Critiquing the Role of Deliberative Democracy in EE and ESD:
The Case for Effective Participation and Pragmatic Deliberation

Brett Cherniak
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Abstract: There has been much written of the potential positive impact in Environmental Education (EE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). This thesis explores the reliance on deliberative democracy by the proponents of EE/ESD and whether or not they have justification for their beliefs. Specifically, participation and deliberation will be separated in order to identify any faults in these values that may prevent democracy – and therefore education – from addressing the problems of sustainable development and environmental concerns. Through a deconstruction of the relevant literature and a clarification of the lines of thought brought forth throughout the various arguments, it is shown that there is no good theoretical or empirical reason for advocating a deliberative democratic approach to EE/ESD as feverishly as some do. Instead, the case for an educational method and content based on the empirically observed characteristics of current liberal democracies will be made.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Environmental Education, deliberative democracy, participation, liberal democracy, philosophy

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Summary: Proponents of Environmental Education and Education for Sustainable Development have focused their attention on increased participation and deliberation, both core values of deliberative democratic theory, within the classrooms in order for environmental and sustainable development concerns to gain a stronger and more legitimate position. As opposed to the “traditional” method of teaching, where educators played a stronger role in guiding their students, a deliberative democratic education would place more freedom and work in the hands of the students. This is important not just for environmental concerns, because education also prepares students for active participation in democratic society outside of the classroom. This thesis will explore and examine relevant literature to this topic, while asking whether EE/ESD scholars are justified in their reliance on deliberative democracy as a method for teaching. It will be concluded that kinds of participation and deliberation required for deliberative democracy are flawed. Instead, we should teach –through content and method– students to work with and reform our current liberal democratic systems, as they are stable and operate satisfactorily, and we have little hope of changing it for a new, largely deliberative system.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Environmental Education, deliberative democracy, participation, liberal democracy, philosophy

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1. Introduction

Education is a pillar of modern society. It is the domain where the current generation is prepared for the future. It is a tool with which the sum of all human knowledge is passed on to our genetic heirs. It is a means for society to reinforce the values necessary for civic engagement. And if one has listened to the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), read Agenda 21 or any one of the many scholarly articles about the topic, it will also play a pivotal role in ensuring the viability of our common future. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is the term given to the project of educating people of all walks of life about the importance of adopting a lifestyle that is focused on developing sustainably. It is not just content, but also a way of teaching based on the values of sustainable development as outlined in the Our Common Future (Brundtland Report) from 1987 (UNESCO). Thus ESD is rooted in the most commonly cited definition of sustainable development, “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Development, 1987).

Our Common Future may be the most important international report to identify the importance of education in persuading and making the individual act in favour of the common interest (Development, 1987). However, it was not until the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and the adoption of Agenda 21 that education’s role in redirecting the world’s progress towards a more sustainable future was made clear. Section IV, Chapter 36 begins,

Education, raising of public awareness and training are linked to virtually all areas of Agenda 21, and even more closely to the ones of meeting basic needs, capacity-building, data and information, science, and the role of major groups. (Nations, 1992)

Section IV of Agenda 21 is entitled “Means of Implementation”, as to leave no doubt of the role education should play. Education should, among other avenues, be able to lead to the implementation of sustainable development by creating an environment which leads to the public effectively participating in decision-making (Nations, 1992).

Education espousing participation was further emphasized and expanded upon by the UN’s Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, beginning 2005. ESD should foster critical thinking and reflection, where “learning to question our current belief systems and to recognize the assumptions underlying our knowledge, perspectives and opinions” (UNESCO). It should also nurture systemic thinking, leading to an acknowledgement of the complexities of the issues at hand while looking for connections while trying to solve whatever problems we may face (ibid). Partner 2006ships should also develop, helping to promote dialogue, negotiation, and learning to work together. Finally, the Decade of ESD reiterates the need to empower people so that they can participate in decision-making (ibid).

Furthermore, at the 4th International Conference on Environmental Education the panel recommended that we should:

Use education to develop capacity for democratic participation in Earth governance through building understandings of the relationship between ethical principles (such as those outlined in the Earth Charter), legal instruments, multilateral agreements and national policy frameworks in all areas related to sustainable development

(UNESCO, UNEP, & Government of India, 2008)

Moreover, they recommend that we use all communication mechanisms at our disposal to create a “democratic knowledge commons” where educators, students and citizens can openly and freely share information related to the well-being of the Earth (Development, 1987).

1.1. Previous Research in EE, ESD & Democracy

The fundamental assumption is that environmental problems are structurally anchored in society and our ways of living. For this reason it is necessary to find solutions to these problems through changes at both the societal and individual level. This is why the aim of environmental education must be to make present and future citizens capable of acting on a societal as well as a personal level. (Jensen & Schnack, 1997, p. 164)

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1 From Chapter 2, Section II, “How are individuals in the real world to be persuaded or made to act in the common interest? The answer lies partly in education, institutional development, and law enforcement [italics added]” (Development, 1987)
There has been no shortage of attention paid to ESD and its counterpart Environmental Education (EE), and how they should be constructed, implemented, etc. In this section I will provide an introduction to some of the literature that has been written on EE/ESD and the importance placed on incorporating democratic methods and values in teaching practices and content. My intention is to provide the reader with a sense of the importance placed on democracy within EE/ESD, especially regarding the values of participation and deliberation.

There is no shortage of authors who claim that an education which “involves diverse interest groups, supports free opinion-making and enhances students’ competence to act” should be a central component of EE/ESD (Öhman, 2008, p. 20). These democratic elements have a tradition within EE, and ESD has inherited this pluralistic tradition. For Öhman (2008) this tradition aims to promote and acknowledge different opinions, values and perspectives when addressing a particular topic. Solutions are reached through constructive dialogue, where all those involved can voice their opinions and analyze different perspectives. Open and deliberative discussions such as these are essential for an education to operate democratically (ibid). Öhman (2008) argues that one of the goals of a pluralistic education is to develop students’ ability to become actively involved in these decision-making processes and thus incorporates the democratic role of education. Having the tools necessary to competently participate in discussions, debates and decision-making processes is important not just within the classroom, but in democratic society at large (ibid).

Sund (2008) is also part of the increasing focus on not only the content of EE/ESD, but also the context in which it is taught. He is among the academics who believe it is becoming more important to look at the way EE/ESD are taught, the educational environment in which students are raised and the non-ecological-related values that are imparted onto them and how those will affect their interaction with the environmental and sustainable development movements (ibid).

He develops five “foundational questions” to use to analyze the way EE/ESD are taught in specific settings. While these questions do not have a normative aspect to them, that is to say, they do not prescribe a line of action we should take, they allow

us to look at a case and determine which values are emphasised and which are not (ibid). Two of these questions are briefly discussed below.

“What role do students play in education and environmental work?” (Sund, 2008, p. 68)

Students should be given comprehensive knowledge, so that they can engage their teachers in a democratic setting. Providing this information, so that students stand on a more equal intellectual level with their educators, creates what Sund (2008) calls an action space. Education should not be conducted in an authoritarian matter. Rather, students and teachers should have access to roughly the same information, empowering all the actors involved to participate, discuss and deliberate the process. Students should not be democratic before they began education or become so after they finish, rather the education in itself should be democratic (Öhman, 2008 as cited in, Sund, 2008, p. 65).

“What is the teaching aiming to change?” (Sund, 2008, p. 66)

With this question Sund (2008) aims to determine what is the teachers’ educational philosophy. That is to say, what is the purpose of education? For Sund there are two purposes which teachers have to try to marry with each other: treating students as autonomous individuals, where they are given the scientific facts of the environment and then given the freedom to act accordingly or developing the students into democratic citizens who work towards collectively solving problems while learning and adhering to the norms of society at large (ibid). While Sund proposes that these questions should operate as part of an analytical tool for the way EE/ESD are conducted, he nonetheless contends that “Teachers’ value-based interests should not dominate their teaching, however,” (p. 70). He cites the “normative tradition” of teaching, where institutions prescribe an idea of how things should be, whether this is a conscious action or not (Öhman, 2008). While teachers may mean well in their efforts, they,

…may well undermine student’s possibilities to actively participate and take responsibility for their own education and societal work as democratic citizens

(Sund, 2008, p. 70)

This sentence is indicative of how, while Sund (2008) puts forward this analytic tool with no normative quality, he nonetheless is against authoritarianism in education. He allies his concerns with those of Munby & Roberts (1998, as cited in Sund, 2008, p.
57). Since the classroom incubates its students before they enter society at a grander scale, we must be wary of any (authoritarian) values that would inhibit them from becoming thoughtful, responsible citizens who habitually question and exercise their reasoning powers with respect to knowledge claims, explanations and decisions…

(Sund, 2008, p. 71)

Thus above all, democratic values must be prevalent throughout education.

For Gustafsson & Warner (2008) there is no denying the important role that democratic values must play in ESD. The embracing of these values is also indicative of the shift from EE, which was more focused on ecological facts to ESD, which “…requires a broad, multi-faceted approach addressing the ecological, social, cultural and economic factors relevant to sustainable development issues,”(p. 75).

With Gustafsson & Warner participation and deliberation are central to this democratic education. Because of the complexity of sustainable development, it is not adequate for educators to simply implant pre-fabricated solutions, values or perspectives into their pupils. Rather a democratic education that is open to deliberation and participation allows for the wide range of opinions, facts, approaches and disciplines that exist within and around sustainable development to be considered (Gustafsson & Warner, 2008). They have taken deliberative democracy as their theoretical underpinning, citing Jürgen Habermas, Amy Gutmann and Seyla Benhabib as some of the key proponents of this theory of democracy. Key to this approach is deliberative communication, which advocates an open arena for communication, where new and traditional views are open for dissection and debate, where individuals and their voices are respected, where students can communicate directly with each other and not with the aid or interference from teachers, and where some drive to reach a consensus, or iron-out the differences is held up by the participants (ibid). Furthermore, since ESD involves teaching and being taught with democratic values in mind, it can prepare students for actively participating in democratic spaces in the future, outside of the classroom (ibid).

Schusler, Krasny, Peters & Decker (2009) see this focus on the democratic method and content of EE/ESD as a shift from the moralistic paradigm that education once inhabited. In this former paradigm education is an instrument, whose purpose is to alter the behaviour of the students to fulfill the requirements of a certain ethic. This new democratic paradigm aims to create the conditions where students have more direct participation in their education, where they can discuss and debate the social causes – the only cause explicitly mentioned – of environmental problems under their own direction (ibid). Schusler et al. (2009) also feel that while this paradigm shift towards democracy is more apparent and advanced in Denmark and South Africa for example, this transformation has only just begun in the United States.

Wals & Jickling (2002) offer a scathing criticism of the consequences of sustainability and its role in education – specifically higher education - if those involved within educational systems fail to re-evaluate what ‘sustainability’ means and the conditions within which it is addressed. Their first critique is a common one, that “sustainability” implies we will keep doing whatever it is we needed to do forever, with no particular target to aim for (Wals & Jickling, 2002; Jickling, 1994). However, their most critical interpretation of sustainability education is that ESD is education for sustainable development. This means that education under ESD is for a specific, determined end and thus normative. The democratic and self-deterministic ideas of our current understandings of education are now scuttled aside for a “specific and undisputed product…sustainability.” (Wals & Jickling, 2002, p. 222). The larger problem is that this neglects the possibility that different approaches or interpretations to how we should tackle environmental problems are ignored, or at the least given a less than prominent voice. Jickling (1994) also describes this interpretation of ESD in a much more distasteful manner, “The prescription of a particular outlook is repugnant to the development of autonomous thinking,” (p. 6).

However the vagueness of the term ‘sustainability’ can be useful. Because it can be adopted by so many diverse groups, it can be used as a lingua franca, allowing people to find a common ground on environmental discussions (Wals & Jickling, 2002). Yet we must still be concerned about treating sustainability as an end in and of itself, failure to talk about sustainability will prevent a wide range of issues from being considered both in and out of the classroom (ibid).

The precise way that ESD is interpreted will determine whether alternative values and
perspectives regarding environmental issues will be allowed to flourish or whether or not they will be supressed by ‘sustainable development’ (Wals & Jickling, 2002). They explore two interpretations of ESD, the first of which is alluded to by their concern over the proposition “for”. This instrumental interpretation of ESD gives education the role of a tool that governments can manipulate in order to achieve their vision of sustainability, however they define it. As we can see from the international reports mentioned in the introduction, there is a cry for mobilizing education, for using it as a “Means of Implementation”. One of the issues of this interpretation relates back to the vagueness of sustainable development. We are still not sure of what the ideal sustainable world would look like or how we would get there, and an instrumental system would have difficulties in adapting to any new challenges that would arise because of its relative inherit inflexibility (ibid).

The alternative is an emancipatory, or liberating approach to ESD. This view does not hold sustainability as its concrete foundation, but rather that education should strive for a “democratic and environmentally just world – whatever such a world may look like” (Wals & Jickling, 2002, p. 224). Education should not indoctrinate but rather to develop “self-actualized members of society, looking for meaning, developing their own potential and jointly creating solutions,” (p. 225). Under the emancipatory approach, there is no sustainable future without full democratic participation in society.

For Wals and Jickling (2002) the benefits of democratic values can also be employed beyond the classroom. They ask whether the educators and students have any say in the content and methods of teaching and whether or not (higher) education is able to be reactive to issues that may arise outside of the classroom. They conclude that, we cannot use ‘sustainability’ as our unquestionable standard because doing so would allow its ambiguity to hinder future adaptations to challenges as well as inhibit our education systems from being able to operate in the way it is commonly observed they should: democratically (ibid). If it is unquestionable, then we will have a hard time clarifying its meaning. Instead, democracy and participation should allow the complexities and undefined nature of ‘sustainability’ to be discussed by many people from many walks of life, helping to create a more rich and adaptable approach to environmental problems (ibid).

This feeling is echoed by Peden (2008) whereas a democratic and not a ‘static’ approach to the knowledge base of ESD will allow students to better adapt to the changes and challenges that will arise (p. 3). However, Peden (2008) unlike Wals & Jickling (2002) and Jickling (1994) claims that ESD does teach those being taught to engage with the material democratically, and that it (ESD) also acknowledges that ‘sustainable development’ is not well defined.

Peden also cites Stevenson (2006) who believes that ‘sustainable development’ can be understood as allowing “people with widely different views to accept it (sustainable development) to some degree, but without agreeing on any of the underlying philosophical and political issues,” (as cited in Peden, 2008, p. 21). Peden (2008) does side with Wals & Jickling (2002), whereas ESD should be seen as a way to open doors for discussion in education, but that educators should be wary of being trapped by the concept. The ability for education to be dynamic and adaptable should not be restrained.

1.1.1. Summary of Background Research

I have tried to make it clear that Swedish and international research is representative of the EE/ESD democracy debate. Education is important, not just for developing knowledge of sustainable development and environmental concerns, but also for preparing students for their civic responsibilities in their democratic societies. The scholars all agree that we should separate ourselves from the normative tradition of education and that educators should avoid indoctrinating their students. This tradition represses the deliberation of values and perspectives, which education should strive to achieve. While Wals & Jickling (2002) and Jickling (1994) take the most aggressive stance against any sort of authoritarian education and sustainable development itself, there is nonetheless something all the authors of this section have in common: two values of democracy which are at the heart of their EE/ESD interpretations. Participation and deliberation will be given specific attention throughout the rest of this thesis, as I intended to guide the reader towards an alternative approach to EE/ESD.

1.2. Problem

The problem, as I see it, is whether we have good reasons to believe that the reliance on deliberative democratic values in EE/ESD is too high, and even unfounded. There seems to be little literature, at least within the EE/ESD discourse, about alternative
methods to teach our students for achieving sustainable development or another goal.

1.3. Aim

This thesis aims to clarify and critique the one central component of EE/ESD that has been given much attention in the literature surrounding the subject as well as in the international policies that first championed these approaches. This component is one that encompasses the promotion of public participation in decision-making, critical thinking of current perspectives and opinions, promoting open dialogue and constructive collaborations. This component is the theory of deliberative democracy. While specific focus will be placed on deliberative democratic theory, considerable attention will rightly be paid towards liberal democracy. That is to say, liberal democracies are those which represent the Western ideals of democracy: free and open elections with at least two parties participating. While this definition may be broad, it is rather intended to frame the debate, it will be expanded and further defined in the coming pages. Participatory and deliberative institutions are relatively limited. In other words, liberal democracies are those which occupy the Western world today, with the United States often seen as the archetype. When I mention “democracy” without any further clarification, this is basic definition of democracy you should have in mind.

Through a look at what has been written about the deliberative democratic values of participation and deliberation, hereafter referred to collectively as “deliberative democracy” in EE/ESD, about the role democracy should play in education in general and a look at the critiques of deliberative democracy and its potential impact on the sustainable development and environmental movements as well as an analysis of alternative approaches to our current liberal democracies, this paper aims to show that deliberative democracy is not as unquestionably valuable to these environmental movements as has been asserted and that reimagining our current liberal system requires more attention in EE/ESD. This thesis is not concerned with what is right or wrong, only what can work.

3 I will often use “sustainable development”, “environmental movement”, “greens”, etc. interchangeably or as the specific scholars and theorists have used them, but as should become clear, the specific movements, values or individuals are not entirely relevant to the conclusion of this thesis.

1.4. Outline

The structure of this thesis will proceed as follows: a background of the previous research in EE/ESD regarding the role of democracy was provided in order to give context for the present argument. This was intended to show the importance deliberative democracy has been given by these scholars, and the impact that international policies has had on their works. Questions to have been answered include: how important is deliberative democracy for EE/ESD and how is deliberative democracy supposed to aid the move towards a more sustainable future? How is a deliberative democratic EE/ESD supposed to look, that is to say, how is it different than current educational practices?

This section will be followed by an isolation of democracy and education from EE/ESD. This is done in order to provide the reader with an understanding of how this relationship has developed and why their connection is central to this thesis. Questions to be answered include: what does it mean to teach democracy and why do we do it? What roles do education and democracy play in our society? Where were the seeds of deliberative democracy first planted?

Democracy itself will be isolated next in the following section. It is necessary to understand democracy outside of the classroom without the influence of education. In particular participation and deliberation will be treated to a deconstruction. As they are the values which the proponents of EE/ESD most commonly champion, a closer inspection is required. Questions to be asked include: what, exactly, is deliberative democratic theory? Might increased participation be a bad thing for democracy? To what extent is the urge to reach consensus misguided? How is deliberation difficult and might it be asking too much from citizens?

Following this will be a focus on green democratic theory, or more precisely, a critique of green deliberative democratic theory. The purpose of this section is to provide literature critiquing the green movement and why deliberative democracy may be unable to serve it. Questions to be answered include: Can deliberative democracy be beneficial for the environmental movement? Is there arrogance from greens towards the utility of deliberative democracy? Is the green movement inherently undemocratic? Can greens escape this authoritarian nature? Can the deliberative democratic principles address the needs of minority groups?
The next section will be focused on providing alternatives to adopting a deliberative democratic approach. Questions to be asked include: What benefits does our current liberal system have? What kind of changes to it must we make? What kind of benefits should we expect from these changes?

I hope to answer these questions, which will then be analyzed and discussed, and where applicable I will relate them to the discourse of EE/ESD, with the intention of providing an answer to the question: if we are, as the scholars and scientists say, facing an environmental emergency, should we be relying on deliberative democracy to save us or should we be teaching our students that working with and reworking our current liberal democracies is better suited for the challenge?

This will of course be followed by a conclusion, summarizing everything that has been put forth in this thesis.

2. Method and Material

The method which will be employed for this paper is one that is rooted in philosophical tradition. Broadly speaking, a systematic clarification of the lines of thought utilized by the various policy makers and scholars whose works appear in this paper will first be used to bring forward a better understanding of the material for the reader (Barbour & Barbour, 2002; Booth, 2001). That is to say, it will be a thorough deconstructive analysis of the literature related to the subject matter for the betterment of the reader and for an easier dissection of the analysis presented in this paper (ibid).

Secondly, a critical analysis of these lines of thought will be provided, opening up these works to alternative perspectives, counter-arguments and deliberation in order to critically and systematically reflect upon their credibility and open up the possibility for new alternatives (ibid).

However, this paper is not concerned with simply providing a descriptive analysis of the literature or a comparative and critical analysis of the various theories and assertions held by the authors. There is also a normative aspect. Through providing criticisms and through introducing alternative theories and approaches to participation and deliberation in Western social systems this paper presents also a normative analysis common in environmental philosophy and social ethics and will suggest an alternative democracy for use in EE/ESD.

There are several reasons for the choice of the materials used. Öhman, Sund, Gustafsson & Warner were selected as they provide a national context for the current discussion. They have written within the context of the Swedish educational system, with its priority for sustainable development and democracy. Their material is representative of the main positions in the Swedish EE/ESD research discourse and generalizable to other Western democracies, as will be clarified in the discussion. Meanwhile the scholars of the latter half of the background section represent the international EE/ESD discourse and provide a more generalized analysis of EE, ESD and sustainable development. The sources for Democracy & Education were chosen because they provide the necessary background to the subject, and are some of the most respected theorists in this field. Meanwhile, the scholars were chosen for the Democracy portion based on their ability to provide a more detailed account of deliberative democracy, while also providing critical perspectives of participation and deliberation. This also follows for the final literature-based section. The introduction of new lines of thought and criticisms towards the green political movement, as well as producing alternative interpretations of participation and deliberation in a society is why these sources were chosen.

As for how the material was chosen, this was based on the need to properly frame the debate. The focus was on those papers and reports which possessed the relevant characteristics of the various lines of thought within the EE/ESD discourse, education and democracy, deliberative democracy, green political theory and pragmatic political theory (Barbour & Barbour, 2002; Booth, 2001). These texts, and sections within these texts, were chosen because of their relevancy to the discussion and the depth and insight they were able to provide. Moreover, their logical compatibility/incompatibility with each other was essential (ibid). The analysis was conducted in much the same way. Relevant material was extracted and compared/contrasted with like material, taking

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4 “Democracy forms the basis of the national school system,” and “It is not in itself sufficient that education imparts knowledge of fundamental democratic values. It must also be carried out using democratic working methods and prepare pupils for active participation in civic life”, and finally it is “incumbent on all who work in the school to work for democratic working structures,” (Education, 2006 as cited in Öhman, 2008, p. 18)
the resulting combination and using it to form the larger picture (ibid). Material was broken down in order to find those elements most relevant and central to the problem. The elements of a critical nature were the most essential, as they provided counter-arguments to previous literature (ibid). Counter-arguments are used to disprove or challenge previous theories, and this paves the way for alternatives. Furthermore, the majority of research was conducted via Google Scholar, with the Öhman (2008) book representing the sources from print.

2.1. Limitations of Method

The limitations of this method are based largely on the reliance on qualitative data. More importantly, the results of this analysis are based on the author’s critical, reflective and logical reasoning abilities and peer-review. Nonetheless, the primary aim of this paper is to produce a proper critique of the current literature while producing a new approach to the issue at hand.

3. Democracy & Education

In this section I will explore the intimate connection that democracy and education have developed in the 20th and 21st Centuries to provide a deeper background for the EE/ESD debate. It is necessary to explore these connections so that we can gain a better understanding of what forces are at work within EE/ESD. I will also further develop the deliberative democratic theory of education, while briefly mentioning an educational alternative, cosmopolitan education.

Perhaps the most influential thinker in developing the relationship between democracy and education has been the philosopher John Dewey (1859-1952). His works have influenced many movements in education, and his ideas still play a key role in democratic theory today (Englund, 2002 as cited in Bergdahl, 2010). For Dewey (1916/2008) education has both a social and communicative function. Without education, the “language, beliefs, ideas, or social standards,” would be lost between generations, so “Education, in its broadest sense,” provides a social continuity for life (Dewey, 1916/2008, p. 2). Without education, the knowledge of previous generations would be lost, or at least its distribution greatly reduced. Education, in this sense, is the glue that holds the ages together.

Dewey’s emphasis on democracy in education arises from his philosophy that education is important for a well-functioning democracy (Bergdahl, 2010). For Dewey (1916/2008) there are two traits which are “precisely what characterize the democratically constituted society,” (p. 43). The first being its ability to accommodate the “varied points of shared common interests” while also allowing for “recognition of mutual interests as a factor in social control,” (ibid). In other words, democracy is desired because it allows the common interest to become more common. In allowing people and groups to freely associate, communicate and deliberate with each other, the common interest becomes more representative of society of large, where, at least relative to an authoritarian state, no single group reigns over another (Dewey, 1916/2008). Since groups are able to communicate which each other, mutual interests are discovered. The result of this is that a “social control” is created, whereas, for lack of a more poetic interpretation, people play nicer together when they both have something to gain. This is akin to Hobbes’ social contract and the state of nature, where individuals give up certain freedoms because they benefit from the resources provided by cooperation (Hobbes, 1660). To put it another way, a democracy does not need the police-state attitude of a totalitarian regime because the mutual interests of the citizens in a democracy prevent them from acting selfishly, but of course this is not perfect.

The second of the traits concerns the freedom to associate with other members of society, but more importantly that these interactions, this “varied intercourse” between citizens, produces a “change in social habit” (Dewey, 1916/2008, p. 43). In other words, a democratic society is not static. The interaction between individuals and groups brings them into contact with new, foreign values and perspectives which can cause them to re-evaluate their own. While in a non-democratic society there is a rigid and formal life, where the protection of a group’s own self-interest takes priority over “intercourse with others”, a society whose citizens and groups behave democratically will be welcoming of change and of re-assessing their previous values and beliefs (ibid).

By combining these two traits, we can see a democratic society as a fluid, dynamic and ever-changing entity. Its various components are consistently interacting with each other, altering their interests as a result. Their common and mutual interests also change, creating something that is not stagnant, but adaptable, evolutionary, and dexterous. We can also see here the seeds for participation and deliberation.
Education’s ability to also accommodate these traits is what makes it desirable in democracies to create a continuation of social standards (Dewey, 1916/2008). It is described as a “form of social life”, where the interests of those involved mutually enter the educational sphere, that is, it is a forum where new perspectives can be heard and deliberated upon, while “progress” and “readjustment” are also considered important. Education also aims to develop and move, it does not remain stagnant. Thus a democratic society is “more interested” than other societies in “deliberative and systematic education,” (p. 43).

This stems from his belief that a democratic society rejects being ruled by an external authority, and thus needs to find a “voluntary” alternative institution for creating interest in and an inclination towards internal self-governance (Dewey, 1916/2008). This is the role that only education can play, because in this open and democratic society, there is a wealth of stimuli available to both individuals and groups (ibid). Failing to equip its citizens with the education needed to consume these stimuli would lead to stratification, whereas only one class of people would hold more access to knowledge than the others. This would, in the long run, prevent fruitful interaction between the classes, resulting in a society whose common interest is skewed towards one class and whose mutual interests are at a minimum. As Dewey has said, these run counter to the traits that are desired in a democracy. An education that reaffirms these characteristics of a democratic society imbues “personal initiative and adaptability” into its citizens, provides the avenues for change, the exchange of new ideas, and the possibility to form new intellectual connections (p. 44). In other words, education prepares students for participation in the democratic society.

For Dewey (1916/2008) life itself is constantly growing and developing, it never ceases. Dewey said, “education is development”, so it must have no end in and of itself, no final goal (p. 25). He also felt the same way about democracy. Rather, education must mimic life, and be a process of “continual reorganizing, reconstructing, transforming,” (ibid). Furthermore, “Since growth is the characteristic of life, education is all one with growing; it has no end beyond itself,” (p. 26). Education in schools is valuable insomuch as it supports the developmental process of life; this is why democracy is also of such importance. Democratic societies provide the space for individuals and groups to grow, develop and adapt, education must provide the tools needed to allow people to be able to effectively do this, to maintain democracy. This is why Dewey believes that “Democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience,” (p. 44). In other words, democracy is a way of life, and education is the guardian and preserver of this.

These two traits of education and democracy that were so important for Dewey are still at the forefront of democratic education. Though Dewey talked lengths about the advantages of democracy, this was not his purpose. Rather, according to Carr & Hartnett (1996) his main aspiration was to give education a philosophical foundation (as cited in Bergdahl, 2010, p. 13). That is to say, he meant to show why education was conducted as it should and why it should be conducted that way. He meant to show why we find the same traits in democracy as we do in education, because the latter is meant to replicate the former. Following from Carr and Hartnett, it could lead one to conclude that whether democracy is the ultimate expression of a perfect governing method, or ‘way or life’, or if it is the worst such method is irrelevant. All that matters is that education is there to pass its key traits onto the next generation.

For Englund (2006) Dewey is the foundation of deliberation in education systems, especially Swedish, and thus still plays an important role today. Though writing within the Swedish education perspective, it is nonetheless clear that Englund finds Dewey’s impact undeniable in all deliberative-orientated education systems. Dewey, along with Mead, stressed the importance of “education as communication” (p. 507). Since Dewey’s criteria for communication mentioned above aim at “achieving free and open communication between and within groups” they provide an excellent framework upon which to build deliberative communication (p. 508). Thus, we can see where the deliberative democratic focus within EE/ESD, especially within the Swedish curriculum, is rooted.

Gutmann (1987) makes the argument that this study of the connection between democracy and education has been around since Plato and Aristotle were pondering the questions of life in Ancient Greece (as cited in Bergdahl, 2010). For her “democratic theory
of education”, or in other words, her democratic approach to education, education “consciously reproduces a democratic society by socializing students into a certain notion of the common good,” (as cited in Bergdahl, 2010, p. 13). This is the most important feature of a democratic education for Gutmann (ibid). The common good, for Gutmann, is an ethical end for which education should help its citizens aim towards. Thus a democracy is, in a sense, conscious of itself almost as if it were a sentient being. The democratic state believes it is important that children are given the space to interact with new ways of life that may be different than what they would learn within different family or social circles, and that they learn “to accept” those ways of life which are consistent with the “rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society,” (as cited in Bergdahl, 2010, p. 13).

Gutmann believes there are certain values, such as respect for race and religion, that are compatible with democratic politics and which the education system would aim to nurture its students into inheriting (as cited in Bergdahl, 2010). However she refrains from making a normative declaration, and doesn’t prescribe any values that a society should or must have (Bergdahl, 2010). Rather, what is most important is that in this fluid process of democratic education students are allowed to shape their future and society itself, by taking part in free and open deliberative democracy. Values and perspectives of past, present and future are always open for debate and discussion. This “conscious social reproduction” means that society, the education system and the students are not only reproducing democracy through their actions, but they are also aware of it (Bergdahl, 2010, p. 13). A given value can be reproduced in a positive sense for the current generation, or re-evaluated as a result of deliberation. In the end, a democratic society has an idea about what the common good should be, and what it should be is a democratic space where ideas and people can move around and communicate freely, deliberate and critique. The result will be a society that passes down its embrace of democracy to the next generation and which utilizes those values which are democratically compatible.

David Held (2006) does see one component that all models of democracy share which can cause conflict with other “ways of life” (as cited in Bergdahl, 2010, p. 13). Western liberal democracies have, as with any normative theory about human interaction, an idea of what the ideal democratic character would look like. In these democracies, autonomy and rationality are considered to be of the utmost importance. While these could also be compatible with, say, a Protestant Christian way of life, there are no doubt other religions where these ideas would conflict (ibid). Indeed, these conflicts need not be contained to religious ways of life and as we will see can be expanded to democracy in EE/ESD as well.

If we look at autonomy and rationality as the base, or part of the base of Western liberal democracy, then we build up values and beliefs from there. Other ways of life also do the same with their respective core beliefs, such as community-organized societies. However, when it comes to debating one topic which all parties are connected to in some way, their disagreements can be traced down to their core ethical beliefs. Individuals of many backgrounds come together in the classroom, the overarching role of democratic values will inevitably come into contact and conflict with the various backgrounds of the students. Since many of the scholars mentioned and those who have not have a difficult time asserting that democratic values should permeate all public and private institutions, attempts have been made to develop two new types of “political” education (Bergdahl, 2010). These two approaches, cosmopolitan education and deliberative democratic education shall now be explored.

3.1. Cosmopolitan Education

Bergdahl (2010) cites Ulrich Beck, Anthony Appiah Kwame and Martha Nussbaum as being some of the leading philosophical thinkers behind cosmopolitan education. Those philosophers have built upon the idea of world citizenship, first put forth by Immanuel Kant. The ever increasing globalization of ideas have meant that human co-existence outside of the classroom has become more complicated. This is because concerns of a universal nature now have to fight for intellectual space with particular, local concerns. Cosmopolitan education’s primary aim is to provide an education that is more reactive to these concerns (ibid). We must approach this issue by asking to what extent education can accommodate both values which are universal or common, and those which are specific to an individual, group or area (ibid). What the advocates of cosmopolitan education want to see address this issue is the development of a “world citizenship” (p. 15). These world citizens would be guided by cosmopolitan

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6 Although Bergdahl (2010) is concerned with how religious values should/can be incorporated into the education system, there is no logical reason why the same arguments do not hold true for other values, including sustainable development.
values, for example “attentiveness to and responsibility for larger global concerns,” (p. 25). There is still continued debate as to whether or not these values of a globally conscious citizen should be the principal ideals which lie above particular and local values (ibid). In other words, should the world citizen ideal run parallel with the particular citizen ideal, or should the latter exist within the former? The theory remains unclear as does it appear any implementation methods.

However the exact place that cosmopolitan values should occupy in an individual’s life is not what is most important. Rather, cultivating, or “socializing” awareness for global responsibilities, giving students the tools needed to prioritize between them, and above all developing a concern for the affairs of the planet that particular, local and regional institutions and affiliations cannot necessarily guarantee is what a cosmopolitan education should deliver (Bergdahl, 2010). That is not to say that these other institutions may not have similar concerns, but rather a cosmopolitan perspective has its core values rooted in a global perspective, and would be more primarily focused on worldwide concerns than other perspectives.

3.2. Deliberative Democratic Education

The second approach to politicizing education is supported by Seyla Benhabib, Jürgen Habermas, Iris Marion Young (Bergdahl, 2010) and alluded to by Dewey, Gutmann and championed by the EE/ESD writers is a deliberative democratic education. The goal of a deliberative democratic education is to create an environment where different opinions from people with diverse backgrounds can come together and be freely discussed, debated and critiqued. We are “In a time of plurality and disagreement,” and the deliberative discourse is seen as a way of building bridges (Bergdahl, 2010, p. 15). We may start far apart in our ideologies, but by the end of our deliberation we will have a common ground that connects us. It is also a way to reach the goal of a deliberative democratic education; in a democratic society we want to create more democratically able citizens, so we should start with education, by providing them with an environment that encourages free and open dialogue (Bergdahl, 2010).

3.3. Democracy & Education: A Summary

What these two notions about education aim to do is provide a way in which different views, beliefs and ideologies can be reconciled. Cosmopolitan education seeks to develop a lone entity which at the very least, should be in the backs of the minds of all individuals. It is not clear yet whether cosmopolitanism should supersede the local, regional, religious, etc. beliefs held by all the different people of the world, but at the very least it should play a role in decision-making processes. The fear of Western imperialism and the fall to relativism may also be playing a role in the unwillingness to commit to the place that cosmopolitanism should inhabit on the values hierarchy. Nonetheless, it does provide a set space for a global common good, whether or not this approach to education can incorporate it in a meaningful way remains to be seen.

Meanwhile, the deliberative approach shies away from attempting to apply any sort of hierarchy to values and perspectives, except for participation and deliberation. Rather, they are all given equal standing in discussions, and it is left up to those involved to be retrospective, to be able to criticize and evaluate their own assumptions while doing the same with others. Deliberative education aims to teach its students the tools necessary to perform this dissection of thoughts. It allows for people and ideas to join together in a more holistic manner, so that you don’t have the dichotomy of values fighting for superiority that is found in cosmopolitan education. In the end, cosmopolitan education provides a conscious normative outline (however weak) for how to create more globally conscious individuals, while a deliberative democratic education shies away from any substantial normative intention, the procedural values of participation and deliberation are those which must be taught. They have their differences, but they both have the notion of the ‘common good’ in mind.

4. Deliberative Democratic Theory

The previous section isolated democracy and education from EE/ESD in order to gain a greater insight into their relationship. Here I will isolate deliberative democracy from education, so that I can provide a more detailed examination of this theory of social organization. Participation and deliberation
will also be separated in order to identify any faults in these values that may prevent democracy – and therefore education – from addressing the problems of sustainable development and environmental concerns.

Smith (2003) provides an insight into the growth of support for a deliberative approach towards current democratic politics; it grew out of peoples’ dissatisfaction with our current Western liberal democracies. Our Western pluralistic society contains a wide number of values and perspectives whose proponents feel that they are underrepresented. After they have cast their vote, they feel disconnected from those who make policies and confer decisions. Additionally, certain groups or individuals have economic power or social influence which can be used to further alienate the public from their leaders (ibid). Thus, the political elite are responsive to only a few if they are not reined in by the many.

As a result of these concerns, deliberative democratic theory has gained traction. While political division will still exist, that is to say, there will be leaders and there will be citizens, the division itself will be different. Citizens will have more than voting to rely on to be involved in the political system. The theorists advocate that this is not only desirable, but plausible as well (Smith, 2003). This continuous opportunity for involvement will create a critical voice “upon which more legitimate forms of political authority can be grounded,” (p. 56). In other words, it creates a system of checks and balances where the citizens have more opportunity for involvement.

What is important for Smith (2003), as with all of the other deliberative democratic theorists discussed throughout this paper is the desire to create a space for inclusiveness and unconstrained dialogue. This is where conflicts are resolved, but also through this deliberative process peoples’ values and preferences can be changed. Smith also provides us with a more detailed description of what the aforementioned inclusiveness and unconstrained dialogue entail. For inclusiveness:

…relates to both presence and voice: in principle, all citizens are entitled to participate in the process of political dialogue and have an equal right to introduce and question claims, to put forward reasons, to express and challenged needs, values and interests. Voices should not be excluded from the political process; citizens have an equal right to be heard.

(p. 56-57)

With unconstrained dialogue, Smith’s interpretation is much the same as his contemporaries. We should avoid the “strategic manipulation and manoeuvring” that is often found in the current political climate and strive towards more open, reflexive, responsive, critical dialogue as well as narratives and storytelling (Smith, 2003). The two later approaches are provided by the feminist theorist Iris Marion Young (2000), because we must also be concerned to not rely too heavily on,

…a particularly rigid form and style of rational argumentation: ‘polite, orderly, dispassionate, gentlemanly argument…

(as cited in Smith, 2003, p .57)

Deliberation must not only be open to a plethora of values and perspectives, but to different means of communication, story-telling, narrative, etc. as well. Above all, these means of communication must be “non-coercive and are orientated towards broadening the understanding and perspectives of participants,” no matter what they are (Young, 2000, as cited in Smith, 2003, p. 58). Though, as Smith (2003) observes, these ideas have yet to move beyond the theoretical stage; there are no concrete implementation strategies on offer.

4.1. Participation

Whilst “participation” in its broadest sense has been given a lot of attention thus far, its consequences in democracy, and therefore education, have not been given a closer inspection. Because of its centrality to EE/ESD, I must provide the theoretical understanding of participation to see if the claims made by those scholars still hold. I shall now turn to Pateman, Schumpeter, Berelson, Dahl and Sartori, to see what effects the increased participation championed by the deliberative democrats have on a state.

Though her Participation and Democratic Theory was written before much of the current EE/ESD literature existed, Pateman (1970) still found that the demand for participation from students was high. Yet she found this to be at odds with what was “widely accepted” by political sociologists and theorists as the theory of democracy. The theories which Pateman was analyzing at the time favoured minimal participation, and went so far as to say that large-scale participation was detrimental – “dangers inherent” – to the democratic state (p. 1).

During the middle of the 20th Century, while democracy was still seen as the model of government, the role of participation came into
question. This was due to the rise of totalitarianism during the inter-war period (Pateman, 1970). Totalitarianism became associated with – albeit coerced – mass participation. This, combined with the instability of the many ‘new’ states that ‘adopted’ the Western-style democratic system after the Second World War caused theorists to reconsider what was actually necessary for a stable democracy (ibid).

Large-scale empirical investigations undertaken by political sociologists in Western countries during the post-war period into political attitudes found that in general most people lacked interest in politics or political activity (Pateman, 1970). These apathetic views were highest amongst those with a lower socio-economic status, as were the “widespread non-democratic or authoritarian attitudes,” (p. 3). Political sociologists concluded that the “classic” (participative) ideal of the democratic citizen was unrealistic, and that given the apathy present throughout Western societies, any attempts to increase participation would disrupt the system (ibid). In other words, we can think of the political sociologists as looking into the kitchen in a restaurant. For simplicity’s sake, we’ll say that only four chefs actually cook, while the other six are always on break and never lift a finger. Yet these chefs work very well together, and the restaurant runs smoothly. However, as if the political sociologists believed, the boss (classical democratic theory) came around and said that “Everyone needs to cook, no slackers in this system!” then the equilibrium which had been reached would be thrown off kilter. What was once four organized chefs has now become ten without a clue of how things should work now.

The drive to base democratic theory off of the scientific and empirical realities of political life and not on normative utopian ideals was brought forth by Joseph Schumpeter before any of the aforementioned investigations took place (Pateman, 1970, p. 3). He laid out the foundations for looking at democracy for what it was, and not what it should be. Democracy is not a means to an end, but rather it “is a political method, that is to say, a certain type of institutional arrangement for arriving at political – legislative and administrative – decisions,” (Schumpeter, 1943, as cited in Pateman, 1970, p. 3). In other words, we should think of democracy as more of a tool. We must be aware of how it is actually working in the real world and not rely on how we think it should be working. For Schumpeter (1943), this was empirically clear; there was no evidence to support the claim that wide involvement by the public in the democratic system was necessary (as cited in Pateman, 1970). Current Western democracies are stable and working with their low participation, so why aim for this classical ideal?

The only means of participation the general public should have are voting and discussion. However, once the leaders are elected, that’s where the participation must stop. Any attempt to protest or bombard leaders with letters violates what is meant by “leadership”. Citizens have the opportunity to replace leaders at each election, but during inter-election periods their participation is limited if not non-existent. There should only be enough participation to keep the democratic machine working “satisfactorily” (ibid). Why, according to Schumpeter (1943), should we ultimately leave it up to our leaders to be the real force behind change? Because “the electoral mass,” as he sees it, “is incapable of action other than a stampede,” (as cited in Pateman, 1970, p. 5).

Berelson (1954) adopts the same strategy as Schumpeter, by taking the “classical theory” of democracy and comparing it to what we empirically find in democratic states (as cited in Pateman, 1970). Berelson (1954) formulated the following paradox:

*Individual voters* today seem unable to satisfy the requirements for a democratic system of government outlined by political theorists. But the system of democracy does meet certain requirements for a going political organization. The individual members may not meet all the standards, but the whole nevertheless survives and grows

(As cited in Pateman, 1970, p. 6).

What he meant by this was that the “classical theories” had placed too much emphasis on the individual and their place in a democracy, and not enough attention on the actual requirements to maintain the democratic system itself. If we look at successful Western democracies the individuals are not reflecting anything like what the classical theories said they would look like, yet as with Schumpeter they still work satisfactorily. Furthermore, Berelson provides us with the conditions necessary to maintain our political democracies:

…intensity of conflict must be limited, the rate of change restrained, social and economic stability maintained, and a pluralist social organization and basic consensus must exist…

(As cited in Pateman, 1970, p. 6).

Berelson (1954) further theorized that because our Western democratic systems are generally flexible
and stable this means that the minority who are participating are enabling this to happen. Indeed, for Berelson we expect our democracies to be both stable and flexible (as cited in Pateman, 1970). This minority has a wide enough range of values and perspectives to create flexibility in the system, and because their various political leanings are built into tradition, that is to say the political ties in this minority are relatively predictable year after year; they have stability (ibid).

Pateman sums up Berelson’s empirical interpretation of democracy,

…we can see that high levels of participation and interest are required from a minority of citizens only and, moreover, the apathy and disinterest of the majority play a valuable role in maintaining the stability of the system as a whole. (as cited in Pateman, 1970, p. 7)

From this we can conclude that the actual amount of participation in our separate functioning democracies now is all the participation we need to maintain a stable system.

Pateman (1970) also brings attention to the works of Dahl (1956), whose stance on the power of citizens follows that of Schumpeter. He believes that the most democratic part of democracy is the fighting between leaders for the vote of the public (ibid). Voters can change their political affiliations, so leaders must be responsive to their demands. This is the only time when “citizens exert a relatively high degree of control over leaders.” (as cited in Pateman, 1970, p. 8). Again, maximum participation is not necessary for a democratic state to function in Dahl’s mind. He believes that in any given social organization a minority will end up taking over the decision-making, so why should we be surprised when this happens at a larger scale (as cited in Pateman, 1970)?

Dahl, also outlines the dangers inherent from increased participation from the “ordinary (less socio-economically entitled) man”. The theory of democracy that Dahl creates, his “polyarchy”, has a complex set of relations at the leadership level. Since those in the lower socio-economic classes are apathetic but also sympathetic towards authoritarian personalities, a large influx of their vote, and therefore opinions, might disrupt the norms created at the leadership level and cause the polyarchy to fracture (as cited in Pateman, 1970).

The theorist Sartori (1962) also follows the same lines as the previous scholars but takes his interpretation of a functioning democracy to a stronger conclusion. Sartori places a lot of emphasis on the stability of the system, and a drastic increase in participation would bring about its downfall (as cited in Pateman, 1970). The small group of competing élites which operate in such a way that maintain the stability would be replaced by “undemocratic counter-élites” (as cited in Pateman, 1970, p. 11). For Pateman, Sartori sees all increases in public participation as leading inevitably to totalitarianism. The public should not be active, but rather they should be reactive to the policies and decisions made by the leaders, and “Fortunately”, this is what we see in practice (as cited in Pateman, 1970).

Sartori (1962) asks, “How can we account for the inactivity of the average citizen?” (as cited in Pateman, 1970, p. 11). His response: we don’t need an answer. The suggestions that poverty, illiteracy, lack of information or simply inexperience in voting lead to apathy have been proven wrong “by events” (Pateman, 1970, p. 11). The only way we can proceed with our democratic system is by accepting that this is simply the way things are, we should stop “seeking scapegoats” (ibid). Once again, the system works, it should be clear that its working because only a minority participate, and that if the apathetic majority joined in the fray the stability of the state would be lost. And since it works, we should not really be concerning ourselves with why much of the public is apathetic. In short, it is irrelevant, the system works, so let’s leave it at that.

4.2. Deliberation

While “deliberation” is the focus of the following section, it is necessary to discuss “consensus”, because it is often deemed as the desired outcome of deliberative discussions. Again, this section aims to provide a deeper theoretical understanding of one of

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7 Minority, not necessarily in terms of voter turnout, but in terms of direct impact on leadership, decisions, “political elite” etc.

8 “Polyarchy” or “polyarchical”, is simply the term Dahl gave to his empirical interpretation of democracy as it functions.

9 Of course this is not true of everywhere, there are high voter turnouts in many countries. But voter turnout does not necessarily imply a lack of apathy, and certain systems, such as proportional representation and legally required voting alter the outcomes.
the two most important values of EE/ESD analyzed in this thesis.

In addition to providing another perspective on the deliberative democracy theory debate, Smith (2003) examines whether or not some scholars have placed too high a value on “consensus”. Smith (2003) cites Habermas as being responsible for the number of theorists who place an emphasis on achieving consensus through democratic deliberation (p. 58). Though admirable, there are several practical issues which lie in the way of reaching any sort of true consensus. The first lies in the very plurality that advocates of deliberative democracy cite as a cause for the theory. Since there are an incomprehensible number of ideas in the world, it is simply unavoidable that there will ideas which will be “incommensurable and/or incompatible” (Smith, 2003, p. 59). In other words, we must face the reality that there are values and perspectives that cannot work together. No matter how hard we try, it is simply not logically possible for these sides to come together in agreement. Yet there is still a large commitment to the attaining of consensus (ibid).

Furthermore, the expectation of consensus can inhibit our critical analysis (Smith, 2003). If we are aiming for consensus, and it appears that through our deliberation we will achieve it, it is likely that we will stop criticizing our process. In the same vein, those groups who have already reached consensus on a given issue will see no reason to re-evaluate their positions or processes.

The position that Smith takes, which also seems to be more in line with opinions held by the EE/ESD scholars is that we should not think of deliberative democracy as guiding us towards consensus but rather mutual understanding. We must acknowledge that agreement between two parties cannot always be attained. Rather deliberation should be the fluid process mentioned earlier. Providing a critical analysis of another’s views and perspectives is simply not enough, “It requires that citizens recognise the limitations and fallibility of their own perspectives and judgements,” (p. 59). Mutual understanding means trying to place the values and perspectives of others in the same light as yours, and vice versa. You will not reach consensus most of the time, but your mutual understanding will allow all parties to grow, analyze and re-evaluate their own positions. As long as all the sides involved can agree on the “conditions under which collective decisions and judgements are reached, disagreement does not undermine deliberation,” (p. 60).

We must still proceed cautiously, as laying out the guidelines for inclusive and unconstrained dialogue does not necessarily lead to the open-mindedness we desire (Smith, 2003). As the old idiom goes, you can lead a horse to water but you cannot make it drink. With citizens it is no different, they “need to cultivate a particular disposition: internal attitudes of mutual respect and impartiality,” (p. 60). We cannot expect citizens to be inherently open and respective towards the values and perspectives of others. Rather, they must “cultivate”, grow these sentiments in themselves. This is what Smith has referred to as developing an enlarged mentality. For the majority, this means thinking about the values and perspectives of the minority, while for the minority this means a strong commitment to their own opinions in the face of oppression from the majority. The minority must fight so that it may “persuade others of the veracity and significance of their particular perspectives,” (p. 60). Smith (2003) does not mention here if the responsibility of this cultivation falls solely on the citizen or if social institutions such as education should play a role.

4.3. Deliberative Democratic Theory: A Summary

The growth of deliberative democratic theory resulted from dissatisfaction with liberal, or what we might think of as ‘traditional’ democracy. In our society with its plurality of values and perspectives, citizens feel disconnected from their leaders once their ballots have been cast. They have demanded, and the theorists have delivered, a theory that promises more opportunity for participation and deliberation from the general public in the decision-making processes of the government. This opportunity comes in the form of a space, the particular practicalities of which have yet to be developed, where all individuals are welcome to participate in open, critical, dialectic and deliberative discussions. It is from this space and its connection to those in power, that political authority will gain legitimacy.

However, the role of participation began to come under fire after the end of The Second World War.  

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10 See also Todd (2009) who argues that "the point is not to win the argument, or to eschew the passions of others, but to live in the fragile and unstable space of 'conflictual consensus'" (Todd, p. 114).
Theorists and philosophers began to question whether the utopian ideals of democracy could be held up against what was beginning to become empirically clear about reality. Mass participation became taboo, and minimal input from citizens was seen as the way to maintain stability in a democratic society. Indeed, this is how Western democracies appeared to function. Only a minority actually affected the politics of day to day life, while the majority was generally apathetic towards all of it. Yet, democracy was still working. Out of this realization came the belief that since Western democracies were actually working, there was no reason to push the apathetic, the lower classes or those with authoritarian sympathies to vote or become more active. Democracy is in equilibrium; pushing more people into the system, creating change and conflict could mean the downfall of the state. Meanwhile, the call for consensus among deliberative debates is also fraught with difficulty. First and foremost, given the pluralistic nature of our current societies it is almost impossible to reach consensus on decisions. There are many values and perspectives which simply lack any common ground. This drive for consensus can also make us blind to any alternatives, we give ourselves consensus ‘tunnel vision’. However if we shy away from this requirement for our deliberations, and instead aim for mutual understanding, then our dialogues become more flexible and adaptive; though we must be able to admit to ourselves that we will not always come to agreement. The deliberative process itself places a high responsibility on the citizens themselves. It is one thing to ask that the public is informed or knowledgeable before partaking in deliberations, but it is another, much more complex issue to ask of them that they be open and welcoming to the cacophony of values and perspectives they will encounter. They have to adopt this enlarged mentality, being open and critical of the values and perspectives of others, as well as their own.

Deliberative democratic theory expects a lot from its citizens, and we shall see if these requirements provide a boost for or hindrance of EE/ESD.

5. Green Deliberative Democracy

While it has been necessary to analyze deliberative democracy in isolation from any specific agenda in order to more accurately deconstruct the theory, I will now turn my attention to how theorists think this new approach to democratic politics will have an impact on the environmental movement. First, I will look at a topic which has already been widely discussed, and that is the ability of deliberative democratic discussions to open up a space for green voices to be heard. However, this will be followed with a look at why there is no guarantee these discussions will lead to environmental change. Following this I will focus on what I believe to be the most important challenge towards green deliberative democracy and that is the authoritarianism implicit in its nature. However, while Saward (1998; 1993) provides this critique, he will also produce a way for greens to avoid it. I will conclude this section by looking at a case of environmental planning in Australia, and how the emphasis on deliberation and participation failed to democratize civil society and caused the Aborignals to become more marginalized than they previously had been, and a similar case with Danish national parks and the local citizens.

5.1. Opening up to Green

John Dryzek is one of the most prominent theorists to explore this relationship. Dryzek (1987) sees deliberative democracies as more able to accommodate contemporary environmental problems (as cited in Smith, 2003). This is because the inherent flexibility of a deliberative system would be able to accommodate the unknowns of sustainable development, climate change, etc. (ibid). This is because the deliberative democratic process can incorporate negative feedback into its system (ibid). Since its guidelines dictate that this theory should accommodate new values and perspectives, challenges and changes, a deliberative democracy can adopt and adjust to new information received by its citizens.

This also necessitates cooperation for Dryzek, as no one problem occurs in isolation, many parties must be able to come together to rectify the situation (Smith, 2003). Dryzek (1995) sees this flexibility as coming from deliberative democracy’s eschewing of a “bounded rationality” (as cited in Smith, 2003, p. 62). Individuals or groups are not bound to solving these problems in isolation, but are able to utilize their shared knowledge in order to devise solutions that would have otherwise been intellectually unavailable (ibid). An unhindered flow of information also follows from this assertion. Less intellectual and institutional barriers exist in a deliberative democracy, allowing values and perspectives to flow less encumbered both horizontally and vertically throughout the power hierarchy of the system. The hope is that those in
power will become more aware of, informed by and accepting of information brought forth by both the minority and majority. Through utilizing experimental evidence gained through game theory, Dryzek (1987) believes this dissemination of information will lead to greater cooperation come decision time\(^{11}\) (as cited in Smith, 2003).

Smith also looks at the “moralizing effect” which David Miller (1992) claims the deliberative democratic theory would have on environmental discussions. He bases this on two claims: the first being that since in deliberative discussions participants are required to expose their own beliefs and have them be subject to criticism and dissection, those who hold beliefs based on false evidence or poor reasoning will not bring them forward (as cited in Smith, 2003). From this claim Miller believes the same will follow for self-interested individuals. In the public arena these values and perspectives would be exposed as not only being counter to the pursuit of the common good but are also by nature generally “environmentally degrading and unsustainable practices,” (as cited in Smith, 2003, p. 63).

Smith (2003) concludes that deliberative democracy has much to offer “greens”. More ideas are available in this enlarged mentality, which creates the possibility for new solutions, perspectives, changes and for people to come into contact with these ideas. Political institutions can also be seen as more legitimate, as they would now have a closer tie to the values and perspectives held and shared by the citizens of a state. Finally, it would not just be the average citizen, whose voice would be heard and deliberated upon, but also those of the experts and scientists from environmental, social, economic and other fields of study. Indeed, deliberative democratic theory should be very tantalizing for greens, sustainable developers and others connected to the environmental movement.

5.1.1. Green Assumption

It is not always greener on the other side of the tracks, and here Smith (2003) looks one of the most distinct criticisms facing the attempt to drive the green bus down the deliberative democratic boulevard. The first stems from the idea that exists in much of the talk regarding deliberative democracy and any green initiative: it is the assumption that environmental concerns will take precedent over all others. As Smith phrases it, “What is the guarantee that deliberative institutions will embody environmental values?” (p. 66).

Smith sides with Dobson (1993) and Goodin (1992) in arguing that deliberative democratic politics cannot be relied on for advancing green principles (as cited in Smith, 2003). As Smith said, there is simply no guarantee that this will happen. Deliberative democratic politics only necessitate that all voices will be heard with equal standing\(^{12}\). Sustainable developers and environmentalists will be able to debate, discuss and participate with others in deliberation but there is nothing that guarantees that the final solution(s) would be green (ibid). Unfortunately for greens there is no inherent superiority of green and sustainable values. Greens and sustainable developers must provide convincing arguments for this priority to be given.

Michael Bonnett (1999) similarly asks whether education can “afford to be procedurally neutral” while so many of the other forces at work in our society are not (p. 321). The emphasis on neutral, rational deliberation as method and for content in ESD takes a big gamble. For it makes the, …assumption that ‘pure’ rationality: (i) will prevail; (ii) provide the truth; (iii) support the democratic values its proponents favour; (iv) support sustainability of the desired sort...

(p. 321).

Bonnett draws our attention to the ‘stress’ that participation and deliberation of the sort asked for in EE/ESD put on rationality. Once again there is concern over the reliance on rationality, and that there is no such guarantee it will produce the sustainable future many people think it will. We must also be very wary of the prejudices that lurk deep down in the axioms of “rationality”. It is possible that these prejudices within rationality, these preferences towards “the world, notably to classify, explain, predict, evaluate and, as far as modern rationality is concerned, increasingly to control and exploit it,” will prevent us from reaching a sustainable society (Heidegger, 1977 as cited in Bonnett, 1999, p. 321). Bonnett also argues it is quite possible that these inbuilt tendencies in rationality brought us towards

\(^{11}\) Smith however does note, Dryzek (1987) is talking about “a generalizable principle or respect for particular aspects of nature”, not particular action requirements. (as cited in Smith, 2003)

\(^{12}\) “…we cannot pre-judge what is and what is not a permissible claim in democratic dialogue; that is for those involved in the dialogue to judge.” (Smith, 2003, p. 71)
our current environmental predicaments. In other words we must be careful, and at the very least aware of, inherent qualities in our (Western) rationality that may prevent us from employing it as a means to attain a sustainable society.

5.2. Implicit Authoritarianism

This presumption of green value superiority present in much of the green political research stems from a “latent authoritarian tendency” (Torgerson, 1999, as cited in Smith, 2003 p 67). That is to say, there always seems to be an underlying assumption taken by greens, sustainable developers, etc. that their values are inherently superior. They are non-negotiable and trump all other concerns, including democracy. These ‘fundamentalist greens’ do not have the tolerance for the uncertainty and inter-subjectivity upon which (deliberative) democracies are built.

Ophuls (1977) finds this authoritarianism as arising from the demands that ecological imperatives place on society and governing bodies (as cited in Bonnett, 1999). These imperatives are derived from facts of nature, and are often given intrinsic values. This means that they are given metaphysical superiority over things which only have contingent, instrumental value, such as democracy (Bonnett, 1999). In this way, these demands, such as limiting CO2 release into the atmosphere, maintaining polar ice coverage and conserving biodiversity are unquestionable standards which lie beyond the democratic sphere (ibid). These limitations are not open for debate, as they are scientifically founded and are prerequisites for a sustainable society. The authoritarian nature of green politics follows from this. This leads Ophuls (1977) to declare “liberal democracy as we know it … is doomed by ecological scarcity; we need a completely new political philosophy and set of institutions,” (as cited in Bonnett, 1999, p. 314).

Michael Saward has explored this issue in quite some detail (Saward, 1998; Saward, 1993). The strategy invoked by greens can be boiled down to three steps. Firstly, they define the current state of affairs with a certain imperative, such as growth or ‘progress’. Secondly, they create the opposing, green, imperative. Finally, since one of these imperatives is “rationality unchoosable” – because our lives depend on one of them – we should see the necessity of switching our allegiances (Saward, 1993, p. 64). As we have seen, there is no shortage of EE/ESD writers who would place democracy at the foundation of their education. Saward (1993) also notes that there is no shortage of ‘green writing’ where democracy is central, or at least a part of the ‘solution’. However, these two groups of writers are faced with the following dilemma:

…ecologically sound policies by an effective and strong government would limit freedom as currently defined [and] the scope of democratic decision-making and political compromise … [to do so] is to limit major factors that produce consent among citizens of this country [the United States] and thus produce legitimacy for the government. (Stillman, 1974, as cited in Saward, 1993, p. 67)

This means that ecological policies/imperatives themselves will in effective disable or handicap democracy. The very democracy that many greens argue is at the centre of a successful movement for more sustainable practices would become subservient to the imperatives they desire. While there have been attempts to create certain “trade-offs” which a hierarchy of values might be able to be used as a mechanism to determine which imperatives are more ‘important’, democracy itself would be shut out from this process (Saward, 1993). Once imperatives are left to the realm of science or given the designation of “necessary goals which must be accomplished” there is no role democracy can play. There is no room for participation or debate, as science, or whatever medium used to set the imperatives has already made the decisions. Saward summarizes the paradoxical nature of a green democracy:

A commitment to democracy must clash with core green values which, if taken on board, limit the range of acceptable policy outcomes beyond those self-binding constraints that democracy logically requires. (p. 68)

In other words, green policies would restrict democracy in such a way that it would no longer be democracy as we have come to know it. He is also aware of a possible challenge to his position, being that certainly there are other values present in our democracies which trump democracy. Indeed, the ‘liberal’ elements of our (Western) liberal democracies are given higher value than democracy itself. For liberal democracies, there are freedoms which democracy must serve to protect, while in a green democracy there are “similarly sacrosanct ecological imperatives” which the system must guard (Saward, 1993, p. 68). However, the key word in the last sentence is “freedom”. In liberal democracies, in theory, the individual has greater freedom to pursue “the good” as they see fit than in green democracies, which limit the actions of their citizens insomuch as
they are counter to the ecological imperatives (ibid). In an ideal liberal democracy, you are given the keys to a brand new motorcycle and are free to ride wherever you like, whereas in a green democracy, you are being chauffeured by Gaia. Thus, we find the ‘latent authoritarian tendency’ in much of green political conversation.

5.2.1. Escape from Authoritarianism

So if we want to avoid the authoritarian angle, which has a few foreseeable institutionalization problems, Saward (1993) offers some revisions to democracy which may provide an outlet for green voices. While he puts forward five possible revisions to consider, it is his fifth that is of most relevance here: greens should release their grip from unquestionable principles or imperatives (ibid). Democracy itself has only procedural and no such substantial unquestionable foundations such as those ecological imperatives pushed by greens. While Saward’s argument is enlightening, its implications are far more important. His pragmatic approach, similar to that of Schumpeter, Berelson, Dahl, and Sartori, focuses more on what democracy is, not what it might be. As Saward finds in Barber (1984),

Truth in politics seems, as William James said of truth in general, to be something which is made in the course of experience’ rather than something discovered or disclosed and then acted upon.

(as cited in Saward, 1993, p. 76)

We cannot simply create and adopt a theory out of the ether. Instead we must work with what we know, what we see. Since we see democracy acting as an instrument, behaving in the way it does, we must learn how to work with what is in front of us.

Green imperatives, with their intrinsic value, operate as a “strait-jacket” on democracy (Saward, 1993). They do nothing but get in the way of not only the effective functioning of a democracy but handcuff greens as well (ibid). Nor are they necessary for green-minded action to take place. There is no doubt that the current political climate must change in order for sustainable thinking to gain a significant foothold (ibid). However, the authoritarian nature of green imperatives, its “implicit arrogance”, as Saward phrases it, prevents sustainability from gaining influence through the avenues of change that we actually see at work in democracies. Instead, Saward “suggests that Greens abandon imperatives and accept that persuasion from a flexible position based on uncertainty can be their only legitimate political strategy” (p. 77). Greens must be flexible in order to be able to work with the democratic system. Any commitment to intrinsic values will only cause problems for the democratic machine, greens must be able to operate within it, and get people to think differently, in order to create political change.

5.3. Participation and Deliberation in Practice:

Before exploring Lane (2003) and his experiences with Australian aboriginals and state planning, there is need for a small clarification. While Lane talks about decentralizing state powers, civil society participation and the democratization of planning, he is essentially describing those ideals which the EE/ESD scholars, as well as the deliberative democrats are arguing for. They want less state-centred, authoritarian power relations, where participation in decision-making is open to all and deliberation is the fuel of our discussions. Lane has adopted the language of those who stand opposed to his conclusions, thus while the terminology may be different, the essence and the desired ends remain the same.

Since the 1960s there has been an increased call for participation in planning (Lane, 2003). This involvement of civil society is seen as a way to democratize planning and legitimize decisions which result. What exactly is “civil society”? For Friedmann (1992) it is also the space between the market and the state (as cited in Lane, 2003). However, broadly speaking, civil society is everything between the state and the individual (Lane, 2003). It is here where connections, relations and discussions can be born and take place. Thus, as Lane notes:

In environmental planning and management, an enhanced role for communities, social movements, and other civil associations is widely regarded as a crucial dimension of both policy development and implementation.

(p. 362)

However, an increase in civil society participation cannot occur without the decentralization of government. Known as devolution or democratic decentralization, this consists of the:

…transfer of resources and power to lower levels of authority or nonstate associations that are largely or wholly independent of central government…

(p. 362)
This results in civil society being closer to the decision-making bodies. Thus people are able to participate more closely with the governing of their society, and it is assumed that this leads to an enhanced democracy (Tendler, 1997 as cited in Lane, 2003). In other words, the state is seen as being ineffective solving planning problems, especially at the local and regional level. Thus, by transferring power to communities and other social organizations more closely related to the issues, through this democratization change can be realized (Lane, 2003).

Once again, it is important to see the connection between the arguments Lane cites and the “democratic empiricists” covered earlier. Democracy and education are both seen to be enhanced by participation. By taking the power away from the (authoritarian) state or (authoritarian) education ministers and teachers and putting it into the hands of the citizens and students, these institutions become democratized. That is to say, they become more legitimate as those previously without a voice have now gained one. Democratization is also deliberative, because the state no longer has the final say, and it is left up to the various social groups and institutions to participate in decision-making processes. It is also believed that this democratization, this increase in participation and deliberation will lead to ‘better’, or at least more legitimate results. As Lane (2003) notes, “Civil society, it is claimed, can fill the breach left in the wake of a retreating, dysfunctional state,” (p. 363).

However, this immediate jump to an empowered civil society may not be a wise decision. It is not immune to the kind of inequality and conflict that we find in the market, state, or other social institutions. Furthermore, civil society does not operate in a vacuum, it can still fall victim to the influence of various state actors (Lane, 2003). While the centralized government of the state is accused of having its own agendas, there is no reason to believe that regional governments, agencies and social institutions would be any more neutral (ibid). Thus, there is a hard time imagining a civil society that operates outside of the influence of power relations (Ehrenberg, 1999, as cited in Lane, 2003).

We now arrive at Lane (2003) and his experience with the inclusion of Australian Aboriginals in environmental planning. In the first case, which Lane had personally witnessed, aboriginals taking part in planning discussions had to adopt the rational planning which is prevalent in Australia (ibid). They were already at a disadvantage because of the perceived “irrationality” of their beliefs, which weakened their voices (Jackson, 1997, as cited in Lane, 2003). And by taking part in these rational discussions, they only reinforced the system that was already in place (Lane, 2003). It allowed those with the biggest voices, pockets or rationalities to dominate discussions and form their own alliances no differently than they had before. In fact, this occurred at a higher level than with the central state monitoring their actions (ibid). Increased participation did not accomplish democratisation, instead left aboriginal groups trying to fight regional state and players at their own game.

In the second case, the government aimed to democratize the planning over conflicts related to public forests. This was done through the devolution of the central government to more regional actors. Instead of the democratization of the civic society and with it the Aboriginals, undemocratic corporatist agreements were formed (Lane, 2003). Without the central government’s oversight, certain state and civic actors were able to form their own alliances, worse that what had been witnessed before (ibid).

A similar theme was found in the state’s attempt to create a community-based management system. Without the central government’s supervision the power relations within local communities and the civic society were exacerbated (Lane, 2003). While it was thought that creating decision-making processes closer to those affected and eliminating influence from the central government would create more democratic participation, it created the opposite. The knowledge of the Aboriginals and other small groups in civic and local society were limited and underrepresented (ibid). Lane concludes:

...that an ongoing commitment of the state to ensuring equality of participation and mediation among diverse (civic) actors is of crucial importance to the creation of democratic outcomes.

(p. 369)

The power relations between local and civic groups was actually magnified, as without a central government monitoring the decision-making process, who you know and who you can influence becomes much more important (Lane, 2003). It would be as if the principle and teachers left the school for the day, then those who were friends with the ‘bullies’, ‘jocks’ and ‘cool kids’ would get by just fine, and their roles would be increased as they had no one to stop them, while the ‘geeks’, ‘nerds’ and other minority cliques would be afraid for their lives.

Similar conclusions were found by Clausen, Hansen, & Tind (2010) in their research of attempts to
increase biodiversity in Denmark by creating new national parks, specifically Moen. The Wilhjelm Committee was set up, and focused its attempts, among other things, to organize “local political steering committees” where locals of all backgrounds could come together with experts and politicians to discuss and determine a course of action (ibid). However,

…the process did not overcome the traditional technical rationality of expert systems, nor did it fulfill the political ambition of bringing more value-orientated issues into the process…

(p. 243).

Instead traditional power relations, this time concerning land ownership, proved as one impediment to success. Thus the largest stakeholders promoted maintaining the previous power-relation hierarchy, alienating and intimidating “more ordinary citizens” (ibid). These citizens were at the same time overwhelmed by the scientific character of the discussions, or workshops. Thus they felt there was little they could add to the debate and the entire program ended with a “negative conclusion” (p. 244). While their biggest conclusion reached from their analysis may be that approaching these situations with a stakeholder mentality and not a citizen of Earth mentality contributes largely to these problems, they also find the need for methodologies that balance power more evening and prevent the marginalization of minorities. Clausen, Hansen & Tind (2010) lean towards more holistic conclusions, but nonetheless the problem was the same: attempts to decentralize power and increase participation and deliberation between different interest groups without proper state supervision lead to the reinforcement of previous power-relation hierarchies.

Saward (1993) comes to similar conclusions:

Not having a structure of representation in any consistent respect opens up the possibility that informal leaders will be able to impose themselves rather than be proposed by the subject population.

(p. 72).

Communities, governments and agencies become more open to corruption and power broken, as the power vacuum created by a lack of central governing can give way to manipulation and bullying.

In this section I intended to show how green theory could be applied to deliberative democratic theory, and why this would be beneficial and why it would not. There are many theorists who believe that embracing the kind of deliberative communication championed for by greens would help to open people’s eyes to our current environmental situation. This I find hard to doubt. There is at least a democratic space provided where, in theory, these voices could be spoken. However, there is no guarantee that these voices would be listened to. While deliberative democratic theorists insist that we will teach students to be receptive to the values and perspectives of others, there is nothing forcing them to do so. Even if greens are able to put forward what may be objectionably called the “best” or most sound and valid argument, it can easily fall on deaf ears. Greens assume that the environment is the most just cause and deserves the highest of values, but many people may never see things this way, resulting in decisions that are watered-down at best.

This assumption, as several theorists argued, lies in the latent authoritarianism found in the green movement. Greens place environmental imperatives on society, thus limiting its democratic flexibility. There is ultimately a goal that lies above democracy. Thus democracy is ruled by the authoritarianism of the environmental limits imposed on us. Greens can escape this, but they must remove the imperatives that they cherish so much. As we will see in the next section, this will mean putting their faith elsewhere. Meanwhile, the cases of environmental planning in Australia and Denmark showed how attempts to create a more democratic approach, ultimately led to a worsening of the previous power-relation struggles. If there is no central state to mediate and guard the rights on individuals, especially minorities in discussions, then they will fall victims to the powerful in the system. We cannot place such a high reliance on deliberation and participation to bring about a more democratic state. In the Discussion and Conclusion, I will place these arguments within the context of the classroom, and why they may not be ideal for students both in class and beyond.

6. Alternatives to Deliberative Democracy

This section will look at two important alternatives to a full shift towards deliberative democracy. I will look at Lane (2003) and the recommendations he produced after his experience with environmental
planning in Australia. Instead of pushing for full participation, deliberation and devolution of power from the state, we must keep a powerful, “savvy” state in charge to ensure that participation and deliberation can occur in such a way that is beneficial to all parties. The system is not broken; we just need to tie up a few loose ends. Saward (1998) and Smith (2003) look at maintaining our current liberal democracy, but adding small fixes to the system. Some of these fixes include creating more space for deliberation, but we should be wary of putting all our eggs in one basket.

6.1. Maintaining the Central State
Lane (2003) concludes there is nothing inherently democratic about decentralization, simply putting the power in the hands of the people does not mean they will use it properly. So he produces three suggestions for how this problem can be fixed. First, instead of handing over all the power to the state, we should explore building more effective ways of managing the relations between the state, society, market, etc. Removing the power from the central government simply puts all that power into another’s hands; instead we must develop a better way of distributing this power (ibid).

Secondly, why must we deny that the state can play a progressive role with such issues? The state can insure the democratic spaces are maintained and enlarged (ibid). The more parties involved, the more voices that are to be heard, the more necessary it is to have a moderator.

Finally, there is the notion that an empowered civic state (or classroom for the matter) will among other things operate more democratically (ibid). However, the actors alone cannot be relied on to produce this shift. Once again, a “savvy” government must be available to help this happen.

The third solution made by Lane (2003) asks similar questions to Sund regarding how much influence authority figures and institutions should have. However, it seems too much emphasis is put on the students themselves to solve environmental problems, so far as it sometimes does not feel that the teachers will have any moderator-like role. The big fear is indoctrination, and we should keep the teachers from controlling/influencing the students as much as possible. But if we don’t watch over them, with a constant eye, there is no guarantee of the power-relations that may be developed or exposed inside or outside the classroom. Instead of trying to shut out the central government or teachers, they must play a continuous role in monitoring students and citizens and their various interactions. This is even stronger when we speak of a specific (environmental) aim, for they need to be (authoritatively) guided.

6.2. Making a “Better” Liberal Democracy
The state is much more than the government. It contains an enormous array of bodies, more or less distant from direct lines of democratic accountability, with more or less separate codes of conduct, links with outside interests, and favoured approaches to policy and implementation. Powerful electoral pressures and large parliamentary majorities may not be enough to activate the state from a governmental perspective. Further, insofar as new ideas are perceived to challenge state capacities to pursue successfully the growth, order and security imperatives, governments will be less receptive anyhow, or perhaps merely symbolically receptive.
(Saward, 1998, p. 349)

We now turn to Saward (1998) and his solution. He does not believe in deliberative democracy, nor does he believe that any green political theorists want to abandon our current liberal democracy, “because it cannot, and probably should not, be transcended,” (p. 345). We will leave it in a more or less familiar form, instead using it as a vehicle towards a green future. What our liberal democracies need is the autonomous state to be able to prioritize interests which are of a higher, more general importance (Saward, 1998). However as we can see that this does not happen, instead the state is much more complex, and by accident or design, prioritizes certain issues which only represent certain sections of society (ibid). While he does offer a defence for why this is the case, and why it is unlikely to change, what is more important is how we work with what we have.

Instead of trying to attain some “green state”, which as we have seen throughout, is unattainable, we should be trying to make adjustments to the current liberal democratic state. Trying to “wish” away the worst qualities of the state is nothing more than a fantasy, and has no connection to how actual governments operate. All of this talk simply produces theories which try to avoid that which is historically and physically there. “At the end of the day, greens have to work with the state as we know it, not pretend it can be wished away,” (Saward, 1998, p. 350). Saward proposes, that by turning our attention to “seemingly feasible” reforms rather than
unrealistic substantive changes to our current system, it is still possible that the green state is possible, but from within our current system (p. 351).

First, we should aim to make our current governments more transparent. Giving greater access to official information to environmental groups has proven successful in the past (Saward, 1998). Part of Saward’s logic for this is that during elections parties compete against each other by pushing for various policy changes. Some of these changes also happen to be more openness. While governments never fully live up to promises and provide everything, there is nonetheless the possibility that environmental and other groups may gain leverage against the government with this information (ibid). It brings informative pressure out into the public sphere.

Secondly, we should not be confused in anyway by the claims of deliberative democratic theory. As seen above with Smith (2003), there is no actual physical model for the implementation of the theory. How is it supposed to be implemented, how is it supposed to replace all the non-deliberative institutions and practices that currently exist, not to mention how long would this take? There are a lot of uncertainties about deliberative democratic theory, indeed there is a temporal limitation to debate.

Third, greens should focus their efforts on changing the electoral structure of their governments to more proportional representational, as these are more likely to provide an accurate picture of public representation and with it green voices in the government (Saward, 1998).

While Saward (1998) offers another four suggestions, including entrenching environmental rights in constitutions, these three serve well enough to explain the point he is trying to make. There is a higher chance of at least some success if greens focus their attention on reforming various elements of our current liberal democracies rather than trying to make a sweeping change of the entire system (ibid). We should try to democratize these areas, not try to replace or destroy our current state with some green utopian dream (ibid). Making parts of the system better improve the whole product, indeed there is a chance that change in one or more areas can have a positive effect on the others (ibid).

Saward (1998) acknowledges that there is no guarantee that these changes could lead to more effective green policy. However, we must be more realistic than green theorists have been, and realize what exactly the state is and how exactly we are theoretically and physically able to work with it and within it. Only then through these incremental steps of democratization do we have a chance of reaching anything close to a “green state”. Not all of these suggestions have the possibility to happen in every country, but what Saward is saying is that we need to work with the system we have, because it is too stable to be knocked over, and we do not know what would come afterwards.

Smith (2003) also finds that for deliberative democratic theorists there is little in way of “rules” for decision-making processes. That is to say, while theorists talk at length on how these discussions should operate and how the participants should behave, there is very little clarity in the procedures of participatory deliberation for reaching decisions. However it is clear that, A decision implies the end of a discursive process. But deliberation is, in principle, ongoing: excepting universal consensus, there is no obvious end-point to the process of mutual understanding, reasoned dialogue, persuasion and judgement. On the other hand, politics requires decisions: there is a temporal limitation to debate.

(p. 73-74)

As a result of this, Smith (2003) as with Saward (1998) find that many theorists abandon the idea of a purely deliberative democratic state, instead assimilating the values of the theory within liberal democratic institutions. The reason for this should be clear, the liberal state, its framework and institutions are already in place. Deliberative democratic theory has not yet developed all the tools necessary for it to be implemented, how it would fully operate, how it would look, how exactly the liberal democracies would be overthrown/bypassed. Instead, liberal democracies as we know them have many of the
elements that deliberative democratic theory, states, or green states lack. Thus we should aim to combine elements of all, while maintaining the basic, overarching current liberal state system. This is the most realistic, likely and possible way that any change can occur in our current liberal democracies.

Similarly, Lane (2003), found that relieving the central state of its duties, hoping the result would increase participation and democratization, found that the opposite occurred. Previous power-relations were strengthened and old practices were maintained. The result was that the central state is needed, and that we need only to make adjustments to the current system in order the increase the power of minority groups.

6.3. Alternatives to Deliberative Democracy: A Summary

With these arguments I intended to show that it is not necessary to completely overhaul our current system and replace it with a deliberative one for green values to be realized. We have a system in place that works – to some extent – so we should look at making small, possible changes to it to give green values a chance. For Lane (2003), this means a strong state which can keep all the parties under control. Giving people the space for democratic discussions does not ensure that these discussions will occur, rather you need a guiding hand to make certain participation and deliberation is more likely to occur between everybody. Minorities have difficult times getting their voices heard, so it is important that someone can sure they are.

Smith (2003) found that many deliberative democratic theorists have a difficult time overcoming both practical and philosophical hurdles, so they turn to deliberating liberal institutions. Saward (1998) insists we must work within the system we have. It is far too complicated to undertake the kinds of monumental changes that deliberative democratic theorists are asking for. Instead, greens must be pragmatic and learn how to play by the rules of the system. They should look to several avenues of change within the system, to make the overall environment more welcoming to green values. Greens must stop the impossible task of trying to tear down the house and build a new one, instead making incremental changes to what they have, it is their only choice. I intend, in the Discussion and Conclusion, to show that this is what we should be teaching in our classrooms.

7. Summary

I will now return to the questions I posed in the Outline to make sure that they have been answered and where necessary these ‘groups’ of questions will be divided.

7.1. Previous Research in EE, ESD & Democracy

How important is deliberative democracy for EE/ESD and how is deliberative democracy supposed to aid the move towards a more sustainable future? How is a deliberative democratic EE/ESD supposed to look, that is to say, how is it different than current educational practices?

As we have seen from Schusler et al (2009), Gustafsson & Warner (2008), Sund (2008), Peden (2008), Öhman (2008), Wals & Jickling (2002), and Jickling (1994), deliberative democracy is central to EE/ESD. Its importance lies in its ability to move away from the previous substantially normative tradition of teaching, where indoctrination was seen as a problem. Instead of teaching a path to follow, a deliberative democratic education allows students to become more active by becoming involved in open, reflective, critical and constructive discussions. Deliberative democratic education provides a space for sustainable values to be discussed, for new values and perspectives to be introduced, and old, out-dated positions to be questioned. Teachers are no longer seen as authoritarian figures within the classroom, rather they will participate at a level more on par with their students. It aids the move towards a more sustainable future because it provides a flexible and receptive space that can respond to new challenges, and provides the framework to address the wide range of social, economic and environmental questions prevalent in sustainable development.

7.2. Democracy & Education

What does it mean to teach democracy and why do we do it? What roles do education and democracy play in our society? Where were the seeds of deliberative democracy first planted?

For Dewey (1916/2008), Englund (2006) and Gutmann (1987) there is an undeniable, symbiotic connection between democracy and education. We could call education democracy’s reproduction branch. Education develops students into democratic citizens, so that they will be able to participate in society once the time comes. Democracy is, in a
sense, self-interested. It rejects control from outside forces, so it educates its citizens on how to be democratic, so the state becomes self-sustaining. Democracy is what we live in and also how we live, that is to say, we live democratically. Thus, education guards democratic values by passing them onto new generations. Dewey can also be seen as first planting the seeds of deliberative democracy. His focus on discussions and communications being open to many, in order for more values and perspectives to be shared and developed, is what deliberative democratic theorists have built upon. The aim is that, through open and free communications, more individuals are connected to the common good; their participation in deliberations has led to the formation of the 'good'.

There is also no need to provide a critique or open up to discussion the works of Dewey, Gutmann, Englund and the others concerned with the relationship between democracy and education. I mentioned their works to provide a clear sense of this relation, and where the seeds for deliberative democratic education theory were first planted. The purpose of this thesis is to critique the embrace of deliberative democracy within EE/ESD, not question the intimate and undeniable relation between democracy and education. While this precise relation still deserves more attention, it shall get no more here.

It is also necessary to clarify why cosmopolitan education has received relatively little attention in this paper, even though it may have desirable elements for use within EE/ESD. The first, and most important reason for this, is that it is deliberative democracy, not cosmopolitan democracy, which scholars and theorists have advocated for leading the charge against unsustainability and environmental degradation. Though by advocating a global citizen mentality, it becomes more normative and thus, possibly, more useful than deliberative democracy in green terms because presumably the global citizen would be a more environmentally conscious citizen, though this is not guaranteed. Thus, people would have the environment on their mind more, most, or all of the time. However, as mentioned, the actual
design of this global citizen relation to the local is non-existent or complicated at best. Cosmopolitan education is by no means less sound than deliberative democracy, but its completeness is irrelevant. This is the second reason, it is irrelevant because the same institutional, implementation, and theoretical underpinnings as deliberative education also prevent cosmopolitan education from overcoming our current

7.3. Deliberative Democratic Theory

What, exactly, is deliberative democratic theory?

As we have seen from the above contributions including Smith (2003), deliberative democratic theory aims to depart from our current liberal democracies. While now citizens may feel disconnected from those they elect and the policies they enact, a deliberative democracy would create spaces for more participation from their citizens resulting in more legitimate government actions. Citizens become more involved in the various decision-making bodies of the state, creating open, deliberative and reflective dialogues. More values, perspectives and expert opinions would become involved, benefitting from a less top-heavy power-relations structure with the government.

Might increased participation be a bad thing for democracy?

Pateman (1997), Sartori (1962), Dahl (1956), Berelson (1954) and Schumpter (1943) all focus on the possible consequences of this increased participation. They believe that since our current system works satisfactorily and operates stably, pushing for greater or full participation will disrupt this balance. Those who have traditionally not participated also have high apathetic and authoritarian leanings, so their involvement in the process of politics at any level could have disastrous consequences for those at odds with their values and perspectives.

To what extent is the urge to reach consensus misguided? How is deliberation difficult and might it be asking too much from citizens?

Meanwhile Smith examined the problems with deliberation itself. Attempts to reach a consensus are misguided, because the pluralistic nature of society presents an enormous range of values and perspectives that are not always compatible. Trying to reach a consensus will be rare if not impossible. Also, the urge to reach a consensus prevents us from looking for other decision method alternatives. We become so focused on reaching a consensus, we do not look to see if there are other ways to come to a conclusion. The process itself also requires a lot from citizens. They must be taught/embrace the tools needed to participate in these discussions. They must
be open, critical, and reflective of not just the values and perspectives of others but also of their own. These deliberative tools aside, citizens must also hold a certain amount of knowledge over the subject(s) which they are discussing, else those with more knowledge/reasoning prowess may silence their voice(s).

7.4. Green Deliberative Democracy

Can deliberative democracy be beneficial for the environmental movement?

Smith (2003), Dryzek (1995), Miller (1992) and Dryzek (1987) all see deliberative democracy as being quite beneficial for the environmental movement. A space is provided for a wide range of new ideas to be explored by a greater number of people. Both experts and the layman would be able to interact and share their values and perspectives, and neither of them would be required to solve their problems in isolation. Instead the opportunity exists for greater cooperation, for new challenges to be addressed and irrational lines of thought to be critiqued.

Is there arrogance from greens towards the utility of deliberative democracy?

Smith, Bonnett (1999), Dobson (1993) and Goodin (1992) make note of the assumption that seems to be held among green theorists, that in a deliberative setting green values would come out on top. However there is no guarantee that this would happen. Greens would have to debate with fellow greens and non-greens alike in deliberations, and it cannot be assumed that through this process green-friendly decisions would result. These values would stand on equal footing with all others, and it would be up to greens to argue that their values are the “right” ones.

Is the green movement inherently undemocratic?

Bonnett, Torgerson (1999), Saward (1998; 1993), and Ophuls (1977) all find this assumption as arising from a latent authoritarianism in the green movement. Greens assume their values would be victorious in deliberations because there are certain ecological imperatives which cannot be questioned, but must rather be obeyed. These imperatives handcuff democracy, as they present a subject which cannot be deliberated. A green democracy would not really be a democracy as we know it, because there are certain values that cannot be questioned, only adhered to. This adherence is also more strict than the kind we find in current, liberal democracies.

Can greens escape this authoritarian nature?

Saward (1993) believes that greens can escape this authoritarian nature; all that it requires is that greens drop their allegiance to these ecological imperatives. The obvious consequence of this is that ecological goals will now be subject to deliberation and the various institutions and interactions within the state.

Can the deliberative democratic principles address the needs of minority groups?

Looking at the studies of Clausen, Hansen & Tind (2010) and Lane (2003) we can see that a full implementation of deliberative democratic principles cannot address the needs of minority groups, and can exacerbate previous discrepancies. Attempting to create greater democratization by increasing participation and deliberation will not be successful if those involved are left to govern themselves. Previous power-relations are cemented, and new relations between more powerful interests can be formed. Without the aid of a guiding central government or institution, minority groups lose their voice to those with economic, political and scientific power.

7.5. Alternatives to Deliberative Democracy

What benefits does our current liberal system have?

As Lane and Saward (1998) noted, we can benefit from already having a stable governing system in place. For Lane, we retain our central government with its ability to manage the relations between various interests, while for Saward we maintain a complex functioning web of institutions and relationships which are likely not to be done away with. Not to mention our current liberal system reflects what actually exists. It is not a theory that does not have its practical elements developed; rather it is what we actually observe, what is empirically true. We do not have to debate a theory, rather alter a system that we already know that we have, and that works, satisfactorily.

What kind of changes to it must we make?

For Lane these changes involve making sure the power relations between different interest groups are managed differently. Instead of removing power from the central state and having it go elsewhere, the state
should work to minimize discrepancies between different actors and their interests, monitor deliberations and decision-making processes and ensure that minorities are not silenced and those with economic, political and scientific power do not control the process. In other words, the central government would ensure that fairer interactions would take place.

Saward meanwhile, is entirely pragmatic with his approach, though that is not to say that Lane is not. Rather he focuses on making small changes to the various elements of state and government, instead of focusing on a single, large and difficult sweeping change. Electoral reform, freedom to information and reforming various political institutions and processes so that they become more deliberative, are all possible means through which this could be realized. They could also benefit from advances by the others.

What kind of benefits should we expect from these changes?

Greens should aim to change the system where there is space to do so, and instead of making the government more receptive to greens specifically, they should aim to develop an environment that is more welcoming of new values in general. Saward does not want greens to aim for The Green State, but rather, making pragmatic and possible changes to our current state so that it may become more receptive to greens. It may not produce the best results ecologically speaking, but it is the most realisable path.

8. Discussion

I will now take all of the pieces of EE/ESD that have been dissected so far, give them my own further analysis, and then put them back together. However, instead of inserting deliberative democracy back into the corpse of EE/ESD, I shall make the case that embracing and reforming our current Western liberal democracies should be its replacement.

8.1. A Critique of the Arguments

I find Sartoti (1962) believing that increased or full participation would lead to authoritarianism as an extreme point of view; however I find it hard to deny that the system would become less stable. Whether this participation comes in terms of voting or in political action varies between the theorists is unclear, but nonetheless the claims of Sartori, Dahl (1956), Berelson (1954) and Schumpter (1943) seem to hold. Voting may not disrupt the system as much, but a large influx, especially of those with apathetic and/or authoritarian sentiments into other parts of the political landscape will send disruptive waves throughout a system which has found equilibrium. Not to mention those theorists who explicitly state that democracy is simply built on stability, that change is not desired, and consistency is a good thing.

Also, while I will admit that the need for a consensus is not strongly held by the deliberative democratic theorists, or the EE/ESD writers, deliberation still results in a problem (Smith, 2003). We can look at it in mathematical terms: you can take a wide range of numbers, add them together and divide by the amount you have and end up with the average. While the average is not the best representation of all of those numbers, it is a way that connects them. This is what this deliberative process feels like, we may not arrive at the best or most accurate “common values”, but they will nonetheless be connected to all of those values involved. This is not a strong number, as in a sense, it has tried to please all numbers. Of course, this changes depending on the context of the discussions, if there are more greens in a deliberative discussion than “non-greens”, the average may be shifted towards their direction. However the odds of this happening at a large enough scale to make significant change are low, and even then a large majority may not be enough in the face of the complex machine that is our government(s).

There is also another theoretical issue inherent with a deliberative democratic education. It is unclear whether or not that within this system we could deliberate deliberative democratic education itself. It would appear as if this should be possible, and as Saward (1998) has described, democracy is a complex, evolving beast. Our current liberal democracies change, so why wouldn’t a more responsive and receptive system do the same, if not at a higher rate? Is it possible that deliberations could determine that this system is useless, and instead we should adopt authoritarian rule to further sustainable, environmental, or other causes? Are we even allowed to think of other educational and political procedures within a deliberative democratic education? I think this is a serious problem that this theory needs to address: it is such an open and welcoming theory, that it leaves itself open to the possibility of being thrown out, let alone welcoming majorities with unfavourable opinions. Maybe some of the theorists and scholars would agree with this, if they were
“strict” deliberative democrats as we might call them, but it is nonetheless a weak element of the theory.

There is of course the “guarantee” that plagues the greens’ appraisal of deliberative democratic theory (Smith, 2003; Bonnett, 1999; Dobson, 1993; Goodin, 1992). There is the implicit assumption that sustainable and environmental values would simply “win out” over all those being discussing. But by welcoming in the plethora of values and perspective to discussions, from all sides of the political spectrum, there can be no certainty as to what will result. This arrogance stems from the latent authoritarianism present with environmental imperatives (Bonnett 1999; Torgerson, 1999; Ophuls, 1977). Setting sustainable targets immediately handcuffs democracy (Saward, 1993). So greens cannot call whatever they would have in place a democracy if there are certain things which even deliberation cannot touch (ibid). Getting rid of these imperatives moves the discussions back to the deliberative arena, where no one can predict what the outcome is. All greens have to gain from deliberative discussions full of participation, is that their voices will now be heard, and that maybe others involved will come to a mutual understanding with them (Smith, 2003), what is not guaranteed is that any sustainably or environmentally motivated decisions or actions will spring from them. However discussions would, undoubtedly, bring forward new values and perspectives not previously considered (Smith, 2003; Dryzek, 1995; Miller, 1992; Dryzek, 1987).

Furthermore effective deliberation requires participation and discussions which are open, critical and respectful (Schusler et al, 2009; Gustafsson & Warner, 2008; Sund, 2008; Peden, 2008; Öhmman, 2008; Smith, 2003; Wals & Jickling, 2002; Dryzek, 1995; Jickling, 1994; Miller, 1992; Dryzek, 1987). However, how can we guarantee that any of this will come to fruition? We can teach students and citizens in a deliberative manner, and teach them the tools needed to deliberate, but what is the guarantee that what will result are the kinds of discussions the theorists hope for (Smith, 2003)? For one, there is the problem with the individuals involved. They must require a certain, basic knowledge of whatever is being discussed to participate. Of course, they can be taught this information and it is possible for it to be retained. We must also teach them the values of logic and rationality, of respect for others, of the willingness to change their own values and perspectives if confronted by more sound and valid arguments, or, at the very least, that they can come to a mutual understanding of one another. Like Smith (2003) I find that this is quite a task for the education system, let alone a difficult task for students and citizens themselves to acquire this knowledge. Moreover, while this methodology despises indoctrination, is this not what is being accomplished by ‘socializing’ these values?

There is really no predicting what these discussions would look like (Smith, 2003). How do we guarantee that logic and reason will prevail (Bonnett, 1999)? Also, as we have seen our own logic and rationality may be, and likely is, filled with biases which may have brought us to our current environmental condition (Bonnett, 1999; Heidegger, 1977). We then must guarantee that these systems are free of these unfavourable biases, which seems quite difficult, and whatever biases are left are somehow neutral, which is impossible, or slanted towards green and environmental concerns, which brings with it latent authoritarianism. As we have also seen with the Australian and Danish cases, deliberations without a strong, effective, or moderating central authoritarian body to oversee these discussions they run the risk of falling prey to previous power relations (Clausen, Hansen & Tind, 2010; Lane, 2003).

Saward (1998), of course, should not escape these critiques either. The obvious problem for greens is that his pragmatic approach does not give any guarantee at all for environmental policy advancement, and he clearly acknowledges this. Green values may or may not become more vulnerable to the advancements of other values, because they have no ecological imperatives to hide behind. Thus his approach will also have the hardest time being accepted by those radical greens, or even your average greens. Instead of pushing for a new democratic system that has a lot of promises for green policy, greens are forced to work with and within a system that has “wronged” them many times thus far. Even his “small” pragmatic changes need a large amount a support, an amount which Saward himself says is not enough to guarantee any change in the complex web of state and government institutions, to become a reality. Changing the electoral system or enacting green values into the constitution are not “small” changes by any means, though they still remain pragmatic because they are at least possible. However, Saward does not make any promises. We must try to change the system we have because it is near impossible to change it in the way Greens imagine (Saward, 1998, p. 350).

Furthermore, there is an issue with time-scales. While the pragmatic approach is likely to realize changes earlier than a deliberative democratic approach,
because it is working within an existing system and does not require an overhaul of current educational, government or state practices, it is unclear how long implementing these changes would take. However, if it is impossible for deliberative democratic theory to bring about the changes that greens are searching for and there is only one practical alternative, then time may be irrelevant.

8.2. The Problem Revisited

The problem, as I see it, is whether we have good reasons to believe that the reliance on deliberative democratic values in EE/ESD is too high, and even unfounded. There seems to be little literature, at least within the EE/ESD discourse, about alternative methods to teach our students for achieving sustainable development or another goal.

In terms of participation, I think it is safe to assume that apathy occurs in our schools. I have lacked interest, as have many of you reading this I’m sure. Not everybody participated and not everybody cared, but, to at least a sufficient sense, the system worked. Those who chose to participate gained the added benefit of more attention from their teachers, while those who did not kept to themselves. As for the lower socio-economic, the apathetic and authoritarian citizens in our classrooms? Well there were the ‘jocks’, ‘jokers’, ‘bullies’, a wide arrange of cliques and classes or whatever you would like to call them. They did not participate; they had their own activities, hobbies and interests they were focused on. This is clearly an over simplification, but the point remains, not everyone participated and the system worked. Those who wanted to focus on learning, and for the sake of argument, learning about sustainable development, benefited from greater resources and less distraction.

What happens if we try and force every student to participate, let alone participate in a deliberative, polite and reciprocal manner towards sustainable and environmental values? In some cases this may work, where such feelings already exists in some form, but I have a hard time seeing how this could occur at the scale desired by the international bodies and the EE/ESD scholars. Would the stability of our previous system remain, would its pragmatic efficiency stay intact? Imagine if all of the jocks, who, for the sake of argument, are less environmentally inclined, forced to participate. Let us also assume they are not angered by this, but rather, they join forces, because they are used to being teammates. They are also bigger and stronger than the rest of us, and thus can intimidate us. I know this is extreme, but the point is that our current system is designed to allow the best, brightest and most importantly interested to participate and develop through the educational system. If we, like Wals & Jickling (2002), want to make happier students then this may be desirable, but as they also said: if we want a more sustainably and environmentally minded democracy and hence education, we need stratification and a hierarchy of (intellectual) power, or what they would say resembles authoritarianism.

Again we must decide, what is more important? Making sure (forcing) everyone participates, or, at the very least, given the chance to, or should we focus on addressing our urgent environmental concerns? Although getting everyone to participate is an honourable goal, indicative of our embrace of human rights and love of altruistic behaviour, it is not practical for environmental action. However, you may say, what if the jocks are environmentally minded? They can flex their muscle and make sustainable changes! Well, this does not mean that the system would still not become unstable. It is still an influx of people who were not previously participating in the classroom/school/democracy system. There is no guarantee that the current institutions within the classrooms and within our states could handle this disruption. Of course we do not know for sure, but as it stands our system works with its current participation levels, and green or not those masses not currently involved could undermine our equilibrium in undesirable ways (Sartori, 1962; Dahl, 1956; Berelson, 1954; Schumpeter, 1943).

There is also the difficult task of making sure that not only do all the students have the requisite knowledge to participate in environmental discussions, but also that the reasoning faculties are properly developed (Smith, 2003; Bonnett, 1999). How much of this can effectively taught, is it simply too much to ask from students? The teacher’s role is now limited, instead the responsibility for deliberating rationally and fairly lies solely on the students. Once again, we can assume that we can effectively teach students the necessary science and reason and logic capabilities to participate in “effective” deliberations, but we cannot

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14 “Force” may be a strong word, but by educating students a certain method that we desire them to learn, that some governments even say is required to learn, I don’t believe it is far from the truth. Refer to Footnote 1.

15 We now have to listen to them all!

16 For example, pushing the final 1% of students into participation may not be a problem, but it only takes 1% to cause major problems.
pretend that green values will be necessarily championed, perhaps only mutually understood (Smith, 2003; Bonnett, 1999; Dobson, 1993; Goodin, 1992).

The green jocks are also reminiscent of the latent authoritarianism and ecological imperatives. If we want a truly, deliberative democratic classroom then there can be no ecological imperatives, or those who hold more power in the discussions (Saward, 1993). Deliberative discussions are supposed to provide a space for all the students to participate on an equal playing field. But if deliberative discussions within the classroom or beyond are meant to open the doors to green thought, experts, activists, etc. they certainly open the doors to all other kinds of moderate, communist, extremist, experts, activists, etc. One dissatisfaction with liberal democracy is that is does not incorporate enough values and perspectives (Pateman, 1970), but deliberative democracy surely brings too many, at least for effective classroom functioning. Without proper teacher supervision, there is no guarantee green values will win out This is where the jocks come in again, if we removed the teachers and let all of the students discuss and issue, what is stopping those with perceived social or physical power from reinforcing the social hierarchy, gaining strength because no one is monitoring them, and having the final results swing “rationally” their way?

Even with proper supervision, there is no necessary reason why green values would triumph. If the only goal of a deliberative democratic education is to get more students involved and have friendly, open and understanding discussions, then by all means, let us adopt this methodology in our classrooms.

However, if we want to have a possible chance at making a difference...

We need to think about effective participation and pragmatic deliberation (Lane, 2003; Saward, 1998). Not only does the deliberative democratic system have no guarantee of a more sustainable future, but the very participation it requires to be implemented or realized may destabilize our educational equilibrium. We must, instead, teach our students a better understanding of how our current educational and governmental systems work. We need to stop being mesmerized by utopian theories, and work with what is empirically there (Saward, 1998; Sartori, 1962; Dahl, 1956; Berelson, 1954; Schumpter, 1943). Small, incremental changes to our educational and governmental systems are more likely than sweeping ideological shifts to occur (Saward, 1998). These systems are more accompanying to such changes, so this is what we should teach our students to strive for.

Our current democratic institutions, be them schools or governments, are large, momentum driven webs of complexities (Saward, 1998). There are many small places, nooks and crannies, where realistic changes can occur. These changes are not inherently green or sustainable, but they make it easier for such changes to take place. We should be teaching our students about these complexities, not a utopian theory of deliberation that has no basis in reality. We need to teach our students to become reformers, to make these small changes from the inside, to pave the way for sustainability and environmental concerns. Similarly, we must acknowledge how our educational institutions actually work and what possible changes can actually occur. Perhaps they are more flexible than states and governments, so the deliberative democratic ideal of the EE/ESD writers can be realized. However, there is no guarantee for a sustainable future from this method, so the EE/ESD writers must ask themselves what is more important: a deliberative space for participation and discussion or an effective and pragmatic approach to reaching change?

Before concluding this thesis, I shall leave you with two last analogies, which may perhaps shed a different light on my proposal. First, let us imagine that we’re playing a game, board, sport, does not matter. Liberal democracy is the current set of rules, and greens right now are complaining they are unfair. They are losing the game to those that are strong, better, smarter, etc. So what is their solution? Demand that the rules be changed to make the game fairer. They are losing, and losing is not very fun. What greens should be doing instead of whining, is find loopholes in the rules they may exploit, or get better at the game. Practice, workout, get help, etc. The kid who complains he keeps losing at chess will not start winning until he learns every detail of the rulebook and every strategy. If he’s lucky, he may even become a grandmaster.

This second analogy concerns the incremental changes, rather than an overhaul of our system. Say you have a large tree we want to take down, and let’s say that deliberative democratic theory is a sledgehammer. You can swing it as hard as you want, but it is not the right tool for the job and there is no guarantee it will fall down. So you’re just left pummelling it. Let us think of the incremental changes as an axe. It cuts out a little chunk at a time, but eventually the tree will fall – if the lumberjack is skilled – because the axe works, choosing it is being
pragmatic. We know the axe works; it was built for this job.

9. Conclusion
As should be clear by now, the role of education, according to the various international reports, is pivotal to the success of sustainable development and addressing environmental concerns. Thus, there has been a need to theorize and describe how these two elements were supposed to be integrated into our – for the sake of this thesis – Western education systems. While Swedish scholars are by no means the only ones to have attempted to define and describe this integration, due to the location of this thesis and the material available, not to mention the extent of material, it was necessary to give closer attention to their works. Nonetheless, their values and perspectives seem to be generalizable to many Western scholars. Drawing on the deliberative traditions of Dewey and Gutmann, among others, these scholars have sought to develop a theory which allows the best chance for sustainable and environmental ideals to flourish.

However, as I have tried to show, if we want to achieve a sustainable future, we cannot rely on a deliberative democratic education. There is no guarantee that within the classroom, green values will triumph. More importantly, there is no guarantee that green values will triumph in the democratic society at large. Since we are teaching students to be prepared for effective participation in our society, we must teach them a theory and method that is effective. Thus, we must embrace our current educational structures, and teach students to embrace them and their liberal democracies, or whatever democratic system they operate within, and learn how to become masters of the system, exploiters of loopholes, and forgers of actualisable change.

I leave you with what I believe are three alternative possibilities which could lead to the kind of large-scale change that many are looking for: green, scientific and empirically responsive despots, large-scale environmental disaster(s), or massive uprisings in Western democracies.

Unless we would like to wait for chaos to bring us change, I think it is safer to work with that we have.
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