s work. Despite the emphasis on the state and its formal institutions, we see a significant effort on her part to locate deliberative settings and ecological citizenship in the public sphere as well. Indeed, she argues that without ecological citizens maintaining a vibrant public sphere, ecological democracy is not likely to survive, since one of the preconditions of ecological democracy is a new ‘ecological sensibility’ (Eckersley, 2004: 245) produced as a result of a cultural shift. And this cultural shift can only take place in the public sphere. For this reason, if a

8. Nicos Poulantzas’s (1973, 1978) notion of the ‘relative autonomy’ of the state explains that in a capitalist society the state is autonomous from economic institutions, but only relatively autonomous because state policy legitimates and seeks to secure the capitalist society by reproducing the conditions for private capital accumulation.

ECOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP AND THE GREEN STATE

deliberative ecological state is to emerge, the constitution, although necessary, is not enough.

However, in Eckersley's theory, it is the state and the constitution that are entrusted with the promotion of ecological democracy, citizenship and the public sphere through mechanisms that seek to secure the availability of information about risk-generating activities, citizens' participation in deliberations and access to environmental justice. In this account, the public sphere where deliberative democracy and the learning of ecological citizenship take place is part of the state and it is encouraged by the state itself. Yet this means that it lacks the sort of autonomy needed to retain its critical force: if the public sphere is included within the state, it is likely to be eroded and lose its vitality and oppositional nature. Such a view of the public sphere may result in the liberal state co-opting ecological democracy. Insofar as ecological democracy is placed within a theory of the state and institutionalised by constitutional means, is at risk of being assimilated by the liberal state, and thus will not lead to the kinds of transformations needed to originate a green state.

In light of Dryzek's typology of different state-civil society relations (Dryzek, 2000; Dryzek et al., 2003), a civil society with a myriad of contested discourses will be more likely to be maintained when interacting with an 'exclusive' state, since an 'inclusive' state can absorb and erode diversity. A deliberative green state is inclusive, open and receptive to civil society and ecological citizenship deliberations, to the extent that the state acts as a facilitator of such deliberations, making information available, implementing the mechanisms for citizen participation and acting as a coordinator of deliberation that takes place in both spaces – state and civil society.⁹ A green state that incorporates civil society into its own political and constitutional structures would absorb civil society, not in the same way as authoritarian states do, but in a way that may compromise its confrontational powers and ability to change the present order.

II. Capitalism and ecological modernisation

In brief, the green state's potential to facilitate ecological citizenship is compromised because ecological democracy will be undermined by state imperatives, particularly by the accumulation imperative. The neo-Marxist analyses of Jürgen Habermas (1976) and Claus Offe (1975, 1984) highlight that in advanced capitalist societies the state has to create and maintain the conditions appropriate for capital accumulation, since the power and capabilities of

9. In an ideal deliberative eco-state, national parliaments and states agents are responsible for the application and functioning of the instruments of transboundary ecological democracy. So the state remains the first and primary unit of government, although democracy is transnationalised and the principle of the affected is applied using deliberative mechanisms (Eckersley, 2004: 195).

the state depend upon the continuity of the process of private capital accumulation. This is due, mainly, to states' need of tax revenues. Ignoring this dependency upon accumulation would compromise state's capacities. But the state cannot organise the economic system as it wishes, because the state's decision-making competences are subject to the survival of the process of accumulation. Therefore, maintaining the conditions for accumulation becomes a state imperative.

This leads us to the final aspect of my critique of the green state: ecological modernisation. Eckersley would reply to the sorts of arguments illustrated above by stressing that strong ecological modernisation allows the green state to avoid the contradictions of capitalism. This view is generally shared by theorists of the ecological state, for instance, Christoff (2005) and Meadowcroft (2005b), who would see the kind of objections outlined in Dryzek's analysis of state-economy relations – summarised above – as rather anachronistic or outdated. But can strong ecological modernisation help overcome these criticisms? Is ecological modernisation truly a way out of the contradictions of capitalism?

First, it should be noted that a green state committed to strong ecological modernisation does not avoid criticisms levied at weak ecological modernisation's stress on production and techno-fixes. As Stewart Davidson (2012) explains, the difference between weak and strong ecological modernisation has been overemphasised. Although not primarily focused on the implementation of green technologies (like weak accounts), Davidson argues that strong forms of ecological modernisation, such as that advocated by Eckersley, still depend on technological innovation. However, if the green state is to act as an agent for environmental change, it must be freed from the imperative of maintaining accumulation. This would require a radical reorganisation of the economy in a way proponents of ecological modernisation are not willing to accept. Instead, ecological modernisation theory reinforces those institutions responsible for environmental degradation. Davidson suggests that some improvements seen as illustrations of the decoupling theory are in fact the result of displacing polluting practices to developing countries and not of an overall decrease of environmentally damaging technologies. I am sympathetic to Davidson's view that a green state informed by reflexive or strong ecological modernisation does not guarantee a shift towards a more ecological capitalism.

If neo-Marxist state theory is correct, any organisation declaring itself an agent for sustainability should acknowledge that environmental goals are in contradiction with capitalism's requirement of economic growth. Yet it is not clear enough whether this is the case of Eckersley's green state. Her view of the relationship between the green state and capitalism is rather obscure. On the one hand, she regards capitalism as one of the main obstacles to a green state. Indeed, she suggests that 'any deeper greening of states ... presupposes the alleviation of the systemic pressures arising from the development of

ECOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP AND THE GREEN STATE

global capitalism' (2004: 51). On the other hand, she concedes that ecological modernisation is a way to reconcile capitalism and the economic growth imperative with environmental protection. In fact, we are told that ecological modernisation is a strategy for the competition state to adapt itself to demands of greater competitiveness by global markets and neoliberalism (Eckersley, 2004: 69). Thus, if ecological modernisation does not replace capitalism but offers a way to accommodate the sustainable development discourse within a capitalist system, it can be argued that the green state is still a capitalist state, despite Eckersley's assertion that 'a deep and lasting resolution to ecological problems can ... only be anticipated in a postcapitalist economy' (2004: 81). This is what Eckersley herself seems to be accepting when she holds that a green democratic state would still rely on 'private capital accumulation to fund, via taxation, its programs and in this sense would still be a capitalist state' (2004: 83). The truth is, to put it with Davidson, that despite claims made by proponents of the 'ecologically modernizing state', 'the accumulation imperative remains insuperable from an ecological point of view' (2012: 48).

There is another important point to consider: since the green state relies on technological innovation and the production of clean technologies that enable environmentally friendly consumer choices, it may be promoting a green form of consumerism rather than ecological citizenship based on practices that question consumer rates. As Davidson (2012) stresses, the ecological modernisation agenda does not include the issue of downsizing or limiting consumption. Consequently, in the context of ecological modernisation, the socioeconomic dimension of ecological citizenship may be reduced to following the right market signals and making the right choices in the marketplace, that is, to a form of ecological consumerism that reinforces the status quo. In my view, the duties of ecological citizens imply reducing consumption, rejecting consumerism and prioritising the common good over private self-interest. And these attitudes, I believe, stand in opposition to capitalism and the mass consumption society. As Graham Smith notes, the profit-oriented rationale of a capitalist economy 'overrides environmental considerations' and thus is in conflict with ecological citizenship (2005: 274).

The argument I wish to advance is that a green state characterised by the implementation of an ecological democracy and ecological modernisation cannot counterbalance the pitfalls of liberal democracy and capitalism and, thus, it is not the most appropriate locus for the cultivation of ecological citizenship. This suggests that we should focus on other spaces such as the community, the workplace and transnational civil society where anti-capitalistic strategies may be pursued and where the seed for the cultivation of ecological democracy and citizenship may better flourish. In this sense Dryzek's ideas may be useful once more (although he is more welcoming of the state and of discursive notions of citizenship and politics than the position I seek to defend here).

In contrast to Eckersley's approach, Dryzek believes that coordination of political transformation could be entrusted to spontaneous networks in civil society. This spontaneous system is similar to the way international organisations and movements operate. Nevertheless, even though civil society should be self-governing, this does not mean that it can be completely separate from the state. State activities and regulations penetrate civil society and shape cultural, social and economic relations – just as civil society activities sometimes target the state and influence its policy. Yet civil society can be the source of legitimate and binding decisions, even if these do not emanate from state bodies. These decisions can be implemented and put into practice without being further institutionalised by the state. This is a form of 'paragovernmental activity' (Dryzek, 2000: 102), which goes beyond seeking to affect state policy and leads to what Iris Young (2000) defines as 'intra-society change' because it transforms social organisation directly.

CONCLUSION

The prospects for ecological citizenship transformation within the structures of a green state are encouraging. In a deliberative green state, ecological citizenship is a constitutional mandate and is to be enacted in the context of an ecological democracy. Citizens' environmental responsibility is expressed through democratic participation. The idea of a framework for ecological citizenship activity that gives coherence to isolated ecological citizenship acts (much needed if we want to avoid having ecological citizenship become a moralistic and depoliticised road to sustainability, as I argue elsewhere [Melo-Escrihuela, 2008]) is present here: the whole machinery of the state is put to the service of environmental and social justice.

A deliberative ecological democracy implemented by a green state is likely to offer more possibilities for the promotion of ecological citizenship than an aggregative liberal democracy, since a deliberative framework acknowledges the process of formation and transformation of citizens' values, preferences and motivations to act, as well as the structures that constrain citizens' choices. Moreover, the ecological dimension of this view of deliberative democracy, which renders possible the inclusion of traditionally excluded groups, is central to the promotion of ecological citizenship. Ecological citizens acknowledge how their decisions and acts impact on others and on the environment. Hence a state whose political system is an ecological democracy inclusive of groups ruled out of conventional policy processes will be using its institutions to facilitate ecological citizenship.

Yet two main issues are indicative of the problems that the promotion of ecological citizenship in the context of a deliberative green state will have to overcome. The first one relates to the means used to expand ecological

ECOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP AND THE GREEN STATE

citizenship: ecological democracy. The central implication is that ecological citizenship is encouraged through political communication. This approach is vulnerable to all the criticisms raised against deliberative democracy in general (above all, that the transformation of citizens' values and preferences may not be realised due to issues of power, asymmetries in participation, citizens' resources, time and skills) and against eco-deliberative democracy in particular (namely, that more participation may not lead to increased sustainable outcomes, that citizens may not get to see the benefits of pro-environmental action and that ecological citizenship motivations might not be internalised). In addition, rationality and discourse are stressed over other means for learning ecological citizenship, especially those that involve learning through quotidian experiences – like gardening or walking – or through participation in alternative systems of provisions where decreased consumption and other related conditions of sustainable living can be met.

The second limitation that I hope to have thematised arises from the privileged position of the state as the main agent for ecological democracy. The fact that the new principles that constitute ecological democracy are embodied in state structures suggests that they may be co-opted by the liberal state. As Dryzek puts it, 'liberalism is the most effective vacuum cleaner in the history of political thought, capable of sucking up all the doctrines that appear to challenge it, be they critical theory, environmentalism, feminism, or socialism' (2000: 27). What makes the deliberative green state potentially different from the liberal state – and a better candidate to promote ecological citizenship – are its values, new functions and aims. But the changes necessary to start creating a green state originate in the public sphere. If deliberations are neutralised by the constitutional system of the liberal state – caught up by the accumulation imperative – those transformations will not take place. This may frustrate the oppositional element needed for starting the chain of reforms that would result in a deliberative green state. As a result the potential for the promotion of ecological citizenship may remain dormant. This is what happens in the case of inclusive states that facilitate deliberation in the public sphere and the incorporation of public opinion into policy (Dryzek et al., 2003), where there is less democratic vitality and more social homogenisation.

Davidson (2012) rightly notes that both theories of strong ecological modernisation and the green state assume that the legitimisation imperative will counterbalance the accumulation imperative. In Eckersley's account, this means that ecological modernisation depends on the ecological democratisation of societies, as I mentioned earlier. However, this paper has argued that Eckersley's notion of the green state does not avoid the problems arising from the relationship between liberal democracy and capitalism. Since the articulation of an eco-state constitutes a process that originates within liberal democratic institutions and within capitalistic relations, the possibilities for ecological democracy will be inhibited before this is implemented and before

the mechanisms for reflexive ecological modernisation are put in place. If the state depends on wealth generated by private capital accumulation, its capacity to pass legislation that does not guarantee the continuity of the process of accumulation is undermined. And, by the same token, its ability to enact an ecological democracy (which would provide the free communicative context where the socio-environmental impact of capitalism and neoliberal creeds can be exposed) is compromised. This does not only render difficult the task of creating a green state guided by ecological values, but constitutes an obstacle to ecological citizenship.

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