**CONCEPTUALIZING TRANSNATIONAL DEMOCRATIC NETWORKS: A CASE STUDY OF WORLD WIDE VIEWS ON BIODIVERSITY**

Desirée Fiske

Western Political Science Association

Political Science Department

Colorado State University

**Abstract**

*Democratic theory has most recently found itself in a ‘deliberative turn.’  Extending beyond the capacity maintained by state institutions, the deliberative turn of democratic theory may be understood as necessary for conditions of democracy to move beyond the bounds of the nation-state to incorporate conditions of a globalizing world.  As global governance literature recognizes nuanced abilities to regulate through private and public interactions, the democratic voice of citizen input is in a shift.  Deliberative democratic theory has found its way into International Relations discussions, as it proposes methods for transnational democracy.  World Wide Views on Biodiversity is the second transnational citizen deliberation to be held on a global scale, allowing a window of opportunity to bridge the normative theories with empirical observation.  In support of the overall initiatives of the transnational network, this report simultaneously seeks to inform the project of its successes and limitations as a transnational network while placing it within International Relations theoretical discussions. Identifying three core concepts of transnational democracy present in International Relations literature - Cosmopolitan Nationalism, (Liberal) Global Cosmopolitan Democracy, and Discursive Democracy - the analysis of the network is placed in the greater context of transnational democratic theory. Through the analysis, all three theories of transnational democracy find relevancy in the empirical analysis of World Wide Views on Biodiversity. Transnational Discursive Democracy seems most equipped to explain and understand the network and will be used as results to provide implications for the network. In conclusion of the results, interest of expanding the network’s reach and accumulating greater discursive power are recommended for the network, and four implications for future World Wide Views events are suggested based on result analysis.*

**Introduction: The Democratic Deficit**

Through nuanced methods of communication, society has advanced the complex ways in which we come together and organize. Political structures are nonetheless within a realm of social construction as it solidifies boundaries, geographically and morally. Because society has advanced the means by which we communicate, the coalition of knowledge and power opens an opportunity for global change more than ever before. Increased interactions with political reach have moved beyond the bounds of citizen accountability creating a gap known in literature as the “democratic deficit.” As collective outcomes are increasingly made and embedded more complexly in systems beyond immediate mechanisms for citizen accountability, academic literature has begun to address the question of the democratic deficit in the global public sphere (Dryzek 2010, 177). Facing an Anthropocene that requires reconfiguration of the political, my thesis presents an analysis of World Wide Views on Biodiversity, a transnational democratic network hosting global citizen deliberations on biological diversity issues and policies. [[1]](#footnote-1)

**The Case: World Wide Views on Biodiversity**

On September 15, 2012, World Wide Views on Biodiversity (WWVB) conducted the second global citizen deliberation event to occur worldwide.[[2]](#footnote-2)[[3]](#footnote-3) The launch of the project was orchestrated by the Danish Board of Technology Foundation (DBTF)[[4]](#footnote-4) and garnered support through transnational connections and networking. With 34 sites spanning across six continents, the event gathered approximately 3,000 citizens from around the world to advise biological diversity policies and recommendations during a global “Day of Deliberation.” Lay citizens were chosen to reflect the demographics within the hosting region. Citizens were considered upon age, gender, environmental organization affiliation, geographical zone of residency, education level, and occupation. With a goal to maintain at least 100 citizens for participation per region, the ideal was to have a representative demographic present at the Day of Deliberation. The global design was developed by the Danish Board of Technology and implemented through the same procedure in each host site. Deliberations were held in at tables of 5-8 citizens over the course of four sessions on topics around biodiversity issues and policies. Citizens voted on the four thematic sessions, of two to four questions each, with the option of a national or local session as a fifth. Anonymous votes were cast and uploaded to the World Wide Views on Biodiversity website live. As an organized transnational network, World Wide Views on Biodiversity collected and presented the results of the citizen deliberations at the United Nations Conference of Parties 11 (COP11) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Results appealed to COP 11 and World Wide Views (WWViews)[[5]](#footnote-5) increased support for biodiversity initiatives as representative of the *global citizen voice*.

**Introduction to the Project**

As global governance literature recognizes nuanced abilities to govern through private and public interactions, the democratic voice of citizen input is in a shift. In response to the changing climate, democratic theorists suggest the need for greater deliberative involvement of citizen input in important and pressing global policy issues. Deliberative democratic theory has found its way into International Relations discussions, as it proposes methods for transnational democracy. Merging democratic theory, concepts of globalization, and transnational network analysis, my thesis informs theoretical discussions of transnational democracy with an analysis of World Wide Views on Biodiversity. Simultaneously, my analysis provides feedback to the World Wide Views network for future projects as a network participating in global citizen deliberations. Transgressing these perimeters in my research, I respond to the integrative calling from World Wide Views’ proponents to assess practical implications of global deliberation while seeking to contribute to the reflective process of the event. “Realizing the potential of global deliberation requires not only continued research efforts but also calls for self-reflection by political actors on how WWViews-type activity fits into the extant institutional landscape, and what is required to make it fit there” (Worthington, Rask, and Jœger 2012, 284). Both academic based goals of the research project intend to advance the initiative as the network continues to organize globally.

The project is phronetic in the interest of evolving the network, theories of deliberative systems, and transnational democracy. My analysis offers a bridge of theory and praxis to steer theory and method while pragmatically appealing to application of global citizen deliberation. The discussion to follow identifies three core concepts of transnational democracy present in International Relations literature: *Cosmopolitan Nationalism, (Liberal) Global Cosmopolitan Democracy,* and *Transnational Discursive Democracy*. Recognizing disjunction between theory and practice, I intend to balance the two perspectives - empirically as a case study of a transnational democratic network and theoretically to address transnational democratic theory.  Because World Wide Views on Biodiversity is the second transnational democratic experiment, I utilize the case study to examine theories of transnational democracy, recognizing World Wide Views as a *transnational democratic network*.

**Literature Review and Theory: Transnational Democratic Theory**

**Transnationalism**

Global interactions have reshaped the directions of International Relations literature, prompting increased discussions of *transnationalism*. Literature attributes the concept to the increasingly complex movements beyond and between nation-state boundaries. The global economy and accessibility of communication between global citizens have jettisoned the process of globalization (Cox 1983; Rosenau 1995; Risse-Kappen 1995; Held and McGrew 2002; O’Brien and Williams 2010; Viotti and Kauppi 2010; Hay 2013). Globalization offers avenues for communication, accessibility, and flow not previously known in global interactions (Kütting and Rose 2006, 121). Recognizing the increased influence of these interactions under preconceived notions of the state, scholars became interested in globalization as an altering force on state behavior (Haas 1964; Keohane and Nye 1977; Ruggie 2004). Michele Betsill traces the theoretical shift of transnationalism in three waves: functionalism (Haas 1964), transnational relations (Keohane and Nye 1977), and global governance (Betsill 2006, 173; Keohane 2003). The progression of academic discussion reflects the pragmatic observation of increased global connectivity and dependency as influence on governance. Global governance had become recognized as a new avenue for formal and informal social, political, and economic governance.

John Ruggie cites the emergence of globalization as closely linked to the subsequent emergence of the *new global public domain* (Ruggie 2003, 504). The new global public domain is “an increasingly institutionalized transnational arena of discourse, contestation, and action concerning the production of global public goods, involving private as well as public actors” and moves beyond traditional decision-making bound-ness of the nation-state (Ruggie 2003, 504-505). “It ‘exists’ in transnational non-territorial spatial formations, and is anchored in norms and expectations as well as institutional networks and circuits within, across, and beyond states” (Ruggie 2003, 519). Moreover, states become increasingly embedded in frameworks of sociality rather than acting as a system of powers (Ruggie 2003, 521). In other words, as the process of globalization snowballed throughout the 20th century, an increasingly amount of private decisions were made, prompting responses from the *global public domain*, unbounded by spatial or temporal restrictions and with potentiality of being non-filtered through state-affiliation. The setting for World Wide Views is found within the non-bounded space as described by Ruggie. While state-affiliations may be present throughout the WWVB network, there is malleability in state influence or identity association between the various sites and participants.

Influence of transnationalism is felt not only through its disruption of institutionalized accountability but also as challenge for the global public to scale legitimacy. While nation-states previously constituted public accountability, the global public domain has found it necessary to respond and assert influence by new means. The sentiment for accountability responds to a multitude of globally-raised concerns, including in questions of humanitarianism, poverty, and ecological crises. As private interests extend beyond and between states, availability for scopes for public debate and forms of democratic accountability fall from decisions made that have socio-political-economic effect. Concerns about accountability subsequently raise questions about the legitimacy of transnational interactions (Biermann and Pattberg 2012, 274-275). With private interests finding ways to move beyond regulations of states and out of the hands of formal democratic processes of legitimation, citizen representation becomes bypassed. Global governance literature, therefore, has begun to explore theories of increased demands for citizen participation as complementary systems to transnational interactions (Dryzek 2000; Eckersley 2004; Picciotto 2008, 327; Baker 2009; Bexel et al. 2010). Although transnational relations may be to an extent informal, these relations often impact citizen life. Theories of democratic deliberation have been proposed as response to globalization. Transnational democratic deliberations offer a window for debates of accountability, new forums for norm and agenda-setting, and opportunities to legitimize new forms of global governance (Baker 2009, 196).

While the sphere of conceptualizing global interactions shifts, this also means there is a shift in individual identity recognition. National identities have been a formative foundation for individual orientation to the self and others (Anderson 1983; Haas 2000). While perceptions of a nation can be affiliated with a nation-state, a national identity is not necessarily bounded to the state but may be bounded to a common community seeking political power. In building national communities, individuals develop and respond to society under notions of citizenship, and particularly as members of nations. Discussions of *transnational citizenship* have emerged in literature, creating a space for the conceptualization of, what Jonathan Fox calls, the *multi-layered* *citizen* (Fox 2005, 175). The concept of multi-layered citizenship finds footing in cosmopolitanism and the individual’s relation to and function within the state (Fox 2005; Eckersley 2007). Multi-layered citizenship may take on two forms of meaning: rights-based and membership-centered (Fox 2005, 194). Rights-based citizenship refers to the idea of citizenship embedded in a liberal foundation of rights and accountability by nation-states as citizens engage a social contract. As national boundaries have blurred, identities have become multicultural and of multiple relations (Fox 2005, 177). The liberal frame of basic human rights, observable cross- and trans-boundary, may be observed as a “cosmopolitan citizenship” (Fox 2005, 177). In a more traditional, neo-liberal sense, individuals may have maintained transnational citizenship through memberships with two or more states, observing access to legitimacy and accountability through national accreditation (Fox 2005, 177).

Encountering new understandings of citizenship, therefore, highlights the *evolving role of citizens* and brings to light the *evolving role of democracy*. The evolution of transnationalism then leads us to ask what may be the most effective ways providing means for accountability as governance scales up transnationally and identities become less concrete in national bounded-ness? In practice, World Wide Views acted as a vessel for citizen voice in the global arena. To understand the existence of a global arena, we acknowledge the existence of transnational actors operating within and as a part of global civil society (O’Brien 2005). Within this framework, and building upon understandings of transnational relations, a picture is painted of WWVB - a network of organizations, scientists, universities, governmental institutions, and non-profits working together to exercise democratic principles.

**Transnational Actors and Networks**

Observations of transnational interactions have propelled further intrigue into *transnational* *actors* and their collectivity via *transnational* *networks* within International Relations literature (Betsill 2006; Bexell et al. 2010). Broadly speaking, transnational actors are often accounted for as non-state affiliated actors (Ruggie 2003, 104-105). The account of WWVB considers the roles of state-affiliated actors as vital to the project, though not acting particularly as representative or on behalf of a national government (Risse-Kappen 1995). Albeit, the influence of state-affiliated actors may manifest in state-identity form within the network. The WWVB project will be explained throughout this study as a transnational network based upon results of observation and testimony and in reflection to theoretical description.

Transnational networks create identities but may not necessarily have state affiliation, adding to the complexity for researchers to understand the dynamics of a network and conduct empirical studies (Betsill 2006, 177). Because the WWViews alliance is not an NGO nor MNC, the fluidity of actors involved in organizing better resemble networks. For example, in the study of Cities for Climate Protection (CCP), Betsill and Bulkeley identify the significance of CCP through its recognition as a transnational network and its ability to remain simultaneously state and non-state, operating at levels of governance from local to global (Betsill and Bulkeley 2006). The authors frame the network within a scale of multileveled governance to fully encapsulating the dynamics and conditions of the network (Betsill and Bulkeley 2006).

Furthermore, studies of transnational networks have identified three frequent forms of organization: epistemic communities (Haas 1989), transnational advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink 1999), and social movements (O’Brien 2000; Betsill 2006, 176). As International Relations literature adapts to new ways of understanding global governance so does the ability to empirically describe and explain network organization and capacity of influence. While the study of WWVB will not seek to explicitly expose the capacity of the network (important studies of sort are concurrently being conducted throughout the network), rather, I will observe the network from a macro, theoretical lens, scaling the observation of the network from within a framework of global democratic organizing. Nonetheless, I will suggest World Wide Views operates similarly to a transnational advocacy network (Keck and Sikkink 1999) encompassing affiliates of epistemic communities and social movements.

Transnational advocacy networks may be understood as the entity scholars use to describe affiliates of actors operating under shared interests in norms or policy influence. Keck and Sikkink (1999, 90) see value in the role of transnational advocacy networks as *communicative structures*. While the networks may seek to influence policy changes, there is intrinsic value in the ability to enter into larger policy communities and open up dialogue while simultaneously initiating a political space for debates about change amongst varying stakeholders and perspectives (Keck and Sikkink 1999, 90). In other words, advocacy networks have discursive intrigue as methods towards organization. The WWViews Alliance seeks to broaden the scope of advocacy by opening dialogue and influence of international policy agreements through activating citizen voice. Although the focus of WWVB may be studied as a transnational advocacy network framed around concerns for international biodiversity policy, it may also be understood, as it is in this study, as an advocate of transnational democracy. While one may assess the network in its capacity as an entity seeking to influence international biodiversity agreements (through studies of citizen opinion; organization/stakeholder interests; or in continuation of dialogue surrounding biodiversity policy), the rotation of topics by the WWViews Alliance to coordinate with UN COPs suggests a grander concept of organizing for democratic purposes.

To more accurately describe the transnational actions of WWVB, I suggest linguistically moving away from the word *advocacy* and suggest highlighting the distinct action of the democratic processes in practice by the network. With two World Wide Views events completed and a third being discussed, consistency of the network is found in its ideological principle of scaling up democratic accountability through recognition (and consideration) of citizen opinion in international agreements. Furthermore, I present the study of WWVB as a *transnational democratic network*. In its nuance, the network’s organizing is viewed as an experiment in transnational democracy and not only a political space to discuss possibilities of hypothetical design. To highlight the democratic action of the network, three subfields of literature – Transnational Networks, Global Ecological Governance, and Democratic Theory – overlap to provide insight to theories of transnational democratic networks.

**Transnational Networks, Global Ecological Governance, & Democratic Theory**

Transnational networks have begun to organize in response to the complexity of ecological crises. While Peter Haas (1989) observes the formation of an epistemic community and its influence on Mediterranean pollution policies, Betsill and Bulkeley (2004) provide an analysis of a multi-city climate change advocacy network. The empirical studies observe the network under observation for their abilities to influence environmental policy. Though WWVB appealed to policy initiatives of COP11, citizen representation remained the primary target for the network. The network did not establish expectations for policy influence; rather, formal recognition by the UN Secretariats and COP were set as target goals. WWVB sought democratic legitimacy as a network. It was a strategic decision by the network to focus on environmental initiatives due to the perceived imminent need for citizen representation within international debates. Nonetheless, the focus of the project, biodiversity, speaks to the prominence and appeal of connecting globally on ecological crises. Studies, such as those aforementioned by Haas (1989) and Betsill and Bulkeley (2004), further support the increased accounts of transnational networks forming under pretense of ecological issues.

Speth and Haas describe biological diversity loss as having three dynamics of understanding: “the genetic variety within a given species; the millions of individual species of plants, animals, and microorganisms; and the diversity of different types of ecosystems such as alpine tundra, southern hardwood bottomlands, or tropical rainforests” (Speth and Haas 2006,39-40). Because we understand the intense interconnectedness of ecological crises, losses in these areas are often attributed to the unequal process of globalization, particularly as the suffrage of loss is predominantly felt in the ‘less developed’ states. The multi-scalar level of influence of biodiversity loss carries additional weight in the complexity of understanding, mitigating, or adapting to the issue. The complexities of ecological issues are reflected not only in the nature of ecosystems but also in the human systems and decision-making procedures intertwined (Dryzek 2013, 9). Hence, research in global ecological governance has emphasized the need to understand the multi-dimensional phenomena.

Scholars have begun to examine the ways governance may react in institutional design to cope with problems of the environment (Bocking 2004; Bulkeley 2005; Speth and Haas 2006; Biermann and Pattberg 2012; Bulkeley et al. 2012). Moreover, as globalization transforms the ways in which the global public domain understands its relationship with the nation-state, there have been increased discussions exploring deliberative democratic responses to ecological crises and issues of resources (Eckersley 2004; Baber and Bartlett 2005; Bäckstrand et al. 2010; Dryzek 2013). Ideals of deliberative democratic perspectives on ecological governance are in part due to the *deliberative turn* in democratic and critical theory (Dryzek 1990; Habermas 1992; Rawls 1997; Mouffe 2000). Within the scope of global environmental governance, therefore, the deliberative turn represents “…increased attention in environmental politics to procedural qualities such as participation, dialogue, transparency and accountability” (Bäckstrand et al. 2010, 3). Moreover, as supplemental means for citizen representation and participation are sought for overlooked means of accountability via national citizenship, global ecological scholarship calls for citizen participation as necessary feedback into the complexity of eco-socio-political debates.

Theoretical starting points of empirical investigation into the deliberative turn in environmental governance include such conversations about legitimacy, representation and participation but under assumptions of ecological rationality (Lövbrand and Khan 2010). Baber and Bartlett propose a typology consisting of three concepts to understanding environmental democracy based on foundations of rationale: liberal rights; public reason; and discourse (2005, 50). The study of WWVB, in a way, merges the tasks of these conversations, placing it back in International Relations and without preconceived notions of ecological thought. WWVB, rather, was a transnational experiment of deliberative democracy, using the catapulting appeal of biodiversity as grounds for legitimizing formal global citizen response. Furthermore, discussions of transnational democratic theory have begun to serve as ideological response to the global dilemmas presented.

**Transnational Democratic Theory**

In efforts to understand the possible path for democratic citizen response to globalization and to place the World Wide Views on Biodiversity network within a theoretical scheme, it is first necessary to identify the literature’s framing of conceptions and conditions for transnational democracy. I have identified three transnational democratic concepts within International Relations literature: Cosmopolitan Nationalism, (Liberal) Global Cosmopolitan Democracy, and Transnational Discursive Democracy (see *Table 1*). Theories of transnational democracy are predominately developed from the work of Robyn Eckersley, David Held, and John Dryzek. Drawing from the theoretical conceptualizations presented by the authors, I outline seven indicators as analytical tools for comparison. Developing a typology to understand the theoretical arrangement of WWVB as a transnational democratic network not only parses the differences between the presented concepts but also acts as a comprehensive tool to analyze the network through the methods of research. The applied identifiers are designed to not only provide analysis of institutional structure differences but also seek to connect theoretical standpoints to concepts of governance. Understanding International Relations literature’s embracement of democratic theory in lieu of the recognition of transitional networks necessarily needs to bridge conditions of which will execute the prescriptions of democratic theory. Addressing representation, participation, and process of deliberation, the indicators within the typology are designed to expose and explore fundamental conditions apparent within these conversations of transnational democratic theory.

***Table 1*: Transnational Democratic Theory Typology**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **COSMOPOLITAN NATIONALISM** | **(LIBERAL) GLOBAL COSMOPOLITAN DEMOCRACY** | **TRANSNATIONAL DISCURSIVE DEMOCRACY** |
| **VALUE** | Justice; Ecological Ideals; Humanitarianism; Membership | Justice; Liberal Ideals; Affectedness Principle; Legitimacy and Accountability | Inclusion; Pluralism |
| **THEORETICAL TRADITION** | Communitarian; Deliberative Democracy; Critical/Ecological Theory | Communitarian; Liberalism; Deliberative Democracy | Post-Structuralism; Discursive Democracy; Critical Theory |
| **INSITUTIONS, VENUES, ACTORS** | Republics:  Provide basic rights and constituted by institutions | International Institutions: Provide protection of rights through Courts; interact with regional institutions | Civil Society:  Social and cultural life (inclusive of protests, networks, and deliberations) dialectically interact with institutions of the state |
| **INFLUENCE** | Foreign Policy with Cosmopolitan Justice; Embedded in National Institutions; Legislative | Constitution-building; Legislative | Discourse in civil society: social choice theory  Discursive shifts can influence public policy  Communicative power |
| **PROCESS** | Communicative power & administrative power; Consensus | Representation through elections | Intersubjective communication generates public opinion as outcome of contestation |
| **REASONING** | Reciprocity, publicity, accountability (to constituents and other citizens, to citizens of other political systems, and to future generations);  Communicative rationality | Public-reason - rationality  Democracy is pluralistic; layered belief system | Politics of identity and difference  Deliberative and communicative core  Democratic evolution |
| **CONDITIONS OF A PUBLIC SPHERE** | PS interacts with National Institutions; Justice determined by consensus; National identity with loyalty to humankind | Participation by those affected | Public spheres, relatively unconstrained |

*Cosmopolitan Nationalism*

The Cosmopolitan Nationalist approach to transnational democracy accepts the platform for cosmopolitan ideals but bounds them to the institutional frame of the nation-state, albeit not exclusively (Eckersley 2007, 675). Robyn Eckersley’s account of Cosmopolitan Nationalism extends itself beyond the boundaries of states but adopts a global, cosmopolitan, ideal. The role of national institutions remains as a political vessel to the international sphere. Citizens, though, reason through the deliberative process in conditions of reciprocity, publicity, and accountability (to constituents and other citizens, to citizens of other political systems, and to future generations) (Dryzek 2000, 17; Gutmann & Thompson, 2004; Eckersley 2007, 675). Eckersley’s position for civil society, therefore, influences foreign policy, legislation, and embeddness of national institutions. Furthermore, Habermasian conditions for communicative rationality and consensus are intended to appeal to national institutions (Habermas 1997, 55; Rehg 1998; Dryzek 2000, 25, 172).

The concept behind Eckersley’s *Green State* (2004) foremost lays out its priority for the instituting of a state represented predominantly upon reasoning of ecological value. The “green state” seeks to assert ecological responsibility in the political realm through constitutional structures.

By “green state” . . . I mean a democratic state whose regulatory ideals and democratic procedures are informed by *ecological* democracy rather than *liberal* democracy. Such a state may be understood as a *postliberal* state insofar as it emerges from an immanent (ecological) critique, rather than from an outright rejection, of liberal democracy. (Eckersley 2004, 2)

Establishing an ontological starting point, Eckersley approaches the theoretical design with emphasis in theoretical traditions of critical, ecological thought (Eckersley 2004). Building upon an immediate reaction to global ecological crises, Cosmopolitan Nationalism rests upon national institutions, as established, based on reliability and prioritization. Eckersley suggests capitalizing on institutions in place to address immediate concerns of social and ecological justice and based off of citizen membership of nation-states.

Eckersley’s adapts a Habermasian approach towards consensus-building within a specified territory, pivoting on the concept of *membership*, as it encompasses overlapping and contesting interests (Eckersley 2007, 682). Challenging the liberal scaling up of citizenry (or the ‘we’) in efforts to appeal to international institutions, Eckersley suggests, “The missing ‘we’ follows from the fact that the global identity associated with cosmopolitan global citizenship lacks two key elements that help to define a meaningful collective identity: collective continuity over time and collective differentiation from others” (Eckersley 2007, 682). As the public sphere is observed to be in consistent interaction with national institutions, Eckersley relies on national identity to bound citizens to one another for purposes of consensus and humanitarianism. While Cosmopolitan Nationalism is still bounded by national institutions, it is more open to debate within the public sphere than liberal democracy; civil society is understood to have a dialectical effect on legislative processes (Dryzek 2000, 23, 25). In other words, there is a duality of modern law in its procedural formation through a deliberative public as it exhibits pressure on responsive democratic institutions (Rehg 1998, xii-xiii). Eckersley acts as a proponent for these methods as means to (1) acknowledge effectiveness of national democratic institutions of which are already embraced and (2) as means to work on institutions from the inside-out rather than developing anew (Eckersley 2004; Eckersley 2007, 676).

*(Liberal) Global Cosmopolitan Democracy*

(Liberal) Global Cosmopolitan Democracy emerges from the liberal-institutionalist approach to democracy observed in democratic nation-states but seeks to ‘scale it up’ to accommodate the international sphere. Proponent of Global Cosmopolitan Democracy, David Held supports the formation of democratic procedures to conform to a role within international institutions and institution-building (Held 2003, 173; Held and Patomaki 2006, 121). Similar to Eckersley, Held adopts a cosmopolitan ontology in that all those who are affected should be represented in the democratic process. Moreover, the theoretical tradition is strongly communitarian[[6]](#footnote-6) and liberal in its pursuit of justice (Rawls 1997; Goodin 2003). Recognizing cosmopolitan elements embedded in global institutions, Held believes they have not served the purpose well to date and have “. . . by no means generated a new deep-rooted structure of cosmopolitan accountability and regulation” (Held 2003, 172). The primary actors within Held’s theory are representative of public cosmopolitan liberal ideals, including concepts of liberty, prosperity, and individualism, devised from agreed upon notions of justice.

Liberal democracy is fundamentally based on the reasoning of rational decisions made by the public and entrusted in elected leadership. Institutions such as courts and legislative bodies of which directly contribute to constitution-building are the main forums for democratic development and influence (Dryzek 2000, 12-14). Institutions responsible for democratic evolution require and constitute liberal rights as means to influence the democratic processes (Dryzek 2000, 10; Held and Patomaki 2006, 116, 123). In building a foundation for democracy on these agreed upon principles, higher-level institutional venues (and officials) advise the democratic process with the rationale of common good in mind. Citizen deliberation is, therefore, not a normal process of government arrangements but may effectively contribute to the democratic process through mechanisms of voting and prioritizing the pluralistic components of a democratic society (Rawls 1997; Dryzek 2000, 14; Held and Patomaki 2006, 129). Held offers the opportunity to increase legitimacy in international institutions, such as forums and subdivisions of the United Nations and international courts. Furthermore, legitimacy is given to particular populations affected by events or phenomena, and accountability is provided through constitutions supported by institutions and judicial processes.

Global Cosmopolitan Democracy, as adopted by Held, finds reasoning through Rawlsian ideals of public reason and ration (Rawls 1997). Rawls highly emphasizes the concept of justice as means to verify democratic procedures, and democratic institutions reciprocally verify justice through the belief and ability of the public to establish and constitute reason (Baber and Bartlett 2005, 50). In consideration of the conditions of transnationalism, public reason would be demonstrated and reflected in regional and international institutions in response to legal procedures founded by public reasoning and shared ideals. “A cosmopolitan polity can only be satisfactorily entrenched if a division of powers and competencies is recognized at different levels of political action and interconnectedness – levels which correspond to the degrees to which public issues stretch across borders and significantly affect diverse populations” (Held 2003, 174). Bridging institutional structure and cosmopolitan ideals, Held (2003) recognizes international institutional fallacies, but at the same time, is optimistic of powers of deliberation, reason, and common good to reshape political space.

*Transnational Discursive Democracy*

Rather than embracing liberalist notions of democratic formation, including reliance on traditional liberal institutions, John Dryzek is an advocate for a bottom-up based response to transnationalism through methods of discursive democracy (Dryzek 2000). Transnational Discursive Democracy theoretically bridges the critical components of Habermasian democracy, such as the relevance and significance of communicative action, with Chantal Mouffe’s discussion of agnostic pluralism (or radical democracy) (Dryzek 1990; Habermas 1992; Mouffe 2000). Prominence is given to values of inclusion and pluralism within the ideal of democracy as people come together through experiences and interactions. Similar to Habermas, Dryzek suggests public spheres remain an important venue for democratic discussions (Dryzek 2000, 23, 103, 131). Dryzek, though, establishes a much more flexible structure and expectation for democratic processes – unconstrained by institutional foundationalism and relevant in social and cultural life in forms of public action including protests to formal deliberations (Dryzek 2000, 60, 100). Discursive Democracy is not bounded by institutions of state or identity, but rather, is founded in a communicative base of similar interests.

Civil society takes prominence as venue by engaging in discourse to breakdown barriers of intersubjectivity, generating public opinions as outcomes of contestations (Dryzek 2000, 56). The communicative power of citizen discourse has direct influence on the process and can inform and transform democracy as it finds appropriate, unbounded by institutional expectations (Dryzek 2000, 131). Moreover, there are no vivid distinctions and expectations for what democracy should look like, rather, it is embraced as a continually evolving process (Mouffe 2000, 17). Here is where the bridge between Habermas and Mouffe is built as the approach adopts a post-structrualist understanding of discursion in consideration and pretense to understanding a transforming democratic system. Consensus, in the Habermasian prescription, is not theoretically sound as citizens’ deliberation is constantly within a paradigm of antagonism, contestation.

Essential to Transnational Discursive Democracy is its deliberative and communicative core (Dryzek 1999, 44). The deliberative component not only fosters democratic evolution but also perpetuates democratic identity as that of which reaches beyond boundaries of nation-states and encompasses contesting ideals of identity (Dryzek 1999, 48; Dryzek 2000, 60). The process of reasoning is founded on the politics of identity, contestation, and dialogue as citizens work through differences to address social disputes, and consequently, evolving the democratic process. Civil society organizing in forms of networks, protests, and deliberations is legitimized as it dialectically influences institutions and push for changes. Discursive Democracy embraces transnationalism and envisions it as the most radical democratic shift as it separates itself from formal institutionalization and cosmopolitan ideals but finds home in civil society – inclusive of networks, non-governmental organizations, and social movements.

Cosmopolitan Nationalism, (Liberal) Global Cosmopolitan Democracy, and Discursive Democracy all present distinct approaches to pursue or conceptualize transformations into transnational democracy. With different values prominent – ecological justice, global liberalism, and pluralism – each pave a different path with different goals for how to readdress the limitations of state-based democracy. The three approaches to transnational democracy are presented to inform the World Wide Views project as a phenomenon. The process of analysis will be elaborated on in the following section as I present the typology as an analytical tool and attempt to shed light on the practicalities of transnational democratic exercises in lieu of the authors’ discussions.

**Research Design**

At the onset of my academic interest in the WWViews process, I began collecting data on individual organizational hosts sites in efforts to begin to paint strokes towards a comprehensive understanding of network diversity. Using methods of web-based content analysis, I utilized organization and affiliated websites to collect the following qualitative information from (at the time) 36 international sites[[7]](#footnote-7): (1) organization and affiliated networks, (2) organization mission statements, (3) association to World Wide Views’ agenda, (4) number of years as an organization, and (5) if the organization was environmentally affiliated. The web-based content sought to provide two main extractions of data – content for organizational capacity analysis of the network and insight for interviews with selected site managers. Three separate result typologies were created, representing citizen, network, and DBTF analysis.

**Results: Theory in Praxis**

The practice of transnational democracy through the case of World Wide Views on Biodiversity exhibits characteristics of the theories of Cosmopolitan Nationalism, Global Cosmopolitanism, and Transnational Discursive Democracy in the intersection of all actor levels: citizen, site hosts, and the Danish Board of Technology. While the network arises out of civil society networking, the design of the event focuses on legitimizing representation through the Convention on Biological Diversity, a convention formed through the United Nations. Citizen results, though, show strong support for national policies to protect biodiversity loss. The questions then become: Are theories of transnational democracy speaking past one another? Or is there disjunction in the operations of World Wide Views? I suggest it’s neither, but rather, speaks to the complexity of the network and the ideas it represents.

As the indicators provided a starting point for theoretical comparisons, in application they connect embedded axiological, ontological, and epistemological assumptions of the network to theoretical design. The observations and ability to identify through the indicators supports the notion that transnational democratic theory is applicable to analysis of WWVB. As *Table 2: Transnational Democratic Practice* illustrates, each indicator aligns with particular characteristics of practices, actors, institutes, or ideas situated within the network.

***Table 2:* Transnational Democratic Practice: World Wide Views on Biodiversity**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **COSMOPOLITAN NATIONALISM** | **(LIBERAL) GLOBAL COSMOPOLITAN DEMOCRACY** | **TRANSNATIONAL DISCURSIVE DEMOCRACY** |
| **IDEOLOGICAL**  **VALUE** | Missions of institutes in the network included environmentally-focused and nationally-affiliated institutes; Regional demographic representation | Network founded to address democratic deficit of citizen recognition in international policy-making | Structure requirements for demographic inclusion; Missions of institutes in network include citizen participation in science and technology |
| **THEORETICAL TRADITION** | Network developed around international environmental dialogue | Network established under tradition of deliberations; Practicality to establish citizen recognition on international level | Network established as an ‘idea’ by the DBT; Expansion of previous initiatives |
| **INSITUTIONS, VENUES, ACTORS** | Some actors identify as national institutes; Strong encouragement to use results to appeal to national policy; Regional sites by national identity | Contribution to reaching Aichi Biodiversity Target 1 of the CBD Strategic Plan | DBT as central to network; Sites join through snowballing outreach through partners |
| **INFLUENCE** | Citizen support for national policy on biodiversity conservation; One case used results for city planning; Some cases directly associated with national institutions | Official recognition from the CBD and supported to continue as an international project | Material and reports dispersed to policymakers, citizens, media; Results/Material used for side projects including youth outreach and research; Strong reliance on informative video and material |
| **PROCESS** | Structure provided uniformity and opportunity to influence national legislation; Consensus not enforced | Voting procedure by citizens; Quantitative, comparable results; Strict voting structure for presentation of representation | Deliberative (qualitative) conversations not recorded; Design of structure critiqued for lack of qualitative results |
| **REASONING** | Desire for process and opinions to be reflected upon by citizens and policymakers within the political system | Citizens reflect on deliberation, order values, and vote | National results express differences in culture; Process understood to be ‘constantly reinvented’ and evolving |
| **CONDITIONS OF A PUBLIC SPHERE** | Citizens identified by nationality with loyalty to solving global biodiversity issues; Citizen results support for ecological value over economic | Citizens value biodiversity loss as a global crisis; All-affected | Varying reasons for individual citizen participation |

*Implications of Practice for Cosmopolitan Nationalism*

Site hosts and citizens exhibit conditions supportive of a Cosmopolitan Nationalist approach to transnational democracy through ideological values and conditions of the public sphere. Citizen results do seem to support the notion that education and engagement in ecological issues maintains a value for policy enforcement and reform. In Eckersley’s idea of post-liberal democracy, citizen values shift from predominantly economic to predominantly ecological. Citizen response to the question of biodiversity protection in lieu of economic gains provides optimism for citizen value shift, possibly presenting a foundation or beginning reformation of citizen ideals. Although citizens discursively suggest a shift in liberal conceptions, actions according to these principles may vary or not hold outside of the deliberative event without institutional support.

Global citizen voice represents great concern for biodiversity loss, but how these voices provide influence in deliberative systems differs from the map provided by Eckersley’s Cosmopolitan Nationalism. For one, the deliberative forums are not instituted by national affiliations with the intent of directly feeding back into national democratic debate. Rather, there is only suggestion in the methodological design of the process. Partners who did engage a national forum found little or no influence in biodiversity policy changes. The goals of the network encouraged reflection of citizen consultations in national forums but were not the anticipated outcome. Secondly, because the consultations were designed to be foremost legitimized in international negotiations on biodiversity, uniformity for national processes were not pursued or enforced. Furthermore, the abilities for national democratic appeal very much differ within political landscapes of network countries. One can assume the process for implementing deliberative forums on biodiversity may be constructed very differently from China to Canada, Palestine to Denmark. Although national ministry representatives to the COP were engaged and informed of their countries’ results, ministries are not delegates within national institutions.

*Implications of Practice for (Liberal) Global Cosmopolitanism*

World Wide Views on Biodiversity most effectively displays characteristics of (Liberal) Global Cosmopolitanism in its deliberative design and interaction with international institutions. It is clear the design’s intent is to meet the goals of WWVB to appeal to and be recognized by (and even effective in) international negotiations. The design is strategic in its approach and able to source funding and support from the Convention. The road to permanent legitimization of citizen participation in international environmental negotiations may be along the path the World Wide Views alliance has begun to lay. The process could ultimately build the foundation for international legislative requirements for citizen feedback that are presently absent and of contribution to the democratic deficit Global Cosmopolitanism seeks to address.

Some critiques warn, though, that such a process would be beating the same drum of liberalism, curtailing from real problems of democratic deficiency. “We tend to think of the UN in terms of these romanticized contexts, but I think we also forget that the UN has interests,” one voice of feedback suggested, “…It’s not as though they are disinterested bystanders that just have provided a forum for different voices to be heard.” There are troubling realities of the Untied Nations as a forum for citizen voices to be recognized which may include, but is not limited to, that delegates at the United Nations are not citizen-elected officials and no direct accountability to citizen concerns. Moreover, questions of legitimacy and effectiveness of the United Nations and affiliated international institutions still hangs in question in Global Cosmopolitanism. The issue of symbolism in soft law versus the effectiveness of enforced hard law has spurred academic conversations for decades.

*Implications of Practice for Transnational Discursive Democracy*

Transnational Discursive Democracy shows most prominently in site host and DBT design analysis, although both citizen response and site hosts agree in favor of the educational materials used for the deliberations. I highlight the overlapping opinions in lieu of the communicative core of Discursive Democracy. Scientific and social information distributed to participants proved to be a positive tool for all parties. There is solidifying contentment with the information provided as the basic talking point and connection. These ideas of citizen deliberations and biodiversity issues snowballed a network of affiliates together in a common project. The capacity of the network exemplifies possibilities of civil society around a common idea, as suggested in Transnational Discursive Democracy. While the power of a communicative network is demonstrated in the organizing of World Wide Views on Biodiversity, the strength and extent of the network may come into question against such as: Would the network be more successful if it was institutionalized? Would greater decentralization and less strict and demanding procedures allow the network greater capacity to expand?

The design of WWViews, though, is continually evolving. Because the network or process is not constitutionalized, there is allowance for greater flexibility to exceptions and challenges. The flexibility in design and acknowledgement as an evolving project alleviates experimental pressures of one-off success of design and implementation. The network sees strength and longevity in the project and design *to* evolve and enacts such changes. Moreover, the network sees itself as part of a larger deliberative system with a communicative core to its existence. WWViews ability to evolve creates adaptability and resilience in its structure and could possibly benefit by allowing for greater flexibility and demands on individual site host locations.

**Implications for World Wide Views**

Bent Flyvbjerg offers questions for a phronetic researcher, the results of the research project lead me to turn to the network and ask: “Where are we going?” and more specifically “Where are we going with transnational democracy?” (Flyvbjerg 2001, 60, 145). Where is the network situated in theories of transnational democracy, and where may it be headed? Coded content analysis and transcribed interviews revealed a high frequency of Transnational Discursive Democracy, especially in the site host and DBT design levels of analysis. With majority of the total codes being supportive of evidence of Transnational Discursive Democratic design, we may assume that this theory speaks most adequately to World Wide Views on Biodiversity. As the results show strong relations to Transnational Discursive Democracy, what may theory teach practice?

For one, success in feedback of educational materials across all levels of analysis shows strong support for and possibly hints at expanding the dissemination of the education materials for practices outside of the Day of Deliberation. Sharing of educational material will not only create new cells for knowledge and interest but will expand the deliberative core. Citizens and site host managers should be encouraged to share the educational materials and experience beyond the events of a single day. Through frequency and practice, the network has the ability to strengthen its *discursive power*. Discursive power is important for the understandings of complex ecological, political, and social issues and should be encouraged to be used in alternative ways, beyond the day program. According to Dryzek:

The idea of a deliberative system begins with the recognition that a deliberative democracy cannot easily be sought in a single forum. Instead, it should be sought in the contributions of multiple sites. Rhetoric is essential when it comes to communication between different elements in a deliberative system, because those elements will often feature differently situated actors with different perspectives, subscribing to different discourses. (Dryzek 2010, 66)

To begin to cross discourses in lieu of global deliberations on ecological, political, and social issues, the rhetoric to bridge these discourses must be consistent. The information packets serve as a rhetorical device for the network, bridging together parties that may have not otherwise been affiliated. Such a tool should be encouraged to use in “multiple sites.”

Furthermore, it appears the WWViews network is working towards a continued expansion of the project to incorporate more partners and be representative at more Conference of Parties. Less strict of procedures, such as in design, may alleviate some financial burdens on individual host sites as well as allow for a greater accommodation of variety of participants and site locations. As the network organized through snowballing procedures of discursive and affiliate connections, the design of the network should allow for greater flexibility in organization and design to meet the goals of extending the network. “Central to discursive democracy is the idea of engagement and contestation across multiple discourses in the public sphere,” and a dominating discourse within a network may be constraining (Dryzek 2010, 127). Providing greater room for network partner input and allowing for even more flexibility in design may cast a wider net in the deliberative system, extending scopes of discourse. Caution is thrown to casting too wide of a net and losing credibility in international institutions. The structure of the network, Day of Deliberation, and dissemination builds credibility in the process and citizen results in international and transnational discussions. As shown, the CBD advised the continuation of WWViews involvement in the conference creating future accreditation of the network in the negotiations.

Finding answers to Flyvbjerg’s initial value-rational question for guidance of the phronetic researcher may entail looking at World Wide Views in its shared characteristics to Transnational Discursive Democratic theory in praxis. As a deliberative system, World Wide Views should aim to expand its discursive reach for upcoming projects. The methods of doing so may include the scaling back of DBTF guidelines, topics of discussion, or an increase in guiding post-deliberation processes and individual site host reach. Are there any shifts of power dynamics in these suggested adjustments? Is the track desirable, and based upon this position, what should be done?

**Conclusion**

The analysis of World Wide Views on Biodiversity finds that transnational democracy pragmatically applied most closely resembles John Dryzek’s theory of Transnational Discursive Democracy. Site hosts and citizens very much valued the education material provided for the deliberations. The network generally formed through snowball affects rather than institutional recommendation or design. Interested parties came together over a shared project. Furthermore, the World Wide Views process is understood to be an evolving initiative. Through progress and trial, the network will feed back to the process with intentions for improvement, as this analysis intends to do. With theory applied to practice, four recommendations are made to expand the discursive power and reach of World Wide Views: (1) Scale back DBTF guidelines, (2) create greater open space for topics of discussion, (3) DBTF should support post-deliberation processes, (4) increase in guiding individual site host reach. These recommendations are based off of the desire for the network to extend is discursive power and reach through expansion within the deliberative system.

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1. For the purposes of this paper, the concepts of (1) an anthropocene and (2) global ecological crises will be accepted as a frame accepted by the Earth Systems Governance report (Biermann et al. 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “The Project,” World Wide Views on Biodiversity, accessed May 10, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The first transnational democratic event occurred in 2009: World Wide Views on Global Warming. See Rask and Worthington, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. During the World Wide Views on Biodiversity project and this analysis, the Danish Board of Technology was defunded by the Danish Parliament. The Danish Board of Technology (DBT) then became the Danish Board of Technology Foundation DBTF). Both names are used in the report according to appropriateness with the timeliness of the shift. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Throughout the analysis, World Wide Views on Biodiversity (WWVB) and World Wide Views alliance/network (WWViews) are used in reference to two different entities: WWVB is the specific network and event around Biodiversity held in September 2012. WWViews refers to the network partners who have been involved with the project either before or since the Biodiversity event. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. While a theory of communitarianism maintains factions and contestations within the theory at it’s own right, we may generally understand communitarianism as a relationship of mutual support of and for the “community” (Bronner 1999, 41-54). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The initial organizing of the network included sites in Bangladesh and Australia; both withdrew from the process due to limitations on funding and institutional support. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)