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Building the Foundations of Deliberative Democracy:

The Deliberative Person and Climate Change

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Introduction

Deliberative democracy has developed quickly since the deliberative turn in political theory in the early 1990s, advancing the conceptualization of democratic processes being underpinned by the exchange of reasons under conditions of fairness and equality among citizens (e.g. Dryzek 1990; Gutmann and Thompson 1996) and involving the transformation of preferences by the force of reason (Manin 1987). This was followed by the so-called 'empirical turn', which in many cases involved the examination of deliberation in action among small groups or 'minipublics' (e.g. Goodin and Niemeyer 2003; Niemeyer 2004; Setälä, Grönlund et al. 2010; Niemeyer 2011a) and parliamentary settings (Steenbergen, Bächtiger et al. 2003; Steiner, Bächtiger et al. 2005). There has also been the 'institutionalization turn', which tended to focus on the development of particular designs that facilitate micro (small group) deliberation (Smith 2001; Chambers 2003; Fung 2003). Most recently, there has been a move toward the development of the idea of deliberative systems as a conceptual framework for understanding the dynamics within polities comprising many different 'deliberative' components (Mansbridge 2011).

The field of deliberative democracy is thus a very dynamic one. And, arguably, it is an important one too, the influence of which extends well beyond that posturing of political theorists. In Australia the lexicon of deliberative democracy is beginning to reach into the heart of government; but there are limits, as the recent example of the hostile reception to the proposal for citizens' assembly on climate change demonstrates. Whether these are limits imposed by circumstances that are a product of political systems and thus subject to transformation, or a product of limitations inherent to the deliberative democratic project is a question in need of careful analysis.

The Challenge of Climate Change Governance

Over a similar timeframe to the development of deliberative democracy there has been the increasing recognition of climate change as an important challenge confronting the ability of human social and technological systems to adapt. It is already pushing to their limits the ability of systems of governance to effectively respond, both in terms of achieving cooperative approaches internationally as well as within many nation states. Australia, for example, has been unable to act decisively on what has been colourfully described as a 'diabolical policy problem' (Garnaut 2008). This is at least partly due to the difficulty in conveying the need for action even as scientific consensus coalesces around findings

supporting the need for greater urgency (Kitcher 2010). The complexity of the issue has made it all too easy to obfuscate in order to maintain the status quo (Tranter 2011) and the epistemic community has been unable to effectively rise to the challenge (Miller and Edwards 2001). Those scientists that have assumed an activist role have sometimes deemed it necessary to overstate the case (Kellow 2007) and in some cases, are accused of manipulation — for example the "climate gate" incident in the UK (Nerlich 2010).

Meanwhile, public opinion in Australia appears to be hardening against taking action (Coorey 2010; Hansen 2010). This ostensibly democratic outcome strongly contrasts with the imperatives associated with global environmental governance in the face of climate change, which requires, at a very minimum, a clear recognition of the problem (Biermann 2007). Deliberative approaches have been identified by an increasing number of researchers as not only a solution to this impasse, but also as a tool for improving the 'response space' in the face of climate change (Tompkins and Adger 2003; Berkhout 2010; Tompkins, Adger et al. 2010) — including the use of deliberative minipublics to develop policy options for proactive adaptation strategies (Few, Brown et al. 2007) and the development of deliberative systems to coordinate global climate change governance (Dryzek and Stevenson Forthcoming 2011).

Addressing the Limits of Deliberative Democracy

Does deliberative democracy really hold the key to improving governance in the face of climate change? Is it well developed enough as an idea to inform real world innovations that can nudge societies in the direction of adaptive action? The move from minipublics toward deliberative systems is an important development in the field of deliberative democracy, representing a strong step forward toward placing the idea of deliberation in the 'real world' of political decision-making. And it has at least an intuitive appeal in relation to climate change governance.

However, one of the problems with the idea of deliberative systems is that it appears to have leap-frogged important foundational questions for deliberative democracy. There are certain questions in regard to which deliberative democracy is relatively strong. Although there are competing procedural accounts (see Bächtiger, Niemeyer et al. 2010) there is very clear agreement on the broad characteristics of deliberation as a process involving the exchange of reasons by equal citizens under conditions characterised by fairness and mutual respect that is directed toward the resolution of political issues (Gutmann 2004). However, the substantive question regarding what it is that deliberation actually 'does', beyond the potential transformation of preferences, is less developed in deliberative theory beyond relatively

tentative appeals to epistemic superiority (Cohen 1986; Estlund 1993; Estlund 1997). Moreover, there is also an assumption that deliberative procedure and outcomes cannot be definitively linked (Bohman 1998). From a climate change perspective, then, one could draw the conclusion that deliberation could continue *ad infinitum* as part of a 'well functioning deliberative system' while climate change impacts continue to accelerate. Clearly, if deliberative democracy is to be relevant to real world problems such as climate change it needs a coherent theory of deliberative action. This is precisely what this research will contribute to.

To fill the gap concerning substantive questions regarding deliberation, some authors have borrowed directly from other fields, such as social psychology relating to improved opinion strength (Barabas 2004); or social choice, pertaining to the structuration of preferences (McLean, List et al. 1999; Dryzek and List 2003; Farrar, Fishkin et al. 2010). There is absolutely nothing wrong with this approach; it is essential to learn from a broad range of epistemologies and draw connections, where relevant. But if deliberative democracy is to inform institutional design and real world politics it must also be clear what it contributes in terms of something that we might call a 'deliberative' outcome. Such a project needs to have a strong relationship with agreed deliberative ideals. Going too far without explicit reference to normative deliberative theory brings with it the danger of concept stretching (Steiner 2008). Tendencies such as this have resulted in reported outcomes bearing a tenuous relationship to authentic deliberation, the famous example of group polarisation, for example, being attributed the status of "law" (Sunstein 2000). Another example, this time theoretical, is that of the 'discursive dilemma', which uses the aggregative logic of social choice to demonstrate the impossibility of coherent 'deliberative' outcomes (Petit 2001). Deliberative research is now beginning to catch up and counter these claims, basing arguments in part on procedural norms of deliberative democracy (e.g. Jaeger 2005; Braham and Hees 2011). That the rebutting of these claims regarding potentially undesirable deliberative outcomes has been made possible through reliance on well developed procedural norms gives us a clue that a link between procedure and outcome should not only be directly observable, it should also be amenable to theorising.

Empirical researchers examining group deliberation (usually in the form of minipublics) tend to support the argument that something approaching 'authentic' deliberation is both possible and desirable (Hansen and Andersen 2004; Niemeyer 2004; Morrell 2005; Rosenberg 2005; Reykowski 2006). And there is already a good deal of theoretical and empirical support for

the argument that deliberation produces improved environmental outcomes (Dryzek 1995; Gunderson 1995; Pretty 1995; Dobson 1996; Goodin 1996; Jacobs 1996; Aldred 2000; Kenyon, Nevin et al. 2001; Smith 2003; Ward, Norval et al. 2003; Niemeyer 2004; Baber and Bartlett 2005; Talpin 2005). Niemeyer (2004) has shown that these outcomes are not necessarily a product of social engineering to engender environmental values. Rather, deliberation in his studies reconnects political choices with the underlying 'public will' of citizens (Niemeyer 2011a). The connection between what citizens want and what they choose is distorted in every day politics by competing truth claims that are strategically deployed, particularly in relation to complex environmental issues. Political actors often seek to manipulate outcomes rather than communicate important issues, reducing the citizen to spectator rather than participant (Edelman 1988). That is to say, there is a very different outcome when citizens are given the opportunity to step back and reflect on political issues rather than follow the symbolic cues offered to them in the public sphere. And they are very much less likely to choose political outcomes that undermine the environmental services that underpin the activities of modern societies.

The challenge, then, is to discern those features of a political system that can harness these predispositions to produce outcomes that are both more democratic, ecologically rational (Dryzek 1983; Bartlett 1986), epistemic, consistent with the imperative to adapt to climate change. One particular feature that is relatively undeveloped in deliberative democracy is a working theory of the "deliberative person" that is both empirically plausible and consistent with deliberative theory; and can provide a foundation for understanding the possibilities for deliberative systems. Just as the argument for ecologically rational outcomes in politics gave rise to the search for the ecological citizen at the foundations of environmental political economy (John, Welsh et al. 1994; Dryzek 1996; Gowdy 1999; Siebenhüner 2000) there is a strong case for doing the same for deliberative democracy. It is a gap that also has important implications for climate change governance, pertaining to the motivations, capabilities and dispositions of citizens in a deliberative context. Moreover, the tentative evidence from minipublics suggests that it is possible that the deliberative citizen and the ecological citizen could turn out to be the same thing, and that those institutional features that facilitate the deliberative, will also facilitate the ecological (Goodin 1996), particularly in respect to how citizens respond to climate change.

Developing a conception of the deliberative person as part of a deliberative system

The rationale underpinning the need to develop a conception of the deliberative person as well as its implications for a deliberative system can be illustrated by comparison to microeconomics. Although the analogy should not be taken too far, economic theory provides a good example of how a clear conceptualisation of the objectives of a theory can inform the development of institutions as part of a goal oriented system. The economic system, the elements of which are summarised in Table 1 is a system whose ***goal*** it is to *maximise material 'happiness' or utility*. It works via the assumption that the ***economic person*** acts as a *rational agent* seeking to maximise their own utility via the ***procedure*** of *exchange of goods and services* and, provided that ***institutions***, such as *property rights* and *markets* work as they should, produce ***outcomes*** in the form of a price signal that contribute to this outcome (*efficient pricing*).

The elegant (if excessively abstract) model described by neoclassical economic theory is much criticised, but has proved highly resistant, partly because of its elegance rendering it incredibly malleable and adaptive (Etzioni 1988). Although it began with astute observation through the lens of a moral philosopher (Adam Smith; see Heilbroner 2000), microeconomic theory is a good example of what can happen when epistemology becomes detached from normative inquiry, pursuing its own internal logic (Gowdy 1999). Deliberative democracy, on the other hand, is a strongly normative tradition with weak epistemological foundations. As alluded to above, it is very well developed in terms of the broad procedural norms that contribute to political legitimacy, but the workings of a deliberative system within this broad framework are unclear, particularly when it comes to questions regarding rationality, or the deliberative person. But, even before we get to this problem there is the question regarding what deliberation is supposed to do (see Table 1), a question that is raised by Mansbridge et al (2011).

Say, for example, that the of objective deliberative democracy is to elicit of form of reasoning such that there is an explicit connection between "public will" — what the public wants — and what they choose (see Niemeyer 2011a). Depending on the conception of the individual, the goal will lead to different implications for appropriate procedures and institutions. For example, if we assume that will is constituted along the lines argued by economic theory — that the expression of preference *is* the expression of will, and that there is no different

between pre-political and post-political preferences (Warren 1992) — then aggregative approaches to politics are appropriate.

However, if preferences are "constructed" as part of the decision process (Slovic 1995; Elster 1998; Lichenstein and Slovic 2006) — an assumption implicit in deliberative theory — then the model needs to account for this, including the mechanisms of preference construction. The discussion below suggests a number of mechanisms whereby this construction occurs. Recent research by Niemeyer has suggested that one potential mechanism for deliberative preference transformation is "emancipatory": that deliberation serves to peel away the influence of symbolic discourses (often deployed by dominant interests in the public sphere) that impede the operation of deliberative reason (Niemeyer 2011a). If this is true for all cases of deliberation, then it suggests that emancipation — reconciling underlying will to expressed preference — may only require a relatively minimalist form of deliberative system. Rather than 'scaling up' small group deliberation into a public sphere-wide enterprise — where every citizen deliberates on every relevant issue — it demands a system that inures the citizen against the sort of manipulatory forces that Rousseau (1978) sought to avoid, but for which deliberation is the antidote, not the disease (Niemeyer 2004).

Stretching the economics analogy a little further, a deliberative system could involve an account of how both supply and demand operates in respect to the way that epistemic and normative claims are dealt with. Supply side approaches involve institutions to regulate the dissemination of claims in the public sphere — just as we have institutions that regulate to ensure the quality of products available on the market. Deliberation itself is perhaps the most promising candidate. Habermas has famously prescribed the "ideal speech situation" as a regulatory ideal (Habermas 1984). But, as previously discussed, the question regarding what specific form deliberation can and should take is still a relatively open question. In light of potential weaknesses in using widespread deliberation per se as a regulatory approach — a point that will be addressed shortly — another possibility is the use of minipublics to filter information to the public under a 'trust-based' system (Warren 2009) where minipublics could do the hard work in sifting out the 'wheat from the chaff' among those discourses that would otherwise manipulate the will of citizens who are just 'like them'.

Mansbridge et al (2010) adopt a different approach to supply side questions in the deliberative system. The main problem for them is not to constrain or filter discourses in the public sphere, but to ensure that all the relevant arguments are discursively represented (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2008). One potential mechanism for them is the harnessing of self interest in

bringing these discourses to the 'market of ideas'. It is an approach that is intuitively appealing, potentially delivering the kind of elegance achieved by the economics model. But, from an emancipatory perspective, there are potential pitfalls, where the self-interest that has driven the dissemination of arguments is the same self-interest that has driven the distortion of political outcomes identified by Niemeyer (2011a).

However, before drawing conclusions about supply side approaches to deliberation it is necessary to also look at the "demand side" in a deliberative system. For example, an emancipatory perspective suggests demand side approaches would involve working with the deliberative capacities of citizens to inure them against symbolic manipulation — just as the market teaches us to be wary of swindlers and con artists. In this case, the regulatory ideal of Habermasian deliberation already provides us with an ideal filter via the operation of the 'force of reason'. But it is an ideal, not an empirically based theory. In contrast to Habermas, Dryzek has argued the admission of wide forms of speech acts, such as rhetoric, to deliberative encounters (Dryzek 2000; Dryzek 2010). While this is an approach grounded in real world deliberation, there is a danger from an emancipatory perspective that this simply re-opens up the deliberative system to the problem of manipulation through the rhetorical deployment of political symbols.

From a systems point of view, the tension between the approaches of Habermas and Dryzek — which have been characterised by Bächtiger, Niemeyer et al as type I and type II deliberation respectively (2010) — could be resolved by playing out the implication of these modes of deliberation through the workings of the system. For example, rhetoric might be permissible, if not desirable from an emancipatory perspective, if deliberation is predicated on the individual characteristic of inquisitiveness (or 'truth seeking' behaviour) — something observed in relation to small group deliberation by Niemeyer (2004) where the attempt to use rhetoric heightened sceptical behaviour among deliberators in face of attempts to manipulate the outcome. The use of manipulatory rhetoric where participants adopted an 'inquisitive mode' only served to help reveal the intentions underlying speech acts and form judgements regarding their trustworthiness.

On the other hand, where rhetoric is deployed to serve as a bridge between concepts in ways that serve to illuminate the issue (Dryzek 2010), the inquisitive filter is potentially able to assist citizens to form judgements about the relationship between a claim and their interests because the assessment is made based on actively matching the two, rather than simply acting

on the emotional appeal of the claim — a phenomenon that is captured by the distinction between core and peripheral processing in social psychology (Petty and Cacioppo 1986).

If the above claim holds up to empirical scrutiny, and the deliberative person is characterised by inquisitiveness, the next level of analysis involves investigation of those procedures and institutions that facilitate this characteristic. Take for example the claims in respect to the democratisation potential of the internet (e.g. Coleman and Blumler 2009; Noveck 2009). If inquisitiveness is at the heart of the demand side of the deliberative system, then online deliberation is manifestly not a promising approach. It is well established that online behaviour is rife with confirmation bias (Nickerson 1998; Lavine, Borgida et al. 2000; Kaye and Johnson 2002; Winkielman and Berridge 2003; Taber and Lodge 2006; Kim 2009; Stroud 2010) and polarisation (Sunstein 2007; Hindman 2009). But if we also take into account supply side functions then there are mechanisms where the internet can contribute to deliberative democracy — for example via the dissemination of discourses subjected to supply side filters, such as minipublics in a trust based system.

Table 1. Models of Economics and Deliberative Democracy

Theoretical Goal	Assumption	Procedure	Institutions	Intermediate outcomes	Evaluative Goal
	Economics/Market System				
Maximise Utility *(Material Happiness)*	***Individual*** • Utility maximising behaviour (instrumental rationality) • Perfect Information *Other Assumptions* • Divisible Goods • Excludability	• Market Exchange • Bargaining	• Property Rights • Markets	• Efficient pricing	**Climate Change Governance —Adaptive Capacity**
	Deliberative Democracy/Deliberative System				
• Public reason? • Maximise Collective Happiness? • Emancipation?	***Individual*** • Instrumental Rationality or Discursive Psychology? • Self-interest?/Other-regarding interest? • Deliberative Competence? • Scepticism? • Inquisitiveness? Other Assumptions • Issue characteristics? (limits to deliberative democracy)?	• Discussion? • Deliberation within? • Reason Giving? vs Rherotic? • Discussion vs Information? • Argumentative? Bargaining?	• Information systems? • minipublics?, • demoi? • (division of labour?)	• Ideal Preferences? • Emancipated preferences? • Reasoned Preferences?	

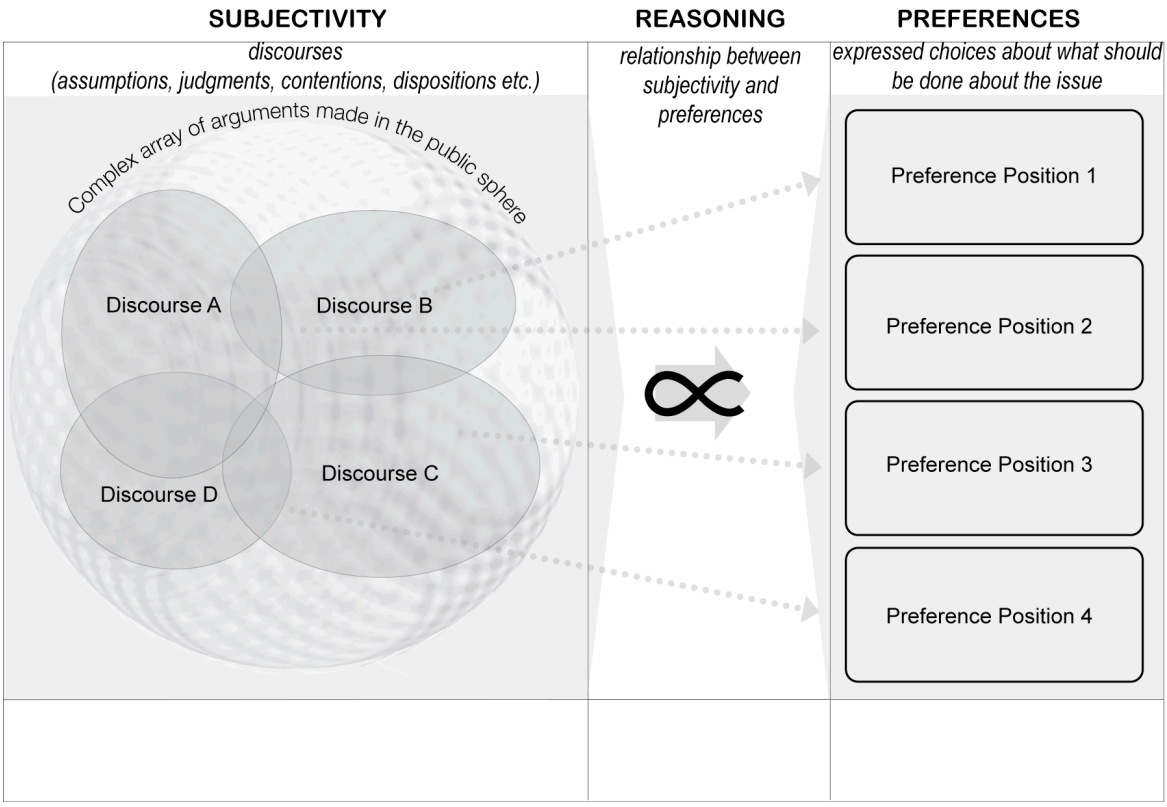
a) An Exploratory Model of the Deliberative Person

It has been stated a number of times above that an important component part of the deliberative system missing in deliberative theory is the idea of the deliberative person. The exploration of the deliberative person in this research will be informed by a particular exploratory model that Niemeyer has adopted as part of a discursive approach to conceptualising preference transformation. It is based on the model outlined in Figure 1, which is elaborated on in Niemeyer (2011a). The model assumes that there is some sort of relationship between discourse and preferences — and is related to discursive psychology insofar as it locates the mind at the intersection of language games (Harré and Gillett 1994). It is not an attempt to account for political behaviour in its entirety, but to explore transformation in a specifically deliberative context — to track the evolution of discourses and their consequences for choices.

The operationalization of this model in empirical research has already led to significant insights that have made important contributions to deliberative theory. For example, the observation that deliberation 'cleaned up' the range of arguments acceptable to all participants, irrespective of agreement, by eliminating those claims designed to elide with emotive symbols and manipulate public will, which also had an impact on the viable range of outcomes, led to the development of the idea of metaconsensus (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2006). Another is the observation of how identity and preference transformation in the deliberative context tend to follow discursive lines, leading to the conceptualisation of the idea of discursive representation (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2008).

The model assumes that political behaviour is at least in part contextual: that the self can adopt different modes that are activated in different settings (Elster 1986), a claim that has already been empirically verified (Frey 1997; Frey and Jegen 2000). It does not, however, make prior assumptions about the specific motivations etc. driving these different selves, which is something that the model permits the exploration of under deliberative settings.

Figure 1. A Discursive Account of Deliberative Preference Transformation



The model opens up a number of avenues for exploring the deliberative person. These include a number of possible relationships between discourse and preference as they transform: for example a neat relationship between identifiable discourses and identifiable preference positions, or a messy relationship between a range of discursive fragments in a complex public sphere and a range of choices.

Niemeyer has already used observation of deliberative transformation using the model to suggest an 'emancipatory' view could be appropriate. Before deliberation preferences are influenced by the presence of symbolically powerful discourses produces discourses that are often a product of the blandishment of particular interests. Deliberation provides an 'unblocking' mechanism by diffusing the impact of these symbolic discourses and permitting the operation of modes of preference formation that bear a more direct relationship with citizens' own interests (individual and collective) (Niemeyer 2002; Niemeyer 2011a). More recently, the observation that alignment between identity with discursive positions (as a whole) and the preference position improves after deliberation (often dramatically) has led Niemeyer to speculate about the possibility of an 'intersubjective rationality' at play during deliberation that gives rise to the improvement in this relationship (Niemeyer 2011b). Thus, in

simple terms, the model permits the evaluation of whether "deliberative rationality" involves the transformation of preferences along discursive lines (which supports the emancipatory conception) or via more comprehensive rationalisation of all the relevant arguments (supporting a more comprehensive public reason conception).

The discursive model also permits the exploration of the content of deliberative transformation. It can be used to identify discourses in the deliberative system that embody claims relating to self-interest or appeals to the common good; reflect different distributions of power and hegemony; or varying levels of cognition from peripheral and emotionally appealing intuits to considered reflection upon a wide range of complex and inter-related phenomenon. And, finally, it permits the exploration of the way in which truth claims are dealt with discursively and then translated into political preferences under conditions of deliberation particularly in respect to the issue of climate change.

Implications for Climate Change Governance

Exploring the problem of climate change governance from the systematic perspective (using the broad approach outlined in Table 1) makes it clear that simply claiming that preferences need to be consistent with environmental imperatives (Common and Perrings 1992; Norton, Costanza et al. 1998) is not sufficient. These kinds of preferences have to be something produced by the system, which brings us to the question regarding exactly how they would be achieved. And simply focusing on preferences brings us back to a system that is dominated by instrumental rationality, which Dryzek (1996) argues lies at the heart of the problem of environmental governance. Dryzek prescribes the idea of ecological rationality as the solution to the problem of political systems producing "good" environmental outcomes. And at the heart of the system lies the ecological person (Dryzek 1983; Dryzek 1987). However, again, this is not something that we can simply wish into existence: a kind of 'rationality by dictate' (although this is not to suggest this is what Dryzek is proposing).

However, it is possible to explore whether there is space within observable modes of political behaviour, including deliberative behaviour, that are consistent with ecological rationality. These would constitute predispositions that can be harnessed under regulatory institutions that are also consistent with higher order norms (most important of which include those embodied by democratic principles). For example, if the emancipatory approach identified above is also applicable to climate change, then institutions could potentially involve the regulation of

information supply to avoid manipulatory discourses; or, more feasibly, facilitate the capacities of citizens to filter the information (demand side).

This would provide a relatively simple solution to the problem of climate change governance. However there is some evidence that climate change presents a considerable challenge to this approach. Recent research by Niemeyer under the Climate Change and the Public Sphere project (DP0879092) found that deliberation in relation to climate change was less emancipatory than reconstructive. That is to say the changes observed were not the result of removing discourses that served to subvert the public will — compared to Niemeyer (2004) in relation to a wilderness issue. Rather, the outcome was reconstructive; deliberation resulted in redrawing the discursive map (Niemeyer and Hobson 2011; Hobson and Niemeyer submitted 2011a). Thus, instead of a minimalist (emancipatory) approach to improving the response to climate change the findings suggest the need for a much more comprehensive account of deliberative transformation.

The findings also suggest that deliberative engagement with certain kinds of individuals (deep sceptics) may not be possible in certain circumstances (Hobson and Niemeyer submitted 2011b) — although this could simply be a matter of the extent of deliberative engagement (e.g. see Dryzek and List 2003). This is something that the development of the systemic approach would need to account for, including the conception of the deliberative person. The approach will involve working through the implications of certain conceptions within the model, as was described above. For example, if we accept that there are limits to 'discursive representation' (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2007) and certain kinds of individuals form a minority incapable of rationality consistent with deliberative and environmental imperatives. What are the procedures for determining exclusion? Is it possible to reconcile this finding with higher order norms (democracy) and environmental outcomes? Or does the deliberative democratic project really collapse when confronted with this sort of challenge?

Conclusion

This paper has sketched out the case for developing ideas about the deliberative person as part of move toward ideas of deliberative systems, with particular implications for environmental governance and climate change in particular. Achieving these goals requires, in part, that we understand the concept of the deliberative person: the way in which the individual reacts to deliberation and the mechanisms of transformation that are at play.

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