



Demos outside the Polis – A Critique of the Concept of Global Democracy

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Introduction

The end of the Cold War has heightened the sense of insecurity both among practitioners and theorists of politics. The bipolar age had become deeply entrenched in their ways of thinking to the effect that theory became virtually incapable of conceiving change and, even less, of serving as a guide in a rapidly changing environment. This outstripping of theory by practice² has expanded the horizon of policy-making to a multiplicity of issues well beyond considerations of what has traditionally been considered diplomacy or "high politics." The study of phenomena such as global social movements, climate change, human rights and transnational migratory flows has strained the prevailing terminologies and increased the need for a reassessment of the most fundamental categories of modern political thought. The concept of democracy can claim to constituting such a category, having attained a standard of comparison according to which virtually everything else is measured.³ A recent commentator thinks it striking that "nearly everyone today says they are democrats no matter whether their views are on the left, centre or right."⁴ At a time when its importance appears to be universally acknowledged its meaning, however, has become ever more elusive. Why should this be so?

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² Watson, *The Practice Outruns the Theory*, in: Roberson (ed.), *International Society and the Development of International Relations Theory*, London & Washington: Pinter, 1998.

³ Dryzek, *Transnational Democracy*, in: *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol. 7:1, 1999, pp 30-51, p 30.

⁴ Held, *Models of Democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987, p 1.

The reason is, as I shall argue in this essay, that we have currently no proper understanding of what should constitute the *demos*, the prime referent of democracy, much less of the scope and extension of the power it is supposed to exercise. In the face of this predicament that includes migratory flows and environmental pollution, supposedly escaping the territorially grounded authority of the modern state, proponents of a global concept of democracy have argued for the extension of democratic community. If theories of global democracy are to be successful in their attempt of creating a *demos* beyond the *polis*, they will have to overcome the conceptual dominance of the modern in articulating the limits and possibilities of political community. Concentrating on the work of David Held and Jürgen Habermas, I will first give an account of how their arguments for the historical and conceptual contingency of the modern state attempt to prepare the ground for a democratic cosmopolis. Both Held and Habermas attempt to accomplish this feat by postulating a Kantian version of individual autonomy as the foundation for a global *demos*.

In their view the autonomy of a world-citizen founded on universal human rights provides a credible alternative to the constitutive power of the modern state. However, the Kantian reading of autonomy that serves as the conceptual background for both Held's and Habermas' account cannot provide a sufficient alternative to the constitutive mechanisms of the modern state, because it is merely a parallel reading, following a similar spatial-exclusionary logic. In addition, the transcendental status of autonomy is questionable on methodological grounds, showing that the attempts at theorising global democracy treated in this essay have overall been unsuccessful. I will then proceed to examine how the globalising processes diagnosed by theorists of global democracy also impact on the Kantian concept of spatial autonomy to conclude that a foundationalist account of autonomy has become impossible. Arjun Appadurai's concept of the ethnoscape could serve as an alternative starting point in imagining global *demoi*, because it does not foreclose the multiple possibilities that now exist for their constitution.

The Problem of Scope

Theories of global democracy vary enormously in terms of their claims and respective understandings of what democracy means. Common to them is their rootedness in what Kimberly Hutchings calls a political cosmopolitanism that "prescribe(s) types of political practice and institution that operate over, above or across the boundaries of

the nation-state and which are at least potentially global in their reach."⁵ Theories of global democracy are therefore primarily about conceptually extending its reach beyond the confines of the modern state. But if democracy has been as "... impotent when faced with questions about its scope"⁶ as one recent commentator suggests, the question is, if the conceptual resources necessary for a global democratic project can be found within democratic thought itself. Theorists of global democracy are optimists in that respect,⁷ believing that democracy provides the necessary theoretical flexibility in order to remain the only legitimate and feasible option in the face of rapidly changing political circumstances.⁸ Their goal can therefore be described as an attempt to clarify the normative potential of democracy in the face of specific historical events, unsettling traditional orthodoxies about how political communities are to be imagined. Theories of global democracy deserve to be taken seriously because they explicitly criticise the link between democracy and the modern state, a mainstay in the framework of contemporary political self-understanding.

Theorising about democracy usually starts from the observation that "social relations within a state [are] governed by democratic principles whereas relations in between states [are] not."⁹ This so-called "liberal nexus"¹⁰ between democracy and the state is not only paramount for framing the spaces wherein the appeal to democracy is practically possible, it is also at the centre of the disciplinary division between democratic theory and International Relations. The assumption underlying much of what passes as the debate between "idealism" and "realism" in International Relations is that of democracy as a condition confined to states, although there is disagreement about the extent to which the incidence of democracy within states should matter for the conduct of relations between them.

If it is true that states behave very much like theoretical disciplines¹¹, the critique of territorial boundaries and their constitutive function as conceptual limitations to our political imagination will inevitably influence our thinking about the relationship between democratic theory and practice. The upholding of the great theoretical divide between democratic theory confined to the particular spaces where ambitions of equality, justice and participation can be realised and the realm of international

⁵ Hutchings, *International Political Theory*, London: Sage, 1999, p 154.

⁶ Shapiro & Hacker-Gordon (eds.), *Democracy's Edges*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p 1.

⁷ Held, Democracy, the Nation-state, and the global system, in: Held (ed.), *Political Theory Today*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, p 226.

⁸ Held, Democracy and the New International Order, in: Held and Archibugi (eds.), *Cosmopolitan Democracy. An Agenda for a New World Order*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995, p 116.

⁹ Clark, *Globalization and International Relations Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p 160.

¹⁰ Hutchings, *International Political Theory*, 1999, p 159.

¹¹ Linklater & MacMillan, Introduction: Boundaries in Question, in: MacMillan & Linklater, *Boundaries in Question. New Directions in International Relations*, London & New York: Pinter, 1995, p 2.

relations where democracy is by definition impossible, denies a theory of global democracy any practical value. It would dismiss any such theory as the mere " ... affirmation of the hope that someday, somehow, all that is presumed to be possible inside may be extended to the outside - a hope that is constantly deferred, and indeed can only be specified as a condition of its own impossibility in anything other than the bounded space of the sovereign state."¹² If the relationship between theory and practice of democracy becomes itself susceptible to critical reformulation, this might open new horizons for thinking about the possibility of global democracy beyond the mere affirmation of utopias. An analysis of global democracy will therefore have to confront the question to what extent such a theory is successful in engaging in a critique of the state/disciplinary divide by criticising and replacing the state as the central concept of both theory and practice of democracy.

Globalisation – the historical context

Democratic theorists confident in the realisation of the universal ambition of democracy have paid a great deal of attention to the capacity of the modern state to shape the imagination of political community. Looking for clues that might point towards a loosening of the conceptual grip this imagination has made them turn to current events and processes that could prove wrong the self-assertion of the state community as natural and eternal. The "global turn" of democratic thought will therefore have to be seen in the context of these developments. Two tendencies have especially encouraged reflection about the conditions and possibilities for democracy in today's world: democratisation of previously non-democratic regimes has raised the stakes in the debate about the meaning of democracy while globalisation has at the same time contributed to the "underproduction" of this condition.

The increasing geographical spread of regimes exhibiting features commonly associated with democracy, referred to as the "Third Wave of Democratisation,"¹³ raised concerns about the study of conditions most conducive to democratisation. The identification of "hard" characteristics of a democracy was deemed highly relevant by policy makers looking for ways of establishing institutions conducive to the development of the so-called "Third World." As these institutions and practices used as distinguishing "markers" became increasingly widespread, the sense of despair over

¹² Walker, R.B.J., *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p 152.

¹³ Huntington, *The Third Wave Democratization in the late twentieth century*, Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.

democracy's fate in the non-western hemisphere gave way to a partial triumphalism. One commentator even equated the spread of liberal-democratic institutions with the "End of History."¹⁴ Critics did not fail to note that despite the geographical extension of liberal democratic regimes there had not been any noticeable improvement in the quality of political associations for the vast majority of the people concerned.¹⁵ A number of political regimes clearly continued thinly veiled authoritarian practices under the formal protection of a recently installed voting machinery. This raised doubts the definition of democracy used and the criteria to be applied in the identification of the democratic condition.¹⁶

Paradoxically, at the same time as democracy supposedly became universal in scope, processes that had contributed to its spread were interpreted as a danger to its foundation. Global migratory and financial movements came increasingly to be viewed as a threat to what was believed to be the core of democracy: autonomy of a self-governing collective body.¹⁷ Although "...the term 'globalism' was in its first usage coupled with a purported process of world-wide democratisation,"¹⁸ it is striking that the processes leading to this condition, conveniently summed up under the heading of "globalisation," is now seen simultaneously as a threat. The conditions that globalise democracy and make for the triumphalist fulfilment of its universal ambition are at the same time perceived as making democracy impossible. The extension of its geographical scope is interpreted as part of a process that dilutes narratives of sovereignty and self-determination to the effect that commentators now disagree about the normative content of democracy itself. At a time when it appeared to have gone global, the agreement about what democracy could now possibly mean seems to unravel. Our supposedly settled state of political existence is exposed as problematic rather than a "finished condition."¹⁹ Addressing the challenge of globalisation in democratic theory therefore implies more than the application of a settled condition to another geographical level. The addressing of the problem of democracy's scope is intrinsically connected to a re-evaluation of its referents.

Theorists of global democracy have confronted this task by searching through the tradition of democratic thought hoping to find clues that could point us towards a way

¹⁴ Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, London: Penguin, 1992.

¹⁵ Held, David and Archibugi, Daniele (eds.), *Cosmopolitan Democracy. An Agenda for a New World Order*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995, p 3.

¹⁶ Smith, Why is There no International Democratic Theory? in: Smith (ed.), *Democracy and International Relations. Critical Problems/Problematic Practices*, London: Macmillan, 2000, p 5.

¹⁷ Held, Democracy, the Nation-state, and the global system, in: Held (ed.) *Political Theory Today*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, p 203.

¹⁸ Scholte, *Globalization - a critical introduction*, London: Macmillan 2000, p 261.

¹⁹ Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993, p 146.

of making these referents of democracy meaningful to us. They need to show what the *demos* could now possibly be and how it is meant to form itself outside the confinement of a state that today appears too embattled in order to serve as constitutive foundation. The problem of constituting a *demos* outside the modern *polis* will be the finding of a conceptual basis from which the problem of determining democracy's scope can be solved.²⁰

Paying HOMAGE to sovereignty

In what we might call the "democratic paradox," democracy is aspired to as a universal condition and its extension is equated with human progress while its articulation remains nonetheless confined to the particularity of the modern state.²¹ William Connolly notes that "Today the territorial/security state forms the space of democratic liberation and imprisonment."²² It is only within the boundaries of the modern state that we find democracy as a condition that is meaningful to men and women. The state is the most prominent articulation of the democratic paradox by realising its universal demands within its boundaries and for its own people.

The fact that the sovereign state is able to assert such a strong priority in our political imagination is reason enough for any theory attempting to re-negotiate the scope of democracy to pay serious attention to this phenomenon. Democratic theory cannot not advance a single step without paying homage to the problem of the sovereign state. In order to realise its promise of extending the *demos* beyond the *polis*, it will first of all have to examine how the modern state and its claim to sovereignty were able to successfully settle the question of democracy's scope. Only if theories of global democracy properly recognise the fragility of any specific solution to the question of democracy's scope will they be able to develop their own conception of what a *demos* in a cosmopolis could refer to today. In that respect, democracy is similar to sovereignty not in that it is an "essentially contested" concept, but one that is essentially non-contested.²³ The failure to address the question of the constitution of the *demos* was probably one of the reason why democratic theory willingly settled within the boundaries dictated by the disciplinary divide between Political Theory and International Relations. David Held is therefore correct when he argues that it is "a

²⁰ Shapiro and Hacker-Gordon (eds.), *Democracy's Edges*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p1.

²¹ Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*, 1993, p 142.

²² Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995, p 152.

²³ Walker and Mendlovitz (eds.), *Contending Sovereignities: Rethinking Political Political Community*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1990, p 1.

taken-for-granted conception of 'sovereignty'" that is today at the centre of democratic theory.²⁴ Taking theories of global democracy seriously means addressing the problem of the "under theorised state"²⁵ by inquiring how it managed to constitute the *demos* specifically as both the particular expression and the limitation of the universal democratic ambition.

The use of the terms *demos* and *polis* is not to denote a false sense of continuity between political institutions of ancient Greece and modern democracy. In the ancient Greek, politics as the activity that constituted the *polis*, connoted enclosure, *polis*, the city-state, meaning "wall" or "fence."²⁶ It is this act of enclosing that lifts a people, the *demos*, above the mere coincidental existence of human beings. Greek thought did not conceive of the *polis* in terms of a physical-spatial location, it could be potentially created anywhere at any time as intersubjective non-space.²⁷ Although the originally Greek term democracy as a condition of government wherein the *demos* acts politically as one, constituting the *polis* by its action, has become ever more popular, it is important to keep in mind that these notions cannot be used but metaphorically today. The specific institutions that we have come to associate with democracy exhibit an understanding of the term that is radically different from that of ancient Greece. The problem of democracy's scope that has now become so pressing will have to be accompanied by the analysis of what *demos* and *polis* currently refer to.

Constituting Democracy

Modern political democracy is premised on popular sovereignty and its institutionalisation in the form of citizenship rights.²⁸ The constitution of democracy thereby falls into two parts: creating the *demos* and exercising sovereignty. Since the two are mutually dependent on one another, we are confronted with what William Connolly has described as the "paradox of political founding"²⁹ in the constitution of the *demos*. Before the people can decide, someone must decide who the people are.³⁰ Neither condition can be established without the previous attainment of the other. The reason why the modern state has monopolised the role of creating the people is

²⁴ Held, *Democracy, the Nation-state, and the global system* in: *Political Theory Today*, 1991, p 201.

²⁵ Smith, *Why is There no International Democratic Theory?* in: Smith (ed.), *Democracy and International Relations*, 2000, p 4.

²⁶ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1958, p 64 and note 64.

²⁷ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 1958, p 198.

²⁸ Axtmann, *Liberal democracy into the twenty-first century. Globalization, integration and the nation-state*, Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1996, p 10.

²⁹ Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization*, 1995, p 138.

because it furnishes criteria outside of the democratic process that claim to be "naturally" effective at overcoming this paradox. Historically, this has taken place through the invocation of citizenship criteria the state has invoked and subsequently rationalised through the narrative of a founding myth. Determining citizenship in the modern state has usually taken two forms:

1. The tying of the *demos* to the *ethnos*, especially prevalent in romantic notions of citizenship. The *ius sanguinis*, the granting of citizenship on the basis of descent is still in use in some countries today and is an expression of this.³¹ A nation-state is seen as a community of people of the same descent.³²
2. The determining of citizenship rights by territoriality with the concept of *ius soli*, granting citizenship rights on the basis of birth in a certain territory.³³ The state in this case is seen as a community of politically organised people and as a voluntary association within a territory.³⁴

How do theorists of global democracy attempt to overcome the link between democracy and the romantic notion of citizenship?

Arguments for both the historical and the conceptual contingency of the state in its role of determining the *demos*, advanced by David Held and Jürgen Habermas respectively attempt to make the first step in the project of constituting a global *demos*. Held suggests that there is no necessary conceptual relationship between the historically contingent notions of the national and territorial state and the concept of democratic citizenship. The primacy of the modern state in determining the limits of democracy is challenged by pointing out that the nation state is a specifically modern phenomenon, not a natural entity and therefore subject to historical change. He argues that globalisation has confronted us with a fundamentally new political situation that makes apparent a number of fundamental gaps between democratic politics in its present form and current globalising reality. Processes such as economic production and exchange, international regimes and organisations as well as regulatory mechanisms of regional and international law increasingly challenge the idea of a self-determining

³⁰ Weber, *Simulating Sovereignty: Intervention, The State, and symbolic exchange*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p 62.

³¹ Castles & Davidson, *Citizenship and Migration. Globalization and the politics of belonging*, London: Macmillan, 2000, p 85.

³² Habermas, *Die Normalität einer Berliner Republik. Kleine Politische Schriften VIII*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1995, pp 179 ff.

³³ Castles & Davidson, *Citizenship and Migration. Globalization and the politics of belonging*, 2000, p 85.

³⁴ Habermas, *Faktizität und Geltung. Zur Diskurstheorie des Rechts and des demokratischen Rechtsstaats*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1998, p 635.

national community as the natural basis for democracy.³⁵ To the degree that there are an increasing number of what he calls "external disjunctures" between global system and a seemingly misplaced theory of the sovereign state, a democratic theory that takes the state for granted can only contribute very little to the understanding of politics.³⁶

Cosmopolitan democracy, in his view, could refer to a process that grants citizens the right to give voice in matters of their concern in whatever spaces they may be located. The *demos* is not determined by the national bond, but is a community of those affected by processes that both involve and cut across the modern democratic state.³⁷ It is therefore not surprising that this account of global democracy pays particular attention to the democratisation and reconstruction of existing institutions, seeking "a political order of democratic associations, cities and nations as well as of regions and global networks."³⁸

Similarly, Habermas claims that the concept of popular sovereignty in itself denotes a structural transformation of how political authority is exercised.³⁹ Popular sovereignty transforms the nature of power from mere authoritarian affirmation into the unlimited practice of self-legislation.⁴⁰ Modern democracy, premised on this principle, cannot therefore be limited territorial or national concepts of citizenship but implies itself the transcendence of the modern state. The *demos* is to be constituted by the adherence of citizens to the formal procedures of democratic will-formation itself,⁴¹ realising its ambition of universal self-determination by overcoming its particular articulation in the modern state. Both Habermas and Held argue that for conceptual as well as historical reasons respectively, the link between nation-state and democracy has become obsolete. Democracy cannot be restricted in its scope by traditional concepts of citizenship, because its underlying claim to autonomy and self-determination has universal value. The self-governing *demos* cannot be forced onto the same geographical space with the nation, but will have to overcome these historically contingent limitations by asserting autonomy as its constitutive foundation.

³⁵ Held and Archibugi (eds.), Editors' introduction, in: *Cosmopolitan Democracy. An Agenda for a New World Order*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995, p 5/6.

³⁶ Held, *Democracy, the Nation-state, and the global system* in: *Political Theory Today*, 1991, p 209.

³⁷ Held and Archibugi (eds.), Editors' introduction, in: *Cosmopolitan Democracy. An Agenda for a New World Order*, 1995, p 13.

³⁸ Held, *Democracy and Global Order. From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995, p 234.

³⁹ Habermas, *The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article*, in: *New German Critique*, Vol. 3, 1974, pp 49-55, p 52.

⁴⁰ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989.

⁴¹ Habermas, *Die Moderne - Ein unvollendetes Projekt. Philosophisch-politische Aufsätze*, Leipzig: Reclam, 1992, p 180.

The Problem of Autonomy

Although the historical critique of the modern state as the primary framework for the realisation of democracy is convincing, it remains to be assessed whether the concept of autonomy offered as an alternative foundation by Held and Habermas is suitable for the constitution of a *demos* outside the *polis*. As mentioned above, the paradox of founding the democratic community can only find a solution through the establishment of a political will that can constitute the subject that is to be sovereign. Having eliminated nation and territory as means of determining who is to constitute the body politic, both Held and Habermas seem to rely on the concept of autonomy and self-determination to deliver the necessary fix point from where the *demos* is to be constructed. Central to theories of global democracy is an "entitlement to autonomy"⁴² guaranteed through principles of international law transcending the traditional claims of the modern state. Both Held and Habermas share the idea of democracy based on individual self-determination protected by human rights⁴³ which are simultaneously the conditions of possibility of individual self-determination itself.⁴⁴ In their view this principle is a valid alternative to the constitutive power the modern state exercises over the *demos*.

I believe this alternative to be problematic, especially in terms of connotations that clearly demonstrate its rootedness in the modern account of territorial sovereignty. The development of autonomy shows significant conceptual parallels to the emergence of the modern state. Autonomy developed simultaneously with the transition from the personal to the territorial principle in law. Personal relationships were no longer to determine the legal position of the individual, but the judicial area of the place he was living.⁴⁵ One cannot fail to note the spatial connotations that envelop the modern discourse on autonomy, especially in their Kantian variety on which both Habermas and Held seem to rely.

Whereas for Kant internal freedom is regulated by the categorical imperative, external autonomy is realised by practical reason and what he calls "the idea of right."⁴⁶ The legal regulation of individual autonomy through the idea of right is premised on the

⁴² Held, David, *Democracy and Global Order*, 1995, p 156.

⁴³ Habermas, Kant's Idee des ewigen Friedens - aus dem historischen Abstand von zweihundert Jahren, in: Lutz-Bachmann und Bohman (eds.), *Frieden durch Recht. Kants Friedensidee und das Problem einer neuen Weltordnung*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1996, p 20.

⁴⁴ Hutchings, *International Political Theory*, 1999, p 160.

⁴⁵ Link, Reflections on Paradigmatic Complementarity in the Study of International Relations, in: Czempiel and Rosenau, *Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges*, p 101, quoted from: Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors. An Analysis of Systemic Change*, 1994, p 128, note 116.

⁴⁶ Kant, *Metaphysik der Sitten*, in: Weischedel (ed.), *Theorie-Werksausgabe Immanuel Kant*, Band VIII, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977, p 337.

possibility of men encountering one another in space: it is the duty of men who cannot avoid encountering each other physically to enter into a state governed by principles of distributive justice.⁴⁷ Only if men live in a direct external relationship with one another, are they bound by the idea of right reason.⁴⁸ The spatial proximity of men is therefore the precondition for practical reason coming into its own by demanding the regulation of individual autonomy through principles of legal community.

"The final end and at the same time *conditio sine qua non* for all other external duties is the right of man to live under public laws of coercion through which each is determined his own and secured against external intrusion."⁴⁹

The way in which this regulating principle takes effect is therefore marked by a spatial logic. It demands that invisible borders be drawn between individuals confining them to territorial parcels where they can exercise their autonomy and defend themselves against encroachment. The law in Kant is basically a principle determining a symmetrical distribution of autonomous spaces that makes possible human coexistence by instituting the right of enforcing their boundaries.

The Kantian account of autonomy on which the global demos is supposed to be constituted, is also inevitably relational. The legal subject comes into existence through interacting with other men and women. These relations constitute the spaces wherein the subject can legitimately claim priority. It is therefore surprising that Held and Habermas do not seem to pay a great deal of attention to the impact that globalising processes have had on these. Autonomy seems to be exempt from the forces of temporality that nonetheless greatly impede the modern state's working on a very similar logic. The problem with this account is the way it arbitrarily separates the historically contingent, the particular context in which democracy developed, from its the universal normative claims.

Methodologically, theories of global democracy in the form advanced by Held and Habermas are inadequate in that they are abstracting the normative standard of autonomy from a historical context that they nonetheless reflect.⁵⁰ The Heldian/Habermasian understanding of global democracy attempts to present autonomy as a stable term, but must fail to do so. Their concept of autonomy, instead

⁴⁷ Kant, *Metaphysik der Sitten*, in: Weischedel (ed.), *Theorie-Werksausgabe Immanuel Kant*, Band VIII, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977, p 424.

⁴⁸ Kersting, *Die politische Philosophie des Gesellschaftsvertrags*, Darmstadt: Primus, 1996, p 184.

⁴⁹ Kant, *Schriften zur Anthropologie, Geschichtsphilosophie, Politik und Pädagogik 1*, in: Weischedel (ed.), *Theorie-Werksausgabe Immanuel Kant*, Band XI, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977, p 144.

⁵⁰ Hutchings, *International Political Theory*, 1999, p 160.

of overcoming the particular limits to the universal ambition of democracy, simply is another expression of these limits themselves. It therefore only provides a parallel reading to the realist/idealist discourse that in whatever form, takes autonomy as a starting point to be either fulfilled by universal reason or to be condemned as particularism.⁵¹ This failure is compounded by the lack of historical awareness for the implications that their diagnosis of globalisation has for the constitutive relations of modern autonomy and identity.

Global Demoscapes – Kinetic *Demoi*

Problems with the above-mentioned account of foundational autonomy arise whenever historical events threaten the seaminglessness between autonomous spaces.⁵² A historically sensitive account of modern autonomy will not fail to note that the frontiers that separate them have become ever more porous.⁵³ Forced as well as voluntary diasporas, the newfound mobility of a global class as well as new possibilities of communicating have marked the transition towards a non-territorial sense of identity as autonomous. The shrinking of geographical distance as well as the possibilities of electronic mediation have transformed subjectivity and replaces the sense of settled spatial autonomy that Kant's account seems to imply. As these relational accounts are increasingly also reliant on speed and motion⁵⁴ as well as space, globalisation has made possible multiple ways of constituting autonomy and community. The *demos* has therefore become rather more ambivalent instead of or unitary.⁵⁵ The prime characteristics of an account of global democracy that accepts this ambivalence will therefore be openness towards multiple possibilities of *demoi*.

Such an account could be compared to what Arjun Appadurai has called an ethnoscape. The ethnoscape refers to a landscape of persons whose relations of birth, residence, and politics are in perpetual motion, to the effect that their stability and fixity can no longer be assumed.⁵⁶ It can therefore be conceived as an alternative to the idea that identities must necessarily be seen as spatially bounded or homogenous. Its most important feature is its refusal of dogmatic identities⁵⁷ that makes it impossible to speak of the primacy of autonomy or indeed of any one specific foundation as a basis for global democracy. Since the politics of enclosed spaces is no

⁵¹ Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*, 1993, p 149.

⁵² Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: cultural dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p 181.

⁵³ Castles, & Davidson, *Citizenship and Migration. Globalization and the politics of belonging*, 2000, p 182.

⁵⁴ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 1996, p 191.

⁵⁵ Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization*, 1995, p 104.

⁵⁶ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 1996, p 33.

⁵⁷ Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization*, 1995, p 99.

longer sufficient, a *polis* that is to accommodate multiple kinetic *demoi*, cutting across any preconceived notions of fixity, spatiality and identity, must first of all ward off the threat of nostalgia, of returning to the comforting stability of what Connolly calls "historically vacated positions."⁵⁸ Globalising processes have not only been the conditions of impossibility for the confinement of democracy to the modern state, but they have simultaneously made impossible Held's and Habermas' foundational account of autonomy as the basis for global democracy.

Conclusion

In the course of this essay I have tried to assess the contribution that theories of global democracy can make to the extension of democracy's scope. Theories of global democracy in order to be successful will have to overcome both the theoretical and the practical divides imposed by the modern state on the political imagination. The reason why democracy is unable to answer questions regarding its own scope lies in what Connolly has called the "paradox of political founding," the problem that the people cannot speak before an external source determines who the people are. The primacy of the national-territorial state and its performance in determining the *demos* and thereby limiting the universal ambition of democracy to a particular political space has been correctly identified by theorists such as Held and Habermas. They have argued on historical as well as conceptual grounds for the contingency of the national-territorial mechanisms of constructing the *demos* and the need to base an account of global democracy on a transcendental notion of autonomy. For Held, several processes summed up under the heading of globalisation have compromised the state's claim to sovereignty over the *demos*. At the same time the insufficiency of the state in providing its members with opportunities for action in the face of ever more abstract technological and market mechanisms has emphasised the need for expanding the claims for democratic autonomy beyond territorial borders. Similarly, Habermas argues that autonomy can serve as a stable basis on which world-citizenship can be constructed in the face of traditional accounts of ethnicity and territoriality that limit the principle of autonomous self-legislation on which democracy has been based since the enlightenment. In the last part of this essay I have given several grounds on which the concept of autonomy can be rejected as insufficient for constructing a *demos* outside the *polis*. On methodological grounds, the division between principles of the national and territorial sovereignty that are seen to be subjected to the dissolving

⁵⁸ Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization*, 1995, p 3.

forces of temporality and a notion of autonomy that is abstracted from history and given a quasi-transcendental status appears entirely arbitrary. Autonomy is playing the role of a positive constant in an otherwise problematic and fluid history, overcoming the ambiguity of the act of political founding by serving itself as a stable foundation.

Theories of global democracy have not been successful in delivering a superior account to that of national territoriality in constructing the demos. As their account of autonomy only parallels the conventional reading of realism/idealism in relying on the primacy of transcendental spatial-exclusionary concepts in constructing the demos, they have also failed to bridge the theoretical divide that has traditionally separated democratic theory from international relations. A historical analysis that stops short of inquiring autonomy itself will inevitably fail to note the specific ways in which the concept has been subjected to historical change. Autonomy is susceptible to the dissolving forces of temporality to at least the same extent as are the traditional claims of the modern state. Human coexistence has become increasingly marked by a degree of fluidity to the effect that we can no longer rely on the stability of territorial interrelations. The task of a theory of global democracy taking account of these developments will therefore have to be to ward off the foreclosure of multiple possibilities of constituting *demos* outside the *polis*. What Appadurai refers to as ethnoscapes could serve as a useful framework in this attempt. Although theories of global democracy have clearly recognised the problem of the state to be relevant for their argument, they have not yet paid sufficient attention to the question of how the principle of self-determination as an essential part of our democratic myth may have been subject to historical change in the past and present. This points to the fact that the relation of modern democracy and sovereignty is still little understood.

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