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# An Introduction to the Concept of Energy Democracy

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Accademic Year 2018/2019



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We can no longer save the world  
by playing by the rules

Because the rules have to be changed

We need a system change, rather than  
individual change

But you cannot have one  
without the other

And so I ask you to please wake up and  
make change required possible

To do your best is  
no longer good enough

We must all do the seemingly  
impossible

Everything needs to change

And it has to start today

- Greta Thunberg Speech on the United Nation Building in New York.

# Introduction

Nowadays, one of the most debated topic in newspaper or on social media is the human impact on the environment and continuing rising of global temperatures. In the 21th century, the importance of the relationship between the society and the earth is increasing compared to the knowledge developed in the past generations. People are more aware of the problems created ecologically and they are willing to make an improvement. There are several different solutions to bring a change for the rising of temperatures. From the simple task of reducing the use of plastic to a deeper engagement, as it can be the switch to the use of renewable sources. Of course, the different economic and social position in the current society makes it hard for some people to make more sustainable changes. As in the simple action of grocery shopping, it is possible for us to see that some options, which unfortunately include plastic packages or non-vegan option are the less expensive one and thus more affordable for a part of the society. For this reason, it is important not only to consider the change which can be achieved by small actions in our everyday life, but also how the political system let us be more comprehensive in relation to the environment.

Many studies in Germany are concentrated on new solution to stop the increasing rise of temperature, and one of them is the new concept of energy democracy. It is interesting to concentrate on this topic for many reasons. First of all, one of the particular characteristic, of which the importance will be highlighted in the different chapters, is the centrality of the individual. In the case of energy democracy, the individual is studied approaching the new renewable sources. We will mainly focus on cooperatives in different part of the European hemisphere, as some in Italy or in the United Kingdom. Indeed, the scholars of this approach mainly study the efficiency of cooperatives promoting renewable sources and how they promote the involvement of every individual to a proficient ecological change. This passage will lead us to another concept introduced in the second chapter, the one of deliberative democracy.

As we will demonstrate, most scholars in the environmental field see the deliberative approach as the most appropriate for a better change. Their main assumption is the ability to have a fundamental change with an instructive dialogue between the society and the decisional body. For this reason, in the second and third chapter we will introduce the basic notions of the deliberative approach and then see its application on environmental issues.

The deliberative approach is really broad, but in the second chapter we will try to give some information to have a more or less clear idea of the basic characteristics of the concept. One of the main representative of the theory is the German Scholar Jurgen Habermas. His vision on the deliberative sphere is considered mainly normative theory, however, it is one of the starting point for most of the scholars interpreting and theorizing the deliberative approach.

The importance of deliberation was not just considered by scholars of the deliberative approach theory, but also from philosophers of Liberalism and Republicanism. In consequence, we will give attention to the theory of John Rawls in one paragraph of the second chapter. John Rawls has a huge impact on the political

philosophy theory of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One of the most known theories are concentrated on the concept of justice and on political liberalism. We will try to present the topic as better as it can be presented in a small thesis, because we find that the topics have a big relevance in the political philosophy field, especially in relation to the concept of deliberative democracy presented by Habermas. Following in the second chapter, we will try to illustrate a more contemporary view of the deliberative approach with Joshua Cohen. We will present some responses of the philosopher to some criticism on the deliberative approach. It is interesting to present some objections to the approach, because they can be frequently presented when talking both about the deliberative theory and the energy democracy one.

Nonetheless, in the last chapter we will try to combine the two approaches. The “adolescence” of energy democracy made it hard to find researches which combined its efficiency with the deliberative approach. For this reason, we will focus on thoughts related to the deliberative environmental field, since it also focuses on the substitution to renewable sources for a more ecological perspective. One of the main assumption which we will be able to present is the importance given to the simple of action of a dialogue. As deliberative scholars also environmental and energetic one will see it as one of the most functioning solution for a better understanding of the current environmental crisis.

This is one of the reason which made the topic of energy democracy in relation with the deliberative approach really fascinating. In the current society, even if the predisposition to an actual dialogue seems vanishing, most scholars think that an actual discussion is what may help the society change the world into a better one. Especially, in fields as the ecological one which are mainly technocratic, considerations made by every individual are important in taking a more conscious step in our everyday life. Moreover, it was interesting to focus on a different presentation of democracy. After the end of the Second World War, many countries especially in Western Europe and consequently in different developing countries started to implement a more democratic government, which, nonetheless represents most of the liberal characteristics. So, the comparison between the deliberative approach and the liberal one is certainly stimulating today, when we can see troubles in certain liberal governments.

Furthermore, the deliberative approach is sure fascinating in the current society in correlation to all the new opportunities created by social media. The possibility of creating a more open space to talk and discuss about current issues can be simplify by the use of all the new sources proposed by the internet. Especially in the environmental and ecological field. Different social environmental groups have been created in the past few years spreading their words protesting in the streets and squares of different cities, especially in the European continent, or by sending messages via Facebook or Twitter. The form of dialogue and communication is definitely important to have a change and most importantly the participation of the people.

We will see how dialogue is important to have an ecological change and a more significant knowledge of renewable sources, a possible future solution. Therefore, this thesis will mainly concentrate on the concept of energy democracy and its correlation with the deliberative approach.

# Chapter 1: Defining Energy Democracy

## 1.1 Energy Justice and Environmental Democracy

The concept of energy democracy has been codified in the last twenties years, thus it is still very recent. After disasters as the one in Chernobyl in 1986 and the one of 2011 in Fukushima, the interest for what regards the energy sector and energy sources started to increase. Indeed, after the disaster in the Russian continent, European countries were keen on using more renewable energy sources, but especially after the Japanese disaster caused by an earthquake, a lot of countries decided to stop with the production of nuclear energy even if it could have brought many opportunities. For example, in 2011 94% of Italian voted against the introduction of nuclear energy, despite a strong political campaign in favour of this new energetic power.<sup>1</sup>

So at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, scholars started to be more interested in defying politically and philosophically this new matter and a lot of them are still working on a complete and satisfying definition of "energy democracy". They are using some assumptions of the two concepts of energy justice and of environmental democracy on which more studies have concentrated.

The scholars Jones, Sovacool, and Sidortsov concentrated on the concept of energy justice since they do not only see energy as a vehicle of economic and social development but also as a conflict in the demands for social justice. Energy is peculiar in our life since we use it in order to achieve almost every good. The distribution of energy should be equal in order not to aggravate the situation of the part of the population who is already a victim of different discriminations in sectors, as the health care one or the educational one. Moreover, the energy sector is considered authoritarian, because few people control it and, as we will consider later introducing concepts as the "carbon democracy" one, they mainly enrich who owns the energy power and who is already powerful.

The three scholars introduce the framework of energy justice built on two key principles a prohibitive and an affirmative one. The prohibitive principle states that the energy system must be able to let people easily acquire energy without any interferences. The second principle, the affirmative one sees energy as fundamental for everyone in order to acquire and to benefit from their basic goods. In other words, "[...] energy serves as a material prerequisite for many of the basic goods to which people are entitled."<sup>2</sup>

The concept of energy justice was already presented in the '70s when professor Robert Bullard (also considered one of the founder of the concept of environmental justice) studied the distribution of incinerators in the city of Houston. The main finding of the study was the concentration of incinerators and its pollution mainly where lower and working classes people lived and moreover, their involvement in the national environmental movement and change was non-existent.<sup>3</sup> This research was important because it was one of the first to prove that the environmental protection is a right of everybody and when a new project is presented

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<sup>1</sup> Energy Policies of IEA Countries, International Energy Agency, 2009

<sup>2</sup> Jones B.R., Sovacool B.K, Sidortsov R., (2015) Making the Ethical and Philosophical Case for Energy Justice

<sup>3</sup> Robert D. Bullard, Solid Waste Sites, and the Black Houston Community, 1983

not only the costs and the benefits should be considered, but also the effects that have on people. After Robert Bullard concentrated on the city of Houston, the same study was spread in most American cities and then it also arrived in the European Continent, especially in the United Kingdom and Germany.<sup>4</sup>

The principle of energy justice will be represented in the concept of energy democracy as the idea that all the people should benefit from fair access to electricity and as said by Amartya Sen, everybody will be accountable for the decisions that they take.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, the concept of environmental democracy refers to the governmental aspect of the environment. Environmental democracy asks the government to be transparent and accountable in taking the decision that affects the quality of people lives.<sup>6</sup> As emphasized also by Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development of 1992 “Environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided.”<sup>7</sup> Indeed, as Professor Bándi analysing the article of the Rio Declaration, environmental democracy and public participation go hand in hand in order to increase the accountability of the officials and educate them on behaving depending on the action taken by the community. In order to have public participation, Bándi lists three important steps, which are access to information, participation in decision-making and access to the administrative practices or access to justice.<sup>8</sup>

When environmental democracy will be functional and everybody will have access to information on how energy is produced, there can be an actual change and not just people profiting off a good which is essential in everyday life. As said by John Dewey, democracy, in this case, does not only have to integrate people in the decision-making process, but also educate them in order to be properly part in the political life of their own country.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, these two concepts will be fundamental for a final definition of energy democracy, mainly by applying the principle of political participation therefore all the people, especially the one who is disadvantaged will be able to control a good that is essential of everyone and that affects something that is part of every people life, the environment.

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<sup>4</sup> Becker S., Naumann M., *Energiedemokratie: Grundlage und Perspektive einer kritischen Energieforschung*, 2015

<sup>5</sup> Amartya Sen (1971), *The Idea of Justice*

<sup>6</sup> *Environmental Democracy and Law*, (2014), Gyula Bándi

<sup>7</sup> *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*, (1992)

<sup>8</sup> Bándi G., (2014) *Environmental Democracy and Law*

<sup>9</sup> Fott D., (1989) *John Dewey and The Philosophical Foundation of Democracy*, Harvard University



## 1.2 The Concept of “Energy Democracy”

Nowadays, one of the most cited topics in journals, in social media or also during lessons at university is global warming and all the risks that the world is facing due to the change in temperatures. The rights of individuals and groups are constantly evolving and being redefined, especially for what regards the one in the environmental sphere.<sup>10</sup> The Charter of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of the United Nation in 1966 already highlighted the importance of the correlation between people and resources in the first article, which states: “All peoples may, for their own ends, freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources without prejudice to any obligations arising out of international economic co-operation, based upon the principle of mutual benefit, and international law. In no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence.”<sup>11</sup> How energy is produced, transferred and used is fundamental for the improvement of this situation, principally concentrating on the relationship between resources and society. Indeed, the international or regional attention given to the problem of the environment is always evolving, as it is possible to see it by looking at different conventions of the United Nations centred on environmental solutions or the different treaties and regulations applied by regional organizations, as the European Union which with the Treaty of Lisbon in 2010 wanted to preserve the regional energy field with the introduction of disparate articles in the two treaties. One of them, it is article 176A consolidated in the TFEU: “1. In the context of the establishment and functioning of the internal market and with regard for the need to preserve and improve the environment, Union policy on energy shall aim, in a spirit of solidarity between Member States, to: [...] (c) promote energy efficiency and energy saving and the development of new and renewable forms of energy; [...]”.<sup>12</sup>

In the political and social sphere, many scholars, by emphasizing the role of social, economic and political influence in the energy transition, are introducing different approaches to this new change, as it is the case for the concept of “energy democracy”.

The definition of energy democracy is newly born, but the key concepts are popular sovereignty, participatory governance, and civic ownership.<sup>13</sup> The spread of this new theory has started thanks to the increase of the role in society of actor known as prosumers of energy, e.g energy cooperatives, or not-for-profit organization. In the ‘90s, the performance of prosumers of energy as not only producers but also consumers of energy have started to develop, especially in countries in Northern Europe as the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, and Germany. Hence, a German group, the Rosa Luxembourg foundation was one of the first to propose the new definition of energy democracy starting from the concept given by the climate justice movement Gegenstrom, which sees it as a theory capable of integrating energy and climate struggles mainly based on the principle that decisions should be taken jointly by the society, since they are fundamental in the frame of our lives.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Baber W.F. and Bartlett R.V., Consensus and Global Environmental Governance

<sup>11</sup> International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the United Nations (1966)

<sup>12</sup> European Union, Treaty of Lisbon Amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty Establishing the European Community, 13 December 2007, 2007/C 306/01, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/476258d32.html> [accessed 12 July 2019]

<sup>13</sup> Kacper Szulecki, (2018) Conceptualizing Energy democracy

<sup>14</sup> Website Gegenstrom (2012): <https://gegenstromberlin.org/>

Kunze and Becker from Rosa Luxembourg Foundation have defined it as a “conceptual frame for political action capable of integrating energy and climate struggles [...] grounded on the basic understanding that the decisions that shape our lives should be established jointly and without regard to the principle of profit”.<sup>15</sup> They started from the common idea of Lausitz Climate Camp, which promotes energy democracy as open access for the people, who do not have to be harmed by it. For this reason, they promote the use of renewable sources distributed more democratically. The two scholars focus on four fundamental dimensions: democratization, property; surplus value production and employment; ecology and sufficiency. The first dimension of Kunze and Becker on democratization and participation is mainly focused on the economic sphere because consumers or members of the associations should be entitled to decide the price policy of the sources they are benefiting. The second dimension on the property is based on the principle that energy production, distribution, and consumption should, therefore, be regulated by society and not be apolitical. The authors see as a solution a form of municipal or semi-state ownership or collective private ownership as cooperatives. The concept of cooperatives is still new in some countries, but there are good examples of cooperative around Europe, like the one of Retenergie in Italy which will be presented in the following paragraph. The characteristic of the third attempt surplus value and employment has analysed the costs of the energy production and the employment it creates in Europe. In the end, they mainly focus on the principle of post-growth, which noticed that society use more energy than the one actually needed and they promote a more green and ecological dimension to consume less electricity and heating.<sup>16</sup>

The concept of energy democracy is still debatable and for this reason, there are different definitions with some similarities. One of the explanations worth to consider is one of the Warsaw's Green Institute, which has published a manifesto about "Energy Democracy". Differently, from Kunze and Becker, Maciejewske focuses more on the political aspect of Energy democracy as “power to the people” as the power on the energy as less centralised and more spread to all the people.<sup>17</sup> This is the main assumption also of the U.S-based Trade Union for Energy democracy initiative, which sees as the main characteristic of the concept the role of legitimacy and how people should be able to decide on how their energy is own, operate and produced. Scholars as Morris and Jungjohann tried to find a definition of energy democracy by studying the German case of Energiewende. When German people refer to the transition in the energy sector for a better solution for the environment, they refer to Energiewende.<sup>18</sup>

This event does not only concentrate on the switch to a more sustainable and affordable power supply, but also on future development policy on emissions. It started as a movement from the rural area of Germany to stop the construction of a nuclear plant. However, it really began in 2011 with the decision of Angela Merkel against the use of nuclear energy as a reaction to the disaster in Fukushima. What is important from this movement and what is used to better define energy democracy is the democratization of the energy sector.

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<sup>15</sup> Kunze, C. and Becker D., (2014), *Energy Democracy in Europe. A survey and outlook*. Brussels: Rosa Luxembourg Stiftung.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Szwed, D. and Maciejewska, B., (2014). *Demokracja energetyczna*. Warsaw: Green Institute.

<sup>18</sup> Morris C. and Jogjohann A., (2016), *Energy Democracy*

There will be a transition of the ownership of energy from big business to small communities, which will have more power in the market and will be able to create competition between one another.<sup>19</sup> Their focus is not only on the environmental issue but also on the democratic one. For this reason, the *Energiewende* can be used as an example when defining energy democracy because it represents accountability and democratization in a sector seen as purely technocratic. Traditionally, the domain is reserved for experts who construct the infrastructure and the hardware. However, this power is part of the daily life of people who on the other hand are not able to decide on a sector which is ordinary. Society is seen as a passive subject in the decision-making process of the energy issue, even if problems as energy poverty, air pollution or climate change have an impact on everybody. Fischer sees energy democracy as fundamental because people will be educated to handle sources of power used daily and as a consequence, their participation will improve the quality of the governance. In other words, what energy democracy would like to achieve is to have both experts and public taking decisions and discussing about the common good. For this reason, it introduces the figure of the prosumer, who can be both an individual or a community, the important presumption is that the prosumer will generate and produce its own energy in the form and “[...] at the scale most appropriate to their needs, be it individual, local or regional.”<sup>20</sup>

Hence when defining energy democracy, scholars intend that the political agenda has to be decided in a collective manner looking at the interests of the people influenced by those choices.<sup>21</sup> Especially civil society organisations identify energy democracy as both the transition to renewable sources and the transition of the control of power to the society in order to have a more<sup>22</sup> “genuine popular control over energy choices”.<sup>23</sup> Similar to the theory proposed for environmental democracy, the more suitable solution when talking about a political system where people participate in the decisions about the energy is deliberative democracy. For scholars as Della Porta, people are political agents and their involvement and engagement is fundamental because only by having an equal inclusive and transparent behaviour the decision can be oriented towards the public.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, there are theories which we will present in the following paragraph which proved that countries who are strongly dependent on fossil fuels, the way they are extracted, transported and used has a strong influence on the political and governmental system of a country.

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<sup>19</sup> C. Morris, A. Jungjohann, (2016) *Energy Democracy*

<sup>20</sup> Kacper Szulecki (2018) Conceptualizing energy democracy, *Environmental Politics*, 27:1, 21-41, DOI: 10.1080/09644016.2017.1387294

<sup>21</sup> Cohen, J., (2007) *Deliberative Democracy*. In: S.W. Rosenberg, ed. *Deliberation, participation, and democracy. Can the people govern?* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 219–236.

<sup>22</sup> Strachan, P., et al., (2015) Promoting community renewable energy in a corporate energy world. *Sustainable Development*, 23 (2), 96–109. doi:10.1002/sd.1576

<sup>23</sup> McHarg, A., (2016) Community benefit through community ownership of renewable generation in Scotland : power to the people ? In: L. Barrera-Hernandez, B. Barton, L. Goddne, A. Lucas, and A. Ronne, edited by. *Sharing the costs and benefits of energy and resource activity*. Oxford: Oxford Univ, 297–337.

<sup>24</sup> Della Porta D., (2009), *Democracy in social movements*

### 1.2.1 Practical Examples in Europe

In order to understand better the concept of energy democracy, the presentation of some practical examples functioning properly in the European renewable energy field is able to simplify the relationship between the need of democracy and the implementation of renewable energy sources. Nonetheless, as it was noticed by the scholar Angel it is still unclear how some energy democracy movements would like to implement their political power since their opinions oscillate between the non-state cooperative, the municipality and the nation state.<sup>25</sup> But still, nowadays in Europe, there is a noticeable percentage of environmental cooperatives worth considering, also because according to many intellectuals studying this movement, cooperatives represent the ideal organisational entities in which the participation of individuals in the decision making process is fundamental.<sup>26</sup> The participation of citizens in the change to renewable energy happens through projects which are known as Community Energy Projects (CE) and they are fundamental for the transition to renewable energy in the entire world.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, cooperatives in Europe based on the theory of Community Energy have as a common denominator the participation of citizens, because they provide energy or revenues from sales to their members.<sup>28</sup> In this case, CE focus on the Social Innovation (SI), which is a concept based on four operational foundations: crises and opportunities; the agency of civil society; reconfiguration of social practices, institutions, and networks; new ways of working.<sup>29</sup> However, even a clear definition of Social Innovation is still missing, but one of the main concepts, highlighted also by scholars as MacCallum<sup>30</sup> is to create new inputs of social innovation. The use of institutions or of social networks can create in civil society an environment which responds to crises and opportunities<sup>31</sup> with the use of “innovation ... in favour of a more nuanced reading which valorises the knowledge and cultural assets of communities and which foregrounds the creative reconfiguration of social relations” (MacCallum et al. (2009: 1– 2).

In most of Europe, there are good examples of energy cooperatives integrating people in energy production and consumption. In defining the concept of energy democracy, scholars study these different cooperatives in order to understand the best course to implement all over the European continent in the future.

One of the best working cooperatives is in Piedmont, in northern Italy. This project is called Retenergie and it started to develop in 2007 when a group of activists decided to invest in the implementation of solar panels. As shown on their website, the first thing that the cooperative uses to introduce itself is "We are a cooperative, which consider the energy a common good".<sup>32</sup> The main aim of this cooperative is the production of renewable energy through popular stakeholders since the energy produced is going to be sold to partners and members

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<sup>25</sup> Angel J. (2016), *Towards an Energy Politics In-Against-and-Beyond the State: Berlin's Struggle for Energy Democracy*

<sup>26</sup> Carrilho Da Graça, G. and Gomes, S., (2016) *Exploring transition pathways to sustainable, low carbon societies*, Pathways Project. Lisbon, Portugal: The Jimmy Reid Foundation. [http://www.pathways-project.eu/sites/default/files/Case study Coopernico energy.pdf](http://www.pathways-project.eu/sites/default/files/Case%20study%20Coopernico%20energy.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Bregje Van Veelen (2018) *Negotiating energy democracy in practice: governance processes in community energy projects*, *Environmental Politics*, 27:4, 644-665,

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> MacCallum, D., Moulaert, F., Hillier, J., and Vicari Haddock, S. (eds.). (2009). *Social Innovation and Territorial Development*. Farnham; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Retenergie, Energia Cooperativa. Available at <http://www.retenergie.it/cooperativa/> [Accessed 15 June 2019]

of the cooperatives. The cooperative has to respect the principles of participation, self-government, and solidarity. Retenergie has started different projects, promoting different types of renewable energy sources like the wind and hydroelectric one and most of the projects started were completed. One of them was the installation of a photovoltaic system on public buildings as schools or agricultural agencies, to which a percentage of profit is given. Thanks to financial aids by the state and contributions by Soci Sovventori, Retenergie was able to realize seven installations, which became active in 2018. The basic ideology of this cooperative represents perfectly the concept of energy democracy in Italy: the control of the means of production is of the supplier who is at the same time the consumer and that the location of the installations is close to the places of consuming, in order to reduce the exploitation of fossil fuels. Retenergie is considered one of the best example in Italy and in Europe of environmental cooperatives started by a small group of people who promoted the ideologies of mutual benefit and public benefit.

Another of the examples representing the concept of social innovation projects presented is the “Berliner Energietisch”, a plan to build a socio-ecological community-owned energy supplier in the capital of Germany. It is important to remark that Germany is a Federal Republic, with 16 federal states benefiting of a high degree of autonomy and in those federal states there is also the city of Berlin, considered a city-state. The city of Berlin has its own Parliament and Senate and the “Berliner” are able to call for a referendum concerning a common issue. In 2011, the city won a municipal referendum asking for the municipalisation of water and for this reason in the capital a sentiment of change towards more ecological solutions was increasing.<sup>33</sup> The Berliner Energietisch initiative was promoted by 56 local civil society groups and by citizens of Berlin, claiming to have a more ecological, social and democratic energy supply in Germany’s capital. One of the main reason is that large corporations own power supply, but they focus mainly on maximizing profit rather than to serve citizens, especially when the owner of the energy is a private and foreign corporation, Vattenfall. This plan, however, was not accepted because the percentage of 25% for the quorum was not achieved, but only the 24.1% of the people voted 83% of whom voted for the initiative to be accepted. Moreover, this initiative was not well supported by national parties who decided to have the parliamentary elections and the referendum, not on the same day, decreasing the possibility of higher participation in the referendum. Nonetheless, the reasons and the aims of the Berliner Energietisch represents perfectly the concept of energy democracy, the demand to deal with correlated problems under a shared debate and a single agenda.<sup>34</sup> More precisely, the referendum drafted two demands. The first demand was the creation of a new stipulated company owned by the local state on a non-private-profit basis, called Stadtwerke. The role of this agent was mainly to sell 100% clean energy by buying new renewable capacity. The decision-making process would require a participatory democracy including elected citizens and the convocations of neighbourhood assemblies in order to have total transparency and to have conclusive decisions taken by public debates. The second demand in the draft was a reformulation of the contract with the private Swedish distributor of energy Vattenfall.

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<sup>33</sup> Becker S., Naumann M. (2016) Energy democracy: Mapping the debate on energy alternatives, DOI: 10.1111/gec3.12321

<sup>34</sup> Berliner Energietisch, (2017) Available at <http://berliner-energietisch.net/english-information> [30 June 2019]

The movement for the municipalisation of energy is still strong in Berlin, spreading to more citizens the basic knowledge regarding new renewable sources and the possibility to change towards a more environmental solution.

### **1.3 Correlation between Fossil Fuels and Authoritarian Regimes**

As already said in the previous paragraphs, the concept of energy democracy is still studied and scholars focusing on it are still few. However, there are theories which can be associated to the one of energy democracy because they focus on the relationship between fossil fuels and authoritarian regimes.

One of the theories is the one proposed by the political theorist Timothy Mitchell in his work *Carbon Democracy*. He has presented the concept of carbon democracy by giving an introduction to the sources of energy and their path throughout history analysing the relationship between the sources of energy and the spread of democracy. He does not only focus on the political task of sources but also on the distribution of energy, the way they are taken and then transformed into energy, because in this way they establish connections and build alliances between actors fundamental for the final political establishment.<sup>35</sup> As he shows in the introduction, fossil fuels helped both the possibility of modern democracy and its limits. They were relevant for the change they brought, but their production has enlarged the access to new territories in order to grow crops for the supply food and also for the manufacture of cottons. This change was one of the causes that contributed to the colonization process and the enslavement of forces lead to a big concentration of carbon and to what Eric Hobsbawm as defined as the age of democratization and the age of empire.

The first source which determined the industrialization process is coal, the main protagonist during the two Industrial Revolutions. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, cities started to create different methods in order to transport more easily coal, as for example, the first Canal Act created in Britain in order to pass coal. Mitchell does not only analyse the way sources are transported, but also the power they have exercised on people. Indeed, the coal miners by working in mines developed strong socialization between each other, which made them leaders of the labour regimes started to grow during the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These movements will be fundamental in continuing history, as the birth of the labour party will be stronger at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century especially after the First World War. During the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, electricity used by a majority of people in industrialised countries was handled and supervised by a small part of the population. For this reason, coal miners developed a strong political power thanks to "... the extraordinary quantities of carbon energy that could be used to assemble political agency, by employing the ability to slow, disrupt or cut off its supply."<sup>36</sup> Indeed, also Rosa Luxembourgh saw the birth of workers' movement from their isolation economic struggle was connected, but Mitchell focuses also on the quantity of energy they worked on and the power they had working on that source. In the *Miner's Freedom*, a study of Carter Goodrich the situation in which the miners were working let them create an autonomy that was then heavily protected from mechanisations or more

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<sup>35</sup> Timothy Mitchell (2009) *Carbon democracy*, *Economy and Society*, 38:3, 399-432, DOI: 10.1080/03085140903020598

<sup>36</sup> Timothy M., *Carbon Democracy*, political power in the age of oil, 2013, p.19

dangerous work practises. As these theses proved, most of the mass strikes at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were mainly made by mass miners who strikes were also able to last longer compared to other industries.<sup>37</sup>

Subsequently, Mitchell focuses on the nature and the production of oil, and not only considering oil money. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the state of California in United States was the first producer of oil in the nation. Already in that period, petroleum workers were complaining and fighting to have a true democracy, that according to their opinion could have been reached only by making the oil industry public owned, because “government shall be formed as to benefit the great mass of the common people... against the material interests of the remaining few.”<sup>38</sup> The usage of the source is fundamental too. Before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, oil was not used as source of energy, but as provider of light or as lubricants for machines. During the period between the two world wars, oil started to become fundamental for the production of electricity. However, the two sources are different, even if the oil could be seen as a new kind of power for workers (the industrial actions at Baku in 1905 in the Russian controlled Caucasus or the Mexican oil strike in 1937<sup>39</sup>), the manufacture of the two is completely different, e.g oil requires less workforce or its transportation is much easier compared to coal. Looking at the transportation of oil which is less controlled, some shipping companies escape labour laws by establishing a flags of convenience<sup>40</sup> and for local forces it is complicated to control the sites of this source. Moreover, the democratization of oil is less probable due to the ways it is easily extracted, transported and used. Since, this resource is easy to transport, a good producer of oil will import in different countries limiting market competition. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century European countries understood the function of oil and they started to invade the Middle East in order to get a huge amount that the region benefitted.

The presentation of these two sources present us some of the differences between them: first the production of oil will be located in places mainly isolated from the places in which this source is actually consumed and second due to the creation of networks in different nations workers of oil are more also exploited than miners.<sup>41</sup> After the Second World War, the global financial order was mainly based on oil, thus the value of the dollar was converted not anymore to gold but to oil.

However, during the '70s the main concern by the Western part of the world was not anymore on how to let the source circulate but rather the threat that oil could end as a resource. This Western worry was the consequence of the Ba'thist government of Iraq developing its own oil production without any Western collaboration. In order to stop the increase of oil production, the Western companies started to spread the knowledge on the exploitation of the resource of oil and how it can be dangerous for the environment.

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<sup>37</sup> Timothy M., Carbon Democracy, political power in the age of oil, 2013, p.20

<sup>38</sup> Kern County Union Labour Journal, 10 November 1917 and 18 May 1918, cited in Nancy Quam Wickham, *Petroleocrats and Proletarians: Work, Class and Politics in the California Oil Industry 1917-1925*, PhD dissertation, Departement of History, Univerisyt of California, Berkeley, 1994; 13-14

<sup>39</sup> Timothy Mitchell (2009) Carbon democracy, *Economy and Society*, 38:3, 399-432, DOI: 10.1080/03085140903020598

<sup>40</sup> Timothy Mitchell (2009) Carbon democracy, *Economy and Society*, 38:3, 399-432, DOI: 10.1080/03085140903020598; (Flag convenience is a business practice whereby a ship's owners register a merchant ship in a ship register of a country other than that of the ship's owners, and the ship flies the civil ensign of that country, called the flag state)

<sup>41</sup> Timothy M., Carbon Democracy, political power in the age of oil, 2013, p. 31-33

According to Mitchell, this emphasises one of the relationships between oil and democracy, such as the knowledge of the source is mainly left to expertise and engineers and used eventually to influence the opinion of the public.<sup>42</sup> The correlation between wealth and authoritarianism was analysed also by Leonard Wantchekon, noticing that their association can create breakdowns due to the combination of incumbency advantage, political instability and political repression.<sup>43</sup> The study is mainly focused on those states known as rentier, since their national income is based primarily on the sale of a natural resource and in most of the cases their main source is oil. Nonetheless, the problem appears when the institutions are weak and tend to be less transparent, because they can help consolidate the establishment of authoritarian government due to the little abilities of the electorate to control the government. As a consequence, the one who are going to rule are the one who owns more natural resources and in case there is an opposition, the ruler can decide to ban the opposition it or to merge with the ruling party. The voters will tend to rely more on the government since it has more information advantages than the competition. To conclude the study, Wantchekon shows the difference between a state with a state with a high degree of transparency, Norway and a state with weak institutional power, Nigeria.

Also the American scholar Leif Wenar in his different works, shows the association between the exportation of oil and other natural resources and the regime of a country. By looking at the list of the big African exporter of oil, it is possible to see that the first five countries are authoritarian<sup>44</sup> which even if they have been hostile to the Western world, they have been financed by their payments. This creates a resources curse, that at the end will create violence and political instability. As an example, Wenar proposes the United States who bought oil from Libya during the Gaddafi government but from the rebels. The policy named as “might makes right” can be an incentive for authoritarian states to sell the resources to the country who is more coercive. The policy consists in “importing states award the prize of their consumers’ demand to whoever can control a country or a territory by any means, including through force or fear.”<sup>45</sup> This can not only enrich an authoritarian regime, but also civil conflicts and corruption. In his study, Wenar states that importing states should stop the acquisition of resources from countries where public accountability is absent. In order to stop the exchange of resources that increase the inability of people to benefit of their right, a Clean Trade Act and a Clean Hand Trust have been implemented to control both importing and exporting states.

In his main work “Blood Oil”, Wenar compares the oil dependence of some countries to dependence of substances of an individual. As a person who is addicted to alcohol will purchase always more alcohol, a resources dependent country will continue being an authoritarian country which will rise corruption and violence. In the first chapter of the book, he presents the case of Norway that even if it is one of the stronger producer of oil in the Northern European region, people profits a strong amount transparency by their government. In the case of oil money, the parliament set up a wealth fund to hold the wealth sovereign to pay

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<sup>42</sup> Timothy Mitchell (2009) Carbon democracy, *Economy and Society*, 38:3, 399-432, DOI: 10.1080/03085140903020598

<sup>43</sup> Wantchekon L, (2002) Why do resource abundant countries have authoritarian governments, Leonard Wantchekon Yale University October 15,

<sup>44</sup> Wenar L, (2013) Fighting the Curse of Oil, *Global Policy* V.4 I.3

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.



the future pensions and for public goods.<sup>46</sup> Still according to Wenar the use of natural resources should be reduced with the passing of time, but it is already an improvement that people know for what their resource is been used. Wenar gives different examples regarding the oil curse in his different works, but most importantly he understands that a way to stop the trades of fossil fuels, not only dangerous for the environment but also for people around the world, is to increment popular sovereignty and accountability.<sup>47</sup> Making people more aware of the sources their country benefits and the way they are used can be one of the step to improve the current environmental situation that will have people relying more on renewable energy sources, as it is foreseen by scholars promoting the concept of energy democracy. The theories that we have just presented can be further theses for the concept of energy democracy, since they have shown that the use of a natural resource can endanger the planet and most importantly put in the shade the public will. Differently, energy democracy requires the participation of the society in a process that will make our environment more conscious of the risks that our planet is taking.

In the following chapters, we would like to focus on the different types of democracy that could be implemented in order to create an environment inclined at the acceptance of energy democracy with the possibility to have the society participating in this process which is becoming always more important to safeguard our planet.

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<sup>46</sup> Wenar L., (2017) *Blood Oil*, Oxford University Press, USA

<sup>47</sup> Wenar L., (2017) *The Oil curse, go deeper*, IPPR Progressive Review, V.24(1)

## Chapter 2: Deliberative Democracy

### 2.1 An Introduction to Democracy and Justice

In this chapter, we are going to introduce the concept of deliberative democracy since, for the scholars of “energy democracy”, in order to implement a regime able to integrate the society in the energetic change a deliberative regime would be the most appropriate. Before introducing the concept of deliberation and deliberative democracy, we would like to give a short introduction to the concept of democracy and the concept of justice. First of all, democracy has always been a very much debated concept, as it is possible to understand from the perspective of a political science student. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, by looking at the evolutions of certain states, scholars were trying to identify the main characteristics of democracy by trying to understand what needed to be considered, the goals and effectiveness of a regime or the way institutions are implemented. When people talk about democracy, they mainly refer to a liberal concept of democracy whose prerequisite are the concept of the rule of law and institutions. Indeed, the Austrian economist Schumpeter define democratic method “as that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions which realizes the common good by making the people itself decide issues through the election of individual who are to assemble in order to carry out its will”, presenting democracy as based on the importance of institutions in which people are elected by a free and fair vote<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, this definition can represent also the failures of liberal democracies, in which politicians’ aim is just to achieve power by weakening those liberal principles in order to maintain their power. Unfortunately, nowadays a lot of countries are doing this turning back in their policies transforming their politics in an illiberal one.<sup>2</sup> What it is important in democracy, considering mainly the definition proposed by the liberal perspective, is the responsiveness of the government to the need of the society. As Robert Dahl defined “A key characteristic of democracy is the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals.”<sup>3</sup>. If there is no responsiveness from the government and also no consensus from the society, the paths of democracy of a country might take other directions. This is what some nations in Europe are fearing due to the increase power of populist parties. In the modern world, the main aim of democracies is to create a coexistent environment where people with different ideas and opinion are able to work together. A huge importance is given to the power of law and institutions, which we will see even in deliberative democracy is a fundamental part.

Another important definition which goes hand in hand with the concept of democracy for certain philosophers is the meaning of justice. It is important to define justice, especially because we will focus on the figures of John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas, who (even if they develop totally different theories) concentrate on this principle as one of the fundamental thing to then arrive to a final conclusion of how a right political society should be created. Indeed, especially after the work of John Rawls “A Theory of Justice”, political philosophy starts to focus on the concept of justice as “distributive”, in the sense that it is mainly focused on how primary

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<sup>1</sup> Morlino, L., D. Berg-Schlosser, B. Badie (ed.), 2017 (1° ed.), Political Science: A global perspective, London, SAGE.

<sup>2</sup> Maffettone S. (2019), *Politica, Idee per un mondo che cambia* (Politics, Ideas for a changing world)

<sup>3</sup> Dahl R. (1971), *Polyarchy; participation and opposition*, pp. 1-11

goods, as income, freedom and opportunity are distributed in the society by institutions.<sup>48</sup> According to Rawls, in order to have a more just share of the different goods, their distribution should be based on the principle of equality. This implies not only a definition of justice, but also that people are living together and respecting each other.<sup>49</sup> Even if we have given a short definition of distributive justice, basing ourselves mainly on the Rawlsian definition, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century there are many different theories which propose a different vision of the topic, as the utilitarian one, or the one given by Habermas in the “Ethic of discourse” (which we will consider in a further paragraph), libertarianism of Nozick or the capability approach of Sen.<sup>50</sup> As we can see, the concept of justice in this sense is merely focused on the justice of people considering their socioeconomic and political situation in the society. However, with the passing of the years, due also to historical changes in the society, the focus will be given also on the definition of justice considering the social status of a person and any member of the society who can be discriminated.

In this chapter, we will try to define the very wide concept of deliberative democracy at first and then focus on the theories of philosophers who have a huge impact in the deliberative discourse. This presentation will then be useful to understand if the deliberative process, more precisely deliberative democracy will be useful in energy democracy and if it can bring a change to the environmental situation explained in the first chapter.

## 2.1 Deliberative Democracy

First of all, let's define the word “deliberation”: “[...we define deliberation itself minimally to mean mutual communication that involves weighing and reflecting on preferences, values, and interests regarding matters of common concern. Defining it this way minimizes the positive valence that attaches to the word “deliberation” itself, so that we can then speak of “good” and “bad” deliberation without “bad deliberation” being a contradiction in terms. We define deliberative democracy as any practice of democracy that gives deliberation a central place.]”.<sup>51</sup> The origins of deliberative democracy can be routed to ancient Greek history and philosophy. The first philosophers, as Plutons and Aristotle mainly based their philosophy on the process of discussion between people, who, according to their thoughts, are able to find a final decision by discussing and deciding together. As Aristotle said with a metaphor about food: “A buffet is more valuable and rich if every commensal brings something, but it will be more poor if just one commensal organizes it...”<sup>52</sup> However, in the Ancient Greece a very small portion of the people in the society was counted as citizens and indeed the number of slaves was higher.<sup>53</sup> The use of the term deliberative can, however, define the concept of deliberative democracy in a wide way, in the sense that all the type of democracy introduced in the past have the characteristic of proposing a deliberative aspect. On the other hand, the feature which distinguishes

<sup>48</sup> Maffettone S. (2019), *Politica, Idee per un mondo che cambia* (Politics, Ideas for a changing world)

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Andre Bächtiger, John S. Dryzek, Jane Mansbridge, and Mark Warren, (2018) *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*, 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198747369.013.50

<sup>52</sup> Viola F. (2004), *La democrazia deliberative come pratica sociale* (Deliberative Democracy as social practice),” *Ma contano più gli argomenti o i voti*, pp. 70-73, Università di Palermo

<sup>53</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, in *Complete Works*, vol. II, J. Barnes, ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), Bk. III.

deliberative democracy to other form of democracy, as the liberal one proposed by Rawls, is the way in which a political environment deliberate.<sup>54</sup>

An important introduction is the philosophical contrast between deliberative and aggregative democracy, which are often contrasted. Aggregative democracy is mainly based on the accountability of the vote by taking the individual and his or her preferences as important<sup>55</sup>, which are important also in the deliberation process but after the discussion has taken place.<sup>56</sup>

One of the main characteristics of deliberative democracy is the role of citizens as active part of the political life of the society. They have the responsibility to ask and to demand justification of specific laws and political decisions to the one in charged.<sup>57</sup> Subsequently, when a decision is taken and it is put into practice, they should have the possibility to ask the motivations which lead to that final outcome. Metaphorically, decisions should be made in public as it was represented in Ancient Greece by the place of the *agorà*, by definition the location of democracy in the past open for debate and discussion between citizens.

However, the modern situation is far different from the one of the Greek one, especially because the complexity and the dynamics of certain topics has increased and the overall knowledge of the society is not enough to let it be able to be integrated in the discussion progress, as it is the case for renewable sources and energy. In this case, people should be able to rely on experts, who can eventually explain and educate the society to different circumstances.

In deliberative democracy, in order to face future scenarios, the decision making process is in constant activity by looking at the judgements made in the past and the likely upcoming one.<sup>58</sup> This another important characteristic of deliberative democracy, in the sense that even when a final decision is taken, the dialogue between the different parts of the society is not over, but they should be always open to criticism and to future challenges. So the proponents of deliberation, differently from the aggregative ones, see the preferences of the people not as fixed and private, but rather as in constant transition because they might be discussed again and eventually changed. For this reason, citizens' vote is seen as not sufficient instrument to show a social preference, but elections should be followed by a public discussion.<sup>59</sup> In other words as cited by Professor Maffettone *"The opposition to the aggregative interpretations and collective choice of democracy emerging from these works consists mainly by overcoming of self-interest and of the private nature of preferences in the name of democracy as form of life (Dewey) and of a common interest found through public discussion."*<sup>60</sup>

Many scholars, who have been concentrating on deliberation, have started from the theory of the American economist Kenneth Arrow. His theory was mainly based on the impossibility of a functioning democratic

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<sup>54</sup> Ferrara A., (1996) *Democrazia e Società complesse: l'approccio deliberativo* (Democracy and Complex Society: the deliberative approach), *Manuale di Filosofia Politica* di S. Maffettone, S. Veca

<sup>55</sup> Adersen C. S., Loftager (2006), *Efficiency between Aggregative and Deliberative Democracy*

<sup>56</sup> Andre Bächtiger, John S. Dryzek, Jane Mansbridge, and Mark Warren, (2018) *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*, 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198747369.013.50

<sup>57</sup> Gutmann A. (2011), *Why Deliberative Democracy?*

<sup>58</sup> Maffettone S., (2019), *Politica, Idee per un mondo che cambia* (Politics, Ideas for a changing world)

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

regime by the aggregation of fundamental characteristics, such as democracy, rationality and decisional capacity of a political system. According to this paradox, the two possible outcomes are either the incapacity to have a common decision or a dictatorship. This theory might emphasize the difference between social choice theory and deliberative one, noticing that the social choice theory cannot be easily reconciled with the public one.

A more practical attempt to show the efficiency of deliberative democracy was done in 2004 by two American scholars Fishkin and Ackerman. They worked on project called “Deliberation Day” which consists in a utopic situation in which citizens were given a free day from work to reunite in public and discuss about current issues, mostly the one listed in the electoral campaigns. In their work, they refer to John Stuart Mill who has noted that the people when secretly voting were mainly gratifying themselves rather than choosing the best candidate for the future political life.<sup>61</sup> Even if John Stuart Mill, one of the main representative of utilitarianism<sup>62</sup>, was sceptical about an open discussion between all citizens, he was the one introducing the concept of “government discussion”, which will be then revisited by theorists as Jürgen Habermas as popular sovereignty.

In other words, deliberative democracy does not only ask for a change in distribution of the institutions by increasing the number of people participating at it, but also for a change in how the final decision should be made. There is a fundamental evidence in the act of voting and the one of deliberating. A vote represents the aggregation of preferences of a person, and probably it will be still used as a final mean in order to take a decision, but by discussing the topics by exposing different opinions, the attitude when voting will be different compared to the one made without any type of dialogue.<sup>63</sup> And this is one of the fundamental characteristic of deliberative democracy according to MacIntyre, deliberation should not be seen as a mean to achieve a certain political decisions, but as an important tool for socialization and for the relationship established in the society.<sup>64</sup> It is, indeed important to consider the attitudes of the people who as a virtue are looking together for a common good.

As it is possible to see, the process of deliberation is part of the society itself, which will then be able to find a common solution by evaluating the suited decisions depending on the different issues proposed.<sup>65</sup> In this way according to scholars as Gutmann and Thompson, an open-minded virtue established in the society is fundamental for the political development of it.<sup>66</sup> In this way, it is possible to develop “public reason” which works in the public sphere and it contributes to give it consistency.

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<sup>61</sup> Ackerman, Bruce and Fishkin, James S., "Deliberation Day" (2002). Faculty Scholarship Series. 162. [https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/fss\\_papers/162](https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/fss_papers/162)

<sup>62</sup> Kymlicka W. (1990) Contemporary Political Philosophy, An Introduction “Utilitarianism is a political philosophical approach developed theorized mainly in the 19th and 20th century. It claims that the morally right act is the one which create greatest happiness for all the members of the society. The importance of Utilitarianism should be given to John Rawls, who with the publication of Theory of Justice in 1971 started his theory about justice by introducing the basic concept of Utilitarianism”

<sup>63</sup> J. Elster (ed), Deliberative Democracy, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge, 1998

<sup>64</sup> A. MacIntyre, (1988) Dopo la virtù. Saggio di teoria morale, trad. it. di P. Capriolo, Feltrinelli, Milano, p. 225.

<sup>65</sup> Viola F. (2004), La democrazia deliberativa come pratica sociale (Deliberative democracy as social practice)

<sup>66</sup> A. Gutmann, D. Thompson, Democracy and Disagreement. Why Moral Conflict cannot be avoided in Politics, and What should be done about it, The Belnap Press of Harvard U.P., Cambridge, Mass, 1996, p.82.

Scholars as Elstub, Ercan and Fabrino Mendonça, in one of their work, understood the complexity of deliberative democracy, which cannot be considered as a single concept, but they see it as continuing process by foreseeing four generations of it. From the '80s, the concept of deliberative democracy was never a unified one, in the sense that scholars have posed different questions or focused on different actors. However, these three scholars have been able to identify four generations of deliberative democracy not focusing on the temporary aspect, rather on the diversity of their trends. The first generation is represented by Habermas, who is considered the founder of the contemporary deliberative thought. This generation is mainly focused on the normative theorizing of the principle. He focuses on the discursive procedure where everyone is participating in decision making process of an action<sup>67</sup>, but we will analyse the philosophy of Habermas in the next paragraph. The second generation of democracy starts from the definitions given by the first one, but they went further in considering also the new episodes developed in contemporary democracies, as feminism, multiculturalism and environmental politics. In this way, these scholars have made the concept of deliberation more practical and closer to the current reality.<sup>68</sup> According to these scholars, philosophers as Dryzek, Deveaux and Young can be considered part of the second generation. Differently from them, the philosophers of the third generation try to place this philosophy in the institutional sphere. Nonetheless, they are more inclined in considering the concept of deliberative democracy as the second generation does, by giving attention to the differences and the inequalities in the society. This approach will then be fundamental for the fourth generation which will try to find a definition of deliberative system and a more concrete example in the current world. Nonetheless, a characteristic that is shared by the philosophers of different generation is the theory of mutual respect<sup>69</sup>, which means listening actively and trying to understand the different meaning exposed by the different actors rather than just contradicting each other<sup>70</sup>: Every speaker “[...is owed an effort at identification; that he [or she] should not be regarded as the surface to which a certain label can be applied, but one should try to see the world (including the label) from his [or her] point of view.]”<sup>71</sup>. In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the concept of deliberation was introduced differently by philosophers considered as part of the first generation as Habermas, Rawls and the writers of the Republicanism. In the following paragraph, we are going to introduce the theory of justice and of the public discourse by Rawls, then the theory of deliberative democracy by Habermas and lastly the analysis of the objections by Joshua Cohen.

## 2.2 John Rawls

The approaches of both Rawls and Habermas were an introduction to the concept of deliberation in contemporary political philosophy, even if the two scholars introduced it in diverse manners. In the 20<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Stephen Elstub, Selen Ercan & Ricardo Fabrino Mendonça (2016) Editorial introduction: The fourth generation of deliberative democracy, *Critical Policy Studies*, 10:2, 139-151, DOI: 10.1080/19460171.2016.1175956

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Gutmann A., Thompson D. (2004), *Why Deliberative Democracy*

<sup>70</sup> Bächtiger, A., Dryzek J.S., Mansbridge, and Warren M., (2018) *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*, 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198747369.013.50

<sup>71</sup> Williams, B. (1962). *The Idea of Equality*. In *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, ed. P. Laslett and W. G. Runciman (Oxford: Blackwell), 35–53.

century, the Theory of Justice was one of the changing arguments of the contemporary political philosophy. For this reason, even if we are going to focus on the discourse of public reason, it is important to make a short presentation of the theory proposed by Rawls, to introduce the different concepts of his other work Political Liberalism and also to understand Habermas thought.

At the beginning of the last century, one of the main topic was the protection of rights and liberties in order to treat people as equals.<sup>72</sup> Utilitarianism was one of the fundamental theories talking about this topic and from which Rawls was inspired to arrive to a theory of justice. The main theory of justice by Rawls can be divided in two arguments: people should share the same amount of primary goods, as liberty, opportunity, income and wealth; these goods need to be shared equally between people unless an unequal distribution of them can advantage the least advantaged people. Inequalities are important if they are an improvement for my situation and they are not going to have an effect on the personal share. The goods listed by Rawls are several, so in order to have a clearer idea on which rights and liberties is important to concentrate there are two more principles to consider.

The first principle “The Priority of Liberty” principle, is focused on freedom which can be restricted only for more freedom. This criterion is concentrated on basic liberties as the freedom to vote or of free speech. In the liberal perspective are conceived as civil and political rights in and since they are widely common in our society, they are not really debatable.

“The Priority of Justice over Efficiency and Welfare” is the second principle, giving attention on the distribution of opportunities to give people similar chances in maximizing their situation in life. So the two starting principles of Rawls are concentrated on this lexical priority: “Equal liberties take precedence over equal opportunity which takes precedence over equal resources.”<sup>73</sup> The second principle was the one for which philosophers were struggling to agree. According to Rawls, the differences in the distribution of income are justified only if there was a fair competition in the distribution of offices and jobs. He wants that the life of people is determined by their choices rather than the circumstances, in the sense that people should not be disadvantaged *a priori* by their social status or sex, but the shape of people’s life should only be determined by their performances. Some further important critics to this Rawlsian theory will consider natural conditions of an individual which are prior to the one of the personal status, as health circumstances which can still slow down people in their life, which are not mentioned in the principle. Nonetheless, according to Rawls, if people were in an “original position”, in the sense a position in which they did not know either their social and economic position in life, they would choose his two principles. “... no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, nor does anyone know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength, and the like. I shall even assume that the parties do not know their conceptions of good or their special psychological propensities. The principles of justice are chosen behind a veil of ignorance. This ensures that no one is advantaged or disadvantaged in the choice of principle by the

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<sup>72</sup> Kymlicka W. (1990,) Contemporary Political Philosophy, An Introduction

<sup>73</sup> Kymlicka W. (1990), Contemporary Political Philosophy, An Introduction pp.56

outcome of natural chance or the contingency of social circumstances. Since all are similarly situated and no one is able to design principles to favour his particular condition, the principles of justice are the result of a fair agreement or bargain.”<sup>74</sup> This process of Rawls is fundamental for many reasons, but also because the philosopher will assume that the same attitude should be taken by the people during the public political discourse, which we will now talk about it.<sup>75</sup>

The discussion about the theory of justice cannot be satisfied in one small paragraph, but it was important to give a small introduction of it in order to introduce the next concept and as a conceptual frame to understand the different critics made by other philosophers, as Habermas.

In 1993 Rawls publishes *Political Liberalism*, in which he introduces the concept of consensus and public reason. Some authors see this work as a continuity of *Theory of Justice*, because they see the author trying to test the application of the theory of justice and its relation with legitimacy in a more concrete and realistic view. In *Political Liberalism*, Rawls concentrates on the differences defining a pluralist society, because even if the principle of justice represents the fundamental of the society, people will still be characterized by different opinions and points of view. For this reason it is important to find a social and political model in which these differences can live with one another.<sup>76</sup> The discourse of pluralism is fundamental when talking about public reason. In the Lecture VI of *Political Liberalism*, Rawls talked for the first time of public discourse, which still played an important role in *Theory of Justice*, since the principle of justice needs to be public.<sup>77</sup> The definition of public reason is important in order to understand the real meaning of a democratic society, but especially to learn the role of the society when fundamental questions can be delimited.

So, public reason represents the reason of the society in the political hemisphere in three ways: “(i) reasons of the citizens as reason of the public; (ii) its subject is the good of the public and matters of fundamental justice; (iii) its nature and content is public, being given by the ideals and principles expressed by society’s conception of political justice, and conducted open to view on that basis.”<sup>78</sup> As it is possible to see from these three features, public reason is mainly focused on the constitutional and institutional aspect of the social and political life. Public reason has two main features: The first one is that it is applied to constitutional questions as the right to vote or equality of opportunities, because they are the essential in order for justice to be applied; the second feature is that public discourse does not stop personal considerations about any political and social manner, which on the other hand are important when people engage in political debate.

However, Rawls does not consider the cultural background of a person, which on the other hand might be influenced by other realities as the religious or academic one. The idea of public discourse is mainly the discussion between citizens in public places, who have to discuss constitutional essentials of the justice of the

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<sup>74</sup> Rawls J., (1971) *Theory of Justice* pp.12

<sup>75</sup> White A. D. (2011), *A Rawlsian Idea of Deliberative Democracy* Western University Ontario

<sup>76</sup> Maffettone S. (2019), *Politica, Idee per un mondo che cambia* (Politics, Ideas for a changing world)

<sup>77</sup> Maffettone S. (2010), *Rawls, An Introduction*

<sup>78</sup> Rawls J., *The Idea of Public Reason*, (1997) *Deliberative democracy: essays on reason and politics* / edited by James Bohman and William Rehg



society.<sup>79</sup> Nonetheless, over time it is hard to consider which matters have the same importance as the constitutional one and need to be considered. Of course, Rawls does not consider those matters of second importance, but first he focuses on fundamental matters as the constitutional one, which in his opinion are the basis for democracy.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, it is important to distinguish public reason with the public sphere. For Rawls is important to consider firstly fundamental matters, as it is the constitution and then consider other problems, as it can be environmental and animal protection.<sup>81</sup> In this case, public discourse applies mainly to members of the government, because their actions represent the basis of political life, they have more responsibility to respect constitutional and political laws. Public reason might be seen as a continuous of the theory of justice, from which Rawls takes two essential concepts, political justice and guidelines of the political life, which will make the inquiry free and public. However, the theory of justice introduced in *The Theory of Justice* is just one of the alternative applicable to the concept of public reason, which on the other hand gathers all those reasonable political conceptions.<sup>82</sup>

To conclude this wide topic, the arguments for public reason are two: reciprocity and political legitimacy. Reciprocity is referred both to collaboration between people, but also to the ability to choose some political criteria to which all people are able to agree and then collaborate in the future. The second argument is political legitimacy, which is directed to the capacity of the person to act following constitutional acts. In this sense, the citizen owns the “duty of civility”, the citizen when discussing in the political and public forum will evaluate firstly the basic principle of democracy –in this case liberal of course.<sup>83</sup>

Many scholars had something to criticize to the thesis regarding public discourse by Rawls, some of them were targeted as “continuists”, because they considered Rawls public discourse too wide and permissive, in the sense that it can accept any other doctrine. One of the philosophers “categorized” as continuist is Habermas, who we are going to present in the following paragraph.

### 2.3 Jürgen Habermas

Jürgen Habermas is one of the most influential philosophers of the past century. He starts to focus mainly on the emancipation of the individual in a liberal institutional environment whose social relationship are not based on any kind of domain. This basic thought of the Habermasian theory is influenced by the historical path of his motherland, Germany which was affected by the aftermaths of the Nazism regime and the Second World War seen as a degeneration of the current society, but also positively by new development as wellness and democracy.<sup>84</sup> He focuses on the concept of modernity and how this concept is still in evolution and how a person can achieve it individually or collectively.

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<sup>79</sup> Maffettone S. (2010) Rawls, An Introduction

<sup>80</sup> Rawls J., (1997) *The Idea of Public Reason, Deliberative democracy: essays on reason and politics* / edited by James Bohman and William Rehg

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Rawls J. (1993) *Political Liberalism*

<sup>83</sup> Maffettone S. (2010) Rawls, An Introduction

<sup>84</sup> Maffettone S. (2019) *Politica, Idee per un mondo che cambia (Politics, Ideas for a changing world)*

One of his most influential work is concentrated on the concept of public sphere, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* of 1961. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there was the start of the creation of a public sphere, when people started to gather in English coffee houses or French salons to talk about literature and political and social affairs of the state. Society was not shaped by the religious affiliation, but on reason and rational experience, two concepts representing the period of the Enlightenment.<sup>85</sup> However, in his analysis he has a pessimistic view of how the development of the public sphere was shaped. Even if the principles proposed were the integration of society as a whole, he still recognizes that there is a specific submission to the interests of a part of the population, which will shift with the passing of time, the public interest mainly on power and money reducing the cultural sphere. In this work, Habermas by drawing an historical path of the public sphere emphasizes how society has failed in creating an open environment based on communication and dialogue.<sup>86</sup> In the society different public spheres arise by overlapping one another since they do not have clear temporal, social or credential borders.<sup>87</sup> By looking at the disparity of the different public spheres and their complexity and contradictions, the German philosopher understands both that decisional power cannot be held only by one administrative body and that the society cannot be seen as a unified and similar body. These different spheres of the public policy to which Habermas is referring can be limited by geographical locations or common interests, some are able to grow thanks to their enduring life, as social movements and some are characterized by the way people interact with one another, as it is possible to see in the contemporary society by the encouraging new generation and their relationship social media.<sup>88</sup> The public sphere is represented as a body which cannot be easily labelled, because it keeps moving and changing. The important part to emphasize of the public sphere is the capacity to understand their problem and to communicate them to the political power. The importance and the capacity of the dialogue able to shape society and its decision making process is fundamental also in the theory in which we are interested for what regards the concept of energy democracy, the one of deliberative democracy.

Indeed, Habermas introduces his concept of democracy in one of his works, *Faktizität und Geltung* (Between Facts and Norms: An introduction to Democracy) of 1992 and by analysing the relationship between legislation and constitution, he has criticised aspects of liberal democracy and republicanism to arrive to a final conclusion of democracy, which is the deliberative one.<sup>89</sup> So, first of all he emphasises the differences between the two approaches: in the liberal state, there are two entities, the state who manage the political and administrative life of the society, which is the second entity and it is an interactions between private factors and their own labour; and the republican one, where politics represents the basis for establishing any type of socialization process between the people, in the sense that people interact with one another by seeing

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<sup>85</sup> Peter Duelund (2010) Jürgen Habermas, *The structural transformation of the public sphere: an inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 16:1, 26-28, DOI: 10.1080/10286630903038923

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Habermas (1996) , *The Inclusion of the Other*, *Studies in Political Theory*, Three Normative Models of Democracy pp.364.365

<sup>88</sup> Ferrara A., (1996) *Democrazia e Società complesse: l'approccio deliberativo* (Democracy and Complex Society: the deliberative approach), *Manuale di Filosofia Politica* di S. Maffettone, S. Veca

<sup>89</sup> Maffettone S. (2019) *Politica, Idee per un mondo che cambia*

themselves as individual free and equal under law.<sup>90</sup> By presenting these two conceptions in this way, we can assume that the notion of the citizen, the one of legal order and the one of the political process differ. In the case of citizen, it is easy to understand that in the liberal case the citizen is mainly determined by his or her individual rights, whether republicanism focuses mainly on political rights of the individual as a responsible subject of free and equal citizens.<sup>91</sup> The difference between the rights which are first claimed by the two different approaches let us understand the role that plays the legal order in their society. In the case of the liberal one, the legal order in order to claim the individual right of a person, on the other hand in the republican one the rights of a person are integrated in the political sphere, part of the legal order: "In a republican view, a community's objective, common good substantially consists in the success of its political endeavour to define, establish, effectuate and sustain the set of rights (less tendentiously, laws) best suited to the conditions and mores of that community."<sup>92</sup> In this case the action of voting is fundamental, since it represents not only self-determination but all rights of an individual included in the legislative political sphere.

This can lead us to understand the last of the characteristic emphasized by Habermas in this work, Three Normative Models of Democracy. In the liberal regime, there is a sort fight to reach access in the administrative power and to achieve a specific role. The political process is more characterized by the acquisition of people's consensus, in other words the political process is concentrated on people preferences and their votes. In order to put a clear picture in the readers' heads, Habermas compares the liberal political process to the strategies of the market. Politicians are selling a specific product in the market and competing to get the more voters they can.<sup>93</sup>

On the other hand, in the republican process there is not the act of selling a product, but they are more aiming at creating a dialogue in the society, which will then express the majority decisions and then the administrative power is given to the government apparatus. The dialogue of the society is a part really important and on which Habermas focuses because then the political discourse will have an effect on the decisions taken by the authority. After exposing these differences between these two approaches and the advantages and disadvantages of the two, the main focus is given to the process of the dialogue which is able to realize better social cooperation: "Deliberation...refers to a certain attitude toward social cooperation, namely, that of openness to persuasion by reasons referring to the claims of others as well as one's own. The deliberative medium is a good faith exchange of views - including participants' reports of their own understanding of their respective vital interests—... in which a vote, if any vote is taken, represents a pooling of judgments."<sup>94</sup> The analysis of the two approaches let us understand the importance of creating a dialogue – in this case we are considering the Republican one- between the people, which may eventually lead to a collective understanding, which according to Habermas cannot be universal since in the modern society there is the representation of diverse realities. For this reason, they have to reach an agreement based on general validity – the liberal

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<sup>90</sup> Habermas J., (1996) *The Inclusion of the Other*, Studies in Political Theory, Three Normative Models of Democracy pg.239-252

<sup>91</sup> Habermas J., (1996) *The Inclusion of the Other*, Studies in Political Theory, Three Normative Models of Democracy pg.241

<sup>92</sup> Michelman F. (1988), *Political Truth and the Rule of Law*, Tel Aviv University Studies in Law, pg.284

<sup>93</sup> Habermas J., *The Inclusion of the Other*, Studies in Political Theory, Three Normative Models of Democracy pg.239-252

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

understanding. By putting together these two conceptions, Habermas introduces this third way of democracy, the deliberative one also presented as discourse theory. It gives major importance to the to the process of political opinion and will formation as it is done in Republicanism, but it understands that in order to create an environment open to discussion and dialogue, there is the need of a constitutional establishment<sup>95</sup>: "Discourse theory works instead with the *higher-level intersubjectivity* of communication processes that unfold in the institutionalized deliberations in parliamentary bodies, on the one hand, and in the informal networks of the public sphere, on the other."<sup>96</sup> Decisions taken by the government and by the administrative are connected by the opinion and will formation process. The public opinion of the people has not the function of ruling, but it has the power to express the common will of the people and influence and stimulate the main power to take an action. In a certain sense, the society is guiding the administrative power to take specific path. In this way, Habermas develops a model of democracy shaped in two levels: institutional bodies able to make decisions and on the other side a wide public made of people and interests groups. Democracy is not only the ability to form and to create norms, but it is also shaped by an attentive society and a public sphere not manipulated, which still needs to be regulated by a restricted part of the society – such as members of the government, Parliament etc.<sup>97</sup> Society is both seen as a whole since it is represented by a constitution, but also as decentred since in the discourse process all the people part of it should be represented and all their problems put into noticed. The German philosopher proposes the division between the strong and the weak. The "strong" are represented by the institutional sphere, whether the "weak" are the represented by the public sphere. The part of the society considered as weak has to identify problems which need an imminent solution to the "strong" part of the society which as a consequence has to find solution to the problem. According to Habermas, deliberative politics should be based on political socialization by sharing opinion and different political culture. By creating such an environment, it will be possible in the future to create a proper institutional reality which is not based on political control.<sup>98</sup>

## 2.4 Joshua Cohen

Joshua Cohen is a contemporary political philosopher whose thoughts regarding deliberative democracy are essential for the contemporary thought. In the different generations we pointed out in the paragraph about deliberative democracy, Cohen would be part of the first generation since most of his work is more concentrated on normative theory.<sup>99</sup> According to Cohen's point of view, deliberative democracy "...is rooted in the intuitive ideal of a democratic association in which the justification of the terms and conditions of association proceeds through public argument and reasoning among equal citizens. Citizens in such an order

<sup>95</sup> Habermas J., *The Inclusion of the Other*, *Studies in Political Theory*, Three Normative Models of Democracy pg.239-252

<sup>96</sup> Habermas J., *The Inclusion of the Other*, *Studies in Political Theory*, Three Normative Models of Democracy pg. 248

<sup>97</sup> Ferrara A., (1996) *Democrazia e Società complesse: l'approccio deliberativo* (Democracy and Complex Society: the deliberative approach), *Manuale di Filosofia Politica* di S. Maffettone, S. Veca

<sup>98</sup> Habermas J., *The Inclusion of the Other*, *Studies in Political Theory*, Three Normative Models of Democracy pg.239-252

<sup>99</sup> Stephen Elstub, Selen Ercan & Ricardo Fabrino Mendonça (2016) Editorial introduction: The fourth generation of deliberative democracy, *Critical Policy Studies*, 10:2, 139-151, DOI: 10.1080/19460171.2016.1175956

share a commitment to the resolution of problems of collective choice through public reasoning, and regard their basic institutions as legitimate insofar as they establish the framework for free public deliberation.”<sup>100</sup> In a deliberative democratic system, there are continuing associations between members which are the results of the deliberation. People –gifted with deliberative capacities as taking part to a public debate and then acting according to the final decision in the debate –work together in the political sphere as a commitment to reach deliberation, which represents the legitimacy of their society. Of course, this does not presuppose that people are aiming to reach the same things and have the same preferences, but that the society is able to commit to a common goal even with different preferences.

In the essay “Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy” published by Bohman and Rehg, Cohen introduces a model of deliberative democracy which is able to show how institutions should embody deliberative characteristics. He focuses primarily on three aspects of deliberation: agenda setting; explaining the agenda; propose alternatives for resolutions in the agenda. An outcome, of a specific topic, is considered legitimate when it is discussed and reasoned and indeed people are more inclined to rely on the final results of discussions, because it implies that it was built on a strong discussion between individuals. It is important to say that not all the ideas are accepted, but they should be based on important and changing evidences which will influence the final decision taken by a collective body, where parties are formally and substantively equal. The final result of this deliberation process is based on consensus, which however is different from the one of the aggregate non-deliberative system, because it will be the result of a process of discussion.<sup>101</sup>

A discussion by Cohen, which can be interesting related to the relationship between energy and deliberative democracy is his response to the objections to deliberative democracy: sectarian, incoherent, unjust and irrelevant. The first objection sees deliberative democracy as sectarian, because it sees focused on the ideal of active citizenship.<sup>102</sup> According to Cohen, a political conception cannot be seen sectarian because it is based on free deliberation among equal citizens. Deliberative democracy is based on the conception of good human life, because the discussion process justifies political notions and establishes a process of common good which is not only based on national allegiance. Moreover, the concept of deliberative democracy cannot be seen sectarian if based on the idea of active citizenship.

Some scholars see deliberative democracy as incoherent. Cohen starts by focusing on the assumption made by the American political scientist Riker, who sees majority ruling weak and unstable since at the end it reflects the will of institutions. However, according to Cohen, deliberative democracy focuses on expressing preferences in an open discussion which premises the establishment of institutions which will consequently follow the political will.<sup>103</sup> The third objection sees deliberative democracy as injustice, because it is based on the judgments of the majorities rather than considering the personal situation of an individual. Cohen, in

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<sup>100</sup> Cohen J. (1997), *Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy*, *Deliberative democracy: essays on reason and politics* / edited by James Bohman and William Rehg.

<sup>101</sup> Cohen J. (1997), *Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy*, *Deliberative democracy: essays on reason and politics* / edited by James Bohman and William Rehg.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

order to reply to this criticism, considers one of the basic freedoms in deliberative democracy: the freedom of speech. The total freedom of speech can be seen as a way to prevent the power of the people, who on the other hand would prefer such to have such restriction, which can be favourable in some cases. This argument is interesting, but the deliberative process claims that what is good for society is decided in public discussion, not before it. The deliberative conception supports the expression of any type of interests, stopping forms of expression would go against the grounding principle of deliberative democracy. So the injustice criticism is not fully correct, because the liberties are not just the topics of deliberation but they are especially what makes deliberation possible. The last objection sees public deliberation irrelevant in modern politics, because they see direct democracy as the only option for the deliberative one. Cohen understands that deliberative democracy might be not unrealizable, but he says that gathering people in the legislative body cannot be the solution to it. Logically even a legislative assembly without a discursive body would fall, but a proper work of deliberative institutions takes in account the psychology and behaviour of its citizens.<sup>104</sup>

## 2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have introduced some of the basic principles of deliberative democracy. One of the main character that distinguishes deliberative democracy from the other perception of democracy is the importance that these philosophers give to communication and to the dialogue. Also for the three different philosophers described the dialogue as an important feature in the political sphere. Rawls is one of the main representative of liberal democracy, but he still gives importance to the concept of the public discourse. Another similarity between the different thoughts of the three is the importance given to the political institutions and the to the constitution. Indeed, it is important to not forget the power given to primary laws by deliberative democracy, which on the other hand may seem as a political thought who mainly give power to the people without having some basic political guidelines. However, the presence of a dialogue between citizens and the society is fundamental in the shape of the political life of a country. According to Cohen, the dialogue will shape and help the formation of the political structure of a country. For Habermas, the dialogue in the public sphere is going to shape the decision taken at the end by the government. Rawls too, sees the power of the public discourse in shaping the public final outcome, but on the other hand he thinks that the public discourse has to be used for what regards constitutional and institutional topics, which as a consequence are the fundamental of the freedom of an individual.

The differences in a continuing growing society are always increasing, and for this reason the deliberative dialogue cannot stop and it is in continuous evolution. It was interesting to see the different generations listed by the three scholars Elstub, Ercan and Mendonca, who understand that the change in the society are so fundamental that they have to be introduced in the public discourse in order to influence in the political establishment and its relationship with the citizens. Deliberative democracy may not be put into practice in the current political situation of any country in the world, but it shows something that got lost in the contemporary

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

world: the importance of being part of the society. This is something which was also shown by the American sociologist Rober Putnam in his work “Bowling Alone”<sup>105</sup>. In this work, Putnam emphasises how the concept of society and society itself are crumbling. People do not communicate anymore as if they are part of the community but they primarily think about each other. One of the reason listed by Putnam in his book, but then also in other interviews is the birth of these new means of communication, which are fictitious. On the other hand, social media can be an evolution for the communication between different people in the world, as it is the case for the new environmental social movement Extinction rebellion, but people do not have to forget what means to be part of the society and the importance of the point of view of every citizen.<sup>106</sup> Nonetheless, as said in the introduction to this chapter, most of the democracies in the world are liberal one and still in some of them the populist wave is forgetting some liberal principles fundamental in a democratic regime. So it can seem hard for the modern world to be open to a deliberative regime. In the following chapter, we are going to find some reasons which can show the advantages of deliberative democracy in creating an environmental and sustainable development in modern societies.

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<sup>105</sup> Putnam R. D. Interview Our Civic Life in Decline?, Conversations with Bill Kristol, 13. March 2016, <https://conversationswithbillkristol.org>

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

## Chapters 3: Correlation between Deliberative and Energy Democracy

### 3.1 Habermas and the Environmental Field

Habermas' work has also been studied in relation with the environment by many philosophers, and this is important for us to understand the association between deliberative democracy and any environmental issue. Critics of the environmental view of Habermas tend to concentrate on his relationship with Frankfurt School and how much he has stepped away from the human-nature consideration given by the German school. On the other hand, there are philosophers who tend to emphasize the importance of the dialogue to solve environmental problems and risks.<sup>107</sup> The criticism by the Frankfurt School on the environmental interpretation of Habermas are concentrated on his thought about the human being having a purely natural interest in self preventing his or her interest. In other words, his thought is mainly concentrated on rise of the individual domination also in the environmental field.<sup>108</sup>

Contrary, one of the biggest supporter of Habermas, Brulle concentrates on the development and institutionalization of the arguments of the society, able to improve its environmental situation. According to Brulle, the Habermasian theory on dialogue can help the ecological situation by creating a coherent, generalizable and environmental interest in all society. Indeed, according to Brulle one of the main problem about this field is the failure in reaching a proper consensus, because people tend to be blocked from exposing their own opinion: "we need to develop and institutionalize more adequate procedures to integrate the consideration of ecological values into the decision-making process. ... We do not need to look to metaphysical arguments, but to ourselves and our beliefs, political actions, and social institutions."<sup>109</sup> The oligarchic and technocratic disposition of the environmental field is blocking people to have a stronger influence in problems which effect everybody. The solution, according to Brulle, is the environmental metanarrative as an ecologically sound society based on the democratization of the environmental field with the introduction of the ethics of the discourse.<sup>110</sup>

Another Habermasian environmental supporter is Thomas Webler, who adapted Habermas basic theory in the public environmental decision making process. According to Webler, Habermas has focused, when studying the dialogue process, mainly on the characteristics of the individual rather than on setting rules which could have facilitated this procedure.<sup>111</sup> For instance, the possibility of making some claims has to respect previous rules. Nonetheless, the scholar focuses mainly on the importance of creating a public discourse on a topic whose final decision will influence every member of the society. Moreover, people have to be able to access

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<sup>107</sup> Gunderson R.,(2014) Habermas in Environmental Thought: Anthropocentric Kantian or Forefather of Ecological Democracy, Michigan State University

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Brulle R. (2002), "Habermas and Green Political Thought: Two Roads Converging" *Environmental Politics* 11:1-20

<sup>110</sup> Brulle R. (2000), "Agency Democracy and The Nature: The U.S Environmental Movement from a Critical Theory Perspective, Cambridge, Massachusetts: M.I.T Press.

<sup>111</sup> Webler, Thomas. 1993. "Habermas Put Into Practice: A Democratic Discourse for Environmental Problem Solving." Pp. 60–72 in *Human Ecology: Crossing Boundaries*, edited by S. D. Wright, T. Dietz, R. Borden, G. Young, G. Guagnano. Fort Collins: The Society for Human Ecology.



to all the information to evaluate better a problem. By looking at the theory of Habermas, Webler also emphasizes the importance not only of the outcome, but also of the process that brings to the final step.<sup>112</sup> Other scholars have started from the theory of Habermas to then revision it. Differently from the one who mainly support the theory of Habermas, they attempt to integrate in the decision making sphere also how non-human interests can be included in the discourse field.

One of the scholars being part of the revisionist of the communicative theory of Habermas is Dryzek. He has done important works in regard to the environmental inclusion of the deliberative approach. In his revision, he starts from Habermas approach insofar the normative ending aspect of it, by then adding the important communicative action, which according to Dryzek needs to be the standard of the ecological problem resolution.<sup>113</sup> The dialogue is one of the possibility to bring an improvement into the ecological rationality, seen as the capability of ecosystems consistently and effectively to provide the good of human life support. He also states that the participation of all the people in the debate process would help society to better respond to the complexity of the environmental concern.<sup>114</sup> However, differently from the supporters Dryzek disagreed on the capacity to put into practice Habermas' theory. First of all, he sees the management of the ecosystem not as reliable as its normative theory may seems, since the environment cannot be forecasted depending on the novel human intervention.<sup>115</sup> Dryzek affirms that it is important to pay attention to the way the ecosystem communicates with people by looking at the environmental catastrophes which are happening. So, he focuses also on a different dialogue: the one with the actual environment. Dryzek suggests to "treat signals emanating from the natural world with the same respect we accord signals emanating from human subjects"<sup>116</sup>, however he has not proposed any form of policy to establish a form an understanding sphere between the people and the ecosystem.<sup>117</sup> Also the English professor Eckersley follows the democratic discourse path presented by Habermas by stating that in the public sphere there should be an actual representative of the nature, in the sense a person who presented ecocentric-ethical assumptions.<sup>118</sup> An interesting point of view shown by the professor is that the interest on the environmental issue should be immediate. Therefore, the question needed to be asked is not how can we know what are the interests of nature (considered by the author as immediate epistemological problems), but what the people should include in the nature moral realm (immediate moral question).<sup>119</sup> In other words, she is asking to consider also the aspects of the nature in the moral consideration discourse. In this way, the Habermas' theory is seen also as representative of nature or, as defined by the

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<sup>112</sup> Webler, T.( 1995) "'Right' Discourse in Citizen Participation: An Evaluative Yardstick." Pp. 33–84 in Fair and Competent Citizen Participation: Evaluating New Models for Environmental Discourse, edited by O. Renn, T. Webler, P. Wiedemann. Dordrecht: Kluwer,

<sup>113</sup> Dryzek, J.S. (1992) "Ecology and Discursive Democracy: Beyond Liberal Capitalism and the Administrative State." *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 3:18–42.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Dryzek, John S. (1987) *Rational Ecology: Environment and Political Economy*. New York: Basil Blackwell.

<sup>116</sup> Dryzek, J.S. (1995) "Political and Ecological Communication." *Environmental Politics* 4:13–30. Eckersley, Robyn. 1990. "Habermas and Green Political Thought: Two Roads Diverging." *Theory and Society* 19:739–776.

<sup>117</sup> Gunderson R.,(2014) *Habermas in Environmental Thought: Anthropocentric Kantian or Forefather of Ecological Democracy*, Michigan State University

<sup>118</sup> Eckersley, Robin (1999). "The Discourse Ethic and the Problem of Representing Nature." *Environmental Politics* 8:24–49.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

author, non-human community. To conclude, we can say that Habermas theory of deliberative democracy and of the public discourse can be interpreted as a mean to improve the relationship between nature and the individual in an environmental world less technocratic. However, many of critics were giving their attention on the individual, seen in a glass bowl isolated from the surrounding environment. According to Gunderson, both the critics and the supporters of Habermas are correct, since they rely on the anthropocentric assumption and have provided discourse-procedural tools that can be utilized to improve the human nature relations. Moreover, they see the discourse option as a way to better change the relationship we have with nature.<sup>120</sup> In the next paragraph we are going to show the opinion of scholars, who see the deliberative discourse as an option to improve the environmental situation.

### **3.2 Deliberative Environmental Democracy**

The principles of commitment to a rational discourse in search for consensus, of the dedication to diversity and of inclusion in the environmental field promoted by deliberative democracy are not new in the international political field. However, the difficulty to implement these principles is still current. The assumption of maintaining the exchange of information between the people has always been of primary importance in the global perspective. In 1998, in the Danish city Aarhus 47 parties have signed the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters.<sup>121</sup> The Convention refers mainly to the principles evaluated by the deliberative democracy approach in the decision making body of the environmental field, as an easy access to information extended to all the public, the public participation and access to justice in the decision making process on matters concerning the local, national and transboundary environment.<sup>122</sup> As already said, the Convention was signed by 47 nations including the European Union and all its Member States. Even if the rights are fundamental not all the nation governments are able to support the Convention's purposes as they are supposed to do. The spread of information promoted by the Convention is of fundamental importance when making political decision, even to vote simply for the next political candidate or to inform better a citizen, who can be more tempt in taking part at the public discourse.<sup>123</sup> The Convention promotes interesting principles who should be brought more into real life by national government, not only to keep promoting basic ethics but mostly to establish a relationship of trust with the public field. In this way, society will feel that their expressed intervention on any argument will never be a waste.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Gunderson .,(2014) Habermas in Environmental Thought: Anthropocentric Kantian or Forefather of Ecological Democracy, Michigan State University.

<sup>121</sup> Walter F. Baber & Robert V. Bartlett (2019): A rights foundation for ecological democracy, *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, DOI: 10.1080/1523908X.2019.1566059

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Bauhr, M. and Grimes M. (2015) Indignation or Resignation: The implications of transparency for societal accountability. *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions* 27 (2): 291–320.

<sup>124</sup> Gerber, A. S., Huber, G. A., Doherty, D., & Dowling, C. M. (2011). Citizens' policy Confidence and Electoral Punishment: A Neglected Dimension of Electoral accountability. *Journal of Politics*, 73(4), 1206–1224.

As said in the first chapter, the concept of energy democracy is still pretty recent, but same principles have been already promoted as it is the case of the Aarhus Convention. Also different concepts, as environmental democracy or environmental justice have already been studied in relationship with the concept of deliberative democracy. The concept of energy democracy is pretty close to the topic of the environment, first of all, because its main aim is to achieve a more ecological and just distribution of the energy between people and also because, it is especially based on the production and distribution of sustainable sources. Since, there are not many studies regarding the correlation between deliberative and energy democracy, we are going firstly to focus on the efficiency of deliberative democracy with the environment by introducing some theories, which see it as one of the possible solution to reconcile the world of science with the society.

In the second chapter, we introduced the basic concept of democracy and it is important to highlight that without the proper functioning of democracy any type of democratic system can be implemented: "...the most ecologically sophisticated policies imaginable will prove unsustainable if they fail the test of democratic legitimacy. So deliberative democracy is a necessary (though not sufficient) element of environmental sustainability."<sup>125</sup> Not only the concept of legitimacy has to be always remembered, but the importance of having a deliberative regime in the environmental sphere is to empower the individual in the narrative aspects rather than in the voting one. Of course, the vote is fundamental, but the presence of a dialogue is important to spread knowledge between people.<sup>126</sup>

The two authors, Baber and Bartlett study the concept of deliberative environmental democracy, especially because in the 21th century it has been studied that the impact of the individual on the ecosystem is always increasing. According to the two authors, the deliberative process is the most suitable, because it implies the concept that we are all involved when it comes to the environment and we should develop a mutual environmental obligation.<sup>127</sup> Indeed, they listed four promises of the deliberative environmental democracy. First of all, the deliberative approach will create a more open and participatory environment which will spread more knowledge between people. The presence of a wider number of people in the deliberative space will influence the final decision making progress in a different way compared to the final outcome decided by a small number of people. It is important to notify, that deliberative democracy wants to focus on representing part of the society which has been often marginalized, rather than interest groups.<sup>128</sup> The second promises is the possibility to get to know the reality of an ecosystem better. By implementing a policy which is focused on the resolution or the improvement for a specific local area, the deliberative process will explain and work trying to get to know how fields are worked by local groups, for example they can study the different landing managements or physical infrastructures or focus more on the political side by looking at social institutions. According to the two authors, the deliberative decision will be more just compared to the one taken with an

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<sup>125</sup> Baber W. and Bartlett R., (2018) *Deliberative Democracy and the Environment*, The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy

Edited by Andre Bächtiger, John S. Dryzek, Jane Mansbridge, and Mark Warren

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Feinberg, M. and Willer, R. (2013) The Moral Roots of Environmental Attitudes. *Psychological Science*, 24:56-62

<sup>128</sup> Dryzek, J.S and Niemeyer, S. (2008) Discursive Representation. *American Political Science Review*, 102: 481-93

aggregative approach, because in order to give voice to most of the citizens, its form will be more decentralized.<sup>129</sup> The third assumption of deliberative environmental democracy is the idea of justice, focusing mainly on the unequal distribution of environmental goods or harms. A just distribution of goods in the environmental field will develop a different approach in relationship to any form of discrimination, which eventually will then be fought. Another characteristic highlighted by the two scholars of the deliberative environmental democracy approach is the ability to make better decisions. The elitist decision making body has the arrogance of taking better decisions even in fields where their knowledge is not well-versed. On the other hand, according to the authors even a good policy, if it is not supported by the society will fail to be politically sustainable.<sup>130</sup> This can be a good solution both to integrate the society into the scientific progress and to facilitate the government in understanding the main problems of the people. The last premises of this approach is one of the most cited characteristics in the deliberative democracy approach: the legitimacy of the decisions taken with the consensus of the society.<sup>131</sup>

By some others scholar, the deliberative environmental approach can be a way to create an approach between science and society. Scholar, as Monika Berg and Rolf Lidskog talk about the democratization of science, as in the sense of spreading the scientific knowledge to both society and stakeholders. The scientific sphere speaks to people only through the use of social media<sup>132</sup>, but by creating a deliberative capacity in the scientific field the system will become more inclusive, reciprocal and consistent.<sup>133</sup> The scholars of this approach think that environmental problem should be dealt mainly by the people who are affected by them in order to have a more effective resolution, since those part of the society experience mostly those environmental changes. An example can be health problems related to the environmental issues. People are more honest about issues compared to governments or companies and they can immediately talk and associate them.<sup>134</sup> It was also studied that a much higher improvement can be achieved with the integration of people in the environmental sphere. Indeed, the Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services aims at unifying the knowledge of the scientific and local spheres. Their main ambition is to create "... a dialogue between science and knowledge system in order to provide policy-relevant knowledge for environmental governance."<sup>135</sup> The society can have a fundamental role in presenting problems which affects it more consistently and then ask help to the technocratic sector. In the study of Berg and Lidskog, three characteristics of a deliberative institution were presented, which aim at promoting the democratic deliberation in the form

<sup>129</sup> Baber W. and Bartlett R., (2018) *Deliberative Democracy and the Environment*, The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy Edited by Andre Bächtiger, John S. Dryzek, Jane Mansbridge, and Mark Warren

<sup>130</sup> Baber W. and Bartlett R., (2005) *Deliberative Environmental Politics: Democracy and Ecological Rationality* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press)

<sup>131</sup> Baber W. and Bartlett R., (2015) *Consensus and Global Environmental Governance: Deliberative Democracy in Nature's Regime* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press)

<sup>132</sup> (cf. Stevenson and Dryzek 2014, p. 185).

<sup>133</sup> Berg M. Lidskog R., (2018) *Deliberative democracy meets democratised science: a deliberative systems approach to global environmental governance*, *Environmental Politics*, 27:1, 1-20, DOI: 10.1080/09644016.2017.1371919

<sup>134</sup> Brown, P., 1997, *Popular epidemiology revisited*. *Current Sociology*, 45 (3), 137–156.  
doi:10.1177/001139297045003008

<sup>135</sup> Berg M. Lidskog R., (2018) *Deliberative democracy meets democratised science: a deliberative systems approach to global environmental governance*, *Environmental Politics*, 27:1, 1-20, DOI: 10.1080/09644016.2017.1371919

of dialogue, especially for what regards the interest of the future generations and of non-human being. The first one will be certainly a chamber where dialogue happens: Chamber of discourses, where different voices and questions from the public sphere are posed. According to Dryzek, this chamber should be instituted in international organizations, because he sees that a change in the governance can be more efficient and democratic than a change in the institutional setting of organization. A second characteristic is the reflexive institutions, seen as an institutionalization of the public debate. The public debate can be supervised by an authoritative independent agency, which will take information but also ask people to express their own points of view. This assumption is really interesting, because it emphasizes one of the difficulties of science in making people participate in the scientific discourse. Of course, society knowledge is limited compare to people more involved in the field, but the cultural background can be forgotten by the scientific area. The last offered assumption is the constitutional adaption of environmental rights and responsibilities which mainly are a solution to preserve people rights by claiming the respect of transparency and responsibility.

In this chapter we have presented some assumptions about the concept of deliberative democracy applied the environmental one. Since the concept of energy democracy has been recently introduced in the political scientific field, there are few works concentrating on how to apply this new approach to both the society and nature. On the other hand, energy democracy is mainly based on the introduction of renewable sources with the application of a deliberative method, making all people participants of it. As it is possible to understand, the main concern of these scholars is the safeguard of the ecosystem which can be implemented more easily with the cooperation of the whole society. However, a proper participation and collaboration of the people can only be achieved developing an all-around knowledge of the situation in society, and here it is important the role of deliberative democracy. A proper dialogue may result not only efficient for the democratic development of the population, but also for a more precise resolution of the problem. The participation of the people by discussing issues will make them more conscious of the environmental risks that we will live in the future and will make them feel part not only of the society, which is a characteristic that we do not have to omit, but also of the ecosystem.

In other words, we can say that the energy democracy solution might result of fundamental importance. Renewable sources of energy can make a significant change to the natural risks which are flourishing nowadays and making people part of the process might be the only solution to have a proper shift. As a conclusion, it is possible to notify that deliberative democracy might empathize properly the environmental social field, since people will feel more integrated in a society, more aware of the problem and ready to make a proper change.

Another conclusive point, which can make people understand the importance of their involvement in the environmental and ecological sphere is their being part and integrated in what it is studied by science. They should not be afraid of being involved in the decision making process of the scientific bodies, especially because they are one of the first to be affected by it. Therefore, they should be treated as participants and not as public. In other world, participating in the decision making process of the world we live on every day,

should not be seen as a question, but rather as a something we claim as human beings. Being involved in the environment resolution is part of people human rights.<sup>136</sup> In the history, the path to achieve fundamental rights of the individual has been long and debated. Even if the foundations of every existing constitution are mainly based on a strong implementation of human rights, many populations' identities have been struggles by oppressive government restricting their freedoms. In this case, it will be difficult to see national governments respecting the territorial soil when sometimes they do not even respect the people living on it. However, thanks to the constant collaboration between people in claiming what they are entitled to, some changes have been made. Nowadays, the environmental consciousness is spreading, as it is possible to see by the increasing number of people "rebellious" and striking asking the attention of the government for the environmental damage created to the ecosystem. The deliberation of the environmental field, as in this case the one of energy might bring a change more rapidly with constant participation.

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<sup>136</sup> Walter F. Baber & Robert V. Bartlett (2019): A rights foundation for ecological democracy, *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, DOI: 10.1080/1523908X.2019.1566059

## Conclusion

In the following chapters, we have introduced the new concept of energy democracy and the very much studied topic of deliberative democracy. The concept of energy democracy mainly focuses on how the use and the production of energy should be divided in the society. As said in the first chapter, the key concepts of it are popular sovereignty, participatory governance and civic ownership. We have described the concept of cooperatives, focusing on the participation of citizens in the ecological production of energy and of the figure of the prosumer of energy, as an individual or a non-profit organization, acting both as the producer and as the consumer of their own energy. We have listed some example of cooperatives which are working to achieve an environmental improvement in the current situation of the society. How the number of this kind of cooperatives is always increasing in Europe, with some exceptional examples also in countries in which the society is not really focused on the environmental damage created during the years, like cooperatives in Italy and Spain. One of the solutions according to the scholars of this movement is to increase the participation of citizens in the ecological decision making process and let them participate in this change.

However, not only promoters of the concept of energy democracy see that the change can only be achieved if the people are involved, but also other scholars, whom theories we have introduced. Scholars as the American Leif Wenar, who has studied how the production of oil of some authoritarian countries is just damaging the field and for this reason importing states should also stop the acquisition of the source. Also the Professor of the Columbia University, Timothy Mitchell has studied the political impact of the production and of the exchange as sources, like coal and oil. The solution is always to increase the democratic participation in the decision making process of the distribution of sources which are fundamental for the production of energy and electricity. For this reason, in chapter two we have discussed the concept of deliberative democracy, introducing its basic concepts and some of the thoughts of the biggest exponents of the field. At first, we have focused on the discussion about democracy to then concentrate to on the aspects which differentiate the deliberative from other types of democracy, mainly the liberal one.

Deliberative democracy is mainly based on the participation of every citizen in a public forum. Nonetheless, it is fundamental not to exclude the institutional and constitutional aspect in it, because it still plays a fundamental role. The deliberative aspect of democracy was introduced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by different branches of political philosophy: the liberal point of view of Rawls, Republicanism and deliberative theory introduced by Habermas, who as we saw has criticized these two approaches to arrive to his theory of deliberative democracy.<sup>137</sup> The description of these three concepts can make it easier to understand the concept of deliberative democracy in its nature, as it is presented as a concept hard to define, which in time can change. Indeed, as we have seen there are different generations of deliberative philosophers who started with normative theories of the concept, but they are trying to apply the current realities, as it is the case of the second generation which understood how the in the current society there are different realities who need to be respected, or the

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<sup>137</sup> Maffettone S. (2019), *Politica, Idee per un mondo che cambia* (Politics, Ideas for a changing world)

third generation which is trying to apply the deliberative concept at the institutional level.<sup>138</sup> In this chapter we introduced the basic concepts of Rawls' thought as the veil of ignorance and the basic concept of liberalism to then concentrate on the importance of the public discourse. Nonetheless, it is possible to see the difference between the public discourse presented by Rawls and the one presented by Habermas. John Rawls mainly focuses on the importance of the public discourse in the changing the institutional schemes of a democratic society.

The deliberative process is always evolving, in fact also the scholars of energy democracy are referring to it as a possible solution for the implementation of a more sustainable solution. However, its basics are always founded on the theories of one of the fundamental theorist of this approach, Jürgen Habermas. The philosophy of Habermas was concentrated on more notions, but the one we studied more is on his criticism of republicanism and liberal democracy and then his opinion on deliberative democracy.

Habermas' work has also been studied in relation with the environment by many philosophers, and this is important for us to understand if deliberative democracy can be associated to environmental issue. Critics of the environmental view of Habermas tend to concentrate on his relationship with Frankfurt School and how much he has stepped away from the human-nature consideration given by the German school. On the other hand, there are philosophers who tend to emphasize the importance of the dialogue to solve environmental problems and risks.<sup>139</sup> The criticism related to the Frankfurt School on the environmental theory of Habermas are concentrated on his thought about the human being having a purely natural interest in self preventing his or her interest. In other words, his thought is mainly concentrated on rise of the individual domination also in the environmental field.<sup>140</sup> On the other hand, Habermas theory about the dialogue is what is often seen as fundamental for scholars of the deliberative environmental democratic field. Scholars as Baber and Barlett sees it as one of the option to let people be integrated in the political field, especially for what regards the environmental field. Some analyses have focused on the improvement that the integration of the people can bring both to the scientific field and to the society. By being more open to the people, the scientific field will be more conscious on what to focus and on how to change it in relation with the need of the different individuals.

There are not many theories which correlate the theory of energy democracy with the one of deliberative theory, however in the third chapter we concentrated on the concept of deliberative environmental democracy. Thanks to the introduction of this theory, which mainly evaluates all the improvements which can be brought to society with the integration of the people through dialogue, it is possible to understand that a deliberative democratic approach is needed in order to have a faster change in the environmental field. In other words, energy democracy is a change needed in the society, especially looking at the environmental situation (after

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<sup>138</sup> Andre Bächtiger, John S. Dryzek, Jane Mansbridge, and Mark Warren, (2018) *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*, 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198747369.013.50

<sup>139</sup> Gunderson R., (2014) *Habermas in Environmental Thought: Anthropocentric Kantian or Forefather of Ecological Democracy*, Michigan State University

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.



the Industrial Revolution, the impact of greenhouse gas emissions has increased the global temperature of 1.2°C and it is estimated that between the 2030 and 2052 the global temperature will reach 1.5°C)<sup>141</sup>. A switch to renewable sources will be one of the option to live in a more ecological society, but also a more united one. People will start cooperating with one another, relying on each other and creating the basis to find better solutions, as the use of renewable source of energy, to face the coming natural changes.

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<sup>141</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch> 16.09.19

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## **Introduzione al concetto di Democrazia Energetica**

Il surriscaldamento globale e il cambiamento delle temperature sono tra le tematiche più di rilievo di questo ventunesimo secolo. Il rialzo della temperatura globale sta portando dei cambiamenti naturali impossibili da trascurare, che hanno un impatto sulle condizioni di vita delle persone che vivono nei paesi dove i cambiamenti climatici hanno più effetto (non a caso questi paesi sono anche quelli più affetti dalla povertà e dal sottosviluppo economico).

Dopo due importanti disastri naturali come Chernobyl e Fukushima, causati da errori tecnici di gestione dell'energia nucleare, l'interesse per il settore energetico è aumentato e, soprattutto, ha cominciato a puntare alla promozione delle risorse energetiche rinnovabili. Alla fine del ventesimo secolo molti studiosi si sono concentrati sui diversi concetti del tema ambientale in modo filosofico e politico, tale da creare una maggiore partecipazione da parte tutti. Nonostante le decisioni prese dalle istituzioni su problematiche ambientali ci sembrino così distanti dalla nostra vita quotidiana, secondo il Trattato Internazionale sui Diritti Civili e Politici delle Nazioni Unite, tenuto a Rio nel 1966, ogni persona è proprietaria delle risorse che si trovano nel proprio territorio.

Secondo gli studiosi del concetto di democrazia energetica, l'uso delle risorse energetiche dovrebbe essere gestito da tutta la società. Alla base dell'approccio democratico energetico possono essere individuati tre principi fondanti: la sovranità popolare, un governo partecipativo e la proprietà civile del settore energetico. Il rispetto di questi principi creerà una società più pronta e propensa all'uso delle risorse energetiche rinnovabili. Infatti, la partecipazione dei cittadini è fondamentale per gli studiosi di questo pensiero, i quali infatti presentano la figura del "prosumer" energetico, un agente che non solo produce energia ma la consuma anche. Alcuni esempi pratici attuali sono rappresentati dalle cooperative energetiche e dalle organizzazioni non profit.

Secondo l'associazione tedesca, Rosa Luxembourg Foundation, il concetto di democrazia energetica è una soluzione per accrescere delle risorse rinnovabili, viste come una delle soluzioni alle varie problematiche climatiche. Le diverse definizioni di democrazia energetica si concentrano molto sulla figura dell'individuo, il quale partendo da motivazioni puramente personali, aumenta la propria conoscenze e contribuisce al mantenimento del nostro ecosistema. Dunque, una partecipazione più attiva di ogni cittadino può essere un incoraggiamento ad ampliare le proprie conoscenze e ad assumere un atteggiamento più cosciente per una risoluzione ambientale.

L'approccio della democrazia energetica è molto forte in Germania, dove si è formato un movimento sociale ambientalista, concentrato soprattutto sulle risorse rinnovabili. Questo movimento è noto come "Energiewende", svolta energetica, che si concentra sulla riduzione dell'emissione dei gas fossili attraverso un processo di democratizzazione di questo settore. I proseguitori di questo movimento puntano a spostare la proprietà delle risorse energetiche dalle grandi aziende alle piccole comunità o piccole cooperative.

Lo sviluppo delle cooperative energetiche, le quali promuovono l'uso delle energie rinnovabili è in atto soprattutto negli stati dell'Europa del Nord, ma vi sono alcuni esempi che mostrano un proficuo sviluppo

anche nel sud Europa, come in Italia, precisamente in Piemonte vi è una cooperativa molto funzionante, Retenergie. Il primo obiettivo di questa cooperativa è la promozione dell'energia come un bene comune, trasformando i cittadini in imprenditori nel settore energetico. I diversi progetti di questa cooperativa sono concentrati soprattutto sullo sviluppo energetico delle risorse del settore idroelettrico ed eolico. Questa cooperativa può rappresentare un ottimo esempio del concetto di democrazia energetica, poiché il consumatore di energia n'è anche produttore e inoltre, la vicinanza della "sorgente" energetica diminuisce l'uso e il trasporto dei combustibili fossili.

Altri studiosi, come gli americani Mitchell e Wenar hanno esposto le proprie teorie, che mostrano le correlazioni tra le nazioni con regimi autoritari e lo sfruttamento delle risorse combustibili. Si può capire, quindi, che l'uso delle risorse rinnovabili non è esclusivamente un beneficio per l'ambiente (e quindi per tutti noi abitanti di questo pianeta), ma bensì può essere un modo per rinforzare il principio di democrazia, soprattutto quella partecipativa di ogni nazione.

Uno dei concetti principali della democrazia energetica è la centralità dell'individuo nel atto decisionale riguardante il settore energetico. Per questa motivazione uno dei processi politici promossi dai pensatori di questo approccio è la democrazia deliberativa.

Il concetto di democrazia deliberativa è molto più vasto di quanto si possa pensare, poiché esso non è visto come statico, bensì come in continua evoluzione. Innanzitutto, il concetto di deliberazione rappresenta uno scambio di idee, valori e pensieri riguardanti un interesse comune. Nella democrazia deliberativa, il ruolo principale è presentato dagli individui.

Questo processo di comunicazione e di dialogo tra i cittadini è stato già presente nella storia della filosofia. Infatti, delle prime tracce del processo deliberativo risalgono ai tempi dell'Antica Grecia, con Platone ed Aristotele. Nonostante la cultura degli antichi Greci promuovesse degli ideali democratici che spronavano al dialogo, alcuni partecipanti della società erano comunque emarginati da ogni tipo di coinvolgimento. Una delle caratteristiche fondamentali della democrazia deliberativa riguarda quindi il ruolo del cittadino, fondamentale nella vita politica e sociale. Nella società moderna, piena di interessi e di scambi a livello globale, vi sono scoperte quasi ogni giorno, soprattutto nel campo scientifico. Per questa motivazione gli esperti di settori più tecnici dovrebbero puntare ad insegnare ai diversi componenti della società ad avere un dialogo più istruttivo e proficuo quando trattano di tematiche che hanno un effetto su tutta la popolazione, come nel caso delle diverse soluzioni da intraprendere per mitigare il cambiamento climatico.

Visto che il mondo è condizionato dai continui cambiamenti e dalle continue trasformazioni sociali, politiche ed economiche, anche i dialoghi non terminano mai e per questo si deve essere sempre pronti a rivedere le decisioni passate e a metterle in discussione. Questa caratteristica del pensiero deliberativo, ci fa capire quanto il voto non sia sufficiente per mostrare una preferenza individuale. Nonostante il voto sia uno dei metodi più efficaci per rappresentare l'aggregazione di preferenze di un individuo, la presenza di un dialogo prima di un qualsiasi tipo di elezione può creare una conoscenza ed una predisposizione diversa ai quesiti contemporanei. Inoltre, un'altra caratteristica da non sottovalutare è il livello di socializzazione che crea il dialogo. Quindi è

importante considerare anche come il processo deliberativo può cambiare l'attitudine delle persone nel contesto politico sociale.

Nel Ventesimo secolo si presentano le prime teorie concentrate sul processo deliberativo. Essendo la democrazia deliberativa in continua evoluzione, si sono create diverse generazioni che affrontano il processo deliberativo andando oltre il processo normativo e provano ad applicare le proprie teorie alla realtà. Infatti, la prima generazione è appunto rappresentata dai fondatori di questo approccio, come Jürgen Habermas. Questi studiosi si sono concentrati prettamente sulle caratteristiche normative dell'approccio. Diversamente, i filosofi della seconda generazione, notando l'andamento multiculturalista di una società che affronta diverse problematiche, hanno preferito applicare le teorie e le tesi normative in maniera più pratica nel contesto moderno. I filosofi della democrazia deliberativa di terza e quarta generazione si concentrano maggiormente sull'istituzionalizzazione di un vero sistema politico deliberativo. Nonostante ci possano essere delle differenze tra queste generazioni, le assunzioni di partenza sono le stesse: i diversi componenti della società devono beneficiare della possibilità di esprimersi e di essere ascoltati.

Il concetto di deliberazione è stato introdotto nello scorso secolo anche da altri filosofi, come uno dei più importanti filosofi del pensiero moderno John Rawls. Una delle teorie più importanti di Rawls, che ha rivoluzionato il pensiero filosofico moderno, è la teoria della giustizia. Questa teoria è fondata su due concetti principali: 1) le persone devono condividere la stessa quantità di beni primari, come la libertà o il reddito; 2) questi beni devono essere divisi nella società equamente, fin quando una distribuzione inuguale possa favorire le persone svantaggiate. Quindi, una distribuzione non equa può essere fondamentale per un miglioramento della situazione sfavorevole di alcuni componenti della società. Infatti, uno dei concetti fondamentali è che la vita delle persone non può essere determinata dalle circostanze in cui si sono trovati, bensì dalle loro continue decisioni. Secondo Rawls, se le persone si trovassero in una "posizione originale", intesa come una situazione dove non conoscono il loro ruolo nella società, accetterebbero questi due principi poiché rappresentano un accordo giusto ed equo.

Questa stessa predisposizione è stata utilizzata anche per la teoria Rawlsiana del discorso pubblico. In un altro suo lavoro, *Liberalismo Politico*, Rawls studia un sistema politico e sociale, dove le persone riescono a convivere nonostante le loro differenze. In questo suo lavoro introduce il concetto della ragione pubblica e successivamente del discorso pubblico, che riprende le caratteristiche descritte nella *Teoria della Giustizia*. La ragione pubblica è importante perché rappresenta la natura della società e il suo bene in un contesto politico e sociale. Essa si concentra prettamente su questioni costituzionali, poiché esse sono fondamentali per avere giustizia nella società, ma le considerazioni personali non sono da dimenticare, poiché influenzano le persone durante la fase di dialogo. Infatti, successivamente, il discorso pubblico è soprattutto concentrato sullo scambio dei pensieri del cittadino su questioni costituzionali ed istituzionali che sono, secondo il filosofo, la base della democrazia. Quindi possiamo capire che il discorso pubblico di Rawls è concentrato prettamente sulla sfera istituzionale, poiché ha più responsabilità per quanto riguarda la vita politica di una nazione. Quindi la

continuità della teoria della giustizia e del discorso pubblico si basa sul concetto di giustizia, il quale rende il processo democratico libero e pubblico.

Uno dei filosofi contemporanei più influenti, noto anche per le diverse critiche fatte alle teorie di Rawls e Jürgen Habermas. Uno dei suoi lavori più conosciuti è concentrato sul discorso della sfera pubblica, la quale ha incominciato a svilupparsi alla fine del Diciottesimo secolo con le prime apparizioni dei caffè letterari. Nonostante i principi presentati in queste discussioni puntassero ad una maggiore integrazione della società nel contesto politico, secondo Habermas questi incontri letterari e politici invece hanno fallito nel creare un ambiente aperto al dialogo dell'intera società. Studiando le varie sfere pubbliche, differenti in base alle varie circostanze sociali e temporali, il filosofo ha capito che non vi può essere un solo corpo amministrativo che rappresenti la società, la quale non può essere vista come un'entità unita e simile. La sfera pubblica è in continuo cambiamento e non può essere contrassegnata dalla localizzazione geografica o dagli interessi comuni. Vi deve essere, pertanto, un dialogo aperto e pubblico con i poteri amministrativi che possa influire sul processo politico decisionale. Per questa motivazione, per gli studiosi della democrazia energetica i concetti della democrazia deliberativa sono fondamentali.

Habermas introduce il concetto di democrazia deliberativa nella sua opera *Fatti e Norme* del 1992. Prima di tutto, inizia criticando il sistema liberale e repubblicano per arrivare poi all'introduzione dell'importanza del dialogo che, secondo il filosofo, può creare una cooperazione sociale migliore. La democrazia deliberativa dà molta importanza al processo dell'opinione politica (caratteristica che si ritrova nel pensiero del repubblicanesimo) con delle forti basi costituzionali (caratteristica dell'approccio liberale). Le decisioni prese dagli organismi amministrativi e politici devono essere connessi alla sfera pubblica, la quale deve guidare questi poteri a prendere atto di problemi presenti nella società.

Quindi, Habermas crea una teoria che enfatizza l'importanza del potere istituzionale e di una società partecipativa nella vita politica e pubblica. La società è sia analizzata come un'unica entità, con i diversi individui che la compongono e il potere politico, ma anche come decentrata poiché ogni persona vive delle circostanze diverse, le quali possono essere rappresentate nel processo deliberativo. Quindi la politica deve essere basata, secondo Habermas, su un processo di socializzazione ottenuto attraverso uno scambio di opinioni politiche e sociali. Per questa motivazione questo approccio è visto come una possibile soluzione dagli studiosi del pensiero del "Energy Democracy", poiché essi puntano alla creazione di un ambiente aperto alla comunicazione e al cambiamento ecologico, soprattutto quando è chiesto dalla società.

Ovviamente, il pensiero deliberativo non è accolto da tutti, bensì vi sono moltissime critiche a questo pensiero. Uno dei filosofi della democrazia deliberativa contemporanei, Joshua Cohen, ha risposto ad alcune delle critiche presentate al pensiero deliberativo. Secondo Cohen la democrazia deliberativa è una predisposizione alla risoluzione dei problemi, coinvolgendo il cittadino attraverso il dialogo. Questo, secondo il filosofo rappresenta la legittimazione della società.

In un saggio pubblicato poi da James Bohman e William Rehg, Cohen risponde ad alcune delle critiche fatte al pensiero deliberativo, le quali possono essere importanti poiché potrebbero essere poste anche alle diverse



caratteristiche della democrazia energetica. Alcune critiche vedono questo approccio troppo focalizzato sulla partecipazione del cittadino, mentre altre come incoerente, poiché basato sulla teoria del “majority ruling” che potrebbe risultare debole in un contesto temporaneo. Altri studiosi vedono il processo deliberativo troppo concentrato sul pensiero delle masse, invece di considerare le diverse circostanze di ogni cittadino. Ma il processo deliberativo è fondato sulla libertà di parola, la quale non deve essere vista come un modo per prevenire il potere delle persone, bensì come una discussione delle società in comune. Fermare la discussione e cessare il potere di parole di alcuni cittadini va contro il concetto di democrazia e di società libera. Altre critiche, invece, vedono il processo deliberativo come irrilevante poiché la democrazia diretta è la cosa più importante. Nonostante sia comprensibile pensare che la creazione di un sistema deliberativo sia molto complicata, una società più aperta al dialogo può essere una soluzione per compiere delle scelte più coscienti e complete durante le elezioni.

Il concetto di democrazia deliberativa è molto importante perché introduce dei concetti che alla società odierna sembrano molto distanti, come l'importanza concreta di un dialogo e della comunicazione. La democrazia deliberativa è studiata molto spesso in relazione alla situazione ambientale. Infatti, le diverse teorie di Habermas sono state relazionate con le varie concezioni ambientaliste, le quali alcune riescono ad essere supportate dalle teorie del filosofo. Infatti alcuni sostenitori delle teorie di Habermas, come il filosofo Brulle, pensano che il dialogo possa essere una soluzione per il miglioramento della situazione ambientale attuale. Uno dei problemi ecologici contemporanei è rappresentato dalla poca conoscenza da parte della società dei problemi ambientali e delle soluzioni che potrebbero essere attuate. La riservatezza di questo ambiente fa sì che sia puramente controllato dalle persone del mestiere.

Creare un dialogo che introduce argomenti sconosciuti alla maggior parte della società potrebbe essere un modo per aumentare la conoscenza, ma soprattutto la partecipazione democratica attuando delle azioni più furtive per la risoluzione di un problema abbastanza allarmante, come il surriscaldamento globale. L'inclusione della situazione ambientale nell'approccio deliberativo è stata studiata molto dal professore inglese John Dryzek, il quale pensa che per salvaguardare i diversi ecosistemi bisognerebbe passare ad un sistema politico deliberativo. Oltre a concentrarsi sull'importanza della deliberazione che potrebbe aumentare la considerazione della società sulle questioni ambientali, Dryzek si concentra sul dialogo tra il cittadino e la natura, la quale sta mandando dei messaggi abbastanza chiari.

I concetti presentati della democrazia deliberativa non sono nuovi nel campo ambientale internazionale. Infatti, la Convenzione di Aarhus del 1998, si concentra proprio sulla diffusione dell'informazione ambientale a tutto il pubblico, il quale attraverso la propria partecipazione avrà un potere decisionale per quanto riguarda problemi ambientali locali e nazionali.

Come si può notare, ci sono molti studi che si concentrano sulla correlazione tra l'ambiente e la democrazia deliberativa, ma d'altra parte ci sono ancora pochi studi che attestano l'efficienza della democrazia deliberativa per un'implementazione della democrazia energetica. Nonostante ciò, abbiamo analizzato il concetto di

democrazia deliberativa ambientale, la quale vuole risolvere le varie crisi ambientali con l'utilizzo di metodi ecosostenibili, come le risorse rinnovabili.

Infatti, la democrazia deliberativa ambientale introdotta dagli studiosi Baber e Barlett si concentra soprattutto sull'influenza dell'individuo sugli ecosistemi. Secondo questi studiosi, il processo deliberativo è quello più adatto per avere un aumento dell'interesse ecologico. Ironicamente, la società ha bisogno di essere coinvolta maggiormente in un problema che le riguarda in prima persona.

I due studiosi elencano quattro premesse della democrazia deliberativa ambientale. La prima premessa è che con il processo deliberativo, ci sarà più dialogo e quindi più conoscenza. Questo atteggiamento potrebbe essere utile per fare una scelta più costruttiva e cosciente alle elezioni politiche. Un secondo importante punto è, che grazie a questo nuovo approccio, la volontà delle persone di conoscere il proprio ecosistema sarà maggiore. Creando una politica che punta a risolvere problemi ambientali, si potrà conoscere le varie differenze sociali tra le diverse comunità. La terza caratteristica si focalizza su una giusta distribuzione di beni nel settore ambientale, che possono diminuire ogni tipo di discriminazione non solo ecologica. Un'ultima assunzione evidenziata da due autori è la creazione di idee più legittime, perché comprendono non solo argomenti dati dalla classe elitaria, ma bensì da tutta la società.

Per altri studiosi, il sistema deliberativo può essere un metodo per creare un rapporto tra la società e la comunità scientifica. Creando un dialogo, si può creare un sistema più inclusivo, reciproco e consistente. L'inclusione delle persone in questo rapporto può essere anche un modo per il settore scientifico di conoscere meglio problematiche ambientali e puntare ad una risoluzione più efficace. Nonostante abbiamo mostrato alcune delle caratteristiche della democrazia deliberativa in relazione con quella ambientale, possiamo considerare queste caratteristiche nel contesto della democrazia energetica grazie alle similitudini tra le due. Un dialogo costruttivo sulla catastrofe naturale nella quale ci troviamo e sulle varie risoluzioni possibili potrebbe essere un primo passo per spronare le persone ad intraprendere una quotidianità più ecologica. L'uso delle risorse rinnovabili sarebbe ideale non solo per controllare l'emissione di gas combustibili, ma anche per la cessazione dell'estrazione delle risorse naturali che danneggia il suolo. Il processo deliberativo potrebbe aumentare la conoscenza nella società, la quale non dovrebbe rispondere con indifferenza ad un problema per le generazioni attuali e quelle future. Nonostante tutto, pensare ad un sistema politico di questo tipo sembra surreale. Basti guardare i vari stati liberali che hanno dimenticato alcune caratteristiche basilari della democrazia, ma un possibile inizio per un cambiamento l'interesse politico della società potrebbe essere avviato leggendo i siti delle cooperazioni ambientaliste nazionali e partecipare alle varie proteste pacifiche.