National and International Environmental Law and Justice

The Unresolved Issues

3. Ecological Democracy-Environmental Democracy

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Ecological Democracy

When compared with environmental democracy, ecological democracy tends to set more demanding normative standards, both in terms of environmental protection, '*which should be adequate for human, non-human, and future generations well-being*,' as well as democratic inclusion. However, the two concepts do not define any clear-cut distinction, each representing an ideal type, with room for intermediate or hybrid alternatives, or combination of the two for effectiveness. A number of discussions on ecological democracy give greater prominence to the state (Eckersley, 2004), while others emphasise the transformative potential of civil society and discourse (Dryzek, 2000), even though both maintain an ecocentric perspective. Earlier, the views of Morrison (1995) and Faber (1998) on ecological democracy, however, envisage the transformation of industrial capitalism from an anthropocentric perspective to an ecocentric one. What is interesting to note is a statement from Guatari (2000):

> Ecology must stop being associated with the image of a small nature-loving minority. Ecology in my sense questions the whole of subjectivity and capitalistic power formations.

In simpler terms, ecology is what makes the planet's life systems tick, ensuring planetary systems balance. In his discourse on ecological democracy, Dryzek (2013) argues that ecological democracy is '*democracy without boundaries*', meaning that:

> Ecological democracy requires looking beyond jurisdictional boundaries, as well as beyond the conceptual boundaries traditionally drawn between humans and non-humans.

While Ecological and Environmental democracy may on the surface mean one and the same thing, the subtle differences between the two separate them as to their specific objectives and significance in the policies and politics of international environmental law and justice and environmental management. Pickering et al. (2020) define the concept of ecological democracy as:

> The concept of ecological democracy (or green, environmental democracy) revolves around how to make a commitment to environmental protection compatible with democracy.

While CIEL (2015) defines environmental democracy as:

> Environmental democracy is based on the idea that land and natural resource decisions adequately and equitably address citizens' interests. Rather than setting a standard for what determines a good outcome, environmental democracy sets a standard for how decisions should be made.

It is however important to bear in mind the differentiation between the natural and the man-made environments. Ecological/Environmental democracy is purely concerned about the natural environment, the environment '*not of human hands*.'

Definitions of ecological democracy have been many, and Mitchell (2006).defines ecological democracy as an alternative democratic model that:

1. Strives to incorporate interested citizens into environmental decision-making, and,
2. But lacks structural features that systematically concentrate environmental amenities into the hands of particular social groups,

Any discussion on ecological democracy should initially assume that the '*entire biotic community*' should necessarily include humans also, contends Dryzek (1992). The concept of ecological democracy became established some 2 decades ago, and has been initially discussed by Dryzek, (1992), and later by Ungaro, (2005). Even if there have been some variations on the same theme, the concept has been slowly evolving into a liberal notion that presupposes a link between democratic systems and ecology, and has now been included to various extents into the strategies, or rather newer concepts of Sustainable Development, or Green Capitalism, or Green Consumerism. However, rather than being presently part of policies, ecological democracy remains based on grass-roots participation by citizens both individually and collectively. Within the limits of such perception, Dryzek (2000) observes that:

> The essence of democracy itself is now widely taken to be deliberation, as opposed to voting, interest aggregation, constitutional rights, or even self government.

The relationship between democracy and ecosystems has been discussed variously over the years and around the world, including theories of ecological, environmental and green democracy. Goodin (1992) recognises the important issue that arises in reconciling two ideals in conflict: ensuring environmental sustainability while safeguarding democratic values and practices. If citizens were to accord a low priority to ecological values, then efforts to strengthen environmental protection and sustainability through democratic processes are likely to fail. Conversely, claims Goodwin, securing environmental values through authoritarian rule to ensure sustainability has been said to come at a high democratic price, and probably high economic and environmental costs too. More recently, and based on the arguments of Goodwin (1992), Bang and Marsh (2018) and Gills and Morgan (2019) have analysed, discussed and elaborated upon existing tensions that persist between democracy and sustainability, mainly reinforced by two contemporary political features:

1. The rise of populism and nationalism in numerous countries amid declining public trust in democratic institutions and international organisations; and
2. The realisation that the world has entered a state of ecological and climate emergency warranting a rapid and sweeping response.

Taking the discussions and propositions further, Eckersley (2004) brings into his concept of the '*green theory*' the principle of all '*affectedness*' in order to determine and accept or recognise the parties involved. As Eckersley puts it, the extension of the idea of a '*democracy of the affected*' to the non-human, that is the affected, is what makes this conception of democracy '*both new and ecological*,' stating that:

> All those potentially put at risk by a proposed policy or law, regardless of their class, location, nationality, generation or species, must be given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. And those who cannot speak for themselves, such as future generations or non-humans, must be granted representatives to defend their interests.

These notions have led to a resurgence in environmental activism, particularly among young people, attempting to offer renewed hope that democratic practices can coexist with progress towards ecological/environmental sustainability. It is accepted today that democratic values, such as representation, inclusion, participation, accountability, and transparency are central

elements in the proposed concept of Earth System Governance, which, however, is still embryonic.

However, Bäckstrand et al. (2006) propose that the concept of ecological democracy should be examined as one revolving around on how to make a commitment to environmental protection compatible with democracy and democratic processes, while Ungaro (2005) appears to be more concerned about the last quarter of the twentieth century, which, according to him has witnessed world-wide schizophrenia in '*development*' policies; in other words, the priority of economic development over environment, and the continued unsustainable extraction of resources. According to Ungaro, global players like the US and European Union and '*arms of their economic hegemonies'* such as the World Bank and the IMF have forced governments, especially in the South, to adopt policies that have resulted in a serious all round crisis, including an ecological crisis. On the other hand, there has been a multitude of UN Conferences on various dimensions of the ecological crisis, but with little affirmative action. What Ungaro probably left out is the ever-growing power of corporations and multinationals, their influence over the World Bank, the IMF and sovereign states of the South, and their eternal strategies in commodifying natural systems.

In support of consideration for the '*entire biotic community*' and as a result of increasing concern about humanity's impact on the non-human entities of ecosystems and the environment in general, Jamieson (2003) proposes a new direction in that, apart from laws, regulations and international agreements based purely on policies, politics and judicial frameworks, the contribution of environmental ethics should be considered in discussing changes in the political efforts to reduce such impacts to ameliorate non-human environmental problems. Environmental ethics should guide humanity's moral obligations towards the natural environment and towards the other inhabitants of the same environment, and such obligations have been discussed by Jamieson (2003) and Varner (2012). However, such calls for a change in human behaviour and outlook appear not to have gathered momentum, and disrespect for ecological systems prevails to this day.

Moving away from ethics and morality, the discussions of Blühdorn (2013) is more concerned about the greater emphasis that modern societies place on individual freedom in terms of '*more democracy*,' which the author contends should be understood in terms of '*greater responsiveness to citizens demands,*' and '*may well imply even less sustainability.*' Yet, what is still a contended issue is sustainability itself, argues Blühdorn, and as such, the question remains whether every change in policies and practices should be principally anchored on sustainability, a concept that is still little understood, probably too much manipulated, and with more concentration on economic development and growth.

According to Peters (2017), the concept and practices of ecological/environmental democracy have developed as part of a broader theoretical re-examination and conceptual development of '*participatory*,' '*strong,*' '*discursive*,' '*inclusive,*' '*deliberative*' and '*radical*' democracy towards greening the economy, and such philosophies or idealisms appear to be stalling presently. The process of '*greening'* the concept of citizenship is to embed new rights and duties related to the environment and correlate to the ideas of Earth Democracy proposed by Parola (2013) and Hrynkow (2017), or Planetary Citizenship discussed by Thompson (2001), or perhaps even the contentious issue of environmental rights too. Hrynkow (2017) suggests that Earth Democracy should achieve a new identity where humans feel part of a larger community within earth systems, and the protection and promotion of the interests of the Earth should be both meaningful and profitable for them On the other hand, Hester (2010)

earlier argues that it is only by combining the powerful forces of ecology and democracy that the needed changes in established systems will take place. Hester remarks:

> Democracy bestows freedom; ecology creates responsible freedom by explaining our interconnectedness with all creatures.

In his thesis on '*Education for ecological democracy*' Peters (2017) further observes that education has the possibility of bringing together two powerful concepts: the influence of international movements on ecology and ecosystems, and those of local democratic processes; these may bring about the transformation of grass-roots civil society. However, the author questions whether the difficult problem that revolves around democratic institutions based on deliberative forms of governance have the power to set new environmental norms, to curb the destructive activities of corporations, transnationals, and multinationals, or to institute change quickly enough in order to avert environmental collapse. Peters laments several previous efforts that have discussed ecological forms of democracy only in vague terms. And given the prospects of any future change in mindsets and practices, Hollie Gilman (2017) analyzes and discusses the intricacies of participatory democracy, observing that the possibility has been a recent subject of intensive discussions, but what is happening in several countries today is quite the opposite.

Under the circumstances, one wonders whether democracy is able to deliver ecological outcomes, or whether the power to transform industrial and capitalist activities, or even consumers demands for more and more, can ever be achieved in the stand-off between the demands of ecological democracy, rights, or even justice, and the opposing power of oil, gas, overconsumption, and other activities of the exploitative model of capitalism and consumerism.

In an earlier discussion and in asking the question '*Is capitalism compatible with democracy*?' Merkel (2014) reaches the obvious conclusion that:

> Capitalism and democracy follow different logics: unequally distributed property rights on the one hand; equal civic and political rights on the other; profit-oriented trade within capitalism in contrast to the search for the common good within democracy; debate, compromise and majority decision-making within democratic politics versus hierarchical decision-making by managers and capital owners. Capitalism is not democratic, democracy is not capitalist.

The fact is that modern representative democracy (by the ballot) was never designed to handle ecological challenges, and many are those now seeking the establishment of new global institutions that carries the responsibility for intergenerational ecological or environmental problems based on evidence-based sustainability science, deep ecology, ethics, morality and equality of species. Hanusch (2018) argues that some recent critiques take too much of an indistinct approach to ecological democracy, while Fischer (2017) reflects that:

> Given the tight time frames and urgency necessary to avert climate crisis, the prospects for ecological democracy are greater at local levels where democratic transformation can be more readily achieved.

However, Lepori (2019) is of the opinion that supporters of ecological democracy have been relying too much upon the deliberative democracy framework for their understanding of what democracy is and what an ecological democracy should be. According to Eckersley (2020), what he terms the '*environmental political theory* (EPT)' of ecological democracy emerged in the 1990s, a time when liberal democracy and cosmopolitanism appeared to be on the rise.

And in an earlier statement, and as far back as 2004, Eckersley (2004) appears to have believed in the same philosophy:

> A key proponent of ecological democracy, notes the crucial importance of ensuring that the interests of non-humans and future generations are represented in decision-making.

In their discussions, Pickering et al. (2020) explain how theories of ecological democracy are more critical of existing liberal democratic institutions addressing democratic processes, while theories of environmental democracy call for reforming rather than radically transforming or dismantling those institutions. Basically, ecological and environmental democracy both seek to reconcile two normative ideals: '*ensuring environmental sustainability while safeguarding democracy*,' observe Pickering et al. In an earlier discussion, Goodin (1992) contends that both those ideals are frequently in conflict, and questions the possibility of reconciling two widely held normative ideals, that is '*ensuring environmental sustainability while safeguarding democratic values and practices*.' Thus, if a low priority were to be accorded to ecological values, then efforts to strengthen environmental protection and sustainability through democratic processes may not meet the intended goals.

Despite their differences, theories of ecological and environmental democracy are united by a shared interest in whether democratic processes can be compatible with strong environmental outcomes, as argued by Eckersley (2020). They also share an interest in what types of arrangements for participation, representation and deliberation are necessary to secure democratic legitimacy in ecological/environmental decision-making, as reflected in the statement of Peters (2017):

> We have every reason to think that whatever changes may take place in existing democratic machinery, they will be of a sort to make the interest of the public a more supreme guide and criterion of governmental activity, and to enable the public to form and manifest its purposes still more authoritatively. In this sense the cure for the ailments of democracy is more democracy.

Eckersley (2020) further observes that a new wave of ecological democracy has emerged, shifting normative horizons, focus and method even beyond being purely a human concern, asserting that:

> Public spirited political deliberation is the process by which we learn of our dependence on others (and the environment) and the process by which we learn to recognise and respect differently situated others (including nonhuman others and future generations).

Baber and Bartlett (2005; 2020) recognise that since the mid-twentieth century the world of democratic politics and governance has been transformed by a rights revolution in which recognized rights have come to constitute a '*global normative order*.' There are several policy voids in which persuasive environmental rights discourses have been emerging from existing or foreseeable popular environmental norms, including;

1. Rights involving access to information and decision-making processes;
2. Rights ensuring access to food and water, and
3. Rights providing environmental security to all.

Often, rights are considered purely anthropocentric, but democratising environmental politics could also involve the extension of rights to non-humans, moving into a purely ecocentric era. Tentative progress has been achieved in the granting of rights of personhood to some non-human entities, as rivers or ecosystems in New Zealand, India and elsewhere, discussed by Winter (2019), or to Mother Earth in Ecuador's Constitution, discussed by Espinosa

(2019), and broadly discussed and summarised in a paper by Venkatasamy (2022). But what is baffling is that non-living entities such as corporations have been given personhood.

The search for alternative or additional strategies to ensure, or even practice ecological democracy has never stopped. Some proponents of ecological/environmental democracy recognise the urgency to formulate new concepts to ensure human well-being that are equitable and ecologically sustainable The world is facing new challenges with the multiple crises of ecological unsustainability, poverty, food and water insecurity, pollution, global warming, weather uncertainties, appearance of new diseases, and economic collapse. A large number of such alternatives are already being practiced in many countries. Some of the more common concepts include:

- Deliberative Democracy,
- Radical Ecological Democracy (RED),
- Ecosocialism, and
- Inclusive Ecological Democracy.

These different concepts and approaches need to be analysed and discussed separately to build up the complete picture of what ecological democracy is about, or should be about, and in which direction it is moving, or should be moving.

Deliberative Democracy, one of such alternative concepts, has been described by Baber and Bartlett (2005), as:

> Deliberative democracy, which presumes that the essence of democracy is deliberation, thoughtful and discursive public participation in decision making-rather than voting, interest aggregation, or rights, has the potential to produce more environmentally sound policy decisions and a more ecologically rational form of environmental governance.

Cohen (1997) and Bohman (1998) are in agreement that decisions resulting from deliberation are likely to be more legitimate, more reasonable, more informed, more effective, and politically more viable. However, Warren (2007) observes that deliberative approaches remain underdeveloped in at least two other areas that affect the relationship between deliberation and institutional design:

1. The social psychology of deliberation under conditions of conflict, and
2. Institutional structuring of incentives to deliberate.

According to Breiner (1989) and Alexander (2000), democratic theories may be purely ethical in structure, stressing on the goods of civic virtues or communal solidarity, viewing specific institutions as means to these ethical goals. In contrast, deliberative theories of democracy are defined neither by commitments to any particular institutional device nor by ethical commitments to civic virtues or community. Rather, they seek to advance a particular medium of political conflict resolution and organization, that is, '*communicative influence on solutions*', explains Alexander (2000).

Discussing the benefits of deliberative democracy in environmental management, Smith (2003) argues that the enhancement and institutionalisation of democratic deliberation will improve consideration on the wide range of environmental values that citizens hold, reflecting on the plurality of environmental values leading to a better understanding of the relationship between democratic and green political theories proposed so far.

In conclusion to his analysis and discussions, Smith states that:

> Thus, environmental law acts as a legitimate constraint on the outcomes of democratic policy making. But given the right to participation, the content of environmental policy, standards and law itself becomes legitimate subject of democratic deliberation.

However, in his discourse about deliberative democracy, Warren (2007) takes a more positive view and explains how deliberative dimensions of democracy have been remarkably productive over the last decade, explaining how deliberation functions within political arenas. Chambers (2003; Gastil and Levine, (2005) and Parkinson (2006) further demonstrate how normative theories of deliberative democracy have justified and sometimes inspired a wide range of new institutional developments, from citizen juries, stakeholder meetings, deliberative polling, and deliberative forums, to the Freedom of Information legislation that enhances public deliberation. In other words, participatory ecological/environmental democracy may yield results where authoritative systems have failed, and still failing. However, not all scholars have condemned authoritative processes as being unfair to democratic processes.

Much earlier Goodin (1992), in examining a probable and possible situation of conflict in the concept and processes of deliberative democracy, remarks that:

> To advocate democracy is to advocate procedure, to advocate environmentalism is to advocate substantive outcomes: what guarantee can we have that the former procedures will yield the latter outcome?

And Goodwin (1992) continues:

> There is no guarantee that democracies will necessarily bring about ecological and sustainable ends, and more authoritative processes of attaining those ends could undermine democratic ideals and legitimacy.

Discussing the growing focus on global environmental changes, and the complexities brought about by the Anthropocene, Dryzek and Stevenson (2011) propose that such situations necessitate the exploration of other possible models of institutional arrangements for achieving sustained ecological forms of governance on a global scale. Earlier work on deliberative systems for achieving that goal (Dryzek, 1992) points out that democratising Earth Systems Governance should comprise part of such institutional arrangements, drawing on situations according to their features of deliberativeness, inclusiveness and consequentiality. In a later analysis, Stevenson and Dryzek (2013) also explore the democratisation of climate governance via the '*mechanisms of contestation of discourses in a polycentric global context*.' It stands to reason that global problems should necessitate global solutions rather than piecemeal attempts, as is commonly the case right now.

While there are different versions of deliberative systems, reviewed by Owen and Smith, (2015), and through their studies and deliberations Mansbridge et al. (2012) find that there is a tendency to share the view that deliberative capacity is a feature of the system as a whole, rather than embodied in particular individuals, institutions or processes. Such observations stress on the necessity for systems change.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development-OECD (2020) has also had an input in support of deliberative democracy. The OECD focuses on exploring innovative ways to effectively engage with stakeholders to source ideas, co-create solutions, and examines new research in the area of innovative citizen participation practices to analyse the new forms of deliberative, collaborative, and participatory decision making that are evolving

across the globe. The OECD concludes that combining the principles of deliberation, representativeness and impact is not new as these principles have been used in other situations, stating that:

> The increasing complexity of policy making and the failure to find solutions to some of the most pressing policy problems have prompted politicians, policy makers, civil society organisations, and citizens to reflect on how collective public decisions should be taken in the twenty-first century.

Radical Ecological Democracy (RED) has been proposed by Kothari (2014) and Coles (2016) as yet another concept, probably as an extension to the many organisations claiming a change in politics towards a form of democracy that is more radical. Dahlberg and Siapera (2007) define radical democracy as a type of democracy that signals an ongoing concern with the radical extension of equality and liberty, implying that: '*democracy is an un-finished, inclusive, continuous and reflexive process*.'

It is claimed that Radical Ecological Democracy, standing principally for degrowth policies and grassroots participation has been used to demonstrate how to solve problems for existing democratic structures (Kothari, 2014; Mitchell, 2006). According to Kothari (2014), RED contributes to:

> The search for sustainable and equitable alternatives to the dominant economic development model that pursues the goals of direct democracy, local and bioregional economies, cultural diversity, human well-being, and ecological resilience at the core of its vision.

Political and social radicalism have been around for centuries, while environmental radicalism, a grassroots branch of the larger environmental movement, emerged from an eco-centrism-based frustration with the co-option of mainstream environmentalism. The radical environmental movement, according to Manes (1990), aspires to a new kind of environmental activism: iconoclastic, uncompromising, and discontented with traditional conservation policies. And from there emerged the concept of Radical Ecological Democracy, discussed by Kothari (2014).

Interest in democratising global environmental politics has attained a new height given the urgency of resolving the problems of the Anthropocene, a new geological epoch characterised by unprecedented and persistent human impact on the Earth's life-support systems, and extensively discussed by Dryzek (1987) and Steffen et al. (2011). Dryzek and Pickering (2019) remark that the principal claim made in democratic theories of the Anthropocene is that institutions that developed in the late stages of the preceding epoch (the Holocene) lack a capacity to respond effectively to signs of ecological degradation, meaning that democracy needs to be re-imagined or re-invented with a capacity to deliver effective and fast responses to the present, and future planetary crises.

Adding a new dimension to radicalism, in her discourse on the many facets of radical ecology, Merchant (2005) states that:

> In a world replete with ideological struggles often leading to armed conflicts, we are reminded that not all radical thinkers wish to attain their goals by violent means. These are the men and women from all walks of life who have taken a stand against the oppression of nature and by extension, fellow human beings, who, by virtue of their socioeconomic status, gender, and ethnicity have become increasingly marginalized by the actions of those in power.

What Merchant actually aims at pointing out is that systems rather than individual problems should be targeted, concluding her discussions by stating:

> Radical Ecology provides an excellent overview of ideas and practices aimed at finding solutions to very pressing issues facing the world today.

The work of Merchant (2005) supports the contention that embracing both deep ecology and social ecology, radical ecology seeks to champion a sustainable and socially just world through the transformation of the conditioning factors which exist within individual consciousness, and which are inscribed in social-economic, political-judicial and technological systems in a way that highly determines citizens lives. In contrast, and as elaborated upon by Capra (2013), deep ecology offers a fundamentally different sensibility; it does not separate humans from the natural environment. It needs to be remembered that the separation of humans from nature is '*of humans*' not '*of nature*.'

Expanding on their propositions, Kothari (2014) and Coles (2016) claim RED is an evolving framework of governance in which each person and community has access to decision-making forums of relevance to them, and in which the decisions taken are infused with ecological and cultural sensitivity, and socio-economic equity (ecological self-rule). The Peoples' Sustainability Treaty on RED, bold and all-encompassing, considers and includes the following tenets:

1. Ecological integrity and limits.
2. Equity and justice.
3. Right to meaningful participation.
4. Responsibility.
5. Diversity.
6. Collective commons and solidarity.
7. Rights of nature.
8. Resilience and adaptability.
9. Subsidiarity and ecoregionalism.
10. Interconnectedness.

Whether RED is yet another academic exercise is yet to be assessed, but its objectives certainly leave ample room for a most heated debate. Following a more sober route, Pickering et al. (2020) recognise that the persistence of obstacles to the achievement of radical ecological democracy points to the necessity for a combination of elements from several ideals to identify pathways out of present and persisting unsustainable conditions. On the other hand, Eckersley (2021) recognises that the possibility of some form of co-existent or synergistic relationship that would result in fostering environmental and ecological democracy simultaneously in different domains may help to compensate for limitations.

Ecosocialism is yet another concept discussed by Kovel (2011), and is based on an economy founded on the non-monetary values of social justice and ecological balance. While opposing capitalist market ecology and productivist socialism, both ignoring the earth's equilibrium and limits, it redefines the path and goal of socialism within an ecological and democratic framework, best expressed by Kovel as:

> Ecosocialism involves a revolutionary social transformation, which will imply the limitation of growth and the transformation of needs by a profound shift away from quantitative and toward qualitative economic criteria, an emphasis on use-value instead of exchange-value.

Discussing the relationship between capitalism and ecosystems, Kovel (2011) proposes yet further definitions for ecosocialism in relation to capitalism:

> Capitalism may be defined as generalized commodity production; just so is ecosocialism definable as generalizable ecosystem production-this being, however, ecosystems of a definite kind conducive to the flourishing of life.

Kovel and supporters have taken their concept of ecosocialism further and in their publication '*The Belem Ecosocialist Declaration*' Kovel and Löwry 2009), states:

> The world is suffering from a fever due to climate change, and the disease is the capitalist development model.

Attending The Socialist Resistance Movement in 2009, and commenting on '*The Belem Ecosocialist Declaration,*' (2008), and in his earlier address at the UN (2007) Evo Morales, president of Bolivia, summarises his views by declaring that:

> Capitalism, socially and ecologically exploitative and polluting, is the enemy of nature and of labour alike.

In '*The Belem Ecosocialist Declaration*' The Socialist Resistance Movement (2009), proposes radical transformations regarding:

1. The energy system: by replacing carbon-based fuels and biofuels with clean sources of power under community control: wind, geothermal, wave, and above all, solar power.
2. The transportation system: by drastically reducing the use of private trucks and cars, replacing them with free and efficient public transportation.
3. Present patterns of production, consumption, and building: which are based on waste, inbuilt obsolescence, competition and pollution, by producing only sustainable and recyclable goods and developing a green architecture.
4. Food production and distribution: by defending local food sovereignty as far as this is possible, eliminating polluting industrial agribusinesses, creating sustainable agro-ecosystems and working actively to renew soil fertility.

Some further elementary but essential immediate changes proposed by The Socialist Resistance Movement in '*The Belem Ecosocialist Declaration*' (2009) include:

- Drastic and enforceable reduction in the emission of greenhouse gases.
- Development of clean energy sources.
- Provision of an extensive free public transportation system.
- Progressive replacement of trucks by trains.
- Creation of pollution clean-up programs.
- Elimination of nuclear energy, and war spending.

Finding that '*beyond a cosmetic veneer*,' whatever reforms that may have been promised over the past thirty-five years have been '*a monstrous failure*,' Michael Löwy (2018) of the Ecosocialist Movement further declares that:

> Infinite economic expansion is incompatible with finite and fragile ecosystems, but the capitalist economic system cannot tolerate limits on growth; its constant need to expand will subvert any limits that might be imposed in the name of '*sustainable development*.'

In 2018 the movement further declared that:

> Ecological devastation, resulting from the insatiable need to increase profits, is not an accidental feature of capitalism: it is built into the system's DNA and cannot be reformed away.

A last remark from the Movement in that '*humanity today faces a stark choice: ecosocialism or barbarism*' may have some profound meaning, especially when the world is today witnessing an act of war that may well have capitalism as its driving force, and barbarism its outcome.

Inclusive Ecological Democracy is a concept derived from a synthesis of two major historical traditions: the classical democratic and the socialist traditions, although it also encompasses radical green, feminist, and liberation movements in the South, and the concept has been discussed by Jones (2001), and Fotopoulos (2003), describing it as:

> A new conception of democracy, which, using as a starting point the classical definition of it, expresses democracy in terms of direct political democracy, economic democracy (beyond the confines of the market economy and state planning), as well as democracy in the social realm and ecological democracy. In short, inclusive democracy is a form of social organisation which re-integrates society with economy, polity and nature.

According to Fotopoulos (2003), it has become obvious and necessary that the extension of the traditional public realm to blend the economic, ecological and social realms is an indispensable element of an inclusive democracy. Fotopoulos further finds that there is a distinction between four main constituent elements of an inclusive democracy: *political, economic, social* and *ecological*, reasoning that the first three elements constitute the institutional framework aiming at the equal distribution of political, economic and social power; in other words, the system which aims at the effective elimination of the domination of human being over human being. Fotopoulos comes with his own definition of ecological democracy in that:

> Ecological democracy is defined as the institutional framework which aims at the elimination of any human attempt to dominate the natural world, in other words, the system which aims to reintegrate humans and nature.

The concept suggested and discussed by Fotopoulos has been reviewed and further discussed by Bula and Espejo (2011). There is no doubt that the concept arises from recent efforts to establish inclusive democracy in the political systems of countries of the South, where citizens hardly have the right to participate in decision-making or to be consulted, and where in fact, political democracy hardly exists. These efforts have been reflected in several international meetings, including OECD (2015), UNDEF (2019), UNDP (2016), and in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs), whose objectives are:

> Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development; provide access to justice for all; and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

In yet another discussion. Arapoglou et al (2004) explain how the concept of inclusive democracy came to being; since the beginning of the new millennium, the world started facing a multi-dimensional crisis (economic, ecological, social, cultural and political), caused by the concentration of power in the hands of various elites, and rising capitalism, hence the inference to the '*domination of human being over human being*.' Arapoglou et al. (2004) conclude that an inclusive democracy, which involves the equal distribution of power at all levels, would perhaps be the only way out of the present crisis.

However, in spite of efforts from different quarters and directions to find the best formula to ensure ecological democracy, central to ecological democratic processes remains the ideology that the '*non-human element*' must be incorporated into the democratic political framework, as Terence Ball (2006) puts it:

> If there is a single.-. and singular - feature that distinguishes green democracy from other variants, it is surely the immense widening of the moral and political community to encompass what Aldo Leopold called the entire '*biotic community.*'

Environmental Democracy

According to CIEL, the Centre for International and Environmental Law (2015), environmental democracy involves three mutually reinforcing rights that, while independently important, operate best in combination:

1. The ability for people to freely access information on environmental quality and problems,
2. To participate meaningfully in decision-making, and
3. To seek enforcement of environmental laws or compensation for damages.

These are the three principles that form the basis and backbone of arguments over the years for recognising that the environment should be entitled to democratic rights. Far too often, the public is not meaningfully engaged in decisions that could affect their health, livelihoods, freedom and culture, and as such seeking redressment or justice becomes impossible. However, even if not well established, the routes to be followed exist. Criticizing the purely individualistic approach as responsible for the failure of present conservation efforts in protecting the natural environment and its resources, Callicott (1985) advocates a version of land-ethical holism, supported by Aldo Leopold's (1949) statement:

> A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.

Trying to establish the links between the causes and reasons for environmental harm has been the eternal quest of both the environmental and social scientists. Connections between environmental destruction, unequal resource consumption, poverty and the global economic order have been extensively discussed by politicians, scientists, development theorists, geographers, economists, and scholars from different disciplines around the world, but not so much as by philosophers and ethicists, leaving the philosophy of environmental ethics out of the debate around environmental rights and environmental democracy. The work of Sagoff (1988) has clearly established the links between economics and environmental ethics, arguing that:

> As citizens rather than consumers, people are concerned about values, which cannot plausibly be reduced to mere ordered preferences or quantified in monetary terms.

But where could ethics fit into economics is yet to be unravelled. However, other interdisciplinary approaches linking environmental ethics with biology, policy studies, public administration, political theories, social concerns, cultural history, justice and injustice, literature, geography, and human ecology have been discussed by Shrader-Frechette (1984), Schmidtz, and Willott (2002), and Rolston (2012). The recognition of the importance of environmental values, and high levels of conflict around issues such as the release of genetically modified organisms, destructive development projects, destruction of rainforests, climate change and global warming, and given the increasing concern for the environment and the impact that human actions have upon it, it is clear that the field of environmental ethics should receive due consideration in environmental management.

However, it has always been a long-drawn battle to try and reconcile political objectives, sometimes unethical and amoral, that concentrate on unbridled economic growth and the activities of capital-oriented businesses whose main objective is ever-increasing profit; interestingly, both operate under the guise of sustainable development. These two persisting negative influences on the natural environment have been analysed and discussed by Sharon Beder (2006), who exposes how the concept of '*sustainability*', promoted by the environmentalists of the 1960s and 70s, is being replaced by a commodified, privatised, anthropocentric, utilitarian free market version of sustainable development, more of a corporate take-over, with only one objective:

> To allocate scarce environmental resources such as wilderness and clean air and replacing legislation with voluntary industry agreements, reinforced or newly created property rights and economic instruments. The idea is to incorporate the commons into the market system through the use of economic instruments and the creation of artificial property rights.

In 2000, commenting on Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration of 1992, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan declared the Principle as being:

> By far the most impressive elaboration of principle….which stresses the need for citizen's participation in environmental issues … As such it is the most ambitious venture in the area of environmental democracy so far undertaken under the auspices of the United Nations.

Principle 10 of the Declaration states that:

> Environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individuals shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided.

But Principle 10 does not appear to have made any difference to rampant environmental destruction and injustice around the world, and neither have there been any judicial or administrative frameworks in countries where environmental destruction and trampling over basic human rights have been most serious. The present situation looks vastly different from the 1972 Conference and Declaration on the Human Environment at Stockholm, or the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development-(Earth Summit-UNCED, 1992), that produced an '*official stance of cautiousness*' with regard to the world's environmental problems, discussed by Park et al. (2008). Rather than dealing with the environmental issues specifically, Park et al. (2008) observe that UNCED preferred the indirect route of sustainability with governments of the North and South sharing a basic interest in responding to a set of problems linking environment and development goals. But the missing link, development and environmental '*hard harm and injustice*' does not appear to have been part of the strategies, declare Park et al. (2008).

However, in spite of being merely an academic exercise, globally Principle 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration makes a meaningful but rather vague theoretical declaration:

> Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level.

Even if in the form of a sweeping declaration, this idea has spurred the international community to take progressive steps towards creating a space for the public in environmental governance, especially by entrenching the concept of '*public participation*' in various

international environmental instruments, the 2010 Bali Guidelines being a recent example. Within the same spirit of democratisation, several countries of Latin America and the Caribbean took a historic stand in 2018 by adopting the world's first binding agreement on environmental democracy, the ECLAC-Escazú Agreement (2018), asserting:

> This is an opportunity to give environmental rights the same legal standing as human rights at the global level.

An opportunity it was indeed, but not many countries have opted to take that route; in fact, most countries have opted to move in the opposite direction. What is still missing are the legal instruments to protect people's rights regarding access to information, public participation and justice on environmental matters, as stipulated in Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development; there have neither been any legal instruments from any source to compel states to investigate and punish killings and attacks on people defending their land or environment.

Environmental democracy laws, such as those resulting from the European Aarhus Convention (UNECE-1998/2001), require public authorities to grant European citizens access to information, public participation in procedures such as Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA), and in general to all processes leading to decisions which can have an impact on the environment. Beyond that, such laws must also ensure access to justice. The Aarhus Convention is thus a key instrument for EU citizens seeking to protect the environment in order to make their voices heard. The rights granted under the Aarhus Convention contribute to:

> The protection of the right of every person of present and future generations to live in an environment adequate to his or her health and well-being.

The Convention goes a step further in providing for future generations, whereas in all existing environmental policies/laws only the present generation appears to be under consideration. Unfortunately, countries outside Europe and not governed by the Aarhus Convention do not have the same privileges and rights, and neither have they attempted to adopt similar conventions.

As such, Smith (2003) observes that contemporary democracies are frequently criticized for failing to respond adequately to environmental problems, and political institutions are often accused of misrepresenting environmental values in decision-making processes. Smith further argues that the enhancement and institutionalisation of democratic deliberation would improve reflection on the wide range of environmental values that citizens hold, and draw important lessons on theories of deliberative democracy. Smith contends that institutions need to be restructured in order to promote democratic dialogue and reflection on the plurality of environmental values.

Mitchell (2006; 2011), and others involved in earlier work on the democracy-environment nexus have prescribed strategies for participatory decentralised governance, where citizenship and grassroots social movements would act as buffers against environmental discontent and disputes. In earlier discussions, both Goodin (1992); and Jasanoff (1996) emphasise on the difficulty of resolving tensions between environmental science and the so-called '*green*' outcomes bartered by politicians and corporations on the one hand, and popular democratic processes on the other. The work of Lafferty and Meadowcroft 1996) and Dryzek et al. (2003) on environmental and ecological democracy elaborates on how engaging closely with the rising environmental and social movements, and the coming of '*Green*' political parties

may help resolve a number of persisting environmental problems. However, it is only recently that democratic practices, and possibilities and constraints in global environmental politics have been studied in depth, as reflected in the works of Baber and Bartlett (2020) and Dryzek and Stevenson (2011). So the debate goes on.

However, recent years have led to further theoretical development of the democracy-environment nexus, including debates on avenues for reconciling environmental protection and democratic processes (Wong, 2016), employing theories of deliberative democracy to envisage democratic modes of governing the Earth System (Dryzek and Stevenson, 2011), and applying Mouffe's (1996) agonistic democratic theory to explore the possibility of '*radical democracy,*' particularly in climate change policy (Machin, 2013). This period has also seen thematic expansions to encompass how nonhuman and other entities can '*co-participate*' in democratic practices (Disch, 2016), and in relationships between everyday environmental practice and radical politics (Meyer, 2015; Schlosberg and Coles, 2016; Eckersley, 2020). Emerging areas on this spectrum include newly coined variants of democracy, such as '*carbon democracy*' (Mitchell, 2011) and '*energy democracy*' (Szulecki, 2018). The former argues that the rise of modern democracies is entwined with the development of fossil fuel industries, while the latter explores pathways to democratising energy production and consumption. Environmental democracy thus resonates with ideas of '*green liberalism'* (Wissenburg, 1998) or '*liberal environmentalism*' (Bernstein, 2005).

It also needs to be mentioned that the EU Aarhus Convention is a milestone in environmental democracy, granting procedural rights to the public with respect to access to environmental information held by public authorities, public participation in decision-making in procedures such as Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) Social Impact Assessment (SIA), Health Impact Assessment (HIA), and access to justice in environmental matters. Rather than beating about the bush in the search for an appropriate formula, most still ignore that the model is already there.

Arguments supporting a reconciliation between democracy and environmental protection have met with vigorous criticism, even in the earlier days of discussions on the concept, and at a time when the concept of sustainability was beginning to take shape. In the late 60s, Hardin (1968), through his thesis '*Tragedy of the commons*', and Ophuls (1977) on '*the politics of scarecity'* argued that a global authority is necessary to avert imminent environmental catastrophe, an argument that was actually the birth of the authoritarian concept (*Eco-Authoritarianism*). Heilbroner, (1974), another sceptics, expressed his views in the sense that liberal democracies based on free choice would generate or reinforce individualism, greed, profit-seeking, and overconsumption. Democracy has been perceived as too slow, compromising, cumbersome, and readily captured by interest groups and veto players.

What has also been prominent in recent years is the call and support for Environmental Authoritarisms (EA). In his analysis of '*Environmental Authoritarianism,*' Beeson (2010), points out the obvious weaknesses of the new wave of anti-democratic instruments in an all encompassing statement:

> Proponents argue that '*good authoritarianism*', which takes away some liberties and restricts unsustainable behavior, is the most effective way to prevent environmental degradation…….EA is a possible, even likely, response to intensifying environmental problems on the part of governments that are either already authoritarian, or which may find sustaining democratic rule increasingly difficult in the face of mounting problems. In this

> context, it is important to recognise that EA does not have to be judged more effective in managing environmental problems for it to persist.

Obviously those proponents of EA are rather confused in their strategies and possible outcome. And Gilley (2012), another supporter of the authoritarian recipe, declares:

> Environmental authoritarianism offers centralized government control over policy decisions, allowing the government to streamline policy implementation. This system envisions a centralized government with a small group of decision-makers who create non-participatory policies.

The age of a world government is yet too far off to even contemplate of assigning it duties. However, in spite of positive efforts towards achieving environmental democracy and environmental management through democratic processes, institutional barriers have been identified and 3 such barriers have been analyzed and discussed by Worker and Ratté (2014) of the World Resource Institute:

1. Meaningful and effective democratic decision-making is most of the time hampered by an unavailability of information, in spite of free access to information for effective public participation as enshrined in international law: Principle 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration and The Environmental Democracy Index (EDI), established by the UN-Bali Agreement (2010) are disregarded by too many countries, as reported by the WRI (2005; 2014).
1. Lack of consultation by policymakers with the local communities most impacted by environmental policies further impedes meaningful public engagement. Again, the WRI (2014) notes the majority of countries scored poorly, in spite of three directives of the EDI:
    - Existence and enforcement instruments of laws providing opportunities for the public to participate in environmental decision-making,
    - Laws obligating the state to proactively seek public participation, and,
    - Laws requiring policymakers to integrate public input into policy decisions.
2. Lack of appropriate institutions prevents citizens from defending their constitutional rights. Although Courts in the majority of EDI countries assessed were found to provide fair, timely, and independent hearings of environmental cases, few provide assistance for marginalized groups, or protect citizens against powerful corporations (WRI, 2014).

Worker and Ratte (2014) conclude that reforms for strengthening environmental democracy are therefore necessary if environmental egalitarianism were to be actualized, and the authors suggest the following propositions:

1. Right to Know:
   A '*Right to Know*,' embedded in both state and local law, should be a fundamental first step toward securing environmental democracy. The '*Right to Know*' movement champions freedom of information (FOI) laws requiring that environment and health-relevant information be made freely available to citizens. With such information, citizens would be able to participate more effectively and confidently in political decision-making, as well as hold corporations and states accountable for infringements upon their environmental rights. The legal principles of accountability and transparency must be strictly upheld as a fundamental tenet of democratic citizenship (UNECE, 1998/2001).

2. Facilitating Public Participation:
   States should proactively and pre-emptively consult citizens on policies, inform them of avenues for greater participation, and provide opportunities for general environmental education.. This would enable and encourage citizens to engage with issues that concern their immediate environment, preventing the unjust domination of basic liberties, as recommended by Young (1999), allowing citizens to exercise their democratic self-determination and self-development, deliberating and determining the content of their social life as equal and respected members of their community.
3. Environmental Courts and Tribunals (ECTs):
   An open and inclusive system of redress for environmental injustice must be implemented to ensure that all citizens enjoy the full suite of constitutional rights when they have been harmed. Citizens should possess the unimpeded right to demand compensation, contest proposed policies or projects, and openly challenge violations of their environmental rights. As such, it is crucial that environmental lawsuits be heard by independent and impartial environmental courts/tribunals. Pettit (2000) argues that the '*depoliticization of environmental jurisdiction will preserve the ability of citizens to resist environmental oppression when, for instance, the state has economic interests in protecting transnational mega-corporations*.' ECTs are especially important in localities harbouring poor and marginalized communities that suffer the harshest environmental harms.
4. Reasonable Limits to Public Participation:
   Pettit (2004) suggests that democracy should promote public deliberation for the common good and local communities must be empowered to deliberate and determine environmental policies that affect their localities. According to Schumpeter (2013) individuals are less inclined to think critically about issues that are more distant from themselves, often yielding to either political manipulation or irrational impulses. Hence, there must be limits to pure democratic involvement in a way that accommodates full citizen participation whilst ensuring that overzealous but ill-informed citizens cannot exert a disproportionate amount of influence on the deliberation process.

One further interpretation of environmental democracy could be that it is a visualization of democratic procedural rights, one of the best options to make environmental rights vital, as proposed and discussed by Bandi (2014). Public participation should be regarded as an integral aspect of environmental democracy, and Bandi discusses further the three pillars of environmental democracy, that is:

1. Access to information,
2. Participation in decision-making, and
3. Access to justice,

In their study, Worker and Ratte of the World Resource Institute (WRI-2014) expand on how and why environmental democracy should involve three mutually reinforcing rights that, while independently important, operate best in combination, that is:

1. The ability for people to freely access information on environmental quality and problems,
2. The ability to participate meaningfully in decision-making, and
3. The ability to seek enforcement of environmental laws or compensation for damages.

These three key components, Information, Participation, and Justice also known as '*access rights*', are reflected in Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development

(RIO, 1992), and are the backbone of environmental democracy and in the requirements for Impact Assessments (environmental, social, health). Along the same line, the World Resource Institute-WRI (2005; 2007; 2014) contends that:

> Environmental democracy exists when the public is able to freely access information around environmental impacts, participate meaningfully in decision-making, and demand enforcement of environmental laws or compensation for damage.

According to Worker and Ratté (2014):

> Environmental democracy embeds the idea that meaningful participation by the public is critical to ensuring that environmental decisions adequately and equitably address citizens' interests.

Concepts, theories, and environmental rights can only be valued through their implementation potential, as is reflected in the Aarhus Convention (1998) within EU law and practice system, and in national law in several other countries. However, there is still a void where international environmental law is concerned, especially in the South that has seen its environmental policies dictated by the North most of the time.

States with procedural environmental rights are more likely than non-adopting states to facilitate attaining environmental justice, especially where it relates to access to information. Similarly, Pratisti (2017) asserts that public participation is vital to democracy as the key to sustainable development, and in a discourse on environmental rights, Pratisti recognises three main types of environmental rights:

1. Procedural,
2. Substantive, and
3. Solidarity.

Some recent critiques of environmental/ecological democracy and rights take a more middle-of-the-road approach, and in his discussion, Fischer (2017) argues that, given the tight timeframes and urgency necessary to avert climate crisis in particular and not global biodiversity and environmental destruction in general, the prospects for environmental/ecological democracy are greater at local levels where democratic transformation can be more readily achieved. However, Blühdorn (2013) finds that with the greater emphasis that modern societies place on individual freedom, '*more democracy*,' translated as greater responsiveness to citizens' demands, '*may well imply even less sustainability.*' However, it needs to be accepted that freedom has been a contentious issue since the middle ages, and the fight for rights has been ongoing since.

The new geological epoch (anthropocene), characterised by unprecedented and pervasive human impact on the Earth's life-support systems has been discussed by Steffen et al. (2011), and has driven the interest in democratising global environmental politics. Schlosberg (2016) Schlosberg et al. (2019) and Dryzek and Pickering (2019) are in agreement that the main claim stressed upon in democratic theories of the Anthropocene is that the democratic institutions that developed in the late stages of the preceding epoch, the Holocene, failed to respond effectively and timeously to signs of imminent ecological/environmental degradation. Consequently, there is a call for reassessing existing situations and re-inventing strategies that are capable of delivering legitimate and effective responses to present environmental crises. To that effect, Fiorino (2018) and Hanusch (2018) are in agreement that against the backdrop of global environmental concerns, the capacity of democracies to respond to climate change and global warming has increasingly taken centre stage in both theoretical debates and empirical analysis.

Contrary to the negative observations so far, Gellers and Jeffords (2018) sustain that the global trend toward adopting environmental rights within national constitutions has been largely regarded as a positive development for both human rights and the natural environment, even if the impact of constitutional environmental rights has yet to be systematically assessed, and probably enlarged too. Gellers and Jeffords (2018) find that expanding procedural environmental rights, that is legal provisions relating to access to information, participation, and justice in environmental matters, will provide fertile ground for analyzing how environmental rights directly interface with conditions necessary for a functioning democracy. The authors contend that positive outcomes from states with procedural environmental rights are more likely than non-adopting states, and may lead to situations where achieving environmental justice through democratic processes is more likely.

According to Eckersley (2019), in spite of their differences, concepts of environmental and ecological democracy are united by a shared interest in ensuring that democratic processes be made compatible with strong environmental outcomes. Both also share an interest in arrangements for participation, representation, deliberation and justice, necessary in environmental decision-making. Wong (2016) has proposed strategies for managing differences between environmental and democratic processes, such as restrictions on the permissible democratic decisions, or relaxing theoretical claims about the relationship between democracy and environmental outcomes. Questions on democracy, democratic practices, and democratic legitimacy should be the backbone of environmental/ecological politics, and green political theories. Such democratic values as representation, inclusion, participation, accountability, and transparency are governing themes in Earth System Governance, and has been discussed by Bäckstrand (2006), Bäckstrand et al. (2005) and Pickering et al. (2020)

Analyzing environmental democracy, Pickering et al. (2020) contend that reconciliation between the ideals could be achieved largely through reforming existing institutions of liberal democracy and capitalism to incorporate environmental values, and expanding participatory governance. However, most of the time ideas and ideals are not necessarily transformed into political or legal instruments. While substantial environmental impacts affect local, national and sometimes even international populations, meaningful participation in the decision-making process of large-scale projects can be difficult or is often not guaranteed at all, claim the authors. From the outset, citizens may lack access to information and may not be involved in the decision-making process at a time when their input could still be considered. Moreover, conclude Pickering et al (2020), they may not have proper access to justice to appeal against the violations of their rights to participate, or against breaches of existing environmental laws, especially where powerful corporations are concerned.

The discussions of Pickering et al. (2020) further explain how and why arguments supporting a reconciliation between democracy and environmental protection have stagnated, meeting with vigorous criticism whenever discussed. Earlier, Heilbroner, (1974) explained how sceptics object that liberal democracies premised on free choice generate or reinforce individualism, greed, profit-seeking, and overconsumption, behaviour that is at odds with core values of sustainability. Pickering et al. (2020) recognise that democratic environmental processes are too slow, compromising, cumbersome, and fail to capture interest groups and policy makers to generate the transformative change needed for sustainability. Instead, and as concluded much earlier by Hardin (1968) and Ophuls (1977), '*eco-authoritarian*' or '*survivalist*' protagonists argue that a hierarchical, technocratic and centralised response

featuring a strong state or '*green leviathan*,' and a corresponding global authority, would be what is needed to avert environmental catastrophe. Interest in eco-authoritarianism, revived from the mid-2000s onwards, and discussed by Humphrey, (2007) and Shearman and Smith, (2007) is said to have been the result of the urgency to combat climate change risks, contrary to arguments to the contrary put forward by Shahar, (2015). Other scholars and environmental analysts are in favour of managerial or technocratic responses to climate change, or a new concept of '*eco-modernism*,' as a means of circumventing political polarisation (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015; Giddens, 2009). It is hoped the new concept of '*eco-modernism*' may also pave the way to ecojustice/environmental justice, the other contentious and unresolved issues in environmental law.

In conclusion, the reflections of Hanusch (2018) should add to our understanding or misunderstanding of ecological/environmental democracy and its importance in both social and environmental management:

> While there is still value in accumulating further evidence on whether democracies perform better on environmental protection than non-democracies and authoritarian states, it is just as important to form a deeper understanding of why some democratic polities exhibit better environmental performance than others, how countries that are democratically progressive but environmentally recalcitrant can do better and how practices of environmental and ecological democracy can take root in authoritarian societies.

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