

RICHARD ST'ACHEL

INDUSTRIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEMOCRACIES AS MODELS OF A POLITICALLY ORGANIZED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIETY AND NATURE

Abstract. This paper is based on the concept of environmental political philosophy and from its perspective, it highlights the weaknesses and contradictions of contemporary, existing democracies. It aims to formulate an outline of the concept of environmental democracy, following the accounts of M. Bookchin, R. Morrison and H. Skolimowski, as well as international environmental law enshrined in United Nations documents and resolutions. It is based on the hypothesis that the preservation of a democratic political system in a situation of a collapsing planetary system (the Anthropocene) requires improving the foundations of democratic theory with the insights of the Earth system sciences, particularly of political ecology and critical environmentalism. Through philosophical analysis, explanation and interpretation, this paper explores an environmental democracy that would, on the one hand, preserve the basic constitutional principles of current democratic constitutional regimes, and, on the other hand, reconcile them with the current state of understanding in the Earth sciences concerning the vulnerability of the planetary system. In a sense, J. Habermas's understanding of human rights characterizes the concept of environmental democracy as a realistic utopia. The author concludes by drawing up the imperative of sustainability, which he sees as a guiding organizing principle of institutions and public policies for the climatic, demographic and economic regime of the Anthropocene.

Keywords: environmental political philosophy; industrial democracy; environmental democracy; human rights; Anthropocene

1. Introduction. 2. Environmental political philosophy. 3. Industrialism and industrial democracy. 4. Environmental democracy as a realistic utopia. 5. Environmental democracy implies expanding the areas of democratic deliberation. 6. Placing the sustainability imperative above the growth imperative. 7. Conclusions.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper raises a critique of real democracies from the perspective of environmental political philosophy. This is based on the recognition

that all human activities have environmental preconditions and are limited by the finitude of the planetary system, while at the same time it is true that all human activities (economic, technological and social policies) have environmental consequences. The existence and the form of any political system are thus determined by environmental conditions, something that is rarely addressed in traditional political philosophy. Environmental political philosophy argues that, if the right to life is a fundamental human right then the preconditions of life, both social and environmental, must also be the subject of political thought. These include a stable climate, breathable air, drinkable water and biodiversity, as well as food that is not harmful to health and secure housing, or at least shelter strong enough to protect against increasingly frequent extreme weather situations such as heat waves and storms with high wind speeds and heavy rainfall. It turns out that current real democracies, determined by industrialism and the associated consumerism or imperial mode of living, are not able to guarantee these preconditions of life. If democracy as a form of government of constitutional states is to be preserved in the climatic, demographic and economic regime of the Anthropocene,¹ it is necessary, from the point of view

1 The devastation of all components of the planetary system is so complex and widespread that biologist E.F. Stoermer and atmospheric chemist and Nobel laureate P.J. Crutzen, as early as the turn of the 21st century, came up with the proposal to refer to the geological and climatic current state as the Anthropocene (Crutzen, Stoermer 2000). Indeed, the cumulative impact of human activities on key planetary life support systems has exceeded the ability of the self-regulatory mechanisms of these systems to maintain stable climatic conditions of the Holocene. This refers to a climatically relatively stable and temperate period that began 12,000 years ago after the last ice age. It was this stability with only minor climatic fluctuations that allowed permanent human settlements, and subsequently all civilizations, to emerge. This period so favorable for mankind came to an end due to the massive exploitation of fossil fuels. In other words, mankind became the dominant force influencing all components of the planetary ecosystem (including lithosphere, biosphere, hydrosphere and atmosphere, cryosphere) (Crutzen 2002).

of environmental political philosophy, that it be transformed into an environmental democracy.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

In terms of environmental political philosophy,² contemporary constitutional democracies can be characterized as industrial democracies, primarily because of the prominent role that the ideology of industrialism plays in the formulation of their imperatives, organizing principles and forms of everyday life. Criticism of industrial democracies points out, above all, that this form of organization of society, and its relationship to the environmental preconditions for the existence of a complex human society, cannot effectively control, let alone limit, economic and technological power, and its impact on the state of all components of the environment. Rather, it often serves only to legitimize, or legalize, decisions in favor of economic and technological power, or to normalize various forms of environmental devastation, which are described as the “inevitable toll of progress.”

In addition to the traditional internal contradictions of the concept of constitutional democracy, such as freedoms versus equality, the idea of the rule of law versus the principle of the sovereignty of the people (Habermas 2001), and, last but not least, the universalist idea of human rights versus the fundamentally exclusionary concept of citizenship, which grants the full range of rights only to a selected group of the human population (ideally all inhabitants of a particular state) in the regime of the Anthropocene, other contradictions are being discussed, and those already under scrutiny are being deepened or accentuated. In an industrial society, which is determined in most of its sectors by market imperatives, several constitutionally guaranteed freedoms are reduced to freedom of consumption and freedom of enterprise. Yet the current constitutional and political

2 On the definition of environmental political philosophy, see Horyna 2022.

systems lack mechanisms to limit the size of consumption and profit. This exacerbates social inequalities, as well as environmental inequalities and injustices. These arise from the fact that the growth of consumption and profit in a closed planetary system is only possible at the cost of deepening resource inequalities, in particular concerning to the basic resources of life such as water, food or even just the land that makes survival possible. Access to the basic resources of life thus emerges as a possible major fault line in the political controversies of the future. Indeed, modern democracies are still perceived as closed systems within specifically territorially defined political entities.

Climate change, or environmental devastation, is not only highlighting this problem at the international level but increasingly at the national level as well. The Constitutions of many countries guarantee the right to a favorable environment, but this right cannot be fully realized within the borders of a single country. In the context of planetary climate change, pollution and reduction in biodiversity, then, at the very least Constitutions promise what the current states are unable to deliver. Ultimately, this disqualifies or discredits the whole concept of constitutionalism. Given the huge inequalities in the consumption of all kinds of resources and the disparity in the carbon footprint of individual states, the whole system of international political and trade relations is weakened.

This system was fully developed in the process of globalization that began in the late 1980s. Not only has it exacerbated inequalities between the countries of the global North and the global South,³ but global supply chains and the global increase in industrial production during this period have contributed significantly to the fact that up to half of the total anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, which now threaten the stability of the climate

³ The so-called “advanced economies” of the global North rely on a large net appropriation of resources and labor from the global South, which they obtain through induced price differentials in international trade (Hickel *et al.* 2022).

system and thus the preconditions for the existence of civilization, have been released into the atmosphere in the last 30 years alone (IPCC 2021). Globalization has thus exacerbated inequalities in accessing the global commons – atmosphere, stable climate system, hydrosphere and biodiversity. Since these are common resources, literally the prerequisites for life, all people should have equal access to them. Without air, water, food and a tolerable climate, the right to life is fiction.

Given that any human activity has not only environmental preconditions but also consequences, the possibility of polluting and the extent of pollution must also be considered in this context. Ordinary and necessary human activities such as food preparation and daily hygiene are already a source of pollution. Ecosystems can cope with many forms of pollution or waste: the problem arises when there are too many forms of pollution, particularly involving toxic substances. The more industrialized a country becomes, the more resources it needs for its population and industry. At the same time, it will produce far greater waste, often toxic, than less industrialized countries. Inequality in resource consumption and pollution production began to widen precisely with the process of industrialization, a process that accelerated greatly after the Second World War and has been completed by globalization in the last four decades. As a result, the global North is responsible for up to 92% of global CO₂ emissions produced by mankind between 1850 and 2015 (the US is responsible for up to 40%, the EU-28 for 29%). The countries of the global South, which are also the most affected by climate change, are responsible for only 8% of global CO₂ emissions produced between 1850 and 2015, including China and India (Hickel 2020). From this perspective, industrialism is one of the main components of the global economic-political system that allows certain individuals or collectives to extract from and pollute significantly more of the planet's common resources than others.

3. INDUSTRIALISM AND INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY

At the heart of the politically organized relationship between society and nature is the economic and political system of global civilization determined by industrialism. Industrialism manifests itself not only in the form of consumer goods and large-scale energy production, but also, since the middle of the last century at the latest, in the bulk of agricultural activities and marine fisheries. The tourist industry, the music and film industries and the entertainment and information industries have also emerged. All these activities are characterized by high energy intensity, concentration and centralization, which in turn require the long-distance, often intercontinental transport of vast quantities of goods and people.

Industrialism has become a virtually universal blueprint for development and is often seen as synonymous with modernization, regardless of the ideology espoused by the constitutional system or the current political regime of individual countries. According to R. Morrison, industrialism is “a system for maximizing production and consumption, the basic organizing principle of global civilization” (Morrison 1995, 25). He understands industrialism broadly as “a comprehensive system of social relations shaped by industrial reality; a psychology that makes repression a virtue and defines accommodation to the intolerable as normal; an ideology based on the interlocking principles of hierarchy-progress-technique; and a complex myth that defines our values and shapes our feelings and behavior” (Morrison 1995, 30). Industrialism, therefore, translates into the institutionalized forms of political systems as well as extra-political relations. Thus, industrial relations prevail in society, which, according to R. Morrison, are “those of domination, with the many ordered by the hierarchical organization of power” (Morrison 1995, 51). This precludes a true democracy, i.e. a socio-political system based on nonhierarchical structures and relationships, a society in which relationships based on the principle of civic equality prevail.

Only such a society could be described as truly civil and only in such a society would active participation of citizens in the decisions of the institutions of power, political as well as economic, be possible. It is precisely such dynamics that, because of globalization, affect the daily lives of the citizens of even the most formally democratic countries in the world more than the decisions of political institutions and bodies. Contemporary constitutional political systems are therefore more accurately described as industrial democracies.

However, according to H. Skolimowski “the industrial democracy, in truth, is no longer democracy. At best it is the pursuit of democracy within one nation, and often at the expense of other nations – if only indirectly, via complicated socio-economic mechanisms and determinants. This form of democracy does not deserve the name of democracy, as it does not lead to increased freedom, but to new forms of slavery among nations” (Skolimowski 2003). Indeed, industrialization processes are hierarchical, centralizing and prescriptive – requiring the imposition and enforcement of a technological discipline that virtually excludes citizen participation in the organization of production and, to a large extent, distribution. The claim that “democracy ends at the factory gate” is merely a laconic expression of a characteristic feature of industrialized societies, or industrial democracies. If this statement is accepted as an unquestionable axiom, it ceases to matter whether the political system of a country subscribes to democratic principles or human and civil rights in its constitution.

Industrialism as a conceptual framework for thinking about the world, the structure and the organization of society rests on a few implicit assumptions. The first of these is to take “nature,” including the basic components of the environment such as water, breathable air, the ozone protective layer and climate stability for granted, as a freely available commodity. Implicit in this is the right to exploit all available natural resources, as well as the right to pollute (sinks). This follows from an understanding of “nature” as something external,

separate and oppositional to society. This is also why “nature” can be seen as an unchanging stage and coulisse of human history. This belief, which has persisted for millennia, has not yet been shaken by scientific knowledge. Nor has this knowledge been able to shake the other implicit assumption of industrialism, which is the belief in the possibility of a steady increase in production and consumption (the growth imperative).

4. ENVIRONMENTAL DEMOCRACY AS A REALISTIC UTOPIA

From the perspective of environmental political philosophy, then, the weakness of industrial democracy is primarily that it cannot effectively control, let alone limit, economic and technological power. Rather, it often serves only to legitimize and/or legalize decisions rooted in economic and technological power. On the one hand, this suspends the basic principles of a democratic form of government; on the other hand, it contributes significantly to the devastation of the environmental preconditions for the existence of constitutional democracy and of organized human society in general.

The concept of environmental democracy presupposes the possibility of reversing the relationship between society and nature organized according to the policies of industrialism. Therefore, it seeks to redirect it beyond the purposes and goals narrowly defined by the accumulation of capital and the escalation of the rate of profit (Horyna 2022, 254). It is based on the recognition of the finitude of resources available for the development of society and the vulnerability of the planetary system (not only the climate system). Among its premises is the recognition of the existential dependence of any organized human society on the quality of the environment.

In this context, then, the concept of environmental democracy must facilitate the development of principles that can inform democratically governed societies subject to the limits and risks of the Anthropocene regime (Horyna 2022, 254). Given the current

state of the planetary system and the economic-political system of global industrial civilization, the method suitable for formulating a theory of democracy for the Anthropocene regime, that is, for formulating forms of governance in a society facing the risk of environmental collapse, is utopianism, understood as a tool for overcoming the dystopia toward which the development trends set by the processes of industrialism and globalism are heading (Horyna 2022, 260–261). Thus, the concept of environmental democracy can also be thought of as a realistic utopia, much like J. Habermas understands the idea of human rights as “...anchoring the ideal of a just society in the institutions of constitutional states” (Habermas 2012, 95). Further, the concept of environmental democracy suggests that human or civil rights can only be meaningfully considered where access to environmental rights is ensured.

The concept of environmental democracy presupposes the preservation of the idea of control and the separation of powers as basic principles of a democratic constitutional system. These principles should also apply to economic and technological powers because, as H. Jonas states: “Knowledge, will and power are collective, and so must be their control. It can only be public, that is, it can only be political, and this requires the permanence of a broad consensus from below”⁴ (Jonas 1992, 142). The democratic control of the actors who wield technological power is also emphasized as one of the fundamental issues that a political philosophy of the Anthropocene must consider. As R. Morrison explains: “In an ecological democracy, all aspects of technology – its use, its control, its spread – and the specific manifestations of given technologies are thus subject to social control and democratic choice” (Morrison 1995, 227). This also implies

4 “Das Wissen, der Wille, die Macht sind kollektive, und so muß es auch ihre Kontrolle sein: Sie kann nur bei den öffentlichen Gewalten liegen, also politisch sein, und das bedarf auf Dauer einer breiten Zustimmung von unten”.

social and democratic control of the economic power, i.e. economic democracy.

Another idea that should be preserved and expanded within environmental democracy concerns the equality of citizens, or even of the equality of people, regardless of their nationality. The fundamental principle of democratic constitutions is the equality of all citizens before the law and the equality of access to public office. This should be extended to include access equality with respect to the basic resources of life, such as breathable air, water, food, shelter and territory with a tolerable climate. As M. Risse suggests, these can be understood as part of the common ownership of the Earth (Risse 2012), or as a global common. Access to them is the minimum environmental subsistence necessary for human agency to be realized in the social world: without them the right to life cannot be meaningfully realized (UN 1948, Art. 3). The idea of access equality to the basic resources of life, or the environmental subsistence minimum, is hardly sustainable at the level of civil law or within the territory of a particular state alone.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL DEMOCRACY IMPLIES EXPANDING THE AREAS OF DEMOCRATIC DELIBERATION

Current political systems limit the application of democratic principles largely to the area of political relations. Even within these, there is a tendency to centralize decision-making processes, to devolve them to unelected institutions and to reduce civic participation to the occasional exercise of the right to vote. At the same time, even traditionally democratic countries make no secret of the fact that their foreign policy often does not respect the will of their citizens or even basic democratic principles – stronger or richer states often treat smaller or poorer ones, or their former colonies, as inferior and often directly undermine their sovereignty. International relations are thus often interpreted along the lines of T. Hobbes's state of nature.

Authors who subscribe to the concept of environmental democracy stress the need to deepen political democracy or broaden the areas in which democratic principles are applied. They see this as a possible way of overcoming not only the environmental crisis (climate crisis, biodiversity crisis, pollution crisis) but also the social and political crisis.

At the political level, this means first and foremost decentralization, i.e. transferring a significant part of competencies from the nation-state or, even supranational level, to the level of local self-government. M. Bookchin speaks of the need for "... the decentralization of cities into confederal united communities sensitively tailored to natural areas in which they are located" (Bookchin 2006, 47). Indeed, he assumes that people with the right to make decisions about their immediate surroundings will consider the possible environmental consequences of industrialization or urbanization processes more carefully than state officials or corporate owners who have no ties to a given locality, and do not live in it.

Hence the emphasis on significantly strengthening the elements of direct democracy. M. Bookchin sees a model for the organization of an ecological society in the democratic polis of classical Athens: "direct democracy, the formulation of policies by directly democratic popular assemblies, and administration of those policies by mandated coordinators who can easily be recalled if they fail to abide by the decision of the assembly's citizens" (Bookchin 2006, 48-49). He does not ignore the slavery that formed the economic basis of Athenian democracy, but stresses that the inspiration should be primarily Athenian "institutions that were extraordinarily democratic – even directly so – by comparison with the republican institutions of so-called 'democracies' of today's world" (Bookchin 2006, 49). It was precisely these institutions that created the possibility of direct citizen participation in governance, or in the adoption of the most important political decisions.

M. Bookchin refers to his concept as Communalism, or as "... a politics of libertarian municipalism, in which municipalities conjointly gain rights to self-government through networks of confederal councils, to which towns and cities would be expected to send their mandated, recallable delegates to adjust differences" (Bookchin 2006, 49-50). This concept emphasizes the need to empower citizens and enable them to make decisions about their immediate surroundings, but also to create a counterbalance to the currently over-centralized state power. The goal is to implement "... a dual power in which the free municipality exists in open tension with the nation-state" (Bookchin 2006, 50). Thus, the counterbalance to state power would not only be the power of another state, but also the real power of local governments.

However, relations between states should also be democratized. Indeed, centuries of rivalry between states are the source of militarism, imperialism and colonialism, which have played a significant role in the devastation of natural and human resources across the planet.

Recognition of the interdependence, not only of society and the environment, but also of human communities – pollution produced in one place threatens the lives of people in another place, often at the other side of the world – is one of the key features of the concept of environmental democracy, together with the need for a transnational application of its principles. In the words of H. Skolimowski: "In this interconnected and co-dependent world of ours, the notion of democracy must take on a new meaning. Democracy can no longer be limited to the city-state (the polis); it can no longer be limited to one nation. Democracy must be so conceived that its execution in one nation does not harm (if only indirectly) other nations and does not harm nature itself" (Skolimowski 2003). In other words, the socio-economic, let alone environmental, prerequisites of a democratic form of government in one country, or part of the world, cannot be secured via behaviors that incur environmental costs and social disruptions in other countries or parts of the world.

6. PLACING THE SUSTAINABILITY IMPERATIVE ABOVE THE GROWTH IMPERATIVE

One of the main prerequisites for environmental democracy – i.e. a socially and environmentally sustainable, constitutional form of government – is the imperative of sustainability and its implementation across institutional spheres via public policies. The unsustainability of the society and economy, determined by the growth imperative has been the subject of public and scholarly criticism since at least the 1960s. Indeed, any economic growth is associated with an increase in the consumption of all renewable and non-renewable resources, as well as with an increase in all types of pollution. However, the Earth has only a finite amount of resources, including its ability to absorb pollution (e.g. the amount of greenhouse gas emissions) without affecting its stability. This is also why J. Habermas states that “Ecological balance designates an absolute limit to growth” (Habermas 2005, 41). The current cascade of crises suggests that global industrial civilization is running up against these limits to growth. Yet economic growth is still the goal of most country policies and institutions. R. Heinberg (2022) points out that a 2 to 3 percent annual growth rate is considered a sign of a healthy, functioning economy. However, even with such relatively low growth, resource consumption will double in about 25 years, increasing waste and greenhouse gas emissions. For the past quarter-century, the global economy has grown at such a rate that: “Since 1997 we have used over half the non-renewable resources extracted since the origin of humans” (Heinberg 2022). Such large-scale extraction of natural resources is heading toward exceeding the biophysical limits to growth. Thus, it is only too apparent that fundamental changes in the organization and structure of society are necessary if the conditions that allow civilization to exist are to be maintained on the planet.

In terms of environmental political philosophy, a prerequisite for changing society is changing its institutions. This is only possible if the imperative that shapes institutions, the principles of their organization and the meaning of their existence, is changed. Indeed, the efforts of individuals to change their life-priorities and consumption habits have only a limited impact on the functioning of the institutions of today's complex societies. The imperative that could replace the growth imperative can be described as the sustainability imperative. This can be derived from Kant's categorical imperative, which inspired H. Jonas' formulation of an imperative appropriate to the new situation in which man finds himself as a result of his technological power: "Act in such a way that the consequences of your actions merge with the duration of truly human life on Earth"⁵ (Jonas 1979, 36). According to Jonas, it is because of our knowledge, and the technological power we have acquired through it, that we are responsible for the preservation of the conditions of life on Earth.

Based on current knowledge of the state of the Earth system (planetary boundaries), resource availability and consumption, as well as waste production, the imperative of sustainability can be formulated as follows: act in such a way that your total environmental footprint can become a universally applicable standard – i.e. in such a way that your total material, water and carbon footprint (consumption of all types of resources) as well as waste production, can become a norm that any person on the planet can adhere to without jeopardizing the stability of the planetary system. The imperative of sustainability requires also individual participation in territorially defined political entities (states) and their administrative and power apparatus (consumption and emissions of public administrations and armed forces). The above-mentioned environmental living minimum should derive from such an imperative. Establishing a claimable environmental minimum is

5 "Handle so, daß die Wirkungen deiner Handlung verträglich sind mit der Permanenz echten menschlichen Lebens auf Erden."

a prerequisite for the right to life (UN 1948, Art. 3). In this sense, then, a stable climate, breathable air, drinking water, but also soil, forests or oceans, i.e. biodiversity, can be understood as global public goods and basic resources for the life of individuals and society.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights also recognizes “the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control” (UN 1948, Art. 25, para. 1). The fulfillment of this right is, however, conditional on the availability of resources and the formulation of a maximum, but adequate, level of personal consumption of these resources, since in contemporary highly differentiated societies the definition of the standards of living that ensure health and well-being varies widely. In this context, one can agree with L. Sklair about the need to define the human right to adequate consumption: “The human right to adequate consumption (we can define this as the basic minimum level that even averagely well-off people would settle for), properly conceived, entails the social responsibility of those who are democratically elected to make such decisions to ensure that is available to all. The crisis of ecological unsustainability dictates that this will entail reductions in consumption for those who consume the most all over the world” (Sklair 2009, 87). This applies to the predominantly affluent populations of the Global North.

In other words, rights (to a favorable environment, or environmental minimum, to adequate consumption) and duties (to protect and improve the environment, not to pollute more than is strictly necessary) must be based on our knowledge of the finiteness or limited availability of natural resources. The total environmental footprint must be limited. This means that personal consumption freedom (including the freedom to travel, consume and do business) must respect the fact of the finiteness of natural resources and the ability

of the planetary system to absorb pollution. Accepting the need to set minimum and maximum consumption limits would be both a fulfillment and an update of the traditional definition of personal freedom via the slogan: "one person's freedom ends where another's begins."⁶ This would bring the principle of freedom into balance with the principle of equality.

The framework within which social and environmental rights can be considered as part of, or even a precondition for, fundamental human, and therefore, ultimately civil rights was established by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, it was not until the United Nations Declaration on the Human Environment (UN 1973)⁷ that the environment became one of the necessary conditions for a person to enjoy fundamental human rights, including the right to life. Despite this Declaration, few countries have imposed the obligation to ensure the availability of the right to water, food and shelter for at least their entire populations in their legislation. In the meantime, the global environmental crisis and climate change have made it clear that the possibility of human existence is determined primarily by environmental conditions and relationship, in addition to social conditions (economic, political and legal). Therefore, fundamental human rights can also be understood as the right to guarantee the basic conditions of life.

In other words, the right to a favorable environment underpins all other rights. Discussions on this topic at the United Nations

6 On the shrinking opportunities for personal freedoms due to a growing world population and the need to consider the basic human needs of all inhabitants of the planet, see Stahel 2016.

7 The Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, which details the proceedings of the first UN Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972, states that the environment is one of the necessary conditions of fundamental human rights, "even the right to life itself." The requirements of clean air, water, shelter and health are described in the report as "undeniable needs and rights of man." The protection and improvement of the environment is identified by the report as an "obligation of all governments" (UN 1973).

for its 50th anniversary resulted in the adoption, at the end of July 2022, of a United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution declaring “access to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a universal human right” (UN 2022).⁸ The concept of environmental democracy is thus no longer just a philosophical vision for the future. It has already acquired political and legal status, even if it remains a normative concept or a realistic utopia.

7. CONCLUSION

The complete devastation of all components of the Earth system, coupled with social destruction, threatens existing systems of constitutional democracy in an unprecedented way. At the same time, most existing conceptions of democracy are inadequate to describe the complex interconnectedness of man, society, culture and all other components of the planetary system. Thus, the environmental preconditions of the political, social and economic relations of complex industrialized societies are not systematically thematized in concepts that justify the need for, and the scope of, activities of political, social and economic institutions. It is now becoming evident that institutions conceived in this way can only fulfill their tasks in a society of surplus, in which there are resources enough to maintain continued growth. The period of resource abundance, which allowed overproduction and the long-term growth of overconsumption, is coming to an end.

The concept of environmental democracy seeks to formulate a theory of democratic forms of government that places the interdependence of political, social, economic and environmental systems at its center. According to environmental democracy, for a political system to remain democratic in the climatic, demographic and economic regime of the Anthropocene, it must determine the degree and extent

⁸ 161 states voted in favor of the resolution; 8 abstained or did not vote.

of public control of economic and technological power, as well as the minimum and maximum size of consumption, that is, the socially acceptable environmental footprint of each individual's mode of living. The concept of environmental democracy can be seen as a realistic utopia. However, this article has shown that at least some aspects of it can be derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UNGA resolution concerning access to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a universal human right.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bookchin, M. (2006). *Social Ecology and Communalism*. Oakland – Edinburgh: AK Press.
- Crutzen, P.J. (2002). Geology of mankind. *Nature*, 415, 23. <https://doi.org/10.1038/415023a>.
- Crutzen, P.J., Stoermer, E.F. (2000). The 'Anthropocene'. *Global Change News Letter*, 41, 17-18. Retrieved from <http://www.igbp.net/publications/globalchangemagazine/globalchangemagazine/globalchangenewslettersno4159.5.5831d9ad13275d51c098000309.html>
- Habermas, J. (2001). Constitutional Democracy: A Paradoxical Union of Contradictory Principles?. *Political Theory*, 29(6), 766-781. DOI 10.1177/0090591701029006002.
- Habermas, J. (2005). *Legitimation Crisis*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Habermas, J. (2012). *The Concept of Human Dignity and the Realistic Utopia of Human Rights*. In: J. Habermas, *The Crisis of the European Union*, 71-100. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Heinberg, R. (2022). The Final Doubling: on the growth Ahead. *Common Dreams*, November 6. Retrieved from: <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2022/11/06/final-doubling-growth-ahead>.
- Hickel, J. (2020). Quantifying national responsibility for climate breakdown: an equality-based attribution approach for carbon dioxide emissions in excess of the planetary boundary. *The Lancet Planetary Health*, 4(9), e399-e404. DOI 10.1016/S2542-5196(20)30196-0.
- Hickel, J., Dorninger, Ch., Wieland, H., Suwandi, I. (2022). Imperialist appropriation in the world economy: Drain from the global South unequal exchange,

- 1990-2015. *Global Environmental Change*, 73, article no. 102467, 1-13. DOI 10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2022.102467.
- Horyna, B. (2022). Hybné síly environmentální politické filosofie. [Motive Forces of Environmental Political Philosophy]. *Filozofia*, 77(4), 251-267. DOI <https://doi.org/10.31577/filozofia.2022.77.4.2>.
- IPCC. (2021). *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Jonas, H. (1979). *Das Prinzip Verantwortung*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Jonas, H. (1992). *Philosophische Untersuchungen und metaphysische Vermutungen*. Frankfurt am Main – Leipzig: Insel Verlag.
- Morrison, R. (1995). *Ecological democracy*. Boston: South End Press.
- Risse, M. (2012). *On Global Justice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Sklair, L. (2009). The globalization of Human Rights. *Journal of Global Ethics*, 5(2), 81-96.
- Skolimowski, H. (2003). Cosmocrazy: As the Next Stage in the Development of Democracy. *World Affair*, 7(2). Retrieved from https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/wa/wa_apr03_d.html.
- Stáhel, R. (2016). Environmental limits of personal freedom. *Philosophica Critica*, 2(1), 3-21. DOI 10.17846/PC.2019.2.1.3-21.
- United Nations. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Retrieved from: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.
- United Nations. (1973). *Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, 5-6 June 1972*. New York: United Nations.
- United Nations. (2022). *The human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment*. Retrieved from: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3982508?ln=en>.

RICHARD ST'ÄHEL

Filozofický ústav Slovenskej Akadémie Vied

(Institute of Philosophy of Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovak Republic)

ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1665-5795>

richard.stahel@savba.sk

DOI 10.21697/spch.2023.59.A.06



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. (CC BY-ND 4.0).

Received: 16/12/2022. Reviewed: 09/03/2023. Accepted: 30/03/2023.

This article is part of VEGA project 2/0072/21: *Tasks of Political Philosophy in the Context of Anthropocene*.