



REINVENTING GLOBAL DEMOCRACY

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There is a growing crisis in global governance. The shortfall in global governance reflects both the complexity of the issues and the inadequacy of existing institutions. The global agenda and rules of globalisation have so far been set primarily by Europe and the United States, reflecting the distribution of power and capacity that existed at the end of World War Two. The formal organisations these countries have developed – the UN, WTO, the IMF and the World Bank – do not fully address the concerns of the 21st century and do not possess the global legitimacy needed to serve as the fora within which the world can tackle its most pressing problems. Other existing institutions – the G8 and other G-groups, networks of regulators, private-public partnerships, and transnational civil society coalitions – remain underdeveloped and/or generally unrepresentative.

It is clear that in order to make the significant strides needed to improve effective decision making for the global agenda, we need new approaches to global governance. In response to this compelling need, in January 2008 the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy and its Centre on Asia and Globalisation launched the three-year S.T. Lee Project on Global Governance. The project brings together top thinkers and practitioners from Asia and West to develop insights and recommendations on how to govern a world that includes a rising Asia.

The project addresses two key sets of questions:

How can states, the private sector and civil society better organise to address the deficiencies in global governance? In a world of emerging multipolarity and deepening globalisation, how can the international community take effective collective action?

What is Asia's role in dealing with these issues? How can, and should, Asia translate its emerging economic clout into positive political influence that will strengthen global governance?

To address these questions, the project commissioned leading scholars from Asia, Europe, and North America to prepare papers on concepts of global governance, energy and global governance, and global health governance. This Working Paper is the result of one such commission. For a complete description of the ST Lee Project, please see <http://www.caglkyschool.com>.

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REINVENTING GLOBAL DEMOCRACY

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Abstract

How can democracy be suitably formulated in face of the more global character of contemporary society? Modern ideas and practices of ‘people’s rule’ (whether in a statist or a cosmopolitan mode) fall short as frameworks for global democracy. Statist approaches to global democracy have a host of behavioural, institutional, historical and cultural problems. Modern cosmopolitan approaches do better in addressing contemporary social changes, but are deficient in terms of their globalist tendencies, oversimplified notions of political identity, limited cultural reflexivity, tame responses to resource inequalities, and anthropocentrism. To address these shortcomings one might explore a conception of ‘postmodern global democracies’ built around principles of transscalarity, plural solidarities, transculturality, egalitarian distribution, and more ecologically framed ideas of political rights and duties.

Introduction

Democracy – rule by, for, from, of, to, and with the people (ever the nuance of prepositions) – is widely embraced as an indispensable quality of a good society. For a host of ethical and practical reasons it is deemed right that ‘the demos’ should, itself, take the decisions that shape its joint circumstances and common destinies. All affected persons should have due say in the governance of their mutual situations.¹ If that general principle is accepted, then ‘people’s rule’ is as relevant to global spaces (i.e., when shared conditions and futures have a planetary dimension) as it is to national, local and other arenas of collective life.

How can democracy be realised in a world, of the kind that is currently emerging, where social relations have more pronounced global aspects? Moreover, how might democracy operate in that more global world when, as now unfolds, power and resources become less concentrated in Europe and North America? And what would global democracy

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¹ J. Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (New York, Holt, 1927), pp. 15-16; S. Näsström, ‘What Globalization Overshadows’, *Political Theory*, vol. 31, no. 6 (December 2003), pp. 808-34.

mean when, as already transpires, ‘the people’ involved inhabit highly diverse cultural contexts? That is the puzzle for the present essay.

Social relations have in recent decades acquired a more pronounced global character. People have become substantially more interlinked with one another on a planetary scale: through communications, consciousness, ecology, finance, health matters, military affairs, organisations, production chains, travel and more. While it is certainly important not to exaggerate the extents of contemporary globalisation, it is equally misguided to deny them. Across the various areas of social life global connections have obtained historically unprecedented quantities, scopes, frequencies, velocities, intensities and impacts.²

The expansion of global connections has gone hand-in-hand with increased efforts to govern global affairs. Rules and regulatory processes have proliferated so as to bring greater order and control to planet-spanning public concerns. Countless formal measures, informal norms and overarching discourses for governing transplanetary relations are now formulated and implemented through complex networks that variously combine national states, suprapstate (regional and global) bodies, substate (local and provincial) agencies, nonofficial (market and civil society) arrangements, and multistakeholder constructions. While nothing suggests the arrival of a unitary centralised world state, a substantial complex of transscalar and transsectoral governance of global affairs has developed and looks likely to undergo continued growth.³

In most conceptions of a good society, governance operates with the consent of the governed. A major source of such legitimacy is democracy, whereby deliberation and decision-taking are open to any and all persons whose lives and livelihoods are implicated.⁴ Thus a society with pronounced global dimensions, such as emerges today, would preferably develop ideas and practices of global democracy to guide its regulatory activities. Yet what forms could ‘people’s rule’ take in respect of transplanetary affairs? How can the publics who are affected by one or the other global issue participate in and exercise control over relevant policy decisions? It is often argued that contemporary globalisation has unfolded in deep tension with democracy.⁵ How could this major obstacle to a good (more global) society be overcome?

² J.A. Scholte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005 second edn), chs 2-3.

³ W.H. Reinicke, ‘The Other World Wide Web: Global Public Policy Networks’, *Foreign Policy*, no. 117 (Winter 1999-2000), pp. 44-57; J.A. Scholte, ‘Governing a More Global World’, *Corporate Governance*, vol. 10, no. 4 (2010), pp. 459-74.

⁴ J.A. Scholte, ‘Towards Greater Legitimacy in Global Governance’, *Review of International Political Economy*, vol. 18, no. 1 (February 2011), pp. 110-20.

⁵ C. Ake, ‘Globalization, Multilateralism and the Shrinking Democratic Space’, in M.G. Schechter (ed.), *Future Multilateralism: The Political and Social Framework* (Tokyo, United Nations University Press, 1999), pp. 179-95; N. Hertz, *The Silent Takeover: Global Capitalism and the Death of Democracy* (London, Heinemann, 2001); A.C. Aman, *The Democracy Deficit: Taming Globalization through Law Reform* (New York, New York University Press, 2004).

Such questions have generated a notable recent scholarship on ‘global democracy’, as well as related ideas of ‘cosmopolitan’ and ‘transnational’ democracy.⁶ The debates to date have offered two main formulas for democratic governance of global relations. One approach, here called *statism*, argues that global democracy is best achieved through multilateral collaboration among democratic nation-states. A second perspective, here called *modern cosmopolitanism*, maintains that global democracy is optimally realised by elevating pillars of western liberal democracy (such as citizenship, human rights, civil society and representative government) from the national to the global level.

As the next parts of this essay indicate, each of these two models has severe flaws, so prompting a search for alternative conceptions. Pursuing one such exploration, the latter part of the essay proposes a different orientation, here dubbed *postmodern global democracies*. This reinvented conception of global democracy goes beyond both statism and modern cosmopolitanism, with principles of transscalar geography, plural solidarities, transculturality, egalitarian distribution, and eco-ship.

Several qualifications are in order before elaborating this argument. First, the present discussion is an exercise in general theory rather than specific policy. Although the following pages do make reference to various concrete experiences for illustrative purposes, the essay defers more detailed consideration of how to enact broad principles in particular institutional designs and political strategies. Those more practical considerations would of course be necessary before the conceptual formulations developed below can be fully meaningful. However, the philosophical reflections introduced here also merit attention in their own right and could help to guide practical initiatives concerning global democracy.

A second important qualification concerns time frame. Sceptics might object that the vision of postmodern global democracies outlined here is ‘utopian’ in current circumstances. Yet the purpose of the present contemplation is not to propose an immediately and fully realisable formula. Certainly, as the latter part of the discussion will indicate, intimations of postmodern global democracies can be read into a number of contemporary situations, thereby suggesting that relevant new practices are already available on a modest scale. However, the essay mainly operates on a longer time horizon, with a view to supporting innovations in knowledge and practice of global democracy that would mature over a period of several generations.

A final preliminary note concerns methodology. To the extent that the following discussion offers something distinctive on the subject of global democracy, that novelty probably results largely from the alternative research approach adopted. Most existing literature on global democracy emanates from: (a) introspective academic debates; (b) the field of (western) political theory; and (c) sites in North America and Western Europe. While the present essay certainly engages with mainstream scholarship, as the references indicate,

⁶ See the online library of the Building Global Democracy programme, listing several hundred writings, at www.buildingglobaldemocracy.org/building-global-democracy-library.

the argument as importantly also builds on 15 years of conversations about global democracy with hundreds of activists, entrepreneurs, journalists, officials and politicians – as well as researchers – across all world regions.⁷ This broader cultural, geographical, intellectual and vocational scope generates different perspectives than conventional academic debates, and in the process may promote a democratisation of the conceptualisation of global democracy.

Statism and Its Problems

A statist vision suggests that people's rule in global affairs is best realised through multilateral collaboration among democratic nation-states. Some of that collaboration can be formally institutionalised in international law and intergovernmental organisations, as occurs for example in the World Trade Organisation (WTO). In other cases the collaboration can be informal through transgovernmental networks of ministers and officials, such as the Group of 20 (G20).⁸ Whatever the precise form of the coordination arrangements, the crucial point in a statist vision of global democracy is that each participating nation-state meets democratic standards vis-à-vis its own citizens.

Statist conceptions of global democracy can be traced back to the Wilsonian programme of world order in the early twentieth century, with its aim to promote national self-determination (outside the overseas colonies of the day, that is) and then to unite such democratic states in a League of Nations.⁹ More recently a number of theorists have suggested in a statist vein that democracy beyond the state is not a problem so long as democracy within the state is secure.¹⁰ Likewise, the Community of Democracies (CD), an intergovernmental organisation founded in 2000, has conceived of global democracy as 'a global network of democratic countries.'¹¹

Certainly many states have on multiple occasions advanced collective self-determination in global politics. The host of examples include the promotion by various states

⁷ J.A. Scholte, *Democratizing the Global Economy: The Role of Civil Society* (Coventry, Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation, 2004), at www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/csgr/projects/englishreport.pdf; Building Global Democracy programme, at www.buildingglobaldemocracy.org; J.A. Scholte, 'More Inclusive Global Governance? The IMF and Civil Society in Africa', *Global Governance*, forthcoming 2012.

⁸ A.-M. Slaughter, *A New World Order* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2004); M.-L. Djelic and K. Sahlin-Andersson (eds), *Transnational Governance: Institutional Dynamics of Regulation* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁹ T.J. Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992).

¹⁰ A. Moravcsik, 'Is there a "Democratic Deficit" in World Politics? A Framework for Analysis,' *Government and Opposition*, vol. 39, no. 2 (April 2004), pp. 336-63; J. Pevehouse and B. Russett, 'Democratic International Governmental Organizations Promote Peace', *International Organization*, vol. 60, no. 4 (October 2006), pp. 969-1000; K.-C.Tan, 'Global Democracy: International, not Cosmopolitan', in D.K. Chatterjee (ed.), *Democracy in a Global World: Human Rights and Political Participation in the 21st Century* (Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), pp. 161-83; R.O. Keohane *et al*, 'Democracy-Enhancing Multilateralism', *International Organization*, vol. 63, no. 1 (January 2009), pp. 1-31.

¹¹ 'Introduction', Website of the Council for a Community of Democracies, www.ccd21.org/about/index.html, accessed on 3 May 2011. See also the Community of Democracies at www.community-democracies.org/; D. Archibugi, 'A League of Democracies or a Democratic United Nations', *Harvard International Review*, 19 November 2008, at <http://hir.harvard.edu/a-league-of-democracies-or-a-democratic-united-nations>.

of decolonisation, the criminalisation of slavery, and numerous other steps to empower marginalised groups. However, *statist* approaches to global democracy – i.e., strategies which seek to accomplish global democracy through territorial national governments *alone* – have critical defects. These shortcomings can be discussed under the four headings of behaviour, institutional design, social structure, and culture.

With regard to behaviour, the actions of modern democratic states on global affairs have normally failed to involve much, if any, popular participation and control. Thus regulation of matters such as arms proliferation, climate change, financial flows and the Internet have usually figured only marginally, if at all, in national elections. Only in Switzerland has membership of intergovernmental organisations been subject to national referendum.¹² Likewise, national parliaments have generally exercised at best incidental and shallow scrutiny of their state's involvement in global governance.¹³ Moreover, states have normally been represented in global regulatory processes by professional bureaucrats who are far removed from the daily lives and concerns of most of the national population.¹⁴ Then states – including major states in particular – have often taken actions that impact beyond their borders without fulfilling democratic accountability to affected people in those external areas.¹⁵ In short, states that embrace a democratic constitution for their national order tend to exhibit weak democracy in their handling of global issues. And this conclusion arises even when taking liberal national democracy on its own terms. More critical theories such as feminism and poststructuralism of course question the democratic credentials of the modern liberal state itself.¹⁶

Other deficiencies in the *statist* formula of global democracy arise when the institutional design of state-based global governance arrangements fails to meet democratic criteria. For instance, a number of key intergovernmental bodies have not offered membership to all of the states whose populations they affect. Examples include the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). On other occasions state-based global governance has been marked by glaring arbitrary inequalities, including veto power for five states in the United Nations Security Council and votes based on capital subscription in a number of intergovernmental financial institutions. Meanwhile various global governance arrangements that were initially created by states have with time acquired substantial power over their

¹² G. Sheehan, 'Neutrality No More? Switzerland Joins the United Nations', *Harvard International Review*, 6 May 2006, at <http://hir.harvard.edu/intelligence/neutrality-no-more?page=0,0>.

¹³ R. Round, *Who's Minding the Store? Legislator Oversight of the Bretton Woods Institutions* (Ottawa, Halifax Initiative, 2004).

¹⁴ L.W. Pauly, *Who Elected the Bankers? Surveillance and Control in the World Economy* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1997); D. Kerr, *Elect the Ambassador! Building Democracy in a Globalised World* (Annandale, Pluto Australia, 2001).

¹⁵ 'Voices without Votes: Americans Vote, the World Speaks', at <http://voiceswithoutvotes.org/>.

¹⁶ C. Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge, Polity, 1988); G. Burchell *et al.* (eds), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Hemel Hempstead, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991); B. de Sousa Santos (ed.), *Democratizing Democracy: Beyond the Liberal Democratic Canon* (London, Verso, 2007).

(especially weaker) member states,¹⁷ and such power generally operates with little or any participation and control by the affected people. The relationship between the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and most states of Sub-Saharan Africa offers one example in this regard.

More severely still, statism fails as a formula for global democracy because several of its key premises do not match up with core social structures of the contemporary world. For one thing, statism assumes that social geography is defined predominantly if not wholly by country domains; yet problems of a more global world also unfold in transborder realms across countries, as well as in local spheres within countries.¹⁸ In addition, statist conceptions presume that all governance of global affairs proceeds from, or is under the control of, states; yet recent decades have witnessed a considerable growth of relatively autonomous regulatory activities through suprastate, substate, private and multistakeholder channels.¹⁹ Statist notions furthermore assume that ‘the people’ in global politics always and only take the form of a nation; yet collective identities and solidarities in today’s world may also be expressed in various nonterritorial guises, such as ‘peoples’ based on class, faith or sexual orientation.²⁰ In sum, then, a statist approach to global democracy presupposes structures of geography, governance and identity which may have broadly prevailed in the middle of the twentieth century, but no longer hold sixty years later.

Finally, in addition to the behavioural, institutional and deeper structural problems already noted, statism fails as a model for global democracy on cultural grounds. The modern state (and intergovernmental organisations and transgovernmental networks comprised of modern states) sit uncomfortably with the life-worlds of many people who are implicated in global politics. For example, many indigenous groups have experienced the modern state to be a purveyor of cultural imperialism as much as a source of democracy.²¹ The cultural fragility of the colonially imported modern state is also regularly apparent in much of Africa and the Pacific.²² In addition, the secularism of the modern state can sit uneasily with

¹⁷ B. Reinalda and B. Verbeek (eds), *Autonomous Policy Making by International Organizations* (London, Routledge, 1998); M.N. Barnett and M. Finnemore, ‘The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations’, *International Organization*, vol. 53, no. 4 (October 1999), pp. 699-732; Barnett and R. Duvall (eds), *Power in Global Governance* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹⁸ R.J. Johnston *et al.* (eds), *Geographies of Global Change: Remapping the World* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2002 2nd edn); H. Lefebvre, *State, Space, World: Selected Essays* (eds N. Brenner and S. Elden) (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

¹⁹ M. Barnett and M. Finnemore, *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2004); D. Criekemans (ed.), ‘Special Issue: Regional Sub-State Diplomacy’, *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, vol. 5, no. 1-2 (2010); R.B. Hall and T.J. Biersteker (eds), *The Emergence of Private Authority in Global Governance* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004); K.T. Hallström and M. Boström, *Transnational Multi-Stakeholder Standardization: Organizing Fragile Non-State Authority* (Cheltenham, Elgar, 2010).

²⁰ Scholte, *Globalization*, ch 7.

²¹ D. Maybury-Lewis, *Indigenous Peoples, Ethnic Groups and the State* (Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 2001 2nd edn); B.R. Howard, *Indigenous Peoples and the State: The Struggle for Native Rights* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003).

²² R.H. Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990).

religious faith for some circles.²³ Thus statism questionably assumes that modern national territorial government integrates smoothly into, and is democratically meaningful for, every political culture in the contemporary world.

As underlined at the outset, the preceding critique of statist visions of global democracy does not deny the many contributions to collective self-determination that many national governments have made – and could continue to make – for many peoples in respect of transplanetary concerns. Indeed, various reforms could upgrade the performance of state-based democracy in global politics, especially in regard to some of the behavioural and institutional shortcomings described above.²⁴ However, these adjustments to state activities and state-based global regulatory bodies would not come easily, as decades of struggle to reconstruct the Security Council illustrate. Moreover, even if these reforms were realised they could not resolve the deeper structural and cultural contradictions set out above. Hence while the state can certainly play a part in realising people's rule in a more global world, global democracy cannot begin and end with the state and inter-state relations.

Modern Cosmopolitanism and Its Problems

Recognising intractable inadequacies in statist approaches, many contemporary theorists and activists have explored alternative avenues to global democracy. Much of this innovative thinking has occurred in a frame of modern cosmopolitanism that has undergone considerable revival since the 1990s.²⁵ Building on earlier modern thinking by the likes of Vitoria, Kant and Marx – as well as world federalists of the twentieth century – these conceptions take the planet and its total human population as the unit of society alongside, if not ahead of, the country and its national populace.²⁶ Ideas of cosmopolitan democracy thereby address social geography beyond country containers and collective identities beyond nations.²⁷ These conceptions also acknowledge regulatory processes beyond states, e.g., with notions of 'multi-level governance'²⁸ and aspirations for world government.²⁹

²³ N.J. Demerath and K.S. Straight, 'Religion, Politics and the State: Cross-Cultural Observations', *CrossCurrents*, vol. 47, no. 1 (Spring 1997).

²⁴ H. Patomäki and T. Teivainen, *A Possible World: Democratic Transformation of Global Institutions* (London, Zed, 2004), Part I.

²⁵ S. Vertovec and R. Cohen (eds), *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, Practice* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002); G.W. Brown and D. Held (eds), *The Cosmopolitanism Reader* (Cambridge, Polity, 2010).

²⁶ S. Scheffler, 'Conceptions of Cosmopolitanism', *Utilitas*, vol. 11, no. 3 (1999), pp. 255-76; J. Waldron, 'What Is Cosmopolitan?' *Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 8, no. 2 (June 2000), pp. 227-43; E. Grande, 'Cosmopolitan Political Science', *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 57, no. 1 (March 2006), pp. 87-111; C. Calhoun, 'Cosmopolitanism in the Modern Social Imaginary', *Daedalus*, vol. 137, no. 3 (Summer 2008), pp. 105-14.

²⁷ A. Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era* (Cambridge, Polity, 1998); J. Habermas, *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays* (Cambridge, Polity, 2001); N. Fraser, *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2009).

²⁸ I. Bache and M. Flinders (eds), *Multi-Level Governance* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004); H. Enderlein *et al.* (eds), *Handbook on Multi-Level Governance* (Cheltenham, Elgar, 2010).

Broadly speaking, modern cosmopolitan visions of global democracy elevate the framework of western liberal democracy from the country-state-national arena to a planetary scale.³⁰ Thus, for example, various writings in a modern cosmopolitan vein have suggested that principles of modern citizenship can be suitably transposed from the national to the global sphere.³¹ Similarly, modern cosmopolitanism holds that global human rights can offer a foundation for global democracy, much as a bill of rights enshrined in a national constitution is meant to guarantee public participation and control in state-based democracy.³² Likewise, much as modern liberal political theory has extolled the virtues of national civil society and a national public sphere as arenas of democracy vis-à-vis the national state, so modern cosmopolitanism celebrates the democratising potentials of global civil society and a global public sphere vis-à-vis global governance.³³ Whereas liberal democracy through the state rests largely on the competitive election of people's representatives in national legislatures, a number of modern cosmopolitans have proposed that global plebiscites and global parliaments would provide a cornerstone of democratic accountability in global governance.³⁴

Principles of modern cosmopolitanism have made some headway in practice as well. A host of global human rights instruments have obtained legal force since the 1940s.³⁵ Particularly since the 1990s most global governance institutions have developed rituals of consultation with civil society associations.³⁶ Various proposals have circulated for a United

²⁹ T. Tännsjö, *Global Democracy: The Case for a World Government* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2008); C. Craig, 'The Resurgent Idea of World Government', *Ethics & International Affairs*, vol. 22, no. 2 (Summer 2008), pp. 133-42; L. Cabrera, 'World Government: Renewed Debate, Persistent Challenges', *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 16, no. 3 (September 2010), pp. 511-31.

³⁰ D. Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (Cambridge, Polity, 1995); D. Archibugi, 'Cosmopolitan Democracy and Its Critics: A Review', *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 10, no. 3 (September 2004), pp. 437-73; D. Archibugi, *The Global Commonwealth of Citizens: Toward Cosmopolitan Democracy* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2008).

³¹ K. Hutchings and R. Dannreuther (eds), *Cosmopolitan Citizenship* (New York, St. Martin's, 1999); D. Heater, *World Citizenship* (London, Continuum, 2002); L. Cabrera, *The Practice of Global Citizenship* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010).

³² C.C. Gould, *Globalizing Democracy and Human Rights* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004); D. Jacobs, *Global Democracy: The Struggle for Political and Civil Rights in the 21st Century* (Nashville, Vanderbilt University Press, 2007), chs 14, 15; M. Goodhart, 'Human Rights and Global Democracy', *Ethics & International Affairs*, vol. 22, no. 4 (Winter 2008), pp. 395-420.

³³ M. Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War* (Cambridge, Polity, 2003); J. Keane, *Global Civil Society?* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003); N. Fraser, 'Transnationalizing the Public Sphere: On the Legitimacy and Efficacy of Public Opinion in a Post-Westphalian World', *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 24, no. 4 (July 2007), pp. 7-30.

³⁴ R. Falk and A. Strauss, 'Toward Global Parliament', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 80 (January-February 2001), pp. 216-20; G. Monbiot, *The Age of Consent: A Manifesto for a New World Order* (London, Flamingo, 2003); A.L. Strauss, *Taking Democracy Global: Assessing the Benefits and Challenges of a Global Parliamentary Assembly* (London, One World Trust, 2005).

³⁵ J.D. Montgomery, 'Fifty Years of Human Rights: An Emergent Global Regime', *Policy Sciences*, vol. 32, no. 1 (March 1999), pp. 79-94; S. Marks and A. Clapham, *International Human Rights Lexicon* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005).

³⁶ J. Steffek *et al.* (eds), *Civil Society Participation in European and Global Governance: A Cure for the Democratic Deficit?* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); J.A. Scholte (ed.), *Building Global Democracy? Civil Society and Accountable Global Governance* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Nations Parliamentary Assembly,³⁷ and in 2001 the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) actually had several members of its board elected through a global ballot on the World Wide Web.³⁸ Several initiatives have also experimented with informal transplanetary plebiscites to consult ‘global public opinion’ on one or the other policy concern.³⁹

Modern cosmopolitanism has certain decided strengths over statism as a vision of global democracy. In particular this approach recognises that social geography today involves more than countries, that contemporary governance involves more than states, and that political solidarity now often involves more than nations. Moreover, principles and practices of citizenship, human rights, civil society and representative assemblies could well play a part in global democracy, especially if they are interpreted with flexibility and creativity across diverse contexts. However, in other ways modern cosmopolitan responses to the shortfalls of statist conceptions of global democracy do not go far enough. Indeed, modern cosmopolitanism contains its own deep-seated flaws, mainly as related to geography, social psychology, culture, economy and ecology.

With regard to geography, modern cosmopolitan visions of global democracy tend to replace the country-centrism of statism with a spatial globalism. That is, modern cosmopolitanism normally focuses on ‘the global level’ as an arena that is distinct from and hierarchically prior to regional, national, local and immediate spheres of social relations. From such a perspective global democracy becomes a question of bringing public participation and control to a global tier of regulation (such as the United Nations). Likewise, the focus is on a global level of citizenship, a global level of human rights, a global level of civil society, and a global level of plebiscite and parliament. Yet democratic governance of global issues arguably needs to involve people not only as they walk the corridors of global organisations, but also as they live in households, workplaces, districts, provinces, countries and regions. Thus, for example, democratic reform of the UN, the G20, ICANN, and so on would not be fully effective if it were not accompanied by concurrent democratisation at other ‘levels’ such as regional, national and local government. Yet modern cosmopolitanism normally does not address democracy in these ‘lower’ domains, let alone the mutual constitution of democracy across scales of political activity.

With regard to social psychology, modern cosmopolitanism tends to replace the nation-centrism of statism with a universalist conception of ‘the people’. In other words, modern cosmopolitans generally assume that ‘the public’ in global affairs involves the human species as a single political community. In this view ‘the demos’ in global democracy consists of an undifferentiated humanity-at-large. Yet identities and solidarities in

³⁷ P.-N. Kauppi *et al.*, *The Case for Global Democracy: Advocating a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly* (Langport, Bagehot, 2007); Campaign for a United Nations General Assembly, at www.unpacampaign.org/.

³⁸ H. Klein, ‘The Feasibility of Global Democracy: Understanding ICANN’s At-Large Election’, *Info*, vol. 3, no. 4 (August 2001), pp. 333-45.

³⁹ ‘The Global Vote’, at www.theglobalvote.org/; J. Stark, *Rescue Plan for Planet Earth: Democratic World Government through a Global Referendum* (Toronto, Key, 2010).

contemporary global politics are far more complex than this. Global problems do not always affect every human being on earth; nor do global developments affect all persons in the same ways and to the same extents. True, ‘the people’ in global politics might sometimes define themselves in universal terms when, say, climate change or infectious disease has potentially far-reaching consequences for every human inhabitant on earth. However, even on these occasions differential impacts might prompt ‘the people’ in global democracy also to identify themselves partly on class, gender, racial, or territorial lines. Then there are other circumstances in global politics where ‘the people’ might construct their interests and struggles in terms of age, caste, diaspora, disability, religious conviction, or sexual orientation.⁴⁰ Hence, contrary to modern cosmopolitan suppositions, political solidarity in global affairs can take multiple forms in addition to that of humanity as a whole. Indeed, a universalist conception of the global demos can be misleading when propositions that disproportionately favour certain constituencies are presented as being in the equal interest of all humankind. Examples of such hegemonic universalism include global *laissez faire* and English as a global *lingua franca*.

With regard to culture, mainstream cosmopolitanism is, like statism, embedded in a particular life-world, namely that of western-modern rationalism. Proponents of modern cosmopolitanism might suppose that their paradigm of global democracy has roots in a universal ‘human nature’, but like any other perspective this vision has a culturally and historically specific genealogy. Western-modern notions of citizenship, human rights, civil society and representative government are not ‘natural’ conditions, but the product of a particular place and time. By uncritically promoting the universalisation of these ideas, modern cosmopolitans can unwittingly perpetuate an unhappy long-running world-historical saga of Eurocentric imperialism.⁴¹ Modern cosmopolitan writings rarely if ever acknowledge that indigenous epistemologies, religious life-worlds, Confucian mindsets or postmodern knowledge could have anything to offer on global democracy, even though large proportions of humankind today inhabit such other cultural frames.⁴² This is by no means to say that modern cosmopolitanism has no merits and that ‘the west’ has no role in building global democracy; but it is to suggest that western knowledge should engage in transcultural dialogue with other understandings, rather than impose itself on others.⁴³

⁴⁰ B.D. Adam *et al.* (eds), *The Global Emergence of Gay and Lesbian Politics: National Imprints of a Worldwide Movement* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1998); R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London, Routledge, 2008 2nd edn); E.-M. Hardtman, *The Dalit Movement in India: Local Practices, Global Connections* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press India, 2009); P. Levitt, *God Needs No Passport: Immigrants and the Changing American Religious Landscape* (New York, New Press, 2009).

⁴¹ A. Pagden, ‘Stoicism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Legacy of European Imperialism’, *Constellations*, vol. 7, no. 1 (March 2000), pp. 3-22; E. Lander, ‘The Decolonisation of Global Democracy’ (Unpublished Paper, 2009), summarised at www.buildingglobaldemocracy.org/content/latin-america.

⁴² S. Halapua and P. Halapua, ‘Global Democracy as Talanoa: A Pacific Perspective’; N. Mostafa, ‘Beyond Western Paradigms of International Relations: Towards an Islamic Perspective on Global Democracy’; Xu Jiajun *et al.*, ‘Cooperative-Harmonious Global Democracy from the Perspective of Chinese Culture’ (Unpublished Papers, 2009), summarised at www.buildingglobaldemocracy.org/content/cgd-case-studies. See also R. Foot *et al.* (eds), *Order and Justice in International Relations* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁴³ Cf. C. Mouffe, ‘Democracy in a Multipolar World’, *Millennium*, vol. 37, no. 3 (May 2009), pp. 549-61.

With regard to economy, modern cosmopolitan conceptions of global democracy have often downplayed the material circumstances of veritable collective self-determination. Democracy involves *equivalent opportunities* for all affected persons to participate in and exercise control over societal regulatory processes. Liberal political theory has tended to interpret this precondition in narrow terms whereby all members of a polity enjoy equality of civil and political rights. However, as others have long stressed, effective democracy also requires socioeconomic justice, including an even distribution of material resources across ‘the people’. Economic inequalities are already glaring enough within most countries, thereby compromising national democracies. Yet these gulfs are still more extreme across planetary spaces, as calculations of a global Gini coefficient have demonstrated.⁴⁴ True, some modern cosmopolitans have stressed the importance of poverty alleviation on a global scale,⁴⁵ and a few have taken a further step of advocating progressively redistributive global taxation.⁴⁶ However, movement towards global-scale social justice as a basis of global democracy implies more far-reaching transformations of political economy than modern cosmopolitan arguments have generally contemplated.⁴⁷

With regard to ecology, modern cosmopolitanism has paralleled statism in its anthropocentrism. In other words, both of the principal models of global democracy on offer to date have, on a modern pattern, separated ‘society’ from ‘nature’, thereby neglecting to integrate their vision of people’s rule into an appreciation of the overall web of life.⁴⁸ Such an omission would seem unsustainable at a time of severe global ecological fragility. Surely global democracy cannot be constructed without consideration of today’s unprecedented ecological pressures. Against this backdrop certain thinkers have recently proposed notions of ‘intergenerational democracy’, ‘earth democracy’ and ‘Gaian democracies’.⁴⁹ However, ecological thinking has found little or no place in modern cosmopolitan argumentation,⁵⁰ let alone ideas of cosmopolitan democracy more particularly.

By highlighting these geographical, social-psychological, cultural, political-economic and ecological shortcomings, the preceding critique does not conclude that modern cosmopolitanism has nothing to offer a project of building global democracy. In particular this reaction against statism has the merit of recognising contemporary transformations in social structures of geography, governance and collective identity. Moreover, as elaborated

⁴⁴ B. Milanovic, *Worlds Apart: Measuring Global and International Inequality* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁴⁵ T.W. Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights: Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms* (Cambridge, Polity, 2002); D. Held, *Global Covenant: The Social Democratic Alternative to the Washington Consensus* (Cambridge, Polity, 2004).

⁴⁶ H. Patomäki, *Democratizing Globalization: The Leverage of the Tobin Tax* (London, Zed, 2001).

⁴⁷ F. Kurasawa, *The Work of Global Justice: Human Rights as Practices* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁴⁸ Lander, *op cit* (note 41).

⁴⁹ B. Holden, *Democracy and Global Warming* (London, Continuum, 2002), pp. 93-103; R. Madron and J. Jopling, *Gaian Democracies: Redefining Globalisation and People-Power* (Totnes, Green Books, 2003); V. Shiva, *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace* (Boston, MA: South End, 2005).

⁵⁰ P. Hayden, *Cosmopolitan Global Politics: The Pursuit of a Humane World Order* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2005), ch 5; A. Linklater, ‘Cosmopolitanism’, in A. Dobson and R. Eckersley (eds), *Political Theory and the Ecological Challenge* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 109-27.

later, concepts of global citizenship could contribute to a reinvented global democracy, especially if political rights and duties were reformulated to include an ecological dimension. Likewise, ideas of global human rights could retain an important place in global democracy, particularly if they were reformulated beyond a particularistic western-liberal conception so as to embrace more cross-cultural notions of life with dignity.⁵¹ In addition, ‘civil society’ could contribute to global democracy if it were understood not as a collection of modern bureaucratic citizen organisations (‘NGOs’), but in a transcultural sense as a political space outside official circles where people attempt through collective deliberation and action to shape societal rules.⁵² Suprastate parliaments might also have a role in global democracy in those situations where the affected people judge such institutions to be effective channels for popular participation and control. However, a more transformative vision of global democracy would not regard modern representative assemblies to be a necessary condition for, let alone the total extent of, people’s rule in global politics. Indeed, experience with macro-regional parliaments as spurs to democracy has been disappointing to date, and global legislatures could well elicit even less popular engagement.

Postmodern Global Democracies

So, what to do if the main offerings of political theory to date fall short of something that could with confidence be termed ‘global democracy’? One response could be to give up and conclude that ‘global democracy’ is an oxymoron.⁵³ In this vein some ‘anti-globalisation’ voices have argued that people’s rule is only possible in local spaces or, at a maximum extent, national arenas.⁵⁴ These critics maintain that democracy can only be salvaged through ‘de-globalisation’, i.e., undoing the increased transplanetary social connectivity that has developed over recent decades and unravelling most global-scale governance.⁵⁵

Yet such a prescription seems unviable, given the enormous forces that have pushed contemporary social relations into expanded global spaces. How to deny global ecological changes and global infectious diseases? How to return to 1950 levels – let alone 1850 levels – of global awareness and global exchanges? Even if judged desirable, major rollbacks of air travel, telecommunications, transplanetary capital flows, global entertainments, and so on appear most improbable. Hence, if deepened global relations are here to stay for the foreseeable future, a conclusion that global democracy is untenable would surrender the field to global oligarchy. Such an outcome – which contradicts most notions of a good society – must be resisted.

⁵¹ R. Panikkar and R. Panikkar, ‘Is the Notion of Human Rights a Western Concept?’ *Diogenes*, vol. 30, no. 120 (December 1982), pp. 75-102.

⁵² C. Hann and E. Dunn (eds), *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models* (London, Routledge, 1996).

⁵³ R.A. Dahl, ‘Can International Organizations Be Democratic? A Skeptic’s View,’ in I. Shapiro and C. Hacker-Cordón (eds), *Democracy’s Edges* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 19-36; D. Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity* (Cambridge, Polity, 2000); M. Koenig-Archibugi, ‘Is Global Democracy Possible?’ *European Journal of International Relations Online First* (16 June 2010).

⁵⁴ C. Hines, *Localization: A Global Manifesto* (London, Earthscan, 2000).

⁵⁵ W. Bello, *Deglobalization: Ideas for a New World Economy* (London, Zed, 2005).

The imperative is then to develop principles and practices that could take global democracy beyond both statism and modern cosmopolitanism and in the process avoid many of the shortcomings of these mainstream conceptions. In this vein some activists have in recent years experimented with novel spaces such as the World Social Forum.⁵⁶ Meanwhile certain thinkers have brought ideas of ‘deliberative democracy’ to global politics, although most formulations of that concept have not made a radical break with conventional approaches to civil society and the public sphere.⁵⁷ Other theorists have introduced notions of ‘cosmopolitanisms’ (in the plural), ‘critical cosmopolitanism’, ‘subaltern cosmopolitanism’, ‘anarcho-cosmopolitanism’, and ‘grassroots globalism’.⁵⁸ These labels may be suboptimal inasmuch as they may still resonate of the globalism and universalism that, as seen above, compromise modern cosmopolitanism. However, the appearance of all this new vocabulary indicates that a search is on to develop novel frameworks for global democracy.⁵⁹

The strategy of reinvention pursued here focuses on addressing each of the five main shortfalls of modern cosmopolitanism identified above. The resultant alternative could perhaps suitably be called *postmodern global democracies*. Such a vision is ‘postmodern’ in terms of its fuller accommodation of structural transformations that are currently taking social relations substantially beyond modern patterns: e.g., of country-centred geography, state-centred governance and nation-centred identity. ‘Democracies’ is designated in the plural so as to convey an expectation that diverse contexts would generate multiple concrete constructions to implement the principles that are laid out in the following pages.

In sum, a paradigm of postmodern global democracies suggests that, with respect to geography, global democracy be constructed on a principle of transscularity that avoids both the country-centrism of statism and the globalism of modern cosmopolitanism. With respect to identity, postmodern global democracies builds on a principle of plural solidarities that avoids both the nationalism of statism and the universalism of modern cosmopolitanism. With respect to culture, the alternative proffered here promotes a principle of transculturality that avoids the refusals to engage with diversity that mark both statism and modern

⁵⁶ T. Teivainen, ‘World Social Forum and Global Democratization: Learning from Porto Alegre’, *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 4 (August 2002), pp. 621-32; J. Sen *et al.*, *World Social Forum: Challenging Empires* (New Delhi, Viveka Foundation, 2004); J. Smith *et al.*, *Global Democracy and the World Social Forums* (London, Paradigm, 2007).

⁵⁷ J.S. Dryzek, *Deliberative Global Politics: Discourse and Democracy in a Divided World* (Cambridge, Polity, 2006); W. Smith and J. Brassett, ‘Deliberation and Global Governance: Liberal, Cosmopolitan, and Critical Perspectives’, *Ethics & International Affairs*, vol. 22, no. 1 (Spring 2008), pp. 69-92; Dryzek, *Foundations and Frontiers of Deliberative Governance* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁵⁸ S. Pollock *et al.*, ‘Cosmopolitanisms’, *Public Culture*, vol. 12, no. 3 (Fall 2000), pp. 577-89; W.D. Mignolo, ‘The Many Faces of Cosmo-Polis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism’, *Public Culture*, vol. 12, no. 3 (Fall 2000), pp. 721-48; R. Rao, *Third World Protest: Between Home and the World* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010); C. Gabay, ‘Anarcho-Cosmopolitanism: The Universalisation of the Equal Exchange’, *Global Society*, vol. 22, no. 2 (April 2008), pp. 197-216; T. Mertes, ‘Grass-Roots Globalism’, in G. Balakrishnan (ed.), *Debating Empire* (London, Verso, 2003), pp. 144-54.

⁵⁹ See also Marcos, *Our Word Is Our Weapon: Selected Writings* (New York, Seven Stories, 2001); M. Hardt and A. Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York, Penguin, 2004); J. Sen *et al.*, *World Social Forum: Challenging Empires* (New Delhi, Viveka Foundation, 2004); C. Mouffe, *On the Political* (London, Routledge, 2005).

cosmopolitanism. With respect to political economy, postmodern global democracies entails a principle of egalitarian transplanetary redistribution that is usually absent in both mainstream visions. With respect to ecology, the suggested postmodern framework invokes a principle of ‘eco-ship’ that avoids the anthropocentrism of both established models of global democracy. The rest of this essay elaborates on these five cornerstones of postmodern global democracies in turn.

Transscalarity

To begin with, then, transscalarity is a ‘postmodern’ way to imagine and enact political space. This principle rejects modern constructions whereby democracy is pursued in respect of *discrete* spaces at one or the other *level*. On such a pattern, statisticians have centred democracy on a national level, whereas modern cosmopolitans have centred democracy on a global level. Other privileging of a given level has occurred when feminists have suggested that democracy begins in the immediate sphere, when localists have centred democracy efforts on a district level, and when regionalists have centred democracy on, for example, an African or European level.

Taking a contrary approach, transscalar democracy treats all such spheres as aspects of one social space and focuses on the interconnections among the various dimensions. Spaces are appreciated in a relational rather than essentialised sense.⁶⁰ There is no separation of the international and the domestic, or of the global and the local. Transscalar politics address the global, regional, national, local and immediate arenas simultaneously and in fluctuating combinations. From this perspective democracy is not achieved at one or the other geographical ‘level’, but through fluid mobilisations across scales.

Moreover, since the concept of transscalarity regards social space in holistic terms, it avoids the modern penchant to identify a *primary* level of political action. A transscalar approach rejects the notion of hierarchies among (artificially separated) spaces. No scale – whether immediate, local, national, regional or global – is *a priori* privileged as being intrinsically more relevant, more powerful or more democratic than others. In particular, postmodern global democracies would refuse a subsidiarity principle, as arises in many accounts of ‘multi-level’ politics.⁶¹ That premise assumes that ‘the lowest level’ is *ipso facto* more democratic. Yet in practice some national states and global social movements can manifest considerably more people’s rule than certain local orders. In addition, a veritably transscalar perspective would avoid the vocabulary of ‘transnationalism’, inasmuch as that name continues to privilege the national sphere as the primary reference point.⁶² For all its

⁶⁰ L. Pries, ‘Multi-Spatial Entanglements: Essentialist and Relational Concepts of Social and Geographic Space’, Paper for conference ‘Le tournant global des sciences humaines’, Paris, 23-25 September 2010.

⁶¹ A. Føllesdal, ‘Survey Article: Subsidiarity’, *Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 6, no. 2 (June 1998), pp. 190-218.

⁶² S. Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005); S. Khagram and P. Levitt (eds), *The Transnational Studies Reader: Intersections & Innovations* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2007); S. Vertovec, *Transnationalism* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2009).

emphasis on crossing spaces, transnationalism still highlights the national, whereas the term transscularity avoids naming – and implicitly elevating – any particular scale.

Instead of centring on any level, democratic activism in a postmodern mode is always alert to opportunities (as well as dangers) in any arena and combination of arenas. Transscalar strategies also take into account that the pattern of those possibilities and perils across spheres is not fixed and so needs continual reassessment. At one moment it might be opportune to combine interventions in global and subnational governance institutions, while at another moment those same venues might present obstacles, so that attentions would better turn to sites on other scales such as households and regional social movements. In short, transscularity prescribes that democracy promoters should engage on whatever assemblage of scale(s) offers the greatest prospects of recognition, respect, voice and influence for a given public in a given situation.

Transscalar democracy is appropriate for a mode of governance that has in recent times become increasingly transscalar. Again, the holistic and relational term is invoked rather than ‘multi-level’, with its connotations of separate and hierarchically arranged tiers.⁶³ Public policy is today generally handled through networks that interconnect agencies with respective global, macro-regional, national, micro-regional and local jurisdictions and constituencies. Thus, for example, finance is governed through a host of global agencies such as the International Accounting Standards Board and the IMF; macro-regional arrangements such as the euro zone and the CFA franc; treasuries and central banks on a national scale; substate bodies such as the Alberta Securities Commission; and in certain cases local alternative currency schemes.⁶⁴ Transscalar governance similarly marks everything from competition policy to crime prevention, public health and sport. If regulatory processes have a transscalar character, then efforts to make them democratic would suitably be transscalar, too.

Transscalar democracy can be observed in various recent concrete developments. For example, the World Social Forum has since 2001 convened interconnected deliberations globally, regionally, nationally and locally.⁶⁵ Some new modes of labour activism have undertaken initiatives that concurrently involve immediate workplaces, national coalitions and global coordinations.⁶⁶ The peasant mobilisation La Vía Campesina has organised itself as interlinked global, regional, national, provincial and village formations.⁶⁷ Also in the vein of transscularity, various civil society actors have used so-called ‘boomerang’ tactics to reach

⁶³ As note 28 above.

⁶⁴ A. Baker *et al.* (eds), *Governing Financial Globalization: International Political Economy and Multi-Level Governance* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2005).

⁶⁵ As note 56 above.

⁶⁶ R. Munck and P. Waterman (eds), *Labour Worldwide in the Era of Globalization: Alternative Union Models in the New World Order* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 1999).

⁶⁷ A.A. Desmarais, *La Vía Campesina: Globalization and the Power of Peasants* (London, Pluto, 2007); S.M. Borras *et al.* (eds), *Transnational Agrarian Movements: Confronting Globalization* (Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2008).

out from local sites to global arenas in order to reverberate back on national policy.⁶⁸ In each of these cases and more, contemporary democratic activism is not centred at any level, be it the immediate circle *or* the local community *or* the micro-regional domain *or* the nation-state *or* the macro-regional apparatus *or* the global institution. Rather, transscalar democracy works holistically across spatial dimensions treated as a single political field.

Plural solidarities

Along with a reconstructed approach to social space, a second suggested core move in a turn from modern to postmodern framings of global democracy involves an alternative approach to questions of political identity. A principle of plural solidarities gives postmodern global democracies a different way of understanding and enacting ‘the people’. Both statism and modern cosmopolitanism presume that ‘the demos’ rests in one fixed way of collective being and belonging. In the case of statism the single mould of ‘the public’ is said to be the national community, whereas modern cosmopolitanism assumes that political subjects hold an overriding affiliation with a universal community of humankind.

In contrast, a notion of postmodern global democracies suggests that an individual can embrace multiple solidarities and that the relative weights of these attachments can fluctuate depending on the situation at hand. The shift from modern to postmodern global politics therefore involves a move from the singular *dêmos* to the plural *dêmoi*.⁶⁹ Postmodern global publics have ‘many faces’ of ‘diversality’.⁷⁰

For one thing, in postmodern global democracies a political subject can have both a national and a species affiliation. Thus a person could align with a national public in respect of, say, language policy and at the same time espouse species solidarity in respect of, say, disaster relief on the other side of the earth. A postmodern formulation does not demand, in the vein of conventional modern political theory, an either/or choice between communitarian nationalism and cosmopolitan universalism.⁷¹ Rather, this alternative framework allows for an interplay of both tendencies, with their relative weights shifting in accordance with the issue in question.

More than this, postmodern global democracies allows that the same individual could simultaneously hold several national identities. These nations can relate to existing territorial states (e.g. French, Indian, Nigerian) or they can include nations that lack their own state (e.g. Basque, Naga, Ogoni). Contemporary globalisation has also facilitated greater political

⁶⁸ M. Keck and K. Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1998). See also M. Osterweil, ‘Place-Based Globalism: Theorizing the Global Justice Movement’, *Development*, vol. 48, no. 2 (June 2005), pp. 23-8; C.C. Gould, ‘Self-Determination beyond Sovereignty: Relating Transnational Democracy to Local Autonomy’, *Journal of Social Philosophy*, vol. 37, no. 1 (Spring 2006), pp. 44-60; S. Waddell, *Global Action Networks: Creating Our Future Together* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

⁶⁹ J. Bohman, *Democracy across Borders: From Dêmos to Dêmoi* (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 2007).

⁷⁰ Mignolo, p. 745.

⁷¹ D. Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995).

activism in national diasporas (e.g. Palestinian, Tatar, Zimbabwean). Thus national solidarity has a considerably more complex character in postmodern frames of global democracy as compared with the neat coincidence of nation, country and state that has been presumed and pursued in modern politics.

More complicated still, in postmodern global democracies the same political subject can, along with one or more national identities, also affirm several nonterritorial solidarities. That is, species affiliation with humanity as a whole is not the only possible form of transborder solidarity in global politics. It is equally if not more possible to affirm nonterritorial affinities related to age, caste, class, disability, faith, gender, indigeneity, race, sexuality or vocation.⁷² In the vein of such ‘minoritarian cosmopolitans’⁷³ one witnesses *inter alia* global women’s movements, global professional associations, and global religious bonds.

Postmodern practices of plural solidarities are already evident in many areas of contemporary global politics. For example, more and more states now permit multiple national citizenships, and several states (e.g., Bolivia, South Africa) have in recent constitutions legally recognised a plurality of nationalities within their jurisdiction. Substate ethnic mobilisations have proliferated and intensified across the world and are now widely viewed as something to be accommodated rather than repressed. Diaspora networks have become more active than ever.⁷⁴ Other global affiliations have formed around the International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN), Disabled Peoples’ International (DPI), Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI), and the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA). At the same time, putting into practice solidarity across global humankind, appeals for humanitarian relief have generated unprecedented responses.

An appreciation of plural solidarities is also reflected in some recent institutional developments of formal global governance. For example, most intergovernmental, transgovernmental, interregional and translocal bodies have, particularly since the 1990s, elaborated arrangements to consult with non-national constituencies such as faith groups, indigenous peoples, women, workers and youth. In addition, diverse publics have recently gained formal representation in global governance with a burgeoning of so-called ‘multistakeholder’ arrangements.⁷⁵ Instances where non-state peoples have obtained board membership include the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) and the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for

⁷² F. Wilmer, *The Indigenous Voice in World Politics: Since Time Immemorial* (London, Sage, 1993); P. Antrobus, *The Global Women’s Movement: Origins, Issues and Strategies* (London, Zed, 2004); J.M.Rahier *et al.* (eds), *Global Currents of Blackness: Interrogating the African Diaspora* (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 2010). Also notes 40, 66, 67 above.

⁷³ Pollock *et al.*, p. 582.

⁷⁴ Cohen, *op cit* (note 40).

⁷⁵ Hallström and Boström, *op cit* (note 19); T. Macdonald, *Global Stakeholder Democracy: Power and Representation beyond Liberal States* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008).

Development (IAASTD).⁷⁶ Much more reconstruction of official governance would be required in order more fully to embody a principle of plural solidarities, but modest moves in this direction are evident.

Transculturality

Regarding the principle of transculturality, postmodern global democracies departs from both statism and modern cosmopolitanism in the way that it handles epistemological pluralism. Across the planet people ‘know the world’ in highly diverse ways.⁷⁷ To entail veritable collective self-determination, global democracy must be practiced in ways that are *meaningfully* democratic within each of these multiple life-worlds. How can this be done? One needs either to find a common denominator across the diversity or, if such a shared ‘superculture’ is not available, to negotiate through multifarious cultures in ways that leave all concerned experiencing the circumstances as democratic in their own terms.

Neither statist nor modern cosmopolitan approaches to global democracy offers viable answers of this kind. On the contrary, each in its own way sidesteps the issue of cultural diversity. Statist formulas imply that democratic national governments can ‘leave culture at home’ when they engage with one another, so that global governance itself is a culturally neutral arena of diplomats and technocrats. Yet diplomacy and technocracy do have specific cultural content and tend to subordinate and exclude other ways of knowing. Meanwhile mainstream cosmopolitanism assumes that, with ‘development’, all cultures will and should be subsumed in a (superior) western-modern life-world marked by secular, anthropocentric, techno-scientific, instrumental, individualist rationalism. Yet much of contemporary humanity feels alienated in and by western modernity, and so does not experience collective participation and control in that cultural frame. Thus both statism and modern cosmopolitanism contradict global democracy in that they arbitrarily deny recognition, respect, voice and influence to people who live outside western-modern terms of reference.

To provide greater inclusion of diverse life-worlds, a paradigm of postmodern global democracies could adopt a principle of transculturality. This approach differs from ‘multiculturalism’, a perspective which tends to divide a society into neatly circumscribed groups (by faith, nationality, race, etc.) and then to prescribe ways that cultures separated on these lines can co-exist in mutual tolerance.⁷⁸ In contrast, transculturality holds that maps of life-worlds are substantially blurred, with considerable diversity within and mixture across purported cultural categories. In this vein the term ‘transculturality’ is also preferred over

⁷⁶ G.W. Brown, ‘Multisectoralism, Participation, and Stakeholder Effectiveness: Increasing the Role of Nonstate Actors in the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria’, *Global Governance*, vol. 15, no. 2 (April-June 2009), pp. 169-78; I. Scoones, ‘The Politics of Global Assessments: The Case of the IAASTD’, in J. Gaventa and R. Tandon (eds), *Globalizing Citizens: New Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion* (London, Zed, 2010), pp. 96-115.

⁷⁷ B. de Sousa Santos (ed.), *Another Knowledge is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies* (London, Verso, 2007).

⁷⁸ W. Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Citizenship* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001).

‘interculturality’, inasmuch as the latter vocabulary could be read to imply relations between discrete groups (‘inter’-‘cultures’).

As understood here, politics of transculturality have five main pillars: recognition of hybridity; celebration of diversity; cultivation of humility; promotion of listening; and pursuit of reciprocal learning and change. As just described, recognition of hybridity entails an appreciation that culture is not manifested in neatly bounded and mutually exclusive populations.⁷⁹ In global politics as actually lived, culture involves complex intersections rather than discrete groups (of whatever kind). Postmodern global democracies accepts and accommodates this epistemological hybridity, rather than trying to box political subjects into artificially homogeneous cultural categories (‘Asian’, ‘Islamic’, ‘Western’, etc.).

A second cornerstone of transculturality, celebration of diversity, suggests that, in a viable global democracy for contemporary society, epistemological pluralism is not only recognised, but also positively embraced and actively promoted. For postmodern global democracies cultural difference is not regarded as a problem for, let alone a threat to, people’s rule. Rather, exploration of diverse life-worlds is seen as an opportunity to develop new insights, to open wider potentials, to discover alternative answers. With this promotion of multiple paths, political subjects in postmodern global democracies are invited to craft modes of participation and control that offer them a sense of meaningful involvement. In many if not most cases diverse democratic practices towards the same global issue can be pursued side by side in complementary fashion. It is not necessary – and on the contrary anti-democratic – to force all global democracy into a single cultural mould, be it a world parliament, indigenous storytelling or *jihad*. Indeed, the co-existence of multiple democratic practices stimulates debates about the meaning of democracy, and without such ongoing provocations any would-be democracy can degenerate into empty ritual.

True, situations arise where culturally diverse expressions of democracy could clash in global politics: where different understandings of human dignity, collective participation and accountable authority contradict one another. In these circumstances a politics of transculturality prescribes an initial response of humility. Instead of immediately presuming the superiority of their own position, parties to transcultural communication and negotiation acknowledge that they each have severely limited comprehension of contrasting life-worlds. Awe at one’s ignorance of most human experience, and wonder at the sheer scope of human creativity, can check impetuous dismissals of contrary cultural positions. In this vein postmodern global democracies could adapt the Pacific islands concept of *noa*. This notion designates the capability and responsibility of parties in conflict to enter their mutual conversations with maximal detachment of their perceptions, thoughts and feelings from prior commitments and a predetermined agenda.⁸⁰ Certainly humility in postmodern global democracies entails an abandonment of any and all ‘civilising missions’ whereby a self-designated ‘advanced culture’ absorbs supposed ‘backward peoples’. In particular, western

⁷⁹ J. Nederveen Pieterse, *Globalization and Culture: Global Mélange* (Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

⁸⁰ Halapua and Halapua, *op cit* (note 42).

rationalism becomes one party to global dialogues rather than the universal reference point and historical instructor.⁸¹

Humility facilitates a fourth cornerstone of transculturality in postmodern global democracies, namely that of listening. Capacity to listen across diversities is a key skill in postmodern global democracies that has been strikingly underdeveloped in modern global politics. Indeed, the ability to listen is arguably as important for global democracy as knowledge of legal instruments and policymaking processes. Veritable listening goes beyond polite nods (while one is mainly preparing one's own next words). Transcultural listening entails concentrated attention that more fully hears, empathises with, and responds to the other. This deeper listening not only enlarges a listener's understanding of their interlocutor's experience of democracy, but also increases reflexive awareness of their own cultural position. On this basis parties are better equipped to develop actions on global issues that show respect and care for epistemological diversities and leave space for others to pursue different responses with which they may be more comfortable.

Finally, transculturality presumes that building global democracy is a process of ongoing reciprocal learning and change among diverse life-worlds. In a postmodern conception, societal knowledge frames – including the symbols and rituals of democracy – are not static 'traditions'. The inevitable interplay of diversities generates continual cultural reconstructions. A transcultural outlook not only appreciates this dynamism, but positively welcomes the creative potentials offered by mutual transformations. It is understood that history – and global democracy within history – does not converge on an endpoint: whether of a statist, modern-cosmopolitan or any other design. Postmodern global democracies too would be an interlude en route to other forms of people's rule.

Egalitarian distribution

The preceding two cornerstones of postmodern global democracies – plural solidarities and transculturality – have highlighted ideational aspects of an alternative paradigm of people's rule in contemporary society. However, democratic governance of global affairs also has material facets. If political subjects are to pursue effective participation and control in a more global world, then it is not enough that their various identities and epistemologies are acknowledged. In addition, this recognition-in-principle must be complemented with a political economy that provides all parties with sufficient resources to exercise due involvement in global affairs.

Indeed, many of the previously discussed solidarities in global politics have been formed substantially around shared experiences of material deprivation. Economic marginalisation has helped to forge global political mobilisation among Dalits, indigenous peoples, peasants, persons living with disabilities, shack dwellers, women, young people, etc.

⁸¹ D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000).

In principle democratic struggles for socioeconomic justice could also involve global-scale alliances across such groups.⁸² Such cross-sectional coalitions have already appeared *inter alia* at the World Social Forum and in the global campaign to cancel the debts of low-income countries.

In postmodern global democracies the distribution of resources arguably would need to be such that all constituents have broadly equivalent opportunities to exercise voice and influence.⁸³ Legal and moral equality of the affected persons are not enough for veritable democracy unless they are accompanied by a certain material equality. This is not to require that every member of global publics has access to exactly the same types and amounts of resources. However, it is to emphasise that substantial material inequalities generally translate into political marginalisations of those with fewer means, and in turn such political subordinations tend to perpetuate if not deepen the material inequalities.

This correlation between economic resources and political possibilities has prompted many struggles for modern state-centred democracy to seek a progressive redistribution of resources across the relevant country's population. In Western Europe and North America underclasses used universal suffrage and labour mobilisations to promote the development of redistributive welfare states. In much of Eastern Europe and Asia the advent of communist 'people's democracy' went hand in hand with land reform. Twentieth-century decolonisation struggles rested largely on promises (often poorly fulfilled in practice) of socioeconomic justice. Recent democratic rejuvenations in Latin America have involved redistributive agendas in Bolivia, Brazil and elsewhere. Likewise current democratic strivings in Africa and the Middle East have generally targeted the kleptocracy of existing authoritarian regimes. To be sure, different democracy movements conceive of 'fair distribution' in different ways, accord it different priorities, and pursue it with different strategies. Yet the general objective of greater socioeconomic equity has been so consistent as to seem integral to modern national democracy.

It therefore seems incongruous that, as noted earlier, modern cosmopolitan visions of global democracy have on the whole underplayed economic dimensions of the question. Why would equitable distribution of resources across a public be less vital when democracy involves supranational spaces? The development of postmodern global democracies presents an opportunity to correct this neglect. Postmodern global democracies could embrace a host of concrete measures for progressive global-scale redistribution: for instance, alternative currencies, changes to global regimes of intellectual property and taxation, deconsumption by global middle classes, equitable tourism, fair trade schemes, and a globalised universal basic

⁸² N. Bullard (ed.), 'Special Issue: The Movement of Movements', *Development*, vol. 48, no. 2 (June 2005); S.C. Byrd and L. Jasny, 'Transnational Movement Innovation and Collaboration: Analysis of World Social Forum Networks', *Social Movement Studies*, vol. 9, no. 4 (November 2010), pp. 355-72.

⁸³ P. Bardhan *et al.* (eds), *Globalization and Egalitarian Distribution* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2006).

income.⁸⁴ The precise measures to pursue are a matter for further deliberation, but the principle of egalitarian global distribution is indispensable for meaningful global democracy.

Eco-ship

Yet it is not enough that postmodern global democracies would build on and extend the concern with socioeconomic justice that has marked modern democracy of the nation-state in the twentieth century. In addition, this alternative paradigm would embed democracy in a concern with ecological integrity, something that has been decidedly absent in modern constructions of public participation and control. Such ecologically attuned democracy would envelop social democracy within a consciousness of, and care for, the full web of life.

Criticisms of the ecologically destructive logics of modernity have been enunciated since the early days of rationalist social relations with their anthropocentric, techno-scientific, instrumentalist orientations.⁸⁵ However, the full implications of these critiques could be downplayed so long as modernity did not test the carrying capacities of planet earth. Yet these limits became strikingly visible in the 1980s with dangerous levels of stratospheric ozone depletion. Since then the urgency has escalated with global-scale climate change, urbanisation, losses of biodiversity, growing pressures on energy and mineral supplies, prospective shortages of fresh water and arable soil, and possible redefinitions of life itself with rapidly developing biotechnology and nanotechnology.

Ecological durability of the planet can only become still more strained as the human population reaches 9 billion within the next generation. These unprecedented numbers of people will have unprecedented technological capacities to make unprecedented demands on the natural environment. In this situation a perpetuation of modern blindness to ecology (as reflected also in modern democratic practices) could create enormous damage, perhaps even to the point of undermining the conditions that make human life possible. Hence habits of isolating democracy from ecology must be reversed.

Full elaboration of a postmodern construction of global ecological democracies lies beyond the scope of the present discussion, but two general starting points can be identified here. The first is a need to undo the modern separation of society from nature, as reflected in practices of democracy-outside-nature that characterises both statism and modern cosmopolitanism. The life-worlds of various classical civilisations and many indigenous peoples show ways that social relations can be steeped in ecological awareness and

⁸⁴ H. Patomäki, *Democratising Globalisation: The Leverage of the Tobin Tax* (London, Zed, 2001); M. Frankman, 'Beyond the Tobin Tax: Global Democracy and a Global Currency', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 581, no. 1 (May 2002), pp. 62-73; S. Aliprandi, *Creative Commons: A User Guide* (copyleft-Italia, 2010); J. Bowes (ed.), *The Fair Trade Revolution* (London, Pluto, 2011).

⁸⁵ E. de Jonge, *Spinoza and Ecology: Challenging Traditional Approaches to Environmentalism* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004).

sensitivity. Postmodern global democracies can likewise reinvent people's rule so that it is conducted in the frame of, and with deference to, the overall living world.

Such deference requires a second ecologically oriented reconstruction of social relations, namely, away from anthropocentrism. Modernity – and modern democracy within this social formation – has rested on an implicit premise that the rest of nature exists to serve the human project. Reflecting anthropocentrism, modern citizenship has constructed the rights and duties of the political subject as a question for relations among human beings alone, without regard to their situation within wider nature. Indeed, historically as well as etymologically the term 'citizenship' is derived from the city, a human settlement that is deliberately situated outside and above 'the state of nature'. Seeking to replace anthropocentrism with eco-centrism, some Amazonian peoples have coined the term *florestania* ('forestizenship') to designate a polity where rights are due and duties are owed in the context of a whole living world.⁸⁶ The new 'plurinational' government of Bolivia, with a strong base in indigenous peoples, has sought to bring its 'Law of Rights of Mother Earth' to the United Nations and other global forums.⁸⁷ Postmodern global democracies could likewise be practised within a frame of 'eco-ship', in which human rights were delimited by ecological needs and human obligations were framed in a context of ecological care.

Conclusion

This essay has explored how 'people's rule' could be aptly conceptualised in the face of contemporary more global social relations. It has been argued that the two principal visions of global democracy on offer in mainstream thought – namely, statism and modern cosmopolitanism – each have severe inherent limitations. A critique of these approaches has formed a springboard to develop an alternative conception termed 'postmodern global democracies'. Such a perspective urges that governance of global affairs could be suitably democratised around principles of transscalar geography, plural identity, transcultural knowledge, egalitarian economy and holistic ecology.

Of course the argument developed in this overview is far from finished. For one thing, a fuller account of postmodern global democracies would need to expand further on each of the five main pillars, as well as on the relationships between them. In addition, subsequent elaborations would need to integrate the vision of people's rule presented here into a wider conception of a good society. In the process one would have to consider the connections (and confront possible trade-offs) between democracy and other core values such as material well-being, moral decency and peace. Moreover, the present writing has only skimmed over questions concerning the concrete institutional operationalisation of the principles of postmodern global democracies. Also deferred in the current discussion is a strategic analysis

⁸⁶ M.T. Maldonado, *Florestania. A cidadania dos povos da floresta* (São Paulo, Saraiva, 2009 6th edn).

⁸⁷ 'Bolivia at UN: "We Cannot Command Nature Except by Obeying Her"', posted at http://climateandcapitalism.com/?p=4295&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+climateandcapitalism%2FpEtD+%28Climate+and+Capitalism%29.

of forces in the contemporary political scene that favour and oppose a promotion of the proposed vision. Yet these further considerations would take this essay to book length and more. The more modest objective of the present exercise has been to think through core principles of global democracy and thereby lay groundwork for more extensive analysis and action.

Further work on reinventing global democracy is vital. Social structures and power alignments in world politics are shifting. These far-reaching transformations call for commensurate radical reconstructions of democracy that go beyond both statism and modern cosmopolitanism. Such a move – involving as it does an interrogation and revision of various first principles – is not always comfortable. However, a failure to rise to challenges of reinventing global democracy could deeply compromise the future of democracy itself.