

Climate Justice and Democratic Understanding

The View of Democracy of Climate Justice Movements

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Abstract

An increasing number of environmental movements is striving for ‘climate justice’: the linkage of climate change action and socio-economic reforms. The political ideals and methods of these movements can differ vastly. I examine the diverging democratic strategies of two climate justice movements. The Green New Deal is shown to presuppose a left populist strategy, as theorised by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, while Extinction Rebellion proposes sortition-based democracy as the political strategy fitting to climate justice. I compare the different understandings of democracy implied in the two movements, and present an approach that could combine these. The analysis demonstrates that a debate of climate justice is inevitably also one of democratic understanding, democratic principles, and democratic legitimacy.

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Introduction

Although there has been scientific consensus over the need to counter climate change for years, if not decades, there is still a notable lack of large-scale political action against this problem. While each IPCC report only grows more serious in its warnings against inaction, global greenhouse gas emissions keep rising, with the current climate policies of all countries combined adding up to an estimated 3°C temperature rise in 2100 (UNEP 2019, XIX). Even if the Paris Agreement aims for a maximum of 2°C temperature increase in 2100 (with limiting this increase to 1.5°C mentioned as something to ‘strive for’), there are few countries that are currently putting in enough effort to reach this goal.

As the duration of this impasse grows, protest against the current lack of climate action is gaining traction as well. Following Greta Thunberg’s example, schoolchildren and students worldwide have been on strike to protest climate change inaction (for one example, see Taylor, Pidd, and Murray 2019). The grassroots social movement Extinction Rebellion occupied public locations, often for multiple days, in an act of civil disobedience forcing the U.K. government to declare a state of ‘climate crisis’ (Barclay and Irfan 2019). And in the U.S., the Sunrise Movement organised sit-ins at senators’ offices to ask attention for climate change (Nilsen 2019). These are but a few examples, and they have the backup of political movements such as the Green New Deal. It is difficult to say at this point what the impact of such protests and political movements will be, but there certainly is more and more attention for the need to take climate change seriously.

What sets some of these movements apart is their focus on what they often name ‘climate justice’: the need to couple climate change action (and environmental protection more generally) to social justice reforms¹. The logic behind this combination is twofold. Firstly, climate change is a problem that hits certain demographics harder than others, both on a global and local scale. Lower-income groups, for example, often have less options to defend themselves against extreme weather caused by climate change; on a global scale, countries in the Global South generally face larger impacts of climate change with less means to counter these than countries in the Global North. It would be just to couple climate change action with social reforms in order to mitigate these differential impacts. Secondly, the causes of climate change are inherently linked to economic and social policy. Economic growth invariably causes an increase in greenhouse gas emissions, and the policies that benefit large

¹ Such couplings are also sometimes referred to by different terms (see Hopwood, Mellor, and O’Brien 2005). I here use ‘climate justice’, since the movements under study use this wording.

emitters often have an adverse impact on the situation of ‘average’ citizens with a smaller carbon footprint. If the causes of climate change and certain social inequalities are the same, it would seem sensible to attempt to counter both problems at once.

While of course there are many variations possible on this theme of linking climate change action to social justice, the goals of climate justice movements are generally similar. There are large differences, however, in the ways in which these movements intend to politically achieve their goals. In this thesis, I will focus on the democratic strategies of two climate justice movements: the Green New Deal (GND) and Extinction Rebellion (XR). The political logic that both movements follow differs vastly. Proponents of the GND want to overhaul social and environmental policies by means of the existing political system of representative democracy; the GND is essentially a very elaborate policy programme, albeit one containing proposals for radical social and economic policy changes. XR, on the other hand, employs civil disobedience to see its demands fulfilled, with one of these demands being the addition of a ‘citizens’ assembly’, whose members are selected by sortition, to the current political system.

This raises several questions. Why do these movements propose their specific methods to achieve climate justice? What view of democracy is implied in these movements and their strategies? And what does this imply for a democratic politics striving for climate change action? For a topic as timely as countering climate change, the societal relevance of these questions appears clear. The political strategy employed in climate change action might well be one of the factors that will determine its success, and for climate justice movements especially, the choice of strategy will be crucial for turning the linkage between environmental and social issues into a more widely recognised relationship. Which understanding of democracy lies underneath these movements’ strategies could thereby be a question with direct consequences for environmental action. Apart from this societal relevance, there are various philosophical questions underlying this debate, turning the question of these movements’ democratic understanding into an issue of political philosophy as well. For instance, the debate directly touches upon the questions of what we mean by ‘democracy’, and how a democratic system should serve the needs of society. The debate also seems to be informed by different (at times conflicting) ideas of legitimate political representation. The different democratic understandings of the movements studied here are thereby both of philosophical interest and of societal relevance.

In this thesis, I will therefore examine the democratic understanding of the climate justice movements mentioned above. It should be clear from the start that I am not going to

question the need for climate change action, nor the need for climate justice. Both topics are beyond the scope of this thesis, and I also believe that the need for climate change action and climate justice has been amply proven by other authors. Instead, I will focus on the contrasting democratic strategies of the two movements, and on the views of democracy implied in them. The main question that I will answer in this thesis is *What different understandings of democracy are implied in the climate justice debate?* I will progress towards an answer to this question in three chapters. The first chapter examines the political logic of the GND through the lens of left populism, as understood by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. The second chapter discusses XR's political view through the lens of sortition-based deliberative democracy. These first two chapters will follow a descriptive approach in examining the political logic that both approaches follow. In the third chapter, I will turn to a more analytical approach, comparing the understandings of democracy that these two movements imply. I will finish this third chapter with a proposal for an approach that, in my view, would be the most promising way of governing climate justice. In my conclusion, lastly, I will briefly address a broader topic: the way in which the environmental debate always implies a debate of our understanding of democracy.

1: The Green New Deal as a Left Populism

The first type of climate justice movement that will be examined here is the Green New Deal (GND). Generally, ‘Green New Deal’ refers to a political programme which aims for a broad overhaul in socio-economic and environmental policies within a given context. Importantly, GND programmes establish a link between these two fields, aiming to make use of new environmental strategies to simultaneously address socioeconomic issues. There have been various GND programmes established over the last years in different parts of the world, including in the United States, the European Union, and the United Kingdom. The specifics of these different GND programmes differ, but the focus here will be on what they have in common: all are political programmes linking environmental issues to socio-economics issues, and all aim to take radical action on both fields simultaneously. The GND can be seen as an attempt at “politicizing the environment” (Swyngedouw 2013), by striving for radical solutions beyond the consensus-oriented, managerial approach to climate action prominent in many current democracies. Still, even if GND programmes call for revolutionary changes to a country’s (or region’s) economic and social systems, they remain political programmes aimed at gathering electoral support within an existing liberal-electoral system.

I will speak of ‘Green New Deal’ in a broad sense, without focusing on the specifics of any given example. For my elaboration on what a GND entails, I rely on the work of Ann Pettifor (*The Case for the Green New Deal*, 2019) and Naomi Klein (*This Changes Everything* (2014) and *On Fire* (2019)). Both authors are directly involved with the GND programmes in the U.K. and the U.S., respectively. In this chapter, I will argue that a GND programme requires, and to a certain degree *is*, a form of left populism, in the meaning given to this term by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. I will use their work, most importantly *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001), Laclau’s *On Populist Reason* (2007), and Mouffe’s *For a Left Populism* (2019), to argue that a GND is essentially a call for a left populism, or at least presupposes a populist politics. It should be noted that ‘populism’ here is not used in a pejorative sense, but rather in the sense of a specific political logic as indicated by Laclau and Mouffe.

The chapter will begin with a brief explanation of GND programmes in general. I will then elaborate on Laclau and Mouffe’s theories of radical democracy and left populism, after which I will use these theories to argue that the GND pursues a left populist strategy.

The Green New Deal: Climate Justice as a Political Movement

Both of Klein's works that are used here are essentially pleas for implementing a GND, although at the time *This Changes Everything* was written, the term was less well-known than it is today. As such, the book does not explicitly focus on the GND, but it does provide an elaborate account of the linkages between social and environmental issues. *On Fire*, on the contrary, explicitly pleads for a GND, through a collection of various essays on climate change and social inequality. Pettifor's *The Case for the Green New Deal* is also a plea, but moreover, it is an elaborate plan for what an economy adhering to the GND's principles could look like. This sets the book apart from most literature on the topic, and serves as a (theoretical) proof of the GND's feasibility. Taken together, these three works give a comprehensive picture of what the GND could look like - and the similarities in their reasonings are readily apparent, even if they emphasise different elements of the GND.

Klein and Pettifor argue that the neoliberal economic system of globalised, financial capitalism is the root cause of both environmental problems and deeply entrenched socio-economic inequalities. The only solution they see to these problems is a complete overhaul of that economic system on a short timescale. Both make it clear that the GND plans that they are advocating are radical measures that would require transformations in many different sectors of society. Our economic system, Pettifor argues, needs to be turned into "one that respects boundaries and limits; (...) one that delivers social and economic justice" (Pettifor 2019, XV). Klein, similarly, repeatedly argues that neoliberal ideas of complete market freedom and deregulated capitalism are incompatible with both the struggle against climate change and the struggle against economic inequality (see for example Klein 2019, 91). Both authors agree on the need to draw connections between environmental and socio-economic issues. This includes themes such as restoration of public authority over financial markets (Pettifor 2019, 15) in order to reduce extractive activities, and taxation of fossil fuel companies or so-called 'billionaire taxes' (Klein 2019, 282-284).

Given the radical nature of the proposals made in both GND pleas, what is striking is that neither author intends to make equally radical changes in the political system through which they want to fulfill their ideas. Both authors refer to the importance of social movements such as Extinction Rebellion in gathering support for the GND (Pettifor 2019, 166-167, 170; Klein 2019, 259-271). Klein also occasionally calls for enhanced democratic participation (Klein 2019, 268). The way in which both authors ultimately want to implement the GND, however, is through the existing electoral-representative democratic system. The

support of social movements will be crucial, for example in monitoring the GND's execution, but a progressive victory in democratic elections is needed at first.

The way in which the GND is to be implemented is thus through representative democracy, which means that its success will depend on its ability to muster sufficient popular support. For Klein, this entails the establishment of a 'common goal' that people can strive towards, as well as the establishment of a "collective we" (Klein 2019, 270), and the establishment of connections between different types of social movements supporting the GND (ibid, 288-289, 239, 201-202). It is, according to Klein, essential to draw up an attractive story on the possibilities that the GND can offer, to unite people behind it (ibid, 268-270). This story needs to revolve around the theme of 'justice' (ibid, 202) and/or the connections between capitalism and climate change; it also needs to be able to displace the type of national stories focusing on 'endlessness' (ibid, 185-190) that, according to Klein, are at the root of extraction-based, growth-oriented economic systems.

The GND plans outlined by Pettifor and Klein are thus pleas for radical economic and social changes, that should be based on a connection between socioeconomic and environmental issues, and gain their legitimacy and public support through the establishment of a people around this connection. It is my hypothesis here that this type of tactic is essentially what is described by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe in their theories of radical democracy and left populism, and that the GND thus presupposes a left populist strategy. I will now turn to an explanation of those parts of their work that can support this view.

Laclau and Mouffe: Radical Democracy and Left Populism

Laclau and Mouffe have written extensively on the direction a left politics should take in order to effectively resist neoliberalism. Their proposals for radical democracy and left populism provide a framework for gaining popular support and establishing a hegemonic discourse. In the summary of their work given here, I will focus on Laclau's *On Populist Reason*, and Mouffe's *For a Left Populism*. I will first provide a summary of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy (HSS)*, to serve as a theoretical background to these two works.

Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: the Birth of "Radical Democracy"

In line with Laclau and Mouffe's self-declared position as 'post-marxists', *HSS* departs from a questioning of the centrality of the working class in traditional Marxist/left-wing politics (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 2). Laclau and Mouffe refute the 'class essentialism' which they

explain to be present throughout the development of Marxist thought. By class essentialism, they mean the idea of the working class as the privileged social actor in the development of history toward its conclusion in communism - a development which takes place according to certain historical laws that act on unified, well-defined social actors (the working class, the bourgeoisie, etc.). Laclau and Mouffe, on the contrary, state that “fundamental interests in socialism cannot be *logically* deduced from determinate positions in the economic process” (ibid, 84; italics in original). The implications of this refusal of class essentialism for left-wing political thought are far-reaching. Social identities, and thereby political subjects, become unfixed, since the link between class and one’s (political) ‘task’ is no longer a necessary one (ibid, 85-86), meaning that no single social struggle should from the start be prioritised or seen as necessarily progressive (ibid, 86-87).

Central to Laclau and Mouffe’s alternative theory of the constitution of political subjects is the concept of ‘articulation’: the process through which elements of the social are linked in a contingent way (ibid, 94-97). This articulation results in a change in the identity of the linked elements (or ‘moments’; ibid, 105). A key point in Laclau and Mouffe’s theory is that a discourse is never fixed or all-encompassing. This means that the relations between the moments in a discourse, and thereby the meaning of these moments in themselves, are always contingent: a given articulation draws certain relations and imposes certain meanings, but in a different articulation both these relations and these meanings can be completely different. In Laclau and Mouffe’s terms: the ‘field of discursivity’ (which amounts to the infinite amount of possible definitions that can be given to the moments in a discourse) overflows the definition of moments in a discourse, meaning that no given discourse can absolutely fix the relations between its moments (ibid, 111).

This lack of fixation is a condition for the possibility of articulation: if the moments of a discourse were already fixed before articulation, there would be little that an articulation could change in the relations between these moments, and thereby little point in articulation in the first place. Still, there are certain signifiers in a discourse whose meaning is partially fixed in that discourse, and around which the other signifiers in that discourse obtain their meaning. These partially fixed moments are called ‘nodal points’ (ibid, 112-113).

Articulation is in fact the construction of such nodal points, partially fixing meanings within a discourse. In a discourse of climate protection, for example, nodal points could include terms such as ‘global warming’ or ‘climate adaptation’. This fixation of meanings is, however, never complete (ibid, 113). The non-fixation of meanings becomes most clear in

antagonisms: conflicts between groups in society (each with their own point of view on a signifier under discussion) “wherein the limits of every objectivity are shown” (ibid, 125).

Many of these antagonisms exist simultaneously, and what is at stake in each one differs. The general mechanism that antagonisms follow, however, is similar: it always involves the establishment of a ‘chain of equivalence’, wherein different elements are discursively linked according to a ‘logic of equivalence’ (ibid, 127-134). A chain of equivalence is a linkage that is established between different moments of a discourse which makes that the meaning of these moments comes to depend on the others². Before the establishment of a chain of equivalence, the elements within that chain are not yet linked to one another, making it possible that there exists an antagonism over their meanings. The meaning of the separate moments changes when they are linked in a chain of equivalence: they become linked through their common reference to something that they are not (ibid, 127-129). One of the signifiers becomes central to the meaning of the entire chain³. Antagonisms are ultimately about the articulation of different, conflicting equivalential chains. An example could be the different, often conflicting ways in which the aforementioned concept of ‘climate protection’ is employed in different discourses. When climate protection is linked to a discourse of localisation and reducing consumption, the term takes a meaning entirely different from when it is linked to a discourse of large-scale technological solutions (example taken from Methmann 2010). In both cases, climate protection is used as a motivating factor or an ideal, but the two meanings given to it are vastly different and possibly even exclude one another: an antagonism arises.

It is in this field of antagonisms that, for Laclau and Mouffe, a discourse can become hegemonic. A hegemonic discourse articulates a chain of equivalence that becomes dominant in a given context. It links so-called ‘floating elements’ or ‘floating signifiers’, partially fixing their meanings in a way that fits that discourse, while an opposing discourse also attempts to fix the meanings of these elements (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 134-145). The hegemonic discourse is the discourse that is most ‘successful’ at a given moment. However, this hegemonic position is never fixed, and is only established within one antagonism among many (ibid, 139). Hegemony thus becomes a ‘form’ of politics, a way in which an antagonism develops. Still, a hegemonic discourse remains in motion, and can fall into crisis and/or be challenged⁴. Continuing the climate protection example: the hegemonic discourse

² See also the section on *On Populist Reason* in the next paragraph.

³ See also the section on *On Populist Reason*.

⁴ See also the section on *For a Left Populism* in the next paragraph.

here might currently be one of market-based, technologically oriented solutions to climate change, that is increasingly challenged by discourses questioning this market-based orientation, such as that of climate justice.

The political logic of hegemony, with its presupposition of multiple sites of antagonism at the same time, and its large role for the articulation of equivalential chains, calls for a way of politics that recognises the fundamentally plural character of the social. This way of politics is ‘radical democracy’ (ibid, 167). The social should be understood as a plurality of antagonisms and struggles for fundamental principles of democracy, such as equality and liberty (ibid, 165). Radical democracy is the form of politics that does not privilege one of these antagonisms, but rather strives to radicalise the democratic values of equality and liberty to all sections of society (ibid, 176). The contents of a radical democratic political project should depend on the antagonisms that arise in the social. The aforementioned democratic values should be extended to the sites of these antagonisms, but “it is impossible to specify *a priori* surfaces of emergence of antagonisms” (ibid 179-181; quote on 180, italics in original). Radical democracy should always present a positive image to work towards, aside from just a criticism of an existing hegemonic discourse (ibid, 189). Lastly, a left discourse that follows a radical democratic perspective can never be one unified discourse. Proper to the plurality of the social underlying the idea of radical democracy, a left discourse can only be a combination, a linkage of multiple discourses in an equivalential chain (ibid, 191-192).

The idea of radical democracy as put forward in *HSS*, while proposing a strategy that a left politics should follow, remains theoretical. It is in *On Populist Reason* and *For a Left Populism* that the idea of radical democracy is coupled to a concrete political strategy: that of left populism.

Left Populism: Radical Democracy in Political Practice

A strategy of populism may at first sight appear hard to combine with the radical extension of democratic values that radical democracy advocates. What is commonly referred to as ‘populism’ in western democracies entails a predominantly right-wing, simplistic discourse departing from some sort of exclusion, be it of societal groups or of ideologies or religions; the common use of the word hardly refers to an extension of democratic values. This view, however, is both historically and conceptually too narrow, with scholars such as Yannis

Stavrakakis⁵ and Laclau and Mouffe opposing the simplistic identification of populism and right-wing nationalism. Populism is the strategy that Mouffe proposes for left-wing political parties to follow, and the strategy that Laclau explicitly links to the logic of hegemony in politics. A key point here is that the populism they speak of is not the aforementioned right-wing authoritarian type of politics. For Laclau and Mouffe, populism comes closest to being a discursive strategy, one that constructs “a political frontier dividing society into two camps (...) calling for the mobilization of the ‘underdog’ against ‘those in power’” (Mouffe 2019, 10-11). Populism thus does not refer to a certain political programme, but rather to a political logic that Laclau explains in *On Populist Reason*.

Laclau argues that, far from being immature or irrational, populism has its very own logic (Laclau 2007, 17-18). Central to this logic is the construction of a ‘people’, along a frontier in the social following the lines of an antagonism. The social is discursively split into two opposing camps along this antagonism, with the side that names itself ‘the people’ effectively claiming to stand for all of society (ibid, 83). The construction of this ‘people’ comes to pass through the establishment of a chain of equivalence, as explained in *HSS*. Key to this chain of equivalence in the case of populism is that the whole of it comes to be referred to by a single term. This is what Laclau calls an ‘empty signifier’ (ibid, 96-98): the signifier that a ‘people’ can unite behind, and the term that becomes representative for this people in general.

An empty signifier by itself is devoid of any meaning, and only comes to represent a certain set of demands by way of its inscription in a chain of equivalence. This means that the very same signifier can mean radically different things depending on the chain of equivalence it is inscribed in. An example that Laclau provides is a demand for ‘justice’ (ibid, 96-97). This demand of justice only gains a meaning in reference to the other demands that are linked to it in an equivalential chain - by itself, the term ‘justice’ is essentially meaningless. The aforementioned example of ‘climate protection’ can also be seen as an empty signifier (Methmann 2010, 345). An empty signifier that, like these two examples, can be inscribed in multiple opposing equivalential chains, is called a ‘floating signifier’ (Laclau 2007, 129-138). The existence of such floating signifiers makes that the frontier drawn between two opposing camps is never stable, as it can be displaced according to the incorporation of floating signifiers into the opposing chains of equivalence. Populism is the way in which a chain of

⁵ Although I will not elaborate further here on Stavrakakis’ work, a brief summary of his main points on contemporary left-wing populism can be found in Stavrakakis 2018.

equivalence is articulated around a central floating signifier, in order to make that signifier represent the demands of ‘the people’.

There is a large role for affect and emotion in this construction of a ‘people’. In order to be mobilised by an empty signifier, what Laclau calls a ‘radical investment’ is necessary, and this radical investment entails an affective dimension (ibid, 110). This affective dimension is even analytically inseparable from articulation, and only this affective dimension of language can really ensure a radical investment of citizens (ibid, 111). The result is that “equivalential logics would be unintelligible without the affective component” - something that for Laclau is proof of “the inanity of dismissing emotional populist attachments in the name of an uncontaminable rationality” (both quotes from ibid, 111). Populism *needs* affect and emotion, and should not be dismissed because of this. Seeing rationality as the only adequate ground for political demands misses this crucial role of emotion. A left populism is thus not only a rational movement; it needs an affective dimension to bring about the new ways of political identification that it strives for.

The implications of populism for political practice and populism’s link to radical democracy are explained in Mouffe’s *For a Left Populism*. Mouffe situates her plea for a left form of populism in what she calls ‘the populist moment’ (Mouffe 2019, 9-24). The neoliberal hegemonic discourse that has come to power in western Europe has entered a crisis of legitimacy, to which populist movements respond by way of the construction of a ‘people’ against an elite. An important part of the reason that populist movements are gaining so much traction is, according to Mouffe, the situation of ‘post-democracy’ and ‘post-politics’ that western Europe has entered. The fundamental values of liberal democracy, namely equality, popular sovereignty, and liberty, are in neoliberal politics no longer equally present: liberty gains prime importance over equality and popular sovereignty, with the role of parliaments being reduced to legitimizing an economic and individualistic liberalism (ibid, 12-16). This loss of importance of one of the key values of liberal democracy is what Mouffe means by post-democracy. Post-politics refers to the political situation that expresses this post-democracy. Left and right parties are no longer in any real antagonism with each other: with the rise of consensus-oriented ‘third way’ politics, “Politics (...) has become a mere issue of managing the established order” (ibid, 17).

The only real questioning of neoliberalism comes from populist movements, which attempt to construct a ‘people’ to challenge an order that benefits only a small part of society. Such movements often come from the right, constructing the people in a nationalist,

xenophobic fashion. The way to counter this is, according to Mouffe, a left populist movement that constructs a people around a deepening of the fundamental values of liberal democracy (ibid, 22-24). Social-democratic parties do not counter the neoliberal system and its consequences for the largest part of society. The left response to the crisis of neoliberalism should thus not be a social-democratic one, but a left populist one that will replace neoliberalism with an order of deepened democratic values. This populist strategy needs to draw a link between the various resistances against post-democracy, by clearly uniting these resistances in the form of a people that is opposed against a common adversary (ibid, 36).

The deepening of liberal-democratic values that a left populism should strive for is where radical democracy, as introduced in *HSS*, comes back into play. A left populism should aim for ‘radical reformism’ (ibid, 46-47), in which liberal-democratic values are kept intact, but radicalised and reshaped, so that their meaning counters the definitions given to these values in neoliberalism. Essentially, this is what was presented in *HSS* as radical democracy: liberal-democratic values should not be rejected, they merely need to be restored to the central position that they belong in. This radicalisation of democratic values needs to be the central point around which the chain of equivalence of a left populism is formed, regardless of what other demands and values exactly are linked to it: “What is important is that (...) ‘democracy’ is the hegemonic signifier around which the diverse struggles are articulated” (ibid, 50-51, quote on 51). For Mouffe, the only way in which radical democracy can be put into practice is through representative democracy, since representation is central to the constitution of a political border along which a ‘people’ can be articulated. She rejects notions of direct or sortition democracy, because these lack the element of the construction of a collective that is essential for the creation of political subjects (ibid, 52-57). The plurality of the social can only be institutionalised by way of representation.

How, then, should this collective ‘people’ be formed? As mentioned before, the demands inscribed in the equivalential chain of the ‘people’ gain their meaning in relation to certain empty signifiers. This means that, in accordance with the notion of articulation as expressed in *Hegemony*, the nature of any political demand is only determined when its linkage to other demands is articulated. It also means that there exist no “struggles that are inherently emancipatory and cannot be oriented towards opposite ends” (ibid, 64). The way in which a people is formed, according to Mouffe, is not merely rational, but (as Laclau also states) strongly dependent on the mobilisation of an affective dimension (ibid, 72-78). Identification of political subjects with a left populism and the values of radical democracy will not happen out of nowhere. Affection with the values that are propagated is essential for

the success of a left populism. This affective dimension needs to be mobilised by way of providing an attractive notion of the future that can be reached through a left populism, starting from the daily reality of the majority of society, and with an important role to be played by art and cultural expression (ibid, 76-77).

A left populism then, for both Laclau and Mouffe, ultimately aims to shape the political identities of citizens, and to mobilise them behind the radical democratic cause. The importance of representation and articulation for these aims should not be understated. “If we accept that the consciousness of the social agent is not the direct expression of their ‘objective’ position and that it is always discursively constructed, it is clear that political subjectivities will be shaped by competing political discourses and that parties are essential in their elaboration” (ibid, 55-56). Political identities are formed in the articulation of a chain of equivalence: when political demands are linked around an empty signifier, the combination of these demands becomes a new position behind which mobilisation becomes possible. An individual does not have a predetermined political identity that they express when politically active (Laclau 2007, 72-77); a political identity is constructed as differential political demands are linked and tested against opposing demands. This is what Mouffe means with political consciousness being ‘discursively constructed’: the opposition of different discourses in an antagonism, or the clash of different chains of equivalence, is what determines one’s political identity. The articulation by which a certain signifier comes to represent a series of demands is thus crucial (ibid, 161-162). A left populist strategy should begin there, and aim for a radicalisation of democratic demands.

To sum up: Laclau and Mouffe propose to radicalize democracy, through deepening and emphasising the key values of liberal democracy (equality, popular sovereignty, and liberalism) along the lines of the multiple antagonisms existing in society. This radicalisation of democracy counters the present hegemony of neoliberalism, in which the values of equality and popular sovereignty have lost their key position. The strategy Laclau and Mouffe advocate for this is that of left populism. The aim should be to construct a collective ‘people’, through articulating a chain of equivalence that links the popular demands for democratic values existing along the antagonisms present in society. These demands are linked around a central empty signifier, with an important role in this linkage for the affective dimension of politics. I will now discuss how Laclau and Mouffe’s theory can be applied to the GND, which in my view presupposes a form of left populism as its political strategy.

The GND as a Left Populism

Mouffe states that a connection between the ecological struggle and the social struggle should be at the center of a left populism (Mouffe 2019, 61). In a recent lecture she took this point even further, stating that “at present, a left populism needs to rely on the Green New Deal, and a Green New Deal needs a left populist strategy to succeed” (see Decreus 2020 for a summary of this lecture; quote taken from opening paragraph). In my view, the GND as conceived by Klein and Pettifor is indeed an example of a left populist strategy being put into practice. I will argue for this position by showing how the main concepts of the theories explained in the previous paragraph are present in the GND. I will start with the rejection of essentialism in favor of a plurality of antagonisms, and the articulation of an equivalential chain. Afterwards, I will continue with the construction of a ‘people’ around an empty signifier and link the GND to radical democracy. I will conclude this chapter by addressing some limitations of viewing the GND as a left populism.

Antagonisms, Articulation, and the Chain of Equivalence

Even if the GND does not refer to itself as an anti-essentialist programme, in its most basic formulation, it can be seen as a rejection of essentialism: at least two separate struggles are united in the GND programme and given equal importance, with their meanings differing according to context. This can already be said to be a basic recognition of the existence of multiple antagonisms in the social. Klein goes a step further in her conception of the GND, with the explicit inclusion of the antiracist struggle and the struggles of various indigenous peoples (Klein 2014, 367-387; Klein 2019, 153, 198-200). Both Pettifor and Klein reject a politics that attempts to address the ecological problem without linking it to social equality issues. Through the very idea of the GND, the existence of multiple antagonisms is recognised from the start. No solution to any of the struggles named by both authors would be possible without some linkage of the separate social movements addressing these issues.

The importance of an articulation to link these struggles also becomes clear throughout both pleas for the GND. Laclau and Mouffe stressed that no demand is progressive or emancipatory by nature; Mouffe has made this point for the ecological struggle specifically (Decreus 2020). Klein similarly warns for the possibility of the ecological struggle to be used to legitimise fascist demands (Klein 2019, 44-45), and for the dangers of linking the ecological struggle to a strictly free-market economic discourse (Klein 2014, 191-229). She also mentions how conservative political movements will link ecological demands to ideas of ‘limitations on freedom’ (Klein 2019, 70-73). The contingency of the

relationship drawn between ecological demands and demands for social justice is thus clear, even though Klein and Pettifor both do state that ecological problems and inequality are fundamentally linked - this is examined in more detail in the ‘limitations’ section below. The importance of an articulation of a chain of equivalence to the logic of the GND is apparent - an importance that has also been stressed for at least one other climate justice movement, ‘Climate Justice Action’⁶.

The way the chain of equivalence of the GND looks in practice should be clear: it is a linkage of social justice demands to ecological demands and, in Klein’s case, anti-racist and indigenous’ rights demands. These demands are linked through their common reference to the opposing hegemonic discourse of neoliberalism. The ‘nodal points’ in this chain would appear to be demands for justice - Klein states that justice in various forms should be the prime focus of the GND (Klein 2019, 202). ‘Justice’ thereby becomes the empty signifier along which the chain of equivalence of the ‘people’ of the GND is constructed.

The ‘People’ Constructed

Mouffe names the GND in itself as the signifier around which the people of a left populism should be constructed (Decreus 2020). In my view, rather than around the GND itself, the programme’s notion of ‘the people’ revolves around ‘justice’ as a key signifier. I will first elaborate on the construction of a people as observable in the GND, and then argue why this is a construction around the empty signifier of ‘justice’.

The GND’s linkage of social and environmental struggles has the power to “mobilize a truly intersectional mass movement behind it” (Klein 2019, 289). Throughout her work, Klein emphasises the need for this mass movement to rally behind the GND, labeling the climate problem a ‘people’s problem’ that needs widespread popular support and accountability among social movements (ibid, 21-23, 259-271). She also states that the image that the citizens of countries such as the U.S., Canada, and Australia have of their ‘national stories’ will need to change (ibid, 185-190) in order for the GND to succeed. This amounts to a proposal to construct the ‘people’ of these countries anew, along the lines of a different ‘story’. This need to reshape the existing conceptions of the people is a recurring theme in Klein’s work, also coming up when she speaks of ‘freedom’ being cast as the central value to the people of the U.S. - a freedom which climate policy allegedly threatens (ibid, 70-81).

⁶ This movement was mainly active around the 2009 Copenhagen climate summit. See Kenis and Mathijs 2014.

The people that Klein wants to rally behind the GND has a clear antagonist, in the form of the companies and politicians that benefit from the strict neoliberalism driving both the climate crisis and entrenched socio-economic inequality. Such an antagonist, or ‘constitutive outside’, is necessary to define the limits of a people. This casting of a people against an ‘establishment’ that is so important to a left populism is clearly present with Pettifor as well. One of the main points of her work is that the monetary system, originally a public good, needs to be reclaimed from the ‘1%’ and restored to public ownership (Pettifor 2019, XII-XIII, 158-159, 160-161). Pettifor also alludes to the importance of an affective dimension to win people over to the GND. In her view, this mostly amounts to the importance of inspiring leadership (ibid, 59, 165-170). Klein develops the importance of the affective dimension further, focusing on the importance of providing an attractive view of the future that the GND could ensure. She also sees a key role for art in the establishment of popular support for the GND (Klein 2019, 272-279).

The empty signifier around which the GND constructs a people is ‘justice’. Klein names justice as the term that should be employed in order for the GND to gather the necessary support; it is “the only thing that has ever motivated popular movements to throw heart and soul into struggle” (ibid, 202). She also speaks of the need to reframe certain social issues, such as migrants’ rights, as climate justice issues (ibid, 180-182). This goes further than just a linkage between social justice issues and climate change mitigation: here, social issues are cast around the central term of ‘justice’, this being ‘climate justice’ specifically. Pettifor similarly names justice as the central goal of her plea for a different economic system (Pettifor 2019, XV). The term ‘Green New Deal’, which Mouffe states to be the signifier around which a left populism should be formed, in my view fails to fulfill her own criterium of “working with notions from the ‘common sense’, (...) address[ing] people in a manner able to reach their affects” (Mouffe 2019, 76). ‘Green New Deal’ in my view is rather the name that can be put on a certain type of climate justice proposal, than a term that should itself be used to gather a support base.

Radical Reformism within Liberal Democracy

The GND, as noted in the first section of this chapter, is a proposal for radical change in social and economic systems, that does not propose a change to the liberal-democratic political system or representative democracy. This is similar to the ‘radical reformism’ that Mouffe states a left populism should strive for: there too the liberal democratic values are not rejected, but rather restored to their prime position in politics. The radical nature of Mouffe’s

proposal refers to her and Laclau's ideas of radical democracy. In my view, the idea of radical democracy is visible in the GND in its radicalisation of equality, popular sovereignty, and the rule of law.

In the material sense, the GND clearly intends to radicalise equality, but in my view it intends to radicalise equality in a more abstract sense as well. Klein's linkage of the GND to antiracism and indigenous' rights, as discussed earlier, is an example of this. Alongside equality, Mouffe names popular sovereignty as a principle of "the democratic tradition" (Mouffe 2019, 14). The GND can be seen as a radicalisation of popular sovereignty: both Klein and Pettifor note the need for an enlarged, democratically controlled public sphere in order to enact the principles of the GND (see for example Klein 2014, 103-110; Klein 2019, 81-82; Pettifor 2019, 57-59). Next to the 'democratic tradition', the other tradition to be strengthened in a radical democracy is that of political liberalism, which Mouffe summarises as "the rule of law, the separation of powers, and the defence of individual freedom" (Mouffe 2019, 14). One could see the GND in its entirety, as especially Klein does, as a plan to increasingly subject market forces to regulation and restrictions, in opposition to the relatively large influence on lawmaking that market forces often have in neoliberalism. Both GND pleas are essentially proposals for reinstating the rule of law above market forces, instead of having economic interests as an important factor dictating lawmaking. The separation of powers and defence of individual freedom are less directly linked to the GND. Its radicalisation of the liberal tradition is thus less readily apparent than its radicalisation of the democratic tradition. The latter, however, is present at the core of the GND.

As stated in the beginning of this chapter, the GND as proposed by Klein and Pettifor does not call for an alternative to representative democracy. When political change is referred to, this amounts to the election of a party or president that would propose a radical climate policy (see for example Klein 2019, 259-260). And although "the decisive questions are not going to be settled through elections alone" (ibid, 262), electoral-representative democracy in itself is not questioned in the GND. Klein does stress the need for social movements to support and monitor the GND, and briefly names 'an effort in participatory democracy' as a condition for its success (ibid, 268). Yet, this participatory democracy is not stated to oppose representative democracy, or to entail a transformation in the political system. In all, the GND proposals studied here do not challenge representative democracy, and thus stay within the boundaries to radical democracy as set by Mouffe.

The GND as a Left Populism: Limitations

Before I conclude this chapter, I will briefly address some counterpoints that can be made against seeing the GND as a form of left populism. The first of these limitations is that it is unclear to what extent Klein and Pettifor view the link that is drawn between environmental and social justice aspects as truly contingent. Although Klein makes reference to ways in which climate action can be linked to highly different ideals than the GND (see Klein 2019, 40-49 for an example on ecofascism; *ibid.*, 150-153 for an example on green colonialism; Deceus 2020 for an example on right-wing nationalism), she and Pettifor do appear to see the link between environmental action and social justice as a necessary one. However, the necessity of linking the two fields is primarily stressed by both authors in a strategic sense. Neither author questions that this linkage could also *not* be made, or be made in a highly different way. Even if both Klein and Pettifor state that social inequality and the climate crisis are inherently linked, they do not preclude the possibility that a different relationship is drawn by others. This shows that, even though the link between social and environmental action is here seen as (strategically and perhaps ethically) necessary, the contingency of this link is ultimately still acknowledged.

A second limitation is that the ‘people’ that the GND intends to construct is not merely a rhetorical device, as Laclau and Mouffe would have it, but also an empirically existing movement: Klein and Pettifor are both explicit in their intention to gather a large movement behind the GND. Still, when they speak of a struggle of the ‘people’ against the establishment, this is primarily a rhetorical move made to establish the necessity of socially just environmental policy. The construction of a ‘people’ in the GND as such is still a rhetorical device, albeit one with the intention of indeed gathering a large empirically existing movement behind the GND.

Finally, one could argue that the radical economic and social transformations that the GND proposes ultimately require a radical political transformation as well. This would mean that the GND would not fit radical reformism as proposed by Mouffe. It is true that Klein and Pettifor both refer to political changes that would be necessary for the GND to be successful (see Klein 2019, 53, 237-239). The changes that they propose, however, are primarily discursive, not entailing a significant reform of liberal democracy. Rather, as explained above, they are radicalisations of some of the key ideas of liberal democracy. The ‘revolutionary power of climate change’ (Klein 2014, 31-63) is the power of climate change to engage people in creating a socially just, environmentally friendly economic system - it is not a call for changes in the fundamental values of liberal democracy, neither for an

alternative to electoral-representative democracy. I have alluded several times to the point that the GND ultimately is a plan for changes *within* liberal representative democracy - not changes *in* that system. The left populist strategy that the GND implies, needs a representative democratic system to succeed, and the lack of radical political change is thereby not inconsistent with the radical changes to social and environmental policy that it advocates.

With this, I believe that the reasons for seeing the GND as presupposing a left populist strategy are clear. In the next chapter, I will turn to a discussion of the worldwide protest movement Extinction Rebellion. While the GND wants to address climate justice through a different political strategy within electoral-representative democracy, Extinction Rebellion dismisses such a strategy as ineffective, and calls for changes to the representative system itself, in order to enforce the radical changes that climate justice requires.

2. Extinction Rebellion: Sortition-Based Democracy in Citizens' Assemblies

The next climate justice movement I will address is Extinction Rebellion (XR). A relatively new organisation, XR came into being in the U.K. in 2018, and rapidly gained traction and publicity worldwide in 2019 through large-scale acts of civil disobedience. The best known example of this is perhaps XR's ten-day occupation and blockage of a large part of the city centre of London in April 2019 (Barclay and Irfan 2019). The scale on which XR applies civil disobedience is unprecedented in the environmental movement, even if other organisations such as Greenpeace and Ende Gelände also use civil disobedience to attain their goals. XR's explicit focus on social justice in climate change action also sets them apart from these other movements, where the main aim is usually climate action in general.

Extinction Rebellion has three main demands: the government needs to declare a climate emergency, it should strive towards halting biodiversity loss and zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2025 (see Healy 2019 for a brief discussion of this highly ambitious goal), and it must create and be led by a citizens' assembly on climate justice. 'The government' can be read to mean whichever national government is addressed by a given XR group. The movement's third aim of creating a citizens' assembly that leads government decisions on climate justice is my main interest here. Contrary to GND programmes, XR strives to reform the political systems in which it operates, by adding a new institution to the existing ones. This is no longer just change *within* a political system; this entails change *in* a political system, setting XR's demands apart from not only the GND, but from many environmental movements in general.

In this chapter, I will examine XR's third aim through the lens of theories on sortition-based democracy. In order to elaborate on the concept of applying sortition in democracy, I will make use of David van Reybrouck's *Tegen Verkiezingen* (2016) and a selection of essays by other scholars on sortition and deliberative democracy. To explain XR's political aims I will mainly make use of selected chapters from their 'handbook' *This is Not a Drill* and a separate document titled *The Extinction Rebellion Guide to Citizens' Assemblies* (2019). It should be noted that XR states to be a decentral movement, which anyone supporting their claims can join without any kind of registration or application. While this means that there is no 'one' Extinction Rebellion, the works used here are published under the name of the movement as a whole.

I will first briefly examine XR's political demands and strategy, after which I will elaborate on theoretical approaches to using sortition in democratic governments. The chapter ends with an application of these theories to XR's political demands.

Extinction Rebellion: Citizens' Assemblies Governing Climate Justice

The two aspects of Extinction Rebellion's third demand that are most interesting for this thesis are the rationale behind the need for citizens' assemblies and the nature of these assemblies in themselves. I will address both in turn.

XR comes to a similar diagnosis of the problems causing climate disruption and social inequalities as Klein and Pettifor: neoliberal 'business as usual' is the root cause of both problems (Knights 2019, 12; Lewis 2019, a chapter in XR's 'handbook', even explicitly discusses the merits of the GND). The only way in which addressing the problems underlying climate change will be possible, is a radical system change that addresses both issues simultaneously; not only in the economic system (as proposed in the GND) but also in our political system (Lucas 2019, 142-143; Ross 2019, 176-177). Apart from these reasons concerning the effectiveness of elected politicians in countering climate change, another important reason for XR's demand for citizens' assemblies is inclusivity. It is here that the nature of XR as a climate justice movement is clearly visible. XR sees itself as a 'movement among many', that is "led by indigenous communities and those in the majority world" (Knights 2019, 12). In a way similar to Klein, XR puts the demands of those groups hit hardest by climate change first, and aims to give a voice to these groups - as can be seen in the fact that several chapters of *This is Not a Drill* are written by farmers in India, members of indigenous groups, and a former president of the Maldives (Joshi and Joshi 2019; Oumarou Ibrahim 2019; Nasheed 2019). According to XR, in a conventional electoral system, the interests of such groups are neglected.

These problems with electoral-representative politics for XR can be solved by the introduction of a citizens' assembly on climate justice. In an electoral system, politicians face lobbying from factions that attempt to slow down climate action. Additionally, short-term election cycles cause politicians to postpone action against longer-term problems such as climate change (XR Citizens' Assemblies Working Group 2019, 16). A citizens' assembly does not face these problems to the same degree, due to the lack of party affiliations and electoral pressure; furthermore, it can lead to more informed decisions because of the possibilities for deliberation (ibid, 7). According to XR, citizens' assemblies would also be a more inclusive form of government than election-based representative democracy, since the

citizens in the assemblies would be selected through stratified random sampling. This way, each societal group should be represented in the assembly proportionally to the share of the general population they represent (ibid, 15).

This random selection method is one of the most important features of the citizens' assemblies that XR demands, serving to promote inclusivity, legitimacy, and fairness of decision-making in the assembly. The assembly's mandate would be any policy related to climate justice. The citizens' assembly thus is an addition to the existing institutions, rather than a (complete) replacement of any of these. Apart from the selected citizens, the assembly would consist of a coordinating group and a facilitation team that ensure the process runs smoothly, an advisory board and expert/stakeholder panel that provide a "fair and broad representation of opinion" on the topic under discussion, and an oversight panel that monitors the entire procedure (ibid, 8-9; quote on 8). The decision-making process of the assembly entails four phases (ibid, 12). First is a learning phase, in which the assembly is briefed by the expert/stakeholder panel on the topic at hand, as well as on critical thinking and bias-detection skills. This phase is followed by the consultation phase, in which perspectives submitted by the wider public are heard by the assembly, and a deliberation phase consisting of plenary meetings and smaller-group meetings. The last phase is the actual decision-making, which culminates in a report of policy recommendations.

XR's plan for citizens' assemblies as the way to make decisions on policy related to climate change links the group's ideas to a broad range of theoretical work on applying sortition in democratic government. I will now turn to a survey of these theories.

Theoretical Perspectives on Sortition-Based Democracy

Calls for sortition-based democracy, where a (stratified) random selection of citizens is brought together to decide on policy matters, are often based on the idea that sortition is better suited to achieve certain democratic ideals than elections are. Scholars see a multitude of problems in using elections as the means of selecting representatives in a democracy. David van Reybrouck's *Tegen Verkiezingen* provides a clear account of the political problems that sortition can solve. I will first summarize his reasoning to show how the case for sortition to replace elections can be made. Afterwards, I will turn to a survey of the various ways in which sortition could be implemented in political practice.

Van Reybrouck: The Case for Sortition

According to Van Reybrouck, many democracies today face a dual crisis. On the one hand, the legitimacy of many democracies has become questionable, with voter turnout and party membership and loyalty decreasing (van Reybrouck 2016, 13-16). On the other hand, the efficiency of democratic government is low. Forming a government takes longer than before, governing parties are increasingly punished in elections, and national governments have a growing group of other political actors to take into account. Apart from this, increasing (social) media attention has turned democratic politics in general and elections especially into a ‘spectacle’, where visibility, presentation and mediagenicity have become more important than policy programmes (ibid, 16-22). Politicians are forced to participate in this spectacle, for fear of losing the next elections. The consequence: “Democracy has become less powerful, but surprisingly, it has also become much louder” (ibid, 21; my translation). Van Reybrouck names this combination of crises in legitimacy and efficiency, evident in most western democracies, ‘democratic fatigue’.

There are, according to Van Reybrouck, three often-made ‘diagnoses’ of the cause of this democratic fatigue. The populist diagnosis puts the blame on a ruling elite out of touch with citizens - the corresponding solution is replacing such politicians with the populist ones that *do* understand the ‘common citizen’ (ibid, 23-26). The technocrat diagnosis blames democracy itself, and claims that a board of experts is better suited for efficient management of a country than its citizens are (ibid, 26-29). The diagnosis of direct democracy, lastly, states that representation is the problem. Representatives are stuck in a form of party politics that shows little care for the citizens that politicians are meant to represent. The solution is to do away with representation, and to reinstate direct self-government (ibid, 29-40). None of these diagnoses is satisfactory for Van Reybrouck. Populism claims to represent a ‘people’ that does not exist in practice, and would allow majority groups to repress marginalised or minority groups. Technocracy lacks popular legitimacy, and has no answer to ethical issues that a government will invariably encounter. Direct democracy, in its anti-parliamentarism, can lead to authoritarianism and a glorification of the democratic process over outcomes. The correct diagnosis is a different one: the problem lies with *electoral*-representative democracy.

Democracy is often seen as synonymous with elections, but this is a relatively recent view. Van Reybrouck elaborately shows how throughout democracy’s history, elections were seen as an aristocratic or oligarchic means of selection, whereas sortition was the selection method that was favored for a democracy (ibid, 59-76). In the French and American ‘democratic’ revolutions, elections ended up being the selection method for political

representation in the newly created republics, precisely because the founders of these republics did not want a *too* democratic government (ibid, 77-88). It is only from then on that elections, never intended as a democratic procedure, start to be seen as a democratic method of selection. A series of developments has since shifted ever more power to citizens instead of the political class, while still retaining this political class (ibid, 44-58)⁷. As a result, citizens are always able to express their opinions and assess the performance of elected representatives, while their power to actually influence politics remains low. Politicians, on the other hand, find themselves judged and monitored ever more strictly, while true conflict of opinion and ideology is increasingly replaced with the negotiation of compromises and market logic⁸. The results are the aforementioned crises of legitimacy and efficiency, or democratic fatigue.

Van Reybrouck's suggested solution to democratic fatigue is the reintroduction of sortition as a method of selection of democratic representatives. There is much debate, however, on the way this reintroduction of sortition should be achieved, as well as the characteristics that a sortition-based democracy should have.

Sortition-Based Democracy in Practice

For Van Reybrouck, the reintroduction of a democratic system based on sortition can serve to increase both legitimacy and efficiency of democratic government (ibid, 137). Random selection of citizens for participation in parliament gives everyone an equal chance of obtaining a political position, increasing legitimacy of the government as a representation of its citizens. Additionally, randomly selected citizens are not constrained by party politics or worries over electoral performance, freeing their time and energy for efficient and impartial government. John Gastil and Erik Olin Wright name inclusion, public control over the political agenda, and participation and voting equality as other democratic principles that sortition can enhance (Gastil and Wright, 2019, 10-13). Tom Malleson and Dimitri Courant add benefits to representativeness, political equality, impartiality, and deliberative quality to the list of sortition's advantages (Malleson 2019, 169-188; Courant 2019, 237-247). There is broad agreement among these authors on sortition's benefits for legitimacy and efficiency of government, as compared to elections - I will return to these in more detail in the next

⁷ These developments include the rise of political parties, general suffrage and civil society, as well as the more recent rise of mass commercial media and social media platforms.

⁸ This point of course is similar to Mouffe's idea of post-democracy; Van Reybrouck briefly refers to the term (van Reybrouck 2016, 52-53).

chapter. What a sortition-based democracy should look like, what a randomly selected body's mandate should be, and how its installment should be achieved, however, are topics where there is less agreement.

Gastil and Wright propose a bicameral political system, consisting of an elected chamber and another equally powerful chamber of citizens selected through stratified random selection. Other authors responding to their work broadly speaking either agree with this proposal, disagree out of wanting to limit one of the chambers' influence, or disagree on specific characteristics of the proposal. I will provide a brief survey of some possible options for the characteristics of the sortition body itself, its mandate and relation to an elected chamber, and the way towards its installment. For all three aspects, I will use Gastil and Wright's proposal as a starting point and explain some of the variations on their plans proposed by other authors.

Gastil and Wright name several 'deliberative principles' that the sortition chamber should adhere to: availability of education and resources to the chamber's members, possibilities for public input into the deliberation process, and a form of accountability and public control (Gastil and Wright 2019, 13-16). Members are offered an adequate salary for participating in a term lasting several years. After accepting their place, they are offered a training in deliberative principles and the political system. During their term, they can make use of resources and staff similar to those that elected politicians have at their disposal (ibid, 16-25). An oversight committee elected from among the sortition chamber's members monitors procedures and the deliberation process, which culminates in a secret vote in order to minimise chances of bribery or other forms of corruption. Communication with the elected chamber is regulated as much as possible in order to limit the influence of political parties on the sortition chamber. Members can be voted out of office by a qualified majority of the chamber in the event of serious misdemeanors (ibid, 25-30).

Stratified random selection seems rather uncontroversial as the selection method appropriate to a sortition chamber. The need for training and support of the chamber's members, as well as the option to remove members when needed, are also generally recognised. Other aspects of the sortition chamber named by Gastil and Wright, however, are questioned by various authors. Term length is one of the more controversial issues. David Owen and Graham Smith state that shorter terms and faster rotation are necessary to ensure political equality of the chamber's members, to prevent the forming of factions in the chamber that would resemble political parties, and to prevent corruption and outside

influence on the chamber's decisions as much as possible (Owen and Smith 2019, 288-292), points that are also named by Malleson (Malleson 2019, 173-175, 179-182). Accountability is controversial too, with Malleson naming this as one of the areas where elections perform better than sortition, since voters can electorally reward or punish representatives at the end of each term (ibid, 175-179). Other authors question this assumption. Brett Hennig emphasises the various democratic accountability mechanisms that operate without having to do with elections specifically (such as social movements, protests, and independent press and judiciary institutions) and states that elections are hardly ever decided based on a politician's past performance (Hennig 2019, 302-307). Jane Mansbridge similarly notes the many different ways in which representatives can be held accountable for their actions by their constituencies, dividing these accountability mechanisms into formal/informal and deliberative/sanction-based accountability. Her conclusion is that only formal, sanction-based accountability is likely to decrease if elections are replaced by sortition (Mansbridge 2019, 193-203). Yves Sintomer makes a similar point, in stating that citizens taking part in a sortition body develop a strong sense of accountability towards the authority initiating the sortition body, the other members, and the general public (Sintomer 2019, 72-73).

There are more topics on which the opinions differ. The need for an oversight committee is asserted by several authors, but there are differing opinions on the way in which this committee should be formed. Terrill Bouricius, for instance, states that a 'rules council' and an 'oversight council' should be selected by lot (Bouricius 2019, 330), while Gastil and Wright's proposal had the oversight committee elected from among members of the sortition chamber. There is also the question of facilitation of the deliberations in the sortition chamber; although independent facilitation is named as crucial by Lyn Carson (Carson 2019, 208, 217-220), Owen and Smith question the appropriateness of strong, interventionist facilitation in a legislative body (Owen and Smith 2019, 285-286). Decision-making procedures are yet another aspect where different options are advocated. Even if secret ballots, as proposed by Gastil and Wright, can serve to decrease possibilities for corruption, Malleson advocates open voting in the sortition chamber, and Carson states that voting should be avoided altogether as much as possible (Carson 2019, 220-221; Malleson 2019, 177-179). Lastly, there is the question of the sortition chamber's relation to the elected chamber. Pierre-Étienne Vandamme et al. fear that an equal division of power would lead to political deadlock and status quo bias, and that this will create an incentive for each chamber to attempt to delegitimise the other (Vandamme et al. 2019, 132-134). Their alternatives are either placing one of the two chambers in a consultative role, or setting up a mixed chamber

with both elected representatives and representatives selected by lot. Hennig goes further, pleading to abolish the elected chamber altogether (Hennig 2019, 309-311). Bouricius comes up with yet another alternative: an elaborate system of six institutions that each fulfill a part of the legislative process, five of which are made up of members selected through sortition, with the remaining one consisting of volunteers (Bouricius 2019, 328-330).

Bouricius' system raises the question of what the appropriate mandate for a sortition body would be. For Gastil and Wright, the sortition chamber should have full legislative powers, which it shares with the elected chamber. Bouricius rejects such a system which "violates a widely recognized principle that the bias caused by pride of authorship requires that the authors should not also be the judge of the final product" (Bouricius 2019, 325), a concern shared by Owen and Smith (Owen and Smith 2019, 292-295). In their and Bouricius' view, the legislative process should be divided over multiple sortition bodies to solve this problem. Bouricius also voices the concern that a mandate that covers all policy fields will necessitate splitting up the sortition chamber into smaller committees, potentially decreasing the representativeness of the chamber's decisions (Bouricius 2019, 324-325). More authors have their doubts about giving the sortition chamber a mandate over all (or at least multiple) policy fields. Sintomer, for example, states that a sortition body should focus on specific issues rather than general topics; in his view, a sortition body should have a mandate over "the rules of the political game, (...) solutions to highly controversial issues (...), and legislating for the long term" (Sintomer 2019, 71). This can for example include ecological issues - a topic I will return to in the next chapter. Some authors even reject the idea of a full sortition chamber altogether. James Fishkin, for example, warns for the high risk of corruption in a longer-term sortition chamber with a broad mandate. He is also skeptical about the technical expertise of lay citizens when asked to deliberate on many pieces of legislature simultaneously, and about maintaining the right conditions for deliberation over time (Fishkin 2019, 82-86). He argues for shorter-term randomly selected 'minipublics'⁹ that act as a 'filter' on legislative proposals, either before or after an elected or participatory chamber discusses these proposals (ibid, 89-98). On the other hand, Malleson argues that it is virtually impossible to isolate any one policy area from other areas, because of the way multiple topics in a legislature tend to influence each other - a large practical objection to limiting the sortition chamber's mandate to any one topic (Malleson 2019, 182-186).

⁹ Meaning a representative sample of citizens, gathered to deliberate on and evaluate a certain topic, but as a one-off or temporary institution instead of a full sortition chamber.

While opinions thus differ on the characteristics and mandate appropriate for a legislative body selected by lot, there is more agreement on the path that should be taken towards implementing a sortition body. Gastil and Wright stress the importance of introducing the sortition body through democratic means, and state that this might be done gradually, starting at regional political bodies, currently existing legislative chambers selected by appointment, or newly formed democratic governments (Gastil and Wright 2019, 35-38). Such a gradualist approach to introducing a sortition body is also defended by Deven Burks and Raphaël Kies, who state that this approach can prevent public and political delegitimation of the sortition body through sudden introduction of either too strong or too weak sortition bodies. It can also ensure that sortition gradually becomes better-known and thereby more popular among the general public (Burks and Kies 2019, 259-267). Their proposal is to start with more institutionalised deliberative minipublics, and to gradually give more power to sortition from there (*ibid*, 274-277). This view is supported by Mansbridge and Malleson (Mansbridge 2019, 201-203; Malleson 2019, 188). Even the quite radical proposals of Bouricius and Van Reybrouck support such a gradual transition to sortition: Bouricius argues that “peeling away issue areas and transferring them one at a time from elected to sortition bodies provides a plausible path toward institutional change” (Bouricius 2019, 332), Van Reybrouck provides a five-step plan for introduction of a sortition body and a plea for a temporary bicameral system (van Reybrouck 2016, 138-150). Andrea Felicetti and Donatella della Porta add a strong connection to social movements and, if possible, a bottom-up introduction as conditions for successful introduction of sortition with support of social movements (Felicetti and della Porta 2019, 161-165). In brief, there seems to be some consensus on the importance of gradually introducing sortition bodies into legislative systems; disagreements on this point mostly concern what the end goal of the introduction of sortition should be.

I have summarized Van Reybrouck’s reasons for introducing sortition, and provided an overview of various positions on how it may be viably and legitimately implemented in practice, as well as the way in which this body should be introduced. In the next section, I will examine how XR’s proposal for a citizens’ assembly on climate justice fits into this broad survey of sortition’s possibilities.

The Citizens' Assembly on Climate Justice: a Closer Examination

In this section, I will reconstruct XR's reasons for introducing a citizens' assembly selected by lot, relating them to Van Reybrouck's reasoning and some of the other advantages of sortition. I will then examine XR's proposal in relation to the literature surveyed in the previous section in terms of the sortition body's characteristics, mandate, and means of introduction.

The Case for a Citizens' Assembly

As explained in the section on XR's plans for a Citizens' Assembly, the main arguments that the group provides for installing such an assembly are the lack of effective climate change action and inclusivity in the current political system. These two points resemble Van Reybrouck's crises of efficiency and legitimacy, respectively. Especially XR's points regarding the pressure of lobbying, the importance of mediagenicity and the focus on short-term problems (XR Citizens' Assemblies Working Group 2019, 16) are strikingly similar to Van Reybrouck's argumentation on the crisis of efficiency (van Reybrouck 2016, 16-22). Even if Van Reybrouck's argumentation regarding the crisis of legitimacy, focusing primarily on the loss of political participation and party loyalty, differs somewhat from that of XR, the group's points regarding inclusivity can be seen as related to this same crisis. The inclusivity that current democracies often lack according to XR can be seen as a failure to provide descriptive representativeness (XR Citizens' Assemblies Working Group 2019, 15) - a problem which leads to the same questions of legitimacy as Van Reybrouck poses based on the lack of political participation in large parts of society. I will elaborate on the topic of descriptive representativeness in the next chapter.

XR's reasoning also matches the advantages of sortition mentioned by Courant and Malleson. The impartiality and decreased influence of the media that XR states a citizens' assembly can promote are named by Courant (Courant 2019, 239-241); the group's point of sortition increasing political equality is also put forward by both Courant and Malleson (ibid, 237-238; Malleson 2019, 171-175). Increase in deliberative quality, another main reason for XR to demand a citizens' assembly, is named by Malleson (ibid, 179-182) and various other authors. It is interesting to see, however, that the disadvantages of sortition that Malleson names - its weak performance in terms of popular control and competency, as compared to elections (ibid, 175-179, 182-186) - are not mentioned by XR. On the other hand, in the specific case of climate justice governance, it can be argued that popular control and especially competence have proven lackluster in nearly all democratic governments

worldwide. This appears to be the (more or less implicit) reason for XR to not question the competency or accountability of the citizens' assembly: if, as the group argues, current democracies have consistently failed to effectively counter climate change in any way, due to powerful lobbying and fear of electoral loss and/or negative media coverage (XR Citizens' Assemblies Working Group 2019, 16), one can question how problematic a loss of 'competence' or 'popular control' in this policy field could really be.

The Citizens' Assembly in Practice

What would XR's citizens' assembly look like in practice, in terms of the body's characteristics, mandate, and installment? The group states that it "will soon publish a more detailed presentation of our demands for the citizens' assembly on climate and ecological justice" (ibid, 5); not all characteristics of their intended citizens' assembly are entirely clear at this point. My discussion here is based on currently available documentation, but at certain points some speculation will be inevitable.

As mentioned above, XR's citizens' assembly will consist of members selected through stratified random sampling in order to promote inclusivity. The term length and size of the assembly are not explicitly named, but my impression is that the citizens' assembly is meant to be a permanent institution with a quickly (likely per case, act, etc.) rotating membership, akin to the proposal made by Owen and Smith (Owen and Smith 2019, 288-292). Wanting 'the government' to be 'led by' this citizens' assembly seems unlikely without some degree of institutionalisation and permanence, but the succession of steps that are named for the practical organisation of such an assembly (XR Citizens' Assemblies Working Group 2019, 10-14) gives the impression that there will be no permanent membership involved. It therefore appears that the intention is to gather a new representative sample for each question put to the assembly. This immediately sets the proposal apart from Gastil and Wright's sortition chamber, but is also different from a one-off minipublic as described by Fishkin by virtue of the permanent character of the institution. Neutral facilitation is ensured by a 'facilitation team', in a way adhering to the points made by Carson on this topic (Carson 2019, 217-220). Owen and Smith's questions on the appropriateness of facilitation in a legislative body seem less relevant to shorter-term deliberations as proposed here. As for the different 'elements' of the assembly that are named, the proposed 'advisory board' and 'oversight panel' (XR Citizens' Assemblies Working Group 2019, 8-9) resemble Bouricius' review panels and oversight council (Bouricius 2019, 328-330), although they are not selected by lot as in Bouricius' plan. Quality of deliberations and protection from outside

influence are briefly named (XR Citizens' Assemblies Working Group 2019, 8, 11), but there is no explicit discussion of accountability, apart from mention of a requirement for procedural transparency which appears to be intended as a form of formal, deliberative accountability as described by Mansbridge (*ibid*, 14; Mansbridge 2019, 195-199).

The mandate of the citizens' assembly appears limited on the one hand, as the end result of an assembly is a report containing recommendations (XR Citizens' Assemblies Working Group, 12). These are reviewed by the existing elected parliament, which retains formal decision-making power for recommendations failing to meet a certain degree of support in the assembly. On the other hand, the assembly will have a mandate on all issues regarding climate justice, which potentially gives it at least some power over a very broad range of policy proposals and fits Sintomer's idea of a sortition body being a good fit to govern long-term issues (Sintomer 2019, 71). This does, however, raise the question of how it will be determined whether or not a proposal needs to be examined by the citizens' assembly. Accepting that climate justice is a topic that at least touches upon environmental, social, and economic policy, the amount of times the citizens' assembly needs to be called into action could become very high. If we accept Malleson's point on the interdependencies between policy fields (Malleson 2019, 184-185), this question becomes even more daunting. It almost appears as if, following this reasoning, an assembly should be gathered on nearly every topic passing through parliament - which appears not to be what XR proposes. It is not entirely clear what the movement would count as the mandate of the assembly, but this is a point that would heavily impact the effect that the assembly could have in 'radicalising' climate change policy.

Lastly, the question of the way of introducing the assembly. The assembly would operate on a national scale, which the movement states has "the power to tackle the scale and scope of necessary action" (XR Citizens' Assemblies Working Group 2019, 7). This already sets the plans apart from several of the options for gradualist introduction of sortition into political systems, which call for a start at local or regional levels or even at school or university councils (Gastil and Wright 2019, 36; Mansbridge 2019, 202). On the other hand, the idea of limiting the body's mandate to a single area can in itself be seen as a manner of gradualist introduction of sortition (Bouricius 2019, 332). The question remains, however, whether or not XR intends to expand the use of sortition beyond the climate justice field. This question is not addressed in XR's documentation on the topic, but could prove highly consequential in the possibilities for success of their proposal; it seems reasonable that an introduction in 'just' one field in a consultative role is more achievable than a more general

introduction, even if gradual (Vandamme et al. 2019, 136-137). In any case, two final points can be made: XR's proposal fits the idea of the 'institutionalised minipublic' that Burks and Kies see as an appropriate first step in a gradualist approach to sortition (Burks and Kies, 274-277), and it naturally has the broad social movement support and bottom-up approach that Felicetti and della Porta claim to be essential for success (Felicetti and della Porta 2019, 162-165).

With this, I have given an elaborate account of XR's demand that a sortition-based citizens' assembly be installed, and situated their plans within the academic debate on sortition as a democratic selection method. In the next chapter, I will contrast XR's political view with the left populism of the GND. I will examine in more detail the understanding of democracy that each approach entails, and assess the implications and appropriateness of each method for the topic of climate justice.

3. Climate Justice and Democratic Understanding

In the previous two chapters, two climate justice movements with similar goals, but highly different methods were examined. While both the GND and XR strive for what can be briefly summarised as ‘climate justice’, both movements have divergent views of the political strategy that fits this goal. The GND aims for climate justice through representative democracy, in a manner that I have shown to presuppose a left populist strategy. XR, on the other hand, sees sortition-based democracy in a citizens’ assembly on climate change as the way forward. Both methods entail different views on democracy, the role of citizens, and democratic principles, and as a consequence both movements employ different democratic strategies. In this chapter, I will turn to the main question of this thesis, starting with a comparison of the understandings of democracy that each movement implies. Afterwards, I will argue that a combination of both strategies is the most promising approach for governing climate justice, and provide a description of what this might look like in practice. What this comparison shows is not only that although the understandings of democracy of the two approaches differ, they can be united; it also shows that a discussion of climate justice is inevitably also one of what is understood by ‘democracy’.

Comparing Democratic Understandings

In my comparison of the understandings of democracy that are implied in the movements under discussion, I will focus on three key aspects. These are the understanding of political representation, the role of antagonism and conflict, and the role of affect and emotion. I will examine each in turn, describe the different understandings of the two approaches on each aspect, and link these to the topic of climate justice specifically. Of course there is also a difference between the two understandings of democracy on the question of whether or not radical socio-economic changes require institutional changes in the political system. However, since this difference was sufficiently addressed in the previous chapters, I will not go into further detail on it here.

Political Representation: Articulation and Descriptive Representativeness

A first point where the democratic understanding of both movements differs, is in their understanding of the concept of political representation, essential to representative democracy. For the left populist approach, the concept of articulation as explained in the first chapter is central to representation. Before the articulation of a chain of equivalence, there is

no political identity and mobilisation: the articulation by which a certain signifier comes to represent a series of demands is crucial (Laclau 2007, 161-162). Citizens' political identities are shaped during the emergence of a popular will - they need to be constructed, and cannot be assumed to already exist, merely in need of expression. Representation is here understood as an empty signifier coming to represent a series of demands - a process which, in turn, requires representation in the sense of political representatives drawing the links between these demands in the process of articulation. The 'popular will' or 'people' central to a left populism depends on this process of articulation, and is understood as an ever-changing outcome of clashing chains of equivalence.

In the case of the GND, this understanding of representation is visible both in the sense that one signifier comes to represent the entirety of the GND, and in the sense that political representation is conditional for the process of articulation. I have argued before that 'justice' as an empty signifier is employed to represent the GND more generally. Moreover, the linkages drawn by political representatives between the topics that the GND intends to incorporate are essential both for establishing the 'popular will' that the GND will strive for, and for gathering sufficient popular support.

This understanding of representation is highly different from that of sortition-based democracy. While a left populism understands representation as political representatives articulating popular demands, a sortition-based perspective understands representation more directly, in the sense of descriptive representativeness ensuring that a sortition body makes decisions that reflect "what the people would think about the issue under good conditions for thinking about it" (Fishkin 2019, 98). As with a left populism, the assumption is thus that the popular will needs to be constructed: it does not just exist 'out there', but takes shape during the process of deliberation in a sortition body. Yet the difference, of course, is in the way this construction takes place. Instead of an articulation by political representatives linking different popular demands, a representative selection of citizens deliberates in order to shape the popular will. Of course there are political representatives in this approach as well, but the 'popular will' is *not* understood in the sense of a signifier representing a series of demands. Rather, the fact that the representatives are descriptively representative of the general population is believed to ensure that their decisions represent a popular will understood as 'what the people would think'. The crisis of legitimacy as signalled by Van Reybrouck is thereby avoided by definition in a sortition-based system.

In XR's Citizens' Assembly, this understanding of representation is visible in the assumption that deliberation by a representative group of citizens will ensure that decisions

are taken “in a fair and informed way” (XR Citizens’ Assemblies Working Group 2019, 16). Implicitly, for XR this of course means that the ‘fair and informed’ judgement of citizens will be one that acknowledges the need for radical action on environmental and social justice issues. The assumption is that a descriptively representative group of citizens will come to the conclusion that climate justice is a necessary approach, if this group of citizens is given the time to study the issues that climate justice pertains to (ibid, 5). In other words: if the popular will is constructed through deliberation of a representative sample of citizens, this popular will is assumed to be one that takes climate justice seriously.

The main aim of employing descriptive representativeness and deliberation as the way in which the popular will takes form, is to promote political equality among citizens. Sortition might thereby even be seen as a way to radicalise equality, as radical democracy would propose. Sintomer, for example, sees a government that mixes different approaches to democracy (deliberative, representative, etc.) to govern “social, economic, and ecological changes” as part of what he calls a ‘radical democratic turn’ (Sintomer 2017, 68) - although Mouffe opposes this view for lack of understanding the crucial role of representation and political parties (Mouffe 2019, 55-57). This is Mouffe’s main argument against sortition as a selection method, and while she appears to critique a system based solely on sortition, some of this critique also pertains to plans for a combined system such as XR’s. In Mouffe’s view, political positions arise collectively, that is they are formed in the antagonisms between societal groups that are essential to a pluralist politics. A sortition-based approach, Mouffe argues, “promotes a vision of politics as the terrain where individuals, unencumbered by constitutive social links, would defend their personal opinions” (ibid, 56). The impartial deliberations that are so important to XR’s approach would then mean that a constitutive part of politics disappears by losing the symbolic role of parties in representing popular demands. The question of representation thereby touches upon the definition of radical democracy: while, for Mouffe’s left populism, radicalising democracy presupposes an electoral-representative system, a case can be made for seeing a sortition-based system as a radicalisation of at least the equality component of democracy.

To sum up: the concept of political representation, crucial to representative democracy, is understood differently in both approaches - giving a first hint at how the climate justice debate also implies a debate on our understanding of democracy, albeit one that takes place ‘on the background’ of the more direct discussion on climate justice.

Conflict and Consensus

A second point of difference between the understandings of democracy of the two approaches lies in the role each attributes to conflict in politics. From the importance of articulation to left populism follows the importance of a sharp division in society, along which articulation can take place (Laclau 2007, 83-93). As described in the first chapter, this division between a ‘people’ and an establishment entails the coming into being of a popular identity - a construction that is not only conditional to the possibility of populism, but to democracy in general (ibid, 169). This means that, for a left populism, struggle and opposition become essential to politics: without the opposition between two camps in an antagonism, there is no construction of the people. Opposition is not something to be overcome, but an essential feature of politics.

This understanding is visible in the example of the GND, in the sense that it is a rejection of consensus-oriented politics. Climate policy often *does* entail a search for consensus, or what Swyngedouw calls a ‘non-political politics’ (Swyngedouw 2013), where climate action is presented as necessary, but the way of taking action becomes a matter of management and technicalities, rather than an issue that is actively debated. The GND puts a radical questioning of neoliberal economic logic opposite this mainstream climate politics. The importance of a sharp division between ‘people’ and ‘establishment’ in a left populism shows in the way this radical questioning of neoliberal logic takes the form of a sharp opposition against political and economic ‘business as usual’.

This central role of conflict and opposition is not present in a sortition-based approach. On the contrary, such an approach emphasises striving for consensus: “when a group deliberates, it *seeks* consensus without requiring its achievement” (Carson 2019, 211, italics in original). However, decision-making by consensus is not a requirement of deliberative, sortition-based democracy, and there are plenty of other options thinkable (ibid, 220-221). The opinions of participants in deliberative minipublics selected by lot do however tend to change over the duration of deliberations (van Reybrouck 2016, 105), and it is likely that they converge into a final opinion that is more or less consensually agreed upon. In any case, this is a far cry from a left populism’s sharp division in society. Rather than aiming for sharp political opposition, a deliberative democracy based on sortition has the ideal of ending up with a ‘popular will’ that is more or less agreed upon by the participants.

In XR's Citizens' Assembly, we see this importance of consensus in the assumption that a climate justice approach will be for the 'common good'¹⁰, meaning that it will be an approach that the citizens' assembly can reach some degree of consensus on. This is again different from the assumptions of the GND: XR's citizens' assembly is an attempt at overcoming divides rather than seeing them as necessary for climate justice's success. XR's three main demands (Knights 2019, 11) are telling in this regard: they are challenges to an existing 'government', that however is *not* cast as an establishment to oppose (as in the GND).

What this comparison shows is another point where the two approaches have a different understanding of what democracy entails: does a democratic politics require antagonism, conflict and division, as in a left populism? Or should the aim of a democratic politics ultimately be to reach consensus, as in a deliberative, sortition-based body? Again, what also becomes apparent here is that the discussion of these climate justice movements effectively presupposes a discussion of our understanding of democracy.

Affect and Rationality

Thirdly, the two approaches differ in the role given to emotion and affect. As explained in the first chapter, a left populism sees affect and emotion as a crucial aspect of politics, meaning that the affective dimension of populism is not to be dismissed as 'irrational'. This role of affect is clearly visible in the GND. Klein, for example, alludes to the importance of providing a hopeful story of the future for gathering support for the GND (Klein 2019, 268-270). Mouffe makes this point as well, and adds that the story of a left populism should start from people's daily lives (Mouffe 2019, 76). Proponents of the GND should thus not underestimate the importance of making the GND emotionally as well as rationally desirable; that is, they should ensure that the role of affect is not neglected. The general point that is implied in the importance that Klein and Mouffe ascribe to the affective is that a GND does not and should not strive to be a rational endeavour only; its political strategy needs to acknowledge the importance of the affective dimension. It would seem that both environmental protection and social justice are issues that lend themselves well to such an approach: both can have a direct impact on people's lives, and both are topics that are generally argued for through rational discussion as well as through emotion.

¹⁰ This is not said explicitly, but the 'common good' is named as one of the goals of a citizens' assembly (XR Citizens' Assemblies Working Group 2019, 7), implying that such an assembly on climate justice would serve this common good.

A sortition-based approach, on the contrary, emphasises the importance of rationality and unbiased decision-making. The entire purpose of deliberative decision-making in a sortition body is, as described above, to come to decisions representing the general population's will, in a 'fair and informed way' - something that is also visible in such reasonings as Van Reybrouck's, which criticize the fact that politicians ultimately need to be charismatic and well-liked in order to stand a chance at political success. The difference to the 'radical investment' that emotion needs to ensure in a left populist approach is clear, as is the importance that the example of XR's Citizens' Assembly gives to rationality and prevention of bias. The latter is visible in the above-mentioned assumption implicit in XR's reasoning that a group of citizens will come to effective decisions against climate change, if given a fair chance to deliberate and gain knowledge on the topic. The idea is that a view of climate justice as necessary will arise because representatives convince each other of the need for such an approach based on facts, expert hearings, and deliberation; it is *not* that representatives employ the affective dimension of the topic to ensure support for their views. Here, too, the different understandings of what a democratic politics should be becomes apparent - as does, yet again, the fact that a discussion of approaches to climate justice ultimately implies a discussion of democratic understanding.

Finally, it is noteworthy that on this last point of the role of affect versus prevention of bias and favoring rationality and impartiality, both approaches are vulnerable to criticism. Anton Jäger questions how likely a left populism is to achieve a true, long-lasting mass mobilisation of citizens, thereby effectively criticising the need for 'radical investment' named by Laclau and Mouffe (Jäger 2019). In Jäger's view, left populism is both 'too left' and 'too populist' to achieve such a mobilisation. Left populism might simply prove too radically left-wing for a large part of voters, preventing the affective dimension of a left populism from ensuring the sought-after investment in its values. There could also be problems when highly different societal groups need to be united behind one cause. Another question that Jäger poses is if the 'masses' that need to be mobilised for a successful left populism even exist today: with high voter volatility and low faith in political representatives, it is questionable if a new left populist movement can achieve the mass mobilisation that it needs. A sortition-based approach faces a different risk: the danger of technocratic capture of deliberations that are intended to be impartial. While much can be done to ensure fair deliberation, ultimately the information provided to the assembly will need to be selected somehow. There lies a large responsibility here with the institution that decides which

information is and is not presented, which could potentially provide incentives for corruption or manipulation.

With this, I have shown that there are at least three aspects where the understanding of democracy that is implied in the movements under study show fundamental differences. The discussion of the democratic strategy appropriate to an ideal of climate justice thus also touches upon the more fundamental question of what one believes democracy to be; I will return to this point in the conclusion. First, I will discuss what democratic strategy would seem most appropriate for a climate-justice oriented movement. In my view, even the fundamental differences outlined in this section can be overcome, and the most promising strategy for climate justice would be a combined one. If the debate on climate justice indeed ultimately is one of democratic understanding, it would seem appropriate to examine the consequences of such a discussion for the political practice of governing climate justice.

The Case for a Combined Approach

The most promising approach to climate justice in my view is a combination of an election-based GND programme with the addition of new sortition-based institutions to the political landscape. Before I describe what this could look like in practice, I will briefly argue for the merits of a combined approach. I will proceed in two parts. First, I will consider why the different understandings of democracy that both approaches entail do not contradict each other, despite their marked differences. Afterwards, I will argue for the strategic advantages of a combination of the two.

The previous section made clear that a left populist approach and a sortition-based one are ultimately based on different understandings of democracy. On all three aspects discussed above, however, these understandings do not exclude one another; they might even be seen as complementary. Firstly, representation as articulation and representation as descriptive representativeness can very well exist simultaneously in one system, and might reinforce one another. For instance, it would be possible that a discourse of climate justice as constructed by political representatives becomes one of the viewpoints discussed in a deliberative session among a descriptively representative sample of citizens, or for the outcomes of a deliberation to become one of the demands articulated in a discursive construction of the popular will. Moreover, the aim of both interpretations of representation is highly similar: both intend to construct a ‘popular will’ that more closely represents the will

of 'the people' than current political outcomes do. In other words: both approaches intend to give a larger role to citizens in democratic decision-making than is currently the case.

Secondly, the different views on the role of conflict and consensus can coexist at different 'levels' of the political system. The antagonism that a left populism presupposes can be said to take place on a very different scale than that of the consensus-seeking deliberation in a sortition body. The first is a (discursively constructed) conflict on the scale of society as a whole, whereas the second takes place on the scale of a representation of society. This difference is important. The relevance of antagonisms to the discursive construction of a popular will does not mean that this antagonism cannot be negotiated to a certain degree of consensus in a sortition body, or that there cannot be some degree of consensus *within* the people that is constructed. Likewise, the fact that a sortition body strives for consensus on a certain topic does not mean that there can be no sharp antagonism at a societal level on this topic, which is then emphasised in the construction of a people.

Thirdly, as was alluded to in the previous section, both the emphasis on affect of left populism and the emphasis on impartiality and rationality of sortition have their weaknesses - but depending on institutional design, they might come to balance one another. I agree with Laclau and Mouffe that criticising the perceived 'irrationality' or vagueness of the arguments made in populism misses the point of populism as a political logic that aims to construct political identities; rather than being irrational, populism has a rationality 'of its own' (Laclau 2007, 17-20). Still, I would say that the arguments made in a left populism should be able to withstand the scrutiny of a deliberative approach. Even if a left populism needs affect to achieve the mobilisation of citizens, its demands could still be subjected to an impartial weighing of viewpoints in a deliberative chamber. A deliberative chamber could judge left populist demands the same as any other, and thereby also act as a way of controlling the power of the so-called irrationality of populism.

The two approaches thus do not exclude each other on the level of their understandings of democracy, even if there are significant differences. Not only does this show that a unification of these two movements might be possible, there is the further implication that a left populism and sortition more generally might be compatible. Essentially, both are constructivist outlooks on the way in which a democratic politics aims to shape a popular will to base its decision-making on. It is noteworthy that in both approaches under discussion here, the procedure of democratic decision-making, and thereby the institutional form that democracy assumes, are key elements in the construction of the popular will. Importantly, if the popular will is constructed during (and not before) the

process of democratic decision-making - be this through articulation of a linkage of demands, or through deliberation of a group of citizens - this means that the design of this process and the associated institutions are an essential part of the shaping of the popular will. If one accepts this constructivist outlook, it follows that one needs to consider what the design of the institutions where the popular will would be (mostly¹¹) formed should look like. This would be essential in order to be able to fully consider the implications of the views on democracy studied here. In other words: a discussion of these understandings of democracy, in my view, needs at least some discussion of the institutional design appropriate to them. It is for this reason that I conclude this chapter with a proposal for what the combination of these two understandings of democracy might look like in practice.

Apart from these theoretical considerations, there is also the strategic point that elections and sortition, as Vandamme et al. argue, have ‘complementary virtues’ (Vandamme et al. 2019, 129-131), meaning that each has benefits for democratic values where the other is less powerful. Sortition performs well in terms of impartial, representative decision-making, while elections are important for contestation and make some degree of political participation possible for all citizens. In my evaluation of both approaches for the purpose of climate justice, other such complementary virtues have become apparent.

The GND’s left populist approach could very effectively counter the neoliberal ‘post-political’ logic that has caused the problems climate justice intends to address. The case can be made convincingly that it is precisely neoliberal, consensus-driven ‘post-politics’ that has prevented serious action on these problems. A radical opposition against this sort of politics, with broad popular support ensured through an incorporation of a large variety of popular demands, would likely prove a very effective way of addressing them. The emphasis on emotion and affect could prove valuable as well - the success of right-wing populism shows that emphasising affect can be a valuable political strategy. However, the lack of institutional change to existing political systems raises the question of how different to existing politics a left populist approach can really be. There is little to the GND to ensure that the problems of legitimacy and efficiency that van Reybrouck signals in current politics (van Reybrouck 2016, 13-22) will not arise in the GND’s left populism. It is entirely conceivable that, should

¹¹ Of course, especially according to Laclau and Mouffe’s theoretical approach, not all articulation of the popular will would take place in what are traditionally considered political institutions. Still, I would state that political institutions are an important part of the ‘field’ in which the popular will would be shaped.

a left populist government proposing a GND attain some degree of power, its plans are thwarted by such problems as the pressure of upcoming elections, resistance from powerful interests favoring business-as-usual, or the need for political compromise in areas where this is least desirable - not to mention the risks of top-down introduction of climate policy in general¹². All this makes it questionable to what extent a different political strategy within existing political institutions, even if it proposes radical changes, can really attain the different politics that it proposes. A consideration of the minimal results achieved by left populist parties rising to power in Greece or Spain, or at the way promising left populist campaigns have stranded in France, the U.K., and the U.S., shows the urgency of this question (Slager 2020).

In a sortition-based approach, on the other hand, the radical social and economic changes of a climate justice approach *are* accompanied by institutional changes. There are convincing arguments for why a sortition-based approach empowering citizens would lead to much-needed different outcomes with regards to climate justice than those of the existing representative system. Whereas for the GND it is uncertain how such problems will be countered, a citizens' assembly avoids these problems altogether. The advantages of a sortition-based system, such as lack of party discipline or concern for voters' favour, would seem especially appropriate for governing a topic such as climate justice, where short-term vested interests and fear of electoral backlash continue to prevent any serious political action (see also Sintomer 2019, 71). An ideal of having climate action benefit social justice and security across society also matches well with an ideal of improving political equality and representativeness, thereby increasing the political power of the 'average' citizen. Apart from this, there exists evidence of cooperation between citizens selected by lot and politicians in a mixed chamber not only yielding well-received results, but also improving the politicians' view of the political capacity of citizens (Arnold, Farrell, and Suiter 2019, 118-119) – a beneficial effect which the sortition-based approach can be assumed to yield in other institutional configurations as well.

However, a fundamental critique on the sortition-based approach is that there is little to make certain that citizens in XR's assembly, after deliberation, will come to conclusions that favour climate justice. It will be difficult to ensure this, without somehow steering the assembly's deliberations - which defeats its entire purpose. Thus there remains the option

¹² A well-known example would be the yellow vests movement in France, which started as a protest against climate policy introduced without due consideration for the interests of (lower-income) citizens.

that, especially if information from ‘both sides’ on a topic needs to be heard, the citizens’ assembly will make decisions *against* climate justice. While this is no challenge to the logic of sortition-based deliberation, it does pose a challenge to XR’s entire case for a sortition body introduced with the specific purpose of striving for climate justice. The GND fares better here, as a detailed programme for climate justice-oriented policy.

Considering this brief evaluation, and the non-mutually exclusive nature of the two approaches discussed above, I would plead for a combination of the GND’s effective, well-developed plans for climate justice, with (a variation on) XR’s sortition-based assembly to counter problems with elected representation. This combination can ensure that the good sides of both approaches are maintained, while their weaknesses are compensated for. In the next paragraph I will provide a more detailed description of what this could look like in practice.

Proposal for a Combined Approach to Climate Justice

As stated above, I think that accepting a constructivist outlook on the shaping of the popular will in a democracy necessitates at least some attention given to the institutional design of democratic decision-making. This is my primary reason to provide a proposal for the design of the decision-making procedure here. A secondary reason would be that the differences between the two democratic understandings studied here can be bridged on the theoretical level; it would in my view be an omission not to discuss the way this theoretical possibility for unification might be reflected in a practical institutional design for democratic decision-making. Having said this, I will discuss the two main elements of my proposal for a democratic strategy for climate justice in turn. First I will examine the execution of a left populist approach to the GND, after which I turn to a discussion of the modified version of XR’s citizens’ assembly that I would propose.

A successful introduction of the GND is indispensable to climate justice as a political goal: it provides an elaborate framework for the far-reaching changes that a climate justice approach needs. I believe a left populist approach to be the most promising to get the necessary popular support for this framework. Employing such an approach can serve to promote the discourse of the GND as one that citizens can subscribe to. A first, perhaps obvious, consideration here is that the GND should not emphasise its left populist nature. As Jäger notes, being ‘too left’ and/or ‘too populist’ has been one of the reasons for many left populist movements to fail. The programme needs support beyond traditionally left-wing

constituencies, and should construct a people against neoliberalism's failures without emphasising its left-wing nature. What the GND should emphasise instead is its central empty signifier of 'justice'. Any popular demand for justice that can be unified with the other demands of the GND, should be taken up into its approach to make its support base as broad as possible. While this runs the risk of losing the focus of the programme, I believe that the existing practical proposals for the GND are well-developed enough that they can hold as the programme's 'core', even if a broad range of demands is added.

While the exact demands of the GND can thus be variable, one of them should be that for a sortition-based citizens' assembly, described in more detail below. Mouffe dismisses sortition as a way to radicalise democracy, but her view does leave the option open for its employment in certain places alongside elections (Mouffe 2019, 69-70). I would argue that, when used in such a way, sortition *can* be seen as a part of the radicalisation of democracy, through giving each citizen a chance of being selected for a political function. In the case of climate justice especially, I have argued above that this possibility for citizens to influence lawmaking can be highly valuable to prevent some of the problems with current political institutions that a left populism might also run into. The citizens' assembly can be a concrete proposal for more equally distributed power on climate justice, and thereby a valuable asset to the GND.

What would this assembly look like? I would propose that, in Fishkin's terms, the assembly is a 'post-filter' institution (Fishkin 2019, 93-94) that evaluates proposals for laws drafted by the elected chamber. This way, the right of initiative and agenda setting are retained for the elected chamber, and the dangers of having one institution in charge of the entire law-making procedure are avoided (Bouricius 2019, 324-325; Owen and Smith 2019, 292-295). The mandate of the assembly would be the binding approval or rejection of *all* drafted legislative proposals coming from the elected chamber. In my view, climate justice is too broad of a topic for any clear demarcation of what does and does not fall under it, making the system XR proposes less feasible. In addition, there is the aforementioned point made by Malleson (Malleson 2019, 184-185) of policy fields being hard to isolate from one another. The assembly would thus have a role similar to that of the 'policy jury' in Bouricius' proposal (Bouricius 2019, 328-330).

There would be several options to turn this introduction of a powerful new political institution into a more gradual or moderate approach, to minimise resistance from citizens or policymakers (Burks and Kies 2019, 261-264). For one, there is Fishkin's idea of only putting those proposals that fall below a certain threshold of approval in the elected chamber

to the citizens' assembly (Fishkin 2019, 94). Another possibility would be to employ a similar logic for the citizens' assembly's decisions, as discussed by Owen and Smith (Owen and Smith 2019, 298). A third option for a more gradual introduction of the citizens' assembly would be to have the assembly at first assess only the climate impact of proposals made by the elected chamber, empowering it to put proposals back to the latter if they are found lacking in this regard.

While the institution of the citizens' assembly should be permanent (Sintomer 2019, 70-71), I agree with the case for fast rotation of its membership (Owen and Smith 2019, 288-292). This reduces the possibilities for corruption and outside influence, gives citizens a higher chance of being selected at least once in their lifetime, and makes membership accessible to everyone. Problems that this might cause in terms of competence of members can be mitigated by Owen and Smith's idea of having a larger randomly selected 'pool' of members that stay in this pool for one or two years, out of which a smaller sample is drawn each time the assembly needs to be convened (ibid, 297). This assembly would be brief, and assemblies can be held as often as necessary to be able to evaluate all proposals. Participation in the 'pool' of citizens should in principle be mandatory to ensure descriptive representativeness and political equality.

When an assembly is called together, the design as XR has currently proposed it could be followed, with attention for the phases of learning, consultation, and deliberation (XR Citizens' Assemblies Working Group 2019, 12). Given the short duration of the assemblies, skilled facilitation as described by Carson would be important (Carson 2019, 217-220; Owen and Smith 2019, 285-286). As the primary accountability mechanism, I would propose forms of Mansbridge's deliberative, formal accountability, for example through obliging the assembly to produce written accounts of the reasoning behind its decisions (Mansbridge 2019, 195). Apart from this, I would propose two smaller councils selected by lot from among earlier participants of the assembly akin to Bouricius' rules council and oversight council (Bouricius 2019, 330). The first would monitor the system's rules and improve these over time. The second would oversee impartiality of the information provided to the assembly and balance of the invited experts.

I believe that this proposal can prevent some of the pitfalls of both electoral and sortition-based systems, and strengthen both parts through their combination. Moreover, this proposal incorporates the differing understandings of democracy of the two approaches to climate justice discussed in this thesis in a combination that can preserve both.

Conclusion

This thesis began with the observation of two movements which employ highly different methods for achieving compatible ideals of ‘climate justice’, in which environmental action is coupled to social and economic reforms. I have shown that the Green New Deal, on the one hand, presupposes a left populist strategy, as understood by Laclau and Mouffe. Extinction Rebellion, on the other hand, proposes the addition of a deliberative sortition-based Citizens’ Assembly to the political landscape. Both approaches to the topic imply different understandings of democracy, but might in my view nevertheless be reconciled in a system that would combine elements of each. My answer to the main question of this thesis would thus be that the understandings of democracy underlying the climate justice debate (as exemplified by the two movements studied here) range from left populism to deliberative, sortition-based democracy; an important addition to that answer would be that these different understandings, when combined, might come to reinforce one another, as I have demonstrated in my proposal for a combination of the two approaches studied here.

There is, however, a broader conclusion to be drawn from my discussion of these two approaches to climate justice. This conclusion is, as was hinted at in the third chapter, that a debate of climate justice always implies a debate of what is understood as democracy, and a debate of what should be the main aims of a democratic political system. At first sight, the different ideas on how to achieve a combination of countering climate change and countering social inequality (of which this thesis has of course discussed but two - far from all that exist) would seem to merely entail different strategies. But on closer examination, the differences between the two approaches discussed here appear to be underpinned by differing views on democracy. Can we assume the popular will to follow out of a deliberation of a representative set of citizens, or does such an approach miss the collective element of politics? Should democratic decision-making be based on broad consensus, or is conflict essential to democracy? Can a democratic decision be reduced to a rational and impartial assessment, or does emotion always play a role? And perhaps most fundamentally, can we entrust the need to make radical changes in our socio-economic system to the existing electoral-representative system, or do these changes require novel political institutions?

It is not just in the discussion of these two movements that such questions inevitably need to be answered to further the climate justice debate. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine any other movements in-depth, it would seem likely that more ‘traditional’ environmental movements or green political parties would come to different answers on these

topics than the climate justice movements discussed here; let alone the answers that would follow from approaches with less direct emphasis on national politics, such as municipalism-inspired ecosocialism movements. Discussing the ways in which our society is to counter climate change thereby always implicitly entails a discussion of the direction our democracies should take. And while it might not always be explicitly the aim of environmental movements to question existing democratic systems, these movements *do* put the results achieved by existing political systems into question, coming up with ways in which these systems might be changed in order to perform better in countering climate change. Aside from aiming to counter environmental and socio-economic problems, the aim is implicitly to improve the functioning of democratic systems in governing these fields. It can be convincingly argued that current democracies have failed to make any meaningful progress on these topics, especially in countering climate change. The need for the discussion on our understanding of democracy that is implied in climate justice movements is clear, as is the need to take this discussion seriously and to carefully examine the implications of the political proposals of these movements. If the goal is to counter climate change in a way that also addresses entrenched social inequality, it would stand to reason to take this opportunity to critically examine the democracies that have allowed these problems to arise and worsen over the years; the question of how the climate justice debate ties into what we want our democracies' main goals to be will only gain more urgency as the impasse on these problems, and the associated protests, continue.

Climate justice, and climate change more generally, are thus inevitably political problems, rather than merely environmental or socio-economic issues. This thesis has explored two of the more divergent views within the climate justice movement on how this political dimension of the topic should be shaped, and added a proposal for a combination of the two that could incorporate the main benefits of each. As both movements continue to gain more influence - be it within political institutions, as the GND, or from outside of these, such as XR - and as climate justice in general becomes a more often set demand, it will be of interest both practically and philosophically how these movements will aim to see their goals fulfilled.

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