Beyond Statism and Deliberation: Questioning Ecological Democracy through Eco-Anarchism and Cosmopolitics

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ABSTRACT

This paper decentres the predominance of statism and deliberation in ecological democracy scholarship. We use insights from eco-anarchism and cosmopolitics to identify democratic configurations beyond capitalism and its entanglement with the nation-state. These configurations are premised on the idea that sustainability transformation not only implies a move beyond capitalism and the nation-state, but might comprise their dismantling. We propose and apply an analytical framework encompassing the dimensions actors, praxis and processes and institution(s) to contrast these three political theories and bring forward a diversity of democratic praxes that revolve around the generation of autonomy and the building of multispecies political communities. Finally, we discuss transformation possibilities from within the capitalist nation-state and propose research directions for post-statist, autonomous and diverse ecological democracies.

KEYWORDS

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1. INTRODUCTION

There is growing social scientific consensus that deepening social-ecological destruction constitutes a central feature of modern capitalist societies (Urry 2010; Newell 2011). Similarly, a myriad of political scientists has scrutinised capitalism's historical and contemporary intertwinement with liberal democracies and the nation-state (Jessop 1982; Streeck 2011; Mitchell 2013; Brand 2016). Fundamental tensions between democracy and capitalism have been noted by a variety of scholarly traditions ever since Marx described capitalism's political architecture. For example, Pichler and colleagues note that:

> [o]n the one hand, democracy allows for a politicization of all conditions in society … while on the other hand, it excludes decision-making on the fundamental material conditions of societies, that is, private property and decision-making in the economic sphere (Pichler et al. 2018: 8).

In this perspective, the enacting of democracy is limited to a narrow public sphere, whilst the 'economy' – considered private but responsible for the greatest social-ecological impacts – is almost completely removed from political contest, democratic responsibility and popular control (Plumwood 1995; Deriu 2012; Pichler et al. 2018).

What follows from such analyses is a growing awareness that deliberate sustainability transformation not only calls for democratic renewal (Pickering et al. 2022), but simultaneously for fundamental reconsiderations of capitalism (Newell 2011). In some readings, these transformations are considered to actually require overcoming capitalism and the nation-state through new forms of democratic praxis (Goetz et al. 2020; Feola et al. 2021). Yet, it remains to be explored which theoretical basis and practical experiences can fruitfully undergird such democratic reconfiguration (Goetz et al. 2020). This paper contributes to these ongoing debates by examining how three theoretical approaches – ecological democracy, eco-anarchism and cosmopolitics – can enrich and diversify conceptualisations of democracy to inform sustainability transformation beyond capitalism and the nation-state.

Ecological democracy scholarship (ED) has taken up the challenge of combining ecological and democratic values to imagine emancipatory collective futures. However, ED remains constrained by statist and deliberative frameworks and lacks clear strategic considerations on how to overcome capitalist structures and institutions in practice.[2] Building on recent ED scholarship and extending its critiques, we argue that both statism and deliberation pose limitations in thinking about sustainability transformation beyond capitalism

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2. Deliberation is defined as 'mutual communication that involves weighing and reflecting on preferences, values, and interests regarding matters of common concern' (Bächtiger et al. 2018: 2). Statism refers to a 'pervasive, historically contingent organisational logic that valourises and naturalises sovereign, coercive, and hierarchical relationships within and beyond state spaces' (Ince and Barrera de la Torre 2016: 10).

and the nation-state. Statist tendencies downplay the latter's structural role in reproducing a capitalist socio-economy and deepening social-ecological destruction, thereby impeding the theorisation of anti-statist democratic configurations and limiting the appreciation of how movements pursue autonomous horizons in-against-and-beyond the nation-state. Similarly, ED's sustained focus on deliberation tends to obscure other political praxes, such as overt conflict or praxis that concerns human–other-than-human communities beyond deliberation.

This paper aims to expand ongoing debates on ED and sustainability transformation beyond statism and deliberation. We explore what ED, eco-anarchism and cosmopolitics can contribute to a conceptual and practical renewal of democracy for sustainability transformation. The latter two theories, in their own right, question statism and deliberation, allowing us to assess how they can enrich the variety of visions on ED that exist. This conversation builds on a conceptualisation of democracy in terms of autonomy, which is antithetical to both the nation-state and capitalism. Our discussion is structured according to an analytical framework comprising the dimensions of actors, processes-praxis and institution(s). This framework enables us to systematically assess the relative strengths, weaknesses and complementarities of these three approaches. In this paper we are not interested in taking position against liberal democracy, economic markets or nation-states *per se*. Neither do we aim to 'settle' debates on the actors that should be taken into account, the political praxes that are legitimate or the institutions that are adequate for ecological democracies. Rather, we propose novel elements to those debates with the purpose of expanding the scope of the topics and practices that ED could encompass.

The next section introduces ED, eco-anarchism and cosmopolitics. We then describe our conceptualisation of democracy and introduce our analytical framework. We use the framework's dimensions to compare the three theories and highlight their contributions and relative strengths. The last section summarises our main findings and develops its implications in terms of the political translation of diverse political praxes. We conclude with questions for the exploration, analysis and strategic fostering of post-statist, autonomous and diverse ecological democracies.

2. ECOLOGICAL DEMOCRACY, ECO-ANARCHISM AND COSMOPOLITICS

Ecological democracy

ED attempts to combine 'environmental concern and engagement on the one hand, and democratic legitimacy and procedure on the other' (Schlosberg et al. 2019: 1). Pickering et al. (2020) distinguish ecological from environmental democracy by highlighting the former's (i) ecocentric approach to

human–other-than-human values; (ii) foundational critique of liberal democracy and (iii) theory of change entailing critical stances towards the nation-state, multilateralism and capitalism. Advocates of ED 'argue for a radical break with the neoliberal state and transformation toward decentralised, organic and grassroots democratic practices that embody ecological values and give greater weight to the interest of nonhumans and future generations' (Schlosberg et al. 2019: 1).

ED's first wave emerged in the 1990s and mostly struggled on the institutional terrain (Eckersley 2019). This wave was universalist and cosmopolitan and became associated with ideas of ecological rationality and representation, as well as a growing focus on deliberation and the ecological transformation of the nation-state. The bulk of green political theory in the 1980s–90s was explicitly anti-statist and anti-authoritarian, drawing also on eco-anarchist thought. This has caused a reaction by political theorists to 'bring the state back in' (Eckersley 2004), inaugurating what Melo-Escrihuela (2015) has called ED's 'statist turn'.

Eckersley (2019: 10) identifies another, new materialist wave that is more communitarian and concerns the 'redirection of the material practices of everyday life to create counter-flows of democratic power and more sustainable systems and flows of food, energy, water, and materials through local communities and environments'. Today, more attention is paid to the material politics of practice, environmental activism and collective democratic experiments (Schlosberg and Coles 2016). This wave, which remains minoritarian in ED, has set out to reconnect with elements of (eco)anarchism and started to embrace concepts and visions of cosmopolitics. Among the eco-anarchist tendencies in ED, for example, Coles (2016) proposes a theory of revolutionary co-optation that builds on the power of grassroots democratic practices, while Lepori (2019) discusses fugitive democracy and interrogates the emergent formation of ephemeral *demoi*. Among cosmopolitical explorations in ED, for instance, Winter (2019) addresses the decolonisation of the concept of dignity by drawing on Māori philosophical concepts. Tschakert et al. (2020) bring in relational ontologies in their discussion of multispecies justice, while Whyte (2020) promotes a kinship-based understanding of environmental justice which builds on moral bonds between humans and other-than-humans.

Eco-anarchism

Eco-anarchism is an umbrella term enveloping a variety of perspectives that extend the classical anarchist rejection of hierarchies and domination to the other-than-human realm and strive for the creation of free ecological societies where humans and other-than-humans alike can thrive (GAIA 2002; Pellow 2014). Beyond its ecological dimension, eco-anarchism distinguishes itself from 'classical' anarchism in its re-actualisation and transformation of

fundamental anarchist tropes to contemporary settings of ever-deepening so-
cial-ecological destruction. As such, it emerges from a double disillusionment
– shattering the anarchist illusion of a 'Global Revolution' as well as the envi-
ronmentalist illusion of 'Saving the Earth' (Anonymous 2011).

Eco-anarchism's main strands include social ecology[3] (Bookchin 1982),
bioregionalism (Scott-Cato 2011), anarcho-primitivism[4] (Green Anarchy
Collective 2014) and insurrectionary (eco)anarchism (Dunlap 2020). Although
these strands diverge with regard to their (a) diagnostic frames (specific analy-
sis of hierarchy and designation of responsibility), (b) action frames (political
strategy, action repertoire) and (c) envisioned collective futures (structure of
anarchist societies), they all contribute relevant insights for renewed dialogue
with ED. In this paper, we select elements from these strands according to
their relevance for our discussion while refraining from assessing what ten-
sions might arise from such a diverse eco-anarchist political strategy.

Cosmopolitics

Cosmopolitics draws on post-development studies, science and technology
studies, indigenous studies and posthumanism to tackle the exclusions that lie
at the heart of modern politics: the exclusion of other-than-humans and certain
categories of humans. Cosmopolitics' theoretical bet is that the simultaneous
deepening (from worldviews to worlds) and widening (from some humans to a
cosmos including other-than-humans) of what politics can possibly be has the
potential to reach collective decisions that are more respectful of the diversity
of existing worlds.

Deriving from Western modernity's ontology and bolstered by modern sci-
ence, modern politics was founded on the separation between 'Nature' and
'Humanity' and the distinction between those humans who are worthy of par-
ticipating in politics and those who are not (Stengers 2000; de la Cadena 2010).
The idea of a unified cosmos – a single political world that is transcendent
and therefore beyond discussion – is strongly contested by the cosmopolitical
approach, which postulates that modernity's ontology has nothing universal
(Descola 2013). Rather than inhabiting the same world, which we merely see
differently, we inhabit a pluriverse: a plurality of 'partially connected hetero-
geneous socionatural worlds' (de la Cadena 2010: 360). In the absence of a
pre-established common world, cosmopolitics proclaims the need to *politically*

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3. Social ecology is usually considered as part of eco-anarchism although its main proponent,
    Murray Bookchin, distanced himself from anarchism towards the end of his life. Ever since
    the 1970s, Bookchin has been criticised by other anarchists for his support of participatory
    local democratic governments.

4. Although anarcho-primitivism has been extensively debated in anarchist circles for decades,
    these debates have only recently started to be picked up in academic circles (for examples,
    see Dunlap 2022 and el-Ojeili and Taylor 2020. We thank one of the reviewers for drawing
    our attention to the manifold tensions and debates within eco-anarchism.

negotiate ontological disagreements between worlds or between heterogeneous collectives composed of humans and other-than-humans (Stengers 2015; Blaser and de la Cadena 2018).

For Stengers (2005: 995), cosmos refers to 'the unknown constituted by these multiple, divergent worlds, and to the articulations of which they could eventually be capable'. From this viewpoint, a common world becomes a possible outcome rather than a given starting point for political disagreement:

> [Cosmopolitics is] a matter of imbuing political voices with the feeling that they do not master the situation they discuss, that the political arena is peopled with shadows of that which does not have, cannot have or does not want to have a political voice (Stengers 2005: 996).

3. FRAMEWORK TO ASSESS DEMOCRATIC THEORIES

We conceptualise democracy as an *infinite, collective, continuous and practical interrogation on how to live together based on the presupposition of equality and the generation of autonomy.*[5] While any definition of democracy foregrounds specific elements and obscures others, the three dimensions of democracy that form the core of our analytical framework comprise its (i) actors, (ii) processes and praxis and (iii) institution(s).[6] These dimensions structure our analysis and comparison of ED, eco-anarchism and cosmopolitics. Table 1 summarises our framework's dimensions and analytical questions.

We understand autonomy as a collective process in which political communities – composed of humans and other-than-humans – set their norms, institutions and limits *themselves* rather than have these imposed by some external justification – be it state, market or gods (Castoriadis 2010). Böhm et al. (2010: 19) define autonomy as a process 'governed by self-established rules, self-determination, self-organization and self-regulation practices particularly vis-à-vis the state and capitalist social, economic and cultural relations'. Framing democracy in relation to autonomy is productive for three reasons. First, it allows for asking a set of analytical questions (notably about the nation-state and what to do with it), questioning how political communities envision, institute and maintain autonomy, as well as how autonomy is contested by incumbent institutions. Second, it claims autonomy in both its collective and individual dimensions – especially in their interrelations (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006), refusing that a liberal-individualist understanding of the

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5.   This conceptualisation draws on insights from political ecology (Swyngedouw and Ernstson 2018), degrowth (Deriu 2012), political philosophy (Castoriadis 2010), critical geography (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006), (eco)feminism (Plumwood 1995), anarchism (Bookchin 1994) and autonomous Marxism (Holloway 2010).

6.   Institution(s) refers both to (i) the norms, values and practices that acquire stability at a given time in a political community (result of diverse political praxes – 'institutions') and (ii) the collective process of instituting autonomy through these political praxes ('institution').

concept be its only legitimate manifestation. Third, it highlights democracy as antithetical to both the nation-state and capitalism, which we understand as intertwined totalising processes that continuously generate heteronomy, i.e. situations wherein the rules, norms and limits that govern society are attributed to an external authority that cannot be questioned or changed (Castoriadis 2010).

Inspired by Castoriadis (2010) and Stengers (2015), we understand autonomy not as a utopian end stage of democratic societies that would be liberated from the heteronomies of the nation-state and capitalism, but as a sustained process of instituting autonomous forms of multispecies collective living and becoming. In this view, democracy consists of the attachment to and enactment of autonomy-generating processes in worlds that are given form by the entanglements between the generation of heteronomy and autonomy. Autonomy exists in and for itself: it is not only a political horizon (i.e. that of a society where autonomy-generating tendencies have become hegemonic); it is simultaneously the very movement in this direction. Rather than merely positing an 'escape' from the heteronomies of capitalism and the nation-state, autonomy encompasses the movements that (i) deny their operational logic, (ii) accept the tensions this denial provokes and (iii) explore ways to navigate them. Following our conceptualisation, democracy provides the tools, mechanisms and procedures for this triple movement.

4. DIALOGUE BETWEEN POLITICAL THEORIES

In this section, we compare insights in ED, eco-anarchism and cosmopolitics. The analysis is informed by the framework introduced in Table 1, the findings are summarised in Table 2.

Actors

ED: inclusion and representation
The question of the demos – the simultaneous subject and source of democratic rule – and especially its boundaries, is foundational to ecological democracy. Theorists have emphasised the difficulty of 'identifying' *demoi* in a context of global social-ecological crises (Eckersley 2017), and questioned the democratic legitimacy of the very founding moment of the demos. ED generally constitutes the demos 'through a combination of the land ethic of Aldo Leopold and the '"all-affectedness" principle' (Lepori 2019: 77). There is a clear discrepancy between a theoretical holistic biotic community and a practical community (or its institutions) that integrates the interests of other-than-human nature and future generations. While innovative proposals for integration exist (e.g. Baber and Bartlett 2019), this discrepancy is usually

Table 1. Analytical framework for assessing democratic theories

Dimension	Topic	Analytical questions
ACTORS	*Theoretical political community*	Which actors are considered to take part in politics – discursively, materially, symbolically? What is the extent of political recognition of reciprocity?
	Practical manifestation	Which actors are recognised to 'do' political work in practice?
PROCESSES PRAXIS		What is considered legitimate political praxis in (non) deliberate transformations? Whose praxis, what praxis can find political translation? How, by whom, are praxes politically legitimated?
INSTITUTION(S)	*Envisioning autonomy*	What is the stance of political communities with regard to existing (nation-state) institutions?
	Instituting autonomy	How do political communities institute autonomous principles and practices?
	Maintaining autonomy	What relationships do members of political communities maintain with their institutions?
	Contesting autonomy	What are the practical tensions between new institutions and existing (nation-state) institutions?

Table 2. Trends in ED, contributions from eco-anarchism and cosmopolitics

Dimension	Topic	*Ecological democracy*	*Eco-anarchism*	*Cosmopolitics*
ACTORS	**Theoretical political community** *Which actors are considered to take part in politics?*	holistic biotic community (ecocentrism)	biocentrism/ecocentrism: animal and earth liberation, interdependence of living beings	relational inclusion of marginalised humans and of other-than-humans beyond inclusion, living together with difference and with non-political voices
	Practical manifestation *Which actors are recognised to do political work?*	humans representing other-than-human nature, future generations and their perceived interests	humans rooted in specific ecosystems: deep listening and learning about resistance and organisation	humans recognising and making visible entanglements, interdependences and communities of humans-other-than-humans

Dimension	Topic	*Ecological democracy*	*Eco-anarchism*	*Cosmopolitics*
PROCESSES **PRAXIS**	**Praxis** *What is legitimate political praxis?*	deliberation through discourse and dialogue inclusion and representation in deliberative arenas prefiguration	prefiguration: building heterarchical multispecies relationships based on mutual aid, solidarity and decentralisation oppositional direct action: resisting social-ecological destruction and dismantling (infra) structures of capitalism deserting capitalism and the nation-state	slowing down politics: unsettling common understandings of politics, its actors and its objectives challenging the political theory that bans other-than-humans from politics
INSTITU-TION(S)	**Envisioning autonomy** *What is the stance of a political community with regards to nation-state institutions?*	critical, but persisting statism	against the nation-state, its naturalisation and statism's persisting myths	against the single ontology of politics rooted in Western modernity and upheld by liberal democracy
	Instituting autonomy *How do political communities institute autonomous principles and practices?*	under-analysed	free (multispecies) association, creation of autonomous spaces communes (direct democracy), possibly federated at higher organisational levels	redefining the baseline of the political designing new political scenes: staging multispecies encounters, cultivating recognition and ontological disagreements
	Maintaining autonomy *What relationships do members of a political community maintain with their institutions?*	under-analysed	spontaneity vs. structure: informal voluntary association and mechanisms to keep hierarchies and bureaucratisation in check	experimenting with the technical and procedural dimensions of cosmopolitical democracy
	Contesting autonomy *What are the tensions between new and existing institutions?*	under-analysed	nation-state repression or co-optation: illegibility to authorities and autonomous self-defence mechanisms	accommodation of elements that are not threatening to existing nation-state institutions

addressed through the inclusion and representation of actors and|or their perceived interests in arenas of deliberative political negotiation.

As such, much of ED scholarship remains confined to a liberal conceptualisation of autonomous individuals whose political agency lies in their capacity for discursive deliberation based on reason and speech. ED under-acknowledges the ways in which other-than-human political work simultaneously enables, constrains and conditions 'human' politics. Disch (2016) challenges the very autonomy of the deliberative subject by pointing to the primacy of alliances in politics, i.e. the recognition that 'actors never act alone' (Marres 2013: 412).

Disch (2016) and Marres (2013) critique both the premises and terms of deliberation. They problematise ED's assumption that presents the boundary between human and other-than-human worlds as the quintessential political boundary, along with its proposal to overcome the latter through extended forms of interspecies communication and human interpretation of signals emanating from other-than-humans. ED's idea of humans acting as mediators of other-than-human interests is considered especially problematic, since conceiving of deliberation in terms of intersubjective communication actually corroborates the anthropocentrism ED aims to overcome.

A great diversity of political work is carried out – through entanglements of other-than-human and human actors – by entities that do not share human expectations and practices of intersubjective communication. This 'material participation' in politics is premised on the symmetrical treatment of other-than-humans and humans with regard to their capacity for legitimate political action (Disch 2016). However, this praxis and its materialities are still often unnoticed by human understandings of politics. The consideration of other-than-human nature and future generations is widely accepted to be foundational to ED (Pickering et al. 2020), and new materialist ED enters into the analysis of humans' immersion in other-than-human natural systems (Schlosberg and Coles 2016). Similarly, recent debates about multispecies justice consider relational ontologies and start from the premise that human are not separate nor separable from other-than-human nature (Tschakert et al. 2020). These examples notwithstanding, the majority of ED scholars' consideration of other-than-human actors (e.g. in terms of inclusion and representation) do not allow for adequate recognition of their capacity for legitimate political work.

Eco-anarchism

Although eco-anarchism aims to overcome both anthropocentric and androcentric accounts of the world, it has an ambivalent relationship with ecocentric and biocentric approaches that propose to deconstruct Western modernity's dualisms. Hall (2011) argues that the two eco-anarchist strands that appear to go farthest in their critique of human domination over nature – social ecology and anarcho-primitivism – actually continue to uphold dualisms (human|nature

and civilisation|wildness, respectively) and maintain a primacy of human reason. Anthropocentrism is further decentred in eco-anarchist writings that are influenced by ecofeminism, animal rights theory, indigenous studies and deep ecology (e.g. Best and Nocella 2006; jones 2009).

Notwithstanding this decentring, the political community that eco-anarchists envisage is mainly constituted by humans rooted in specific ecosystems. The focus lies on humans looking for contact points with the other-than-human world (e.g. Hall 2011) through the recognition of interdependence (e.g. Knowing the Land is Resistance 2014) and the desire to work together with other-than-humans for mutual liberation (Dunlap 2020). For example, jones (2009) states that:

> When we understand ourselves as systems within social and environmental systems, then we understand that our organizing must be founded on solidarity not only among people but also with plants and animals and ecosystems. ... They've been fighting back against capitalist exploitation too. What can we learn from a study of their strategies? (jones 2009: 245)

Eco-anarchism envisions free ecological societies where human and other-than-human life can thrive in healthy, diverse and dynamic ecosystems, where interspecies mutual aid and solidarity are nourished and deep listening is cultivated. However, beyond prefigurative symbolic performances, it provides few practical tools for the enactment of this deep listening, the elaboration of mechanisms for multispecies mutual aid, let alone the construction of egalitarian other-than-human political communities.

Cosmopolitics
In its progressive creation of a common world, cosmopolitics certainly is concerned with inclusion – of other-than-humans but also of those humans who have traditionally been excluded from political participation. Cosmopolitics scholars argue that by creating a single natural order that can be understood, objectified and compartmentalised, Western modernity also established a distinction between humans who are worthy of participating in the common world and those who are not. The worlds in which other-than-humans are social beings with political agency largely coincide with the worlds that modern politics continues to dismiss as irrational, ignorant, superstitious or primitive (Clastres 2007; de la Cadena 2010). This double historical divide – nature|humanity and superior|inferior humans – has resulted in 'the gradual extinction of other-than-human beings and the worlds in which they existed' (de la Cadena 2010: 345).

Cosmopolitics resists this gradual extinction. It is concerned with inclusion when it comes to the progressive composition of a common world but insists that this world can never be a given. Building a common world necessarily entails conflict and disagreement. The democratic question then becomes how these can be politically negotiated at an ontological level. What distinguishes cosmopolitics from modern theories of inclusion – proposing an

ever-expanding list of actors that deserve moral-political recognition – is its proposal to conceive of inclusion in an inherently relational way (e.g. woman-land-lagoon as a political actor, as discussed in de la Cadena 2015).

Beyond relational inclusion, cosmopolitics provides a powerful critique of the very idea of inclusion. Watson (2011) warns against insufficient recognition of the limits to inclusion and representation and argues for a cosmopolitics that

> would accommodate the possibility that not all actors need to be – or can be – fully represented by any proposed politico-scientific institution. ... Living together more peacefully entails living with difference, with the impossibility of completely understanding the other and the ethical imperatives for response and respect that this alterity demands (Watson 2011: 71).

Living together with alterity is no easy task, especially in a pluriverse composed of both established and would-be political participants, while also haunted by the shadows, whispers, cries and silence of that|those without a political voice (Stengers 2005). The enactment of this living-together that cosmopolitics scholars propose revolves around recognition and visibilisation – two types of political work carried out by human actors. First, cosmopolitics calls for recognising the political significance of the multiple worlds that exist and commits to be specifically affected by those practices that cannot be explained by modern politics. This implies recognising the entanglements, interdependences and situated communities of various humans with various other-than-humans. Second, recognition comes with a responsibility to render visible these communities and their political practices through thick and situated descriptions, providing a grammar and analytical lens for those practices that do not easily find political translation in the ontology of modern politics.

Processes-praxis

ED: dominance of deliberation

For Dryzek (2013: 236), deliberation 'involves reaching judgments and reflecting upon preferences in the context of dialogue that is informed, respectful, and competent'. This deliberation would happen in an expanded, vibrant, and critical public sphere (e.g. Hammond 2019) by creating new deliberative institutions (e.g. Hammond 2020) or transforming existing ones (e.g. Dryzek and Pickering 2017). Despite the enduring conceptual and empirical tensions between democracy and sustainability, it is widely accepted that a deliberative ecological democracy – generally understood as an 'as-yet-unachieved democracy-to-come' – would be capable of dealing better with the unfolding social-ecological crises than our current liberal democracies, let alone more eco-authoritarian institutions. As such, the argument for deliberation is both essentialist – it is argued to inherently be a truer form of democracy than others

– and consequentialist – it is 'celebrated for a variety of positive effects it is purported to generate' (Lepori 2019: 78).

Deliberation as both a praxis and a democratic ideal remains dominant in contemporary ED debates. This claim is supported by three observations. First, we observe a prominent position in favour of deliberation in scholarship across nearly the entire spectrum of green political theory (Hammond et al. 2020), as well as a recent surge in mini-publics and experiments with deliberative assemblies in a variety of countries. Second, recent literature in ED has seen theorisations that explicitly aim to further consolidate the deliberative foundation of the field. For example, Hammond (2020) proposes an expanded understanding of deliberation – containing both system-supporting and system-disrupting dimensions – to be foundational to the democratisation and normativity that sustainability transformation demands. Third, fresh appraisals have emerged on 'the sway the deliberation position has over the theorisation of ecological democracy' (Lepori 2019: 80). Lepori (2019) questions whether ecological deliberative democrats actually propose a democratic theory, while Machin (2020) calls for an institutionalisation of ecological agonism in order to cope with the inherent limits to deliberation. Even Hammond (2020), a strong advocate for deliberation, acknowledges that it has lost most of its original transformative potential in its current manifestations.

Eco-anarchism

Anarchism's central political praxis is prefiguration through direct action (Graeber 2004). In its most basic formulation, prefiguration is the simultaneous fusion of – and consistency between – means and ends, and it thus relates to the daily practices of 'living our ethics now' (Anonymous 2011). According to this view, the elimination of hierarchical relationships between humans and between humans and other-than-humans can only come through the conscious nurturing of heterarchical relationships and practices based on rooted, place-based solidarity, mutual aid and co-existence (Hall 2011; Roman-Alcalá 2021). This happens by building unmediated other-than-human friendships and maintaining good relations with other-than-human relatives (Dunlap 2020), dismantling anthropocentric accounts of the world through ritualised performances and repeated altruistic involvement with other-than-humans (Hall 2011), and cultivating deep listening rooted in the particular ecosystems in which we live (jones 2009; Knowing the Land is Resistance 2014).

Eco-anarchist prefigurative praxis extends beyond individual ethics – prefiguration here is essentially collective and relational (Seaweed 2013). Furthermore, direct action relates to more than creating new relationships and communities, as it has at its core (i) direct resistance to social-ecological destruction and (ii) the symbolic and material dismantling of (infra)structures of extractivist capitalism (GAIA 2002; Anonymous 2011; Dunlap 2020). This set of political praxes can be qualified as oppositional direct action (Anonymous

2011), revolutionary environmentalism (Best and Nocella 2006) or insurrectionary (political) ecology (Dunlap 2020; Anonymous, n.d.). Its strategies and methods include cultural subversion, sabotage, arson, insurrection, riots and political violence (Green Anarchy Collective 2014; Anonymous, n.d.).

Finally, desertion is a recurring theme in various eco-anarchist strands (Anonymous 2011). Although the specific object of desertion varies – e.g. capitalism's social synthesis, consumer culture or civilisation altogether – they share a deliberate refusal and unmaking of capitalism that is both individual and collective (Feola et al. 2021). Subtraction from the nation-state and capitalism, community by community, is a quintessential eco-anarchist praxis in that it liberates the basic units for the creation of counterinstitutions that can undermine and challenge the institutions of capitalism and the nation-state (Bookchin 1994; Seaweed 2013).

Cosmopolitics

As a first praxis, cosmopolitics proposes to slow down reasoning and create a political presence that makes any decision as difficult as possible. This sounds paradoxical in times of deepening social-ecological destruction, and sharply contrasts with alarming climate discourses and calls for urgent political action. However, slowing down might 'create an opportunity to arouse a slightly different awareness of the problems and situations mobilizing us' (Stengers 2005: 994). De la Cadena (2010: 358) asserts that slowing down might 'let the composition of that which does not have a political voice (or, in some cases, does not want to have one) affect [our] analysis'.

What is suspended by slowing down is not the feeling of urgency nor its legitimacy, but rather the consequential action logic that urgency all too quickly activates. By definition, this logic is unable to tackle problems in other ways than the usual environmental management and technocratic decision-making. Slowing down politics and making each decision as difficult as possible could unsettle common understandings of what politics is about: (i) what can be considered a political issue; (ii) who can be considered a legitimate political adversary; and (iii) which humans and other-than-humans are affected by specific ecological interventions? As such, cosmopolitics embraces questions of inclusion, limits to representation and the worlds (not just worldviews) that are at stake in social-ecological conflicts.

A second praxis characteristic of cosmopolitics is its defiance of the hegemonic political theory that bans other-than-humans from politics. This defiance has two main components: one discursive, the other empirical. Discursively, cosmopolitics is concerned with the explicit political-relational consideration of other-than-human actors. Empirically, it directs its attention to a variety of 'excessive' practices (de la Cadena 2010). These are instances in which the categories and distinctions of modern politics do not hold in practice; they disrupt 'politics-as-usual'. This does not mean that categories get blurred into

a hybrid state, but rather that they enter into a relationship that creates an ex-cess. Cosmopolitics' attention to the excess inherent in relational ontologies sheds new light on social-ecological conflicts and the ontological disagree-ments on which these conflicts often surreptitiously build. For example, in her analysis of indigenous resistance against extractivism in Peru, de la Cadena (2015) shows that what modern politics would frame as a 'woman defending the lagoon' (i.e. an environmentalist) might actually express a very different relation, namely 'one from which woman-land-lagoon (or plants-rocks-soils-animals-lagoons-humans-creeks – canals!!!) emerge inherently together: an ecological entanglement needy of each other in such a way that pulling them apart would transform them into something else'.

Institution(s)

ED: statism, difficult thinking in-against-and-beyond the nation-state
ED's issues are discussed scales ranging from local, community-level ex-periments to transnational scales encompassed by proposals for earth system governance. However, the bulk of the literature remains very focused on the nation-state – in its geographical scope but more importantly in the specific organisational logic that statism upholds (Ince and Barrera de la Torre 2016).

Theories about the 'green state' emerged in the early 2000s to conceive of ways in which nation-states could integrate ecological values in the design and operation of their institutions (Eckersley 2004). These works have contributed to a statist turn in green political theory, which originally incorporated more explicit anti-statist and anti-authoritarian stances (Melo-Escrihuela 2015). ED's widespread acceptance and promotion of the nation-state as a necessary vehicle for environmental protection, action and justice have led to a plethora of empirical assessments of different nation-states' environmental perfor-mance. These assessments aimed to find empirical evidence for the popular hypothesis that 'democratic' regimes showcase better environmental perfor-mance than non-democratic ones. Yet, besides mixed empirical evidence on the matter (Pickering et al. 2020), it is obvious that the democracies assessed here are a far cry from what ecological democracy would look like accord-ing to its own theorists. Moreover, recent discussions on the environmental state and its 'glass ceiling of transformation' (Hausknost and Hammond 2020) document the different barriers that the structures, institutions and capital-ist growth-imperative of nation-states pose to a sustainability transformation beyond capitalism (Brand 2016; Koch 2020). Despite such critiques and Melo-Escrihuela's (2008: 125) lucid observation that 'proper green states do not exist', statist perspectives remain dominant in ED.

Statist perspectives attract the bulk of normative theorisations and empirical observations for both ideological and pragmatic reasons. Ideologically, there is a persisting belief in the nation-state's capacity to become 'truly' ecological,

whereas pragmatically, the here-and-now existence of state structures and their integration into a global 'order' justifies the need to engage with them (Melo-Escrihuela 2015). As such, most authors continue to consider the nation-state, rather ambivalently, as a legitimate facilitator of transformation (Machin 2020), a necessary broker between the local and global levels (Compagnon et al. 2012), a guarantor of orderly change (Mol 2016), an object of necessary transformation (Koch 2020), or a combination of these. This sustained pragmatic and ambivalent engagement with the nation-state in ED scholarship risks downplaying the nation-state's structural role in reproducing a capitalist socio-economy (Streeck 2011; Mitchell 2013; Brand 2016) and in deepening inequality and social-ecological destruction (Kojola and Pellow 2021).

Anthropologists and political scientists have convincingly rebutted the pragmatic argument by pointing out that nation-states are neither transhistorical nor ahistorical (Opello and Rosow 1999; Clastres 2007). It would be a mistake not to seriously engage with a range of possible anti- and post-statist configurations. Nation-states are recent, contingent spatial-historical constructions that can – and continually do – change through dissolution, annexation, subtraction and revolution (Graeber 2004; Clastres 2007). Thus, ED should engage more deeply with the possibilities of – and aspirations for – anti- and post-statist ecological futures. To rebut the ideological argument, political theorists have shown that (geo)political developments in no way go in the direction of whatever ecological democracy. Rather, eco-authoritarianism is on the rise (Shahar 2015), and a variety of 'far-right ecologist' movements and ideologies have emerged, sharing an aspiration for central authority and contempt of democracy (Lubarda 2020). These tendencies in mind, it becomes difficult to imagine how nation-states would realistically metamorphose into ecological democracies.

Due to the dominance of statism, ED contains little theorisation about the role different assemblages – i.e. patchworks of multiscalar (con)federations, anti-state movements, autonomous communities and their interdependent evolutions over time – could play in sustainability transformation. Ecological democrats have yet to *simultaneously* think and act 'in-against-and-beyond' the nation-state (Holloway 2010). Arguably, most work in ED focuses on transformation *within* (expanding the public sphere, creating new deliberative institutions and transforming existing ones) and *beyond* the nation-state (prefiguration, sustainable communities and material flows), whereas transformation *against* the nation-state is seldom assessed (for a notable exception, see Lepori 2019).

Eco-anarchism

Envisioning autonomy

Anti-statism is foundational to (eco)anarchism. Anarchists oppose the nation-state due to its consolidation and institutionalisation of unequal power relations, which are maintained through coercion and serve a totalising political project (Price 2007). GAIA (2002) distinguishes different understandings of the state that are manifested in anarchist writings, not all of which are rejected by anarchism. While anarchists are against the state as a general organisational structure with significant political, economic and administrative hierarchies, they do not necessarily oppose the state when understood either in terms of a central, (con)federal public sector or in terms of a whole country, society or system.

In rejecting the hierarchical relationships the nation-state consolidates, (eco)anarchists also oppose the organisational logic of statism and its foundational myths through the aforementioned political praxes.[7] At minimum, eco-anarchism's anti-statism contains (i) a generalised disillusionment with electoral politics and representative democracy; (ii) an absence of any expectation whatsoever that the nation-state and its government, whatever colour, will engender noteworthy sustainability transformation; and (iii) a commitment to participate in creating autonomous spaces, practices and institutions that provide concrete alternatives to the nation-state and its persisting myths (Anonymous 2011; Roman-Alcalá 2021).

Instituting autonomy

For eco-anarchists, the institution of autonomy builds on principles of free association, mutual aid, equality and decentralisation – these principles no longer constituting an exclusive human prerogative. If, in its simplest form, the nation-state is the crystallisation of unequal social relations, then it can be destroyed by creating different social relations, i.e. relating differently to one another based on anarchist principles. Although this assumption underestimates the structural, material and corporeal dimensions of political power, the ideal of free association in a prefigurative manner lies at the core of anarchist transformation theories.

The commune usually forms the basic unit of political organisation. It is characterised by popular assemblies for face-to-face direct democratic decision-making on policy matters; the administrative execution of decisions by mandated, delegated and revocable councils; and more generally, the creation of an extended public sphere against the nation-state and capitalism (Bookchin

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7.   Statism's foundational myths comprise the ideas that the nation-state 'is the outcome of a "natural" tendency toward hierarchical organisation at a large scale', that it is 'the only medium through which societies can function efficiently and justly', and that it consists of 'a neutral, apolitical container of "good" or "bad" governments', amongst others (Ince and Barrera de la Torre 2016: 14–17).

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1994). The first step in most anarchist transformation theories is to assert de-centralised popular control over the institutions that are basic to daily life: neighbourhood councils, local public services, municipalities, communes and affinity groups. The burgeoning of autonomous communes and their voluntary federation would progressively create anarchist counterinstitutions capable of competing with the institutions of the nation-state and capitalism.

Although most eco-anarchists converge around the development of heter-archical networks of anti-state communes, diverging ideas exist about which counterinstitutions are desirable as well as the relationships between institutions at different levels. Three main visions can be discerned: social ecologist, bioregionalist and anarcho-primitivist. Social ecologists advance communalist visions that advocate for independent assemblies with the power and mandate for policy-making, which voluntarily associate in confederal councils with administrative, coordinative and redistributive functions on an (inter)regional level (Bookchin 1982). These visions focus on the interdependence between communes, mutual aid between humans and other-than-humans and forging non-exploitative relationships between city and countryside. Bioregionalists propose the 'creation of decentralised, self-sufficient, self-ruling communities, where land is held in common at the community level' (Davidson 2009: 51), and where the boundaries of the political community are determined by the natural processes capable of its reproduction. A persisting focus on self-suffi-ciency and autarky distinguishes bioregionalism from social ecology. Finally, anarcho-primitivists advocate for the establishment of small-scale, self-suf-ficient communities that reject and desert civilisation (el-Ojeili and Taylor 2020). This vision focuses on affinity and rewilding and manifests scepticism toward any kind of confederal coordination, association or redistribution. Davidson (2009) argues that each of these theories raises specific issues in terms of (i) collective action and coordination among communities; (ii) guar-anteeing redistributive justice (between communes or regions, between city and countryside, between humans and other-than-humans); and (iii) adherence to both democratic and green values in autonomous communities, as well as at different confederal levels. With exception of social ecology, which develops the idea that mutual aid in diverse ecological relations with other-than-humans should be a guiding principle for instituting eco-autonomy, neither bioregion-alism nor anarcho-primitivism seriously engages with other-than-humans in their proposals for instituting autonomy. As such, it remains under-explored how human–other-than-human relations – not as a backdrop for human action, but as a living web of relations – are co-constitutive of autonomous communi-ties, or how, in practice, autonomy is re-defined in relation to other-than-human worlds. Here, embracing cosmopolitics could lead for eco-anarchism to further embrace ever-existing human–other-than-human relations.

Questions of structure and organisation highlight how members of a political community relate to the institutions they craft and the degree to which they remain in control of these. Whereas social ecologists and bioregionalists elaborate on the structure and organisation of institutions, as well as their political coordination, anarcho-primitivists and insurrectionary eco-anarchists advocate spontaneity, the minimisation of formal and informal governance, and unmediated association based on affinity (Green Anarchy Collective 2014; Dunlap 2020).

Although a convincing case can be made in favour of structure, transparency and explicit procedures for decision-making (Bookchin 1994), they form a permanent tension for anarchists due to the inherent risk of making new hierarchies and bureaucracies emerge in those very institutions that were supposed to dismantle them. Davidson (2009: 59) warns against hierarchical state structures coming in 'through the back door' when considering how confederal councils would guarantee or enforce communities' adherence to 'universal' principles such as democracy or ecology.

From an insurrectionary viewpoint, autonomy is instituted through temporary, informal organisation, promoting 'radical decentralization, people organizing themselves autonomously ... based on a shared value system or objective, reflecting a multiplicity of unique circumstances' (Dunlap 2020: 1000). Autonomy is maintained by constantly keeping in check tendencies of bureaucratisation and sedimentation – e.g. through delegation instead of representation, through revocable and rotating mandates – and, as such, acting against the 'replication of statist structures and market dynamics within groups or on the micro- and meso-scale' (Ibid.). These tensions are not something to be solved once and for all, but rather collectively experienced, acknowledged, navigated. As such, they raise the question of how a political community can *democratically* navigate the tensions that their institutional organisation makes emerge.

A pragmatic argument in favour of spontaneity and informal organisation is that it constitutes 'a conscious reaction to both the "hard" and "soft" repression of the corporate state' (Dunlap 2020: 1000). This taps into the tensions and conflicting relationship between autonomous institutions and existing nation-state institutions, as well as tensions within anarchism more broadly about the advantages and inconveniences of covert|overt transformation strategies. It is in insurrectionary eco-anarchism that we find the most elaborate discussion of these tensions and how to navigate them.

Beyond expressing the need for autonomous self-defence mechanisms (Bookchin 2014), social ecology exhibits little consideration of how (open) conflict with the nation-state would play out and how the latter would utilise its

capacity for repression, surveillance and counterinsurgency in the emergence of autonomous political projects. Insurrectionary eco-anarchism bears few illusions in this regard, as exemplified by Anonymous' (2011) discussion of state and corporate surveillance and the ways in which it precludes particular political strategies such as desertion and certain forms of sabotage. Embodied experiences of state repression and counterinsurgency explain eco-anarchism's emphasis on informal organising and its proposals to keep counterinstitutions 'illegible to authorities' (Dunlap 2020: 1007).

Cosmopolitics

ENVISIONING AUTONOMY
Unlike eco-anarchism, cosmopolitics does not explicitly frame its political proposal in terms of autonomy; rather, it positions itself against the single ontology of politics rooted in Western modernity and upheld by liberal democracy. Explicit anti-statist or anti-capitalist stances are rare, although they often follow implicitly from the critique of liberal democracy, its institutions and the violent social-ecological conflicts they perpetuate. Cosmopolitics scholars make a case against rational-consensual approaches to politics in their failure to negotiate fundamental disagreements about what constitutes reality. In line with theorists on agonistic democracy, they consider conflict a core driver of democracy and argue in favour of a fundamental, political-ontological conflictuality.

INSTITUTING AUTONOMY
The two main political praxes discussed above – slowing down politics and contesting its single ontology – concern the institution of autonomy in that they aim to prepare the ground for new ways of doing politics by redefining the baseline of what *constitutes* politics. However, it remains open around what baseline, or ethico-political principles, cosmopolitics should be organised. Both cosmopolitics scholars and the agonistic theories they draw upon are vague in this regard. For de la Cadena (2010: 361), it concerns a 'symmetric understanding of plural worlds', whereas Stengers (2005: 1003) highlights the principle of equality, defined as the absence of 'any differentiation *a priori* between that which counts and that which does not [count]'. This vagueness is deliberate, since outlining clear ethico-political principles would contradict cosmopolitics' basic assumption that the limits and scope of democracy are without foundation or transcendence (i.e. that these limits should *themselves* be the result of a democratic negotiation). In the absence of a baseline, cosmopolitical proposals cannot but fall short of a thorough discussion on its implications in terms of institutional design or legitimate political praxis, and how a baseline could constitute an organisational force for pluriversal politics.

As such, cosmopolitics provides few concrete elements concerning the institution(s) of autonomy. Stengers (2005) considers the design of the political scene an 'art of staging' and privileges a technical rather than a normative foundation of democracy by asking which artefacts and procedures could effectively slow down politics. Latour (2017) stages multispecies encounters and reflects on their political implications. However, both examples call for further theorisation, experimentation and critical assessment if cosmopolitics is to go beyond merely proposing interesting thought experiments. Reflectively connecting with eco-anarchism, with its history of diverse praxis and explicit normative orientations, might be fruitful here.

MAINTAINING AUTONOMY

Cosmopolitics does not propose specific mechanisms to keep members of a political community in control of the institutions they craft. Any political outcome will depend on how contingent power relations play out, with the particularity that in the cosmopolitical proposal, ontological disagreements would have a place in the political arena. Cosmopolitics' theoretical bet – that the simultaneous deepening and widening of politics is able to reach more just decisions and halt social-ecological destruction – needs to undergo empirical scrutiny, in particular with regards to its capacity to maintain autonomy. For this, the technical and procedural dimensions of cosmopolitics that were hinted at should be fully embraced and experimented with in political arenas that are either deliberately designed or conflictually emergent. Between proclaiming the need for new practices, procedures, artefacts and their potential institutional forms lies a horizon of political experimentation. Here, we see a need to study existing democratic experiments in light of cosmopolitical proposals and engage with these experiments to collectively-conflictually imagine what cosmopolitics' practical enactments could look like.

CONTESTING AUTONOMY

Cosmopolitical theories provide little clarity on the practical relationship between new political communities and existing nation-state institutions. Some proposals, such as procedures for agonistic disagreement, could be integrated into existing political institutions (Machin 2020), although it seems doubtful that the latter would be able to accommodate agonistic disagreement at ontological levels. Other proposals are even less plausible to find translation in existing political institutions. This would be the case, for example, for procedures to slow down politics and make decisions as difficult as possible. When emergency situations are declared for climate change, wars against terror or pandemics, and while 'politics' is being lamented for acting too slowly on these matters, it seems highly improbable that existing political institutions would take the time to consult with, and be affected by relational communities of humans, other-than-humans and shadows of those without a political voice.

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Although constitutional recognition of indigenous relationality and legal personhood for other-than-human entities – seemingly in line with cosmopolitical proposals – have entered institutional arenas, this has been denounced as being instrumental for an ethno-politics that does not fundamentally question modern politics and upholds the very dualisms that cosmopolitics aims to overcome (de la Cadena 2010; Tanasescu 2015). As such, openings for accommodating cosmopolitics seem to exist in today's political arenas, but only as long as they do not fundamentally undermine the nation-state's projects of economic growth, development, progress or, more recently, ecological transition.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper has addressed renewed understandings of democracy in view of sustainability transformation, by exploring democracy as the generation of autonomy (*vis-a-vis* the generation of heteronomy by capitalism and the nation-state), as well as by contrasting scholarship in ED with cosmopolitics and eco-anarchism. Our analysis shows how eco-anarchism and cosmopolitics can enrich our thinking about ecological democracy. It builds on and strengthens ongoing developments in ED, such as Lepori's (2019) 'anarchist' critique of deliberation and institutionalisation, by adding crucial multispecies and relational dimensions to their discussion of fugitive democracy. In the same vein, we strengthen Disch's (2016) 'cosmopolitical' critique of deliberation and Tschakert et al.'s (2020) call for multispecies justice by drawing attention to the contradictions and potential conflict between those entities that might one day make up the cosmos and, consequently, the impossibility of complete inclusion.

We have explored what eco-anarchism and cosmopolitics can contribute to the attempt to reconceptualise ecological democracy with reference to the analytical framework adopted in this paper (Table 1). Cosmopolitics specifically adds to ED's debates on actors by deepening existing critiques of other-than-human inclusion as well as problematising other-than-human political participation in inherently material, relational and excessive ways. Eco-anarchism's strands intersect with ED's debates on processes-praxis and institution(s). Regarding processes-praxis, eco-anarchism embraces entanglements between confrontational direct action, prefiguration and desertion as equally legitimate forms of political praxis. Regarding institution(s), it provides us with detailed visions of multi-scale autonomous counterinstitutions, along with nuanced discussions on the pitfalls of striving for autonomy, an aspect that has historically been present in ED but diluted by its statist wave. In sum, both theories speak to conceptual renewals of democracy by positing it as a collective striving for autonomy (eco-anarchism) and questioning the baseline of politics (cosmopolitics), whilst engaging with its practical renewal by

bringing in desertion and direct action (eco-anarchism) as well as embracing multispecies entanglements as constitutive of, not peripheral to, democracy (cosmopolitics).

Eco-anarchism has provided critical contributions to ED in the field's early years, whereas cosmopolitical explorations in ED have been more recent. We believe that bringing eco-anarchism back into present debates on ED makes sense exactly because of the ontological openings and disagreements that cosmopolitics allows for. First, cosmopolitics' focus on conflict and ontological agonism links to, and potentially legitimates, eco-anarchism's distinct appreciations and analysis of the nation-state and capitalism, as it allows for questioning sedimented hierarchical structures that we have come to take for granted but that are in no way natural or inevitable. Second, as cosmopolitics renegotiates what we can politically and legitimately disagree about, eco-anarchism pushes this opening into a more normative direction, proposing an emergent praxis of living together with alterity that is rooted in the concrete practices and ecosystems of communities and grassroots movements. As such, it gives insights and practical tools on how to organise collectively for autonomous ecological democracies to an otherwise abstract cosmopolitics.

While we argue that eco-anarchism and cosmopolitics enriches the conceptualisation of democracy that is predominant in ED debates, we neither call for integrating these three approaches nor suggest replacing existing notions of ED with eco-anarchist or cosmopolitical ones. Internal debates and conflicting political proposals are as present within the different strands of eco-anarchism and between different visions of cosmopolitics as they are in the broad literature of ED. Yet, we do contend that by comparing these different approaches against the backdrop of current debates within ED, we identify important questions and crucial contrasts that advance our understanding of the politics of sustainability transformation. In the remaining part of the conclusion, we discuss a major implication for transformation that emerges from this analysis.

Our analysis points to the need to develop mechanisms for the political translation of diverse political praxes. Without effective translation, acknowledging the legitimacy of other forms of political praxis will merely remain discourse. It is not sufficient to acknowledge and celebrate a diverse political praxis for it to become meaningfully integrated in what a political community considers legitimate expressions of emotions, interests or needs that are, at least in some ways, collective. This does not simply imply different institutional designs, like creating new political arenas for dissent or designing deliberative assemblies where other-than-human actors are accounted for. Rather, at a more fundamental level, it implies the renewal of a political *culture* becoming capable of interpreting, for example, insurrections or multispecies encounters as forms of political praxis that are neither ontologically different from nor morally inferior to parliamentary commissions.

Normative discussions about the desirability of one or the other praxis should have a place here; however, they should happen against a baseline and according to criteria that are not exclusively statist and deliberative. Indeed, these criteria misrepresent and silence political expressions that exceed or refuse dominant frames of interpretation. Statist and deliberative reductions consist of (i) highlighting the divide between practices that are acceptable (debate, deliberation, 'peaceful' demonstration) and those that are not (insurrection, 'violent' action, sabotage and arson), and consequently (ii) proposing mechanisms for the selective translation of these practices into statist frameworks. This selective translation, in turn, consists of the redirection of 'popular anger' or presumed political demands towards political arenas, organised and managed by nation-state institutions, where new voices can be consulted or deliberation can take place.[8] Once translated into statist and deliberative logics, what is left is a set of policy proposals that can be integrated (or not) into traditional circuits of policy-making. Alternatively, from anti-statist and non-deliberation perspectives, one can consider similar political movements as gatherings of human–other-than-human communities around shared concerns with regard to which they do not have the same interest. Here, conflict with the nation-state and within communities could be embraced as expressions of democracy (rather than its negation), and different political praxes could be celebrated rather than being subordinated to one another. Movements could refuse to succumb to incentives to be constructive or engage in dialogue with representatives of institutions of the nation-state. As such, anti-statist and non-deliberation lenses allow for recognising these praxes not as anti-democratic or a-political, but rather as legitimate expressions of the variety of ways in which 'doing' politics can become something different. Explicitly refusing statist and deliberative frameworks opens up space for paying attention to the different possibilities for the political translation of excess.

To conclude, our discussion suggests a number of open issues that represent important directions for future research in ecological democracy and deliberate sustainability transformation, which we outline following the dimensions of the framework used in this paper. First, regarding actors, it remains unclear how autonomous human–other-than-human political communities emerge in practice. This includes questions on the ways in which autonomy-generating movements take into account other-than-humans as well as the criteria upon which emerging human–other-than-human communities can be considered manifestations of multispecies democracy. Second, concerning political praxis, our discussion highlights the need to conceptualise and empirically investigate the mechanisms of political translation of multispecies encounters and non-deliberative, insurrectionary political praxes. Finally, for the institution(s)

8. A striking example of selective translation can be found in the French state's response to the 2018 Yellow Vest Movement, where the government promoted deliberation in order to channel social unrest (Ehs and Mokre 2021).

of autonomy, it is important to enquire how autonomous human–other-than-human political communities remain in control of new rules, norms, and collective becomings. Such enquiry involves questions on the extent to which autonomous communities can co-exist with existing nation-state institutions and the need to confront and overcome the generation of heteronomy by capitalism and the nation-state. These are all questions we believe a post-statist, autonomous and diverse ecological democracy should ask.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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