Future Publics:
Long-Term Thinking and Farsighted Action in Democratic Systems

by

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
(Political Science)

in

The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

The University of British Columbia
(Vancouver)

September 2013

Abstract

Many scholars have argued that democracies cannot effectively address long-term problems because of the political dynamics of short electoral cycles, the immediate concerns of voters, the influence of powerful actors with dominant short-term interests, or the political impotence of future persons who do not yet exist. This dissertation explores and challenges these claims. I argue that democracy — in both theory and practice — can help encourage longer-term thinking and make collectively intentional farsighted actions possible. Much of what we know about the nature of intertemporal relations comes from theories of intergenerational justice. A justice-based approach is intuitively appealing because claims of justice are typically granted priority over claims of other types. Unlike political agreements, principles of justice cannot be legitimately ignored or abandoned in response to changing preferences or partisan motives. Nevertheless, I argue that we need to think not only about our justice-based obligations to the future but also about how the actions of individuals and groups can be coordinated such that collectively-desirable long-term objectives can be identified, specified, and achieved. Democracy is not just a system for registering existing views and preferences; it is also a means of shaping preferences and changing the expectations of individuals and groups. I argue that multilayered democratic systems that are comprised of both electoral and extra-electoral institutions, can help mitigate many of the problems identified by those who have argued that democracies are, by nature, short-sighted. At the large scale, democratic practices such as public deliberation make it possible for a society to talk to itself about what it is doing and where it wants to go. At the small scale, deliberation can help encourage longer-term thinking by creating conditions that favour other-regarding positions, including those that take into consideration the potential interests of future-others. Under certain conditions, democracies can create political imperatives that reward long-term thinking and turn short-term positions into political liabilities. While there are features of democratic systems that create and nurture short-term imperatives, democracies are not without resources for overcoming these challenges.

Preface

This is a work of political theory. Ethics approval was not required.

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Acknowledgements

Many people have been instrumental in both preparing me for, and helping me through, the process of writing a dissertation. Before thanking those at UBC, I would like to acknowledge my mentors at the University of Winnipeg for their support and encouragement during my undergraduate degree. In particular, I would like to thank Jim Silver for inspiring me to study political science in the first place, Christopher Leo for teaching me the finer points of marking essays and exams, and Joanne Boucher for insisting that I go to graduate school and apply for scholarships.

I would also like to thank Elisabeth Gidengil and Stuart Soroka for their advice, support, and encouragement during my time at McGill University. Both did a great deal more for my education and my career than any student could reasonably expect from his thesis advisors. I would also like to thank my friends and colleagues at the Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, and in particular my fellow members of the academic team: George Thomson, Jonathan Rose, and Mark Lyons. The year we spent working together did much to reinvigorate my interest in the practical aspects of political science and the exciting world of institutional design!

At UBC, I wish to thank the members of my advisory committee — Mark Warren, Fred Cutler, and Alan Jacobs — for their collective support and critical feedback. Special thanks is due to Mark Warren, who has been the best sort of advisor a PhD student could ask for. He has been a teacher, mentor, colleague, co-author, ski buddy, and hiking partner. Mark's trust and belief in my abilities has been enormously encouraging. He has made every effort possible to not only nurture my intellectual development but to help integrate me, and his other students, into his own professional networks. Mark has encouraged me to "free associate" as much as possible: to think creatively without constraint about the many different (and often conflicting) aspirations of democratic theorists. At the same time, he has always insisted that his students maintain a very high level of conceptual clarity. Mark is a master of the difficult skill of writing about politics in a theoretically rich but nevertheless clear and accessible way. I can only hope that at least some of his talent has rubbed off on me.

I would also like to thank Mike Burgess, Kieran O'Doherty, and my other colleagues at the W. Maurice Young Centre for Applied Ethics. Our research and deliberative events provided me with many opportunities to test my thinking and refine my knowledge of institutional design. Our work also came with an unexpected benefit: I learned a great deal about bioethics, a subject that I would otherwise be unlikely to have studied while pursuing a PhD in democratic theory and institutional design. I would like to extend a special note of gratitude to Mike Burgess who, although not a member of my advisory committee, always treated me like one of his own students; even going so far as to provide me with office space, a much sought after commodity among graduate students in political science at UBC.

I owe a debt of gratitude to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) for generously providing three years of funding during my PhD research.

Thanks are also due to my friends and family. I would like to thank my parents Ursula and Ken, and my sister Kathryn, for their understanding over the long periods of time in which we were not in contact during the writing of this dissertation. Special thanks is due to my friend and office-mate, Alfred Moore, who diligently read early drafts of every chapter. Although I take full ownership of any errors or lapses of judgement, our lengthy discussions helped shape my thinking in numerous, untraceable ways. My time at UBC was greatly enriched by my close friends James White, Shannon Gormley, and Ian Runacres, all three of whom I met during my first day on campus. My most heartfelt thanks goes to Theresa Webber for her love, support, and editing skills.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Theoretical Context

Traditionally, political theory has focused almost exclusively on relations between contemporaries. From one perspective, this makes a lot of sense. The present period is the only arena in which political actions take place. If politics is about dividing scarce resources, negotiating with others, forming associations, claiming rights, and, in general, gaining, maintaining, and losing power, it is by definition about relations between contemporaries. We cannot negotiate with the past and we cannot form associations with those who do not yet exist. We might make long-term contracts or treaties that we hope will last into the future, but future political actors cannot be signatories to our contractual arrangements today. Political relations, like personal relations, are constrained by time.

From another perspective, an atemporal approach to political theory is no longer adequate. We now know that what we do today will affect the future in profound and lasting ways. This is a relatively recent development. Indeed, it was not until the mid-20th century that it became commonplace to view humanity as a decisive agent of our own existential destiny. Karl Jaspers (1961) has called this recently acquired sense of existential agency the "new fact". For Jaspers, the "new fact" is epitomized by the invention of the atomic bomb, which is "novel in essence" because it contains within it it the power of self-destruction — "it is now possible for life on earth to be wiped out by human action" (1). Fifty years on, this statement has become so familiar that it has lost much of the impact that it must have had when it was first written. Nevertheless, this newly acquired sense of collective agency over the future helps distinguish the cur-

rent period from previous epochs. In the following quote, Hannah Arendt makes some of the differences between the current age and all previous ages explicit:

> Up to our own age human action with its man-made processes was confined to the human world, whereas [our] chief preoccupation with regard to nature was to use its material in fabrication, to build with it the human artifice and defend it against the overwhelming force of the elements. The moment we started natural processes of our own — and splitting the atom is precisely such a man-made natural process — we not only increased our power over nature, or became more aggressive in our dealings with the given forces of the earth, but for the first time have taken nature into the human world as such and obliterated the defensive boundaries between natural elements and the human artifice by which all previous civilizations were hedged in (Arendt 1961, 60).

An atemporal approach to political theory is no longer adequate because we now know that what we do today will shape the future, and may even determine whether humanity will continue to exist. Of course, our agency over the future is not limited to dramatic actions with existential consequences, our power to shape the future also has subtler manifestations. We are now aware that seemingly innocuous individual actions can, when aggregated, have emergent effects on human health, animal well-being, and the natural environment (e.g., Hardin 1968). In her famous book, *Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson (1962) documented the many previously invisible environmental impacts of chemical pesticides. She illustrated that when used in small amounts these chemicals have few discernible adverse impacts but in the aggregate they can create severe environmental damage. Carson's analysis is important because it made explicit the extent to which humanity's power to shape the world and the future must be understood in both individual and collective terms. Nuclear bombs split atoms and start 'unnatural' processes in motion. Synthetic chemicals deplete the ozone layer. Genetically modified organisms integrate into otherwise 'natural' environments. Prenatal genetic testing gives us the power to determine who is and is not born. The power to act into nature renders uncertain the stage upon which human actions take place, and throws into relief the agency that we now possess to shape the future in acute and profound ways.

More recently, scientists have argued that for the first time in history, humanity itself has become a global geophysical force. Some have argued that the current geological epoch should be called the *Anthropocene* in order to distinguish it from all previous 'natural' eras of geological change. As Steffen, Crutzen, and McNeill (2007) explain, in the past, the "human imprint on the environment may have been discernible at local, regional, and even continental scales, but prein-

dustrial humans did not have the technology or organizational capacity to match or dominate the great forces of nature" (614). Today, humanity "is, in one way or another, becoming a self-conscious active agent in the operation of its own life support system" (619).

The *Anthropocene* argument emphasizes the power that humanity now possesses to shape the world and to make (or unmake) the future, but it is also an argument about the ever increasing speed of human activities and the pace at which change is taking place. According to Steffen, Crutzen, and McNeill, after World War II "the human enterprise" suddenly experienced a "great acceleration" (617). At this time, human activity and productivity in nearly every field started to increase exponentially: population growth, petroleum consumption, economic development, foreign investment, the number of automobiles, urbanization, water use, the damning of rivers, international travel, communications technology, and, in general, technological change. One of the consequences of this "great acceleration," is that each generation is becoming less like the previous one increasingly quickly. These social, political, economic, and technological changes are forces of disconnection. Each generation is becoming increasingly disconnected from past and future generations as the worlds that they inhabit become increasingly dissimilar. This is another feature of the present era that helps distinguish it from previous epochs.

For most of human history, each generation inhabited a world that was very similar to the one inhabited by the previous generation. Schlesinger (1999), for example, estimates that while modern humans have lived on the earth for only about 800 lifetimes, there has been more scientific and technological change in the last two lifetimes than during all the others put together (xii).[1] In most parts of the world, the last two lifetimes have also witnessed significant social, cultural, political, religious, and economic changes. Examples include dramatic extensions of civil and sexual rights, expanding realms of secularization, the changing role of women in most western and many non-western societies, increasing urbanization and multiculturalism, and the globalization of language, culture, media, and finance. As Benjamin Barber (1996) has pointed out: "Whilst for thousands of generations life for a cohort of grandchildren roughly resembled

[1] Matt Ridley (2011) gives an example of an epoch of technological stasis to which the present period can be compared. He tells us that pre-modern humans used palm-sized stone tools called 'Acheulean hand axes' for more than a million years. What is most surprising is that the design of these tools changed very little over this stretch of time. Indeed, according to Ridley the "bodies and brains of the creatures that made Acheulean hand axes changed faster than their tools" (49). This seems incredible from a modern perspective — but historically, minor, minimal, or imperceptible technological and cultural change between adjacent generations is more the rule than the exception.

life for their grandparents, in our century there is enough change in a decade to confuse people in the fifteen years it takes to grow up" (574).

The power that we now have to affect the future in profound and even existential ways, makes an atemporal approach to understanding political relations socially, politically, and philosophically inadequate. At the same time, rapid social, political, and technological change makes it more difficult for us to act in future-oriented ways. Rapid change of all types renders the future less predictable and more difficult to understand. As Schlesinger (1999) has observed, the "law of acceleration hurtles us into an inscrutable future" (xiii). The world is changing increasingly quickly, and our sense of our own place in time is changing along with it. In order to remain relevant, political theory must respond to the new political imperatives, problems, and opportunities that are created by humanity's recently extended reach into the future. It is no longer adequate to implicitly assume that the only political relationships that matter are those that exist between contemporaries.

In this dissertation, I argue that democracy — in theory and in practice — can help us understand and negotiate intertemporal relations. At first glance, democratic theory might seem like an unlikely place to go looking for a political theory of intertemporal relations. In the minds of many, democracy is associated with short-term thinking and myopic decision-making. Short electoral cycles create strong incentives for elected officials to adopt policies that have demonstrable net benefits over the near-term. At the same time, individuals often discount the future or neglect longer-term problems in order to give precedence to more immediate concerns. As Dennis Thompson (2010) has argued, democracies will be rendered myopic if individuals and other powerful political actors are primarily focused on their own immediate concerns. Effective democracies are responsive to the concerns of individuals and groups, and if these actors are short-sighted democratic outcomes will be short-sighted as well. This is one version of what might be called the 'democratic myopia thesis.'

I argue that the standard arguments used to support the democratic myopia thesis tell us only part of the story. While there are short-term imperatives that are created by certain democratic institutions and practices, effective democracies are not without resources for overcoming these challenges. Democracies are not designed to simply *register* existing views and prefer-

ences; effective democratic processes can also help *shape* the preferences and perspectives of individuals and groups. I argue that in certain conditions, democratic processes can help encourage longer-term thinking by making the long-term effects of specific actions explicit, by exposing the potential interests of future political actors, and by forcing present period actors to publicly justify their actions vis-à-vis their potential impacts on the future. Effective democratic processes can also help underwrite farsighted collective actions. At the most general level, robust processes of public deliberation make it possible for a society or a 'public' to talk to itself about what it is doing and where it wants to go. From this perspective democracy, and in particular deliberative democracy, makes it possible for individuals to coordinate their actions such that specific long-term goals and objectives can be collectively identified, sanctioned, and achieved. This is important because although we possess the power to either help or harm the future, no individual or group can do it alone. Effective democratic systems provide individuals with opportunities to help shape the collective intentions of their societies, and thereby guide them towards specific goals and objectives. Viewed from this perspective, democracy is a way for individuals and groups to take control of our collective agency over the future. Thus despite the political dynamics of short electoral cycles, the short-term preferences or interests of individuals, and the political uncertainties created by regularly alternating governments, I argue that democratic systems can help encourage longer-term thinking and underwrite effective, farsighted, and intentional collective actions. Although democratic theory, itself, cannot provide us with a complete account of intertemporal relations, it can help us make sense of ourselves *in time* and thereby help clarify our collective relations and obligations to the future. Effective democratic practices and institutions can, in turn, help coordinate individual actions in ways that are both collectively intentional and farsighted.

1.2 Types of Political Issues: Temporal-Political Profiles

One of the challenges of exploring intertemporal political relations — and more specifically the relationship between time and democracy — has to do with the diversity of types of collective decisions that have (or might have) long-term consequences. Indeed, much of what we know about intertemporal political relations comes from studies of specific issues or types of issues.

Many scholars have explored intertemporal relations in the context of environmental politics (e.g., Dobson 1996; Eckersley 2004; Goodin 1992; and Smith 2003). Others have explored the political dynamics associated with long-term issues such as public debt (e.g., Gosseries 2007), economic investment (e.g., Nordhaus 1975), health care spending (e.g., Rhodebeck 1993), education funding (e.g., Button 1992), public pension plans (Jacobs 2011; Jacobs and Matthews 2012), and natural disaster preparedness (Healy and Malhotra 2009). Complications arise because each type of issue is associated with specific temporal-political dynamics. My objective is to explore democracy and intertemporal relations in general terms without focusing on any specific long-term issue. Instead, throughout the dissertation, I illustrate my arguments by drawing on a variety of examples of different types of long-term issues. Given this approach, it is worth clarifying some of the political dynamics that are associated with different types of political issues.

Political issues differ from one another on at least two dimensions that are relevant to both time and politics. The first has to do with the distribution of intertemporal costs and benefits. The second has to do with the length of time between actions and consequences.

With respect to the first dimension, political issues can be distinguished from one another according to how their associated costs and benefits are distributed in time. Short-term issues have costs and benefits that are (largely) concentrated in the present period. Governments, for example, often spend public money in order to stimulate economic growth over the near-term. If stimulus funds are drawn from current revenues, the costs of an economic stimulus program will be paid by present period actors and the benefits of that spending (if there are any) will accrue to the same generation of political actors over a relatively short period of time. Long-term issues, by contrast, often have costs and benefits that are distributed across time in different ways. There are, effectively, two possibilities: one type of long-term issue produces benefits in the near-term but imposes costs on the future; the other type of long-term issue involves paying costs in the near-term for prospective future benefits. When governments borrow money to stimulate the economy, delay tax increases, provide social services, or pay for wars, the benefits of those policies are typically obtained over the near-term while the costs are deferred to the future. Other long-term policies, such as taxes on carbon emissions, have the opposite distribution of intertem-

poral costs and benefits. In this case, costs (i.e. taxes) are paid in the current period in order to obtain some long-term prospective benefit (i.e. cleaner air for the future). Each type of long-term issue is associated with a different set of political imperatives, incentives, and challenges. With respect to those issues that have near-term benefits and long-term costs, the challenge is to explain why present period actors should be concerned about the costs (or debts) that they are imposing on the future. With respect to those issues that have near-term costs and long-term benefits, the challenge is to explain why costs should be paid for uncertain or prospective benefits that may be obtained only by entirely different generations of political actors.

Another way of distinguishing between types of temporal-political issues has to do with the length of time between actions and consequences. Short-term issues are those that involve actions with relatively near-term consequences. Crisis situations, such as earthquakes or severe economic downturns, often call for swift political actions that have immediate, demonstrable consequences. Indeed, political actors are often willing, eager, and able to take decisive and even costly actions to rectify urgent political problems. Climate change, by contrast, is a problem with a very different temporal-political profile. Many actions taken to prevent or mitigate climate change will not have noticeable net benefits until some (usually unspecified) time in the future — 50, 100, or even 200 years from now. Nuclear waste disposal is an issue that is relevant over even longer timescales. Given the slow and asymptotic rate of decay, scholars have argued that the use of nuclear fuel amounts to a *perpetual* responsibility to the future (e.g. Ophuls and Boyan 1992; Weinberg 1972). Most long-term issues fall somewhere between these two extremes. Deficit financing, education spending, transportation planning, and public pension plans are political issues where actions (or inactions) and consequences are separated by tens, rather than hundreds or thousands of years.

The temporal distance between actions and consequences is politically relevant because it affects how individuals and groups are likely to relate to specific problems or issues. Short-term issues affect our present-selves in very immediate and often tangible ways. We might lose our jobs (or be in danger of losing our jobs) because of an economic downturn. Our personal safety, or the well-being of our family, might be affected by street crime or violence. Our homes may be damaged by earthquakes or flooding. Long-term issues, by definition, do not affect us in the

same way that short-term issues do: *if* long-term issues affect us, their impacts will be felt only by our future-selves. This matters from a political theory perspective because our future-selves are not identical to our present-selves. We do not know (precisely) *who* our future-selves will be, and we cannot know without uncertainty what we will care about, value, or need in the future. The best we can do is think about and anticipate our future interests in comparatively general terms. Given this, self-interest as a motivating factor for political action becomes less and less relevant to political theory as the temporal distance between specific political actions and their likely consequences increases. This is important because most conventional (i.e. atemporal) political theories rely, at least to some extent, on self-interest as a motivating factor for political action.

On very long-term issues such as climate change or the storage of nuclear waste, self-interest as a motivating factor for political action can become entirely irrelevant, depending on the length of time between specific actions (or inactions) and their likely consequences. This helps account for the fact that these, and other very long-term problems, are hard to understand in conventional political theory terms. These types of problems are even more difficult to deal with in the context of our existing political institutions, many of which rely on self-interest to incentivize collectively-desirable behaviors. On very long-term issues, our future-selves, and in many cases the future-selves of people that we know and care about, will not be affected by the decisions that we make today. On very long-term issues only future-others will be affected by our decisions. This suggests that, when it comes to dealing with very long-term issues such as climate change or the storage of nuclear waste, a different type of political theory would seem to be required — or at least a different set of assumptions about why individuals might be willing to take costly actions to benefit (or protect) future-others that they do not, and cannot, know. There is, then, a politically relevant distinction to be made between long-term issues, such as pension plans, that are likely to affect our future-selves (or the future-selves of those we know and care about), and very long-term issues, such as climate change, that are likely to affect only future-others.

The distinction between long-term issues and very long-term issues, can also be understood in terms of relations between overlapping and non-overlapping generations. Some inter-

generational issues involve relations between *existing* generations of political actors. Education spending, for example, is likely to affect those who are elderly differently from those who are young parents or students themselves. Public pension plans transfer current period funds from those who are in their working years to those who have retired. Education spending and pension plans are intergenerational issues because they involve relations between members of different generations, but these and many other long-term issues involve (for the most part) relations between individuals who are contemporaries. Very long-term issues, such as climate change and the storage of nuclear waste involve relations between individuals and groups who are not contemporaries. While it is true that each generation overlaps with the next and there will be a continuous chain of generations attaching one moment in time to any other moment in time, non-overlapping generations are disconnected from each other both existentially and politically. Once the last individual from a particular generation has died, we are literally disconnected from that period of time. Future generations that will exist 100, 200, or 300 years from now are also disconnected from us: what we do may affect them in more or less profound ways but when they exist 'we' will not exist. These two types of intergenerational issues are associated with two different sets of political dynamics, imperatives, and possibilities. When it comes to long-term issues that involve relations between overlapping generations, many of those who will be affected in the future can, at least in principle, be included in decision-making processes today. When it comes to long-term issues that involve relations between non-overlapping generations, those who will be affected in the future do not yet exist and thus cannot be actively included in our decision-making processes. In this dissertation, I argue that democracy — in theory and in practice — can help us understand and negotiate intertemporal relations, *in general.* Given this objective, I discuss different types of temporally-complex issues. Much of what I have to say is relevant to those issues that involve relations between *overlapping* generations and those that involve relations between *non-overlapping* generations. Likewise, much of what I have to say is relevant to issues that have near-term costs and longer-term (potential) benefits, as well as those that have near-term benefits and longer-term costs. Nevertheless, some of what I have to say is relevant to only specific types of long-term issues or problems. In order to help maintain these conceptual distinctions throughout the dissertation, I specify which types of long-term issues are (or are not) relevant to each point or argument. When speaking in general terms about all types of long-term issues I use the term 'intertemporal relations.'

1.3 Intergenerational Justice and Intertemporal Political Relations

While most of those who study intertemporal *political* relations focus on particular issues, the largest and most thoughtful body of literature on the subject of intertemporal relations more generally is the work on intergenerational justice. In many ways, it makes sense to think about intertemporal relations as relations of justice (or injustice). Most scholars of intergenerational justice agree that it is unjust for one generation (or the existing set of generations) to do as they please, without concern for those who will come later. Most agree that it is, for example, unjust for one generation to deplete the earth's non-renewable resources or fill the air with toxins without concern for the needs of future generations. From the perspective of a theory of justice, it is difficult to explain why 'location in time' should be a criterion that would justify differential treatment or differential access to naturally occurring resources.

In addition, many scholars believe that the interests of the future should be protected by rights claims or claims of justice because these typically have priority over political agreements. The concern is that the interests, needs, and rights of future generations cannot be adequately protected by politics alone because political guarantees and agreements can be too easily changed or abandoned by future political actors. Justice claims, by comparison, are islands of relative certainty in the turbulent and unpredictable waters of intertemporal politics. Justice claims, and especially those that are entrenched in constitutions that are not easily changed, effectively *remove* certain issues or types of decisions from the political arena, and they can therefore be used to help protect the future from the vicissitudes of ongoing political processes. It is for these reasons (and others) that many scholars have adopted a justice-based approach to understanding intertemporal relations.

In this dissertation, I argue that while a justice-based approach is a useful and likely essential component of a general account of intertemporal relations, theories of justice can only take us so far. Even if we had an adequate and widely accepted theory of intergenerational justice (which we do not), we would nevertheless need a political theory of intertemporal relations. Long-term issues often involve conflicts of interest and claims on limited resources. Adequately addressing long-term problems requires taking specific actions, or deciding who should pay particular costs over the near-term. These are political questions that cannot be easily decided or re-

solved by recourse to general theories of intergenerational justice alone. Which specific actions should be taken to fulfill our obligations to the future? Which resources should be conserved? How much should be conserved and by whom? Are there alternative resources that can be used to compensate the future for those that have been depleted? Will investments in technology benefit the future more than conservation? Unlike justice-based obligations or duties — which are necessarily very general in scope and content — obligations to the future that are specified and sanctioned in political processes (and which might nevertheless be founded on justice-based claims) can be filled with detailed content that imposes clear obligations on specific political actors. By focusing their attention on justice-based claims to the exclusion of politics, many theorists have neglected to consider the political processes that are required for us to identify, specify, and legitimize the collective actions that we think we ought to take to fulfill our obligations to the future. From a political perspective, claims of justice are just *claims* that need to be implemented via political processes. Relatedly, where there are conflicts between principles of justice or obligations of duty, political judgements must be made about which principles or obligations ought to have priority.

Lastly, a justice-based approach to studying intertemporal relations is not enough because our relations to the future cannot be adequately understood only in terms of our duty-based obligations. It is important to protect the future from harm, but many individuals and groups want to do more for the future than justice would require. Many people are also motivated to make *positive* contributions to the future. Theories of justice, by definition, exclude supererogatory claims and motivations. As Brian Barry (1978) points out, many people (himself included) feel that there is an important difference "between making successors better off, which is a nice thing to do but not required by justice, and not making them worse off, which is required by justice" (244). Given this orientation, most theorists of intergenerational justice have a lot to say about our obligations to help protect the future from harm, but they have very little (or nothing) to say about making positive contributions to the future. It is my belief that we should not ignore one half (or approximately one half) of the problem of intertemporal relations. We may have justice-based obligations to protect the interests of the future, but we should also think about how we can make positive contributions to the future, both individually and collectively. Indeed, these

two objectives — *protecting* the future on the one hand, and making *positive contributions* to the future on the other — cannot always be kept conceptually distinct or treated as separate problems. In order to achieve both objectives, we need some means of coordinating individual actions such that collectively specified goals and objectives can be achieved and duty-based obligations can be fulfilled. In this dissertation, I argue that democracy can provide a foundation for a theory of temporal political relations. Like theories of justice, democracy is not itself sufficient to provide a fully adequate account of intertemporal relations, but democracy — in theory and in practice — can help us address some of the conceptual issues and practical concerns that have not been adequately addressed by theorists of intergenerational justice.

1.4 Summary and Plan of the Dissertation

The remainder of the dissertation proceeds as follows. Chapter 2 explores the claim that democratic systems are, by nature, short-sighted. This claim — which might be called the 'democratic myopia thesis' — has been investigated both theoretically and empirically in a number of fields including economics (e.g., Alt and Crystal 1982; Nordhaus 1975), political science (e.g., Healy and Malhotra 2009; Jacobs 2011; Jacobs and Matthews 2012), political theory (e.g., Kavka and Warren 1983), institutional design (e.g., Dobson 1996; Ekeli 2005, 2007, 2009), and ecology (e.g., Ophuls and Boyan 1992; Shearman and Smith 2007). Despite considerable attention from scholars, politicians, and many other observers, the terms of the democratic myopia thesis remain theoretically underdeveloped. In Chapter 2, I try to make sense of the different theoretical components of the democratic myopia thesis. I start by identifying five conceptually distinct versions of the thesis: 1) *the short electoral cycles argument*; 2) *the myopic citizen argument*; 3) *the powerful economic actors argument*; 4) *the complexity argument*; and 5) *the non-presence of future persons argument*. I argue that each version of the democratic myopia thesis can be challenged on theoretical grounds. In some cases, specific claims are applicable only to certain types of long-term issues, such as those that involve relations between non-overlapping generations as opposed to those that primarily involve relations between contemporaries from different generations. More generally, I argue that each version of the democratic myopia thesis implicitly or explicitly relies on a model of democracy that: a) focuses on electoral dynamics and institutions to

the exclusion of many other types of democratic processes and practices; and b) assumes that the interests, preferences, and expectations of individuals and groups are relatively well fixed and exogenous to the democratic process itself. I argue that when the democratic myopia problem is viewed through the lens of a more deliberative model of democracy, the prospects for long-term thinking and effective farsighted action do not look so bleak. Democracy is not just a system for *registering* existing views and preferences; democratic processes such as deliberation can also help *shape* the preferences of individuals and groups. I argue that democratic systems that are made up of many different types of democratic and deliberative institutions can help counterbalance the short-term dynamics associated with regular election cycles.

In order to make the argument that democracy can help us think and act in future-oriented ways, it is useful to get a better sense of the individual's relationship to time, and the nature of intertemporal *political* relations more generally. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 are dedicated to these topics. Chapter 3 explores intergenerational relations from a political theory perspective. Chapter 4 looks at theories of intergenerational justice that take the individual as the primary unit of analysis. Chapter 5 explores the relationship between democratic theory and intertemporal relations more generally. In these chapters, I make the argument that in order to understand the individual *in time* it is useful to locate the individual in some sort of collective entity that will persist through time and last longer than any one of its individual parts. It is only by locating individuals in multigenerational collective entities, of one type or another, that we can make sense of intergenerational relations running both backwards and forwards in time. For example, membership (or citizenship) in a nation-state entitles individuals to inherit the assets possessed by that state: the infrastructure, the institutions, the economy, as well as the land and its resources. It is *only* membership that entitles individuals to inherit benefits that are derived from the collectivity, or assets that are owned by the collectivity. Those who are not members are typically thought to have no legitimate claim to inherit the assets of particular states, or the assets or benefits of any other sort of multigenerational collective entity, such as a religious order, professional association, or leisure club. There may be disputes about which individuals or groups ought to inherit specific resources or assets, but these disputes always involve questions of membership in one way or another.

If membership entitles individuals to inherit collectively-derived benefits or assets, it can also help us make sense of our intergenerational responsibilities and obligations. Miller (2007), for example, has argued that we cannot justify accepting useful or valuable inheritances without also accounting for any harms or transgressions that may have been committed in the past. Likewise, if membership in a multigenerational collective entity, like a nation-state, can instill in us a vicarious sense of pride for the achievements of past members, membership can also be used to compel individuals and groups to account for, and in some cases take responsibility for, any transgressions or crimes that may have been committed by past members of their collectivity (or collectivities).

If membership in a multigenerational collective entity can help us make sense of our inheritances and our historically-grounded obligations and responsibilities, it can also help us make sense of forward-looking obligations and motivations. For example, collectivities such as nation-states or corporations can draw debts or sign treaties or contracts for terms that extend well beyond the likely lifetimes of those individuals involved in making the agreements. Multigenerational agreements and contracts are made possible because the collectivity, which can be conceived of as an immortal entity, can retain responsibility over time even as its membership changes.

The concept of the multigenerational collective entity can also help explain why some individuals are willing to pay near-term costs for future potential benefits that they are unlikely to enjoy themselves. Membership in a collective entity of one type or another, can help encourage individuals to consider not only their own interests but also the interests, concerns, and needs of other members. Individuals may be motivated to take longer-term actions that they are unlikely to benefit from if their membership in a multigenerational collective entity causes them to relate to and in some sense equate themselves with future members of the collectivity. When we conceive of future individuals or groups as moral members of our own collectivity (or collectivities) we may be inspired or compelled to act in ways that will help protect or benefit future members, even if we are not likely to benefit ourselves from the actions that we take. Such collectivities need not be defined by shared cultural or religious traditions, ethnicities, languages, or nationalities, although they may be defined by any one (or any number) of these things. It is not

even necessary to assume that there are (or must be) *affective* ties between individual members of a multigenerational collectivity. In theory, in order to motivate, justify, and understand longer-term thinking and action, all we need to do is conceive of ourselves as members of collective entities that are: 1) capable of persisting in time longer than any one generation of members; 2) shaped and affected by what each generation of members does; and 3) made up of other members with a moral status that is equivalent to our own. At its most inclusive, one's relevant multigenerational collectivity might include humanity as a whole, or even humanity in relation to all living things. This is the perspective adopted by many environmentalists. At its least inclusive, one's relevant collectivity might be limited to one's immediate family. The general argument, which is applicable to all types of multigenerational collectivities, is the following: It is difficult to make sense of the individual *in time*, and it is difficult to makes sense of intergenerational relations, without first locating the individual in a collectivity of one type or another that will persist longer in time than any one of its individual members. This situation arises because the life and political relevance of each individual is limited by time.

Chapter 3 discusses the work of three classical political theorists: Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine, and Thomas Jefferson. I use the work of these theorists to explore the claim that it is difficult to make sense of intergenerational obligations and motivations without first locating the individual in a multigenerational collectivity of one type or another. Following Ball (2000), I argue that the work of Burke on the one hand, and the works of Paine and Jefferson on the other, present two mutually exclusive ways of thinking about intergenerational relations. I call these two approaches *connectionism* and *disconnectionism*. According to a *connectionist* perspective, which is exemplified by Burke's political theory, intergenerational relations and obligations simply befall us: they are not matters of consent, they are instead matters of circumstance. According to Burke, each of us is born into an intergenerational partnership, and this partnership very much defines who we are as individuals, and what sorts of opportunities, benefits, and obligations we have to past, present, and future members of the partnership. In Burke's account, the intergenerational partnership forms a body politic with an enduring (and essentially mysterious) collective essence that cannot be fully understood or sanctioned by any one individual or generation of partners. Given this, our membership in the great intergenerational partnership (which is

implicitly but not explicitly defined by Burke in nationalist, ethnic, or cultural terms), cannot and should not be based on the consent of each generation of individuals.

According to a *disconnectionist* perspective, which is exemplified by the works of Paine and Jefferson, all political relations and obligations — regardless of whether or not they involve relations between contemporaries or between different generations of political actors — must be based on the consent of the individuals involved. Given this starting point, the disconnectionists argue that each generation of political actors should be conceived of as a separate, distinct, and politically autonomous entity. From this perspective, each generation of political actors is conceptually and politically disconnected from all others.

In Chapter 3, I argue that despite being mutually exclusive, connectionism and disconnectionism each tell us something useful about the nature of intergenerational political relations. Both schools of thought lend support to the idea that in order to make sense of ourselves *in time*, it is useful to think of the individual as a member of a multigenerational collectivity of one type or another. Connectionists such as Burke, along with a number of contemporary scholars such as Avner de-Shalit (1995), David Miller (2007), and Jana Thompson (2002, 2009), accept the argument that there is a relationship between thinking collectively and acting temporally. These scholars makes use of this relationship in order to justify intergenerational obligations and responsibilities. Disconnectionists such as Paine and Jefferson, as well as a number of contemporary scholars such as Beckerman (2006) and Steiner (1983), make the same point by accepting the consequences of eschewing a collective orientation. The disconnections recognize that if the individual is selected as the primary unit of analysis, political relations, agreements, and obligations cannot be extended past the limited lifetimes of individuals.

The challenge is to figure out how individuals can be integrated into meaningful, multigenerational collective entities without sacrificing their moral autonomy as individuals. Burke's account of a deathless body politic with a mysterious essence that is unknowable to those individuals who make it up, is no longer philosophically acceptable in an age of moral individualism in which legitimate political relations are those that are defined by the consent of those involved. At the same time, it is no longer philosophically acceptable to simply go along with the consequences of disconnectionism. We cannot think of generations as entirely separate political enti-

ties because we now know that what we do (or do not do) will affect the future in profound and even existential ways. I argue that democracy can help integrate individuals into meaningful, forward-looking, multigenerational collective entities that recognize and rely on the moral autonomy of individuals, but that nevertheless provide the collective structures that are needed to help motivate longer-term thinking and maintain intergenerational obligations and responsibilities.

In Chapter 4, I explore the relationship between thinking collectively and acting temporally by looking at theories of intergenerational justice that start with the individual as the primary unit of analysis. If it is possible to understand intergenerational relations as relations between individuals rather than collectivities, this body of literature is the place to go looking for such a theory. In Chapter 4, I examine both contract-based and rights-based theories of intergenerational justice. I argue that theorists such as Beckerman and Pasek (2001), Gosseries (2008), Mazor (2010), and Rawls (1999), have not successfully constructed theories of intergenerational justice that are based on relations between individuals. Instead, when confronted with the limited relevance of the individual in time, theorists of intergenerational justice have tended to adopt one of two strategies: they either 1) retreat into the present by focusing on the obligations that contemporaries have to each other with respect to future individuals; or 2) they adopt a collective orientation of one sort or another in order to make sense of intergenerational relations and obligations. Technically speaking, the first strategy is not intergenerational and the second does not retain the individual as the primary unit of analysis. I argue that these observations help support the claim that I make in Chapter 3: that it is difficult to make sense of the individual *in time* without first locating the individual in a multigenerational collective entity of one sort or another. This means that when we are thinking about intergenerational relations we have to think in terms of relations between collectivities and not in terms of relations between individuals. As explained above, the relevant entities may be any type of collectivity: nations, states, religious traditions, ethnic groups, cultural groups, or even generations themselves. The important point is that when we are thinking about intergenerational relations, we cannot focus only on relations between individuals but we must instead adopt a collective orientation (of one type or another) in order to make sense of political relations that extend past the likely lifetimes of any one individual. This

observation is also borne out in the language that we commonly use to discuss intergenerational relations. When talking about the impacts of our actions on future generations, we rarely say that what we do will affect future individuals. We say 'generations' because we recognize that when thinking about our relations with the future, we have to think in collective terms, if only because future individuals cannot be identified and protected as individuals or engaged in our political decision-making processes today.

The fact that intergenerational relations must be conceived of in collective terms does not mean that we have to accept and sanction a Burkean conception of a deathless body politic with a moral essence that is independent from that of its members. What is needed is *some* means of integrating morally autonomous individuals into collective entities that are, at least in some respects, capable of acting over the long-term. In Chapter 5, I argue that democracy is a means of integrating otherwise unaffiliated individuals into the sorts of collective entities that are capable of acting over the long-term, but that nevertheless preserve the moral autonomy of each individual and generation of individuals. The arguments that I make in Chapter 5 are divided into three parts. In the first part, I argue that the very act of making decisions together in democratic ways makes it possible to forge meaningful collective entities out of individuals who are (or may be) otherwise unaffiliated. On the small scale, identifiable collective entities can form around specific issues or decisions. For example, when a jury makes a decision it, in effect, *becomes* a collective entity with respect to that decision; and even those who dissent from the majority opinion can, at least in principle, come to see themselves as part of a collective entity that has, in some sense, acted intentionally. On the large scale, making collective decisions together in on-going, iterative, and democratic ways at the local, regional, state, or supra-state level, can help forge and continually re-forge the sort of collective entities that are capable of taking specific, intentional, and thus farsighted actions.

In the second part of Chapter 5, I argue that democracy makes it possible for individuals to collectively define, specify, and impose upon themselves collective commitments to the future. Unlike justice-based obligations, politically defined commitments to the future can be filled with any number of details about which actions should be taken by specific political actors such that collective commitments and obligations can be achieved and fulfilled. Unlike other

modes of collective decision-making, democracy makes it possible for individuals to view collective commitments to the future as obligations that they have, in some meaningful sense, imposed upon themselves. The fact that collective decisions in democratic systems are self-imposed and thus 'owned' in a certain sense by those involved in making them, should in theory make it more difficult for new governments or future political actors to abandon previously sanctioned long-term policy initiatives without providing adequate justifications. From this perspective, robust (and in particular deliberative) democratic processes should help provide policy stability over time, despite the fact that governments and political actors frequently alternate in healthy democratic systems.

In the third part of Chapter 5, I argue that democracy makes it possible for individuals to coordinate their actions in collectively intentional ways. This, in turn, makes it possible to attribute responsibility not only to the individuals involved in making public decisions, but also to the collectivity itself. This matters when it comes to dealing with long-term issues and problems because, as discussed above, collectivities are the only sort of entities that can maintain responsibility over time as existing members are replaced by new members. Democracy is a means of linking the responsibility that each individual has to act in future-oriented ways with the capacity to act in collectively intentional ways. This, in turn, makes is possible for responsibility to be meaningfully attributed at the collective level and thus maintained over time.

In the title of the dissertation, I use the term 'future publics' to refer to the sort of democratic entities that are capable of acting over the long-term and bearing responsibility to the future. This term is meant to be applicable to all types of future-oriented democratic entities, even those that are not defined or circumscribed by existing borders or the apparatuses of the state. As Bohman (2007), Dryzek (2004), Warner (2002), and others have explained, the term public is typically used to refer to relatively loose, but nevertheless democratically constituted, collections of individuals. In Warner's account, publics emerge around texts or modes of communication: every book, lecture, radio program, article, public address or website has (and forms) its own public. In Dryzek's account, publics form around particular political issues when people become politically active in addressing those issues. According to these accounts, publics can come to exist at, below, or above the level of the state. As Bohman (2007) argues, transna-

tional democracy, if it comes to exist, will have to account for multiple, overlapping publics — or *demoi* — that form (and will continue to form) around particular political issues that have relevance at different levels of jurisdiction. Publics can exist in multiple overlapping ways because they are, as Warner (2002) explains, self-forming, self-directed, and communicatively-grounded collectivities of otherwise unaffiliated individuals. It is this general sense of the term 'public' that I want to emphasize and makes use of. The democratic publics that I am interested in can, at least in principle, exist at any level of abstraction.

At the same time, much of this dissertation focuses on institutions of the state at various levels of governance. This is a matter of necessity. Although I argue that the formation of democratic publics — in the general sense — is a first step towards effective farsighted collective action, the formation of loose publics around narratives, texts, or political issues is clearly not enough. Even though the notion of the public is not (and should not be) constrained by the apparatuses of the state, some institutionalization is required to solve collective action problems. As Mansbridge (2012) has argued, in order to achieve specific collectively desirable goals or objectives, it is almost always necessary to resort to some measure of coercion to ensure that individual actions are consistent with collective objectives. In order for coercion to be used legitimately, it must be institutionalized and applied fairly and consistently. At minimum, coercive measures should be seen to be legitimate by those who are subject to them. At the present moment, with a few exceptions such as the European Union, most democratic institutions exist at or below the level of the nation-state (see, e.g., Bohman 2007). Given this, when I discuss democratic systems, I refer to those that are organized at the level of the state, even though the sort of democratic publics that I am interested in can, at least in principle, form and find institutional expression at, below, or above the level of the nation-state. Indeed, many long-term problems such as climate change likely require publics to form, and become institutionalized, at the global level if they are to be adequately addressed.

The term 'future publics' is used throughout the dissertation in two related but distinct ways. First, as explained above, I use the term to refer to the sort of collective entities that are capable of acting intentionally over the long-term. Future publics, in this sense, are capable of acting in future-oriented ways because they are democratically organized collective entities.

Democratic entities that are inclusive, deliberative, and self-controlled, enable individuals to act on their own beliefs and motivations about what can and should be done for the future by making it possible for individuals to coordinate their actions in ways that are intentional at the collective level. Thus the 'publics' or collective entities that are formed when decisions are made democratically underpin our individual and collective capacities to act effectively in future-oriented ways.

The second and related sense of the term 'future publics' draws on the claim that intertemporal relations, and in particular those that involve non-overlapping generations of political actors, *are* relations between collectivities and *not* relations between individuals. If this is the case, it is useful to think about intertemporal relations as relations between past, present, and future *publics*. In each case, the collective entity or entities that exist at any one moment in time are made up of existing generations of individuals. Political relations between present and future publics exist because the decisions that a present public makes will affect future publics (i.e. separate but related collective entities that will exist at some point in the future). I prefer the term 'future publics' to the term 'future generations' because a generation is not a self-organizing, self-directed collectivity; a generation is a collection of individuals, all of whom were born during a particular era. Without first becoming a public, a generation cannot act together as a conscious and self-aware collective entity — even though generations are often talked about as if they are intentional collective entities. Given this, I believe that it is more accurate to talk about relations between present and future publics, as opposed to relations between present and future generations, when we are talking about intertemporal *political* relations. Although I prefer the term future publics to future generations, I employ both terms because so much of the extant literature on intertemporal relations uses the more familiar term 'future generations'. Throughout the dissertation, I use the terms past, present, and future publics when speaking of my own work, and the terms past, present, and future generations when engaged in discussions of the works of others.

In Chapters 6, 7, and 8, the focus of the dissertation shifts from democratic theory to democratic practice. The purpose is to explore in more detail the central argument made in Chapter 2: that effective democratic systems do not simply respond to existing claims and preferences,

but can also help shape the interests and perspectives of individuals and groups. Chapter 6 begins with a discussion of what constitutes a robust democratic environment. Most scholars agree that good democratic practices must be equal, inclusive, free, and empowered (e.g., Cohen 1989; Dahl 1985; Smith 2009). Effective democratic processes also enable participants to make informed, well-considered, and publicly-oriented judgements. Many scholars also argue that deliberation plays a number of useful functions in democratic systems (e.g., Chambers 1996; Cohen 1989; Elster 1986; Goodin 2003; Habermas 1996; Mansbridge 1999; Mansbridge *et al.* 2012). As Elster (1986), Cohen (1989), and others have argued, when done well, deliberation can help transform particularistic claims into other-regarding ones. In the second part of Chapter 6, I argue that democratic processes that help turn particularistic claims into general other-regarding ones can also help encourage longer-term thinking when the temporal dimensions of long-term issues are recognized and made explicit. For example, in robust deliberative environments, any claims or positions that do not take into consideration, or adequately address, the potential concerns of future-others can be challenged on those grounds. Given this, democratic practices such as deliberation can create political incentives that *reward* longer-term thinking and turn short-term positions into liabilities.

Chapter 6 focuses on democracy, deliberation and long-term thinking. Chapter 7, by contrast, focuses on democracy, deliberation, and farsighted collective action. In Chapter 7, I address two related but distinct problems. The first has to do with coordinating the actions of contemporaries such that long-term objectives and farsighted goals can be collectively identified and actually achieved. The second has to do with coordinating the actions of non-overlapping present and future publics. In the first part of Chapter 7, I argue that robust democratic environments, especially those that rely on deliberation and persuasion as mechanisms of coordination, can help coordinate individual actions in ways that are collectively intentional and farsighted. The claim is that democratic processes, and in particular effective deliberative practices, make it possible for collections of individuals to act as self-conscious, self-directed, and intentional future-oriented publics. In essence, effective forms of public deliberation make it possible for a public to talk to itself about what it is doing and where it wants to go.

In the second part of Chapter 7, I argue that intergenerational communication (of one form or another) is an essential component of political relations between non-overlapping generations of political actors. This situation arises because future publics, as the disconnectionists explain, will be free to make their own decisions within the confines of their inherited environments. Future publics, whether we like it or not, will be free to accept and continue or reject and discontinue any long-term projects, plans, or initiatives that present publics put in place. The freedom that future publics will have to make their own decisions means that coordination mechanisms that are based on authority, reverence, or coercion will not be effective when it comes to coordinating non-overlapping generations of political actors. There is nothing the present can do to enforce its will on the future. Given this, effective forms of intergenerational coordination must be based on communication and persuasion. Forms of intergenerational communication — such as legally required posterity impact statements — can help encourage longer-term thinking by forcing present period actors to justify their actions vis-à-vis their potential impacts on the future (see, e.g., Thompson 2010). By linking present period plans to justifications that might, at least plausibly, be acceptable to future publics, effective forms of intergenerational communication can also help make farsighted plans, projects, and initiatives more politically viable over the long-term and thus more attractive to present period actors.

The arguments that I make in Chapters 2 through 7 focus on democratic theory and practice. In those chapters I say very little about how (or whether) we can build the sort of democratic institutions that would empower us to act in collectively intentional and farsighted ways. In Chapter 8, I argue that it is possible to design democratic systems that are both efficient and farsighted. Efficient democratic systems and institutions are those that are economical with the democratic resources of individuals. Farsighted ones are those that empower individuals to identify and act in collectively intentional ways.

Based on what is argued in each of the previous chapters, I begin Chapter 8 by identifying five democratic conditions that are conducive to longer-term thinking and farsighted action: 1) independence from electoral cycles; 2) inclusion; 3) deliberation; 4) membership; and 5) popular control. In the first part of the chapter, I outline the basic tenets of a systems-level approach to the study of democratic institutions. In the second part of the chapter, I discuss four

supplementary democratic institutions: citizens' initiatives, referendums, minipublics, and participatory budgeting processes. Together, these institutions can produce the democratic conditions that I have associated with longer-term thinking and farsighted action. What is more, these institutions do not rely on unrealistic or idealistic assumptions about the motivations or time constraints of the average individual. Indeed, these four institutions have been tried, tested, and employed in a variety of democratic contexts.

In the third part of Chapter 8, I examine a number of democratic institutions that have been proposed but have not yet been tried or tested. In that section, I focus on institutions that are specifically designed to help make our democratic systems more effectively farsighted. I argue that it is not necessary to design institutions that are built for this specific purpose. Such institutions might become functional components of a multifaceted democratic system, but they may not be the most efficient and effective way to make our democratic systems more farsighted. Indeed, most of those institutions that have been proposed as correctives to the democratic myopia problem, are designed to deal with only one specific long-term issue: environmental degradation. In response to these proposals, I argue that we should adopt a more general approach to institutional design. If what I say in the rest of the dissertation has any merit, we can make our democratic systems more effectively farsighted by making them more democratic. In Chapter 8, I argue that it is possible to make our democratic systems more democratic *and* more effectively farsighted without overtaxing the democratic resources of the average individual.

In summary, this dissertation makes the following claims. When it comes to effectively addressing politically complex long-term issues, democracy is part of the solution not part of the problem. Democratic systems are not by nature short-sighted. There are certain components of democratic systems that can produce short-term incentives, but democracies also have features that can help encourage longer-term thinking and make farsighted collective action possible. At the highest level of abstraction, democracy can help situate individuals into collective entities or 'publics' that are capable of acting over the long-term in specific, intentional ways. Effective forms of deliberation make it possible for a 'public' to talk to itself about what it is doing and where it wants to go. In addition to *registering* existing views and preferences, democracy can also help broaden the perspectives of individuals by transforming particularistic claims into gen-

eralized ones that consider the interests of others, including future-others. Lastly, unlike other modes of coordination, effective forms of intergenerational communication and persuasion can help coordinate political actors who are not contemporaries. At the lowest level of abstraction, I argue that specific types of democratic institutions can help counterbalance the myopic tendencies of electoral processes and help produce collective outcomes that represent a better balance between the interests of the present and those of the future.

Chapter 2

Are Democratic Systems Short-Sighted?

Introduction

Are democratic systems short-sighted? Many scholars have argued that democracies are not capable of effectively addressing long-term problems because of the political dynamics created by short electoral cycles, the complexity associated with long-term problems, and the myopic views of citizens and other influential groups of political actors. This claim — which might be called the 'democratic myopia thesis' — has been investigated empirically in a variety of fields including economics, public policy, and ecology. In economics, scholars have explored the extent to which regular electoral cycles affect business cycles, and whether these dynamics produce less-than-optimal social and economic outcomes (see, e.g., Alt and Chrystal 1983; Nordhaus 1975). Scholars of public policy have looked at whether democratic systems are systematically biased against the interests of the young on age-related issues such as public pension plans, health care, and education spending (see, e.g., Berkman and Plutzer 2004; Button 1992; Jacobs 2011; Rhodebeck 1993; Street and Cossman 2008). Others point out that democracies have been unable to prevent environmental destruction (see, e.g., Dobson 1996; Ekeli 2005; Heilbroner 1980; Ophuls and Boyan 1992; Shearman and Smith 2007; Stein 1998; Tremmel 2006).

Outside of academia, the democratic myopia thesis has received attention from public figures such as celebrities and politicians. For example, the former German President Richard von Weizacker once said:

> Every democracy is, generally speaking, founded on a structural problem, namely the glorification of the present and a neglect of the future. It is an indisputable fact that we cannot and do not want to be ruled differently than by representatives elected for a fixed amount of time - with no more leeway at their disposal than precisely their legislative terms of office for what they offer as solutions to our problems. I am not saying that all politicians are unconcerned with the future. They are only faced with the problem of having to acquire a majority (quoted in Tremmel 2006, 188).[1]

Despite the attention that the democratic myopia thesis has received, the terms of the argument remain theoretically underdeveloped. Do short electoral cycles cause the problem? Or is the problem caused by the myopic views of voters themselves? What about the political influence of economic actors with dominant short-term interests? Is the problem caused by the complexity of long-term issues? Perhaps the problem is ontological: democracies are supposed to be responsive to those who are affected but future generations that do not yet exist cannot influence collective decision-making processes today. Which of these arguments is most important? Which of these arguments are compatible? Which are mutually exclusive?

This chapter seeks to bring some theoretical coherence to the democratic myopia thesis. I start by identifying five conceptually distinct versions of the thesis: 1) *the short electoral cycles argument*; 2) *the myopic citizen argument*; 3) *the powerful economic actors argument*; 4) *the complexity argument*; and 5) *the non-presence of future persons argument*. Most statements of the democratic myopia thesis are a combination of more than one of these arguments. It is, however, conceptually useful to examine these arguments independently and to judge each on its own terms. This chapter argues that each version of the democratic myopia thesis can be challenged on theoretical grounds. In some cases, an argument can be applied only to certain types of long-term issues. The *non-presence of future persons argument*, for example, is relevant to those issues that involve relations between non-overlapping generations, but it is not relevant to long-term issues such as education spending or public pension plans that primarily involve relations between contemporaries who are members of different generations. More generally, I argue that

[1] A statement with similar connotations was made by Vancouver mayor Gregor Robertson during a visit to China in 2010. The statement reads as follows: "...you can be critical of a lot of regimes around the world, and you can question how worthwhile democracy is in a lot of countries right now which are, frankly, ignoring the biggest crisis in the history of our species which is climate change. That's where you see the Chinese government taking radical dramatic action in investing in turning the ship around. And you do not see that in Western governments right now, democratically elected, and that's because they're afraid. And that's not serving the greater interests of society." Robertson was later forced to clarify and recant his remarks publicly. Source: www.citycaucus.com

each version of the democratic myopia thesis implicitly or explicitly relies on a model of democracy that: a) focuses on electoral dynamics and institutions to the exclusion of many other types of democratic processes and practices; and b) assumes that the interests, preferences, and expectations of individuals and groups are relatively well fixed and exogenous to the democratic process itself.

This chapter examines each version of the democratic myopia thesis from a systems-level perspective. I argue that once we move away from minimalist models of democracy that focus on aggregative processes and electoral dynamics, the prospects for long-term thinking and action in democratic systems do not look so bleak. From a systems-level perspective there is a range of democratic goods and practices — such as inclusion, deliberation, public debate, interest group politics, and even mass protest — that can, and do, help shape public preferences, expectations, and ultimately collective outcomes in democratic systems. There is also a range of supplementary democratic institutions — such as citizens' initiatives, referendums, and minipublics — that are not affected by the political dynamics of short electoral cycles in the same ways, or to the same extent, as electoral institutions. I argue that multifaceted democratic systems can help encourage longer-term thinking and underwrite farsighted collective actions. While there are features of democratic systems that create and nurture short-term imperatives, democracies are not without resources for overcoming these challenges.

2.1 The Short Electoral Cycles Argument

The *short electoral cycles argument* is the most familiar version of the democratic myopia thesis. The basic premise of the argument runs as follows: elected politicians have strong incentives to support policies that produce noticeable net benefits within a single electoral cycle, and they have equally strong incentives to discount or ignore potential solutions to long-term problems, especially if these have associated and significant near-term costs. Kavka and Warren (1983) provide a representative account of this argument. In their words, "politicians in democratic states, who are elected for relatively short periods and who are judged by voters largely in terms of the immediate results of their actions, also have strong incentives to overdiscount the future in the policy-making process" (432).

The *short electoral cycles argument* is commonly cited in conjunction with the claim that voters themselves are short-sighted, but the two arguments are conceptually distinct. Although both voters and politicians might be either short-sighted or farsighted on particular issues, elected governments face political incentives that voters typically do not have to confront. First, governments, and to a lesser extent other elected politicians, have to *demonstrate* the benefits of their actions over the near-term. Second, politicians have partisan objectives and considerations that are different from those of even the most partisan citizen who is not an elected official. Unlike private citizens, public officials have to think about how and where to spend their political capital, whether the long-term policies they are associated with will come to fruition, and whether they will get credit for their actions in the future.

It is difficult for governments and elected officials to *demonstrate* the prospective benefits of long-term policies over the near-term. The fact that prospective benefits have not *yet* been realized means that they *might* not be realized. This fact alone makes it difficult for elected politicians to make credible claims about the good that they have done if what they claim to have done has not yet been achieved. Indeed, voters will have many good reasons to suspect that prospective benefits might not be realized. Long-term estimates may be inaccurate. Unexpected events such as earthquakes or other natural disasters might intervene. Economic circumstances might change and make long-term investments or policies less feasible or effective. These are sources of uncertainty that are (largely) exogenous to the political process. There are also sources of uncertainty that are endogenous to the political process. Elected officials might fail to keep their promises, or future governments might renege on commitments made by previous governments. This latter source of uncertainty has been called the time-inconsistency problem (see, e.g., Hovi *et al*. 2009). As Jacobs and Matthews (2012) explain, many long-term policies or initiatives involve "non-simultaneous exchanges" where costs (of one type or another) are paid in the current period for prospective benefits. If these exchanges involve investment funds or savings that are made for a stated purpose, future governments and politicians may come under pressure to divert these funds to other purposes. It is more difficult for investments in infrastructure or human resources to be diverted by future governments, but the time-inconsistency problem is not restricted to fungible resources. Many policies that are designed to have long-term cumulative

effects can be reversed or abandoned by future governments before their full objectives have been realized. A carbon tax, for example, imposes current period costs that will only be worth paying if the policy is sustained and effective over the long-term, and this requires future governments to remain committed to the policy itself. The danger, as Jacobs and Matthews (2012) explain, is that "even if today's incumbents remain committed to the original long-run project, their successors may have divergent policy preferences and little moral or political stake in a policy bargain to which they were not a party" (910).

The problems associated with uncertainty will affect all types of long-term issues, but policies that address very long-term issues, such as climate change or the storage of nuclear waste, will be subject to more uncertainty than those that address medium-term issues such as education spending. Similarly, sources of political uncertainty, such as the time-inconsistency problem, will affect all types of political regimes. A dictator, for example, might create a fund for one purpose only to pillage that fund for some other purpose in the future. In a dictatorship, there will be few opportunities for citizens or other officials to complain or attempt to prevent desirable long-term initiatives from being undermined by political leaders. Democracies, by contrast, are subject to a different source of policy uncertainty. Healthy democratic regimes are those that have regularly alternating governments (see, e.g., Cheibub *et al.* 1996), and this means that present period governments must factor into their long-term calculations the possibility that newly elected governments may have very different policy priorities from their own. Such considerations might encourage governments to underinvest in long-term initiatives, even if they think their supporters would not oppose investment, and even when they have confidence that long-term actions (if sustained) would be in the public interest.

Given the uncertainty associated with long-term investments and the difficulty of claiming credit for benefits that have not yet been achieved, elected politicians have many reasons not to make long-term investments or adopt policies with prospective benefits and near-term costs. While the benefits of such policies will be difficult to demonstrate and claim credit for in the near-term, the costs will be comparatively easy to link to those who currently control the government.

In competitive democratic systems, politicians do not just think about their own political fortunes, they also have to think about the possible fortunes of their political rivals. If the prospective benefits of long-term initiatives will not be realized until some unspecified time in the future, whoever is in power at that time may reap the political rewards of investments that are made today (Healy and Malhotra 2009; Mayhew 1974). Similarly, when the prospective benefits of long-term investments are realized in small cumulative steps, it will be difficult to link demonstrable benefits to specific political actors or parties at any one moment in time, especially in very competitive democratic systems. These considerations, like those associated with the time-inconsistency problem, might encourage governments to underinvest in long-term initiatives. There are good partisan reasons for elected politicians to refrain from investing their political capital, their reputations, and current revenues in long-term initiatives if the rewards of prospective benefits are likely to be reaped by *other* political actors. These disincentives will be relevant to the calculations of elected officials even if they have the political support to make long-term investments, and even when they truly believe in the wisdom of making those investments. By contrast, any action with demonstrable near-term benefits can be relatively easily claimed by those politicians, parties, or governments doing the acting. From the perspective of an elected official, the most attractive policies are those with demonstrable near-term benefits and few or no near-term costs. In some cases, the costs of long-term initiatives can be transferred onto (unknown) future political actors. Indeed, given the uncertainty associated with long-term policies, the projected costs associated with some policies might never need to be paid. These political dynamics help explain why governments are often eager to borrow money to produce tangible near-term benefits but reluctant to invest in long-term initiatives that have prospective benefits.

These are the basic tenets of the *short electoral cycles argument*. What is less often emphasized is that many of the political dynamics associated with short electoral cycles will operate even if voters themselves are not myopic. If voters articulate strong preferences for specific long-term benefits (such as clean air in the future) it will make it *easier* for elected governments to justify near-term costs (such as a carbon tax), but the preferences of farsighted voters will not eliminate the fact that it is difficult for elected politicians to demonstrate and take credit for prospective benefits that have not yet been realized. Politicians (and citizens) may be willing to pay

near-term costs, but the incentives for elected governments to make long-term investments will be greatly reduced if there are reasons to believe that prospective benefits may not be obtained, that the political rewards associated with those benefits will be reaped by other political actors, or that long-term policies will not remain in place long enough to do some good.

The following stylized scenario is meant to help illustrate the conceptual independence of the *short electoral cycles argument* and the *myopic citizen argument*. Imagine a government considering the potential political benefits of two alternative policies: an economic stimulus plan and an education improvement plan. The economic stimulus plan will use current revenues to stimulate the economy and will thus involve paying near-term costs for relatively near-term benefits. The education improvement plan will also use current revenues but the benefits of the plan will be realized cumulatively over the next 15, 20, or 30 years. Imagine as well that: 1) both plans will cost approximately the same amount of money; 2) each plan is technically sound and thus equally likely to produce the stated benefits if adopted and maintained; and 3) the government can only afford to adopt one of the two plans. In addition, suppose that the government knows that citizens support both policies equally. In other words, citizens are not myopic: they recognize the benefits of eduction spending and they are in principle willing to pay the near-term costs of the education improvement plan. In this stylized scenario, the government will face stronger political incentives to adopt the economic stimulus plan and not the education improvement plan. Both policies will impose near-term costs but only the stimulus plan will produce demonstrable net benefits that can be credibly claimed by that government over the course of a typical 4-year election cycle. In the case of the economic stimulus plan the government can claim credit for actions taken *and* tangible benefits received. In the case of the education improvement plan, the government can claim credit for actions taken but not for any tangible benefits received. Furthermore, by promising to produce net benefits before the next election, the economic stimulus plan will not be subject to the uncertainties associated with alternating governments.

The basic tenets of the *short electoral cycles argument* are persuasive, but the relevance of this argument to the prospects for long-term thinking and action in democratic systems should not be overstated. By focusing exclusively on electoral politics, the *short electoral cycles argument* presents a relatively narrow and incomplete view of collective decision-making processes

in multifaceted democratic systems. From one perspective, focusing on elections and electoral dynamics makes a lot of sense. Electoral institutions are an essential component of any well-developed democratic system. From another perspective, this approach helps to create the problem with which it is concerned. By emphasizing the centrality of electoral politics, the short electoral cycles problem is made more salient than other potentially relevant considerations, democratic goods, practices, and institutions. Indeed, collective outcomes in democratic systems are, and always have been, shaped by a range of factors, forces, dynamics, and processes — some of which have to do with electoral politics but many of which function to supplement, influence, or directly challenge the decisions made by elected officials. As Rosanvallon explains, historically,

> the power to vote periodically and thus bestow legitimacy on an elected government was almost always accompanied by a wish to exercise a more permanent form of control over the government thus elected. People recognized immediately that the sanction of the ballot box was insufficient to compel elected representatives to keep their promises to the voters (Rosanvallon 2008, 12).

The sanction of the ballot box is also insufficient to compel elected officials to address certain types of issues or to take specific actions, especially those that are unlikely to produce immediate electoral benefits. Indeed, such issues may be dealt with through democratic means that are not themselves directly affected by the political dynamics of short electoral cycles.

Effective democratic systems provide individuals and groups with multiple (more or less effective) means of shaping political agendas and influencing decision-making processes. Citizens in democratic systems can form interest groups to put pressure on elected officials, they can engage in mass protests, they can form unions and go on strike, they can use the media to shape public opinions and persuade governments to address issues that might otherwise be ignored, and they can directly challenge government decisions in courts of law. There are also a range of supplementary institutions such as citizens' initiatives and referendums, as well as a number of less familiar institutions such as minipublics and participatory budgeting processes, that can provide citizens with additional influence over public decision-making processes between election periods. These, and other institutions, will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8. At this point I simply want to emphasize the range of possibilities. Citizens' initiatives, referendums, minipublics, interests groups, unions, mass protests, free media systems, and courts of law all have at least two things in common: 1) they provide citizens and groups with some influence over col-

lective decisions; and 2) they are not subject to the short-term dynamics that often characterize electoral politics. What is more, these modes of influence can and often do function in ways that are democratic, despite the fact that each operates independently from our primary electoral institutions. If short electoral cycles render democracies myopic, it is their independence from electoral cycles that makes supplementary institutions and alternative democratic processes part of the solution to the problem. Given the range of alternative modes of democratic influence, the relevance of the short electoral cycles argument should not be overstated. While applicable to electoral institutions, this argument cannot be used to support the claim that democratic systems are, by their very nature, myopic.

2.2 The Myopic Citizen Argument

The *short electoral cycles argument* is not the only one used to support the democratic myopia thesis. Many observers have argued that the source of the problem can be found in the myopic tendencies of voters themselves. As explained above, although the *short electoral cycles argument* and the *myopic citizen argument* are related, it is useful to make conceptual distinctions between them. According to the *short electoral cycles argument*, politicians may be incentivized to act in short-sighted ways even when voters, in principle, would support longer-term initiatives. According to the *myopic citizen argument*, it is the voters themselves who put pressure on elected officials to adopt short-term policies, even if politicians understand the need for long-term planning and farsighted action.

Thompson (2010) presents the *myopic citizen argument* as a kind of syllogism. He reasons as follows: *if* "citizens tend to discount the future," *and* the "democratic process responds to their demands," *then* the laws that democracies produce "will tend to neglect future generations" (17). According to this version of the argument, democracy is by nature myopic because it is responsive to citizens' concerns and there is, according to Thompson, a "natural human tendency to prefer the immediate to the distant, both in what one fears and what one desires" (18).

There are many reasons why individuals might prefer the near-term to the future. In some cases, people are simply impatient: they care about near-term utility more than future utility even if prospective benefits are certain, risk-free, and would provide greater absolute returns or value

than near-term benefits. People who are impatient in theses ways have positive time preferences. It is useful to distinguish between impatience or positive time preferences on the one hand, and future discounting on the other. Future discounting occurs when individuals who may or may not have positive time preferences have reasons to discount the utility of prospective benefits when compared to more immediate gains (see, e.g., Frederick *et al.* 2002, 352; Jacobs 2011, chap 2).

There is a long tradition of research into the possible causes of positive time preferences and future discounting, especially among economists (see, e.g., Frederick *et al.* 2002). N. W. Senior (1836), for example, speculated that positive time preferences may be caused by the psychological strain of self-denial. It is often difficult and even painful to save for the future or pay near-term costs because saving involves self-denial whereas spending and consumption helps satisfy our immediate needs and desires. Many years after Senior was writing, economists such as Koopmans (1960), Koopmans, Diamond, and Williamson (1964), Hirshleifer (1970) and Olson and Bailey (1981), made logical arguments to support the notion of positive time preferences. According to Frederick *et al.* (2002), the "gist of their arguments is that a zero or negative time preference, combined with a positive real rate of return on saving, would command the infinite deferral of all consumption" (359). But as Frederick *et al.* (2002) point out, while this argument is logically sound it would only be true if individuals had infinite lifespans and linear (or near) linear utility functions.

Scholars such as Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk (1889) and Irving Fisher (1930) have argued that individuals tend to *discount* the future because it is difficult to conceptualize our future needs and desires. This, in turn, causes us to underestimate the value of our future utility. We might not have a preference for near-term utility over future utility but if our immediate concerns feel more real and less abstract than our prospective needs and desires we will tend to discount the future in favour of the present. Also, there may be future wants, needs, and desires that do not, for whatever reason, come to mind. If future concerns do not come to mind, they cannot be factored into our intertemporal utility calculations and this will tend to bias our judgements toward the present period, even if we do not have strongly positive time preferences. Thus in addition to the uncertainty that long-term decisions inevitably involve, the difficulty of estimating our future needs and desires can cause individuals to discount the future in favour of the present. In a

related point, Jacobs (2011) has observed that individuals often perceive long-term consequences, problems, or dangers as being less dramatic or less salient than short-term ones even when the only objective difference between two concerns is their temporal location (46).

In addition to uncertainty and a lack of salience, there are cognitive processes that can bias our judgements against the future. For example, individuals tend to place more weight on negative outcomes than on positive ones. This tendency — which is known as the 'negativity bias' — is well documented in the psychology literature (e.g., Vonk 1993), but it has also been shown to affect political judgements, policy preferences, and voting behavior (e.g., Lau 1985; Soroka 2006). In addition, individuals tend to be loss averse: they weigh potential losses more heavily than equivalent prospective gains (e.g., Gilovich *et al*. 2002; Kahneman, Knetsch, and Thaler 1991; Kahneman and Tversky 2000). As Jacobs (2011) explains, these, and other reasons for future discounting can affect the willingness that individuals have to invest in long-term initiatives, plans, or policies, even if individuals themselves do not have strongly positive time preferences. If future consequences are less salient than imminent ones, if we care more about the negative than the positive, and if we tend to weigh potential losses more heavily than potential gains, we will be less likely to support actions or initiatives that seek immediate pains for future gains (46).

Whatever their causes, the distinction between 'pure' positive time preferences and future discounting is politically important. As Jacobs' (2011) explains, if individuals have strongly positive time preferences, actions taken to mitigate uncertainty or to make the future consequences of decisions more salient will do little to help make political actors less myopic. On the other hand, if individuals tend to have only modestly positive time preferences, addressing some of the causes of future discounting, might help make us more willing to pay near-term costs for prospective gains. The standard version of the *myopic citizen argument* makes strong claims that individuals have positive time preferences, and that they tend to discount the future for various reasons. In many accounts of the *myopic citizen argument* the differences between time preferences and future discounting are not made explicit (see, e.g., Thompson 2010).

Another version of the *myopic citizen argument* combines observations about positive time preferences and future discounting with claims about the prevalence of self-interested, util-

ity maximizing behavior. Using Downs' (1957) theory of economic democracy as a foundation for her claims, Stein provides a representative account of a self-interest version of the *myopic citizen argument*:

> It is assumed that individuals behave like self-interested rational actors: they act rationally and with a present preference in the utility function, meaning they act myopically in the short term. People who act myopically will judge today's loss as more important than tomorrow's profit and vice versa: for them today's profit is more important than a future loss. When this problem is transferred to the sphere of democratic politics, the voting behavior of the electorate is more easily understood. Voters will choose those options which promise to maximize the health and well-being of the people, and also for those that avoid any sacrifices (Stein 1998, 425).

Although they are often conflated (as in the above quote), self-interest versions of the *myopic citizen argument* and cognitive bias versions of the argument are conceptually distinct. As Thompson (2010) points out, there is a difference between the "natural human tendency to prefer the immediate to the distant" and the "self interest motivation" (19). Self-interested individuals might rationally favour long-term policy options if they are concerned about the well-being of their future-selves.[2] As such, a self-interest version of the argument does not rule out support for policies related to pensions plans, transportation planning, or other long-term initiatives that are likely to benefit the future-selves of voters. In contrast, the cognitive biases version of the *citizen myopia argument* applies to all types of long-term issues, those that will affect the future-selves of voters and those that will primarily affect future generations that do not yet exist.

Despite the intuitive appeal of the *myopic citizen argument*, the premise of the argument can be challenged on both empirical and theoretical grounds. There is evidence that individuals may have moderately positive time preferences (e.g., Jacobs 2011, Jacobs and Matthews 2012, Teles 2009) and there are many good reasons to discount the future utility of certain actions, especially those associated with uncertainty and risk. Nevertheless, it is not uncommon for individuals to worry about the future, make plans for their own future, or think about their children's future. Indeed, it is not uncommon for individuals to think past their own temporal horizons and

[2] Although, as Derek Parfit (1984) has argued, individuals may have preferences for near-term utility *because* our future-selves are not identical with our present-selves. If we conceive of our future-selves as future-others because changing circumstances, contingencies, and life-experiences change us over time, we should have moderately positive time preferences if we have a preference for ourselves over others.

to consider the interests or concerns of future-others.[3] Scholars such as Ernest Partridge (1981) and Jana Thompson (2009) have argued that it is psychologically normal for individuals to posses interests and concerns that transcend the self. As Partridge explains,

> By claiming that there is a human need for 'self-transcendence,' I am proposing that, as a result of the psychodevelopmental sources of the self and the fundamental dynamics of social experience, well functioning human beings identify with, and seek to further, the well-being, preservation, and endurance of communities, locations, causes, artifacts, institutions, ideas, and so on, that are outside themselves and that they hope will flourish beyond their own lifetimes" (Partridge 1981, 204).

Partridge's intuitions are borne out by empirical research. For example, surveys show that public opinions on very long-term issues such as climate change are far from uniformly myopic. Indeed, public opinions on climate change and related issues may be better characterized as complex and nuanced: the public's opinions on these matters are short-sighted in some respects and farsighted in others. To be sure, long-term issues such as climate change rarely make it to the top of the pollster's list of 'most important issues' (Pew Center 2007). Respondents typically rank immediate concerns such as security, healthcare, and the economy as being more important than long-term issues such as climate change (e.g., Brulle, *et al.* 2012; Hamilton 2011; Lorenzoni and Pidgeon 2006; Pew Center 2007). Despite this, polls indicate that many citizens *are* concerned about environmental issues such as air pollution, radioactive waste, and climate change. In a meta-analysis of published polls, Lorenzoni and Pidgeon (2006) conclude that, "Climate change has woven its way into the general consciousness worldwide, with awareness and concern about the issue present among most publics, including those in the USA and in Europe" (75).

Polls also show that many individuals support specific policies designed to help mitigate climate change. Leiserowitz (2006), for example, reports that large majorities in the US support policies to increase fuel efficiency standards, to strengthen regulations of carbon dioxide as a pollutant, to shift government subsidies from fossil fuel industries to the renewable resource sector, and to tax large vehicles or "gas guzzlers" (55). There is, however, less support for policies

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[3] The literature on intertemporal tradeoffs and the myopic tendencies of individuals tends to focus on the individual's relation to his or her own future-self. See Frederick *et al.* (2002) for an extensive review of the economic literature on intertemporal tradeoffs. From a political theory perspective, it is also important to think about some of the reasons that individuals might have to think *past* their own lifetimes. This question is addressed throughout this dissertation. I argue that when we view ourselves in relation to other individuals who are morally equivalent to ourselves, we will have reasons to think and act in future-oriented ways if we also recognize the long-term or *very* long-term consequences of our collective actions. By contrast, as Stein (1998) observes, if individuals are 'purely' self-interested they will have few reasons to think past their own limited time horizons.

that might affect individuals directly. In Leiserowitz's study, only a minority of individuals said that they would support a business tax on heavy emissions producers (31 percent) or a gas tax at the pumps (17 percent) (56). Similar trends are observed elsewhere. As Lorenzoni and Pidgeon (2006) report, a majority of respondents in the UK said that they would be willing to use their cars less (68 percent), take fewer flights (62 percent), and pay more for flights (51 percent) (84). Although support for a gas tax is higher in the UK than in the US, only a minority of UK respondents said that they would be willing to pay more at the pumps (37 percent) (Lorenzoni and Pidgeon 2006, 84). Overall, these results indicate that while there are limits to what citizens are willing to do for the future, the electorate is not uniformly myopic and individuals are not merely concerned with their own short-term interests, at least on the topic of climate change. As the polls indicate, there are policy options that are designed to address issues such as climate change that would have the support of a majority of voters, even though these policies seek to mitigate problems that are relatively remote and temporally distant in the minds of most voters.

Polls, of course, can only tell us so much. Respondents are asked if they would, in principle, support one policy or another, or whether they would be willing to pay certain near-term costs such as higher prices at the gas pumps. But the prospective benefits of such measures are typically left unstated or underspecified in the survey questions. Nor are respondents asked to consider the temporal tradeoffs at stake or make judgements about the conditions under which they would or would not be willing to pay near-term costs for prospective benefits. A more robust way to explore whether individuals are myopic is to use experiments to examine the conditions under which individuals are (or are not) willing to make intertemporal tradeoffs.

Experiments from the economic literature on intertemporal tradeoffs do not support the claim that citizens have strongly positive time preferences. As Frederick *et al.* (2002) demonstrate, there are many empirical findings that are not consistent with this claim. Experimental subjects, for example, tend to prefer increasing temporal sequences to decreasing ones. In experiments on the temporal distribution of salaries, it was found that subjects generally prefer increasing salary profiles to decreasing or flat salary profiles, even though flat or decreasing salary profiles would put more money in their hands more quickly. Other studies have shown that individuals have modest preferences for spreading income or benefits over time, even though their

present-selves would benefit more from immediate consumption (Frederick *et al.* 2002, 353-354). These and other experimental findings suggest that many individuals do not have strongly positive time preferences, at least when it comes to their personal finances. Individuals might nevertheless discount the future if they believe that prospective benefits are uncertain, or if the long-term consequences of their actions have not been made salient enough.

There are fewer experiments on intertemporal tradeoffs in the political science literature. In order to help address this gap in the literature, Jacobs and Matthews (2012) designed a survey experiment to explore the effects of timing on the willingness of individuals to support long-term policy initiatives that have near-term costs. In the experiment, participants were told that the US public pension plan (which is known as Social Security) would face a financial crisis in the coming years if costly reforms were not adopted. Participants were asked if they would be willing to pay more taxes today in order to avoid larger tax increases in the future. The study induced two experimental manipulations. The first varied the timing of the coming crisis. One group was told that the crisis would occur in 5 years, while the other was told the crisis would not occur for 40 years. The other manipulation dealt with causal complexity. One group was told that similar reforms had been tried before and that experts agreed that the reforms would be easy to implement and effective. The control group received no such assurances.

The results of the experiment confirm that voters *are* myopic, at least in certain respects. Those who were told that the crisis is decades away were statistically less likely to support costly reforms to the Social Security system. But this is not the whole story. Jacobs and Matthews' (2012) results show that voters do not have strongly positive time preferences. Instead, the decisions of voters appear to be affected by contextual factors such as certainty and trust in government. Those who were given assurances that the proposed reforms would be successful, were equally likely to support reform regardless of whether or not they were told the crisis would occur in 5 or 40 years. Jacobs and Matthews (2012) also found that those with low levels of fiscal trust (i.e. those who believe governments tend to waste public money), were statistically less likely to support the proposed reforms if they were told that the crisis would not occur for 40 years. For those in the high-trust group, the temporal distance of the looming crisis did not affect their willingness to support the proposed reforms.

These results provide strong experimental evidence that the familiar picture of the myopic voter is overly simplistic. Although there may be many good reasons for individuals to favour near-term payoffs over long-term prospective ones, and although individuals may be affected by certain cognitive biases against the future, the electorate is not uniformly myopic and individuals do not always favour the near-term over the long-term. As Jacobs and Matthews (2012) point out, while their results "broadly confirm the common views of public attitudes as biased towards the short run, they also caution against *overstating* the magnitude of the electoral risks facing politicians who enact costly investments in the long term" (932).

The *myopic citizen argument* can also be challenged on theoretical grounds. The claim that democracies are short-sighted because they are designed to respond to the short-term perspectives of voters is theoretically consistent with certain models of democracy but not others. The argument is consistent with a model of democracy in which the preferences of voters are assumed to be relatively static and exogenous to the political process. It is not consistent with a model of democracy in which the interests, concerns, opinions, expectations, and preferences of individuals are thought to be shaped by the democratic process itself.

Consider Downs' (1957) 'Economic Model of Democracy', the model used by Stein (1998) to support her version of the *myopic citizen argument.* In Downs' (1957) model, political actors are self-interested agents that seek votes like economic actors seek money. The model is based, in part, on the following simplifying assumptions: 1) all agents (i.e. voters, politicians, and parties) will behave rationally at all times (137); and 2) the preferences of voters are identifiable, relatively stable, and single-peaked at some point on the left-right spectrum (142). Similar assumptions are maintained in other rational choice models of democracy. As Elster (1986) explains, according to the standard version of social choice theory, individuals are assumed to have well defined preferences over a given set of alternative choices, and, among other conditions, the "agents are supposed to be endowed with preferences that are similarly given and not subject to change in the course of the political process" (105).

Other models of democracy assume precisely the opposite: that the interests, concerns, opinions, expectations, and preferences of political actors are, at least in part, shaped by their

participation in the democratic process itself. This is a central assumption of the 'developmental' models of participatory democracy advanced by J.S. Mill (1861) and Carole Pateman (1970). As Elster (1986) explains, according to these models of democracy, "the goal of politics is the transformation and education of the participants" (103). It is through various more or less intense modes of democratic participation that individuals are presented with opportunities to learn about public issues, to develop political competencies, and to become familiar with the concerns and interests of others.

Standard models of deliberative democracy also emphasize the developmental aspects of participation. In good deliberative processes, each participant is supposed to maintain opinions, preferences, and expectations that are, at least in principle, provisional and to some extent revisable (e.g., Gutmann and Thompson 2004). It is provisionality that makes persuasion possible in a deliberative context. This does not mean that participants should pretend that they are blank slates, or that they do not possess strong preferences, stable opinions, or specific interests or expectations. Far from it. Productive deliberations are only possible when each individual or group makes persuasive arguments in favour of some position or another. It is also possible for individuals to legitimately maintain and advance self-interested claims in deliberative processes (Mansbridge *et al.* 2009). Self-interested claims will be legitimate if they can be made reasonable from the perspective of others, and if they are amenable to the interests and concerns of others. In models of participatory democracy, changing preferences are often seen as byproducts of participation. In contrast, the whole purpose of deliberation is to use discursive practices to actively shape and re-shape opinions, interests, concerns, and expectations such that resolutions to difficult or controversial political issues can be found or forged and ultimately accepted by those who are affected (e.g., Gutmann and Thompson 1996). As Chambers (2003) defines it: "deliberation is debate and discussion aimed at producing reasonable, well-informed opinions in which participants are willing to revise preferences in light of discussion, new information, and claims made by fellow participants" (309).

The *myopic citizen argument*, as it is often presented, sets up a false dichotomy: either a system is responsive to the existing concerns of individuals or it is not democratic. If the system *is* responsive and citizens are myopic, policy outcomes will tend to favour the present over the

future. But this dichotomy stands only if we assume that the preferences of individuals are stable and exogenous to the democratic process itself. Alternatively, if preferences and opinions are, at least in part, conceived of as *products* of democratic processes, it is possible to conceive of a system that is democratic but that does not simply respond to the existing preferences and immediate concerns of individuals. Models of democracy that allow for changes of opinion to occur also allow for another possibility: that certain democratic arrangements, practices, and procedures might help actively discourage myopic tendencies and encourage longer-term thinking among participants. In theory, democratic practices such as deliberation might help reduce future discounting by, for example, making the long-term consequences of certain actions (or inactions) more salient. In Chapter 6, I argue that *any* democratic process that effectively helps turn particularistic claims into generalized other-regarding ones, can help encourage longer-term thinking when the temporal dimensions of long-term issues are recognized and made explicit. The basic claim is that democratic practices that help make participants more sensitive to the concerns of others can also help make them more sensitive to the concerns and interests of future-others.

In theory, democratic practices can also help make longer-term plans and policies less politically uncertain. If citizens know, understand, and accept the reasons used to justify costly investments, it should be more difficult for democratically elected leaders to renege on investments made by previous administrations or abandon long-term policies that citizens have knowingly and willingly invested their resources in.

In summary, although the *myopic citizen argument* is relevant in certain circumstances and to specific models of democracy, it is not applicable in all circumstances or to all models of democracy. From an empirical perspective, while there are good reasons for individuals to discount the future, there is evidence that individuals do not always do so. Public opinion on issues such as climate change and public pensions is not consistently lined up against the interests of the future, or against policy proposals designed to address specific aspects of these long-term problems. Instead, public opinions on these issues are complex, nuanced, and likely affected by a range of situational and political factors (see, e.g., Brulle *et al.* 2012; Hamilton 2011; Jacobs and Matthews 2012; Krosnick *et al.* 2006; Leiserowitz 2006; Lorenzoni and Pidgeon 2006).

From a theoretical perspective, the *myopic citizen argument* is consistent with a model of democracy in which the preference structures of individuals are relatively stable, short-sighted, and formed independently of the democratic process. It is not consistent with a model of democracy in which the interests, concerns, opinions, expectations, and preferences of individuals are thought to be shaped by the democratic process. Given this, the relevance and applicability of the *myopic citizen argument* should not be overstated. Democratic systems are supposed to be responsive to the concerns and interests of citizens, and the *myopic citizen argument* is undoubtedly relevant in some cases, but this argument cannot be used to support the more general claim that democratic systems are, by their very nature, short-sighted.

2.3 The Powerful Economic Actors Argument

Another version of the democratic myopia thesis has to do with the influence of powerful economic actors. There are at least two versions of this argument, and although they are conceptually distinct they are not mutually exclusive. The first focuses on the *direct* influence of economic actors in selecting candidates, funding election campaigns, lobbying governments, and ultimately influencing policy. The other focuses on the *indirect* influence that economic actors can exert on governments by way of their influence over economic conditions more generally. In either case, the syllogistic argument runs as follows: *if* economic actors are motivated by short-term profit gains, *and* democratic processes are dominated by the interests of this group, *then* democratic outcomes will reflect the short-term interests of powerful economic actors and not interests of the public as a whole.

The first version of this problem arises because existing democracies are characterized by what Dahl (1956) has termed "polyarchy" and what Lowi (1979) more critically calls "interest group liberalism." In Dahl's version of this system, different groups within society are relatively equal in terms of influence and voice. In Lowi's version of the system, some groups are more influential than others. Those groups that are well organized and well resourced can dominate democratic processes because they know their interests well, they can effectively articulate their concerns, and they can mobilize their memberships and resources to actively support or oppose specific policies, parties, or candidates. From a critical perspective, the task of government is

thus reduced to making actionable agreements or accommodations that have been worked out among leaders of the most powerful interest groups. If these groups have dominant short-term interests, democratic outcomes will tend to reflect those concerns and not the long-term term interests of society as a whole. As Paehlke explains:

> In such a system, the less organized and the unorganized lose ground, particularly in hard economic times. The elderly, the poor, the unemployed, and the ill are grossly underrepresented. So too, of course, are future generations and other species. Furthermore, as Lowi notes, interest group liberalism does not allow for moral arguments. Decisions are qualified; disagreements are resolved by splitting the difference. Policies favour the most organized interest groups, whose members tend to be wealthy and tend to seek concrete, economically self-interested, and immediate gains (Paehlke 1989, 210).

Powerful economic actors exercise direct influence over elected governments in part because candidates and parties face their own short-term economic imperatives. Political parties and candidates need money to run effective election campaigns and they come to wealthy individuals and groups looking for support. The wealthy, in turn, nurture their own sympathetic candidates, fund campaigns, launch advertising initiatives, and generate media coverage. In return, they expect to have influence over government policy when those they have supported are successfully elected. In a similar version, the wealthy elect those who share their beliefs and preferences; these office-holders are not 'controlled' because they already align themselves with the wealthy. It is for these reasons that Duverger (1974) has called the modern state a "pluto-democracy." The government is selected by the people but controlled by the wealthy. Other critics such as Brown (2001) argue that in "those countries without laws regulating expenditures on campaigns the processes of government itself have become subordinate to market incentives" (104). Brown's concern is the following: if powerful economic actors are primarily concerned about making profits in the short-term, elected governments that rely on the wealthy for support will not be free to pursue the longer-term interests of society or to act in ways that are, for example, consistent with the principles of good environmental stewardship.

The other version of the *powerful economic actors argument* has less to do with the *direct* influence of wealthy groups and more do with the *indirect* impact of major economic decisions on government policy. Following Lindblom (1982), Dryzek articulates this (now) classic argument about the influence of economic actors in market-based democratic systems:

> Any state operating in the context of such a system is greatly constrained in terms of the kinds of policies it can pursue. Policies that damage business profitability — or are even perceived as likely to damage that profitability — are automatically punished by the recoil of the market. Disinvestment here means economic downturn. And such downturn is bad for governments because it both reduces the tax revenue for the schemes those governments want to pursue (such as environmental restoration), and reduces the popularity of the government in the eyes of the voters. This effect is not a matter of conspiracy or direct corporate influence on government: it happens automatically, irrespective of anyone's intentions (Dryzek 1995, 15).

These economic constraints are becoming increasingly tight as markets become globalized and businesses are free to flee jurisdictions that impose policies that are not in their short-term interests (Dryzek 1995, 15). Elected politicians are particularly sensitive to economic issues because many individuals base their voting decisions on retrospective assessments of economic conditions (see, e.g., Erikson *et al.* 2000; Lewis-Beck 1986).

There is no disputing the political influence of powerful economic actors. Nevertheless, there are at least three reasons this version of the democratic myopia thesis should not be overstated. First, it applies only to certain types of long-term issues. Second, it applies only to certain types of economic actors. Third, rather than pointing out an inherent flaw in democracy, the *powerful economic actors* argument describes a political system that is, by most standards, not democratic enough.

With respect to the first of these reasons, it is useful to distinguish between policy options that would concentrate near-term costs on specific economic actors, and those that would distribute the costs of long-term policies more widely. Powerful economic actors will have strong incentives to oppose policies that concentrate near-term costs on their members. Indeed, many policies that are designed to mitigate the impacts of climate change would impose significant near-term costs on particular businesses and industries. Carbon taxes, for example, would place the heaviest tax burdens on those industries that pollute the most. This may be justified from a democratic perspective but such policies are likely to meet with considerable opposition from business groups and industry associations. Indeed many of those who have advanced the *powerful economic actors argument* do so with precisely these types of issues in mind (see, e.g., Brown 2001; Dryzek 1995; Ekeli 2005; Paehlke 1989).

The argument is not so clearly relevant to other types of issues or policy options, especially those that would distribute the near-term costs of long-term initiatives more widely. First,

powerful economic actors will have fewer incentives to actively oppose policies that have associated costs that are thinly spread among the population as a whole, and thus place no significant burden on any one group or sector of society. Second, economic actors, like other members of society, may stand to benefit from certain long-term policies such as those that aim to reduce budget deficits, increase education spending, provide public healthcare, or sustain government pension plans. In each case, rational economic actors may have incentives to actively support — or at least not actively oppose — these policies if they would help defer some of the costs of doing business, such as those related to training, providing medical insurance, or funding corporate pension plans. Of course, as Jacobs (2011) argues, any interest group — such as a business or industry association — might actively oppose long-term investments that impose direct costs on them if instead they can win policies that redistribute long-term resources in their favour. In either case, far from providing businesses with a reason to flee, policies that aim to benefit society over the long-term may be reasons *not* to flee jurisdictions, especially if the near-term costs of these policies are widely distributed or transferred to others. The argument that, on the whole, profit seeking businesses are short-sighted and will therefore tend to oppose long-term initiatives is too simplistic. Rational economic actors make cost-benefit analyses. If the near-term costs of a policy are higher than the prospective benefits, economic actors will have reason to actively oppose those initiatives. If the near-term costs are low to negligible, rational economic actors might actively support long-term initiatives even if the prospective benefits are fairly diffuse and temporally remote.

The second reason it is important not to overstate the relevance of the *powerful economic actors argument* has to do with the fact that only certain types of businesses have the power to indirectly affect government policy by consciously shaping economic conditions. While it is true that any individual, group, or business can help support government campaigns and thereby directly affect (or attempt to influence) government policy, only the largest economic actors can shape economic conditions more generally. This includes very large employers in diversified economies as well as moderately sized employers in small economies. Yet even among those businesses or industries with the most economic clout, only a subset are mobile enough to make credible threats that they will flee unfavorable political conditions. Industries that do not require

heavy infrastructure investments, such as manufacturers of simple goods or knowledge-based technology firms, may be highly mobile. Companies that have made heavy infrastructure investments and those that rely on existing human or natural resources are likely to be less mobile. Similarly, although large retailers often wield considerable economic clout, they are not mobile because they cannot take their markets with them — and leaving a jurisdiction would mean abandoning a market to their competitors.

In general, although capital mobility in a globalized market place can put considerable pressure on governments to create business-friendly environments, the ability of businesses to consciously shape economic conditions should not be overstated and the autonomy of elected governments should not be understated. Given this, the *powerful economic actors argument* should not be conceived of as a general argument in defense of the democratic myopia thesis. Instead, this argument should be applied cautiously on a case-by-case basis. The argument is clearly relevant to those policy initiatives that would concentrate near-term costs on dominant economic actors, especially those that are relatively mobile. The argument is less relevant to those policies that would distribute near-term costs more widely or impose costs on economic actors that are less mobile.

The third reason that the *powerful economic actors argument* should not be conceived of as a general argument in defense of the democratic myopia thesis is that it describes a system that is, by most standards, not democratic enough. Indeed, Brown (2001), Dryzek (1995), Paehlke (1988) and others do not advance the argument as a general critique of the myopic tendencies of democracy; instead, they advance it as a critique of most existing democratic systems. A democracy in which some interests dominate others fails to adequately approximate two central democratic ideals: equality of voice and equality of influence. If the cause of the democratic myopia problem is the dominance of one group, the corrective is to reduce the influence of that group and increase the influence of others.

There are a range of policies, practices, and institutions that can help reduce the influence of powerful economic actors in the democratic arena. First, although the influence of money cannot be neutralized entirely, it can be controlled with stricter election financing laws. The argument that powerful economic actors dominate democratic politics is often made with reference

to the political system in the United States of America. But the United States is unique in many ways, and in particular with respect to the near absence of election financing laws. Most other developed democratic countries have adopted comparatively strict limits on corporate donations and election spending (e.g., Scarrow 2007). Election financing laws do not help reduce the political influence of economic actors threatening capital flight, but they can help reduce the direct influence that wealthy individuals and groups have over the actions of elected officials during and after elections campaigns.

Second, the *powerful economic actors argument* is focused on electoral politics, but there are, as we saw above, a range of other democratic practices and supplementary institutions that are not subject to the same economic and political imperatives that affect electoral politics. Resistance mechanisms, such as protests, boycotts, and strikes can be used to give voice to those who would otherwise be rendered voiceless in negotiations between dominant groups. As Lowi (1979) argues, pragmatic negotiations between powerful groups typically exclude moral arguments — such as those having to do with the impact of current period decisions on future generations. Resistance mechanisms such as protests are one means of interjecting moral arguments into democratic processes that would otherwise be dominated by pragmatic (and often short-sighted) negotiations between dominant actors.

Similarly, citizens' initiatives and referendums are designed to provide individuals and groups with an alternative, extra-electoral, means of influencing public decision-making processes. Although initiatives can be dominated by well financed groups, evidence has shown that this problem is less significant than it is often thought to be (e.g., Lupia and Matsusaka 2004). From a theoretical perspective, these mechanisms are of interest because they are designed to take electoral calculations out of the political equation, allowing citizens themselves to make decisions directly. As Smith (2001) argues, in certain circumstances initiatives and referendums can be used to advance long-term issues, such as environmental policies and regulations, by circumventing governments that are (or are thought to be) captured by specific interests, such as powerful economic groups with dominant short-term objectives.

Supplementary institutions such as minipublics (which are small deliberative forums used to discussed specific policy initiatives or proposals) can be used to help organize otherwise unor-

ganized interests. This is important because constituencies for long-term issues are often difficult to organize around. Long-term issues typically involve diffuse public benefits that are prospective and thus intangible in the current period. In contrast, the same issues or policy recommendations will often affect specific groups in identifiable ways in the near-term. It is, as Mancur Olson (1965) argues, easier to organize smaller groups to act on their own behalf, than it is to organize larger groups to act on behalf of a diffuse public interest. Minipublics can help overcome these difficulties because they can be consciously crafted as representative assemblies that can make credible claims to speak on behalf of the public interest, or on behalf of any other diffuse and unorganized concerns. The challenge, of course, is to figure out how to integrate minipublics into the larger democratic system such that their recommendations will have some real impact on collective decision-making processes (see, e.g., Goodin and Dryzek 2006).

Citizens' initiatives, referendums, and minipublics are discussed in more detail in Chapter 8. At this stage, I want to emphasize the following point: when it comes to explaining why existing democratic systems are often myopic, the *powerful economic actors argument* forms only one part of a persuasive explanation. Powerful economic actors often have dominant short-term interests *and* they have the resources and organizational capacities to dominate certain democratic procedures and decision-making processes. This is a problem. But the *powerful economic actors argument* should not be overgeneralized. First, although influential economic actors often have well defined short-term interests, most also have longer-term interests that will not in every case be inconsistent with the public interest. Given this, economic actors in some cases may be willing to support policies that are perceived to be consistent with their longer-term interests, especially if these policies do not concentrate near-term costs on their members.

Second, economic actors, as a group, do not have a uniform influence on democratic processes. Specific actors or groups may be able to leverage considerable influence over certain democratic decisions, but no actor or set of actors will have economic or political clout in all issue areas or over all types of political actors. Only the largest economic actors can shape economic conditions more generally, and only certain types of political actors are likely to be influenced by the pressure applied by smaller economic actors. Those who are responsible for specific geographic areas may be highly sensitive to the concerns of the economic actors who oper-

ate in their areas, but government leaders such as presidents or prime ministers are less likely to feel compelled to respond to pressure unless a particular economic actor has the capacity to affect economic conditions more generally. There is also a level of organization issue that has to be considered. Governments may be able to respond to threats of capital flight by coordinating with each other to resist these threats. If there is sufficient organizational capacity to initiate and maintain intergovernmental agreements, such agreements would empower elected governments to resist the pressure applied by even the most powerful economic actors. As Bohman (2007) argues, coordination pressures of this sort underscore the need for new theories and institutions of transnational democracy. The fact that there is no global entity that can help initiate and maintain intergovernmental agreements aimed at minimizing threats of capital flight says more about the *need* for transnational democratic institutions and less about the incapacity of democracies, more generally, to resist the political pressure of powerful economic actors. Although certain economic actors can (and do) influence elected governments, there are many scenarios in which elected governments may be able to act on long-term initiatives without fear of economic or electoral repercussions.

Third, although democracies will never be free of the influence of money, there are a range of democratic resources that can help reduce the influence of powerful economic actors and enhance the voices and influence of others. Election financing laws, protest movements, citizens' initiatives, referendums, and other supplementary institutions such as minipublics, are examples of democratic practices and institutions that can be leveraged to enhance the influence of those groups — including the public as a whole — that might otherwise be dominated by economic actors with well defined short-term interests and concerns.

It is also worth pointing out that the theoretical assumptions that inform the *myopic citizen argument* and those that underlie the *powerful economic actors argument* are not compatible with each other. According to the *myopic citizen argument* democracies neglect the future because they are *responsive* to the interests and concerns of short-sighted citizens. According to the *powerful economic actors argument*, democratic systems are rendered myopic because they are *not responsive enough* to the concerns of ordinary citizens!

2.4 The Complexity Argument

Another argument asserts that citizens — whether they are myopic or not — are simply ill-equipped to deal with the complexity that pervades most long-term issues. The basic argument here is a Platonic one: most individuals do not know enough about the nature of complex long-term issues to make rational or wise decisions about what needs to be done today in order to avoid long-term problems or disasters. The most extreme proponents of this kind of thinking are the so-called 'eco-authoritarians'. This group includes scholars such as Hardin (1968), Heilbroner (1980), Ophuls and Boyan (1992) and more recently Shearman and Smith (2007). The eco-authoritarians argue that pressing long-term problems such as climate change, nuclear waste, and exponential population growth, can only be addressed if democratic systems are replaced by technocratic, hierarchical administrative regimes that have both the power and the expertise to implement effective near-term solutions to long-term problems that are both technically and politically complex. Although there are differences in their approaches, these authors generally see democracy as a luxury that can only be sustained when natural resources are relatively abundant and social relations are relatively stable. By contrast, they argue that crisis situations, such as resource depletion and exponential population growth, will require authoritarian governments with far-reaching decisive powers, especially when any potential solutions require radical changes of behaviour over the near-term. As Heilbroner argues:

> It is customary to recognize, but to deplore, the authoritarian tendencies within civil society, especially on the part of those who, like myself, are the beneficiaries of the freedoms of minimally authority-ridden rule. Yet, candor compels me to suggest that the passage through the gantlet ahead may be possible only under governments capable of rallying obedience far more effectively than would be possible in a democratic setting (Heilbroner 1980, 130).

In Heilbroner's view, authoritarianism is not desirable, *per se* — it is, instead, a matter of circumstance. It will be forced upon us by circumstances of our own making. Like Heilbroner, Ophuls and Boyan (1992) do not prefer authoritarianism; instead, they believe that individual liberty is a luxury of abundance. Where there is enough left for others, individuals can do as they please without adversely affecting others or future generations. But as natural resources are depleted and the industrial era comes to an end, Ophuls and Boyan believe that extreme resource scarcities will justify restrictions on consumption that are more severe (and more decisively enforced)

than would be appropriate during times of comparative abundance. They worry that democracies are not capable of imposing sufficiently strict restrictions on themselves, primarily because individuals are not well positioned to recognizing and understanding the severity and complexity of certain long-term problems like climate change or the consequences of resource depletion. Thus the solution that Ophuls and Boyan propose is Platonic the following sense: they envision a society that is controlled and directed by wise (and ideally well-meaning) experts or technocrats who are insulated from the ill-informed opinions, wishes, whims, and short-term concerns of ordinary citizens. As they explain, an ecologically sustainable "steady-state" society may

> require, if not a class of ecological guardians, then at least a class of ecological mandarins who possess the esoteric knowledge needed to run it well. Whatever its level of material affluence, the steady-state society will not only be ostensibly more authoritarian and less democratic than the industrial society of today...but it may also be more oligarchic as well, with full participation in the political process restricted to those who possess the ecological and other competencies necessary to make prudent decisions" (Ophuls and Boyan 1992, 215).[4]

It is worth pointing out that there is some overlap between this argument and the *myopic citizen argument.* Heilbroner (1980), Ophuls and Boyan (1992), and Shearman and Smith (2007) argue that democracy is ill-equipped to effectively deal with long-term problems because individuals tend to be primarily concerned with their own short-term interests and concerns. What makes the two arguments conceptually distinct is that while the *citizen myopia argument* emphasizes cognitive biases against the future, the *complexity argument* asserts that any system which is guided by opinions that are weighted equally regardless of their content, sophistication, or validity, will be rendered short-sighted on long-term issues that are beset by complexity. The danger is that in a democracy the majority of those who will be making decisions will not fully understand the complexities or urgency of long-term problems, and will thus be unwilling to make — or unaware of the need to make — the near-term sacrifices that are necessary to effectively address long-term problems.

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[4] Indeed, Ophuls and Boyan (1992) draw explicit connections between their ideas and Plato's, arguing that the "emerging large, highly developed, complex technological civilization operating at or very near the ecological margin, appears to fit Plato's premises more and more closely, foreshadowing the necessity of rule by a class of Platonic guardians, the 'priesthood of responsible technologists' who alone know how to run the spaceship" (210). This theme is continued in Ophuls' (2011) more recent book *Plato's Revenge: Politics in the Age of Ecology* and in Shearman and Smith's (2007) book *The Climate Change Challenge and the Failure of Democracy* (see, esp., chap. 9: 'Plato's Revenge').

The ideas of the eco-authoritarians have been thoroughly critiqued, criticized, and rejected by ecologically-minded democratic theorists such as Dryzek (e.g., 1987), Eckersely (e.g., 1992), Held and Hervey (2009), Holden (2002), and Paehlke (1988). But the Platonic arguments that the eco-authoritarians make are theoretically applicable to all issues that are beset by technical, political, and temporal complexity and not just to those issues that deal with environmental problems. What is more, although authoritarianism has been widely rejected as a viable political option, the idea that technocratic hierarchical administrative systems are best suited to deal with complex long-term problems is built into many existing institutions such as central banks, environmental protection agencies, parliamentary budget officers, and auditors general. The justification for these institutions is that public policy on complex issues like monetary supply, environmental protection, and government spending, should be supervised by — and in some cases led by — technocrats who are, at least to some extent, insulated from the vicissitudes of the democratic arena, the short-term whims of politicians, and the ignorance of individuals.

There are, of course, a number of potential benefits to having centralized, technocratic administrative systems deal with complex long-term issues. First, when dealing with these issues technical expertise *will* be required and farsighted actions must be based on reasonably well grounded empirical findings if they are to be effective. In addition, as Dryzek (1987) points out, centralized systems are comparatively well-equipped to identify specific goals and to efficiently direct resources towards achieving those goals. That being said, there are a number of assumptions that are central to the *complexity argument* that can be questioned on both practical and theoretical grounds. The argument assumes: 1) that it is possible for centralized authorities to maintain effective control over complex bureaucracies and large populations; 2) that experts have the knowledge that is required to effectively address complex long-term problems, *and* that these experts can be easily identified; 3) that technical knowledge is the only sort of knowledge that is required to make competent long-term decisions; and 4) that hierarchical bureaucratic systems can effectively respond to feedback, changing circumstances, and unforeseen contingencies.

With respect to the first of these assumptions, Heilbroner (1980), Ophuls and Boyan (1992), and others who adopt a similar approach, tend to leave the nature of leadership in both

democratic and bureaucratic systems theoretically underdeveloped. They draw a contrast between democratic systems, which in their accounts are controlled by ill-informed citizens, and administrative ones, which in their accounts are controlled by knowledgeable technocrats. Both of these assumptions fall somewhat short of reality. Democratic systems are designed to be responsive to the concerns of citizens, but they are not exclusively directed by the prevailing whims of the public. Effective democratic leaders, who are often quite knowledgeable on complex issues, can help direct the public's attention towards (or away from) specific issues or concerns. More importantly, technical experts have roles to play within a democratic system that do not, in every instance, conflict with the democratic character of the system. Experts can provide technical input on complex issues, and politicians and citizens alike can make competent judgements of expert opinions without being experts themselves (Moore 2011). These interactions make it possible for *democratic* decisions to be informed by the knowledge of experts without requiring all those who make decisions to have substantive expertise in each relevant field.

With respect to the other side of the equation, it cannot be assumed that the leadership in an administrative hierarchy will have effective control over the system, especially in systems that have many levels of bureaucracy and those that aim to manage large populations. As Dryzek (1987) points out, complex implementation chains, and conflicting interests between agencies and between other actors (including citizens), make non-compliance and system failure more likely as the size and complexity of the organization grows. In complex administrative systems, subordinates (including citizens) will always have opportunities to engage in (small or large) acts of defiance, non-compliance, subterfuge, or resistance.[5] These dynamics make undemocratic hierarchical structures less effective at managing complex systems and large populations than is typically assumed by the eco-authoritarians and other advocates of technocratic governance. The problem is that most participants most of the time must be relied on to follow the rules on their own initiative because active enforcement and effective control is much less efficient than consent and coordination that is based on reasoned justification and understanding (e.g., Habermas

[5] Although the *right* to engage in such acts is normally associated with a democratic system, the *opportunity* to engage in such acts is, of course, not limited to democratic systems. This is a point that Machiavelli strives to make in most of his writings but in particular in his *Discourses on Livy*. It is also a point that is well demonstrated by recent events in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and other formerly authoritarian states that have been toppled by popular movements.

1996). Given this, complex systems, if they are to be effective and efficient, require mechanisms that channel concerns, interests, and expectations upward through the ranks of the system (from bottom to top), in addition to mechanisms that effectively channel explanations and justifications down through the system (from top to bottom), in order to ensure that most of the time coercive enforcement is not required. Unlike hierarchical technocratic systems, democratic systems — especially those that are robustly deliberative — are designed to provide and preserve the channels of communication that make consensual (and therefore efficient) social coordination possible.

The eco-authoritarians also assume that technical experts have all the knowledge that is required to effectively address complex long-term issues, *and* that these experts can be easily identified. These circumstances do not always prevail. As scholars of Science & Technology Studies have demonstrated, formal technical expertise is often insufficient when it comes to making good public policy on technically complex issues. The classic demonstration of this is Brian Wynne's (1989, 1996) account of the Cumbrian sheep farmers. In this case study, sheep farmers in the the north-west of England were subject to administrative restrictions on the movement and sale of their sheep because of concerns about contaminated soils thought to be caused by the radioactive fallout from the Chernobyl disaster in 1986. Wynne demonstrates that, although the scientists had technical expertise, they did not possess the necessary contextual knowledge to conduct effective experiments or to design appropriate public policies. The scientists, for example, did not have enough knowledge of local soil conditions. Their initial advice to farmers was that contaminants would simply seep into the soil allowing fresh uncontaminated grass to grow. This assumption later proved to be incorrect. Likewise, randomized experiments conducted by scientists which involved fencing in sheep were eventually abandoned because the sheep did not thrive in those conditions — something that the farmers predicted and warned the scientists of beforehand. Wynne argues that at least in this case, the knowledge of lay experts (i.e. the sheep farmers) would have helped improve the experiments and policy recommendations of the technical experts (i.e. the scientists). But for both structural and cultural reasons, the bureaucracy was ill-equipped to recognize and incorporate the knowledge of local farmers into their decision-

making processes. As a result, the scientists' experiments failed and their policy recommendations proved to be inappropriate.

Hierarchical bureaucracies are not incapable of processing input from a range of different types of experts. This is not the problem. Instead, the problem lies in the fact that there are no mechanisms within these systems that are designed to make use of non-formal expertise or input from individuals and groups that have not been identified as experts by the bureaucracies themselves. Wynne's case study demonstrates that channels of communication running in both directions — from bottom-to-top and from top-to-bottom — are likely required to effectively manage issues that are technically and temporally complex. Unlike hierarchical bureaucracies which are structurally ill-equipped and often culturally resistant, democratic systems are designed to ensure that such channels of communication remain open.

The third assumption that is made by advocates of the *complexity argument* is that technical expertise is the only type of expertise that is relevant and required to make sensible decisions on temporally complex issues. But this is not the case. In addition to being technically complex, issues such as climate change, nuclear energy, and budget deficits are also socially, ethically, and often culturally complex. In order to effectively manage issues that are complex in all of these ways it is useful to address them not only at a technical level by tapping relevant expertise, but also on a *political* level by taking into account the concerns, interests, and expectations of those who will be affected. This is more than a normative stipulation; it is a practical concern and a political imperative because, as argued above, it cannot be assumed that those at the apex of a hierarchical administrative system will have effective control over the actions of participants within the system. Technically wise solutions that are socially, culturally, or ethically unacceptable to those who are or will be affected, will not be *politically* viable over the long-term. Far from being part of the problem, democracy is a potentially effective means of obtaining genuine information about the concerns, interests, and expectations of those who will be affected. If policy stipulations, especially those that involve behavioral restrictions or significant near-term costs, are to be conceived of as normatively legitimate, these policies and their justifications should be forged, sustained, and continually reforged in on-going processes of collective

decision-making that are sensitive to the technical, social, ethical, cultural, and political dimensions of complex long-term issues.

It is possible to obtain useful democratic input on issues that are beset by technical complexity, even though the average citizen cannot be expected to possess the relevant expertise. What is needed is for (some) individuals to learn enough to make competent judgements about how the technical dimensions of an issue are likely to intersect with their own concerns. On high-profile issues such as climate change, extensive public discussions and debates have helped familiarize many citizens with the technical dimensions of this issue. Few have become climate change experts but many now know enough to make competent judgements about how proposed solutions (such as gas taxes or carbon emissions regulations) are likely to intersect with their own social, cultural, or economic concerns (e.g., Krosnick *et al.* 2006). Insofar as this is the case, it will be possible to obtain meaningful democratic input on technically complex issues like climate change. This input may not be useful from a technical perspective but from a political perspective it may be indispensable. If, for example, there are persistent disagreements between what technical experts believe is necessary and what citizens (or some groups of citizens) say they want, democratic input makes it possible to anticipate these concerns and to justify (or attempt to justify) decisions that might otherwise be seen as politically, socially, economically, or culturally unacceptable.

It is also possible to obtain democratic input on technically complex issues that have not been widely discussed and debated in the public sphere. Minipublics, for example, have been used to obtain informed public input on a range of issues that most citizens do not know a lot about (e.g., MacKenzie and O'Doherty 2011). Minipublics are useful in this capacity because they provide 'uninitiated' individuals with the resources that are required to learn about the technical aspects of a small number of specific issues. They also provide individuals with an opportunity to deliberate the political, social, cultural, or ethical dimensions of those issues with others who might disagree. A number of case studies have shown that participants in minipublics are capable of competently deliberating the political aspects of technical issues such as public energy utilities (Fishkin 1995), electoral system reform (Blais *et al.* 2008; Fournier *et al.* 2011), the banking of human tissues for research purposes (Burgess and O'Doherty 2009), mandatory

minimum sentencing laws (Gastil and Knobloch 2011), and the bioremediation of soil contamination (O'Doherty *et al.* 2013). In each of these cases, minipublics were used to provide governments, bureaucratic agencies, and other citizens with some insight into the political dimensions of technically complex issues that had not been discussed extensively in the public sphere. The democratic inputs that minipublics provide can, in turn, be used to help craft public policies that more effectively anticipate relevant concerns, avoid potential political hotspots, and thereby help maintain the public trust over the long-term (MacKenzie and Warren 2012).

The fourth assumption that is made by advocates of the *complexity argument* is that technocratic systems are flexible enough to respond to feedback, changing circumstances, and unforeseen contingencies. Such flexibility is critically important because long-term issues that are beset by complexity are also beset by uncertainty. In response to these arguments, Dryzek (1987) argues that undemocratic administrative systems are not well positioned to respond to feedback, and this makes them less effective at responding to changing circumstances or unforeseen contingencies. He argues that, although free to respond in any way to any contingency, those at the apex of a hierarchical system have few incentives to learn from their mistakes but strong incentives to deny failures when these occur. When it comes to complex long-term issues, failures and mistakes are not only possible they are probable, and they become more likely to occur as we look further into the future and as levels of complexity increase.

Dryzek points out that if failure is not an acceptable mode of learning, a system will become too rigid to effectively deal with contingencies and changing circumstances. Of course, the leadership in *any* system — whether technocratic or democratic — may be inclined to deny failure, to avoid blame, or to transfer responsibility for bad decisions to others. The difference between undemocratic hierarchies and democratic systems is that in the former there are no formal mechanisms to force those in leadership positions to respond to feedback from within the system, to consider input from the affected, or to replace those who are unresponsive to changing circumstances. Following Kenneth Boulding (1966), Dryzek (1987) points out that an undemocratic hierarchy "can be described as a series of wastepaper baskets in which most useful information ends up. The more levels in the hierarchy, the more likely it is that individuals in its upper levels will be operating in a purely imaginary world" (102). By contrast, effective democracies have

feedback and accountability capacities built into the formal structures of the system. As argued above, this design helps reduce the cognitive burdens placed on any one individual or group of experts; but it also helps ensure that democratic systems are capable of responding to mistakes, changing expectations, emerging concerns, unforeseen contingencies, and the evolution of the body politic itself.

It might be objected that the features that make democracies good at responding to changes, contingencies, and mistakes are the same features that threaten to render democracies myopic. The mechanisms that are designed to make leaders responsive and to keep them accountable — regular elections, term limits, recall provisions, government transparency, freedom of speech, and freedom of assembly — help create the short political generations that make farsighted action difficult and more uncertain. Furthermore, as we saw above, legitimate democratic decisions are always provisional and can thus be challenged or changed at any moment in time. These dynamics are real and should not be dismissed: democracies *are* designed to be responsive to the immediate concerns of current publics. What is less often emphasized is that effective democratic systems also have features that can help support policy consistency. In democratic systems where there are clear channels of communication and influence running in both directions — from top-to-bottom and from bottom-to-top — political leaders have an obligation to provide normative justifications for the policy decisions that they make. This is a form of accountability that is most closely associated with deliberative models of democracy. As Chambers explains, according to deliberative theory, a

> legitimate political order is one that could be justified to all those living under its laws. Thus, accountability is primarily understood in terms of "giving an account" of something, that is, publicly articulating, explaining, and most importantly justifying public policy. Consent (and, of course, voting) does not disappear. Rather, it is given a more complex and richer interpretation in the deliberative model than in the aggregative model (Chambers 2003, 308).

This mode of accountability can help promote policy stability over the long-term because it requires each successive generation of political leaders to articulate, explain, and justify any significant changes to the existing course of collective actions. It will be difficult for democratic leaders to change direction if: 1) there are effective channels of accountability; 2) existing policies are seen as legitimate and have been collectively sanctioned by those affected; and 3) those

affected have already paid some of the costs associated with prospective long-term benefits. In these circumstances, communicative modes of accountability should help encourage policy stability both prospectively and retrospectively. Prospectively, democratic leaders will be encouraged to think twice before making policy changes that might not be acceptable to those who have, in the past, supported particular long-term initiatives. Retrospectively, democratic leaders who make changes that are not acceptable can be rejected and replaced by those who are willing to continue to pursue previously agreed upon long-term objectives. The ability of a democratic system to continue along a planned course of action that a majority supports (and is perhaps already invested in) is a feature of democracy that is often disparaged by those who desire radical change, but it is also a feature of democracy that should be celebrated by those who support farsighted initiatives that require long-term policy consistency to succeed. Democratic systems are both supple and stable. They are supple because they are designed to respond to mistakes, changing expectations, emerging concerns, unforeseen contingencies, and the evolution of the body politic itself. At the same time, they are stable because effective democracies prevent political leaders from making arbitrary or self-serving changes of direction without the support of those who are (or will be) affected.

Given these observations, it should now be clear that the platonic argument that complex long-term problems are best dealt with by those who have both the *technical knowledge* to identify effective long-term solutions, and the *political authority* to impose their solutions on otherwise unwilling populations is theoretically underdeveloped. With respect to the need for well-grounded technical knowledge, effective democratic systems, unlike technocracies, are designed to process and incorporate diverse forms of knowledge and information from all parts of the system. With respect to the need for political authority, undemocratic forms of authority are often more brittle and ineffective than those forms of authority that are sanctioned and justified through on-going democratic or deliberative processes (Warren 1996). Similarly, long-term policy initiatives, especially those that involve significant near-term costs or specific behavioral constraints, are more likely to be viable over the long-term if they are both technically sound *and* normatively acceptable to those who are (or will be) affected. When compared to technocratic systems, democracies are thus not only more likely to produce solutions to complex long-term

problems that are technically viable, they are also more likely to produce solutions that are politically viable over the long-term.

2.5 The Non-Presence of Future Persons Argument

The premise of this argument is the following: democracies are biased against the interests of the future because although they are designed to be responsive to the concerns of those affected, unborn individuals who will be affected by our decisions cannot actively participate in our decision-making processes today. This is a problem that all decision-making systems must face, but it poses a special challenge for democracy. If democracy is based on the idea that the system will be responsive to the interests and concerns of all those affected, democracies are rendered illegitimate *on their own terms* because the 'silent majority' of unborn individuals can never exercise their fair share of influence over current period decisions. This argument is outlined by Tremmel in the following quote:

> If only [those] future individuals, who are born in the next 200 years, could vote on energy policies, this would create a huge majority which would facilitate a quick shift to renewable sources of energy. If only these future individuals could vote on financial policy, public debt would be significantly lower than today. This fundamental dilemma of democracy leads to a preference for the present and to oblivion with regard to the future (Tremmel 2006, 189).

This is a powerful argument because it is based on an ontological fact: future generations that do not yet exist cannot be included in decision-making processes today. Furthermore, democracy's conventional solution to the problem of exclusion — the expansion of the franchise — is not an option in this case. As Thompson (2010) explains, "making democracy more inclusive — expanding citizenship and enhancing representation — would not help future citizens. They do not have a voice because they cannot be citizens now" (18). Given the fundamental nature of this problem, it is one of the more persuasive arguments for why democracies are likely to remain biased against the interests of the future. Those who will be affected in the short-term have considerable political influence but the vast numbers of those who will be affected in the future have none.

Despite the fundamental nature of this problem, there are two reasons why the theoretical importance of the *non-presence of future persons argument* should not be overstated. First, the

argument is relevant to only certain types of issues. Second, it relies on an aggregative model of democracy that: a) places emphasis on majority rule to the exclusion of other legitimizing democratic practices; and b) assumes that individuals have fixed short-term interests and therefore cannot (or will not) look past their own temporal horizons.

With respect to the first of these two reasons, the *non-presence of future persons argument* is only relevant to those issues that involve relations between non-overlapping generations of political actors; it is not relevant to those issues that primarily involve relations between contemporaries from different generations. Although it can be difficult to classify individual issues in this way, it is useful to make distinctions between issues that primarily involve relations between non-overlapping generations and those that involve relations between overlapping generations. As explained in the previous chapter, these two types of long-term issues involve very different political dynamics. When it comes to long-term issues that involve relations between non-overlapping generations, those who will be affected in the future cannot be included in decision-making processes today. The situation is different when it comes to those issues that involve relations between contemporaries from different generations. While democracy may be biased against the interests of those who do not yet exist, there is no fundamental reason why it cannot be made more inclusive and responsive to the interests of younger generations that will continue to be affected by today's decisions in 45, 50, or even 60 years. Many advocates of the *non-presence of future persons argument* fail to make this conceptual distinction.

In the statement quoted above, Tremmel (2006) applies the *non-presence of future persons argument* to two different issues: energy policy and budget deficits. The first can be thought of as an issue that primarily involves relations between non-overlapping generations if the most significant negative effects of our current energy policies are not likely to be manifest for more than 100 years — or long after those who are currently making decisions have died. If, however, the negative impacts of our energy policies are likely to become manifest over the next few decades, and thus significantly affect the future-selves of members of younger generations, the *non-presence of future persons argument* does not apply. In this case, some of those who will be affected in the future might indeed be able to influence collective decision-making processes today.

Tremmel's other example, fiscal policy, is easier to classify: it is an issue that involves relations between overlapping generations. Deficits are, by nature, cumulative: younger generations will be affected by accumulated debts more than members of older generations. But public debts are likely to be burdensome over the course of decades, not over the course of hundreds of years. It may be reasonable to assume that members of younger generations will be burdened by today's public debts for 30, 40, 50, or even 60 years. It is much harder to say whether those who will be living 100 or 200 years from now will be directly (and negatively) affected by today's profligate spending.[6] In general, when political issues primarily involve relations between overlapping generations, many (if not most) of those who will be affected in the future can be effectively included in decision-making processes today.

Of course, Tremmel's primary concern is the following: all those who will be affected in the future make up an overall majority but they do not make up a majority of those who exercise political influence today. If this is the case, he argues, democracies will tend to be short-sighted because those who are voting today will be free to ignore the concerns and interests of the future when making collective decisions. This is a persuasive argument from a normative perspective: it is not right that future majorities should be dominated by current majorities that represent only a minority of those who will be affected. From a practical perspective, what matters is whether the current majority itself is likely to be affected in the future by its own decisions, and therefore incentivized (or not) to consider the effects of its decisions on the future. On issues that involve relations between non-overlapping generations, current majorities will not be affected by their own decisions; on issues that involve relations between overlapping generations, most of those who will be affected in the future already exist today and might be more effectively included in decision-making processes. This is the difference.

Thus the first reason that the theoretical importance of the *non-presence of future persons argument* should not be overstated is that it is only applicable to certain types of long-term issues. It is clearly applicable to those issues that involve relations between non-overlapping gen-

[6] Gosseries (2007), for example, points out that "most IMF [International Monetary Fund] loans must be repaid within five years and most World Bank loans are expected to be repaid within twenty years…" (109). Where this is the case, public debt can hardly be considered an intergenerational issue. Nevertheless, Gosseries also points out that many loans are taken out simply to pay the interest on debts incurred in the past, and few countries or jurisdictions pay off their debts within the course of one natural generation, much less one *political* generation.

erations of political actors, but it is less relevant to those issues that involve relations between overlapping generations or those issues that are likely to significantly affect the future-selves of members of today's younger generations.

The second reason that the theoretical importance of this argument should not be overstated is that it presents a relatively restricted account of democratic theory and practice. Tremmel's version of the argument posits an aggregative model of democracy in which the existing views of the majority unproblematically determine collective outcomes. This is a fairly common view of democracy but it is not an entirely adequate one. As explained earlier in this chapter, effective democratic systems are made up of many overlapping parts, practices, institutions, and mechanisms. In effective democratic systems, minorities (such as younger people) will have opportunities to attempt to persuade the majority to take their concerns seriously. Minority voices can influence political agendas by engaging in interest group politics, launching media campaigns, bringing forward court challenges, forming political parties, or initiating protest movements. In complex democratic systems, minority concerns *can* influence collective decision-making processes. Of course, only those who are alive can participate in decision-making processes today — Tremmel is right about that — but the fact that the future cannot be actively included does not mean that their interests cannot be anticipated, considered, protected, and represented in various ways in our democratic processes. Democratic outcomes are not simply aggregations of existing opinions, but Tremmel's version of the *non-presence of future persons argument* relies on a model of democracy in which only existing majorities effectively (and unproblematically) determine collective outcomes.

Relatedly, Tremmel's argument relies on a model of democracy in which political actors maintain fixed (and usually self-interested) positions and are thus unwilling to look past their own limited temporal horizons. The argument that democracy is structurally myopic because a majority of those who will be affected in the future cannot vote, assumes that those who are voting today are unconcerned with the effects of their decisions on the future. While this is undoubtedly true of some individuals this claim should not be generalized to all individuals all of the time. As pointed out above, while there is some evidence that individuals have modestly positive time preferences, there is not much evidence to support the claim that individuals are only con-

cerned about their present-selves (see, e.g., Frederick *et al.* 2002; Jacobs and Matthews 2012). We also care about our own future wellbeing, and most of us possess lifetime-transcending interests and concerns of one type or another (see, e.g., Partridge 1981; Thompson 2009). We care about our family and our friends, our country, our cultural heritage, our reputations, or about ideas or principles that we believe should persist into the future. These are just a few examples of lifetime-transcending interests. These and a range of others routinely affected the interests and motivations of present period political actors. Indeed, something like a theory of lifetime-transcending interests would seem to be required to explain why some individuals *are* willing to bear the short-term costs of long-term initiatives that they are personally unlikely to benefit from in the future.

If democratic processes can help shape the short-term interests and concerns of individuals, these same processes and practices might also effectively *encourage* longer-term thinking under certain conditions. The remainder of this dissertation explores a number of conditions, mechanisms, practices, and institutions that can help encourage longer-term thinking and underwrite farsighted collective actions in democratic systems. Briefly, I argue that effective democratic systems can help situate individuals — even those who very much see themselves as individuals — into collective entities that will persist longer in time than any one of their individual parts. By giving individuals a meaningful role to play in making collective decisions, effective democracies also make it possible for individuals to take *ownership* of collective commitments to the future, and to take some share of responsibility for the consequences of collective actions. Furthermore, any democratic practices that helps transform particularistic claims into generalized ones will also help encourage longer-term thinking when the temporal complexities of long-term issues are made explicit. The claim that democratic practices can help transform particularistic claims into generalized ones is not new, but the temporal dimensions of this process are not often recognized. I argue that any democratic practice that helps participants understand the concerns of relevant 'others' will also help extend their perspectives to include the potential concerns of future-others when the temporal complexities of long-term issues are recognized and made explicit. More specifically, democratic goods such as inclusion and deliberation, as well as meaningful practices of (and assumptions about) citizenship or membership within the democratic

polity, can help encourage present period actors to think about, and to take seriously, the impacts that their decisions will have on both the near and far future.

Although the *non-presence of future persons argument* presents a fundamental dilemma — that is, those who will be affected in the future cannot actively participate in decision-making processes today — democracy itself can play a role in helping to make current publics more sensitive to the potential needs and concerns of future publics. The idea that current majorities have fixed short-term interests and will tend to vote against the future when given the opportunity to do so, is based on an aggregative, majoritarian model of democracy that ignores a lot of what democracy itself has to offer. Democracy is not just a system for *registering* views and preferences, it is also a means of *shaping* preferences and changing expectations. Effective democratic systems can help extend the time horizons of individuals and thereby make political actors more sensitive to the potential impacts of today's decisions on future generations even though future generations cannot be included in decision-making processes today.

Conclusion

Are democratic systems short-sighted? Many scholars have argued that democracies are unable to effectively address long-term issues because of the political dynamics of short electoral cycles, the myopic views of individual voters, the influence of powerful economic actors with dominant short-term interests, the complexity and uncertainty associated with long-term planning, and the fact that those who will be affected in the future have no influence over today's decisions. This chapter argues that while each of these arguments is persuasive when applied to certain models of democracy or to specific types of long-term issues, these five arguments, separately or together, cannot support the more general claim that democracies are by nature short-sighted.

Although the five arguments examined in this chapter are often conflated, I have argued that each is conceptually distinct from the others and should be judged on its own terms. Far from working in conjunction with each other to support the democratic myopia thesis, many of these arguments work at cross-purposes to each other. The *short electoral cycles argument* assumes that elected politicians are the most influential political actors. The *myopic citizen argument* assumes that voters have all the power. The *powerful economic actors argument* claims that

citizens and politicians *do not* have the political clout that is needed to effectively challenge the short-term interests of those who dominate the economic sphere. In contrast, advocates of the *complexity argument* and the *non-presence of future persons argument* worry that current publics have *too much* power, and that they are likely to make bad choices because they do not understand or appreciate the impacts that today's decisions will have on future generations. These differences cannot be reconciled and each of these arguments should therefore be treated as conceptually distinct versions of the democratic myopia thesis.

When these arguments are addressed separately, no single one can be used to make a persuasive argument that democratic systems are by nature short-sighted. Each argument relies on a relatively narrow conception of what makes a system democratic. The *short electoral cycles argument* emphasizes electoral dynamics and institutions to the exclusion of other democratic practices such as interest group politics, court systems, participatory institutions, and mass protest. The *powerful economic actors argument* emphasizes the influence that money has on election campaigns and politicians. Standard accounts of this argument downplay the efficacy of laws designed to mitigate the political influence of economic actors, as well as the relevance and variety of existing democratic practices and institutions that are not influenced by money in the same ways — or to the same extent — as electoral processes. The *myopic citizen argument*, the *complexity argument*, and the *non-presence of future persons argument* each assume that the preferences, expectations, and opinions of citizens are fixed, myopic, and unaffected by the democratic process itself.

In contrast, when democracy is viewed as a multifaceted system made up of various complementary and contrasting practices and institutions, the prospects for long-term thinking and effective farsighted action do not look so bleak. From a systems-level perspective, while some democratic practices and institutions encourage short-term thinking and reward myopic behaviour, other practices and institutions encourage and reward longer-term thinking and farsighted action. The reasons for myopia that derive from a lack of attention to the long-term consequences of present period actions may be particularly amenable to deliberative solutions. By helping to transform particularistic claims or perspectives into other-regarding ones, deliberative practices can help make the interests and concerns of future-others more salient when the tempo-

ral dimensions of long-term issues are made explicit. The challenge is to figure out how each of the parts of a democratic system might be fitted together to produce democratic outcomes that are not biased against the future. This dissertation takes up this challenge, and in doing so strives to turn the democratic myopia thesis on its head. Instead of focusing on those aspects of a democratic system that nurture myopia and reward short-term actions, I explore some of the ways that democratic systems can help form and sustain democratic polities that are capable of acting over the long-term.

Chapter 3

Political Theories of Intergenerational Relations: Time and Collectivities

Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the question of whether or not democratic systems are short-sighted. In that discussion, I drew a distinction between long-term issues that are likely to involve our future-selves and those that are not likely to involve our future-selves or the future-selves of those we know and care about today. Given that very long-term issues such as climate change or the storage of nuclear waste are not likely to affect our future-selves, what motivations are there to act in future-oriented ways on these issues? Why should we pay near-term costs to benefit distant generations and individuals that we will not (and cannot) ever know? Some have argued that these issues raise questions of ethics and that we should therefore look to theories of intergenerational justice to justify and motivate farsighted action on very long-term issues. Theories of intergenerational justice will be discussed in the next chapter. This chapter adopts a political theory approach to understanding intergenerational relations.

From the perspective of the political theorist, intergenerational issues raise difficult (but familiar) questions about the tension between the individual and the collectivity. This tension arises in the context of intergenerational relations because there is a relationship between thinking collectively and acting temporally. Many political theorists who have dealt with issues of intergenerational relations have observed that it is difficult to make sense of the individual *in time* without thinking about how the individual is situated in a collectivity (of one type or another) that will last (or has lasted) longer than any one of its individual members (see, e.g., Ball 2000;

Miller 2007, chap. 6; Thompson 2002). These observations raise questions about the status of individuals within intergenerational collective entities. They also raise questions about whether political theories that treat the individual as the primary unit of analysis are capable of motivating longer-term thinking or making sense of intertemporal relations. The tension between the individual and the collectivity has played itself out in two contrasting conceptions of the nature of relations between non-overlapping generations of political actors. I will call these two contrasting conceptions *connectionism* and *disconnectionism*.

From a *connectionist* perspective, political relations and obligations between generations simply befall us: these relations are not matters of consent, they are instead matters of circumstance. Individuals are firmly situated in time: we are the products of our past and our identities (as individuals and as groups) can be made sense of only in relation to our connections to the past and to the future. From this perspective we are obliged to pay the debts of our forefathers because we are members of the same collective entity. We are motivated to think about the future because we recognize ourselves as committed (in one way or another) to other members of the collectivity, including future members.

From a *disconnectionist* perspective, individuals are autonomous entities and thus separated (in certain respects) from their contemporaries and disconnected (in a profound sense) from other generations. According to this perspective, any political relations that might exist between generations must be based on the consent of living individuals and thus forged and reforged (or not) at each moment of time. Intergenerational relations, associations, connections, or obligations do not simply befall us; instead, they must be actively maintained (or consciously abandoned) by each generation of political actors. From this point of view, each generation is composed of individuals who are politically autonomous with respect to each other and with respect to their past. They can do as they want within their own inherited environments. They can maintain connections to their past or they can break from the past and chart their own directions. From a disconnectionist perspective, individuals are (and should be) free to think about the future or focus their attention on short-term concerns.

From a disconnectionist position, the chief failing of the connectionist approach is the idea that there might be an intergenerational partnership that is not based on the consent of the

individuals who are ostensibly involved in the partnership. From a connectionist position, the chief failing of the disconnectionist approach is that it threatens to rip the individual from his or her situated context. According to the disconnectionists, individuals are not historically grounded or situated: they are simply free floating in time. This conception of the individual undermines any motivation that we might have to think and act in future-oriented ways. This is a particular problem in the current period because we now know that humanity has the power to profoundly affect, or even destroy the future: it is no longer good enough (philosophically, morally, or politically) to bury our heads in our own immediate concerns.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the extent to which these two viewpoints — connectionism and disconnectionism — reflect contrasting, but nevertheless useful, contributions to a fuller understanding of the nature of *political* relations between generations. In general agreement with the disconnectionists, I argue that generations of individuals are (and should be) free to make their own decisions within their own inherited environments. In general agreement with the connectionists, I argue that there is a relationship between thinking collectively and acting temporally, and the individual — if conceived of as independent from her generational embeddedness — will have few reasons to think past her own limited temporal horizons. In this chapter, and in subsequent chapters, I argue that democracy can help resolve the tension between connectionism and disconnectionism. Democracy can help situate morally autonomous individuals into meaningful intergenerational collective entities. Democratic entities not only affect the future through the decisions that they make, but they are also actively shaped by the individuals who make them up at any one moment in time. Democratic systems are purpose-built to provide individuals with some measure of control over the direction of the collectivity itself.

In this chapter, and in the next, I lay the philosophical groundwork for the claim that there is a relationship between thinking collectively and acting temporally: that we cannot make sense of the individual *in time* without thinking about how the individual is situated in an intergenerational collective entity of one type or another. The first section of the chapter outlines the connectionist approach. The second section outlines the disconnectionist approach. The third section explores the tensions between these two approaches and argues that each provides one part of a fuller description of the nature of intergenerational relations. Near the end of the chapter, I briefly explain why I believe democracy can help meaningfully situate the individual in time.

3.1 Connectionism

Edmund Burke is the archetype of what I am calling a *connectionist* thinker. He gives us an account of the nature of political relations between generations in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, which was first published in 1790. The urgent tone of the book underscores his concern that the revolution in France (which he rightly predicted would not achieve its own objectives) was in danger of spreading political instability to other European nations including England. Burke's primary concern was not that the revolution in France was against the 'natural order of things', nor did he believe that it is always illegitimate for a society to rebel against its rulers. Burke was a supporter of the 1688 revolution in England and the 1776 revolution in America. Instead, Burke opposed the French revolution because he saw it as an attempt to rupture the intergenerational partnership that he believed was necessary to maintain a good society. The revolutionaries in France were trying to break from the past. They attempted to build an entirely new society from scratch, a society with a different social order, a new political system, new freedoms for citizens, a secular state, a new calendar, and — what worried Burke the most — the consolidation of the three estates (the clergy, the aristocracy, and the common people) into the *Estates-General*. This new society would be built by one generation of leaders and it would be predicated on the consent of individuals. This was an affront to Burke's view of society as a complex, intergenerational collectivity with an essence and value that is larger — and more permanent — than any one of its individual parts. Burke's views on these matters are expressed in the following quote:

> Our political system is placed in a just correspondence and symmetry with the order of the world, and with the mode of existence decreed to a permanent body composed of transitory parts; wherein by the disposition of stupendous wisdom, moulding together the great mysterious incorporation of the human race, the whole, at one time, is never old, or middle-aged, or young, but in a condition of unchangeable consistency, moves on through the varied tenor of perpetual decay, fall, renovation, and progress (Burke 1790, 120).

It is worth unpacking this quote because it contains a near complete account of what I am calling connectionism. Notice first that Burke employs the metaphor of the body or the body politic to illustrate the nature of relations between generations. This is a "permanent body" at the highest level of abstraction which at the lowest level is made up of "transitory parts." This is the image

of any organic body — an animal, a person, or a plant — that has a holistic essence that is worth more than the sum of its parts. The body politic, in Burke's account, keeps living (forever) and its essence remains even as the shell of the body changes as individual cells die and regenerate. From this perspective, it is impossible or meaningless to conceptualize individuals independently from the role that they have to play in the larger body politic — just as it is impossible to conceptualize the role of a cell outside of the body that it (briefly) supports. The body politic is a temporally enduring "incorporation" of individuals that is, on the whole, ageless. This organic body strikes a curious (yet familiar) balance between consistency and immortality on the one hand and, on the other hand, periodic cyclical rhythms of progress and decay. As a whole, the eternal body politic is a "great mysterious" entity which cannot be fully comprehended by any one member or by any single generation of individuals.

Notice second that Burke associates the existing political world with a Platonic account of justice as symmetry or balance. There is a place for everyone and justice consists of everyone being in (and recognizing) his or her own place. In Burke's account there is a sense of justice or correctness in the symmetry that is observed between generations: the symmetry that is exemplified when the current generation recognizes that it is in partnership with the past and with the future. Burke, sees this as the "order of the world" but it is important to emphasize that he does not view this symmetry as natural or immutable. The symmetry that is observed in relations between the past, the present, and the future — the just order of things — can and might be undermined by the hubris of humanity. Burke was worried about the possible implications of the French Revolution because he saw it as a threat to the foundations of a just, symmetrical intergenerational partnership — a partnership built on foundations that *could* be undermined and thus lost forever by the ill-advised actions of a single generation (see, e.g., Mosher 1991).

Notice, as well, that the phrase "stupendous wisdom" has multiple related meanings. First and foremost, the wisdom of the ages is "stupendous" in the sense of being so great as to be rendered inaccessible to any single member or generation of the body politic. Individuals cannot assume to know the purpose or "mysterious" nature of this great intergenerational partnership from their own limited temporal perspectives. But this is not all that Burke means to convey by the use of this phrase. His argument is also a variant of the 'wisdom of the many' argument. In

this case, "stupendous wisdom" is embodied in the structures of society that have been inherited from the past. These practices and institutions must be respected, if not preserved, because they represent the cumulative and distilled wisdom of many generations of political actors. The current period, no matter how astute, can never match the wisdom that has been developed over many generations and received from the past.

Burke's intergenerational version of the 'wisdom of the many' argument is more original than it might at first appear. He is not merely concerned with the accumulation of knowledge, practice, and tradition (although these are among his foremost concerns). He is also concerned with the *lived* experiences of past actors — the full range of which can never be equalled by current generations because any single individual or generation will only ever have access to experiential knowledge gained during their own lifetime. In contrast, the past is a reservoir of a much fuller range of human experiences. Burke's point is that the present represents not only the distilled wisdom of the past with respect to things that appear to have value regardless of historical location, but that historical specifics — and particular historical experiences — provide insight and wisdom that cannot be obtained at other moments of time and will be lost if we forget our past.

Burke's concern is that when we disconnect ourselves from the past — as the French attempted to do — we lose touch with both types of wisdom: the universal or atemporal wisdom that is distilled from the past; and the wisdom gained in each specific epoch. As Burke (1790) points out: "Time is required to produce that union of minds which alone can produce all the good we aim at" (281). And he goes on to say that the work of building a just society "requires the aid of more minds than one generation can furnish" (282). Thus the whole complex of "stupendous wisdom" is an object of reverence for these two reasons. First it provides hints of the otherwise "mysterious" essence, purpose, and nature of the enduring body politic. Second, it provides us with more knowledge and wisdom about how to organize our own affairs than we could ever possibly obtain over the course of a single generation.

These observations help put Burke's most famous description of the intergenerational partnership into context:

> Society is indeed a contract...a partnership in all art, a particular in every virtue, and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born (Burke 1790, 194-195).

As with any partnership, there are obligations and responsibilities that come along with it. This is the critical point: by locating individuals in a collective entity that will persist longer in time than any one member, Burke gives individuals a reason to think past their own limited temporal horizons. Burke (1790) expresses this idea most clearly in another famous statement: "People will not look forward to posterity who never look backward to their ancestors" (119). Less often quoted are the lines that immediately follow this statement: "Besides…the idea of inheritance furnishes a sure spirit of conservation, and a sure principle of transmission; without at all excluding a principle of improvement. It leaves acquisition free; but it secures what it acquires" (119-120). In this statement Burke emphasizes what I take to be the critical insight of the connectionist approach: if individuals are not connected to each other and thus connected to a collectivity of some type that can or might persist longer in time than any one member, they will not have an appreciation for what has been received from the past and they will have few reasons to think and act in ways that are sensitive to the potential needs and concerns of the future. Burke, in this quote, is expressing this idea with reference to the conventional wisdom that must be applied if one wishes to preserve the family wealth: spend the interest but keep the capital intact!

Burke, of course, is not the only political theorist to have emphasized the collective nature of intergenerational relations. The 16th Century Anglican priest and theologian Richard Hooker also emphasized the transcendental essence of an enduring body politic:

> Wherefore, as any Man's Deed past is good as long as himself continueth: so the Act of a Publick Society of men done Five hundred Years sithence, standeth as theirs, who presently are of the same Societies, because Corporations as Immortal: we were then alive in our Predecessors and they in their Successors live still (quoted in Laslett and Fishkin 1992, 15).

In Hooker's account of connectionism, as in Burke's, individuals are situated in time by being connected to an enduring body politic and thus connected through time to their forebears and to posterity. This view of intergenerational generations can be used as a foundation to establish intergenerational obligations and responsibilities. If the body politic is a single enduring entity with a continuous identity, each generation must take responsibility for the deeds of the whole just as

an old man must take responsibility for the deeds of his youth. In Hooker's account, intergenerational obligations clearly run backwards in time: the actions of the past stand as our own (at least in some sense) if they were taken by past members of our own collective entity. Burke makes an explicit effort to also emphasize forward-looking obligations and responsibilities, but the terms of membership in both Burke's and Hooker's accounts of connectionism are the same. Membership in the great enduring body politic simply befalls us: we are born into it.

This view of intergenerational relations is objectionable to those who believe that: 1) responsibility must always rest with individuals; and 2) contracts or partnerships are only valid if they are sanctioned by the consent of individuals. The problem with a connectionist approach is that it threatens to subsume the moral individual within the intergenerational collectivity. As Laslett argues:

> Assuming an eternal moral person for the State, as Burke seems also to be doing, and investing it with moral claims that have no obvious boundaries is in my judgement totalitarian as well, however 'legal' it may be. What is wanted is a relationship between generations that is individual as well as social, one that passes through mortal individuals rather than through deathless collectivities (Laslett 1992, 41).

Burke's account of intergenerational relations invests the body politic with a moral (and essentially mysterious) status of its own that: 1) cannot be understood by any individual or generation of individuals; and 2) is assumed to exist largely independently of the moral individuals who make up each generation of political actors. It is this idea that an intergenerational entity might have a moral essence that exists independently of the individuals who make it up that animated the opposition of disconnectionists like Thomas Paine.

3.2 Disconnectionism

In response to concerns about the status of the individual in Burke's description of intergenerational relations, other thinkers have emphasized the moral autonomy of individuals and the political independence of generational cohorts. If each individual is conceived of as an autonomous entity that is separate from others, generational cohorts must also be conceived of as separate entities that are disconnected from each other in time.

Thomas Paine is the archetype of what I am calling a *disconnectionist* thinker. The differences between Burke and Paine on the question of relations between generations could not be more sharply defined or expressed in starker terms. Ball (2000) has characterized Burke's position as "an older (and essentially religious) ethic of stewardship" that "emphasizes each generation's responsibility for, and obligations towards, preceding and succeeding generations." By contrast, Ball characterizes Paine's position as a "new (and essentially secular) ethic of individualism" (72). The differences between the two positions arise because those who adhere to a philosophy of moral individualism find it objectionable to invest the collective body politic with a moral essence of its own. In Paine's account of intergenerational relations, the individual has an autonomous identity of his or her own, as well as a moral essence that trumps the value of the intergenerational collectivity.

What is more, Paine believes that living generations not only have a right to make their own decisions in a manner that is free — as far as possible — from the impositions of the past, they also have an inalienable ability to do so. Once we are free from the past — once those who used to be alive have died — there is no one or anything that can stop us from making our own decisions, regardless of what the past might have wanted or the future might need. From this perspective, obligations and responsibilities cannot and should not be automatically transferred through time because responsibilities should not be imposed without consent. In the case of historical wrongs, collective guilt should not be imposed on the living for the deeds of the dead. It is the idea that there might be intergenerational partnerships that are not (and cannot be) based on consent or agreement that most offends those who, like Paine, view each generation as a collection of autonomous moral individuals. Legitimate affiliations or partnerships do not simply befall us; instead, they can only be forged through the consent and agreement of living individuals.

Paine's pamphlet *Rights of Man,* which was published in 1791, was a direct response to Burke's critique of the revolution in France. What is most remarkable, given their divergent positions on the nature of relations between generations, is that Paine spends very little time challenging Burke's description of the enduring body politic. There is no question that Burke's position offends Paine's moral individualism but the majority of Paine's salvos are fired only in the first part of *Rights of Man*. He evidently believed that Burke's account of intergenerational rela-

tions was not merely objectionable but also absurd and plainly wrong: individuals *are* free to do as they choose, and there is nothing the past can do about it. Thus Paine quickly dismisses Burke's version of the intergenerational partnership — more often by assertion than by argument — and the subject is only rarely mentioned in subsequent chapters.

Nevertheless, Paine's position on these matters, which is clearly expressed in the first part of the book, cannot be misinterpreted:

> A greater absurdity cannot present itself to the understanding of man, than what Mr Burke offers to his readers. He tells them, and he tells the world to come, that a certain body of men, who existed a hundred years ago, made a law; and that there does not now exist in the nation, nor ever will, nor ever can, a power to alter it. Under how many subtleties, or absurdities, has the divine right to govern been imposed on the credulity of mankind! (Paine 1791, 43).

In Paine's estimation, Burke's depiction of the enduring body politic, and of the responsibilities and obligations that may be derived from this account, are mere fictions used to colour, confuse, or misrepresent the truth — just as painters or actors aim to blur the boundaries between representation and reality. These are the (mixed) metaphors that Paine employs when critiquing Burke:

> As to the tragic paintings by which Mr Burke has outraged his own imagination, and seeks to work upon that of his readers, they are very well calculated for theatrical representation, where facts are manufactured for the sake of show, and accommodated to produce, through the weakness of sympathy, a weeping effect. But Mr Burke should recollect that he is writing History, and not *Plays*; and that his readers will expect truth, and not the spouting rant of high-toned exclamation (Paine 1791, 50).

Thus Paine accuses Burke of intentionally misleading his readers by turing reality into fiction for the purposes of justifying existing political structures and arrangements that are not based on the consent of the ruled but are instead based on inherited traditions. As we have seen, in Burke's account of the nature of relations between generations, the essential components of all existing social and political relations are the distilled wisdom of many generations and no individual can possibly comprehend the whole from his or her own limited perspective. From this point of view, individual consent pales in comparison to the "mysterious" essence of the whole. The problem with this approach, from Paine's perspective, is that it threatens to turn the bonds of tradition into the chains of slavery. By contrast, if Burke is a purveyor of drama rather than history or truth, his work might be conceived of as a rhetorical effort to obscure a central (and oth-

erwise obvious) fact about the nature of relations between generations: each generation is, and always will be, free to do as they please within their own inherited environment, regardless of what the past might have wanted and what the future might need. This is the central assertion of the disconnectionist position. For Paine, (1791) this is not a matter of opinion or conjecture, it is simply a matter of fact: "There never did, there never will, and there never can exist a parliament, or any description of men, or any generation of men, in any country, possessed of the right or the power of binding and controlling posterity to the *'end of all time'*…. Every age and generation must be as free to act for itself, *in all cases,* as the ages and generations which preceded it" (41). In making this assertion, Paine recognizes that it is both theoretically necessary and rhetorically advantageous to emphasize the disconnections between generations:

> Those who have quitted the world, and those who are not yet arrived at it, are as remote from each other, as the utmost stretch of mortal imagination can conceive: What possible obligation, then, can exist between them; what rule or principle can be laid down, that of two non-entities, the one out of existence, and the other not in, and who never can meet in this world, the one should control the other to the end of time? (Paine 1791, 42-43).

In this quote, Paine encourages his readers to focus their attention on *non-overlapping* generations. His purpose is to emphasize the remoteness of groups of political actors who are separated in time in order to assert and defend the independence and autonomy of the living generation. To achieve this effect, Paine downplays the relevance of interactions and relations between generations.[1] In order to encourage his readers to think in these terms Paine — in another passage — articulates a dramatic fiction of his own. He suggests that we should think of individuals as unique, free, and equal rights-bearing *creations* rather than historically situated individuals born from their parents and thus connected to the past. According to Paine (1791), "all men are

[1] In the above quote, Paine is talking about political relations between the past and the present, and not about political relations between the present and the future. The difference between these two types of intergenerational relations has to do with the direction of causality: what we do will not affect the past but it will affect the future. This asymmetry is important but it is not something that either Burke or Paine emphasizes. As Terence Ball explains, while Burke maintains a sort of symmetrical notion of intergenerational relations — we have obligations to both the past and the future — Paine adopts a similarly symmetrical, but more negative, notion of intergenerational relations: "the present generation has obligations neither to the dead nor to the unborn" (Ball 2000, 73). Paine's notion of intergenerational symmetry is a consequence of 'pure' disconnectionism. If generations are conceived of as entirely separate and autonomous political entities, each generation will be disconnected from all others both backwards and forwards in time. As we will see, Thomas Jefferson develops an asymmetrical notion of intergenerational relations in which present generations have no obligations to the past but have some obligation not to harm the future. Jefferson is nevertheless a disconnectionist because he believed that the best way to protect the future from the present (at least when it comes to the problem of profligate debts) is to treat each generation as a separate political entity (thus preventing one generation from drawing debt in the name of subsequent generations).

born equal, and with equal natural right, in the same manner as if posterity had been continued by *creation* instead of *generation*....The world is as new to [each child] as it was to the first man that existed, and his natural right in it is of the same kind" (66).

In this quote, Paine seeks to assert the natural freedom of each individual, and by extension the natural and inalienable freedom of each generation to break from the past. In this account, each generation is an entirely new and autonomous entity that owes nothing of its essence to the past or the future. This is a direct challenge to Burke's metaphor of the eternal body politic. In Paine's account, instead of an eternal body politic made up of 'transitory' parts, there are separate individual bodies born not of one another but independently of one another! Paine confirms the rights of individuals and of generations to make their own decisions, but only at the cost of an explicit loss of any connections to the past or the future.

If existing generations *are* free to make their own decisions, relations between non-overlapping generations must be based on consent or persuasion and not on force or coercion. Paine recognizes this but he does not pursue the point to any theoretical conclusions. As he points out:

> It requires but a very small glance of thought to perceive that although laws made in one generation often continue in the force through succeeding generations, yet that they continue to derive their force from the consent of the living. A law not repealed continues in force, not because it cannot be repealed, but because it is not repealed; and the non-repealing passes for consent (Paine 1791, 44).

Thus in addition to the consent of individuals, intergenerational collective entities — if they are to function as enduring body politics — must be viewed as long-term conversations between generational cohorts, each of which must be persuaded to accept and continue rather than reject or discontinue their inherited traditions, existing laws, political institutions, or any other long-term projects or initiatives. If the future is free to do as it pleases, intergenerational relations must be based on consent and persuasion not on force or assumed affiliation. From Paine's perspective, this is not a matter of principle, it is a matter of fact.

Paine is not the only theorist to think in disconnectionist terms. Before Burke and Paine, Robert Filmer challenged conventional notions of the enduring body politic:

> The people, to speak truly and properly, is a thing or body in continual alteration and change, it never continues one minute the same, being composed of a multitude of parts, whereof divers continually decay and perish, and others renew and succeed in their places. They which are the people this minute, are not the people the next minute (quoted in Laslett and Fishkin 1992, 8).

Filmer's description of a fluid and ephemeral body politic directly challenges the central claim of the connectionist thinkers. If the body politic has no duration over time, it cannot enter into binding political agreements as a coherent entity, and those who exist today cannot be held accountable for decisions that were made before they were born. According to Filmer, the concept of the enduring body politic is absurd: if it cannot persist even a moment in time it certainly cannot persist over the course of many generations.

Thomas Jefferson is another theorist who was inclined to think in disconnectionist terms. If Paine emphasized the freedom of natural generations to do as they please, Jefferson believed that even finer distinctions had to be made. Remarkably, Jefferson attempted to specify the precise lifespan of a single political generation. He did so by appealing to an accepted theory of political legitimacy: the majority. More specifically, Jefferson argued that a body politic can persist as a coherent and legitimate political entity only for as long as the group of individuals who were alive when any one decision (or set of decisions) was made continues to comprise a majority of the population. In a now famous letter to James Madison from September 1789, Jefferson used mortality tables to calculate the average duration of a single *political* generation. He concludes that half of those above the age of majority "who are living at any one instance of time will be dead in 18 years 8 months, or say 19 years as the nearest integral number" (595).

Jefferson has been criticized for being overly precise in his calculations (e.g., Wills 1978, 124), but despite appearances, precision in this case was not his primary objective. It does not matter exactly when one *political* generation succeeds another; what matters more is that, according to this theory, the body politic regularly (and quite frequently) transforms itself to become a new, entirely different and separate political entity. We do not have to wait for the last member of the last generation to die before we can say that one political entity has been replaced by a wholly new entity. According to Jefferson's theory, we have only to wait for more than half of the current body politic to be replaced by new members.

Even though Jefferson's is a theory of democratic legitimacy, it does not at first glance look like a theory of political consent; at least insofar as it is also a theory of demographic change. In Jefferson's account, demographic changes mean that one legitimate (and wholly independent) body politic is continually replaced by the next. This happens as a result of the mere passage of time and not as a result of the active consent of the individuals who make up the body politic. From this perspective, Jefferson's theory would seem to preclude active consent. This, however, is not his intention. To the contrary, by developing this theory, Jefferson aims to ensure that all future individuals will have maximum latitude to make their own decisions in ways that are (as far as possible) free from any impositions of the past. Jefferson aims to restrict the temporal reach of each political decision by limiting the duration of the body politic itself. From this perspective, no law should persist in force for more than 19 years. No constitution should exist for longer than this period of time. No political entity can legitimately incur debts that cannot be repaid within this period of time.

Both Jefferson and Paine believed that generations should be conceived of as entirely separate political entities, but Jefferson, unlike Paine, believed that distinctions could be made even between overlapping generations of political actors. Jefferson attempted to make these finer distinctions in part because he, unlike Paine, believed that tacit consent is not enough to legitimize laws that were adopted by previously existing political entities. Jefferson (1789) argued that explicit temporal limits are required because "a law of limited duration is much more [politically] manageable than one which needs a repeal" (597). In this respect Jefferson is an even more radical disconnectionist than is Paine. According to Jefferson, when the majority of a population is replaced by new individuals, "the whole society dies" and "another generation or society succeeds" the previous one. This new political entity "forms a whole" in its own right and on its own terms (594). This description of intergenerational relations is, of course, the reverse of Burke's position. In Burke's account, the enduring body politic has an essence and a value that is worth more than the sum of its individual parts. In Jefferson's account, a collective entity can only (and should only) persist in time as long as the individuals who make it up actively consent to its continued existence.

From the perspective of the disconnectionists, it is never legitimate for one political entity to impose its will on another separate political entity without the active consent of the individuals involved. As we cannot obtain the consent of future generations, *at the present moment*, groups of political actors who are separated by time must be treated as separate political entities, even if they come to work in conjunction with each other over time. There is no means of getting around this problem other than by limiting the period of time that any political entity might persist in imposing obligations on its future-self. This, in turn, involves making clear distinctions between groups of political actors who are separated by time, in order to ensure that the impacts of all collective actions are (as far as possible) constrained within the lifetime of the existing political entity.

3.3 Connectionism versus Disconnectionism

As rival rhetoricians Burke and Paine overemphasized the merits of their respective positions, and by doing so implicitly recognized the merits of the other's case. Indeed, both approaches — connectionism and disconnectionism — each contain some essential elements of a more complete description of intergenerational relations.

Even though Burke emphasized the connections between generations, he was fully aware that existing generations, separated from the past and the future by the barrier of time, *are* free to make their own decisions. It is for this reason that he worried about the revolution in France, wrote *Reflections* in urgent and impassioned tones, and feared the spread of the revolutionary spirit. It was a fear of freedom — or more precisely the instability and uncertainty that are the companions of freedom — that caused Burke to emphasize the extent to which the present period *ought* to be linked to, informed by, and shaped by the past. As Mosher (1991) argues, Burke did not believe in a transcendental order that would, through divine intervention or natural causes, simply reassert itself after it had been dismantled by revolutionary change. Far from it. Burke recognized and feared the freedom that each generation has to make their own decisions, to make their own mistakes, and to forever change the course of a society. According to Mosher (1991), "Burke's conservatism was not motivated by transcendent beliefs but by their denial. For him, a way of life abandoned was truly lost" (398).

Paine, similarly, never really believed, that the past might effectively bind the future forever. If Paine believed that the freedom of each generation might be somehow vitiated by the impositions of tradition he would have addressed himself more assiduously to refuting Burke by arguing *for* the rights of the living instead of merely *asserting* them. As it is, Paine assumes that his readers, like Burke, will be aware that each generation is ultimately free to make its own decisions, and to accept or reject its inherited traditions, affiliations, and institutions. Paine brushes aside Burke's assertions that decisions made in the past *should* effectively bind the living and their posterity forever. He rejects these claims as absurd at the outset and never returns to them with the full force of his intellect.

At the same time, Paine was aware that Burke's perspective on these matters is not absurd: generations *are* affected by the past and therefore connected to each other through time. But Paine was not willing to accept the idea that the current period (or the future) should be or could be entered into a binding, non-consensual, intergenerational partnership. Any arguments to this effect only intensified his efforts to assert and defend the freedom of each individual to define his (or her) own affiliations, and the freedom of each generation to make their own decisions.

Indeed, more generally, neither approach — connectionism or disconnectionism — gives us a fully adequate account of intergenerational relations. Instead, what makes these two conflicting approaches compelling on their own terms is that each provides a part of the overall picture. For its part, connectionism helps us understand the extent to which individuals and groups must be situated in collective entities in order to be meaningfully situated in time. The great insight of the connectionist theorists is to recognize that individuals must be connected to their contemporaries — in one way or another — in order to be connected to others across time. This relationship is predicated on a simple but indisputable observation: individual lifespans are limited by birth and death. The limits of the self impose limits on our temporal horizons unless we are associated (in one way or another) with a collectivity that might persist longer in time than any one member. It is also these connections that provide temporally situated individuals with reasons to think and act in ways that are sensitive to both the past and the future.

Consider the issue of making apologies or paying reparations for past injustices. Over the course of many decades — once individual perpetrators and victims have all died — any obligation or willingness to pay reparations, or to feel hurt by past injustices, depends entirely on the strength of one's connections to either the offending collectivity or to the victimized one (e.g, Miller 2007, chap. 6). Without a sense of membership in an intergenerational collective entity, it is difficult to understand why any individual would (or could) be held responsible (in any sense) for actions that were taken, for crimes that were committed, or for debts incurred by those in the past.

Consider, as well, the issue of saving for the future. On what grounds will we be motivated to save for the future if a) we do not ourselves expect to be a beneficiary of those savings; and b) we have no sense of connection to those in the future who might be beneficiaries? There is little reason to save now or to invest in the future unless one is connected in some way to those who might benefit in the future.

William Connolly has drawn a similar set of conclusions from a slightly different starting point:

> Even in an individualist culture the current life of the self is intimately bound up with its perception of the future fate of the collectivity, and the fate of the collectivity is joined to participant perception of its probable future….This connection between the life of the self and the fate of the collectivity, mediated by our morality, enters silently into the performances of those who appreciate the common future they are building. But when the future becomes devalued or depreciated by the present — perhaps because its highest prospects now ring hollow or because the future of current or past achievements appears dim — the common life in the present changes too…. The claims of immediacy and self assume priority over those of the future and the common life (Connolly 1987, 42-43).

In this quote, Connolly identifies the relationship between thinking collectively and acting temporally but he views the issue from the opposite perspective: instead of arguing that an absence of connections to others in the current period undermines motivations to think and act in future-oriented ways, Connolly argues that devaluing the future undermines the purpose of the collectivity in the current period. In either case it amounts to the same: a disconnectionist mode of thinking drives us into the present by separating us from each other and from the future. This is the chief failing of the disconnectionist position. As Burke (1790) warned, if individuals were separated from their contemporaries and generations were not linked to each other across time,

"Men would become little better than the flies of a summer" (193). This metaphor — which is a matching biological counterpoint to Burke's enduring body politic metaphor — not only emphasizes the negative consequences of disconnectionism, it also encourages us to think about the extent to which any human achievements that we currently enjoy are to some extent the products of our own connections to an intergenerational collective entity. Flies have no connections to other flies, no connections between generations, no art, no science, no institutions, and no prospects for progress. They do not and cannot have any moral or political commitments to their progeny. Burke issues this as a warning to those who, like Paine, are inclined to think (and act) in disconnectionist terms.

Paine, Jefferson and other disconnectionist thinkers never compare human generations to "the flies of a summer," but the metaphors they favor have similarly profound implications for the viability of long-term associations and the legitimacy of long-term collective decisions. Jefferson (1813) compares successive generations to distant nations or lifetime tenants. "We may" he argues "consider each generation as a distinct nation, with a right, by the will of its majority, to bind themselves, but none to bind the succeeding generation, more than the inhabitants of another country." Or, he continues in the same passage, "the case may be likened to the ordinary one of a tenant for life, who may hypothecate the land for his debts during the continuance of his usufruct; but at his death, the reversioner (who is also for life only) receives it exonerated from all burden" (599). Paine (1795) adopts the same metaphorical language: "A single reflection will teach us" he argues "that our ancestors, like ourselves, were but tenants for life in the great freehold of rights" (10).

These metaphors highlight the freedoms of individuals and the sovereignty of generations but they have other implications that neither Paine nor Jefferson seemed eager to explore. Tenants make use of an abode for some period of time and one tenure is discontinuous with the start of the next. The space of time between tenures might be hours, days, weeks, months, or years but in the end it does not matter because there is no relationship — and there is to *be* no relationship — between successive tenants. This, of course, is precisely the point. Yet compare this to a similar metaphor that describes a different kind of relationship: the family home. In this case current residents are connected to other generations both backwards and forwards in time. These two

accounts of intergenerational relations imply substantively different sets of obligations and motivations. As tenants, we may be obliged to ensure that future tenants have opportunities to enjoy undiminished what we ourselves have enjoyed. This obligation is established by the use of the word "usufruct" in Jefferson's (1789) famous phrase: "The earth belongs in *usufruct* to the living" (593). As Ball (2000) explains the term usufruct, as used in this context, essentially means to hold in trust (67).[2] Thus even though Jefferson believed that generations should be treated as separate political entities, each generation of life-tenants has some obligation to take care of the capital, to protect the earth from destruction or the government accounts from depletion, for the benefit of those who will come later. Yet even if we have an obligation to act as trustees, those who think of themselves as tenants will see little reason to make *improvements* for the sake of their successors. By contrast, those who think of themselves as members of successive generations living in a family home will see little reason *not* to make improvements for the sake of future generations.

This, again, is the chief failing of a disconnectionist approach: it drives us into the present by separating us first from each other and then from the past and from the future. Those who are disconnected from their contemporaries, from the past, and from the future will have no reason to think beyond the horizons of their own limited lifespans. The cost and consequence of a disconnectionist mode of thinking is a loss of a sense of our place *in time*.

A connectionist approach offers a corrective to this state of affairs but this mode of thinking also has its failings. The concern with Burke's version of connectionism is that it is not consistent with a philosophy of moral individualism: the enduring body politic is assumed to have a moral essence that trumps the moral value of the individuals who make it up. In addition, in Burke's version of connectionism, the dead hand of the past threatens to constrain the actions of existing individuals and groups and this, in turn, limits the potential of the future. Connectionism ultimately fails to provide an account of *when* it is appropriate, and *why* it may sometimes be de-

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[2] Talbot Page (1997) explains that the term "usufruct" is derived from the Latin words for use, *usu*, and fruit *fructus* (586). Thus Jefferson's famous phrase literally means that current generations have the right to use the fruit of the earth's capital without diminishing the value of the principal. Given this, the common contraction of Jefferson's phrase "the earth belongs to the living" means precisely the opposite of what he intended it to mean. Without the word usufruct, the phrase suggests that the living are the exclusive owners of the world and they can therefore do with it as they please. With the word usufruct, the phrase implies that current generations are not the exclusive owners of the world: current generations, tenants, or holders of the trust have the right to the use the property only so far as, and only if, its original value is maintained for future occupants.

sirable for one generation to separate itself (insofar as this is possible) from its predecessors. Indeed, Burke (1790) often speaks *as if* generations and societies are held together by rules and arrangements that must always remain in place regardless of the opinions, sentiments, or actions of the living. He argues, for example, that the English, as a collectivity, forfeited their right to elect their kings in the Revolution of 1688. As he explains, if they ever possessed this right, "the English nation did at that time most solemnly renounce and abdicate it, for themselves and for all their posterity for ever" (104). In this account, the decisions of past generations are thought to be binding on all future generations. This is not acceptable to those who believe that all affiliations and partnerships must be based on the consent of individuals.

To be clear, this does not mean that there is no room for change and innovation in Burke's approach to intergenerational relations. As explained above, Burke (1790) was an advocate of improvement and reform but he believed that all reforms must be built upon the foundations of the existing order. He quotes Erasmus in support of this approach: "*Spartam nacus es; hanc exorna*" (266).[3] Indeed, Burke recognized that a multigenerational entity has to be supple and willing to adjust to changing circumstances if it is to remain relevant, acceptable, legitimate, and stable over time. As he puts it: "A state without the means of some change is without means of its conservation" (106). In Burke's account, it is not that each generation should be content to merely accept their society as they find it, and preserve it without change. To the contrary, each generation should contribute to the whole intergenerational enterprise by making changes as needed and by adoring the structures and institutions that they have inherited. Burke is not opposed to change. He is opposed to wholesale revolution: the structures of society should not be dismantled at the foundation and they cannot be rebuilt anew over the course of a single generation. It is hubris to believe that one generation could recreate and improve what took many generations to build. In Burke's account of intergenerational relations, individuals are free to shape and reform the social and political structures they have inherited; what is not up for negotiation is the relationship that each individual has to the larger intergenerational partnership. This is unacceptable to those who believe that all claims to political legitimacy should be based on the consent of individuals.

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[3] "You have obtained Sparta, adorn it."

Indeed, a theory of intergenerational relations that is not based on a philosophy of moral individualism hardly seems appropriate today. As Ball (2001) argues: "Most of us no longer think of ourselves as short-lived members of a longer-lived community of believers with whose past and future members we must keep faith" (91). Laslett and Fishkin raise similar concerns:

> A deathless collectivity, identified with the political purposes of the state and not itself subject to the limitations of duration imposed on political cooperation and exchange, might make dealing with the problems and puzzlements [of intergenerational relations] much easier. But the image of an eternal, all-inclusive collectivity embracing everyone alive, and everyone who has been or will be alive, scarcely belongs in the arena of individual rights, government by consent of the governed, and the rule of law (Laslett and Fishkin 1992, 14).

At the same time, it is no longer philosophically acceptable to simply go along with the implications of a disconnectionist approach. Jefferson, for his part, was primarily concerned about passing public debt onto future generations. Mounting public debts are a concern today but the stakes are much broader and higher now than they were when Jefferson was writing. We now have the power to not only affect the future but to destroy it altogether. If Burke and the connectionists are correct, individuals will have few reasons to think and act in future-oriented ways unless we are connected to and situated within a intergenerational collective entity (of one type or another) that might persist longer in time than any one member. If Ball (2001) and Laslett and Fishkin (1992) are correct, any theory of connectionism that is not based on a philosophy of moral individualism will not be adequate to this task at this stage in history.

In Chapter 5, I argue that democracy can provide the foundations for a theory of connectionism that is based on moral individualism. That is to say, democracy can help us negotiate the tension between the need for an intergenerational collectivity, and our desire to preserve the autonomy of the individual within such a collectivity. Indeed, democracy provides the classical solution to precisely this problem: How can individuals be conceived of as morally autonomous entities while at the same time being constrained by the rules that govern the collectivity (or collectivities) of which they are a part? If democracy is a solution to this problem from an atemporal perspective that focuses on relations between contemporaries, it might also form a part of the solution in an intergenerational context.

In Chapter 5 I argue that democracy can help connect otherwise unaffiliated individuals to collective entities that are 1) of their own making; and 2) capable of engaging in long-term

action. First, I argue that the very act of making collective decisions together can help forge identifiable collective identities out of the raw material of otherwise unaffiliated individuals. Second, although there is a sense in which our obligations to the future simply befall us because our actions will affect the future, democracy is the only system for making collective decisions that takes these obligations as a guiding principle. It is not possible for those who are not-yet-born to participate in making decisions today, but it is possible — and indeed incumbent upon those who call themselves democrats — to *consider* the potential interests of those who will be affected in the future by decisions made today. Third, by ensuring that individuals have a role to play in making collective decisions, democracy can help us define our collective obligations to the future and thereby underpin any individual commitments that we have to help achieve longer-term collective goals. Fourth, and relatedly, the degree of democratic influence of any one individual or group is directly related to the responsibility that we have (and might *feel* we have) for any collective decisions that are made in our name. Seen from this perspective, democracy is a means of underwriting the responsibility that we as individuals have for collective actions that will affect the future. The more robust our democratic systems are, the greater is the responsibility that each individual might be said to have for collective decisions that will affect the future.

It should be clear that these arguments are focused on the forward-looking obligations that democratic entities can help support. I am not, at this stage, exploring the backward-looking obligations that democracies might help support, even though issues such as paying reparations or issuing apologies for past misdeeds raise some intriguing possibilities for the role that democracy might play in forging and making sense of these sorts of intergenerational commitments and obligations. If membership within a democratic entity can be considered voluntary (at least in some sense), then those individuals who benefit today from the debts, deals, or the moral transgressions of past members of their society might be said to bear some responsibility to those who continue to be negatively affected by those actions. These are intriguing speculations but they are not my primary focus. Gosseries (2007), Laslett (1992), Miller (2007), Sher (1992), Thompson (2002) and others have tackled some of the difficult problems associated with the backward-looking intergenerational obligations of individuals. At this stage, I am primarily interested in those aspects of democratic theory and practice that can help us define our collective and individual obligations and responsibilities to the future.

Conclusion

The theorists that we have explored in this chapter have employed a number of contrasting metaphors to help explain the nature of intergenerational relations. Burke's favorite metaphor is the enduring body politic. In Burke's account, the partnership that exists between the past, the present, and the future takes on a life of its own and has a moral essence that trumps the moral value of any one individual member. Paine's favorite metaphor is the tenant. In this account, we are merely tenants who are living on the earth for a limited period of time: we are obliged, at minimum, to keep the capital intact but we have few obligations other than that, and we certainly have no connections (and hence no obligations) to those who came before us. Jefferson, for his part, viewed generations as separate sovereign nations. In this account no generation has (or should ever have) any right to impose obligations or duties on any other generation. More recently, Ball has suggested that relations between generations can be thought of as a flowing river:

> As with real rivers, so it may also be with the metaphorical river of time. Each generation occupies, as it were, a small village located along that river. As dwellers along the river of time each of us is accountable for what we do in and with our small stretch of the river. And we remain morally responsible for what we send to our descendants downstream (Ball 2001, 108).

The river metaphor effectively reinforces the idea that we have obligations to future generations — what we do *will* affect them in one way or another — but this metaphor nevertheless conceives of generations as autonomous entities that are separated by the (unidirectional) river of time. Laslett (1992) has proposed yet another metaphor. He recommends thinking about generations as individual entities that "continuously intertwine with each other over the whole length of human history. They do so like the strands that wind round one another to create a piece of thread, each strand being shorter than the piece of thread itself, which unlike the strands are incapable of indefinite extension" (46). Laslett's (1992) metaphor is a connectionist one, but unlike Burke's body politic, the thread metaphor more clearly emphasizes the distinct role of each individual and generation. The problem with this metaphor and the others is that they each say very little about the motivations that individuals might have to act in future-oriented ways. In Ball's (2001) river metaphor, we are obliged to think about the future, but only because what we do today will affect the future. This is the only source of motivation. It is for this reason that I prefer

the metaphor of the family home. This metaphor emphasizes aspects of both connectionism and disconnectionism. Each successive generation owns the deed and can make their own decisions, but as members of a family enterprise, individuals will have reasons to do *more* than what mere duty would require. They will have reasons to invest in the future of the enterprise and to make improvements for the benefit of posterity.

Democracy cannot bring unaffiliated individuals together into an affective family unit, but democracies can help situate individuals — even those who very much see themselves as individuals — into meaningful collective entities that are capable of acting over the long-term. In Chapter 5, I argue that it is the act of making (or having to make) collective decisions together that can help forge identifiable collective entities out of collections of otherwise unaffiliated individuals. This is important because a conventional Burkean approach to situating the individual *in time* — an approach that is arguably more closely related to the metaphor of the family home — is no longer philosophically acceptable in an age of moral individualism. On the other hand, given what we now know about our collective capacity to affect the future (for better or for worse), a disconnectionist approach is also philosophically unacceptable. As we have seen, disconnectionism provides individuals with too few reasons to think past their own limited time horizons. A central claim of this dissertation is that democracy can help us overcome this philosophical impasse. Democracy can help situate otherwise unaffiliated individuals into meaningful intergenerational collectivities that are, at least in some respects, *of their own making*.

Chapter 4

Theories of Intergenerational Justice: Time and Individuals

Introduction

An exploration of intergenerational relations would not be complete without a discussion of intergenerational justice. The literature on intergenerational justice is the largest and most thoughtful body of work on the nature of relations between generations, and it is easy to understand why. As Barry (1978) points out claims of justice are generally regarded as having a higher priority than claims of other types. A general concern for humanity, for example, "requires that we respond to others' needs whereas justice requires that we give them their due" (205). Duties of justice cannot be legitimately ignored for political purposes, nor can they be superseded by competing principles, values, or norms unless these competing claims are also framed in terms of justice.

In this chapter, I focus on theories of intergenerational justice that start with the individual as the primary unit of analysis. If successful, theories of this type would circumvent the central claim that was made in the previous chapter: that in order to make sense of the individual *in time* we have to think about how the individual is situated in an intergenerational collectivity of one type or another. In this chapter I explore whether theorists of intergenerational justice that take the individual as the primary unit of analysis have been successful in overcoming this challenge. The first section of the chapter looks at contractarian theories of intergenerational justice. The second section focuses on rights-based theories of intergenerational justice. I argue that theorists of intergenerational justice who start with the individual as their primary unit of analy-

sis have tended to adopt one of two strategies: they either retreat into the present by focusing on the obligations that contemporaries have to each other, or they adopt a collective orientation of one type or another in order to make sense of the intergenerational obligations of individuals.

It is worth clarifying that there is a conceptual distinction to be made between moral individualism and ontological individualism. Moral individualism identifies individuals as the ultimate source of moral value. From this perspective, while collective entities (such as cultural groups, nation-states, or Burke's enduring body politic) might *act* as moral agents, they cannot themselves be objects of moral value: the ultimate source of moral value are the individuals who make up any collective entity. Ontological individualism makes claims not only about the moral value of individuals, but also about their status as separate, autonomous beings or entities. From this perspective, political relations should be understood primarily in terms of relations between individuals. The temporal reach of liberalism as a moral theory is not necessarily constrained by the fact that individuals have limited lifespans. It remains possible to identify the individual as the ultimate source of moral value *and* at the same time locate individuals in collectivities of one sort or another that might persist through time as coherent entities. Indeed, a core value of many liberal theories is situatedness: part of valuing individuals involves recognizing that we are situated in various more or less meaningful collective entities (families, cultural traditions, nations, etc.) (see, e.g., Kymlicka 1995). The arguments that I make in this chapter are about ontological individualism: when individuals are conceived of as separate ontological entities, it is difficult to find a philosophical foundation for intergenerational relations and obligations that will extend past the likely lifetimes of individuals.

4.1 Contractarian Theories of Intergenerational Justice?

According to contractarian theorists, justice should not be conceived of as a transcendental good or a description of the natural and proper order of things. The contractarians are far more pragmatic. In their eyes, questions of justice arise only where there are conflicts of interest and justice *is* what rational actors can in principle agree on. Brian Barry (1989a) has identified two versions of justice that, while very different from each other, both fall within the contract theory tradition. The first is justice as mutual advantage. The second is justice as impartiality.

With respect to the first approach — justice as mutual advantage — justice is nothing more than the terms of whatever compromise is reached by autonomous and relatively equal rational actors. The only motive is self-interest: individuals cooperate in order to more effectively obtain what they want and need. Thus the terms of justice are those that are defined by individuals for their mutual advantage. Individuals accept certain distributions of goods when they cannot reasonably expect to get more given the circumstances, the scarcity of goods, and the distributions of power between those involved (Barry 1989a, 6-7).

With respect to the second approach — justice as impartiality — justice is that which is consistent with the best outcomes for all involved. The motive is not self-interest, *per se*, but nor is it entirely removed from self-interest. Instead, individuals are encouraged to empathize with others and to forge agreements or contracts that each could in principle accept regardless of who they are as individuals, and independently of any power imbalances that might, in practice, exist between them. In this way, each individual will be assured a fair (but not necessarily equal) share of any scarce goods (Barry 1989a, 8).

John Rawls' (1999) *A Theory of Justice,* which was first published in 1971, is the best known and most widely discussed theory of justice as impartiality. But Barry (1989a) points out that Rawls' theory also contains elements of a mutual advantage approach to justice. It is worth taking a closer look at Rawls' theory of justice because it illustrates many of the difficulties that are associated with contract theories of intergenerational justice. In brief, contract theories, like most other political theories, were developed to apply to relations between contemporaries, and it is hardly surprising that a number of difficulties arise when these theories are applied to intergenerational relations. The most important difficulties have to do with the limited relevance of the individual *in time*, the non-existence of future individuals, and the power imbalances that characterize intergenerational relations.

In his famous thought experiment, Rawls (1999) uses the conceptual construct of a "veil of ignorance" to develop a theory of justice as fairness or impartiality. In this thought experiment we are asked to consider what sort of agreements individuals would make with each other if they did not know anything specific about their own personal tastes, characteristics, interests, or positions within society. Of course, individuals cannot identify mutually acceptable principles if they

are prevented from knowing *all* potentially relevant bits of information. Given this, Rawls explains that those who are behind the veil of ignorance must know that they will have a conception of the good life that they will want to pursue. They also know that others will not necessary share their conception of the good life. Nevertheless, those who are behind the veil of ignorance are conceived of as mutually disinterested individuals who "are not bound by moral ties to each other" (111) and nor are they "willing to have their interests sacrificed to others" (112). Thus even though the individuals who are behind the veil of ignorance do not have information about their specific ends, they have enough information to rank possible alternative agreements or principles with respect to their potential interests as abstract individuals. As Rawls explains: "They know that in general they must try to protect their liberties, widen their opportunities, and enlarge their means for promoting their aims whatever these are" (123).

The conceptual construct of the veil of ignorance provides the groundwork for Rawls' theory of justice as fairness, but in order to make it all work he has to ensure that justice *will* be relevant to those individuals who are behind the veil of ignorance. In order to make justice relevant, Rawls relies on Hume's account of the circumstances of justice. According to Hume, questions of justice arise only where there are potential conflicts of interest between contemporaries. Rawls summarizes Hume's account of the circumstances of justice as: 1) moderate scarcity; 2) moderate selfishness; and 3) relative equality (110). With respect to the first condition, Hume argues that justice is simply unnecessary where there is an abundance of any particular resource, just as it is impossible to obtain in Hobbesian conditions of extreme scarcity and mistrust where each individual is only concerned with his or her own immediate preservation. With respect to the second condition, Hume argues that justice is only relevant where there is moderate selfishness. Individuals who are purely self-interested will not follow the terms of a contract, whatever these may be, if it would be beneficial at any time to act in ways that are contrary to the contract. Similarly, the concept of justice would be completely unnecessary if every individual was entirely benevolent. The third condition of justice, and the one most important to a discussion of intergenerational relations, is that there must be approximate equality between relevant actors. Without approximate equality, there will be no possibility of obtaining a contract that will be to the mutual advantage of each party — and it is, according to Hume, only by way of such a con-

tract that the rules of justice can be defined. In Rawls' (1999) thought experiment, those who are behind the veil of ignorance know that the circumstances of justice will obtain and this means that they are (or must be) contemporaries.

This assumption, that the individuals who are behind the veil of ignorance are contemporaries, creates problems for Rawls when he turns his mind to questions of intergenerational justice. As Barry (1978) points out, the Hume/Rawls doctrine of the circumstances of justice can say nothing about injustices committed by the powerful against the weak. According to the Hume/Rawls doctrine, where there are power imbalances there is no *need* for a concept of justice because the strong alone can define the terms of any contract, and they thus have no incentive to enter into genuine contractual relations with others. This, in Barry's opinion, is what makes Hume's approach "insidious" (207). It is also precisely the situation that describes our relations with future generations: they will be affected by what we do but there is nothing that they can do to influence our decisions today. According to a mutual advantage conception of justice, there can be no justice unless there is some reason for actors to enter into contracts with each other. If one set of actors is dominant there is no reason for them to act in partnership with those who are powerless against them. Thus, from the perspective of a mutual advantage theory of justice, the very idea of intergenerational justice is incoherent. Future individuals (who do not exist) do not stand in relations of justice with present individuals. According to the Hume/Rawls doctrine, then, justice can *only* exist between contemporaries because only contemporaries can be approximately equal in terms of their power relations (Barry 1978).

This conclusion, that justice can only exist between contemporaries, *is* an implication of a mutual advantage approach to contractarian justice, but it is not a conclusion that Rawls is willing to accept. Thus when Rawls' turns his mind to questions of intergenerational justice, he emphasizes the 'justice as impartiality' components of his theory. More specifically, Rawls (1999) thinks of intergenerational justice in distributive terms and he focuses his attention on identifying a "just savings principle" (chap. 5, sec. 44). Although earlier generations are not obligated, as a matter of justice, to save resources in order to help make the lives of future individuals better, Rawls argues that each generation is required to save enough, not only to maintain the earth's capital, but to help make a contribution to the development of just background institutions. Thus

according to Rawls, "once just institutions are firmly established and all the basic liberties effectively realized, the net accumulation asked for falls to zero. At this point a society meets its duty of justice by maintaining just institutions and preserving their material base" (255). It is worth emphasizing the very Burkean assumption that Rawls is making. He assumes that each generation not only makes a contribution to the future but that each generation has obligations to other generations *because* all the goods that we seek cannot be built by one generation alone. We are, then, in an intergenerational partnership. In this case, the partnership has to do with building and sustaining justice institutions.

The problem, as Rawls' rightly points out, is that from behind the veil of ignorance there is no reason for mutually disinterested individuals who have no moral ties to others to save anything for the future. Given this dilemma, Rawls famously introduces family connections into his otherwise individualist theory of justice. As he explains, if those in the original position know themselves to be contemporaries, there is:

> no reason for them to agree to any saving whatever. Earlier generations will have either saved or not; there is nothing the parties [in the original position] can do to affect that. So to achieve a reasonable result, we assume first, that the parties represent family lines, say, who care at least about their more immediate descendants; and second, that the principle adopted must be such that they wish all earlier generations to have followed it. These constraints, together with the veil of ignorance, are to insure that any one generation looks out for all (Rawls 1999, 255).

This modification to Rawls' conceptual construct has been criticized on a number of levels. Most straightforwardly, the stipulation that individuals must care about *their* children is unnecessarily strong. As English (1977) argues, all that is required is that individuals in the original position know that there is *someone* in the next generation that they are likely to care about (93). Yet even this stipulation is unnecessary strong. As Barry (1989b) argues, there is no need to ensure that each future individual is cared for as long as the "uncared-for" not cannot be identified as a group to be targeted and discriminated against. As far as Barry (1989b) is concerned, the uncared-for "are pretty safe from that risk" (504). Indeed, they are safe from that risk precisely because future individuals, whether cared-for or uncared-for, cannot yet be specified, targeted, or identified independently of the collectivity (i.e. their generation). But it remains the case that those who are behind the veil of ignorance, if they are to be contemporaries, must have *some* mo-

tivation to think about the future. Rawls tries to motivate individuals to think about the future by connecting each abstract individual to some other (future) individual.

The problem is that this modification changes the status of Rawls' theory. As soon as he is confronted with the problem of intergenerational justice he can no longer maintain that the parties behind the veil of ignorance are mutually disinterested individuals who have no moral ties to each other. In order to get past the temporal limits of ontological individualism, Rawls assumes that individuals will see themselves as members of a collective entity that will persist through time and affect the future in one way or another. Rawls adopts the family as his collectivity of choice but he could have located the individual in any other type of collective entity. Indeed, Rawls' solution to the problem of intergenerational justice is not too far removed from Burke's view of intergenerational relations. As de-Shalit points out,

> Rawls looks for something close to a community, and at the same time different and compatible with individualistic liberalism, and this he finds in the family. He then projects a situation in which each one of us saves for his offspring. This, of course, is not precise, since the whole generation, including those who do not or do not wish to have children, ought to be represented in any decision-making concerning principles or policy. In any case, it is clear that the family is the nearest the contractarian can allow himself to approach the concept of a community (de-Shalit 1995, 105).

Overall, it is difficult to conceive of intergenerational justice in contractarian terms. Mutual advantage versions of contract theory do not work in the intergenerational realm because there is a power imbalance between generations and this means that it is never rational or mutually advantageous for any generation to make and maintain intergenerational contracts. It may be better for each generation if intergenerational contracts (such as agreements to use only limited amounts of non-renewable resources) are maintained, but it will always be rational for one generation to break any existing intergenerational contracts once they have benefited from them (de-Shalit 1995, chap. 4; Laslett 1992). The current generation is free to do as it pleases and there is nothing the future can do about it. What is more, in Hume's version of contract theory, questions of justice only arise where there are potential conflicts of interest between *contemporaries*. If one accepts this version of contract theory, the very idea of intergenerational justice is ruled out from the start (Barry 1978).

The 'justice as impartiality' version of contract theory does not fare much better than the mutual advantage version of the theory. According to a theory of justice as impartiality, resources and burdens *ought* to be fairly distributed across generations. Indeed, according to Rawls' (1999) Difference Principle, inequalities should be permitted only if the least advantaged benefit the most from any inequalities (266). It would not be just for one generation to deplete the earth of its resources and thereby deprive the future of these goods. Nor would it be just for one generation to use but then destroy the institutions that previous generations have built up over time. These inequalities cannot be justified from the perspective of a theory of justice as fairness or impartiality. But if we adopt mutually disinterested individuals as our unit of analysis there is no reason for any one generation of individuals to save for the future or refrain from depleting all of the earth's resources. When Rawls' theory of justice as impartiality leads in this direction he attempts to avoid the problem by assuming that his otherwise mutually disinterested individuals have moral ties to their own offspring.

When confronted with the problem of intergenerational justice, contractarian theorists would appear to have only two options: 1) they can maintain their focus on relations between contemporary individuals, and thereby abandon the search for a theory of *intergenerational* justice; or 2) they can, like Rawls, attempt to locate individuals in a collectivity of one type or another that will persist through time. As we will see in the next section of this chapter, those who adopt a rights-based approach to questions of intergenerational justice have come up against the same limitations.

4.2 Rights-Based Theories of Intergenerational Justice?

As with any theory of intertemporal relations that takes the individual as the primary unit of analysis, rights-based theories of intergenerational justice must confront two ontological barriers: 1) the limited time horizons of individuals; and 2) the non-existence of future individuals. Indeed, given these two barriers, there is considerable disagreement over whether future individuals can even be said to have rights. Some have argued that future individuals simply do not meet the prerequisites that would entitle them to possess rights (e.g., Beckerman 2006; Beckerman and Pasek 2001; De George 1981; Macklin 1981; Mazor 2010; Steiner 1983). Beckerman (2006)

goes so far as to argue that *all* theories of justice are rights-based theories, and if future individuals cannot be said to have rights there can be no such thing as a theory of intergenerational justice (54). This does not mean that we do not have obligations pertaining to future persons or generations, but it would mean that we cannot base our obligations to the future on the corresponding rights of future individuals.[1] Feinberg (1981) disagrees. He argues that future generations can be said to have rights because they have interests. It is not possible to identify the future interests of specific individuals but it is possible to speak in very general terms about the interests of future generations. As Barry (1989b) points out: "It is true that we do not know what the precise tastes of our remote descendants will be, but they are unlikely to include a desire for skin cancer, soil erosion, or the inundation of all low-lying areas as a result of the melting of the ice-caps" (500). If future generations have identifiable interests it is coherent to talk about granting them rights to protect their interests. As Feinberg argues:

> Five centuries from now men and women will be living where we live now. Any given one of them will have an interest in living space, fertile soil, fresh air, and the like, but that arbitrarily selected one has no other qualities we can presently envision very clearly…. Still, whoever these human beings may turn out to be, and whatever they might reasonably be expected to be like, they will have interests that we can affect, for better or worse, right now. That much we can and do know about them. The identity of the owners of these interests are now necessarily obscure, but the fact of their interest-ownership is crystal clear, and is all that is necessary to certify the coherence of present talk about their rights (Feinberg 1981, 148).

But if future individuals have rights *today*, we must also say that they have the right to life — which is *the* foundational liberal right. This, in turn, implies that future persons, who do not yet exist, have the right to exist. But this is clearly unacceptable. There is no sense in which it would be possible for *all* potential future persons to have this right fulfilled, and it certainly would not be desirable even if it were possible to fulfill this right. More importantly, as Beckerman and Pasek (2001) argue, a right can only be justified if its correlative duties and obligations are at least in principle possible to fulfill (15-16).

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[1] Thomas H. Thompson makes a similar observation, but unlike Beckerman (2006) who argues that we have obligations to the future even though future persons cannot be said to have rights, Thompson (1981) maintains that we have few obligations to nonexistent entities. "The demands of existent beings have a claim on me — wife, children, and a few others. There are some dim claims from all my global neighbors. But the hordes of future 'neighbors' will have to put up with my indifference. Future beings, being nonbeings, can have no demands to make upon me. Even if they did, they have no reality, save potential reality, sufficient to establish an emotive bond of identification with me" (201).

One solution to this problem is to say that future persons have *conditional* rights, or rights that would be contingent on them actually coming to exist. This solution has been advanced by Feinberg (1981) and Elliot (1989). De-Shalit (1995) argues that the idea of conditional rights for future individuals and generations has "definitively concluded this phase of the debate" because it means that the "present non-existence of future people [can no longer] preclude our basing obligations to future generations on rights which they have or might come to have" (116). But is this the case? As Gosseries (2008) argues, the idea of granting conditional rights to future individuals is itself incoherent. "It is doubtful...whether it is consistent to maintain simultaneously that, on the one hand, the right exists now and that, on the other hand, the existence of this right depends upon the existence of someone in the future" (453). In addition, the idea of conditional rights does not give us much leverage with respect to what it might mean, in a practical sense, to give non-entities rights claims against existing persons.

The question of whether future individuals have rights *today* is more than an existential dilemma. It is a practical and political dilemma as well because of two additional observations that are difficult to ignore. The first it that future individuals, when they come to exist, *will* have interests. The second is that what we do today *will* affect the future in one way or another. A rights-based theory of intergenerational justice would help elevate the political and moral status of future individuals and generations to a level that is equal to that of existing persons. Given this, a number of scholars have attempted to construct (often elaborate) rights-based theories of intergenerational justice. This section explores the work of Gosseries (2007, 2008), Mazor (2010), and Baier (1981). In each case, these authors confront the same limitations that were faced by those who have tried to construct contractual theories of intergenerational justice. Given the limited time horizons of individuals and the non-existence of future individuals, rights-based theorists of intergenerational justice can either retreat into the present by focusing only on relations between contemporaries, or they can adopt a collective orientation of one type or another in order to help locate the individual in time and make sense of intergenerational obligations. Like the contractarians, rights-based theorists of intergenerational justice have, at different times, adopted both of these strategies.

Axel Gosseries (2008), has developed a rights-based theory of intergenerational justice that does not rely on granting rights to future persons *today.* The basic premise of Gosseries' argument is the following: If future individuals cannot be said to have rights today, they can be said to have rights in the future when they come to exist. This idea is uncontroversial: both those who argue that future individuals should have rights *today* and those who do not, agree that future individuals *will* have rights in the future. But Gosseries' argument is innovative because, unlike others such as Beckerman and Pasek (2001) who argue that there can be no correlative obligations or duties if the rights of future individuals do not exist *now*, Gosseries (2008) argues that present people *have* obligations and duties *today* to respect the future rights of future individuals. In order to make this argument Gosseries must reject the claim that rights and duties must be contemporaneous. He makes two arguments against this claim. First, he argues that current period obligations to act in ways that are consistent with the future rights of future individuals can be justified if present period actions *will* affect future individuals. Second, any obligations to future persons can be established only if we can plausibly claim that future individuals and generations will indeed come to exist (456). Due to Parfit's (1984) non-identity problem (which is discussed below), the first condition is not straightforward, but Gosseries (2008) argues that it can be maintained in certain circumstances. The second condition cannot be guaranteed but it can be maintained as a reasonable supposition, barring some natural or human-caused global catastrophe.[2] Given these conditions, Gosseries (2008) argues that present people have obligations to act in ways that respect the future rights of future people. What is more, this is not idle philosophical speculation. As Gosseries points out, his approach has found legal expression in some statutes:

> A good example is *baby food regulation*. Imagine a can of baby food with a remote expiry date. At the time it is bottled, its future consumer is neither born, nor even conceived. It seems to me that the best account to justify legal restrictions on the type of food that can be bottled in such cans, as well as the legal option to sue for *ex post* damages imposed on the food producer in case of inappropriate content (e.g. bacteria or pieces of glass), is a reference to the future rights of the baby as a consumer (Gosseries 2008, 457).

This is an innovative solution to the challenge of establishing a theory of intergenerational justice that takes the individual as the primary unit of analysis. Gosseries' theory is innovative because it

[2] As Feinberg (1981) points out: "Every philosophical paper must begin with an unproved assumption. Mine is the assumption that there will still be a world five hundred years from now, and that it will contain human beings who are very much like us" (139).

establishes obligations that are based on individual rights, even though the rights holders (and the rights themselves) do not exist at the time the obligations must be fulfilled. Nevertheless, Gosseries' theory faces the same difficulty as the contractual theories: it can be applied only to relations between individuals who are contemporaries. In this case, they need not be contemporaries *when the obligations must be fulfilled,* but the lives of the duty-holder and the rights-holder must overlap, at least to some extent.

To understand why Gosseries' theory only applies to members of overlapping generations, it is necessary to briefly discuss Parfit's (1984) much disputed non-identity problem. Parfit argues that individuals cannot coherently claim that they have been harmed by past decisions because, in almost all cases, if different decisions had been made, those specific individuals would not exist. Thus we cannot say that a particular child would be better off if her mother had been more financially responsible before she was born. If her mother had acted differently, there is a very good chance that this particular child would never have been born. Thus we cannot say that the child, herself, was harmed by any irresponsible decisions that her mother made in the past. Although it is more complicated, there is an aggregate version of the non-identity problem. We cannot say that younger generations would be better off if 'we' had decided in the mid-20th century to actively conserve rather than continue to deplete carbon-producing natural resources. If we had made different decisions in the past, those individuals who make up today's younger generations would not exist. Given this, members of today's younger generations cannot claim that they, as individuals, were harmed by our past decisions. This conclusion holds for all those lives that are worth living, even those that are only barely worth living.[3]

If we accept the validity of the non-identity problem, Gosseries' (2008) non-contemporaneous rights theory can impose obligations only on those individuals whose lives will, at least to some extent, overlap with those future individuals who might be harmed. If their lives do not overlap, the duty-holder cannot be held to account when the rights-holder makes a claim. More importantly, rights-holders can only claim to have been harmed by actions that predate their conception if these actions are outside scope of the non-identity problem. For those

[3] There is an extensive body of literature on possible solutions to Parfit's non-identity problem. See, for example, Kobayashi (1999), Page (1999), Tremmel (2009). Parfit (1986) also addresses some of the possible solutions and criticisms of his theory.

actions that are within the scope of the non-identity problem, individuals can only be said to be affected by actions that occur *after* they have been conceived.

The difficulty is that as we look further and further into the past, the scope of the non-identity problem becomes more and more inclusive. Thus it might be reasonable to argue that the identity of the baby who is harmed by the can of tainted baby food was not affected by the actions of the company that produced the food several months before she was conceived. It is *less* plausible to argue that the identity of any specific member of today's younger generations was not determined, in one way or another, by our society's decision to continue to extract and use non-renewable resources at an ever increasing rate. The decision to adopt a depletion policy affects the lives of each of us in countless ways. It affects where we live, how we travel, where we travel, what we eat, how long we are likely to live, what sicknesses we are likely to get, where we work, who we work with, who we meet, and of course, who we mate with. This can be said for any relatively recent decision or development that has impacts that are sufficiently far-reaching or interconnected; it also applies to any decision (how ever seemingly insignificant) that occurred long enough ago.

If we accept the non-identity problem as valid, then the scope of harm that can be done to particular individuals is temporally limited to relations between individuals whose lives overlap, at least to some extent. If we go back into the past far enough, nearly any action, however seemingly insignificant, could have been a determining factor with respect to the identities of particular individuals who exist today. But if we focus our attention on individuals whose lives overlap, at least to some extent, it is possible to hold present individuals to account for actions adopted in the past that *continue* to affect those who were born later, even though those individuals might not have been born had different actions been taken. Based on this logic, Gosseries (2008) argues that there is a 'complete-life-obligation' to assess the continuing impacts of our actions, and not to isolate and dismiss our obligations by failing to account for what we did before our children were born — or more generally, before members of the younger generations were born. Thus the mother in the previous example has an obligation to 'catch up' and to compensate for making irresponsible financial decisions in the past if those decisions continue to negatively affect her daughter's life *today*. In a general sense, all those who were involved in making bad decisions

that continue to have to have impacts *today* on younger generations have an obligation to 'catch-up' by compensating, in one way or another, for past decisions that continue to have negative impacts on younger generations today. With this theory, Gosseries successfully constructs a rights-based theory of justice that avoids the worst implications of the non-identity problem, but this theory cannot be extended to relations between non-overlapping generations. Because of the non-identity problem, Gosseries restricts his attention to relations between members of different generations who are (or will be) contemporaries.

Gosseries recognizes that a theory of intergenerational relations that applies only to relations between contemporaries would appear to have only limited application when it comes to many of our most pressing long-term problems — such as climate change and the storage of nuclear waste — because these are problems that involve relations between non-overlapping generations. In order to address this problem, Gosseries (2008) proposes a transitive solution, in which members of older generations (G1) owe obligations to members of the next generation (G2), who owe obligations to the next generation (G3), and so on. Thus "with a chain of obligations, it still remains possible to take into consideration the interests of *remote* future generations (i.e. those far beyond the overlap)" (462). But establishing a 'chain of obligations' is not the same thing as saying that we have obligations *to* remote generations. We have obligations to the next generation, and the next generation has obligations to the following one, but the best we can do is "take into consideration the interests of *remote* future generations" — we have no obligations of duty to protect remote generations because the non-identity problem prevents us from affecting or harming future individuals in any straightforward way.

I do not wish to challenge the viability of Gosseries' (2008) transitive strategy: it certainly *should* encourage us to take into consideration the interests of remote future generations. But it is worth emphasizing that this theory, although sensitive to intergenerational issues, can only establish rights-based obligations between individuals who are (or will be) contemporaries. The theory is restricted in this way *because* it takes the individual as the primary unit of analysis. The problem is that relations between individuals are constrained by their limited lifespans. This observation is at the root of Parfit's (1984) perplexing non-identity problem. Indeed, the limited relevance of the individual *in time* restricts the temporal scope of any theory that is based on the

rights-claims and duties of individuals, just as it restricts the scope of theories based on contractual relations between individuals.

Gosseries (2007) has also proposed liberal theory of transgenerational relations. In this case, instead of restricting the temporal scope of intergenerational obligations by focusing on the individual as the primary unit of analysis, Gosseries explicitly locates individuals within multigenerational collective entities in order to make sense of the obligations that individuals have to account for the past. In this article, Gosseries is interested in what he calls *trans*generational obligations, or those obligations that descendants of members of one group have to the descendants of another group of individuals. In order to explore this problem systematically, he constructs a stylized case involving two countries, one of which has borrowed money from the other at a particular moment in time. The question is the following: On what grounds do the descendants of the borrower country have obligations to repay the loan to descendants of the lenders? Just to be clear, this scenario involves relations between non-overlapping generations: the descendant generations of borrowers and lenders do not overlap in time with the borrowers and lenders themselves.

Gosseries (2007) argues that there are, in general, two possible grounds for demanding repayment: consent and enrichment. The first is ruled out in the transgenerational case because this would require gaining the consent of future individuals at the time a loan is procured, and it is clear that "no currently existing arrangement can be said to grant the consent of future people" (104). The second ground for demanding repayment — enrichment — is, at least potentially, applicable to transgenerational obligations. Gosseries develops a distributive theory of justice that would hold the descendants of borrowers responsible for a portion of the payments due *if* those individuals can be said to have benefited in some way from the funds their forebears borrowed (117).

This theory is of interest because it is a liberal theory of, in this case, transgenerational obligations: it is focused on relations between non-overlapping generations of individuals, and it is concerned with whether or not *individuals* have gained or lost from the actions of their forebears. But it is worth emphasizing that this theory explicitly relies on assumptions about the relevance of multigenerational *collective* entities. The question that Gosseries (2007) begins with

assumes that individuals *are* members of such entities: Should the descendants of separate nations honor the contracts that their forebears made with each other? His solution also relies on assumptions about the relevance of multigenerational collective entities. Gosseries (2007) argues that present members of one group (or nation) can be obligated to present members of another group (or nation) only if it can be demonstrated that existing individuals have benefited from the actions of previous members of *their* multigenerational collective entity. Thus although this theory of transgenerational obligations *runs through* individuals, it nevertheless relies on observations about the situatedness of individuals in time *and* in collective entities. Gosseries (2007) succeeds in building a liberal theory of *transgenerational* justice, but in order to do so he relies on a connectionist account of *intergenerational* relations in which each individual is, at least in some respects, shaped by his or her membership in a multigenerational collective entity.

Like Gosseries (2007, 2008), Mazor (2010) has developed a theory of intergenerational justice that he believes is consistent with a version of liberalism that takes the individual as the primary ontological entity. Using a hypothetical scenario developed by Ackerman (1980), Mazor begins by considering a stylized case of relations between only two generations of individuals. In this set-up, there are two individuals in each generation and each has an equal claim to a naturally occurring, labour free, non-renewable, infinitely useful resource called "mana." Mazor (2010) argues that there is an obligation for each member of the first generation to conserve an equal share of mana for each individual of the next generation. More specifically, responsible members of the first generation (i.e. those who conserve enough mana to meet their obligations to the next generation when these individuals appear) can legitimately force potentially profligate members of the same generation to conserve for the next generation. Mazor argues that this obligation exists because there is a "residual liability" on the part of each individual to conserve enough mana to pass on equal shares to individuals in the next generation. This means that if one individual from the first generation fails to live up to her obligations, the other member of that generation has to compensate for her negligence. Given this, there is an obligation that individual members of the same generation *owe to each other* to conserve for the next generation. Like Gosseries (2008), Mazor (2010) argues that these contemporary obligations can be extended to

the more realistic case of resource conservation over multiple generations if it is recognized that each generation overlaps with the previous one and with the next and so on (402 - 407).

Mazor's theory is of interest because it comes up against the same limitations as other theories of intergenerational justice that take the individual as the primary unit of analysis. First, his theory relies on assumptions about the underlying connections that individuals have to each other, both *in time* and *through time*. Second, he focuses his attention on relations between contemporaries, and explores the obligations that contemporaries have to each other with respect to future individuals.

With respect to the first observation, Mazor's (2010) argument is based on two primary claims, neither of which can be justified only with reference to a liberal theory that takes the individual as the primary ontological entity. The first claim is that mana be shared equally, not only between individuals but between generations such that each individual (upon coming into existence) is furnished with an equal share of the initial resource (285). The second claim is that there is a common underlying obligation that each member of the current generation has to other members of the same generation. Mazor illustrates this second claim by considering a familiar but contrary example: "if D and E owe some resource to C, and E pays his debt but D does not pay hers, E is not generally seen as being on the hook for D's debt to C" (394). The reason for this is that, at least in this case, there is no underlying common obligation between D and E. If, however, there is a common underlying obligation between the two, D might very well be on the hook if E does not pay her debts to C. Mazor points out that this would be the case if, for example, D and E were both members of a collective entity, such as a corporation, that incurred the debt (395). He does not pursue this line of thought because he is interested in developing a theory of intergenerational justice that takes the individual as the primary unit of analysis. Instead, he argues that it is possible for separate individuals "who are not members of any collectivity entity" to still have a common underlying obligation (396, note 39). But is this the case?

It is difficult to understand how individuals could have a *common* obligation without there being some sort of connection — however weak — between those individuals. Indeed, Mazor's own example reveals as much. Like Rawls (1999), Mazor (2010) turns to the family in order to better understand intergenerational relations: "if E and D are C's parents, they each have

an obligation to transfer sufficient resources to C so that C has a certain standard of living…. If D shirks her parental duty, the legal burden that E faces will increase" (396). True enough. But this is not a good example of a common underlying obligation between two unaffiliated individuals. Indeed, in this case, we can say precisely what the connection between E and D consisted of!

In the more abstract case of relations between two strangers who happen to be members of the same generation, Mazor seems to assume that there is an analogous, although perhaps weaker connection between these individuals. This becomes evident when we more closely examine Mazor's first claim about the fair distribution of resources. Recall that in Hume's account of justice there is no common underlying obligation between individuals to share resources equally. According to Hume, justice is what rational and approximately equal, self-interested and autonomous individuals are willing to agree to in circumstances of moderate scarcity. As Barry (1978) points out, Hume's theory says nothing about the initial distribution of resources. In order to address this shortcoming, Barry proposes a supplementary account of justice as equal opportunity, in which case each individual would have equal access to existing natural resources (242 - 244). But on what grounds can this claim be justified? In Hume's account, self-interested individuals are free to use as many resources as they can get their hands on, subject only to whatever agreements they have made with others for their mutual advantage.

By contrast, any claim, like Mazor's (2010), that natural resources be shared equally must be based on some underlying claim about our common humanity. It is worth noting that the expectation that resources be conserved and shared among existing and future individuals is not extended to include the claims (or possible claims) of any other entities such as other species. Instead this claim appeals to the equal value and worth of individuals who are or will be members of the collective human enterprise. It is an open question as to whether or not obligations to others that are based on a shared sense of our common humanity is consistent with a version of liberalism that takes the individual as the primary ontological entity. Nevertheless, it is clear that

some connection between individuals is necessary before those individuals can be said to have an underlying common obligation to each other or anyone else.[4]

There is another reason to be skeptical of Mazor's claim that he has successfully developed a theory of *intergenerational* justice that takes the individual as the primary unit of analysis. In addition to adopting assumptions about the underlying connections that individuals have to each other, both *in time* and *through time*, Mazor's theory is only applicable to intergenerational relations that involve contemporaries. He bases his theory on obligations that contemporaries *have to each other* to conserve natural resources *for* future individuals (381). De-Shalit (1995) has criticized this type of approach on normative grounds. He argues that to say we have obligations *with respect* to future people is a much weaker claim than to say we have obligations to future people or generations. It is a weaker claim because questions about *to whom* an obligation is owed are no less important than questions about the *content of* an obligation (i.e. what is owed) (107). A *with respect to* obligation is weaker because it does not give those who ought to benefit from an obligation standing in the relationship that establishes the obligation. According to this approach, members of future generations are beneficiaries of a sort of *collateral advantage* — they are incidental beneficiaries of agreements forged for the mutual advantage of others. The normative problem with this is that it does not treat all individuals as morally equivalent regardless of their temporal location — a stipulation that ought to be a part of any consistent theory of liberalism (see, e.g., Rawls 1999) and *is* a part of Mazor's (2010) initial justification for an equal distribution of natural resources. As de-Shalit (1995) points out: "Unless a good reason is given [for] why contemporaries count more than future people, obligations to contemporaries in

[4] To illustrate this point further it is worth considering a thought experiment developed by Nozick (1974) that is used to illustrate the nature of relations between ontologically separate individuals. Nozick imagines a group of individuals who have each washed up on separate islands. These individuals can send goods to each other and communicate by radio but they have no means of traveling between islands. In other words, they are individuals who can interact but whose spheres of autonomy are perfectly preserved. Nozick argues that in these circumstances, these individuals have no obligations of duty to help each other, even if one lives on an abundantly productive island and another has little or no means of sustenance. For many readers, this conclusion just does not seem right. The reason it does not seem right is that most of us *do* believe in an underlying common obligation to other human beings that is based on a sense of our common humanity. This sense of obligation is often especially strong when other human beings are vulnerable and in need (e.g., Goodin 1985). By contrast, when individuals are conceived of as ontologically separate entities, as they are in Nozick's set-up, there is no common underlying obligation. This suggests that Mazor (2010) cannot have it both ways: either we are dealing with autonomous individuals who have no connections to each other, in which case it is hard to see how there can be relations of duty or justice derived from anything other than a contract for mutual benefit; or, we are dealing with individuals who are members of some collective entity (however loosely defined), in which case it is possible to speak in terms of an underlying common obligation to each other.

respect of future people are different from obligations that are owed directly to future people" (107).

In addition, *with respect to* obligations leave future people vulnerable simply because the obligations from which they are expected to benefit are owed to someone else. This will be a problem in any situation where there are conflicts of interest between existing individuals and future generations. If present people give their own concerns priority, the concerns of the future are likely to be ignored, diminished or undervalued (de-Shalit 1995, 107). The same thing is likely to happen when sufficient foresight is lacking. Take, for example, the difficult case of an "environmental time bomb" in which the destruction of natural resources does not take place until many generations have passed. Mazor (2010) insists that his theory is applicable even in this case. "Think of the point when the 'bomb explodes' and then work backwards through the chain of overlapping generations, insisting that each generation have a share equal to its predecessor. It becomes clear that the individuals who carry out the policy will face much greater natural resource claims from the members of the next generation" (405-406, note 57).

I do not wish to dispute whether or not this claim can be sustained within the confines of Mazor's theory, in which the number of individuals in each generation is known and where there are no complicating factors such as general uncertainty, equivalent or compensatory resources, or technological developments. In the real world, in order for the younger generation to make legitimate claims against members of the older generation, it would be necessary (at minimum) to know in advance when the time bomb is going to go off, how much of a specific resource is going to be destroyed, and how many future people there will be in each intervening generation. Otherwise it seems unlikely that members of any single generation could successfully hold each other liable for claims against them that *will* be made by the next generation in compensation for some event that might or might not happen at some (as yet unspecified) point in the far future. More generally, given these considerations, it does not seem entirely adequate to build a theory of intergenerational justice around a theory of obligations that current people owe to each other to conserve natural resources (or anything else) *for* future people. Like Gosseries' (2008) theory of *future-rights-for-future-people,* Mazor's (2010) approach does not solve the problems associated with building a theory of intergenerational justice that takes the individual as the primary

ontological entity; instead, Mazor's theory simply focuses our attention on relations between individuals whose lives will at some point overlap.

Unlike Gosseries (2007, 2008) and Mazor (2010), Annette Baier (1981) has developed a rights-based theory of intergenerational justice that *explicitly* relies on a Burkean account of a multigenerational collective entity.[5] Her argument begins with a familiar proposition: each generation is obligated "to try to leave things no worse than they found them" (180). But Baier is not merely thinking of the earth's natural capital. She argues that we also have an obligation to preserve the cultural, political, and social goods that we have inherited from the past. Future generations have a *right* to enjoy these goods, and we have a correlative *duty* not to destroy (or diminish them in any significant way), because our forebears did not create them just for *us* but rather for *all* future generations. As Baier explains, "when past generations conserved or saved deliberately for the sake of future generations (in creating parks, writing and fighting for constitutions) there is no reason to think that it was for us in particular, but rather that it was done on the assumption that we would pass on the inheritance" (180). Thus if past generations have built great institutions, such as art galleries, libraries, or universities, *for* future generations it is unjust for one generation to dismantle or destroy these institutions and thereby deprive future generations of their *right* to benefit from them. As Baier explains: "Just as we have no *right* to use up all scarce resources in our generation for our own luxury or whim, but rather, an obligation to renew what we use, to pass on what we received, so we have no right to decree the ending of an enterprise in which we are latecomers" (178).[6] Baier's approach is of interest to our current discussion because it is a rights-based theory that does not take the individual as the primary (or only) unit

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[5] It is worth pointing out that although she consciously bases her account of intergenerational relations on Burke's concept of an intergenerational partnership, Baier (1981) adopts a universalistic conception of a multigenerational collective entity. In her account, this entity is not (necessarily) circumscribed by race, nationality, culture, or any other current period affiliation. As she says: "the cross-temporal moral community in which one finds oneself is not restricted to those who share one's own way of life, but extends to all those with whom one stands, directly or indirectly, in dependency or interdependency relations…. Thus the tie linking 'those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are yet to be born' is a cross-cultural one and brings it about that (at least) no one human is alien to me" (179).

[6] Jana Thompson (2009) has developed a similar theory of intergenerational obligations. Like Baier (1981), Thompson argues that the obligations that individuals have to others who are not contemporaries can only be made sense of if we embrace the notion of a multigenerational collective entity. Thompson (2009) also points out that when we do things *for* the future we rarely have a particular generation in mind. If this is the case, "an effort to appreciate [what has been received from the past] should bring with it an acknowledgement that it is not just meant for us, and that our failure to appreciate it should not necessarily determine its fate" (42).

of analysis. Like Rawls (1999), Gosseries (2007), and Mazor (2010), Baier (1981) finds it is necessary to adopt a collective orientation in order to make sense of intergenerational rights and obligations.

If Baier's (1981) approach does not take the individual as the primary unit of analysis, does this mean that it should be understood as a theory of collective rights? She *is* interested in protecting the rights of future individuals to enjoy goods that are at least equivalent to those that we have inherited; but the rights that she talks about are those of future *generations* as collectivities, and they are rights that future individuals derive from their membership within multigenerational collectivities. The idea that future generations might have rights *as collectivities* is not unfamiliar. As Tremmel (2009) points out, the legal clauses contained in national constitutions and international laws, "speak of 'future generations', thereby referring to groups of people instead of individuals" (61). But what would it mean to say that future generations have rights *as collectivities*?

In a report that was commissioned by the United Nations in 1989, Edith Brown-Weiss, makes the argument that all generations — our own and all future generations together — have what she calls "planetary rights". She explains that these "are not rights possessed by individuals. Rather they are generational rights, which can only usefully be conceived at the group level" (96). But while these are *group rights* possessed by generations at each moment in time, they are *liberal rights* in another sense because they are based on rights-claims that contemporary individuals have (or might have) against each other. As Brown-Weiss explains:

> These rights are associated with corresponding duties, which members of the present generation have toward other members of the same generation. At this stage, they could be viewed as individual rights in the sense that there are identifiable interests of individuals that the rights protect. However, the remedies for violations of these rights will often benefit the rest of the generation, not only the individual, and in this sense they may be said to retain their character as group rights (Brown-Weiss 1989, 96).

Thus although Brown-Weiss frames her argument in terms of a group-based theory of generational rights, she does not seek to establish a theory of intergenerational obligations. Instead, like Gosseries (2008) and Mazor (2010), Brown-Weiss (1989) attempts to protect the rights of future generations by focusing on the obligations that contemporary individuals have to each other.

But perhaps we should think about the rights of future generations as collective rights? It is not that any one future individual's interest in clean air or drinkable water is not, in principle, enough to ground our obligations to avoid actions that will pollute the air and water; it is rather that when viewed from the perspective of the individual it is not at all clear that we have an obligation *to that individual*. As we have discussed, it is impossible to identify future persons because they are abstract individuals from our perspective in time, and our actions today will affect the identities of those specific individuals who come to exist in the future. But if we shift our attention from individuals to future generations *as collectivities*, their collective interests will be both easier to identify and quite clearly significant enough to justify imposing correlative obligations and duties on us. This is an avenue that might be worth pursuing if it helped us avoid some of the difficulties associated with the limited relevance of the individual in time.

Thinking along the lines of granting collective rights to future generations, scholars such as Kobayashi (1999) and Page (1999) have proposed *collectivist* solutions to Parfit's (1984) non-identity problem. Kobayashi (1999) argues that what we need is a *holistic* perspective that makes direct comparisons between whole collectivities of potential individuals. Thus we should not be thinking about whether a particular individual would have been better off if her mother had been more fiscally responsible when she was younger. We should, instead be thinking in *holistic* terms about whether the 'child of that mother' — the 'child' in the abstract sense — would have been better off if her mother had been more fiscally responsible. Because of the non-identity problem, the specific child who comes to exist could not be said to have been made worse off by her mother's past actions; but we can say that the *children* of that mother (whichever individuals actually come to exist) would have been better off if she had been more fiscally responsible. The critical insight here involves a shift in perspective from an individualist viewpoint to what Kobayashi calls a holistic one. When the non-identity problem is viewed from a holistic perspective, it is possible to make comparisons between counterfactual versions of the abstract individual, even though different individuals would be produced (and affected) in each possible scenario.

Kobayashi's (1999) *holistic* solution to Parfit's (1984) non-identity problem also helps us think through the nature of our relations to future generations. Page (1999), for example, has adopted a broadly similar approach in which future *generations* — as opposed to future individu-

als — are conceived of as moral entities that might be benefited or harmed. On this basis, according to Page (1999), Parfit's depletion policy example — in which natural resources are depleted in the current period as opposed to being conserved — "is objectionable in virtue of harming the interests of future collectivities" (119). What makes it objectionable is not that specific individuals would be made worse off than they would otherwise have been, but that each generation (as a collective entity with moral standing) would be made worse off than it otherwise would have been. It makes sense to make comparisons between counterfactual generations in this way — and to claim that the generation of, say, 2100 will be affected by our actions — because we are comparing two potential states of the same entity, even though this entity will be made up of different individuals if we adopt a conservation agenda as opposed to a depletion policy.[7] If this is the case, it may be useful to talk about granting future generations rights as *collective entities* with their own moral standing.

It is worth pointing out that familiar and well justified concerns about balancing the rights of individuals with the rights and wellbeing of the collectivity are not relevant when it comes to granting collective rights to future generations. It is possible to preserve the individual as the ultimate source of moral value *and* grant future generations a moral status of their own *as collectivities*. This approach is consistent with a philosophy of moral individualism because the moral status of future individuals cannot be violated. As abstract or potential individuals they cannot be harmed for the benefit of the community (or for any other reason). Future individuals are, in a sense, guarded by time's protective shield: they will only become vulnerable — and thus subjects of moral concern — when (and if) they come to exist. Until that time it is morally permissible to make decisions about the welfare and rights of future generations as collectivities without worrying about conflicts between the rights of (future) individuals and the rights (or wellbeing) of their collectivities.

Still, it is not obvious what granting rights to future generations, as collectivities, would entail. It is relatively clear, as Tremmel (2009) points out, that these would not be 'group rights'

[7] Gosseries (2008) does not think that a collective approach will solve the non-identity problem: "Although I cannot show it here, I suspect that — on top of the general problem that moral individualists may have with collective rights — this avenue itself may be subject to the non-identity problem once we ask ourselves 'which' community can be said to be harmed" (461, note 58). This is an interesting thought but it misses the mark. When we talk about future generations as collectivities we are not talking about the rights of particular communities which may or may not come to exist (or persist in time) depending on our actions today. Instead, we are talking about the collective rights of whole generations which we know will exist barring a (natural or human caused) global catastrophe.

that would give members of a specific group rights to be treated differently from non-members. Nor would a theory of collective rights for future generations solve the problems associated with granting rights to non-entities. We can be fairly sure that future generations *will* exist, but granting them collective rights would require a persuasive explanation of what it means for a non-entity (such as a future generation) to have a legitimate claim against an existing entity (such as an individual or group). Nor would a theory of collective rights for future generations solve the problems associated with making future rights actionable (see, e.g., Gosseries 2008, 464-468). Nevertheless it is worth thinking about whether rights can be said to inhere to future generations *as collectivities* and what this would entail. Indeed, many people intuitively value future generations as collectivities, simply because we cannot identity specific future individuals from our station in time.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored some of the challenges associated with theories of intergenerational justice that start with the individual as the primary unit of analysis. Throughout the discussion, I have tried to maintain a distinction between moral individualism and ontological individualism. It is difficult to develop general theories of intergenerational justice that take the individual as the primary ontological entity because of the limited relevance of the individual in time. Indeed, theorists of intergenerational justice have typically confronted this challenge in one of two ways: they either: 1) focus their attention on the obligations that contemporaries have to each other with respect to future-others; or 2) they adopt a collective orientation of one type or another in order to establish workable theories of intergenerational obligations.

Given the limited relevance of the individual in time, theories that start with a model of the individual as a situated, social, cultural, and collectively-oriented being are intuitively appealing. Situated individuals are capable of making sense of intergenerational relations and obligations *because* they are connected to collective entities (of one type or another) that have past, present, and future members who have an equivalent moral status to their own. By contrast, when individuals are viewed as ontologically separate and un-situated entities, they will have few reasons to think past their own temporal horizons. This observation suggests that it is necessary to adopt some form of ontological collectivism in order to make sense of relations and obli-

gations that extend past the limited time horizons of individuals. Such an approach, however, does not necessarily imply that we must abandon a liberal theory of moral individualism in order to make sense of intergenerational relations. Baier (1981), de-Shalit (1995), Thompson (2002, 2009) and others have developed theories of justice that conceive of intergenerational relations in collective terms while at the same time preserving the primary moral status of individuals.

Nevertheless, as explained in Chapter 1, there are a number of reasons why an adequate theory of intergenerational justice (if we had one) would not be enough to fully specify our intergenerational relations and obligations. Indeed, theories of justice can only take us so far. Intergenerational issues, like all issues that involve conflicts of interest and claims on limited resources, raise questions of politics in addition to questions of justice. When there are conflicts between competing principles of justice, political judgements must be made about which rights, obligations, or duties of justice ought to be given priority over others. Furthermore, *doing* what justice requires demands more than a theory of intergenerational justice: we also need an effective means of coordinating collective actions so that long-term goals, objectives, and duty-based obligations can be fulfilled. Lastly, and relatedly, in addition to protecting the future from the present, individuals often want to do more for the future than what justice would require. Theories of justice, by definition, exclude supererogatory desires and obligations, but many individuals are motivated by precisely these types of concerns. As individuals we strive to provide our children with more than the bare essentials of life. We aim to change social norms, reform political institutions, make cultural contributions and scientific discoveries that we believe will benefit the future. In general, many of us want to make the world into a better place than the one that we found when we arrived. Theories of intergenerational relations should embrace these motivations, not exclude them from consideration. As such, we need to think not only about intergenerational justice, but about how individual motivations to act in future-oriented ways can be scaled-up and turned into farsighted and effective collective actions. In the remainder of this dissertation, I argue that democracy can help preserve the moral autonomy of individuals while at the same time locating the individual in the sort of collective entity that can help us make sense of intergenerational relations and obligations.

Chapter 5

Democratic Theory and Temporality

Introduction

A classical dilemma in political theory asks whether individuals can remain free while at the same time being members of societies that impose laws that regulate the behavior of individuals. This, of course, is the dilemma that Rousseau (1762) set out to solve: "The problem is to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before" (191).

The classical solution to this dilemma is to argue that each individual can enter into society, obey its laws, and remain as free as before, if he or she is a member of a democratic society and is thus also an author of those laws. Robert Wolff (1970) nicely summarizes the basic tenets of this claim: "Democracy attempts a natural extension of the duty of autonomy to the realm of collective action. Just as the truly responsible man gives laws to himself, and thereby binds himself to what he conceives to be right, so a society of responsible men can collectively bind themselves to laws they have together judged to be right" (22). Wolff is one of only a few political theorists who remains deeply skeptical about the viability and legitimacy of this approach — an approach that has played a role in nearly all versions of democratic theory from Aristotle, to Rousseau, to Mill, to Arendt, to Habermas (e.g., Held 2006).

In the two previous chapters, I have argued that this classical dilemma also asserts itself in the realm of intergenerational relations. The problem, in this case, has to do with finding a place for the individual in the intergenerational collective entity (or entities) that each is a part of for only a limited period of time. As Laslett (1992) has observed: "What is wanted is a relationship between generations that is individual as well as social, one that passes through mortal individuals rather than through deathless collectivities" (41). In this context, as in the others, democracy recommends itself as a solution to the problem of preserving (to a certain extent) individual agency and freedom in the realm of collective action. It is possible to preserve the concept of a (relatively) autonomous individual, while at the same time meaningfully situating the individual in a temporal context, if individuals are conceptualized as members of intergenerational collectivities that they themselves have helped define and guide.

There are scholars who have applied democratic theory to questions of intergenerational relations, but none, as far as I am aware, has suggested using democratic theory as a means of integrating the individual into a self-defined and temporally enduring collective entity. As we saw in Chapter 3, Jefferson (1789) used democratic theory to help *separate* each political generation from the next; but he did not think of democracy as a means of integrating individuals into meaningful intergenerational collective entities. De-Shalit (1995) has developed a communitarian theory of intergenerational justice that has some important democratic elements. In his account, communities are held together and defined by their cultural interactions and moral similarities.[1] But he argues that we should not think of communities as fixed entities. Instead, de-Shalit argues that moral similarities and shared cultures must be actively forged, continually re-forged, and thus sustained (or not) through on-going processes of rational reflection, moral and political debate, and free association (17). Nevertheless, de-Shalit, like all communitarians, takes existing communities as his starting point, and he does not explain why or how individuals should come to see themselves as members of intergenerational communities in the first place.

[1] De-Shalit (1995) notes that communities have traditionally been thought of as having (at least) three, not two, defining features: cultural interaction, moral similarity, *and* daily interactions between members. This last feature rules out communities that extend across large geographic areas or through time. De-Shalit points out that most concepts of community in modern complex societies involve members who do not directly interact with each other on a daily basis, but who nevertheless feel a part of a single community or political entity (16).

In this chapter, I argue that democracy can help integrate morally autonomous individuals into coherent and identifiable intergenerational collective entities. There are three components to this argument. The first section of the chapter argues that the very act of making (or having to make) collective decisions together in democratic ways can help forge otherwise unaffiliated individuals into identifiable collectivities — entities that can help make sense of the individual *in time*. The second section argues that democracy makes it possible for individuals and collectivities to actively define their own relations to the future and impose upon themselves future-oriented obligations. The third section argues that democracy is a means of 'scaling-up' the responsibility that (many) individuals already feel they have to act in future-oriented ways. It does so by giving individuals meaningful roles to play in shaping the sort of entities that can be held *collectively* responsible and thus responsible for their actions over time.

5.1 Democratic Connections

In this section I present two hypotheses. The first hypothesis is that the very act of making (or having to make) collective decisions together in democratic ways can help bring otherwise unaffiliated individuals together into identifiable collective entities. The second hypothesis is that these 'democratic connections' can, in turn, help situate individuals *in time* by connecting them to self-defined and self-directed collective entities that are capable of acting over the long-term and bearing responsibility for their actions. It is worth pointing out, at the outset, that the first hypothesis says nothing about whether individuals will come to develop *affective* attachments to one another. Instead, the claim is that by engaging in democratic decision-making processes, individuals will come to *recognize* themselves as members of whatever entity has made a collective decision.

The idea that democracy can help bring individuals together into identifiable collective entities is not unfamiliar. It is, for example, a foundational component of Arendt's (1958) account of a democratic society. As Warner (2002) observes, Arendt's "ideal of political life is a creative fashioning of a common world" (59). For Arendt it is the *act* of engaging in political activity —

of making collective decisions together — that forms a common world between individual political actors. Indeed this idea, in one form or another, forms the essence of the republican tradition all along the way from Aristotle to Machiavelli to Rousseau to Arendt, and through to the current period. Indeed, it is difficult to interpret republicanism as anything other than the active process of "making worlds in common." At the same time, membership in a republican collectivity is often thought to pre-date the political activity necessary to shape and protect the republic (e.g., Held 2006).

More recently, the idea that political structures and procedures might help *forge* identifiable collective entities out of the raw material of previously unaffiliated individuals and groups, has found expression in the theory of constitutional patriotism (e.g., Cronin 2003; Habermas 2003; Ingram 1996). This theory states that the institutions of a democratic state, its constitutional rules, its procedures, and the values that underpin these arrangements can become the locus of a collective identity that does not presuppose any pre-political cultural affiliations, commonalities, or commitments between individuals (Cronin 2003, 1). As Habermas (2003) puts it, this is a form of "solidarity between strangers" that is produced when previously unaffiliated individuals and groups work together to create and maintain a common state that is recognized as legitimate, fair, and in the mutual interests of all. Or as Ingram (1996) puts it, according to the theory of constitutional patriotism "the state itself is the source of its own unity" (2). These scholars argue that in a post-traditional era, collective identities cannot be imposed from without or 'ascribed' to individuals by others, by history, or through reference to existing ethnic, cultural, or nationalist affiliations; instead, identifiable collective identities in a post-traditional era are 'achieved' in the sense that they are (or can be) consciously and collectively forged through processes of creating and maintaining just and mutually recognized political institutions (Habermas 1990, 495). The success of these processes of identity formation depend less on the composition of pre-political groups, on their size, diversity, or previous affiliations, and more on "whether

participants believe that [their] activities are truly cooperative and mutually beneficial" (Cronin 2003, 14).

According to the theory of constitutional patriotism, democratic institutions and procedures can generate among individuals a shared sense of their membership in the same collective entity. It is however, useful to make a conceptual distinction between the actual *activities* involved in making collective decisions and the *institutions* or *procedures* that make these activities possible. The emphasis in the literature on constitutional patriotism tends to be on the latter as opposed to the former. As Ingram (1996) says, "a post-national identity is a form of consciousness of *institutional* belonging and obligation that comes from identification with a particular political project of modern state-building" (16). The emphasis in this quote is on the state — and the institutions of the state — and not on the identity generating functions of on-going decision-making activities within legitimate institutional arrangements. At other times, democratic values or principles are emphasized. As Cronin (2003) explains: "If constitutional patriotism is to provide a viable alternative form of political identification to chauvinistic nationalism, it must be shown that allegiance to democratic principles can foster forms of collective identity that are capable of commanding allegiance while nevertheless remaining open to transformation in response to the demands of universalistic norms of justice" (2).

In my opinion, greater emphasis should be placed on the *activity* of making collective decisions together in democratic ways. My hypothesis is the following: While sufficiently robust democratic institutions can provide conditions that are conducive to the development of post-traditional collective identities, it is the actual activity of making decisions collectively that generates (or can generate) a shared sense of being part of an identifiable collective entity. This hypothesis casts the theory of constitutional patriotism in much more general terms. This is not just about forging *patriotic* identities out of the raw material of previously unaffiliated groups or in-

dividuals; there is also a sense in which an identifiable collective entity may be formed every time a collective decision is made in sufficiently democratic ways.[2]

To be sure, the nature, purpose, and duration of a democratically forged collective entity will likely depend on the nature of the decision as well as the extent or reach of the institution (or set of institutions) in which it is made. For example, the collective entity that may be formed when a jury makes a decision will be *ad hoc* and constrained to that decision. That is to say, a jury functions as a collective entity and may be conceived as one (by both members and observers) only with respect to the specific decisions that it makes. By contrast, when a set of individuals or groups are involved in iterative, on-going collective decision-making processes on a range of public issues at the local, regional, state, or supra-state level, the collective entities that may be formed by way of these activities will not be *ad hoc* or temporary, but might instead take on a more enduring nature. In theory, the identity generating power of democratic activity might be evidenced at any institutional level, and it should apply equally to all types of collective decisions. It might be observed at the microlevel, as in a sports club, a faculty association, a labour union, or a jury. It may be observed at the level of the state, as theorists of constitutional patriotism argue. At the furthest extreme (if it can be imagined) the very act of making (or having to make) a decision that affects the whole globe could help forge a global collective entity — at

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[2] This hypothesis might seem to run contrary to recent findings in political psychology that identify polarizing effects associated with certain types of collective decision-making procedures. Cass Sunstein (2002, 2007), for example, has shown that deliberation can amplify the ideological tendencies of individuals and groups and thereby polarize political societies more generally. While these are important findings, Sunstein's experiments involve homogenous groups in which individuals with *similar* perspectives engage in deliberation. In these circumstances, deliberation tends to reinforce and amplify the existing ideological tendencies of participants. Such deliberations and discussions may have some polarizing effects on political societies more generally, especially given recent trends in media fragmentation where many discussions of public issues are held in relatively homogenous ideological enclaves (such as internet chat rooms, talk radio programs or cable TV news channels). The claims that I am making are different. First, I am interested in inclusive, heterogeneous democratic processes not homogenous deliberative environments. Second, the claims that I am making have little to do with political polarization more generally and more to do with the creation of identifiable collective entities (whether polarized or not). My argument is that the very act of making (or having to make) a collective decision together, can create a collective 'we' even where there was no identifiable 'we' beforehand. By way of illustration, imagine a referendum on an issue of shared concern (such as watershed management) that involves residents of both British Columbia and Washington State. It is difficult to imagine such a referendum taking place because it would cross existing jurisdictional boundaries; but *if* such a referendum did take place the very act of making a decision in that way would create a collective 'we' that did not previously exist. Under these circumstances, it would become possible to say that 'we made a decision to support Policy A on watershed management.' In the absence of an inclusive democratic processes it would not be meaningful to say that because there would be no relevant and identifiable collective 'we.' The identifiable 'we' that would be formed if a cross-border referendum were held would *only* be relevant to that particular decision. The more general argument is that identifiable collective entities are created whenever individuals and groups make (or are required to make) decisions together in democratic ways.

least with respect to that decision — as long as it is made in sufficiently democratic conditions of equality, mutual recognition, and deliberation.

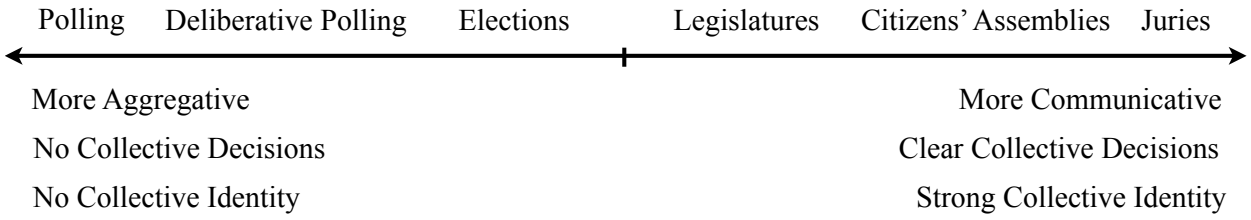
There are several reasons why it may be necessary for collective decisions to be made democratically before this sense of collective identity between strangers can be produced. First, democracy provides each individual or group with influence over collective decisions. Second, influence over collective decisions can help underwrite and solidify individual commitments to the collective expressions of the larger group, whether one agrees or disagrees with the decisions that are made. Third, democracy helps ensure that each individual or group bears some responsibility for collective decisions. Once the conditions for good democratic decision-making have been met — mutual recognition, relative equality, inclusion, and meaningful opportunities to influence collective decisions — the next most important variable is the nature and quality of communication between participants. As Cronin (2003) argues, the "theory of constitutional patriotism marks a decisive advance…by making the democratic political process, discursively conceived, the institutional locus for the production of a rational collective identity" (9).

My hypothesis is that while democratic institutions and procedures may become the locus of an 'achieved' collective identity, it is the *activity* of making collective decisions — of forging these through communicative processes — that actually forms and shapes these identities and fills them with content. In order to illustrate this point, it is useful to consider a range of different types of collective decision-making institutions. Remember, the focus here is not on the type of procedure but is instead on the nature of the activity involved in making collective decisions under different institutional arrangements, and more specifically on the nature and quality of interactions between those involved.

A selection of democratic institutions are arranged along a continuum in Figure 5.1. They are organized on three parallel dimensions: communication versus aggregation; the presence or absence of collective decisions; and, most importantly, the likelihood that collective identities will or will not be produced. On the left-hand side are processes that are principally aggregative. The clearest case is the public opinion poll. Polls are aggregative in the sense that there is, by design, no communication between individual participants. Indeed, the independence of observations is a necessary condition for valid statistical inference about aggregated individual prefer-

ences. Strictly speaking, then, opinion polls are not collective decision-making processes because participants are only asked to provide their opinions; the group itself, which only ever comes together as a group in abstract form, is not asked or expected to make any decisions collectively. The outcome of a poll is understood in purely aggregative terms because the 'decisions' of the group are not collectively forged in any sort of communicative decision-making process. Given this, it cannot be said that the sample that comprises a poll constitutes a collective entity that would be recognized as such by its members.

Figure 5.1: Democratic Decision-Making Processes and Collective Identity Formation



Elections can (and often do) help forge identifiable collective entities. It is not uncommon to think in these terms even though the process of counting ballots is purely aggregative. Identifiable collective entities can even emerge (or be sustained) when election results are deeply divisive. Thus even when elections are close, comments like the following are not unfamiliar: "The American people have decided to punish the Republicans and give the Democrats a chance to govern." It is, of course, only in a very abstract sense that the American people, as an entity, have decided anything in any election campaign. Nevertheless, it makes sense to speak of the American people as a collective entity in this case because the process of holding an election is more communicative and interactive than an opinion poll. Candidates attempt to persuade voters to support them, individuals and groups support parties and candidates through donations and in communications through the media. Furthermore, there is a sense in which each individual voter is cognizant that a collective decision is being made. The decision, in this case, has to do with who should be allowed to govern over the course of the next electoral cycle. My hypothesis is that the very act of making this collective decision under democratic conditions helps forge or reaffirm the existence of an identifiable collective entity.

Looking at the right-hand side of the continuum, juries and citizens' assemblies are highly communicative and charged with making specific decisions that ideally represent the opinions of the group — not as an aggregation of individuals but *as* a collective entity.[3] If unanimity (or a strong consensus) is required, as it is in many jury processes, it is easy to see, or understand the result as the formation of a collective entity. In the best case scenario, a jury's decision represents the outcome of a process of *coming together* — of individuals deliberating, persuading, and ultimately convincing each other of the validity of their claims. A strong consensus represents a successful coming together of disparate perspectives, points of view, or beliefs about what can or ought to be done. It is this process of coming together that plays a critical role in the formation of identifiable collective entities.

It is not, however, necessary for a strong consensus to form in order for an identifiable collective entity to emerge. If a decision-making process is recognized as fair and legitimate, and if participants agree that each had sufficient opportunity to speak and be considered, even those who do not ultimately agree with the decisions of the group may come to feel that they are members of a collective entity, at least insofar as they recognize those decisions as the position of the group (e.g., Beatty and Moore 2010; Gilbert 1996). What is important is that in the process of making a collective decision, the group comes to see itself and comes to be seen by others as a collective entity.

At the same time, the *strength* of whatever collective identity that is developed in a decision-making process likely depends, at least in part, on the degree of agreement among participants. Collective decisions can range from contentious split decisions to strong agreement where everyone agrees for the same reasons. The closer a jury, a citizens' assembly, or any other decision-making entity comes to a consensus, the more coherent (and apparent) the resulting identity is likely to be. The closer a group is to a split decision, where disagreements on important issues remain unresolved, the more difficult it will be to speak of a single collective entity

[3] Citizens' assemblies and deliberative polls are two types of minipublics, or small deliberative forms that are designed to reflect the larger public 'in miniature' on all or most of its relevant political dimensions (Dahl 1989, 342). One of the differences between a citizens' assembly and a deliberative poll is that the former is charged with making collective decisions while the latter involves 'polling' individuals and aggregating opinions after deliberations have occurred. Minipublics are discussed at greater length in Chapter 8.

with an identifiable position or set of positions on a range of issues (MacKenzie and Warren 2012).

The point of the matter is that in communicative and deliberative decision-making processes collective decisions are not merely inferred from aggregated results, as in polls or elections; they are instead *actively* forged by participants out of their potentially conflicting opinions and perspectives. Although it is likely necessary for participants to recognize decision-making procedures as being fair, this in itself is likely not enough for an identifiable collective identity to emerge. Instead, it is the actual process of forging collective decisions, of deliberating and persuading — the communicative processes of *coming together* and the mutual understanding that a collective decision is being made — that supports the claim that democratic processes can help forge identifiable collective entities. It is for these reasons that deliberative polls are depicted on the left-hand side of the continuum in Figure 5.1. Although these are highly deliberative exercises, participants in these processes are not asked or expected to make collective decisions. Instead, the results of a deliberative poll, or the 'opinion of the group', is inferred from pre- and post-event surveys (Fishkin 1995). These results can be distinguished from the 'group opinion' that is (ideally) produced when collective decisions are actively forged through communicative processes of coming together.[4] Some participants in deliberative polling exercises are likely to be persuaded by others over the course of an event, but an identifiable collective entity that is recognized as such by its members is unlikely to form unless there is a mutual understanding that there are collective decisions to be made and that the process of making these decisions involves a coming together through communicative and deliberative processes.

Of course, while democratic processes can be deliberative, they also often involve strategic actions such as bargaining and negotiation. If this is the case in processes that are meant to be highly deliberative (such as deliberative polls, citizens' assemblies, and juries), strategic action is likely to be inevitable in the legislative arena where participants strive to meet specific partisan objectives. It is for this reason that legislatures are depicted near the centre on the right-hand side

[4] This is similar to Rousseau's (1762) distinction between the 'will of all' which is an aggregation of individual wills or opinions and the 'general will' which is the product of persuasion, collective decision-making, and the coming together of previously independent individual wills (Chap 3, 203). As here, Rousseau emphasizes the importance of the process of making collective decisions under democratic conditions to the formation of a meaningful collective entity that represents more than the aggregation of its parts.

of the continuum shown in Figure 5.1. Although bargaining and negotiation can produce agreement on a range of issues, these actions do not represent a coming together, or a shared agreement about what can or should be done. Thus while it is meaningful to speak of a legislative assembly as a collective entity — in part because the institution itself is identified as such — the prospects for the formation of an identifiable collective entity to emerge from parliamentary discussions and deliberations likely depends on the nature of relations between participants as well as the types of decision-making activities that take place within the institution. Those who have bargained away certain objectives in order to fulfill others are unlikely to feel that the resulting decisions of the assembly represent the decisions of a coherent collective entity, even if they agree that the decision-making processes are fair.

Figure 5.1 includes only a small sample of examples. Others institutions, procedures or entities that might be considered include referenda, labour unions, business associations, corporate boards, political parties, interest groups, and political executives or cabinets. In each case, the prospects for the emergence of an identifiable collective identity likely depends on whether collective decisions are made in sufficiently robust democratic conditions, on the status and influence of each individual or group, on the quality of communication between participants, and on the nature and reach of any collective decisions that are or must be made. Scholars of constitutional patriotism have directed their attentions only toward state-level institutions, and have often neglected to sufficiently emphasize the importance of the *activity* of decision-making in the forging of identifiable collective entities. My hypothesis proposes a more general phenomenon that should be evident whenever and where ever collective decisions are made in sufficiently robust democratic processes.

The second but related hypothesis is that the *processes* and *activities* of making collective decisions democratically can integrate otherwise unaffiliated individuals into collectivities that are, at least in principle, capable of acting over the long-term and maintaining responsibility to the future. As Pasternak (2011), has noted (in a slightly different context), "democratic publics have defined identities that last over time and are not exhausted by or dependent upon the exact combination of their individual members" (105). At the same time, we can see how democratic

publics or collectivities come into existence, maintain their identity, and bear responsibility, without losing touch with the moral individuals who make them up at each moment in time.

Some scholars of constitutional patriotism have wondered whether the identifiable collective identities that are created through democratic processes could ever be strong enough to support collective entities that are temporally enduring in any meaningful sense of the term. Cronin (2003) believes that democratic identities are critically important in a modern world that is pluralistic and interconnected — precisely because democratic identities are contingent, mutable, and thus adaptable to changing circumstances, opinions, preferences, and allegiances. Nevertheless, he worries that an "identity that frankly acknowledges historical contingency, mutability and cultural pluralism does not offer the consolations of unreflective identification that make nationalism so attractive: it does not promise emotional tranquility in the restless modern search for identity nor the transcendence of individual mortality implied by membership in a transhistorical community" (20).[5]

It is worth noting that in this quote Cronin (2003) connects "unreflective identification" to "emotional tranquility" and he thereby associates these goods and the relative rigidity of traditional bonds of affiliation with stability. The problem with this is that stability does not in all circumstances require rigidity or anything akin to rigidity. Where changing circumstances, allegiances, and rapid technological, sociological, and political developments are the norm rather than the exception, comparatively rigid bonds of affiliation can become the enemy of stability (or endurability) rather than an ally. Contingency and mutability do not necessarily undermine the essence of a collective identity if it is recognized that something of its essence can be maintained even as it responds to changing circumstances and adjusts to unforeseen contingencies. Furthermore, although we can always choose to break from our past in more or less complete ways, we are not at liberty to 'break from the future' simply because current period decisions will inevita-

[5] Similar claims are made by critics of constitutional patriotism. Scruton (1990), for example, worries that an identity derived from a liberal state is not enough to sustain a temporally enduring political entity. "The liberal state has no home, and generates no loyalty towards generations which, being either dead or unborn, form no part of the contract. Without such a loyalty there is neither honourable accounting nor provision for the future, but only a squandering of resources in the pursuit of present goals" (quoted in Ingram 1996, 4). While I agree with Scruton's conclusion about the need for some sense of connection across generations, I do not agree that such connections cannot be developed and sustained in or by a modern liberal democratic state. As argued in the next sections of this chapter, democracy can help define collective (and self-imposed) commitments and obligations to the future. It can also help produce the sort of entity that can be held collectively responsible and thus responsible for its actions over time.

bly affect the future in one way or another. In this respect, and despite the contingency and mutability of democratic connections, democratic processes can help individuals transcend the confines of their own limited lifespans, insofar as these processes can successfully encourage individuals to think of themselves as members of collective entities that will come to shape the future for better or for worse.

Thus in direct comparison to 'ascribed' identities based on tradition, family allegiance, nationality, or ethnicity, democratically forged collective entities are flexible and reflexive — they are (or should be) open to revision and they might be continually strengthened by iterative processes of identity construction. It should be possible to maintain the essence and legitimacy of democratic entities over time as they continually transform themselves in response to changing circumstances, orientations, preferences, and expectations. In this process, political legitimacy and collective identities themselves, will be continually established and re-established through on-going and inclusive processes of collective decision-making that reflect not only the concerns and expectations of founding members but also the contributions and concerns of each new member or group of members. Any collective entity that does not continually reconstitute and renew itself is in danger of becoming irrelevant and politically illegitimate over time. And the faster things change, the faster this should happen. New members are less likely to feel like genuine members unless they have real and on-going opportunities to make their intergenerational collectivity their own, rather than simply being expected to take it as their own. Collective identities that are unreflective may be in danger of being eroded by changing circumstances, changing expectations, or to use Arendt's (1958) phrase, the natural processes of "natality" (i.e. the generational evolution of the body politic itself). By contrast, democratically 'achieved' forms of collective affiliation, can help preserve the essence and legitimacy of a collective entity over time by ensuring that the body politic is consciously responsive to changing circumstances and significant disjunctures.

In this section I have proposed two hypotheses. The first is that the very activity of making collective decisions democratically can help form otherwise unaffiliated individuals into identifiable collectivities. The second is that these democratic entities can help situate individuals in time by connecting them to a collective entity that is capable of acting through time *as a col-*

lectivity. By giving individuals some influence over collective decisions, democracy also makes it possible for individuals to shape collective commitments to the future and thereby adopt them as their own. This is the subject of the next section of this chapter.

5.2 Political Obligations to the Future

As we saw in the previous chapter, modern scholars who write about intergenerational relations tend to view them in terms of justice. It is, however, also possible (and useful) to think about our obligations to the future in political terms. This section considers two types of political obligations to the future.

Obligations of the first type are those that simply befall us as members of the human community because everything that we do (or do not do) will affect the future in one way or another. This is the general point. The more specific point is that democracy is the only system of collective decision-making that takes these obligations as a guiding principle. The relevant principle in this case is the all affected interests principle, which states that all those who are (or will be) affected by public decisions should have some meaningful and sustained role in making those decisions.[6] Thus unlike theories of justice that take the individual as the primary unit of analysis, and which are thus difficult to make work in an intergenerational context, democracy, at least in theory, already contains the groundwork for establishing obligations to the future. How these obligations can (or should) be fulfilled is another question entirely, a question which is addressed below.

Obligations of the second type are those that are defined and sanctioned in political processes of collective decision-making. As pointed out in the previous chapter, many scholars believe that something more secure than politics is needed, and that our obligations to the future should therefore be grounded in theories of justice rather than practices of politics. I argue that although theories of justice can (and should) be used to help specify our obligations to the future, they are not (and cannot) be sufficient to the task. Political processes will be required to: 1) adjudicate between competing principles of justice (or any other principled claims); and 2) fill our

[6]Alternative but substantively similar formulations of this principle can be found in Dahl (e.g., 1985), Goodin (2007), and Whelan (1983).

otherwise general and often vague obligations to the future with substantive content. In other words, political processes are required to identify and sanction those actions that we believe we ought (or ought not to take) in order to fulfill our obligations to the future. Democracy recommends itself in this context because it provides individuals with some meaningful role in making collective commitments to the future — commitments which can thus be viewed, in some real sense, as self-imposed.

5.2.1 The All Affected Interests Principle and Obligations to the Future

Most scholars of intergenerational relations, irrespective of the philosophical tradition in which they are working, start with the following assumption: *if* we have obligations to the future it is because we will (in one way or another) affect the future. Even Parfit (1984), whose non-identity problem challenges us to think about whether individuals can be said to be harmed by actions taken before they were born, is quick to point out that this does not mean that we do not have obligations to the future. We have obligations to the future simply because what we do today will affect the conditions in which future generations will (or will not) live.[7]

Taking this observation as a starting point, democratic theorists have asked whether the all affected interests principle can be used to help us better understand our obligations to the future (e.g., Arrhenius 2005; Goodin 2007; Johnson 2007; Tännsjö 2007). The all affected interests principle *does* seem to point in this direction. As Goodin (2007) argues, if we take the all affected interests principle as a normative ideal, then "virtually (maybe literally) everyone in the world — and indeed everyone in all possible future worlds — should be entitled to vote on any proposal or any proposal for proposals" (55). But this is clearly impossible. From a practical perspective future generations — or persons who do not yet exist — cannot be included in our decision-making processes today. With respect to space (or geography) it is at least possible to imagine a single, global democratic entity, but the walls that time erects between generations are built of sturdier stuff. These considerations seem to rule out the relevance of the all affected interests principle to a theory of intergenerational obligations. But perhaps this is not the end of the story?

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[7] Thomas H. Thompson (1981) is, as far as I am aware, one of the only scholars to maintain that we do not have obligations to the future.

What if the all affected interests principle were to be viewed as a regulative ideal as opposed to a practical guide? As a regulative ideal, the principle could help ground our obligations to all those who are (or will be) affected even when they cannot (for political or practical reasons) be included in our decision-making processes. Goodin (2007), for example, has suggested that the all affected interests principle might be used to justify the compensation claims of those who are harmed by the decisions that we make (68). He admits that this solution is not ideal from a democratic perspective, but it nevertheless affirms the obligations implied by the all affected interests principle. Arrhenius (2005) and Tännsjö (2007) have also argued that it is useful to maintain a distinction between democratic practice and normative theory when it comes to the all affected interests principle. If viewed as a regulative ideal, the all affected interests principle fairly straightforwardly implies that we do, indeed, have obligations to future generations even though they cannot be actively included in our decision-making processes today.

But even normative stipulations have practical implications. What does it mean, in practical terms, to say that we have obligations to future generations because they will be affected (in one way or another) by our decisions? How can these obligations be fulfilled? One solution, as we have seen, is to insist that those who are not (or cannot be) included are fairly compensated for any harms that they are caused to suffer. There is, however, another solution that would not only fulfill the normative stipulations of the all affected interests principle, but would, if adequately practiced, help prevent harms that might require compensation.

This solution involves reformulating the all affected interests principle along the following lines: the potential interests of all individuals or groups who are, will, or might be affected by collective decisions should be *considered* when those decisions are made. The emphasis here is on the *consideration* of affected interests and not on the *active* inclusion of those who are affected. Although future persons, generations, and publics cannot be actively included in our decision-making processes today, their potential *interests* can be included and represented in more or less formal ways (see, e.g., Dobson 1996; Ekeli 2005; Kavka and Warren 1983). This approach has been largely neglected in discussions of the all affected interests principle because most scholars have interpreted the principle to mean that those who are affected should be *actively* included in decision-making processes (see, e.g., Arrhenius 2005; Dahl 1985; Goodin

2007; Tännsjö 2007; Whelan 1983). Given this, most discussions (and disputes) about the principle have turned on the question of *who* ought to be included. As a result, very little attention has been paid to questions of *how* individuals and groups might be included, and even less attention has been paid to the flexibility that practices or institutions of representation would provide.

Where possible, affected individuals and groups *should* be actively included in decision-making processes. They should have the right to choose their representatives, to deliberate public issues, and to vote on (and perhaps to veto) certain public decisions. But when those who are affected cannot be included in decision-making processes, the normative stipulations of the principle might nevertheless be fulfilled if the interests of the excluded are adequately considered and represented when decisions are made. This is a weaker version of the all affected interests principle but it is consistent with certain familiar democratic intuitions and established institutional practices. We do not, for example, believe that children should be directly involved in making collective decisions that affect them, but we do believe that their interests should be considered and represented when decisions are made. Democratic decisions can only be considered legitimate if the interests of those who are affected are adequately considered and represented, even if some of those who are affected cannot be (or are not) actively included in decision-making processes. From this perspective, the all affected interests principle can be used to support something like a theory of intergenerational trusteeship representation. Future publics cannot actively authorize their own representatives, but we can actively strive to represent their potential interests insofar as these can be determined. What is more, if we accept the all affected interests principle as a foundational principle of democracy, we are obliged to act in ways that at minimum *consider* the potential interests of future publics.

The primary advantage of this approach is that it helps avoid the difficult philosophical problems associated with the theories of intergenerational justice that were examined in the previous chapter. It is not necessary to establish rights-based claims for future individuals, nor is it necessary to assume anything about the specific interests of future individuals or the moral beliefs of future versions of one's own cultural community. It is enough to make broad-based and very general assessments about the potential interests of future generations taken as a whole, or the collective interests of any particular future groups that may be affected by specific current

period decisions. Democracy is the only system that takes these obligations as a guiding principle. Thus if we accept the normative foundations of democracy, we have, in a sense already accepted that we have obligations to consider the interests of future generations that will be affected by the decisions that we make.

5.2.2 Politically Defined (and Self-Imposed) Obligations to the Future

The primary shortcoming of an approach to intergenerational obligations that is based on the all affected interests principle is that it is essentially contentless. That is to say, it says nothing about how we should or should not act, and it says nothing about what we should or should not do. It merely states that we are under an obligation to consider the potential interests and concerns of all those who are likely to be affected by current period decisions. In order to add content to these obligations, it is useful to consider the political process itself.

As suggested in the previous chapter, theories of intergenerational justice are also effectively contentless. Obligations of duty tell us what we ought (not) to do vis-à-vis the future, but they do not tell us which actions we should (or should not) take to fulfill our obligations. Neither a justice-based approach nor one that is based on the all affected interests principle can provide any guidance when it comes to making choices between competing perspectives about which actions would be in the best interests of the future. These approaches cannot, for example, tell us whether we should pursue economic development in order to fund and advance the development of environmentally-friendly technology, or whether we should constrain economic development because it has a negative impact on the natural environment. Where the lines *should* be drawn between economic development and the protection of the environment is a matter of politics not justice. Either one of these actions (economic development or restraint) can be plausibly interpreted as likely to harm *or* benefit the future. Thus simply stating that we have obligations to consider the interests of the future does not sufficiently define or describe the nature of our relations with the future. Theories of intergenerational justice simply set the groundwork for the development and specification of our commitments to the future. We need political processes to determine what it is we are capable of and willing to do for the future, and which specific actions should or should not be taken at each moment in time.

Political commitments to the future (i.e. those that have been forged through political processes) have been largely neglected in discussions of intergenerational relations. It is not hard to understand why. As pointed out in the previous chapter, claims of justice are typically given a higher priority than claims of other types (e.g. Barry 1978, 205). The whole point (in some respects) of establishing intergenerational obligations based on justice-claims is to give these higher priority than any provisional political agreements.

Nevertheless, there are at least two reasons why justice-based approaches to intergenerational relations (no matter how comprehensive) will never be enough to adequately specify our obligations to the future. First, while justice-based duties can provide general guidance with respect to how we ought to act, they cannot determine how we should act when there are conflicts between principles of justice, or conflicts between well founded and well justified rights and duties. When such conflicts exist, political judgments must be made about which rights and duties ought to be given priority over others. Theories of justice can be used as resources to help resolve such conflicts but they cannot replace the role that politics has (and will have) in determining which specific actions are normatively acceptable and which are not.[8] This means that an adequate theory of intergenerational relations will involve more than a theory of intergenerational justice. At minimum, politics will be required to adjudicate between competing principles and duties of justice.

Second, and relatedly, political processes are required to add substantive content to otherwise minimalist (and often quite vague) accounts of our obligations to the future. The all affected interests principle tells us that we are obliged, at minimum, to consider the interests of the future when we are making decisions, but it does not tell us which actions we should or should not take or how current period interests are to be balanced against the potential interests of the future. Theories of intergenerational justice are no more specific. Rawls' (1999) "just savings rate," for example, tells us in only very general terms that each generation should be required, as

[8] Freeman (1995) makes a similar point with respect to rights-based theories of justice and the politics of human-rights: "[C]onflicting rights do not entail incompossible duties. Conflicting rights entail duties to balance rights. A government that discharges its duty to protect the right to privacy by limiting the right to freedom of speech is not violating its duty to respect the right to freedom of speech but fulfilling its duty to balance these rights. The problem of balancing conflicting rights may not have a determinate rational solution, but this does not mean that particular solutions are necessarily unreasonable…. Conflicts of rights, with their consequent indeterminacy, are...stubborn facts of human-rights politics" (29).

a matter of justice, to save enough so that the next generation can continue to build just institutions. As Rawls argues, once these institutions "are firmly established and all the basic liberties effectively realized, the net accumulation asked for falls to zero" (255). Rawls cannot be more specific. His theory (by design) tells us nothing about how much should be saved at any particular juncture in time, or whether there are alternative resources or benefits that should be considered or used as compensation. Nor is it possible to identify anything else a society might feel it ought to do *for* its successors, over and above what is required by justice. Within the confine's of Rawls' theory we cannot say anything more about these questions because they are not matters of justice and right — they are matters of politics.

Like Rawls' theory of the *just savings rate*, Barry's theory of *justice as equal opportunity* is also very general in its stipulations about what ought or ought not to be done:

> In the case of justice between generations, equality of opportunity has to be taken in sufficiently broad terms. What justice requires...is that the overall range of opportunities open to successor generations should not be narrowed. If some openings are closed off by depletion or other irreversible damage to the environment, others should be created (if necessary at the cost of some sacrifice) to make up (Barry 1978, 243).

Barry's theory provides some guidance, but the substance of these claims — questions about whether opportunities have been closed off, whether sacrifices should be made, as well as what those sacrifices ought to be — are political questions that have to be dealt with through processes of negotiation, deliberation, compromise, and possibly (at some point) legitimate (i.e. democratically-grounded) coercion. These questions, along with most other questions about our relations to the future, are fundamentally political: they ask us to consider what we (as a collectivity) think we ought (or ought not) to do for the future. Theses are political questions because they do not permit of any right answers. They are political because any answers that we come up with may or may not be acceptable to each new generation of political actors — given that preferences, expectations, technologies, beliefs, political and social relations, and the natural environment itself, are all subject to change.

The advantage of viewing intergenerational relations in political terms is that politically-defined commitments to the future — such as a carbon tax — can be filled with any number of details and stipulations about how the needs and concerns of the current period should be

weighed against what we know (or think we know) about the probable needs and concerns of the future. A political approach to intergenerational relations forces us to workout the details of our obligations and commitments to the future. By focusing their attention on justice-based claims to the exclusion of politics, many theorists of intergenerational justice have neglected to consider the political processes that are needed to identify, specify, and legitimize the collective actions that we think we ought to take to fulfill our obligations to the future. This does not mean that theories of justice are not relevant to a political approach to intergenerational relations. Far from it. Theories of justice can help us identify, in broad strokes, our duty-based obligations but they cannot adequately define our relations to the future or compel us to take specific future-oriented actions.

De-Shalit is one of the few theorists of intergenerational justice who has seriously considered the role that politics plays (and ought to play) in helping us define our commitments to the future:

> When distribution affects future generations, as is the case in almost all environmental policies, governments should take future generations into account in a reasonable way and to a sufficient degree. What is 'sufficient' should be determined politically, provided that all who participate in the decision are genuinely aware of the moral demands of intergenerational justice. In other words, when certain obligations to future generations contradict other obligations to contemporaries, we should not immediately favour the contemporaries rather than the future generations. Governments very often face such dilemmas of conflicting obligations….Such cases should be solved politically and democratically… (de-Shalit 1995, 59).

There are at least two points to emphasize in this quote. First, de-Shalit focuses his attention on governments. From one perspective, this makes a lot of sense. It is governments that have the power (in most cases) to initiate and undertake collective actions. From another perspective, this focus on government does not sufficiently emphasize the role that individuals in democratic societies play in making (or helping to make) choices about what types of commitments they are willing and able to make for the benefit of the future.

Second, and relatedly, de-Shalit not only emphasizes the role that politics plays in defining our relations to the future, he also insists that political decisions on such subjects should be made democratically. He does not elaborate on this claim but it is worth exploring some of the assumption that likely lie behind it. Democracy recommends itself in this context for many of the same reasons that it is desirable (or thought to be desirable) in other contexts. In the first place,

democracy can help meaningfully distribute responsibility for collective decisions to individuals. The conditions under which collective responsibility can be apportioned to individuals will be discussed at greater length in the next section of this chapter. The critical point here is that by providing individuals with opportunities to influence collective decisions — and thus take responsibility for them — democracy makes it possible for individuals to view collective commitments to the future as self-imposed obligations. The extent to which each individual is, or feels herself to be, committed to these obligations will likely depend on the nature and quality of the democratic system, and thus on the range of opportunities that each individual has to meaningfully affect collective decisions.

These theoretical observations can be formed into a series of hypotheses.[9] First, individuals who have multiple and meaningful opportunities to affect collective decisions should be more likely to see themselves as responsible for the positive or negative outcomes of collective actions. Second, and relatedly, robust democratic systems should make it possible for individuals to view collective commitments of any kind as self-imposed obligations. In the present context, I am primarily interested in the relationship between democracy and self-imposed collective commitments to the future. Third, the extent to which democratic commitments are viewed as self-imposed (or not), should make individuals more (or less) willing to make the sort of sacrifices that are required to achieve long-term goals or to fulfill collectively-forged obligations to the future. If this is the case, democracy may be particularly attractive when it comes to making (and sustaining) long-term policy initiatives — such as a carbon tax — because in robust democratic systems such policies must be continually explained and justified as governments alternate and as new generations of individuals join the body politic. This observation forms the basis of a fourth hypothesis: Long-term policies, investments, or agreements that are forged in robust democratic processes and that are based on reasons that individuals understand and accept, are also those that are likely to survive long enough to do some good.

One concern is that democratically-forged commitments to the future will be *too* easy to change or abandon. Democracy makes it possible for individuals to take ownership of collective commitments to the future, but democratic system are, by design, also characterized by political

[9] As far as I am aware, none of the following hypotheses has been tested in the political science literature.

uncertainty and provisionality. From a democratic perspective, collective decisions are only legitimate if they are, in principle, provisional and thus open to being changed in the future (see, e.g., Gutmann and Thompson 2004). Similarly, governments are only democratic if they are temporary. If every democratically-forged commitment is subject to provisionality and political uncertainty, it may be difficult to sustain long-term policy initiatives. This is the concern. And it is for this reason that scholars of intergenerational justice — when they turn their minds to questions of institutional design — tend to recommend constitutional clauses designed to protect the future from the present as opposed to institutions that would provide new opportunities for individuals to get involved in making public decisions (see, e.g., Tremmel 2006; Wood 2000). Constitutional clauses help preserve and protect political agreements or commitments that have been achieved at one moment in time from future potential challenges. Constitutional clauses, these scholars claim, are a means of taking certain political claims or commitments out of the political arena, and thereby protecting them from the vicissitudes of democratic politics.

A constitutional approach to protecting the interests of future generations makes some sense, but we should not lose sight of the fact that the difference between a democratically-forged commitment (which must be sanctioned and re-sanctioned continually) and one that is constitutionally entrenched is only a matter of degree, it is not a difference in kind. Every constitutional clause must be debated, deliberated, and ultimately sanctioned in a political environment of competing claims and interests. Constitutional clauses are designed to increase the political costs of changing or abandoning certain policies, commitments, or arrangements, but entrenchment only provides policy stability to a certain extent. If each (political) generation is free to make their own decisions within their own inherited environments, as Paine (1791), Jefferson (1789) and the other disconnectionists argued, even constitutionally entrenched commitments must be viewed as provisional over the longer-term. If this is the case, there are no alternatives to defining our commitments to the future in political terms: we must continually go through the process of debating, sanctioning, and re-sanctioning our collective long-term commitments as governments alternate and as members of the body politic change over time. The advantage of a democratic approach is that democracy makes it possible for individuals to influence the shape of those commitments, to take ownership of them, and to view them as self-imposed constraints

or obligations. These features of democratically-forged commitments to the future should make them *more* not *less* vulnerable to changing circumstances, alternating governments, and the "natality" of the body politic itself.

The challenge is to identify democratic practices and institutions that are not structurally biased against the future. There will, of course, always be powerful incentives for political actors to act in ways that will benefit the present in demonstrable and tangible ways. In addition, individuals tend to have modestly positive time preferences, and there are many reasons to discount future potential benefits over immediate gains (see, e.g., Frederick 2002; Jacobs 2011). But the fact that these tendencies exist, does not mean that they cannot be mitigated through institutional design and the creation of countervailing incentives that would encourage longer-term thinking and farsighted action. In Chapters 6, 7, and 8, I discuss a number of democratic practices and institutions that I believe can help counterbalance the myopic tendencies and biases in our existing political institutions. At this point, I want to emphasize the role that politics plays (and will play) in helping us define and understand our intergenerational relations and obligations. There is no sanctuary from politics in theories of intergenerational justice. There will always be conflicts between principles of justice that must be adjudicated politically. Perhaps even more importantly, we are obliged to think about our relations to the future in political terms because we cannot *act* without making collective decisions about how we ought (or ought not to) fulfill our obligations to the future. The role of democracy is to make it possible for individuals to view collective commitments to the future as obligations that they have, in some meaningful sense, imposed upon themselves. This, in turn, makes it possible for individuals to take ownership of collective commitments to the future, and to take some share of the responsibility for what their collectivities are (or are not) doing.

5.3 Democracy and Collective Responsibility

Many people have an intuitive sense that citizens in a democracy are, at least in some respects, responsible for the decisions that their governments make. When decisions are made in undemocratic (and especially dictatorial) environments, responsibility for public decisions can be attributed only to the most powerful individuals or groups and not to the collectivity as a whole. Of course, there is a sense in which any collective entity is responsible for the decisions of even its

most autocratic rulers, just because resistance to those rulers is always an option. Nevertheless, the extent to which a collective entity, as a whole, can be considered responsible for any particular decision depends, at least in part, on whether the decision is made in a democratic fashion. But what does it mean to say that a society is responsible for the decisions it makes? More generally, what does it mean to say that someone (or something) is responsible? How does collective responsibility relate to the political obligations that we have (or might feel we have) to the future?

Most scholars agree that responsibility has something do with intentionality and agency. Following others, such as Corlett (2001), French (1984), Pettit (2007), and Wallace (1994), Stilz (2011) has summarized the conditions that must be met before a person (or a thing) can be considered a moral actor with the capacity to be held responsible for its actions. These conditions are the following: 1) intentionality; 2) the capacity to deliberate among choices and to engage in moral reasoning; 3) the capacity to control one's actions in a deliberate way; and 4) the freedom to act voluntarily without coercion or duress. In many cases it is relatively straightforward to attribute responsibility to both individuals and collective entities. In other cases, the application of responsibility is not so straightforward.

One complication, which is pertinent to the question of whether individuals in democratic (and in particular representative) regimes can be held responsible for collective decisions, has to do with whether (and to what extent) individuals or collectivities can be held responsible for actions taken by others in their name. Another complication has to do with whether agents can be held responsible for actions with unintended (and thus unintentional) consequences. Feinberg (1991) gives the example of a construction company that, despite taking every precaution possible when using explosives and blasting rock, can nevertheless "be found liable, if through some freakish chance a person at a great distance is injured by a flying rock set in motion by the blast, and can be forced to compensate the injured party for his losses" (54).[10] In this case the company has not acted intentionally but they are nevertheless held responsible. This is called 'strict liability' in law. But in what sense is the company responsible? Surely they are not *morally* responsible for the unintended consequences of their actions. In cases like these it is helpful to make a

[10] See Feinberg (1991) for a discussion of a number of other cases in which it is difficult, but nevertheless still possible, to attribute responsibility to individuals or groups.

distinction between two types of responsibility. Goodin (1987) has called these "blame-responsibility" and "task-responsibility." Blame responsibility involves assigning or apportioning blame (or praise) to agents who act in ways that exhibit moral fault (or virtue). Task-responsibility involves assigning duties to agents to compensate for (or otherwise account for) actions that have in some way affected others.[11] In the case of the construction company using blasting materials, they are task-responsible to compensate the victim for the 'freak' accident that caused him injury, but they cannot be held morally accountable for the accident if they took every reasonable precaution to prevent it. In order for an agent to be both blame-responsible and task-responsible it must be possible to say that it: 1) acted intentionally; 2) engaged in moral reasoning and made moral choices; 3) was in control of its actions; and 4) acted voluntarily.

To what extent are collectivities like corporations or democratic states responsible for their actions? French (1984) has argued that corporations can be held morally responsible for their actions. Corporations are collective yet intentional agents that can engage in moral reasoning, make choices, and act freely on their decisions. By comparison, a mob, or any other loose collection of individuals, cannot be held collectively responsible for the actions of the group. Individuals can be held responsible for their own actions in a mob or a riot, but if the actions of the mob are not intentionally coordinated, there can be no responsibility at the collective level.[12]

To what extent can a state be held responsible for its actions? A state is less cohesive than a corporation but it is more cohesive than a mob. Stilz (2011) has argued that it is possible to attribute responsibility to states — as collective entities — because they can act intentionally, they have the capacity to deliberate among possible courses of action, they have the capacity to initiate collective actions, and, at least in the case of sovereign states, they are free to act without coercion or duress (192). To the extent that these conditions are met, collective responsibility can be attributed to states.

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[11] These distinctions are also discussed in Goodin (1995, 100-113). An unfortunate consequence of this language is that it emphasizes blameworthiness and downplays praiseworthiness in the attribution of responsibility. Goodin and others, such as Stilz (2011) and Pasternak (2011), recognize that responsibility has both positive and negative connotations, but the tendency is to focus on attributions of responsibility for blameworthy actions as opposed to praiseworthy ones. As is discussed below, a theory of democratic collective responsibility to the future should speak to both of these dimensions of the concept of responsibility.

[12] Held (1991) has argued that random collections of individuals can be held responsible as collectivities in certain circumstances. The terms of her argument do not concern us here.

Another question has to do with whether the collective responsibility of the state can be meaningfully distributed, apportioned, or shared among the individuals who make up the state. The basic intuitive claim is that the extent to which individuals can be said to share in the responsibility of the state depends on the democratic character of the state. Stilz has argued that collective responsibility can be apportioned to individuals *if* their state meets the following conditions: it must guarantee the inviolability of each citizen; provide basic subsistence to its members; protect freedoms of speech and expression; guarantee private rights that treat each individual equally; and protect political rights such as the right to vote.

In Stilz's account, shares of collective responsibility can be distributed to individuals even if they have played no part in making collective decisions. According to this theory, membership "in a democratic legal state is sufficient to confer responsibility even in the absence of consent, voluntary affirmation, or further evidence of identification with the regime" (204). Thus all those who are granted rights and protections by a democratic state have some share of the collective responsibility that is borne by the state itself. But Stilz is careful to maintain a clear distinction between blameworthiness and task-responsibility. In her account, a citizen cannot be blamed, or held morally accountable for the decisions of her state. Some of those who occupy positions of power may be blamed for the harmful actions of the state — and some may be held legally responsible for criminal actions — but the individual citizen cannot be held morally culpable simply by virtue of being a member of the state. Nevertheless, citizens can be held liable for bearing some of the costs of fulfilling whatever practical duties are required to help account for the actions of their state if it is a democratic legal state (Stilz 2011, 205).

Pasternak (2011) has argued that democratic publics can be held both morally responsible and task-responsible at the collective level. She argues that democratic publics can be held morally collectively responsible because they have the capacity to form collective intentions, reflect on their behaviour through deliberation and debate, and control their collective actions through the mechanisms of the state (108). But the extent to which a democratic public, as a loose collection of individuals, can be held morally responsible for its actions depends on the nature and robustness of the democratic system itself. If democratic opportunities are limited to voting for representatives, the public cannot be held morally responsible for the decisions that their govern-

ments make after they have been elected, unless each action that the government takes was clearly sanctioned by the voters at election time. As pre-sanctioning every action of a government is, in practical terms, impossible, Pasternak argues that an authorization model of representative government is not enough to support the attribution of collective moral responsibility to the democratic public as a whole.

By contrast, in democratic systems where citizens have on-going opportunities to interact with their representatives, to debate and deliberate public issues, and to exert some meaningful influence over governmental decisions between election periods, it will be possible to attribute collective moral responsibility to the democratic public itself. Pasternak argues that a people can be held morally responsible for the actions of their governments if they have: 1) authorized the government to act; and 2) if there are institutional (or cultural) mechanisms in place that give citizens effective and on-going influence over collective actions. The extent to which a democratic public can be said to be morally responsible for its actions thus depends on the range of democratic opportunities that are available to citizens to meaningfully affect collective outcomes.

This does not mean that individuals who disagree with collective decisions are morally responsible for those decisions. As in Stilz's (2011) argument, the moral culpability of individuals must be judged in light of their own behaviour. The difference is that Pasternak (2011) emphasizes the extent to which a democratic entity itself can be said to be morally responsible, over and above the moral responsibility that government officials and representatives must bear for the decisions that they make. Even though individuals who actively disagreed with collective decisions cannot be held morally responsible for those decisions, the attribution of collective responsibility has implications for *all* members of a democratic polity. First, as Pasternak points out, the attribution of collective responsibility generates feelings that are associated with moral responsibility, such as regret, pride, or the personal shame of being associated with a group that has acted badly. Second, the collective moral responsibility "of a group grounds certain task-responsibilities for its members, such as the duty to change their group's practices and norms, or the duty to share the burden of repairing the damage their group caused. When group members end up having these forward-looking duties, then a failure to comply with them would amount to a personal moral failure" (104). Thus in Pasternak's account, a democratic public can be held

morally responsible as a collectivity, and this attribution of responsibility has both practical and moral implications for individuals.

Pasternak argues that collective moral responsibility can be attributed to democratic publics even though such entities can only ever be viewed as relatively loose collections of individuals. If we turn Pasternak's argument around, it is also possible to conceptualize democracy as a *means* of creating the type of entity that can be said to be collectively responsible. Democracy makes it possible for loose collections of individuals to form collective intentions, to reflect on their intentions through deliberation and public debate, and to act on their collective intentions through the mechanisms of the state. If this is the case, only certain types of democracies can fulfill the conditions that are necessary to generate collective responsibility. These must be democracies that are sufficiently robust, deliberative, and not merely aggregative. Aggregative mechanisms are not enough to generate a sense of collective responsibility because they do not provide the intentionality that is required to ground responsibility. By contrast, robust democratic systems make it possible for even very loose collections of individuals to coordinate their actions in intentional ways. Thus democratic systems are one way (and perhaps the only way) of making loose collections of individuals into a collective entity that is something more than a mere aggregation of its parts. Viewed from this perspective, democracy is a means of forging unaffiliated individuals into collective entities that are capable of bearing collective (moral) responsibility.

This is important when it comes to long-term acting because only collective entities are capable of bearing responsibility over time. If there are no collective entities that can be said to have a moral presence of some sort, it will only ever be possible to attribute responsibility to individuals, all of whom are limited by their own mortality. Thus in order for responsibility to be maintained over long periods of time, it must be attributed to a collective entity of some sort that exhibits the characteristics of a moral entity (i.e. it has the capacity to make moral choices and act in intentional ways). The idea that responsibility over time can only be borne by collective entities is familiar from discussions about the obligations that present people have to account for wrongs that were committed in the past, or commitments that were made by their predecessors (see, e.g., Gosseries 2007; Miller 2007, chap. 6; Sher 1992; Thompson 2002). Individuals cannot be held morally responsible for actions or events that took place before they were born, but as

members of collective entities with continuous identities, individuals can be held responsible for paying the costs of reparations or for issuing public apologies for past wrongs. Over time, task-responsibility is borne by present people — in part because present people are the only ones who *can* act — but moral responsibility is borne by the collectivity itself. One's sense of connection to a collective entity — and thus an entity that can, at least in principle, bear responsibility for past actions, is relatively easy to establish when individuals already maintain strong affective attachments to their ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious or nationalistic groups. In these cases, as Miller (2007) explains, it is not uncommon or philosophically uncomfortable for individuals to feel both vicarious pride and shame in the past actions of their group (142). It is more difficult to explain why individuals should be held responsible for past actions if they think of themselves as individuals who are not connected to a collectivity with a moral essence that might plausibly be said to continue through time even as its membership changes. Nevertheless, it is precisely this sort of entity that is required for moral responsibility to be maintained over time and for task-responsibility to be imposed on present period individuals to account for past actions. Without connections to the collective entity, there is no reason why individuals should feel pride or shame for actions taken (by others) in the past, and there is no sense in which they can be held responsible (even task-responsible) for the actions of others. Miller (2007) notes that many individuals are proud of their nation's cultural, scientific, and technological achievements, but they are not comfortable inheriting responsibility for historical wrongs and transgressions. Miller (2007) argues that we cannot have it both ways: if membership in an intergenerational community can justify a sense of collective pride, and if membership can be used to justify inheritances, such as infrastructure, knowledge, and national wealth, membership can also be used to justify taking responsibility for historical wrongs and transgressions. If we inherit the benefits of our intergenerational communities we should also bear the burdens, costs, and problems that go along with our affiliations.[13]

[13] It is worth emphasizing the point that pride (or shame) in our collective achievements need not take on any sort of ethnic or cultural dimension, especially in multicultural democratic societies. We may be proud of our collective achievements: the decisions 'we' have made to enter into or stay out of particular wars, the role 'we' have played in the development of new technologies, or the influence of our society in the production of art and culture. But this sense of pride (or shame) need not emanate from any shared ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or religious affiliation with the individuals who have done great (or infamous) things in the past. Our sense of membership in a society or public that makes collective decisions together may be enough to ground our sense of pride (or shame) in the collective achievements (or transgressions) of our society, or the individual achievement (or mistakes) of some of its members.

In the same way that affiliation to a cohesive collective entity with an enduring identity makes it possible for present people to be held responsible for actions that occurred in the past, such affiliations also make it possible for present people to take on responsibility to the future. If responsibility can be meaningfully said to exist at the collective level, long-term commitments and agreements — such as debts, international treaties, or trade agreements — can be made credible in the current period and maintained over time. If the contacting entities became new entities every generation (or every 19 years as Thomas Jefferson argued), or if they were merely aggregations of individuals and thus could not bear responsibility at the collective level, there would be no entity bound to the terms of the agreements going forward, and thus no individuals responsible for upholding long-term agreements now or in the future. Thus just as collective responsibility makes it possible to hold present individuals responsible for past actions, it also makes it possible for present individuals to actively (and meaningfully) take on responsibility *to the future*.

From the perspective of the individual, collective moral responsibility has both negative and positive implications. With respect to the negative, when commitments are made at the collective level they will persist through time even as the membership of the group is replaced by new generations of individuals — even if the 'will' of the group changes over time. In this sort of scenario, the burden will fall on blameless individuals to either maintain commitments that they do not agree with, or to pay the costs of reneging on those commitments. With respect to the positive, it is only by locating responsibility at the collective level that any assurances of stability or any long-term commitments can be given *to us* in the current period — thus making it possible for us to make long-term plans and to undertake farsighted collective actions. Feinberg gives us an example that nicely illustrates these dynamics:

> Consider the philosophy department which debated whether to pass a graduate student on his preliminary examinations. The main argument against doing so was that passing him would commit the department to the supervision of the student's dissertation, and no one who knew this particular student was willing to read his thesis. The affirmative carried when two members volunteered to direct the dissertation themselves. One year later, however, one of these sponsors died, and the other took employment elsewhere (Feinberg 1991, 73).

What is to be done in this scenario? Feinberg argues that the department is not legally obliged to uphold its agreement to the student, and thus no individuals can be forced to bear the burden of

supervising a student that they would rather not supervise. Nevertheless, the department might be said to have a moral obligation to live up to the commitment that was made to the student. If this is the case, members of the department may be obliged to make good on this commitment simply by virtue of their affiliation to the department, even though no individual in the department made a commitment to this particular student. Collective moral responsibility makes it possible for individuals and groups to make long-term plans and commitments with some assurances that someone will be responsible for upholding the terms of the agreements upon which their long-term plans and commitments depend. Without such assurances all our plans and initiatives would be temporally constrained by the limited lifespans of the individuals involved. The concept of collective moral responsibility makes it possible for whole societies to extend their obligations out past the reach of each current generation, making long-term commitments credible and far-sighted collective actions more feasible.

Democracy makes it possible for even very loose collections of individuals or groups to come together into collective entities or publics that are, at least in principle, capable of being held responsible for their actions as collectivities, and thus capable of meaningfully bearing responsibility over time. In the typical case, individuals are said to be responsible (in a certain sense) for the past actions or commitments of their group because they have some affective connection to their culture, ethnic group, religion, or nationality. As Miller (2007) explains, individuals who have strong emotional connections to a community (of some type) often feel pride or shame in the group's past achievements or transgressions. In Feinberg's (1991) example of the university department, individuals bear responsibility by virtue of their professional affiliations: in becoming members of the department they take on a share of the collective responsibility of the department. It is more difficult to establish collective responsibility — and thus the possibility of responsibility over time — when there are few or no affiliations between individuals that would connect them to each other and thus to other individuals through time. Most relatively loose collections of individuals do not meet the conditions that are required to generate collective moral responsibility: they are not intentional and they do not have the capacity to make moral choices or to act on their choices. Yet as Pasternak (2011) has argued, democratic procedures make collective moral responsibility possible. This does not mean that democracy is the only

means of generating collective moral responsibility among loose collections of individuals, but it is one means of giving groups of individuals, who may or may not be tied together in other ways, the capacity to make moral choices collectively and to act intentionally on those choices. This, in turn, makes it possible for democratic entities to meaningfully bear responsibility *to the future*.

The importance of this can be seen at the global level where there is currently no collective entity that *could* take responsibility for long-term issues such as the environmental crisis or the threat of nuclear war, and where there are few affective connections between individuals or groups. But it would, at least in principle, be possible to forge the sort of collective entity that *could* bear responsibility to the future if there were democratic mechanisms that allowed humanity (as a whole) to form collective intentions, reflect on our behaviour, and to act on our intentions. The United Nations provides the global community with some capacity to deliberate its collective actions, but the U.N. (in most cases) lacks the ability to act on its decisions by enforcing collective decisions.

In a more general sense, democracy has a role to play where ever (and whenever) loose collections of individuals or groups do not already see themselves as members of identifiable entities that are capable of bearing collective responsibility through time. Philosophically, this will be the case whenever individuals are conceived of as separate ontological entities. Democracy is attractive because it is one means of bringing ontologically autonomous individuals together into morally responsible groups in a way that is consistent with moral individualism. Collective responsibility, in turn, makes it possible for responsibility to be borne through time. If responsibility cannot be located at the collective level it will simply live and die with individuals. When responsibility cannot be borne by collectivities it will be difficult (or impossible) for one group to seek redress for past actions from members of other groups once all those who were involved in making specific decisions have died. Similarly, the viability of future-oriented actions or long-initiatives will depend on the existence of collective entities that can bear responsibility over time.

In addition to generating the type of collective entities that are, at least in principle, capable of bearing responsibility to the future, democracy also makes it possible for each individual to act efficaciously on his or her own sense of responsibility to the future. We now know that

humanity has the power to affect the future in significant and even existential ways, but in order to exercise this power in conscious or intentional ways we must coordinate our actions. No individual can change the carbon economy alone by riding a bike or walking more often. No individual can reduce public debt by drawing on fewer public resources than she might otherwise do. In the best case scenario individual efforts to change the future will be demonstrations for others to follow. In the worst case scenario such efforts will be futile. Generally speaking long-term issues, like most other political issues, raise collective action problems that require the coordination of thousands, millions, or billions of actors to solve. Even powerful individuals, such as elected leaders, dictators, or captains of industry, cannot affect the future by acting alone. In every case, individuals can affect the future only by acting in concert with others.

Where individuals are empowered to influence public decisions, and to actively resist those decisions that they do not agree with, some share of responsibility for collective decisions will fall on the shoulders of individuals. In robust democratic systems, where individuals have meaningful and on-going opportunities to affect collective decisions, it is possible to apportion both blame- and task-responsibility to individuals. As Stilz (2011) points out, responsibility for collective actions cannot be apportioned equally to each individual. Those who have the most influence over public decisions should bear the most responsibility, especially when it comes to moral and legal responsibility. Nevertheless, where opportunities to meaningfully influence collective decisions exist, all those who actively support those decisions, in one way or another — or fail to actively resist them — can be held morally responsible for those decisions. Those who actively opposed decisions that might be considered morally wrong cannot be held morally responsible for them, but they can be expected to share in the costs of accounting for any damages that are done. Democracy also makes it possible to meaningfully apportion praise to individuals for collective actions that aim to do some good.

By apportioning power and thus responsibility to individuals, democracy makes it possible for individuals to act efficaciously on their own intuitions about what should or should not be done to (or for) the future. Thus, far from being rendered myopic by the political dynamics of short electoral cycles or the immediate concerns of voters, democracy provides incentives for individuals to act on whatever beliefs they might have about what should or should not be done

for the future. These incentives are created by the fact that democracy not only makes it possible to apportion blame or praise for collective actions to individuals, it also makes it possible for individuals to affect collective outcomes and thereby play some meaningful role in shaping the future for better or for worse.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that democracy can, at least in theory, bring otherwise unaffiliated individuals into collective entities that are capable of acting over the long-term. Democracy can help situate individuals *in time* by providing them with a sense of membership in a collectivity that will persist longer in time than any one member. Democracy makes it possible for individuals to influence collective decisions and thereby *take on* collective commitments to the future *as their own.* For the same reasons, democracy can help underpin the individual's sense of responsibility to the future by supporting the sort of collective entities that can bear responsibility over time. Democracy, in theory, *can* do all of these things, but from a practical perspective this is a rather tall order. As Pasternak (2011) points out, although it is possible for a democratic people to be held collectively morally responsible for its actions, "this would be the case only in very specific and possibly rather rare circumstances" (122). What is more, although many individuals have a sense of commitment and responsibility to the future, we also have cognitive biases against the future and many practical reasons to act in short-sighted ways. In theory democracy can help encourage longer-term thinking and underwrite farsighted collective actions, but it is worth asking *how* and *whether* the necessary conditions are likely to prevail. The remainder of this dissertation is dedicated to addressing these questions.

In the next chapter, I argue that certain democratic goods, such as inclusion, deliberation, and meaningful modes of citizenship, can help encourage longer-term thinking. The claim is that any decision-making process that helps turn particularistic claims into generalized, other-regarding ones, can help extend the time horizons of individuals when long-term issues are being addressed. This is not merely a matter of making persuasive appeals to each individual's more empathetic side. Instead, I argue that under certain conditions democratic practices such as deliberation can create political imperatives that reward long-term thinking and turn short-term positions into political liabilities.

Chapter 6

Democracy, Deliberation, and Long-Term Thinking

Introduction

Up to this point our discussions have focused on the relationship between time and democratic theory. In Chapter 2, I argued that while standard accounts of the democratic myopia thesis are consistent with certain models of democracy — models in which the opinions, preferences, and expectations of individuals and groups are assumed to be exogenous to the democratic process — the democratic myopia thesis is not (necessarily) consistent with participatory or deliberative models of democracy in which the opinions, preferences, and expectations of individuals and groups are shaped by the democratic process itself. Nor, indeed, is it consistent with models of electoral and representative democracy in which preferences are influenced and shaped by leaders, advocates, and other political actors. In Chapter 5, I argued that democracy can, at least in theory, help situate individuals *in time* by connecting them to collective entities that will persist through time and affect the future in one way or another through the decisions that they make. By giving individuals (some) influence over collective decisions, democracy makes it possible for individuals to view collective commitments to the future as their own. Democracy also makes it possible to form relatively loose collections of individuals into the sort of collective entities that are capable of acting intentionally and bearing responsibility for their actions. The focus of the dissertation will now shift from democratic theory to democratic practice.

In the first section of this chapter, I discuss the conditions that define robust democratic environments. Indeed, much of what has been said in the previous chapters depends on practices of democracy that are more robust than those that are found in most existing democratic systems.

While some of the conditions that characterize robust democratic environments are more difficult to realize than others, these conditions are not unattainable. Robust democratic environments can be approximated to greater or lesser degrees depending on the institutional arrangements in which public decisions are made. In the second section of this chapter, I explore how some of the democratic goods that are produced in robust democratic environments can help encourage longer-term thinking. Democratic theorists have argued that certain democratic goods, such as inclusion, deliberation, and substantive forms of citizenship can help transform particularistic claims and expectations into other-regarding claims (see, e.g., Arendt 1982; Cohen 1989; Goodin 1986; Gutmann and Thompson 1996, 2004). I argue that when the temporal dimensions of long-term issues are made explicit, the same processes that encourage political actors to take the interests of others into consideration can help transform short-term perspectives into longer-term ones that encompass the potential interests of future-others.

6.1 Robust Democratic Environments

Despite considerable disagreement about the spirit, purpose, role, practicality, and institutional requirements of democracy generally (see, e.g., Brown 2009; Held 2006; Shapiro 1997), democratic theorists are remarkably agreed when it comes to defining the conditions that are necessary to produce robust democratic environments. Not only are they agreed on the substance of these conditions, but they agree that there are relatively few conditions that are required to specify a robust democratic decision-making process.

Dahl (1985), for example, specifies five conditions: equal votes; effective participation; enlightened understanding; final control of the agenda by the people; and inclusiveness (59).[1] Votes, he explains, are to be taken at the decisive decision-making stage, and these must be equal weighted in order to ensure that the views, preferences, or beliefs of each individual are properly represented in the final outcome. In this schematic, Dahl (1985) works in reverse from the decisive moment (the vote) back through the process of making public decisions democratically. His second condition, effective participation, ensures that each participant has an "adequate and

[1] Dahl has listed similar criteria in at least two other publications (Dahl 1989, 1998). The different accounts that he gives are substantively similar, involving the same five criteria with some variation in wording and emphasis.

equal opportunity for expressing a preference as to the final outcome" before decisive votes are taken (59). This is to ensure that citizens have opportunities, not only to have their views heard, but to persuade others of the validity of their positions, and thereby influence the decisive vote. In order to effectively persuade others, and influence the decisive vote, citizens must have "adequate and equal opportunities, within the time permitted by the need for a decision" to explore, discover, and validate their preferences on the matter at hand (59). Even before this can happen, the demos, or the people themselves, must decide which public issues to place on the political agenda. In order for the public agenda to be set in a fair and effective way that represents the priorities of the public as a whole, democratic decision making processes must be inclusive of all citizens.

Dahl claims that each of these five conditions is necessary, and that they are together sufficient "to fully specify the democratic process" (60). Notice, however, that there are a few critical elements of the democratic process that Dahl does not treat separately. First, he does not treat equality as a separate and necessary condition, but instead works equality into each of the five primary conditions. Second, he does not treat freedom as a separate condition. Nor does does he specifically mention — in this schematic — the all affected interests principle, or any of the many difficulties associated with defining the boundaries of a democratic entity. Dahl's approach starts at a point *after* the demos — or the relevant group of citizens — has been clearly defined and is fairly well fixed. Other scholars have pointed out that it is no simple matter to decide who should be included in a democratic entity (e.g., Goodin 2007; Whelan 1983), or whether the idea of a single and fairly coherent body of citizens makes sense in complex modern societies characterized by shifting social and political issues that affect different groups of political actors in different ways (e.g., Bohman 2007; Warren 2009). Nevertheless, Dahl's schematic identifies a small number of critical conditions for the realization of robust democratic environments. Other scholars adopt similar approaches but emphasize different considerations.

Cohen (1989), for example, identifies four necessary conditions associated with "an ideal deliberative procedure" (22). His focus is on deliberation, which is a necessary component of any robust democratic process but is not itself a sufficient or complete theory of democracy. Deliberation can help individuals formulate well-considered judgements but deliberation is not a com-

plete theory of democracy because it lacks a decision rule. The only decision rule that is incorporated into deliberative theory itself is the unanimous consensus of all participants — which can rarely, if ever, be achieved on contentious political issues. Deliberative theory nevertheless adds substance to each of Dahl's (1985) conditions, with the exception of the first (the vote) which serves as a decision rule. Cohen (1989) also sanctions the use of votes when a unanimous consensus is not reached (or reachable) in a deliberative process (23).

According to Cohen, good deliberative practices must be 1) free, 2) reasoned, 3) equal, and 4) directed toward rationally motivated agreements. Unlike Dahl, Cohen singles out equality for special consideration but equality serves the same functions as it does in Dahl's schematic. According to Cohen (1989), participants must have equal standing at each stage of a decision-making process in order so that each "can put issues on the agenda, propose solutions, and offer reasons in support of or in criticism of proposals" (23). Each individual must also have an equal voice in any decisions that are made. But Cohen also identifies a type of equality that Dahl (1985) only hints at: substantive equality of power and resources. Substantive equality helps ensure that decisions are made only on the basis of reasoned argument, and not on the basis of force, coercion, threats, status, or non-discursive claims of authority. As Cohen (1989) points out, deliberative theory requires that, at least ideally, individuals will have "equal capacity to advance persuasive claims" (281). This form of equality is, of course, not easy to obtain in practice but some notion of substantive equality is implied in most accounts of good democratic processes. There are then, two notions of equality in operation here: formal equality, as represented in notions of equal citizenship and political rights; and substantive equality, as represented in notions of equality of power, resources, and influence.[2]

Unlike Dahl, Cohen singles out freedom as a separate and necessary condition for the realization of robust democratic environments. In order to meet this condition, democratic entities — as publics or collectivities — must be free, not only to set the agenda as in Dahl's (1985) account but in two other ways as well. In Cohen's (1989) account, participants must be free to "regard themselves as bound only by the results of their deliberation and the preconditions for that

[2] Knight and Johnson (1997) have argued that substantive equality should be thought of as a relevant criterion even before deliberation begins. They argue that democratic deliberation requires individuals to be formally and substantively equal in deliberative environments, but that it also required that individuals have "*equal opportunity of access to political influence*" (280).

deliberation" such that collective decisions are made on the basis of persuasive arguments and not as the result of prior commitments, norms, traditions, expectations, or claims to authority. Second, democratic entities must be free in the sense that "participants suppose that they can act from the results [of their deliberations], taking the fact that a certain decision is arrived at through their deliberation as a sufficient reason for complying with it" (22). These two senses of freedom give democratic entities *collective* agency over their own affairs, which, as we will see in the next chapter, is a feature of democracy that plays a crucial role in making intentional far-sighted action possible.

Smith (2009), for his part, identifies a similar set of democratic criteria, even though his focus is on democratic institutions and not on the conditions that are necessary for the realization of democracy itself. Nevertheless, as Smith (2009) points out, there are many affinities between his approach and Dahl's (13). What is more, by focusing on conditions for the design of democratic institutions in particular, Smith identifies a number of concerns — such as transparency and efficiency — that are not part of Dahl's (1985) or Cohen's (1989) theoretical schematics.

In addition, Smith (2009) talks about democratic *goods* as opposed to democratic *conditions*. Democratic goods are collective-level outcomes that are broadly desirable from a democratic perspective. Some of the criteria that Smith identifies are pre-conditions for good democratic practices (such as inclusiveness), while others can be more properly considered democratic goods or outcomes (such as considered judgements). Without making too much of this distinction, Smith identifies, four primary democratic goods as well as two practical ones. The primary ones are: inclusiveness, popular control, considered judgement, and transparency. The practical ones are: efficiency and transferability.

Unlike Dahl, Smith evokes the all affected interests principle in his discussion of inclusiveness. In Smith's account, it is not just those who are formally recognized as citizens that should (or might) have a legitimate role to play in making public decisions. Instead, by the terms of the all affected interests principle, all those who are or might be affected by public decisions should play some meaningful role in making those decisions (21). By this account, the constitution of the demos is not fixed, and might change depending on which issues or set of issues is being decided (see, e.g., Bohman 2007).

Smith (2009), like Dahl, deals with questions of equality under the heading of inclusivity. Inclusiveness in Smith's account refers to the extent to which equality is realized in two aspects of democratic practice: presence and voice (12). Individuals and groups must be provided with sufficient and equal opportunities to participate in democratic decision-making processes, but it is also necessary to consider the strength, power, persuasiveness, and influence of each individual voice or group of voices. As Cohen (1989) and Knight and Johnson (1997) argue, there are thus two types of equality at stake: formal equality of inclusion as well as substantive equality of influence. In Smith's (2009) schematic these two forms of equality are accounted for in terms of presence and voice.

Smith's second criterion — popular control — refers to the degree of influence citizens (or relevant democratic participants) have over public decision-making processes. In order to illustrate this, Smith draws on a schematic description of a decision-making process that involves the following four stages: 1) problem definition; 2) option analysis; 3) option selection; and 4) implementation (23). In Smith's account, there is a role for democratic influence at each stage of the decision-making process, including the last one. By contrast, Dahl's (1985) "final control of the agenda" condition only refers to the earliest stages of a decision-making process when problems or issues are identified and put on the political agenda. Likewise, option analysis and option selection are only implicitly included in Dahl's "effective participation" condition. By making popular control an explicit condition that is applicable to each stage of a decision-making process, Smith (2009) emphasizes the connection between democracy and collective freedom and agency.

Smith's third criterion is what he calls "considered judgement." In order for this good to be realized, democratic processes must be thought-provoking and self-reflective in at least two ways. Those involved should take into consideration the technical aspects of each issue, but they should also take into consideration an adequate or representative range of relevant views and perspectives (12). Considered judgements are not those that are based only on narrow self-serving perspectives, under-examined preferences, or long-standing prejudices. Instead, considered judgements are those that reflect a range of types of relevant information, perspectives, and considerations. Whether or not considered judgements are produced in decision-making proc-

esses depends on whether other democratic conditions are realized. As Cohen (1989) explains, public deliberations that are free, reasoned, equal, and aimed at mutual agreement are one means of producing considered judgements. Trusteeship representation is another means of realizing this democratic good. Even though, by definition, trusteeship representation is not inclusive, good trustees are expected to take into consideration a full range of relevant information, views, and perspectives when making judgements about what is likely to be in the best interests of the represented (e.g., Pitkin 1967).

The idealized democratic and deliberative conditions that are outlined by Dahl (1985), Cohen (1989) and others such as Habermas (1984), often read as if all those who are (or will be) affected are expected to be actively involved in each part of every public decision-making process. This, of course, is neither implied nor practical. Yet, where divisions of participatory labour are employed — that is where one set of political actors (however designated) is empowered to make decisions on behalf of others — additional concerns and considerations are raised. Unlike Dahl (1985) and Cohen (1989), Smith (2009) includes transparency as an essential condition of good democratic practice. Transparency refers to the ability of individuals to scrutinize the activities of other actors, groups, or institutions within the democratic system as a whole. Transparency becomes most important when divisions of participatory labour are drawn: when political representatives are designated and empowered, and opportunities to hide or obfuscate are thus realized. Transparency can thus be viewed as a democratic condition that is in the service of the other conditions. It is, for example, not possible to adequately scrutinize agenda-setting processes, or to make considered judgements about policy options or the actions of representatives unless relevant information is available. Transparency also plays a crucial role in producing other desirable goods such as public trust, political legitimacy, and confidence in the political process as a whole (Smith 2009, 25). Given these considerations, Smith views transparency as one of the four primary democratic goods, along with inclusiveness, popular control, and considered judgement.

In addition to the four primary democratic goods, Smith identifies two practical ones: efficiency and transferability. Efficiency is a consideration because democratic participation places demands on the resources of individuals and groups, such that no individual or group can be in-

volved in making all those decisions that might affect them. From the perspective of institutional design, efficiency is a practical good worthy of consideration because institutions that place heavy burdens on the democratic resources of individuals and groups will not be feasible or functional over the long-term.

Smith's second practical democratic good — transferability — refers to whether or not specific institutional "designs can operate in different political contexts, understood in relation to scale, political system or type of issue" (13). This is an important practical consideration, but it is not itself a necessary condition for the realization of a robust democratic environment. Instead, transferability is a reminder that good democratic environments can take shape in ways that are either quite specific to a particular situation, or that are, by contrast, more widely applicable across a range of political contexts, cultural milieus, or other institutional environments.

Although Dahl (1985) was probably too hasty in declaring that his five criteria "fully specify the democratic process" (60), he was not too far off the mark. Indeed, the three schematics considered here — Dahl's which is focused on democratic conditions generally, Cohen's which is focused on deliberative conditions, and Smith's which is focused on institutional design — are in broad agreement on the main points of the matter. All agree that robust democratic processes must be equal, inclusive, free, and empowered. Effective democratic processes will also encourage participants to make well-considered and publicly-oriented judgements. Cohen and others, such as Knight and Johnson (1997), outline forms of equality that Dahl's scheme fails to consider. Cohen and Smith both develop more nuanced accounts of democratic agency, freedom, and control than does Dahl. Lastly, Cohen and Dahl, in developing theoretical schematics, miss out on some of the more practical considerations that Smith's schematic attends to. In particular, where there are divisions of participatory labour — as there will be in any complex democratic system — it is also useful to consider democratic goods such as transparency, accountability, and efficiency.

In the next section of this chapter I explore some of the ways that robust democratic environments can help encourage longer-term thinking. This approach directly challenges the assumptions made by those who advocate aggregative or social choice models of democracy — models of democracy in which the interests, opinions, and expectations of individuals are

thought to be fixed and exogenous to the democratic process itself (see, e.g., Downs 1957; Elster 1986). In what follows, I argue that robust democratic processes can help shape the opinions and expectations of individuals and groups. In particular, I argue that any democratic practice that helps transform particularistic claims into other-regarding ones will also help transform short-sighted perspectives into longer-term ones that take into consideration the potential interests of future-others.

6.2 Democracy, Deliberation, and Long-Term Thinking

The features of democracy that are most important when it comes to longer-term thinking are those that encourage participants to make publicly-oriented, well-considered judgements. In particular, there are features of good democratic processes that can help transform particularized claims into generalized ones. As mentioned above, democratic deliberation plays a particularly important role in these transformation processes. This is true of both inclusive public deliberations, as well as more exclusive deliberative practices that involve some form of political representation. In both cases, participants are ideally encouraged to consider public issues from a generalized perspective that takes into account a range of potentially relevant interests, considerations, and concerns. Democratic theorists have typically considered only those interests, considerations, and concerns that are attached to, or expressed by current period political actors (e.g., Chambers 2003; Cohen 1989; Elster 1986; Habermas 1984; cf Goodin 2003; Ekeli 2009). In this section, I argue that the same democratic practices that help transform particularized claims into generalized ones can also help transform short-term perspectives into farsighted ones, even though future political actors cannot be included in democratic decision-making processes today. Other features of good democratic practices, such as formal equality and modes of citizenship can also help encourage longer-term thinking. Together, these features of robust democratic processes can help us more effectively balance the concerns of the present with the potential interests of the future.

The idea that democratic practices can help transform particularized claims into generalized ones, usually relies on some notion of public reasoning as an instrumental means of producing "enlarged mentalities." This phrase is Arendt's (1982), but the claim itself is familiar in

democratic theory more generally. Deliberative processes of public reason-giving play a crucial role in these transformations by encouraging participants who are formally equal to talk and listen to each other, test their opinions and positions against the concerns of others, and make attempts to persuade each other of the validity of their claims. Through these practices, participants gain access to a range of perspectives that they might otherwise fail to consider. As Arendt (1982) argues in her analysis of Kant's concept of judgement, "one cannot learn without publicity, without the testing that arises from contact with other people's thinking" (42). It is through this type of contact or exposure to the ideas and concerns of others that it becomes possible to imagine oneself in the position of others and thereby obtain a more complete, or in Kant's terms, "impartial" perspective.

But why should individuals do the difficult work of seriously considering the perspectives of others and formulating generalized perspectives? When it comes to political issues that involve well established beliefs or the distribution of scarce resources, some source of motivation is needed to initiate transformative thinking. Many deliberative theorists believe that there *are* strong incentives for political actors to frame their positions in terms that all could at least potentially accept, even those who do not share the same fundamental concerns, political objectives, or moral outlooks. In non-coercive and inclusive processes of public deliberation, if political actors do not advance public reasons (i.e. those that might be accepted by all) they will be in danger of having their positions or objectives rejected and dismissed. Robust deliberative environments thus ideally exclude reasons or positions that are explicitly self-serving at the expense of others, even when highly contentious issues are being decided. The most widely cited statement of this idea is Elster's (1986): "there are certain arguments that simply cannot be stated publicly. In a political debate it is pragmatically impossible to argue that a given solution should be chosen just because it is good for oneself. By the very act of engaging in a public debate — by arguing rather than bargaining — one has ruled out the possibility of invoking such reasons" (112-113).

Others have argued that this is asking too much of public deliberation, particularly when it comes to contentious or high stakes political issues that involve deep moral questions or the distribution of scarce public resources. Gutmann and Thompson (1996), for example, argue that

while publicity might make individuals "more reluctant to make claims on their own behalf," it will not make them "so reluctant that they forgo the advantage of making them" (126). Gutmann and Thompson also observe that when faced with the expectations (and constraints) of publicity, political actors often simply frame self-serving positions in terms that speak to group interests, in order to "convey some sense that at least they care about some other people besides themselves" (126). Far from undermining Elster's (1986) claim, however, this only makes his point. In Gutmann and Thompson's (1996) account, just as in Elster's (1986), there are strong incentives for political actors to frame their positions in ways that speak to broader interests and more generalized concerns. The group interests that Gutmann and Thompson evoke are *special* interests within the larger polity and are therefore not generalized enough. This fact serves to make these claims as vulnerable as any other particularized claim in a sufficiently robust and inclusive deliberative environment.

How do processes of public reason-giving encourage longer-term thinking? The argument runs as follows: Those making political claims about what ought or ought not to be done with respect to long-term issues, have strong pragmatic incentives to conceptually make their claims at least plausibly acceptable to both current and future publics because any short-sighted claims that are self-serving at the expense of future publics are weaker claims for that very reason, and can thus be challenged or rejected on those grounds in robust deliberative environments.

It can be argued that the primary democratic condition that helps transform particularized claims into generalized ones is inclusion. When a diverse range of viewpoints and perspectives are included in deliberative processes, it will be more difficult for any one group or participant to maintain positions that are self-serving at the expense of some other group or participant. On very long-term issues this critical condition is difficult (or impossible) to obtain because future publics cannot be included in our decision-making processes today. If future individuals or groups cannot actively defend their own interests in deliberative processes, there would appear to be few pragmatic incentives for those who *are* included in these processes to frame their arguments and positions in ways that would be acceptable to the future. Given this, there would seem to be no obvious reason to expect deliberative processes to encourage longer-term thinking — especially in cases where the interests of the current period are (or are thought to be)

diametrically and uniformly opposed to the future. Thus if a particular issue is of great consequence to the current public (such as the implementation of costly greenhouse gas emissions regulations), there is some danger that the potential interests of future publics will be ignored entirely or dismissed even in ideal deliberative environments.

This *is* a danger, but there are pragmatic incentives associated with practices of public reasoning that might nevertheless tend to mitigate against the interests of the future being ignored entirely. While there is no guarantee that advocates of future publics will emerge in any particular deliberative process, those processes that are more inclusive of a full range of potential interests and perspectives are more likely to be farsighted. As Goodin (2003) points out, the "law of large numbers" makes it more likely that "friends of the future" and advocates of other "mute interests" will emerge from within inclusive public forums (221-222).

Simply put, inclusive processes are more likely to include political actors with both short- and longer-term perspectives on any particular issue. In political terms, inclusivity makes it more difficult for current period actors to maintain a unified front against the interests of the future because inclusivity helps ensure that whatever competing perspectives exist in the current public are represented when decisions are made. If there are competing perspectives on what should or should not be done in the current period, any positions that are explicitly self-serving at the expense of the future can be challenged on those grounds, with the political advantage going to those who promote the future's interests — regardless of whether they are genuine "friends of the future" or purely expedient political actors.

Future generations are particularly useful as a rhetorical device because they are widely recognized as vulnerable, innocent, and apolitical subjects of moral concern. Just as it is difficult to justify policies that would hurt the interests of children, the mentally incompetent or other vulnerable groups, it is difficult to justify policies that would appear to hurt or harm the future. It is politically advantageous to be on the side of the future because it is politically disadvantageous to adopt policies or positions that might be (or be seen to be) harmful to innocent groups who cannot speak for themselves. In effective deliberative environments where policy justifications can be challenged by those with opposing positions, those who can persuasively frame their policies as being good for the future will gain a political advantage over those who cannot.

These political or pragmatic dynamics are rarely made explicit by those who are interested in the role of public deliberation in promoting environmental sustainability (e.g., Dryzek 1987; Smith 2003), or longer-term thinking more generally (e.g., Ekeli 2009). Despite this, the practice of rhetorically evoking the interests of the future in order to gain a political advantage in the present, is a commonly employed strategy in many dialogical political exchanges, even those that do not occur in ideal deliberative environments. This strategy is, for example, a familiar approach used by those who promote balanced budget legislation or constitutional amendments designed to help reign in government spending (see, e.g., Saturno and Lynch 2011). Such arguments may be made out of a genuine concern for the interests of the future, or they may be rhetorical devices employed by those who simply favour smaller and leaner governments today. The "think about the future" tagline is familiar in public debates about most other long-term issues as well, especially those having to do with education spending, environmental sustainability, or climate change (see, e.g., Reber and Berger 2005).

Does it matter whether the arguments advanced in favour of the future are genuine or strategic? Can strategic, rhetorical, or pragmatic arguments in favour of the future inspire political actors to take into consideration the *genuine* concerns of the future? There are two reasons why it may not matter whether the arguments that are made in deliberative environments are genuine or strategic. The first reason is familiar; the second is less familiar but arguably more important. The first reason has to do with what some have called the 'civilizing force of hypocrisy'. As Elster (1986) argues, those who "pay lip-service" to certain concerns, often come to be persuaded by the arguments that they initially made disingenuously. This is because by "speaking with the voice of reason, one is also exposing oneself to reason" (113). Given this, Elster argues that it is psychologically difficult to express "other-regarding preferences without ultimately coming to acquire them" (113). Of course, this dynamic assumes that the other-regarding preferences that *are* expressed are at least plausibly reasonable. It is ultimately an empirical question as to whether, when, or to what extent other-regarding arguments come to be internalized and ultimately accepted by those who promote them or are exposed to them in deliberative environments. Where this does happen, the 'civilizing force of hypocrisy' will help to

ensure that genuine other-regarding concerns — including those having to do with future-others — come to be factored into public decision-making processes.

Nevertheless, it is not strictly necessary for individuals or groups to believe the other-regarding claims that they make in order for these to be effectively and meaningfully factored into public decision-making processes. This is because once claims have been introduced into robust deliberative environments (for genuine or strategic reasons), *all* claims must be addressed on the merits of their content. This means that once the concerns of the future have been introduced into deliberative processes they must be addressed *as genuine concerns*. As Habermas (1984) explains, validity claims may be challenged on factual or normative grounds, or they may be challenged on the grounds of insincerity. Thus one might claim that a political actor's expressed concern for the future is not genuine, but in doing so one must also explain why one's own position is not opposed to the interests of the future. By challenging the sincerity of those who support balanced budget laws, those who are opposed to these laws must explain why giving governments the right to run deficits will not be harmful to the future. Similarly, those who are opposed to gas taxes or stricter carbon emissions regulations must explain why failing to adopt these measures will not hurt the future. If the reasons provided in response to these challenges do not appear to be genuine they can be challenged on those grounds. Once future-regarding concerns are introduced into a decision-making environment that is sufficiently deliberative, they must be dealt with as genuine concerns regardless of whether the purveyors of those positions are genuine in their support of the future.

It is worth asking whether political actors in a deliberative environment will face real pressures to answer future-oriented objections with future-oriented reasons. It some cases, it might be possible to neutralize an opponent's argument simply by pointing out its disingenuousness. "My opponent does not really care about the future when he talks about how bad social spending is for deficits and for our grandchildren. He is just defending the interests of his rich friends who do not want to pay taxes."[3] This discursive move redirects the discussion (and the attention of other political actors) back towards present period concerns. As a rejoinder,

[3] I would like to thank Alan Jacobs for raising this criticism and for providing this example.

one might simply maintain a position in favour of social spending that cannot be perceived as self-serving, or that would benefit deserving others in the present period.

While it is possible for any deliberative exchange to be redirected back towards the concerns of the present, there will remain an incentive for anyone who can make credible claims to speak for the future to continually strive to frame (and reframe) the issue in those terms. As explained above, being on the side of the future is politically advantageous because future generations are widely recognized as being vulnerable, innocent, and apolitical subjects of moral concern. If one's position can be framed in a way that promotes the interests of the future — or if one's opponent's position can be framed as damaging to the future — it will be politically advantageous to frame the issue in those terms. Thus any attempt to redirect the discussion back to the concerns of the present (which might be perfectly legitimate concerns) can be met with a rejoinder that reframes the issue in future-oriented terms: "My opponent does not believe that I genuinely have the interests of the future in mind, and it is up to him to judge me on that account. Nevertheless, I would like him to explain how his position is not damaging to the interest of the future. It is a fact that the debts we incur today will be born by our children and grandchildren. How can that be justified?" Given these discursive dynamics, discussions of long-term issues that take place in robust deliberative environments are likely to involve exchanges about how present period actions will affect the future, even though future persons cannot be included in the deliberations themselves. What is more, in deliberative environments the initial intentions of political actors matter less than the persuasiveness of the arguments that they make. Once the concerns of the future have been introduced into a deliberative environment it will be difficult for political actors to maintain positions that are demonstrably harmful to the future without explaining why their opponents' concerns are not justified, or how specific harms (such as the depletion of resources) might be compensated by benefits (such as technological developments).

In direct contrast to any myopic incentives that are created by short electoral cycles, robust deliberative environments can function to incentivize political actors to think in future-oriented ways — at least when the temporal dimensions of long-term issues are recognized and made explicit. Once the concerns of the future have been introduced into a deliberative

environment, these concerns must be addressed on factual and normative grounds and not just in terms of whether or not they are sincere. If deliberations are directed towards the sincerity of a speaker, or towards present period concerns, other speakers will have incentives to reframe the discussion in future-oriented terms if they believe that their positions are consistent with the interests of the future. At some point, those who maintain positions that may be harmful to the future will be under pressure to either: 1) justify their positions on factual or normative grounds; 2) adopt alternative positions or policies that will not harm the future; or 3) willingly pay the potential political costs of promoting positions that can be framed as harmful to the future. These deliberative dynamics should help encourage *genuine* longer-term thinking, especially on those issues that are *most* politically contentious in the current period. On contentious issues, there are likely to be political factions that will benefit from evoking the concerns of the future whenever possible.

But is it necessary for vocal advocates of the future to emerge for long-term thinking in deliberative environments to occur? Perhaps not. As Goodin (2003) points out, it is a common assumption among democratic theorists that in order for particularized claims to be transformed into generalized ones, it is necessary to have some one at the back of the room shout: "Why should I care about that?" (223). But political actors may be incentivized to frame their arguments in general, other-regarding terms even *before* they enter a deliberative forum. As Goodin explains, knowing that one's position "will have to be defended in the public forum, one will ask oneself, 'How would I justify this to *X*?', even before *X* even asks for an explanation" (223). Goodin calls this "anticipatory internalization." This dynamic does not mean that each participant *will* adopt genuine, other-regarding perspectives. What it does mean is that in deliberative environments political actors face strong incentives to think in other-regarding (and future-oriented) ways even *before* they enter the forum.

The claim that I am making is the following: the political dynamics of deliberation can help encourage longer-term thinking in *normal* (i.e. conflictual) political environments. When public decision-making processes are inclusive of both short- and long-term perspectives, when participants are formally and substantively equal in terms of presence, voice and potential influence, and where collective decisions are made according to the persuasiveness of publicly-oriented reasons, the potential interests of the future are unlikely to be ignored or summarily

dismissed because there is always a potential political advantage to being on the side of the future. In robust deliberative environments, the potential interests of the future are only likely to be ignored if current publics remain ignorant of the long-term effects of particular decisions, or if current period actors are united amongst themselves in opposition to the future. Neither of these conditions is likely to prevail. Firstly, we now know that humanity has the power to affect the future in profound and even existential ways. The temporal dimensions of existential issues such as climate change, the storage of nuclear waste, pre-natal screening, and genetic modification are well known. The temporal dimensions of budget deficits, education spending, pension plans and a range of other long-term issues are also well known. Secondly, most long-term issues *are* politically contentious in the current period: in most cases, when decisions are made on long-term issues, some groups or political actors will benefit more than others. As explained above, where there are political factions within the current period, good deliberative processes will tend to encourage longer-term thinking by making it politically advantageous to link the potential interests of the future with one's own interests in the current period. Thus far from being rendered myopic by the political imperatives of short electoral cycles, or the myopic views of voters, democratic systems that are robustly deliberative can help nurture longer-term thinking in most normal (i.e. conflictual) political situations.

In addition to the political dynamics of deliberation, there are other features of good democratic processes that can also help encourage longer-term thinking. In particular, it is worth considering the influence of formal equality and substantive forms of citizenship on the ideas and perspectives of individuals. Although substantively important, formal equality is also symbolically important because it casts each individual in the role of a citizen and helps define the expectations attached to that role. This, in turn, can help transform self-regarding perspectives into generalized ones because those who are cast *as* citizens are encouraged to think of themselves, not only as individuals, but as members of the larger democratic entity.

When the temporal dimensions of long-term issues are recognized and made explicit, those who *are* citizens in a collective entity that *will* affect the future in one way or another, must take the potential interests and concerns of the future into consideration in order to act in ways that are consistent with their role as a citizen. This behaviour, which is well established in the psychology literature, has been called "role rationality" (e.g., Goodin 1986, 88-89). This is not to say that individuals, bureaucrats, and politicians *will* come to think and act in future-oriented,

other-regarding ways simply because they *are* citizens. A cursory glance at any political process will show that decision-makers do not always act in ways that are consistent with their role *as citizens*. Nevertheless, institutions can — and do — shape the behaviour of the individuals within them. Citizenship in a political entity that will (in one way or another) affect the future, should encourage political actors to adopt future-oriented perspectives simply because thinking and acting in these ways is "uniquely appropriate to the role of the individual *qua* citizen" (Goodin 1986, 89). It seems likely that this democratic good (i.e. formal equality and citizenship) will interact with other democratic goods, such as political influence, to further enhance the potential importance of role rationality as a means of transforming particularized viewpoints into generalized perspectives. That is to say, any incentives to think and act in ways that are consistent with one's role as a citizen are likely to be made stronger as one's political influence grows. If this is the case, one way of making citizens more like citizens, and thus more other-regarding and future-oriented, would be to give them additional opportunities to exercise real political influence.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored some of the ways that robust democratic environments can help encourage longer-term thinking. I have argued that any democratic practice that helps turn particularistic claims into generalized other-regarding claims can also help turn short-term perspectives into longer-term ones that encompass the potential interests of future-others. In deliberative processes that are inclusive of a range of both short- and long-term perspectives, I have argued that it is difficult advance and maintain positions that are self-serving at the expense of the future if there are others who — for genuine or strategic reasons — present themselves as 'friends of the future.' Far from simply appealing to each individual's more empathetic side, deliberative environments create *political* incentives that encourage and reward longer-term thinking. In robust deliberative environments, there is always a potential advantage to being on the side of the future when long-term issues are discussed. The critical insight is that once arguments in defence of the future are introduced into robust deliberative environments, these arguments must be dealt with as genuine concerns, even if those who advance them have their own short-term or partisan reasons for doing so. As such, these dynamics are most likely to be

observed on contentious long-term issues where there are pronounced disagreements between existing political factions.

I have also argued that symbols of membership (such as formal equality) and practices of citizenship (such as voting and other forms of influence) can give individuals reasons to think past their own limited temporal horizons. On long-term issues, acting *as* a citizen involves thinking not only about how one's own policy preferences would affect other members of the collectivity, it also involves thinking about how collective decisions will affect the future. This does not mean that those who see themselves *as* citizens *will* come to adopt longer-term perspectives, but it does mean that longer-term thinking is part of being a citizen once we recognize that our collective decisions will affect the future for better or for worse.

Of course merely encouraging longer-term thinking is not enough to make democratic systems more effectively farsighted. It would be naive to think that by encouraging longer-term thinking, longer-term policies will automatically follow. If decisions are made in elected legislatures that are insufficiently deliberative — and subject to the political dynamics of short electoral cycles — policy outcomes are unlikely to reflect longer-term concerns and considerations even if other parts of the democratic system encourage longer-term thinking. This concern raises two additional questions: 1) To what extent (and how) can robust democratic conditions and practices help underwrite farsighted collective actions? 2) How can the different parts of a democratic system be fitted together so that democratic outcomes more effectively balance the concerns of the present with the potential interests of the future? These questions are addressed in Chapters 7 and 8, respectively.

In Chapter 7, I argue that certain democratic practices such as deliberation can help coordinate the actions of individuals and groups in ways that are both intentional and farsighted. Effective forms of public deliberation make it possible for a society or public to talk to itself about what it is doing and where it wants to go. In addition to coordinating contemporaries in ways that are collectively intentional, effective forms of intergenerational communication can help coordinate the actions of non-overlapping generations of political actors. This, in turn, can help encourage longer-term thinking among contemporaries *and* make farsighted plans, projects, and initiatives more viable over the (very) long-term. In Chapter 8, I discuss a number of institutions that can help make our democratic systems more robustly democratic *and* effectively farsighted without overtaxing the democratic resources of individuals.

Chapter 7

Democracy, Deliberation, and Farsighted Action

Introduction

When it comes to coordinating long-term actions there are at least two dynamics to take into consideration — two dynamics that are often conflated. The first has to do with coordinating the actions of contemporaries such that longer-term thinking *in the current period* can be encouraged and farsighted collective objectives can be identified and achieved. The second is a very different dynamic having to do with coordinating groups of political actors who are separated in time.

The first section of this chapter considers the role of democratic processes in coordinating collective actions in ways that are both intentional and farsighted. I argue that robust democratic environments — especially those that emphasize communication, deliberation, and persuasion as mechanisms of coordination — can help contemporary political actors both identify and achieve longer-term collective goals and objectives. When democracies are inclusive, deliberative, and empowered at both the individual and collective levels, democratic citizens can coordinate their actions in ways that are intentional *and* farsighted. By contrast, collective agency cannot be said to exist where collective outcomes are aggregations of individual preferences, expectations or objectives, or where they are products of force, pre-set rules, or inherited traditions. Democracy makes it possible for individuals and societies to guide their actions towards specific collectively identified goals and objectives. As explained in Chapter 5, it is the capacity to act in intentional ways that makes it possible for democratic societies to not only achieve specific objectives but to take responsibly for the (long-term) consequences of their actions.

The second section of this chapter addresses some of the challenges associated with coordinating the actions of groups of political actors who are separated in time. When it comes to relations between non-overlapping generations of political actors, force or authority is not a viable coordination mechanism because, as explained in Chapter 3, each generation is (and will be) free to make their own decisions. The current period has the power to shape the environments in which future decisions will be made, but we have no power to force the future to maintain our principles, policies, or commitments. Nor is aggregation a feasible coordination mechanism: future individuals do not yet exist and they thus cannot have their preferences tallied alongside those of current individuals. For the same reasons, it is impossible to have real-time or reciprocal deliberative exchanges between members of non-overlapping generations. Having ruled out force and aggregation, I argue that *intergenerational* communication and persuasion is ultimately the only effective means of coordinating groups of political actors who are separated in time. While it is not possible for current and future publics to engage in real-time deliberative exchanges, it is possible for current publics to engage with future publics in one-way processes of communication. Effective practices of intergenerational communication can encourage contemporary actors to more fully consider the long-term impacts of their actions. Intergenerational communication can also help make long-term plans, policies, and commitments more politically viable by furnishing the future with the rationales that underpin and justify present period actions. Insofar as this is the case, effective practices of intergenerational communication can, in turn, provide political actors with additional reasons to invest in long-term projects, policies, and initiatives.

7.1 Coordinating Contemporaries

One of the foundational questions in political theory asks how the actions of individuals with conflicting interests and objectives can be coordinated to produce desirable collective outcomes. Remarkably, political theorists have identified only three primary coordination mechanisms. There are those based on power (e.g., force, coercion, law, or authority), those based on aggregation (e.g., markets or voting), and those based on communication or persuasion (e.g., deliberation or negotiation). Qvortrup (2007) has made a similar observation: "In human

societies collective decisions can be reached as a result of three different mechanisms (or combinations thereof): by talking, by voting, or by fighting" (1).[1]

Despite the clarity of this three-part scheme, there are points of overlap between each of these category types. In negotiation processes, those with the most power (i.e. those with a dominant bargaining position or viable alternative negotiation partners) will be at a significant advantage even though persuasion and communication must also play a role in coordinating actions through negotiated agreements. Likewise, although authority involves having the power to issue commands that *will* be obeyed (see, e.g., Arendt 1961), in democratic systems authority is constituted, justified, and upheld through processes of democratic contestation (Warren 1996). Indeed, laws are often more efficient and effective after they have — to some extent — been constituted through deliberative processes of reason-giving and persuasion (e.g., Habermas 1996).

Despite these points of overlap, for our purposes it is sufficient to categorize coordination mechanisms according to the three primary types: power, aggregation, and persuasion. In what follows, I argue that coordination mechanisms that are based on deliberation and persuasion are unique in their capacities to coordinate the actions of contemporaries in intentional, farsighted ways. Effective forms of deliberation make it possible for a society to talk to itself about what it is doing and where it wants to go. Institutionalized deliberation, in turn, makes it possible to use the mechanisms of the state to direct social, political, and economic forces such that collectively-forged longer-term goals and objectives can actually be achieved.

More specifically, I argue that what is needed is some means of *intentional collective coordination*. By this I mean, coordination mechanisms must be *collective* and *intentional* in the following ways. First, individuals and groups need ways to combine potentially conflicting intentions into specific goals and objectives. This is the *intentional* part of the equation. Second,

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[1] Dryzek (1987) has produced a more extensive list that includes nine modes of collective coordination, each with a corresponding social choice mechanism. Dryzek's list is the following: 1) price signals in markets; 2) command systems in administrative spheres; 3) formal rules in systems of law; 4) values in systems of moral persuasion; 5) "partisan mutual adjustment" in polyarchical or pluralistic democratic systems; 6) formal negotiation in bargaining processes; 7) force (as in armed conflict); 8) conditional cooperation in highly decentralized and informal systems made up of independent actors; and 9) discussion in processes of practical reasoning. Notice that each of these forms of coordination can be fitted into a simpler three-part scheme. Command, law, and force are forms of power. The market is an aggregative form of coordination. Values-based discussions and practical reasoning involve persuasion. The rest involve combinations of more than one of the primary forms of coordination.

collectively sanctioned goals and objectives must reflect the genuine intentions, preferences, and concerns of a broad range of potentially relevant interests and perspectives. This is the *collective* part of the equation. Lastly, in order to realize their objectives, political actors need ways to coordinate their actions such that their common goals can be achieved. This is the *coordination* part of the equation.

To make this account more concrete, it is worth briefly considering the extent to which each type of coordination mechanism meets these criteria. Aggregation mechanisms such as markets or voting are collective and inclusive but they are not intentional. Instead, these mechanisms are collectively *unintentional* in the sense that aggregated outcomes are only ever by-products or externalities of the intentional decisions of individuals acting alone. This is as true of democratic processes based on voting as it is of economic markets. Indeed, following thinkers such as Adam Smith (1776) and Hayek (1973), diZerega (1989) has argued that democracies, like markets, can be viewed as "self-organizing" systems that produce collectively desirable outcomes. To put a more negative spin on this, one might say that aggregative democratic processes, like markets, produce *unintentional* outcomes. This is because coordination mechanisms that are purely aggregative cannot be actively and intentionally guided toward specific collective goals or objectives. In order for democratic processes to be intentional, collective goals and objectives must be discussed and identified *before* votes are taken.

Coordination mechanisms that are based on the use of power are not intentionally collective either. These mechanisms are *intentional* in the sense that they provide certain actors with the capacity to achieve specific collective outcomes. Through the use of force, fines, coercion, or command it is possible to coordinate individual actions to achieve desirable collective outcomes or to prevent undesirable ones such as the "tragedy of the commons" problem (Hardin 1968). This, as Dryzek (1987) explains, is one of the advantages of hierarchical administrative systems. As we saw in Chapter 2, it is the capacity to direct society to specific goals or objectives that makes hierarchical administrative systems attractive to eco-authoritarians such as Heilbroner (1980), Ophuls and Boyan (1992), and Shearman and Smith (2007). Hierarchical administrative systems may be *intentional* but they are not sufficiently *collective* because they are not inclusive of a broad range of potentially relevant interests and perspectives.

To the extent that they are inclusive, they can no longer be considered hierarchical or power-based in the same sense. Where collective goals are specified through active and inclusive processes of collective will formation the burden of coordination will, at least in part, shift from enforcement to persuasion.

In contrast to aggregative or power-based modes of coordination, effective forms of deliberation and persuasion make it possible for a society to identify specific collective goals and objectives, and to coordinate its actions such that those goals and objectives can be achieved. From a practical perspective, this does not mean that *all* collective decisions can or should be made only through fully inclusive deliberative means. It is not necessary for each individual to be involved in every public decision. Nor is it necessary for each individual to be persuaded by the wisdom of every collectively agreed upon objective. This level of participation is not feasible, efficient, or desirable in modern complex societies (e.g., Warren 1996). Indeed, all collective entities coordinate actions through a mixture of means, using power, aggregation, and persuasion in different combinations and to varying degrees. The claim that I am making is that collective entities that are *more* inclusive and deliberative (i.e. those that rely more heavily on genuine persuasion as a means of coordination) are also better equipped to effectively act in future-oriented ways.

In order to achieve collectively identified goals and objectives, a society must also be *free* to act according to the results of their collective deliberations and decisions. In aggregative processes, each individual is free to act on his or her own intentions, but aggregative processes are not generative of freedom at the collective level. As Habermas (1984) argues, although aggregation mechanisms such as markets are purposively-rational, in the sense that individuals within them are free to act in ways that they believe will achieve specific individual-level outcomes (such as profits), markets (and other aggregative systems) are not *collectively* rational or generative of collective freedom. This is because within aggregative systems, individuals are compelled to act only in ways that are consistent with the aggregate consequences of those systems, and the system as a whole cannot be guided towards specific collective ends that reflect the mutual values and shared intentions of those operating within the system. Coordination

mechanisms that are based on aggregation do not empower individuals or societies in ways that would allow them to achieve normatively desirable collective outcomes.

Coordination mechanism that are based on the use of power (in whatever form) are intentional at the collective level, but they are not generative of collective freedom or agency. This is because where power-based coordination mechanisms are used, only the most powerful political actors are free to define and achieve their own specific goals or objectives. Where actions are coordinated by authoritative rules or procedures (such as traditions or existing administrative practices) collective outcomes will reflect only the intentions and objectives of the systems themselves as opposed to those operating within them. As Habermas (1984) explains, it was considerations such as these that led Weber (1905), and later Adorno and Horkheimer (1947), to view market systems and "rationalized" bureaucracies as mechanisms that undermine our collective freedom and agency.

Habermas' (1984, 1996) solution to this problem is his *Theory of Communicative Action*. He argues that public deliberation is a means of reintroducing the normative foundations of action theory, and thereby reinstating intentionality and agency into collective action processes. In Habermas' account it is the *process* of coming to collectively-forged agreements in inclusive and uncoerced processes of public reason-giving that allows groups of political actors to collectively specify what they believe ought or ought not to be done. As before, this is the *intentional* part of the equation. To the extent that these processes are inclusive and based (at least in part) on persuasion, mutually agreed upon future goals and objectives will reflect not just the intentions of the most powerful actors or the logic of the rationalized systems themselves, but also the collective intentions of all those within those systems. This is the *collective* part of the equation. Finally, deliberation also has an integrative function which, as explained in Chapter 5, can help bring individuals together into groups with mutually recognized goals and objectives. It is the binding (or bonding) force of persuasive reasons that helps underwrite farsighted collective actions. The claim is that those who understand the reasons and rationales that justify (or are thought to justify) collective objectives are more likely to act in ways that are consistent with those objectives. This is the *coordination* part of the equation.

Dryzek (1987) identifies two types of coordination that are relevant for achieving collectively rational outcomes. "The first is [coordination] *among* actors but *within* particular collective actions; the second is *across* different collective actions" (48). Coordination failures of the first types result in familiar problems such as the underprovision of public goods. Public goods are those that are available to everyone without exception. Such goods include clean air, public parks, national security, or any other good that is indivisible and thus available to everyone if provided at all. The fact that public goods are available to everyone creates a free-rider problem: each individual is incentivized *not* to contribute to the provision of a public good because if enough other people contribute, those who do not pay their share will be able to enjoy the good for free. Given this scenario, public goods will not be provided unless individuals can coordinate their actions so that each individual contributes his or her fair share to the provision of those goods. In general, coordination problems arise whenever rational individual actions (such as not paying for public goods) result in irrational collective outcomes (such as the underprovision of public goods). Irrational collective outcomes are those that are worse for everyone.

One solution to coordination problems of the first type is coercion: individuals may be required by law to act in ways that are collectively rational (see, e.g., Hardin 1968). Law is an essential, efficient, and often effective coordination mechanism but it is not possible to rely on enforcement all of the time (Habermas 1996). In many cases, we must rely on individuals to act in ways that are collectively rational even when individual actions cannot be effectively monitored and enforced. It is in these circumstances that persuasion comes to play a crucial role in helping to solve coordination problems. Where coercion or the threat of coercion cannot be efficiently applied, collectively rational actions must be 'enforced' through communicative practices of justification. Where there are significant individual payoffs for defection, individuals might act in ways that are contrary to the collective interest even if they know and understand the justifications for collective actions. Despite this challenge, the usefulness of persuasion as a coordinating force should not be underestimated. Indeed, the power of persuasion helps explain why it is *not* necessary to enforce most laws, most of the time (Habermas 1996; Warren 1996). And those laws that are routinely broken by otherwise law abiding individuals are often those

that lack sufficiently persuasive justifications. Ultimately, persuasion plays some role in helping to underwrite and make possible all collective actions, even those that *also* rely to a certain extent on enforcement mechanisms. But persuasion is *indispensable* when it comes to those actions that are not easily (or legitimately) enforced through coercive means. Recycling programs provide an illustrative example. Effective recycling programs require some effort from each individual, and they will produce collectively desirable outcomes only if most individuals participate. At the same time, there are no efficient (or justifiable) enforcement mechanisms in place that would *require* individuals to recycle. Successful recycling programs rely almost entirely on persuasion as a coordination mechanism. It is the force of persuasive reason that underwrites and makes collectively desirable actions such as recycling possible. In some cases, it may be necessary to buttress persuasion with coercive measures; in other cases actions must be coordinated without recourse to the use of coercive measures. In either case, persuasion will play some role in making collectively rational actions possible.

The second type of coordination problem that Dryzek (1987) identifies has to do with coordinating actions *across* issue areas. Coordination failures of this type often involve what Dryzek calls "problem displacement." A collectively rational solution to a problem cannot simply shift the problem elsewhere. As Dryzek puts it: "One actor's solution should constitute more than another actor's problem" (51). For example, proposed solutions to the public debt problem will not be collectively rational if budget cuts create problems in other issue areas such as education or economic development that could cost the government more money over the long-term. Nor is it sufficient for one level of government to cut spending in one issue area (such as crime prevention) if this is likely to cost other levels of government more money in different issue areas (such as correctional services). If the objective is to reduce the amount of debt one generation transfers to future generations, uncoordinated spending cuts are not likely to achieve this objective. Without coordination between actors operating in different issue areas, collectively rational outcomes can only be achieved fortuitously.

Collective action problems of this second type stem from a lack of communication between political actors operating in separate but related issue areas. Of course, solving coordination problems of this type is never as easy as simply opening up channels of

communication between political actors. In many cases, specific actors may be heavily invested in policies that have adverse consequences for other actors. Solving collective action problems will often involve resolving conflicts of interest between groups of political actors operating in different issue areas. Solutions might also involve redistributing specific resources or other valuable goods such as economic opportunities. These are difficult political problems that will often require both persuasive and coercive solutions. Nevertheless, opening channels of communication is a necessary first step towards solving these sorts of collective action problems: it is only possible to coordinate actions in collectively rational ways if each actor is aware of the concerns and objectives of others working in separate but related issue areas — and if each actor is aware of how particular actions might help or hinder the actions being taken by others.

Overall, deliberation, persuasion, and communication play at least three essential roles in helping to solve collective action problems. First, deliberation makes it possible for groups of political actors to identify collectively desirable goals and objectives. Second, persuasion helps underwrite collective actions that are not amenable to enforcement, or that cannot be effectively or efficiently enforced through coercive means. Third, communication makes it possible for political actors (individuals, groups, or governments) to act in ways that do not undermine the actions taken by others. The important point, in the current context, is that forms of coordination that are based on deliberation, communication, and persuasion make it possible for groups of individuals to act in ways that are not only collectively rational but farsighted as well. Hanna Pitkin (1981) makes a similar set of claims in the conclusion to an article on Hannah Arendt's conception of justice. As Pitkin (1981) explains: "Only in public life can we jointly, as a community, exercise the human capacity to 'think what we are doing' and take charge of the history in which we are all constantly engaged by drift and inadvertence" (344). It is this process of exercising a political community's collective capacity to think what it is doing, and to act in ways to achieve its own normatively specified collective goals that I am calling *intentional collective coordination*.

Pitkin (1981) also recognizes that deliberation is the only means of achieving effective control over our shared futures. "We cannot" she argues "even begin to direct the drift of social forces unless we see those forces truly and deliberate about them in our public forums" (346).

Lastly, Pitkin (1981) makes a connection between *intentional* collective actions and collective responsibility. "Only citizenship" — by which she means effective inclusion in the public sphere — "enables us jointly to take charge of and take responsibility for the social forces that otherwise dominate our lives and limit our options, even though we produce them" (344). It is a relatively small step to extend this thinking to include not only social forces but economic, political, technological, and administrative as well. Effective processes of public deliberation make it possible to coordinate collective actions in ways that are both collectively intentional *and* farsighted.

In this section I have argued that there are only a limited number of coordination mechanisms. There are those based on aggregation (e.g., markets or voting), those based on the exercise of power (e.g., coercion, command or force) and those based on persuasion (e.g., deliberation and some forms of negotiation). I have argued that inclusive processes of public deliberation are the only means by which political entities, as a whole, can come to consciously shape and control their collective futures. To the extent that collective agency over the future is achieved, collective responsibility to the future is also made possible, and this, in turn, underpins any motivations that we might have to think and act in future-oriented ways.

As mentioned above, in complex modern societies it is not possible for every individual to be involved in making public decisions in every issue area or at each stage of a decision-making process. Nor is it possible *or* desirable to dispense with aggregative processes altogether or with systems of coordination based on authority, bureaucratic rules, or systems of law. Instead, the practical and institutional challenge is to explore how democratic systems, as a whole, can be made more deliberative even though many public decisions will continue to be made through non-deliberative means (see, e.g., Habermas 1996; Warren 1996). Chapter 8 explores some of the ways in which democratic systems can be made more deliberative, and hence better equipped to function in farsighted ways. The next section of this chapter considers the extent to which effective processes of persuasion and public reason-giving can help coordinate not only the actions of those who are contemporaries, but also the actions of non-overlapping generations of individuals.

7.2 Coordinating Actions between Non-Overlapping Generations

Effectively addressing long-term issues often involves more than coordinating the actions of contemporaries such that farsighted collective goals and objectives can be identified and achieved. It is also necessary to coordinate actions *through* time and between groups of political actors who are separated by time. While it is true that each generation overlaps with those immediately before and after — and this makes the intergenerational transmission of social, cultural, and political practices possible — there is a non-trivial sense in which each group of living generations is, at any moment, disconnected from the past and the future and is therefore free to do as they choose within their own temporal sphere.

Intergenerational coordination is required to make long-term projects and initiatives feasible. With respect to long-term investments such as public pension funds or strategic petroleum reserves, the specific challenge has to do with protecting these investments from future governments, each of which may have strong incentives to plunder these savings in order to confer additional benefits or advantages on fellow contemporaries (see, e.g., Jacobs 2011, 52). With respect to long-term problems such as nuclear waste disposal, the challenge is to coordinate the actions of generations of political actors who are separated by very long periods of time. It has, for example, been observed that the slow and asymptotic rate of decay of nuclear waste amounts to a *perpetual* responsibility to protect the future from the dangers of this waste (see, e.g., Ophuls and Boyan 1992, 207). This, in turn, requires not only coordinating the actions of individuals at each moment in time, it also requires coordinating the actions of each intervening generation of political actors. Ophuls and Boyan (1992) along with others such as Weinberg (1972, 1973) do not think that democratic systems can provide the stability that is required to coordinate generations of political actors in this way.

More generally, intergenerational coordination is important because, as Burke (1790) argued, the work of building just and complex societies "requires the aid of more minds than one generation can furnish" (282). Intergenerational coordination can help preserve whatever cultural practices and institutions already exist; it can also help ensure that new institutions or ways of doing things do not undermine whatever benefits have been inherited from the past.

How can the actions of non-overlapping generations be coordinated such that long-term goals and objectives can be achieved? At first glance the options would appear to be the same as before: actions can be coordinated through aggregation, power, or persuasion. But relations between non-overlapping generations of political actors are substantively different from those involving relations between contemporaries. When it comes to coordinating the actions of non-overlapping generations, aggregation is clearly ruled out because many of the relevant actors do not yet exist. This leaves us with only two other options: power and persuasion. Both of these options have been considered by scholars who are interested in intergenerational relations. In the following sections, I explore each of these two options. In Section 7.2.1, I consider coordination mechanisms that would provide current publics with some means of exerting power or authority over future publics. These mechanisms are challenged and ultimately undermined by the freedom that future publics will have to make their own decisions. In Section 7.2.2, I discuss practices of intergenerational communication and persuasion. I argue that persuasion is ultimately the only effective means of coordinating groups of political actors who are separated by time and thus free to make their own decisions.

7.2.1 Intergenerational Authority?

It is relatively common for those who are interested in intergenerational relations to appeal to authority as a means of coordinating groups of political actors who are separated by time. As we saw in Chapter 3, Burke (1790) favoured appeals to political, cultural, and religious authority as a means of achieving intergenerational coordination. In Burke's eyes, the pledge of one generation should be seen as a binding obligation on that generation, their heirs *and* posterity forever (e.g., 103-104). As we saw in Chapter 2, eco-authoritarians such as Heilbroner (1980), Ophuls and Boyan (1992), and Shearman and Smith (2007), believe that a centralized authority with the power to impose its will on current and future publics is needed to produce collective outcomes that are ecologically rational and sustainable over the long-term.

Those who advocate for constitutional clauses that are designed to help protect the future from the present (e.g., Tremmel 2006; Wood 2000) are less overtly authoritarian than the eco-

authoritarians but these two approaches are not entirely dissimilar. Constitutions entrench principles, objectives, and agreements that are thought to be desirable at one moment in time, in order to make it more difficult for these agreements to be changed at some later moment in time. From this perspective, constitutions are one means of imposing the will of one generation (or set of generations) on future generations of political actors. It is for this reason that Jefferson (1816) believed that constitutions should be reconsidered, rejected, or reformed and actively adopted by each new (political) generation.

Hannah Arendt (1961) addresses a number of issues relevant to these positions in her essay "On Authority." In this essay, she argues that the concept of authority is an increasingly threatened but crucial source of stability, durability and permanence in a world that "has begun to shift, to change and transform itself with ever-increasing rapidity, from one shape into another" (95). For Arendt some form of intergenerational authority is necessary to provide the permanence and stability that is required for human beings to exercise their capacities for "building, preserving, and caring for a world that can survive us and remain a place fit to live in for those who come after us" (95). Intergenerational forms of authority are all the more important in the current period because, as Arendt argues, other sources of stability, such as tradition and religion, have lost a lot of their force as effective coordination mechanisms in complex, ever changing, and diverse modern societies (93-94). Arendt's concern is that the concept of authority itself is also losing its power as a coordination mechanism, and this has implications for the long-term prospectives of society.

Arendt is particularly interested in the Roman notion of "founding" as a sources of authority, reverence, and permanence in an otherwise ever changing world. As she explains: "Like the Romans, Machiavelli and Robespierre felt that founding was the central political action, the one great deed that established the public-political realm and made politics possible" (139). From Arendt's perspective it is the authority of the state — or more specifically the constitutionally entrenched procedures, rules, and arrangements — that creates the realm in which 'politics' (or coordination based on argumentation and persuasion) can take place. When the authority of constitutional foundations are challenged and questioned the stability of the whole enterprise is undermined.

According to this view, authority is a source of reverence and stability that is removed from the temporal political world altogether. The authority of the state makes politics possible but it is incommensurate with discussion and persuasion. At the same time, authority cannot be equated with the use of force or coercion. As Arendt explains:

> Since authority always demands obedience it is commonly mistaken for some form of power or violence. Yet authority precludes the use of external means of coercion; where force is used, authority has failed. Authority, on the other hand, is incompatible with persuasion, which presupposes equality and works through a process of argumentation. Where arguments are used, authority is left in abeyance (Arendt 1961, 92).

As we have seen, one of the reasons that Arendt is interested in forms of apolitical authority is because she believes that stable political systems require this sort of authority to persist through time. Where a sense of reverence for the authoritative structures of the state does not exist, the state will become vulnerable to change, provisionality, and the vicissitudes of politics. Under these conditions intergenerational entities will either crumble for lack of the necessary foundations, or they will be built up again on new sources of apolitical authority.

Mosher (2010) has made a similar set of observations. He argues that stable political systems cannot be maintained over time without some source of authority that is grounded in something more than pure reason.

> Breaking the fall into the future cannot come from rational efforts to anchor politics in contract, since any such efforts are always open to the equally rational reinterpretive claims made in the future. On the historicist view, the future can undo every constitutional present. What is needed is a source of authority that cannot be easily undone, namely a structure for political action that is only quasi-rational, a source for reverence as much as for rational argument (Mosher 2010, 8).

Mosher's argument is that when it comes to coordinating the actions of non-overlapping generations of political actors, something like reverence is to be preferred over reason because while both can be reinterpreted and challenged, it is more difficult to reverse or undermine a sense of collective reverence. Like Arendt, Mosher believes that the founding of the state itself can (and should) act as a source of apolitical authority and reverence: “If luck holds, the authority of a liberal or constitutional order may be sustained by transforming itself from being simply a logical argument, whose logic will endure forever, into a historical legacy. The latter is

less rational, more ritualistic, but more likely to retrain political actors and steer them away from being easy prey to time's power to dissolve" (35).

While it is true that reverence can be a source of stability over time, it is not at all clear that a source of apolitical authority based on reverence will be more stable than modes of coordination based on discussion, reason, and persuasion. The issue, as I see it, is that if future publics are free to make their own decisions, they will be as free to question constitutional arrangements (or political foundations) based on sentiments of reverence as they will be to question those based on rational arguments and agreements. Indeed, foundations based on reverence may be especially vulnerable to the power of time to dissolve: once a sense of reverence is challenged there will be nothing to hold it up. By contrast, when constitutional arrangements, political foundations — or more generally intergenerational partnerships — are predicated on explicit rationales, the reasons that justify their existence can be used to support them when challenges are made.

This observation suggests that the foundations of intergenerational collective entities may be stronger if they are built on a form of authority that are closer in substance to Warren's (1996) theory of democratic authority, as opposed to Arendt's (1961) or Mosher's (2010) concept of a foundational authority based on deference or reverence. In Warren's (1996) account, authority itself is constituted through questioning, challenging, and criticism. Legitimate forms of democratic authority can withstand these challenges and thereby gain the acceptance or approval of those who willingly and actively place themselves under its command. This, form of authority then, is as much a form of coordination through persuasion as it is a form of coordination based on the power of command. Still, one of the benefits of authority is that it tends to be more efficient than persuasion. Effective forms of authority make it possible to coordinate actions without persuading each individual or group of political actors to obey laws or commands *at each moment in time*. But if we want the benefits of authority, something like democratic authority is likely required where ever political actors are free to do as they choose. In these circumstances authority can only continue to be an effective and efficient coordinating mechanism if it can, at least in principle, be justified to those who are supposed to act under its command. Given the freedom of future publics to do as they please, democratic forms of

authority (which are ultimately predicated on publicly justifiable reasons and rationales) are likely to produce arrangements that are more stable over time than those based on quasi-rational forms of reverence and deference.

7.2.2 Intertemporal Persuasion

When it comes to coordinating groups of political actors who are separated in time, we have thus far questioned the viability of two of the three primary modes of coordination. Aggregation was immediately rejected because it would require counting up the preferences or opinions of political actors who do yet not exist. Forms of authority that are based on force, power, reverence, or deference have also been rejected because future publics will be free to make their own decisions and we have no control over what they will decide to do. The only remaining means of intergenerational coordination is persuasion.

It is worth noting at the outset that authoritative mechanisms such as constitutions can make it *more difficult* for future publics to reverse specific decisions. Constitutional clauses typically stipulate that a very broad range of actors must agree before any changes in specific policies, principles, or arrangements can be made. Constitutions *can* be effective at constraining the actions of both current and future publics[2] — but it is important to recognize the role that argumentation and persuasion play (and must continue to play) in making constitutional arrangements viable over the long-term. If constitutional clauses do not have plausible justifications to hold them up, they will be vulnerable to change even if supermajorities are required to make constitutional amendments. Indeed, it is relatively common for current publics to conceive of themselves as being in communicative relations with future publics. In some traditions, constitutions themselves are thought of in these terms. Montesquieu (1748), for example, referred to constitutional documents and clauses as *rapports*. From this perspective, constitutions can be viewed as missives to future members of a political society: they are 'living' documents that seek to guide rather than constrain the actions of future publics. When looked at in this way, constitu-

[2] Think, for example, of the 2nd Amendment in the U.S. Constitution. This clause has made it difficult for U.S. politicians to introduce gun control laws even though many citizens support stronger gun control laws.

tions are an example of a mechanism of intergenerational coordination that is based as much on persuasion as on force or coercion.[3]

A persuasion-based approach to intergenerational coordination — in which reasons, rationales, and justifications for current period actions are transmitted to future political actors — has both a normative justification as well as a number of practical advantages. The normative justification is based on the weak version of the all affected interests principle that is discussed in Chapter 5 — but we can also make sense of it from the perspective of a trusteeship theory of representation. From a practical perspective, persuasion and communication must be part of any effective means of coordinating the actions of current and future publics, because future publics will be free to make their own decisions in their own temporal spheres.

As argued in Chapter 5, we are normatively obliged to consider the potential interests of future publics when we are making decisions *if* our decisions are likely to have long-term effects and consequences. The all affected interests principle can also be used to justify a normative obligation to *explain* current period actions in ways that might, at least in principle, be acceptable to both current and future publics. Johnson (2007), for example, has argued that the deliberative ideal calls for "inclusive, informed, and uncoerced deliberation toward an agreement of both existing and future persons, which can serve as a justificatory basis" for any current period decisions that have long-term consequences (69). Given that future individuals cannot be included in decision-making processes today, Johnson argues that the deliberative ideal (together with the all affected interests principle) leads us towards a precautionary approach when long-term decisions are being made. She argues that the *only* actions that can be justified in the current period are those that would not pose any significant risks to the health and well-being of future generations: anything else would not be acceptable from the perspective of those who will be affected in the future.

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[3] It is also worth pointing out that although many long-term issues — such as the protection of biodiversity or balanced budgets — may be amenable to constitutional protections (see, e.g., Tremmel 2006; Wood 2000), many other long-term issues such as education spending, transportation planning, or disaster preparedness are unlikely to be addressed or entrenched in constitutional documents. There will always be long-term issues that have not or should not (for whatever reason) be entrenched in constitutions. To the extent that this is the case, even if constitutional clauses are an effective means of addressing some long-term issues and protecting the interests of the future, we will nevertheless require some other means of intergenerational coordination.

Beckman (2008) makes a similar claim, but he bases his arguments on a contractarian approach instead of a deliberative one. Responding to Thompson (2005), who argues that our primary concern in the current period should be to preserve the sovereignty of future political actors, Beckman (2008) asks whether constitutional constraints that are imposed by one generation can be justified given that they will also constrain future political actors (620). Following Scanlon (1998), Beckman (2008) argues that constitutional constraints *can* be justified if they are based on reasons that the future cannot reasonably reject. In this way, Beckman's and Johnson's approaches are similar: both imagine counterfactual processes of reason-giving between current and future persons. Both argue that the only decisions that can be justified in the current period are those that the future could not reasonably reject.

The problem with this approach is that it cannot account for the diversity of types of long-term issues. Johnson (2007), for example, is concerned only with those decisions that might have long-term consequences that are both negative and irreversible. Where this is the case, our standards for justification should be very high, simply because irreversible decisions *will* be binding on future publics. When it comes to these types of issues — such as genetic modification or the destruction of biodiversity — Johnson is right to argue that the current period should be morally bound to make only those decisions that the future could not reasonably reject.

Nevertheless, there is a range of other types of decisions that will affect the future that are not irreversible, and thus not binding on the future. In these cases our moral standards for justifying current period actions need not be so high. The types of decisions about which Beckman (2008) and Thompson (2005) are worried are not binding on the future. Constitutional constraints adopted in the current period might increase the political costs of making certain future decisions, but these constraints cannot *bind* the future or undermine the sovereignty of future political actors in any familiar sense of these terms. If the current period is free to adopt constitutional constraints, the future will be free to abandon them. As Mosher (2010) says, "the future can undo every constitutional present" (8).

Indeed, the number of decisions that are truly irreversible, and hence binding on the future, are only a small minority of those that are likely to have long-term consequences. Those decisions having to do with genetic modification and the destruction of biodiversity are irre-

versible. Those having to do with public debts, land-use patterns, institutional arrangements, and even many types of environmental pollution are not, strictly speaking, irreversible. Debts can be forgiven or debtors can default. Land can be repurposed for new and different uses, or preserved for conservation purposes. Constitutions can be reworked or abandoned, and many types of pollution can be remediated. These actions may be politically or financially costly but future publics will be free to make these types of decisions on their own terms. To the extent that the future is (or will be) free to revise and reconsider decisions that were made in the past, it is not morally necessary to limit current period actions to only those decisions that cannot be reasonably rejected. To do so would unduly constrain current publics by treating all temporally complex issues the same.

This said, the fact that many public decisions will have impacts that are, at least in principle revisable, does not mean that we can justly ignore the potential interests of the future. I agree with both Johnson (2007) and Beckman (2008) that we have a moral obligation to consider the interests of the future, *and* explain our actions to those who are (or will be) affected. My argument is that we should have different standards based on the types of issues that are being addressed. When long-term issues involve (or might involve) irreversible consequences our moral standards should be very high. On these types of issues we should be obliged to make only those decisions that the future could not reasonably reject. In all other cases, current period decisions should instead be based on reasons that the future could, at least in principle, accept. [4]

This approach is also consistent with the tenets and practices of trusteeship representation. As Pitkin (1967) explains, a trustee is a representative who is free to act according to his or her own assessments of the interests of the represented. Trustees are free to act independently, either for or against the expressed wishes of the represented, or in the absence of any expressed wishes. But this does not mean that they are free to act *completely* independently. Trustees must consider the interests of the represented *and* provide explanations, justifications, and rationales

[4] The distinction between justifications that cannot be reasonably rejected and those that might be reasonably accepted is a distinction that Beckman (2008) fails to make. He often uses these two phrases interchangeably, as in the following paragraph: "The test for the correctness of our actions towards future people should consequently be whether the reasons we provide could *reasonably be accepted by them*. Standing in a moral relation with others is to recognise the force of legitimate expectations placed on us. The contractualist idea is that the content of these expectations is best captured by imagining what reasons for action *others could not reasonably reject*" (616, emphasis added).

for any decisions that are made on their behalf. This act of "giving an account" — or what might be called *communicative accountability* — helps maintain the legitimacy of the representational relationship, especially when a trustee acts against the expressed interests of the represented. As Pitkin (1967) explains, the decisions of representatives "must not be found [to be] persistently at odds with the wishes of the represented without good reason in terms of their interest, without a good explanation of why their views are not in accord with their interests" (209-210). These need not be reasons or explanations that the represented cannot reasonably reject, but they must be "good" in the sense of being reasons that the represented might reasonably accept.[5]

That reasons alone are enough to justify the actions of trustees might at first seem surprising, until it is recognized that in order for a representational relationship to remain legitimate, the represented must also have meaningful opportunities to assess, accept or reject the rationales used to justify decisions made on their behalf. Practices of communicative accountability provide the represented with the information that they need to competently judge the actions of their representatives. In turn, these practices encourage representatives to think about the represented in terms that genuinely reflect their potential interests. If representatives do not do this, they are in danger of losing their positions, having their decisions overturned, and undermining their own long-term goals or initiatives.

The situation is not so very different when it comes to coordinating groups of political actors who are separated by time. With respect to long-term decisions, current period actors are always in the position of trustees vis-à-vis the future. And those in the current period must always act in the absence of the expressed interests and wishes of those who will be affected in the future. According to the theory of trusteeship representation that is described above, the current

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[5] Just to be clear, in the case of irreversible decisions such as the depletion of nonrenewable resources, the justifications that are required (i.e. reasons that cannot reasonably be rejected) are not justifications that future publics must *actively* accept. Once nonrenewable resources have been used there is nothing that future publics can do about it. Instead, Johnson (2007) argues that we should use such justifications in the current period as a criterion for whether certain actions are or are not morally permissible. By arguing that our standards should be lower on long-term issues that involve reversible consequences, I am not saying that the arguments that we transmit to the future should be any less persuasive. Indeed we may have to work *harder* on such issues in order to convince the future not to undo investments that we have made. This is because when it comes to actions that involve potentially reversible decisions, future publics *will* be actively involved in judging our decisions. My position is that our *moral* standards should be lower when it comes to actions that are in principle reversible, because future publics will in these cases be (comparatively) free to make their own decisions. If we do not want future political actors to undo the investments that we make we should make the arguments in favour of those investments as persuasive as possible, but we should not be morally obliged to take only those actions that cannot be reasonably rejected.

period is, at minimum, under an obligation to: 1) consider the potential interests of the future; 2) weigh the potential interests of the future against the expressed wishes and concerns of current publics; and 3) make decisions that might reasonably be accepted by both current and future publics. We are also normatively obligated to transmit the reasons and rationales that justify our decisions *through time* to those who are likely to be affected in the future.

This practice — which might be called *temporal communicative accountability* — has two primary functions. If used effectively, it would help encourage longer-term thinking in the current period. It would also help make long-term plans and initiatives more viable by furnishing the future with the information that they will need to make competent judgements about their own inherited institutions, social arrangements, and intergenerational obligations.

A communicative approach to intergenerational coordination is attractive because it is applicable to all types of temporally complex issues. It is applicable to those long-term decisions that involve overlapping generations (such as education funding), as well as those that involve relations between non-overlapping generations (such as nuclear waste disposal). It is relevant to those issues that involve irreversible decisions (such as the destruction of biodiversity) as well as those that involve revisable decisions (such as land-use patterns). In each case, the important criterion is whether current period actions could reasonably be accepted by future publics.

Far from being a purely theoretical account of intergenerational relations, the practices of temporal communicative accountability that I have described would be relatively easy to institutionalize. Thompson (2010), for example, has argued that governments should be required to "issue statements justifying any adverse effects their actions might have on the democratic capacities of future citizens" (32). These "posterity impact statements" would be similar to the environmental impact statements that many governments are currently required to issue. This is an interesting idea but there is no reason that posterity impact statements should be limited to only these two issues. Governments, and other entities such as corporations, could be obliged to publicly explain and justify *any* actions that will (or might) have significant long-term consequences. Similar practices have found expression in some aboriginal communities in the form of the "seventh generation rule." According to this practice those involved in making *any* public decisions

are obliged to consider the likely impacts of their actions on the next seven generations (e.g., O'Sullivan 2011).

In addition to fulfilling certain normative obligations, practices of temporal communicative accountability have a number of practical advantages. First, as mentioned above, stipulations that current period actions be explained (and explainable) to future political actors is one means of encouraging longer-term thinking in the current period. Posterity impact statements would force political actors to think about the future consequences of their decisions *and* come up with plausible justifications for their actions. Of course, many political actors will be inclined to favour their own short-term interests and they may attempt to make justifications that are less-than-acceptable from the perspective of the future. This is a potential problem. Nevertheless, effective democratic systems can help mitigate this problem. In a democratic system that is sufficiently deliberative, posterity impact statements can be scrutinized by others, judged on the merits of their content, and accepted or rejected on the basis of whether or not they adequately strive to balance the concerns of the present with the potential interests of the future.

Second, practices of temporal communicative accountability can help coordinate actions across time by furnishing the future with the rationales that we have used to justify our own long-term projects, plans, and other intergenerational initiatives. There is no guarantee that the future will accept the rationales that we provide, and there is no guarantee that the future will continue to invest in long-term plans and initiatives that we believe are important. Nevertheless, effective practices of intergenerational communication can help make long-term projects and initiatives more likely to succeed. The reason is simple: long-term projects that are underpinned by rationales that the future can, at least in principle accept, are more likely to *be accepted* and maintained by those who come into existence in the future than those that are made with little regard for the judgements of future publics. To the extent that this is the case, practices of temporal communication can also help justify and motivate longer-term action in the current period. There is no point in making costly investments in carbon tax programs if these programs are likely to be abandoned by future governments or generations before they can do any good. There is no point investing in public pension schemes or posterity funds if these accounts are likely to be pillaged by future governments for their own partisan purposes. Effective practices of inter-

generational communication can help make long-term plans more politically viable by ensuring that the intended objectives of long-term plans are made acceptable to future political actors *and* transmitted to them through time. By making long-term projects and investments more politically feasible, effective practices of intergenerational communication can also help motivate and justify farsighted actions in the present period.

A communicative approach to intertemporal relations does not rule out the use of other mechanisms of coordination such as constitutional clauses. As explained above, constitutions are designed to make it more difficult for future political actors to change certain policies or arrangements without first gaining the support of a broad range of actors. In this capacity, constitutions can help protect the future from the actions of the present, and they can help provide assurances that specific policies or arrangements will not be (easily) reversed by future political actors. Despite this, constitutions should not be understood merely as mechanisms of enforcement: they are also *political* documents that must be forged, interpreted, and continually defended or abandoned in political processes. Constitutions may be an effective way to constrain the actions of future publics to a certain extent and on certain issues, but it is crucial to recognize the role that intertemporal communication and persuasion plays (and must continue to play) in making constitutional arrangements viable over the long-term. If constitutions are not underpinned by justifications that future publics can, at least in principle accept, they are likely to be amended or abandoned even if supermajorities are required for changes to be made. When it comes to the large number of policies, principles, and arrangements that are not entrenched in constitutional documents, communication and persuasion are the only viable means of coordinating political actors who are separated in time.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that deliberation and persuasion can help coordinate individual actions in ways that are collectively intentional and thus potentially farsighted. I have also argued that there are two ways of thinking about coordinating individual actions in farsighted ways. One problem has to do with coordinating the actions of contemporaries such that farsighted collective objectives can be identified and achieved. The other problem has to do with coordinating the actions of non-overlapping generations of political actors. Even though these problems are each associated with different political dynamics, I have argued that they are both amenable to the

same solution. Modes of coordination that are (at least to some extent) based on deliberation and persuasion can help coordinate the actions of individuals both *in time* and *through time* in ways that are collectively intentional.

By comparison, modes of coordination that are based on aggregative processes cannot be consciously or collectively directed towards specific goals. Nor can aggregation be used to coordinate the actions of individuals who are separated in time because the preferences and claims of those who do not yet exist cannot be tallied up and counted. When mechanisms of authority or force are used to coordinate actions, collective outcomes can be directed towards specific goals and objectives but these objectives cannot be thought of as *collective* objectives unless they genuinely reflect the interests, concerns, and input of those who are (or will) be affected. Indeed, collective objectives are unlikely to reflect the interests, concerns, and input of those affected *unless* they are forged in genuine democratic processes of persuasion and deliberation. Nor are modes of coordination that are based on authority, force, reverence, or deference likely to be effective when it comes to coordinating the actions of those who are separated by time. Each generation is (and will be) free to make their own decisions within their own temporal spheres. Where political actors are free to make their own decisions, modes of coordination that are based on authority or reverence must be justifiable *and* justified or they will not survive. If this is the case, modes of coordination that are based on effective practices of intergenerational communication as opposed to semi-rational sentiments of reverence or deference are likely to make intergenerational projects and partnerships more, not less, viable over the (very) long-term.

The more general claim is the following: the prospects for effective farsighted action depend on the deliberative quality of the democratic system itself. If decision-making processes are not sufficiently inclusive and deliberative, a society will have no way to talk to itself about what it is doing and where it wants to go. If the system is not deliberative enough, there will be few political penalties for making claims that are vague, disingenuous, or insufficiently attentive to the potential interests of future publics. By contrast, when claims about the interests of the future are introduced into robust deliberative environments, these claims must be addressed on the merits of their content and accepted or rejected on these terms. In the next chapter, I identify and discuss a number of institutions that can help make our democratic systems more effectively farsighted by making them *more* democratic and deliberative in a variety of ways.

Chapter 8

Institutions: Long-Termism and Democratic Systems

Introduction

We are now in a position to explore how existing democratic systems can be made more effectively farsighted. Based on the arguments in the previous chapters I have identified five conditions that are conducive to longer-term thinking and farsighted action in democratic systems: 1) independence from electoral cycles; 2) inclusion; 3) deliberation; 4) membership; and 5) popular control. None of these conditions — separately or together — is sufficient to *guarantee* that collective outcomes will effectively balance the concerns of the present with the potential interests of the future. Instead, each condition is either necessary or conducive to longer-term thinking and farsighted action.

The first condition is independence from electoral cycles. This refers to institutions or decision-making processes that are independent (at least in some respects) from the political dynamics created by short electoral cycles. If independent but nevertheless democratic institutions can be effectively integrated into the democratic system, they can help counterbalance some of the myopic tendencies associated with electoral politics. Independence from electoral cycles is conducive to longer-term thinking and action but it is not a necessary or sufficient condition. Inclusion is also a conducive condition. Inclusion helps ensure that both short- and long-term perspectives are represented when public decisions are made. Deliberation is a necessary condition. Effective forms of public deliberation make it possible for a society to talk to itself about what it is doing and where it wants to go. Without effective forms of deliberation a society will be un-

able to act intentionally: it will not be able to identify collective goals or direct its actions towards specific objectives. Membership is a conducive condition. A sense of membership within a democratic entity that *will* affect the future in one way or another can provide individuals who very much think of themselves as individuals with reasons to think past their own temporal horizons. Democratic membership is not the only relevant form of affiliation but it is important because effective democracies provide individuals with influence over collective decisions that will affect the future. Popular control is a necessary condition for effective farsighted collective action. Popular control can be divided into two parts: control over political agendas and control over collective outcomes. Both types of popular control are necessary conditions. Without control over the political agenda, a democratic society cannot steer itself towards its own collective goals and objectives. Without some means of controlling collective outcomes, a society cannot act on its own intentions.

These five conditions can help make our democratic systems more effectively farsighted. None of these conditions — separately or together — should be conceived of as a guarantee that collective actions *will* produce outcomes that are less myopic. Indeed, there are no guarantees in democratic politics. As Goodin (1992) and Saward (1993, 1996) have argued, it is useful to make a distinction between democratic procedures and substantive policy outcomes. No democratic procedure or institution can effectively guarantee specific policy outcomes without losing something of its democratic nature (see, esp., Saward 1996). In any case, as argued in Chapter 7, non-democratic political 'guarantees' are likely to be weaker than democratic ones because they are less likely to be supported by publicly-acceptable reasons and rationales. Nevertheless, institutional designs and arrangements can help make specific policy objectives more or less likely. In this chapter I discuss a number of democratic institutions that can help counterbalance the myopic tendencies of electoral politics and produce collective outcomes that more effectively balance the concerns of the present with the potential interests of the future.

The first section of this chapter briefly outlines a systems-level approach to the study of democratic institutions. The second section looks at four supplementary institutions: citizens' initiatives, referendums, minipublics, and participatory budgeting processes. I argue that when effectively integrated into the democratic system, these institutions can together provide each of

the five conditions that are conducive to longer-term thinking and farsighted action. What is more, these are institutions that have been tried and tested in a variety of democratic contexts. The third section of the chapter explores a number of institutional designs that have not yet been tried or tested. In Section 8.3.1, I discuss proposals for institutions that have been specifically designed to help make our democratic systems more effectively farsighted. In Section 8.3.2, I argue that a randomly selected second chamber would help provide many of the conditions that I have associated with longer-term thinking and farsighted action. Such an institution is attractive, in part, because it would be located at the very center of the existing legislative system. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that it is possible to make our democratic systems more effectively farsighted without overtaxing the democratic resources of the average individual.

8.1 A Democratic Systems Approach

It is customary to judge each democratic institution only on its own merits. Some institutions are good a producing high quality deliberation, others provide individuals with effective ways of holding their representatives accountable. Some institutions create inclusive environments that incorporate the voices and concerns of many individuals with diverse and conflicting points of view. Few institutions can provide all of these goods — and others — at the same time. Elections themselves are highly inclusive: every adult citizen is entitled to participate. Elected legislatures are inclusive in one sense because they are designed to be responsive to the population as a whole. Legislatures are exclusive in another sense because they are not typically descriptively representative of the population, and only those who have been elected can participate in parliamentary debates and law-making activities. Courts are not inclusive or representative but they are highly deliberative. According to a democratic systems approach, however, the appropriate unit of analysis is not the individual institution but the system as a whole. To what extent does the system function in ways that are inclusive, deliberative, accountable, and transparent? To what extent are democratic outcomes reflective of the wishes and intentions of the public as a whole?

In addition to primary democratic institutions — such as political parties, free media organizations, elected legislatures, and courts of law — democratic systems often incorporate a

range of supplementary practices and institutions such as protest movements, interest groups, citizens' initiatives, referendums and, more recently, minipublics and participatory budgeting processes (see, e.g., Fung and Wright 2003; Smith 2009). Each institution in a democratic system can help make the system itself more robustly democratic, even if no single institution can provide all of the necessary or desirable democratic goods.

Recent work in this area has tended to focus on the *deliberative* system rather than the *democratic* system more broadly conceived (Mansbridge *et al.* 2012). Mansbridge, for example, has defined the deliberative system as the full set of formal and informal institutions and practices that make it possible for individuals to talk to each other, make collective decisions, and effectively rule themselves:

> Through talk among formal and informal representatives in designated public forums, talk back and forth between constituents and elected representatives or other representatives in politically oriented organizations, talk in the media, talk among political activists, and everyday talk in formally private spaces about things the public ought to discuss — all adding up to what I call the deliberative system — people come to better understand what they want and need individually as well as collectively (Mansbridge 1999, 211).

According to Mansbridge *et al*. (2009), each component of a deliberative system provides some essential or useful function, and each part contributes in a different way to making the system as a whole more deliberative (41). At the same time, while certain parts of the system mutually reinforce each other, in other cases there will be conflicts between the objectives or contributions of one part of the system and the practices or expectations of another (see, e.g., Mansbridge *et al* 2012; Thompson 2008).

The critical insight of a deliberative systems approach is to recognize that while the regulative ideals of deliberation — publicity, mutual respect, equality of voice, open-mindedness, truthfulness — cannot be exhibited in every deliberative interaction, the full range of regulative ideals might nevertheless be achieved at the systems level (Mansbridge 1999, 224). As Goodin (2005) has argued, "while we cannot seriously expect all the deliberative virtues to be constantly on display at every step of the decision process in a representative democracy, we can realistically expect that different deliberative virtues might be on display at different steps in the process" (193). The basic idea is that each part of the system can be judged according to its own

standards and expectations, and that it is not necessary for a particular part of the system, or each individual interaction, to live up to the full set of regulative ideals associated with normative theories of deliberation. Instead, the object of evaluation shifts from individual deliberative 'moments' to the deliberative quality of the system as a whole.

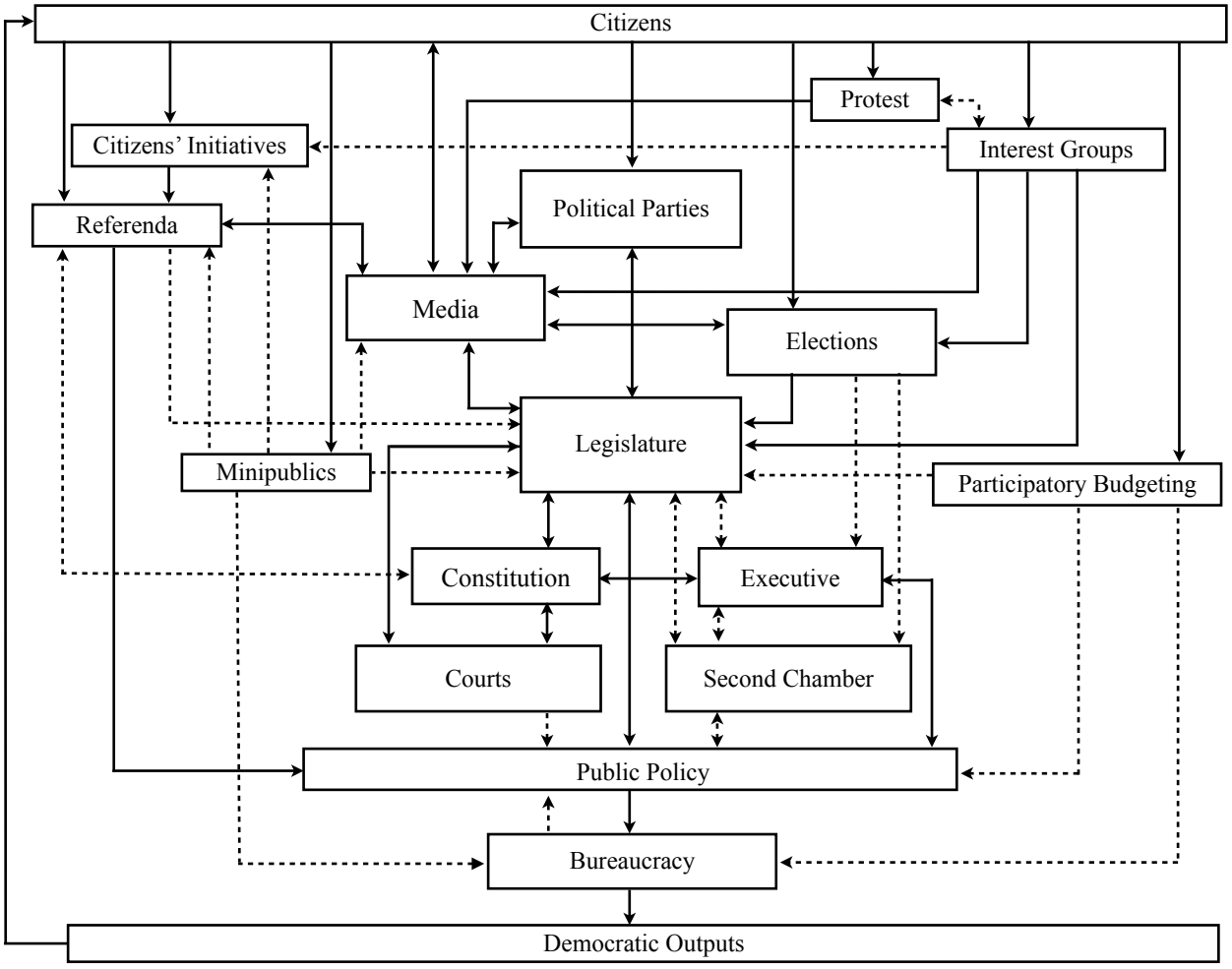
This focus on deliberation makes sense. For many, deliberation is the ultimate source of political legitimacy (see, e.g., Bohman 1998; Chambers 1996, 2003; Gutmann and Thompson 1996, 2004; Habermas 1984, 1987, 1996). Deliberation is *the* democratic practice that makes all other democratic practices (such as voting) legitimate. Nevertheless, deliberation is only *one* component of a democratic system. Like all other democratic practices deliberation has its own strengths and weakness. Deliberation is one way to help individuals and groups make well considered other-regarding decisions, but it is not a complete theory of democracy because it does not provide an account of how public decisions should be made when disagreements arise and persist. As Smith (2009) has argued, the "danger of leaning too heavily on one theoretical position is that significant elements of democratic practice and institutional design can be overlooked" (11). I will follow Smith and focus not on the deliberative system, *per se*, but instead on the democratic system as a whole. I will also follow Smith in pointing out that although this account of the democratic system is not explicitly deliberative, the practice of combining democratic institutions in productive ways "may well have the effect of increasing the deliberative quality of citizen participation" in the system overall (190). Indeed, deliberative theory and practice plays a central role in my argument that a multilayered system of interlocking democratic institutions can help counterbalance the myopic tendencies of most existing democratic systems.

Figure 8.1 is an illustration of what a robust democratic system might look like. The parts are modular and they can change over time as innovations are tried, accepted, rejected, or fitted together in new ways. In addition, democratic systems will be different in different locations because they can be designed to meet specific needs, expectations, and contingencies.

The democratic system that is depicted in Figure 8.1 includes both primary and supplementary institutions. Primary institutions, such as courts and legislatures, are located nearer the centre. Supplementary institutions, such referenda, citizens' initiatives, and minipublics, are located nearer the periphery. Locations and relations between each part may be different in different democratic systems. Referenda, for example, might be depicted closer to the centre in Switzerland or California where this method of decision-making is relatively frequently used. In most

democratic systems, referenda are used sparingly and function more as supplementary institutions (Qvortrup 2007).

Figure 8.1: A Democratic System



In Figure 8.1, democratic decision-making processes start with the citizen body, which is depicted at the top, and they 'end' with democratic outputs, which are depicted at the bottom. As in the work of Soroka and Wlezien (2010), democratic outputs in turn affect the citizen body, thus creating a feedback loop. In this illustration, connections between the parts of the system are represented by arrows. These are the pathways through which ideas, expectations, opinions, preferences, influences, and ultimately public policies travel. Solid arrows depict necessary connections between institutions; if these connections did not exist the function of the institution within

the democratic system would be undermined. There is, for example, a necessary connection between elections and the make-up of the legislature.

Dashed arrows, by contrast, represent potential connections between institutions. For example, while there is a necessary connection between citizens and minipublics, these institutions can perform a number of different functions within the system as a whole (see, e.g., Goodin and Dryzek 2006). Some minipublics are empowered to trigger referenda (e.g., Warren and Pearse 2008). Others are primarily designed to generate media coverage (e.g., Fishkin 1995). Minipublics can also function as information cues for referendum voters on highly complex and unfamiliar political issues (Gastil and Knobloch 2011; MacKenzie and Warren 2012). In other cases, minipublics might be charged with making direct recommendations to those working within bureaucratic or regulatory agencies (e.g., Burgess and O'Doherty 2009). Referendums can also be employed in a variety of ways: they can be used as a form of direct legislation; they can be used to guide legislative debates and decision-making processes; and they can be used to sanction constitutional packages and amendments (see, e.g., Mendelsohn and Parkin 2001).

Participatory budgeting process, which will be explained and discussed at greater length in Section 8.2, can provide citizens with direct influence over public decisions made at the municipal level (Smith 2009). It is also possible to conceive of participatory budgeting processes that are designed to fit into the democratic system in different ways. One could, for example, imagine a participatory budgeting process that functions at the regional or national level.

Although Figure 8.1 depicts the democratic system as a series of interconnected parts, it should not be compared to a machine that simply processes citizens' concerns, preferences, or expectations in sequential, mechanical, or predictable ways. There is no single pathway through the system from 'start' to 'finish.' Instead, public issues or concerns arise within the system and work their way through its parts in unpredictable ways. Thus the democratic system, as a whole, is not sequential in the ways described by Saward (2003) and Goodin (2005). To be sure, there are fixed sequences within particular decision-making processes, and between or within institutions. In most cases, however, public issues are addressed concurrently and iteratively, bouncing back and forth within and between various components of the system. At each stage of this journey, outcomes are contingent and the contributions of one part of the system (such as the media)

will tend to affect the way issues are decided in other parts of the system (such as in a referendum vote).

A specific issue might, for example, take a relatively direct route if it is adopted by a ruling party, introduced in the legislature, written into law, and implemented by the bureaucracy. Other issues will follow more circuitous routes if they originate in the public sphere — or in the 'already always there' background noise of 'everyday talk' (see, e.g., Mansbridge 1999). Such issues might (eventually) be picked by the media, discussed in participatory processes of one type or another, put to a referendum vote, formulated into law in the legislature, and finally implemented by the bureaucracy. Even then, laws may be subsequently challenged in the courts or revisited and revised when new governments are elected. Certain policy proposals, such as balanced budget amendments, might bounce around in the democratic system for years. Each stage of the democratic process is contingent and this makes the production of democratic outputs unpredictable. Indeed, in democratic systems there are no final decisions, there are only provisional agreements to proceed (see, e.g., Gutmann and Thompson 2004). This means that no issue ever leaves the system entirely because it might be re-politicized at any time and from anywhere within the system.[1]

It is in these ways that the democratic system is more like an ecosystem and less like a mechanical system.[2] Like an ecosystem, there are keystone institutions, such as political parties, courts, and elected legislatures that support the democratic status of the whole. If these are undermined, the system itself will be threatened. These keystone institutions do not, however, constitute the whole. A robust democratic system has many supplementary institutions and, like a healthy ecosystem, sustains this diversity by encouraging innovation and thereby protecting itself against catastrophic shocks through redundancy and multiplicity. Lastly, the contingency and provisionality of democratic decision-making processes renders the whole system irreducibly

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[1] Although, as explained in the previous chapter, predictability and stability in democratic systems can be underpinned by: 1) high degrees of agreement or consensus; 2) routines or institutions that develop around decisions; and 3) supermajoritarian laws such as constitutions.

[2] Mansbridge (1999) makes a similar observation in her account of the deliberative system: "By using the word 'system' I do not want to imply that the parts of the whole have a mechanical or perfectly predictable relation to one another, although both of these attributes are connotations of the words 'system' and 'systematic' in ordinary speech. Rather I want to imply an interrelation among the parts, such that a change in one tends to affect another" (228, note 1).

complex, such that any one institution or practice on its own — or at any one time — cannot be said to be fully democratic or undemocratic. Nor can any one institution be expected to bear the weight of the whole system alone.

8.2 Four Supplementary Democratic Institutions

This section profiles four supplementary democratic institutions: citizens' initiatives, referendums, minipublics, and participatory budgeting (PB) processes. These are profiled as examples of institutions that have been tried and tested in a range of democratic contexts. In what follows, I briefly describe each institution. After that, I explore how these institutions can help provide the five conditions that I argue are conducive to longer-term thinking and farsighted action: independence from electoral cycles, inclusion, deliberation, membership, and popular control.

Referendums and Citizens' Initiatives. These two institutions are closely related, relatively familiar, and well tested. They are comparatively simple in design even though their uses within the system and their effects on democratic outcomes are anything but straightforward.

In their simplest form, referendums give individual citizens opportunities to vote on specific law proposals. There are, however, many different types of referendums. One distinction is between advisory plebiscites and binding referendums (Smith 2001). In the case of an advisory plebiscite, legislators must take the results of a vote into consideration when they are making laws, but they are free to treat the results as recommendations to be accepted or rejected. In the case of a binding referendum, legislators are legally required to make laws that are consistent with the results of the vote. Referendums also differ in terms of the thresholds required for proposals to be accepted. Some referendums require a bare majority (i.e. 50 percent plus one). Others have legal thresholds that require supermajorities of 60 percent or more.

Another distinction has to do with *who* initiates the referendum. There are government sponsored referendums and there are citizen initiated processes (see, e.g., Mendelsohn and Parkin 2001). The latter are commonly called *citizens' initiatives*. These processes typically allow a qualified percentage of the population of a country, state, province, or region to put forward law proposals or nullify existing laws. Many U.S. states have citizens' initiative laws, and

the rules that govern these processes vary from state to state. Many states allow citizens to put forward constitutional amendments as well as law proposals. Other states allow citizens to put forward only law proposals *or* constitutional amendments. Thresholds for support also vary from state to state and by type of proposal. The law in North Dakota requires two percent of the population to support a proposition for a law proposal, and four percent to support proposals for constitutional amendments. By comparison, in Wyoming, initiatives for law proposals require the support of at least 15 percent of all the votes cast in the last election. In Wyoming, citizen proposals for constitutional amendments are not permitted. Minnesota, New England, Nevada, and a number of other states require proposals for constitutional amendments to have the support of 10 percent of registered voters. Other states require constitutional proposals to gain the support of at least 15 percent of the votes cast for Governor in the last election (see Braunstein 2004, Appendix).

In many states, support for initiatives must also be geographically distributed. In Arkansas initiatives for law proposals require at least one signature in two-thirds of all electoral districts. Wyoming requires initiatives to have the support of 10 percent of the votes cast in the last election in two-thirds of all electoral districts. Other states have no rules requiring the geographic distribution of support. Most initiatives also require signatures to be collected within a certain limited period of time (Braunstein 2004). Citizens' initiative laws are common in the United States but they are also used in other countries such as Switzerland and Canada (Butler and Ranny 1994). Once the legal requirements for a petition processes are met, a successful initiative will, in most cases, trigger a ballot measure, but initiatives can also be used to recall elected politicians (e.g., Cronin 1989). Other uses of initiatives are also conceivable. They could be used to influence the policy agenda *within* a legislative chamber. Or they could be used to trigger parliamentary debates on specific public issues.

Minipublics. Minipublics are small deliberative forums that aim to reproduce in 'miniature' the larger public on some or all of its relevant political dimensions. These processes typically bring small groups of individuals together to deliberate a single issue or a relatively small number of related issues. Most minipublics are *ad hoc* assemblies that sit for only a limited period of time.

The term 'minipublic' has been used to describe a diverse range of related processes and institutions. These processes differ on many dimensions including subject, size, duration, method of selection, and influence. In terms of subject, minipublics have been used to address a diverse range of topics including environmental issues (e.g., Flynn 2009), energy policy (e.g., Fishkin 1995), science policy (e.g., MacKenzie and O'Doherty 2011), health policy (e.g., Burgess and O'Doherty 2009; Parkinson 2006), urban planning (e.g., Dienel and Renn 1995) and constitutional reform (e.g., Fournier *et al.* 2011; Uhr 1999; Warren and Pearse 2008).

In terms of size, there are small minipublics with 12 to 25 participants, medium sized ones with 50 to 200 participants, and large scale processes with many hundreds of participants. In terms of duration, some minipublics are daylong affairs while others take place over several days or weekends. Others like the Citizens' Assemblies on Electoral Reform in British Columbia, Ontario, and the Netherlands, met at regular intervals over the course of twelve months or so (e.g., Fournier *et al.* 2011). With respect to methods of selection, many minipublics, such as deliberative polls and citizens' assemblies, use random processes to select participants (e.g., Fishkin 1995; Warren and Pearse 2008). Other minipublic processes use targeted recruitment methods (e.g., Fung 2006).

When it comes to political influence, some minipublics play an advisory role by issuing recommendations to governments or bureaucrats (e.g., Burgess and O'Doherty 2008). Other minipublic processes are designed to affect public debates through media coverage (e.g., Fishkin 1995; Urh 1999). There are a few examples of minipublics that have been empowered to make specific decisions themselves. For example, the Citizens' Assemblies in British Columbia and Ontario were empowered to trigger referendums on electoral reform (e.g., Fournier *et al.* 2011; Smith 2009).

Despite the many differences between these types of minipublics, the common objective is to create a relatively controlled environment in which robust and well informed deliberations on public issues can take place.

Participatory Budgeting. Participatory budgeting (PB) was pioneered in Porto Alegre Brazil in 1989. Since then the model has undergone a number of procedural changes (see, e.g., Abers

2000; Smith 2009), and variations of the Porto Alegre model have been adopted by a number of other cities in Brazil, to varying degrees of success (Wampler 2007). When done well, PB gives citizens control over significant portions of a city's yearly budget (e.g., Smith 2009).

The Porto Alegre model, was the original case and is still held up as an exemplar of PB. In Porto Alegre, PB is a staged process with the following components: 1) neighbourhood meetings; 2) regional (or district level) meetings; 3) regional budget forums; and 4) a citizen-led municipal budget council. The process begins in March or April every year. The first stage of the process, the neighbourhood meetings, are open to anyone who wishes to attend. Participants are briefed on the results of the previous year's process, and they are asked to make specific investment proposals. These proposals are ranked and collective priorities are identified.

The second stage of the process, the regional (or district) level meetings are also open to the public and attendance at these meetings is actively encouraged by community leaders and organizers. The regional meetings have at least four functions. First, they serve as information sessions during which the basic components of the PB process and of public budgeting are explained (Abers 2000, 136). Second, these meetings serve as an opportunity for citizens to monitor policy implementation processes, to provide feedback to the government, or to criticize the government's actions. Third, these meetings provide a forum for deliberation and voting on region-wide policy priorities. Fourth, it is at these meetings that citizen delegates are elected to the regional budget forums and the municipal budget council. The number of delegates from each neighbourhood to be elected to the regional budget forums is determined by the number of attendees at each meeting. This approach is designed to incentivize and reward participation. It is also designed to mitigate the dominance of larger more populous areas, while at the same time ensuring that representation on the regional budget forums is roughly proportional to the population in each neighbourhood. Elections to the municipal budget council are done differently. In this case, only two citizen councilors (and two alternates) from each region are elected to serve on the municipal budget council (Smith 2009, 36).

In the third stage of the process, the regional budget forums perform a variety of tasks. Those who are elected to serve as citizen delegates on these forums deliberate with each other and establish policy and public works priorities for their region as a whole. Collective priorities

are established in different ways in different regions. In some regions, delegates vote directly on priorities. In other regions complex formulas are used to rate priorities based on the financial and infrastructure needs of each neighbourhood (Abers 2000, 136). In addition to negotiating priorities for each region as a whole, the regional budget forums work with government officials and public agencies to determine the technical and financial constraints of policy priorities and infrastructure projects. The government also brings its own list of priorities to the regional budget forums. These forums are expected to consider government proposals but they are not obliged to accept government proposals as their own investment priorities. The regional budget forums also work with public agencies to implement policies and public works projects (Abers 2000, 137). The work of the regional budget forums continues all year. Their meetings are open to the public but only elected delegates have the right to cast votes (Smith 2009, 37).

The municipal budget council represents the last stage of the year long PB process. While the regional budget forums negotiate with the administration about the distribution of resources *within* regions, the municipal budget council concentrates on the distribution of resources *between* regions, on investments that affect more than one region, and on the distribution of resources between public agencies (Abers 2000, 137). At these meetings the government presents the council with its proposals for funding priorities. The government's proposals are based on the priorities identified by each regional budget forum. At this stage, the municipal budget council can negotiate with the government for changes to its list of policy priorities. At times these negotiations result in significant changes; at other times, few changes are made or suggested (Abers 2000, 138). Once the municipal budget council has done its work, the government publishes an itemized investment plan, which is treated as a formal contract between the government and the citizens (Abers 2000, 138). Like the regional budget forums, the meetings of the municipal budget council are open to the public but only elected councilors are allowed to cast votes (Smith 2009, 38).

In 1994, Porto Alegre introduced 'thematic' PB forums designed to address issues of concern to the city as a whole, issues such as environmental planning, transportation, health, social services, and education (Abers 2000; Smith 2009). These thematic processes work in the same way as the regional budgeting processes. There are neighbourhood meetings and popular assem-

blies on each issue. At the popular assemblies, delegates are elected to serve on thematic budget forums. In addition, each thematic assembly elects two members to serve on the municipal budget council.

The Porto Alegre model provides individuals with a range of participation opportunities. Individuals are encouraged to attend meetings and discuss public issues. At these meetings they have opportunities to advance policy priorities, listen to the concerns of others, and vote for citizen delegates and budget councilors. Those who are elected as citizen delegates can participate directly in budget negotiations and policy implementation processes. In these ways, PB represents an innovative approach to citizen empowerment. This model strives to balance substantive and widespread public participation with the time and resource constraints that most individuals face.

We are now in a position to examine the extent to which each of these four supplementary institutions — citizens' initiatives, referendums, minipublics, and participatory budgeting processes — can help provide the five democratic goods that I have associated with longer-term thinking and farsighted action: independence from electoral cycles, inclusion, deliberation, membership, and popular control. Each of these institutions has its strengths and weaknesses. Each has it uses and potential misuses. In some cases, the benefits of one institution may be undermined or diminished by some other practice, institution, or component of the democratic system. In other cases, these institutions can be made to work in combination with other institutions or practices to enhance the democratic quality of the system as a whole. The purpose in this chapter is to illustrate that it is possible to conceive of democratic systems that are practical, efficient, *and* well-equipped to function in farsighted, intentional ways.

8.2.1 Independence from Electoral Cycles

As argued in Chapter 2, one of the most common (and familiar) versions of the democratic myopia thesis is the *short electoral cycles argument*. According to this argument, politicians have strong incentives to adopt policies that have net positive impacts over the short-run, and they have equally strong incentives to avoid policies that trade short-term costs for potential long-

term benefits. The political dynamics of short electoral cycles matter because elected politicians play a centrally important role in the democratic system: they have the power to set the political agenda as well as the right (and political legitimacy) to use the mechanisms of the state to coordinate collective actions, not only through persuasion and incentives but also with force. Nevertheless, there are *democratic* institutions that are not subject to the political imperatives of short electoral cycles. Extra-electoral institutions cannot provide the same democratic goods as elected legislatures, but they can fulfill other useful functions within the system by both challenging and complementing elected assemblies. If these institutions can be effectively integrated into the democratic system, but still retain their independence from electoral politics, they will be in a position to help counterbalance some of the myopic tendencies created by short electoral cycles.

Minipublics are representative assemblies that are purpose-built to function independently from elected assemblies. As such, they can be used to help address issues on which elected governments lack the political or social legitimacy to act alone. The Citizens' Assemblies on Electoral Reform in British Columbia, Ontario, and the Netherlands were designed to overcome a conflict of interest problem: elected officials have a vested interest in the electoral system that was used to elected them. The citizens' assembly model was designed to overcome this conflict of interest by creating a representative assembly that would be able to debate the issue of electoral reform independently of electoral politics (e.g., Gibson 2002).

Random selection processes can also help underpin the independence of minipublics. Randomness is a great equalizer: each individual is selected through the same process, for the same purpose, and based on the same criteria. Individuals are entitled to participate not because they are well-financed or articulate enough to win election but simply because they have a stake in collective decisions. They are selected as citizens and not on the basis of cultural, educational, professional, or economic status. The independence that is achieved through the use of random selection makes it possible for the members of a minipublic to study and deliberate public issues in ways that are free from the political and partisan imperatives that elected representatives face. The members of a minipublic do not have to worry about re-election, political favors, interest group pressures, or whether they will be able to take credit for effective policies in the future. Minipublics are simply free to make public recommendations as they see fit.

One might ask how independent minipublics really are if they are initiated and funded by governments or other organizations that might (or could) have vested interests. This is a concern. Minipublics are not self-organizing democratic processes and their mandates and agendas are typically set by funders and organizers (see, e.g., Lang 2008). Nevertheless, a significant level of independence can be maintained even within a relatively narrow mandate. The Citizens' Assemblies on Electoral Reform were run by secretariats that functioned independently from government influence (see, e.g., Fournier *et al.* 2011; Warren and Pearse 2008). In both Ontario and British Columbia, governments exercised some influence over the referendum campaigns themselves, by either funding official "yes" and "no" campaigns, or by distributing the reports of the Citizens' Assemblies or other relevant information materials (e.g., Fournier *et al.* 2011). Notwithstanding the role that governments played in the referendum campaigns, the citizens' assemblies themselves, in both Ontario and British Columbia, functioned independently from electoral politics.

Of course, with independence also comes a potential lack of influence. When compared to elected legislatures, minipublics do not have a clear role in the democratic system, or the power to make binding decisions (Smith 2009). If minipublics are not adequately integrated into the larger democratic process, there is a good chance that their recommendations will have little or no substantive effect on democratic outcomes. Nevertheless, as discussed above, minipublics can be effectively integrated into the democratic system in a number of more or less indirect ways. What makes minipublics attractive is that they are representative assemblies that are nevertheless independent from the political pressures that beset elected legislatures. This independence cannot guarantee that they will, in each case, make decisions or recommendations that are more farsighted than elected legislatures, but it does ensure that they can make decisions in ways that are not heavily influenced by the political dynamics of short electoral cycles.

Participatory budgeting processes are not designed to function independently from electoral processes; they are, instead, designed to be *integrated into* conventional processes of budget making. Nevertheless, PB delegates do not face short-term electoral pressures in the same way that conventionally elected politicians do. Indeed, the early stages of a PB cycle operate almost entirely free of electoral pressures. In the early stages, individuals are invited to attend local and

regional meetings to help set investment priorities and objectives. The fact that investment priorities and objectives can be discussed, debated, and pursued independently from electoral politics, means that PB participants are free to seriously consider all types of projects and plans, even those that would impose short-term costs for longer-term benefits. This does not mean that participants *will* propose such plans, but it does mean that they are not subject to the same short-term pressures as elected officials.

The subsequent stages of a PB cycle involve elected citizen delegates, but these representatives are not elected through conventional processes. Candidates for positions on the regional budget forums and municipal budget councils must convince their fellow citizens to support them at the regional meetings where they are elected, but they do not run extensive or costly election campaigns. Those who are elected to serve as citizen delegates are not normally career politicians, and although they might hope to be elected in subsequent rounds of budgeting, being a citizen delegate is not a full time job; it is, instead, a temporary contribution to a public decision-making process. In this respect, PB delegates can be considered "citizen representatives" for the same reasons that those who are randomly selected to serve on minipublics can be given this designation (Warren 2008). In both cases, these bodies function not as chambers full of professional politicians but instead as representative bodies filled with citizens who are freed from the imperatives of ordinary electoral politics.

Nevertheless, the later stages of PB processes are integrated into ordinary legislative processes and this means that they do not operate entirely independently of the concerns and influence of elected officials and other government workers. Mayors, councilors, and bureaucrats are in regular contact with the regional budget forums, and they work closely with the members of the municipal budget council (e.g., Abers 2000; Smith 2009). Furthermore, investment priorities are made by both citizen representatives and government officials. Indeed, there is some evidence that the technical skills required to adequately consider complex government proposals tends to give elected officials and bureaucrats considerable influence over citizen delegates at this stage of the process. The evidence shows that most government proposals are accepted by citizen delegates (Smith 2009, 60). Nevertheless, the very nature of this exchange, and the pres-

ence of citizen representatives means that decisions about how PB funds are spent cannot be made on the basis of electoral considerations alone.

Like minipublics, citizens' initiatives are purpose-built to function independently from electoral politics. Initiatives allow individuals and groups to *bypass* ordinary processes of representative politics and thereby influence the agendas or challenge the decisions of their political elites. The fact that they *can* be used to bypass ordinary electoral processes does not mean that they *will* be used to challenge the near-term objectives of elected officials or the short-term preferences of politically powerful economic elites. There is enough evidence from California to show that initiatives on certain issues, such as tax policy, do not always produce collective outcomes that are sensible from a longer-term perspective (Smith 1998). Nevertheless, the fact that citizens' initiatives *can* be used to bypass the short-term dynamics of ordinary electoral processes makes them a potentially attractive tool for those who wish to advance longer-term objectives such as stricter environmental policies and regulations — proposals that might otherwise be ignored or dismissed in the electoral arena by individuals and groups with dominant short-term interests (e.g., Smith 2001).

Of course, citizens' initiatives and referendums cannot be insulated entirely from the pressures, power dynamics, and influences of everyday politics. As is well known, initiatives and referendums can be employed, influenced and even derailed by politically savvy and well-financed elite interests. But the influence of political and economic elites in initiative and referendum processes is more complicated than is typically assumed (see, e.g., Lupia and Mastsusaka 2004). Gerber (1999), for example, has found that spending by business groups is not particularly effective at gaining support for initiatives, but it can play a significant role in helping to defeat initiatives in referendum votes. Interestingly, this trend is reversed when it comes to spending by citizens' groups: their spending is more effective at helping to pass initiatives than it is in helping to defeat them. In an extensive historical analysis of referendum votes in Switzerland, Frey (1994) concludes that these processes can be used to effectively break the "politicians' cartel." According to his analysis, "among the 250 referenda held in Switzerland between 1848 and 1990, the majority's will deviated from the stated will of the parliament in 39 percent of the cases" (119). These findings demonstrate that citizens' initiatives and referendums can, at least in

some cases, be used to effectively bypass ordinary processes of electoral politics. If this is the case, they can also be used to influence democratic outcomes on issues that might otherwise be ignored or neglected because of the short-term imperatives associated with electoral politics.

8.2.2 Inclusion

Effective forms of democratic inclusion cannot guarantee that longer-term concerns will be taken seriously or turned into farsighted democratic outcomes. Nevertheless, as argued in Chapter 6, inclusivity is *conducive* to longer-term thinking and farsighted action because decision-making processes that are inclusive are also more likely to incorporate both short- and long-term perspectives.

Referendums are highly inclusive. They are designed to give every eligible voter equal influence in making specific policy decisions. This does not mean that referendums *will* result in farsighted decisions on long-term issues, but it does mean that referendums can be used to help counterbalance decisions that are made in less inclusive ways. If members of an elected government are, as a group, *more* farsighted on some long-term issue than are large segments of the general public, a referendum vote is likely to result in policy decisions that are more myopic than those that would be made by the elected government itself. But if this is the case, the opposite must also be true. When elected legislators, government members, and other influential actors are *more* myopic than large segments of the general public, inclusive decision-making processes like referendums are likely to produce policy outcomes that are more farsighted. The inclusivity of a referendum process helps ensure that all those voices or perspectives that are, for whatever reason, absent from more exclusive decision-making processes are accounted for and equally weighted when decisions are made.[3] Viewed from this perspective, referendum votes can help ensure that both short- and long-term perspectives, as they exist at the time of the vote, are proportionally reflected in public policy decisions. Referendums will be particularly useful when (or if) there is reason to believe that certain longer-term interests have not been adequately considered in more exclusive decision-making processes.

[3] It is worth emphasizing that even though well-financed and well-organized groups can influence a referendum campaign, the vote itself gives each individual a chance to influence policy outcomes in equal measure.

Citizens' initiatives are also inclusive. In principle any individual or group is entitled to start an initiative on any issue of public concern. In this respect, initiatives are inclusive not only of individuals, groups, and perspectives, they are also inclusive in terms of subject matter and policy area. Despite this, unlike referendums, initiatives are not designed to give each individual equal influence in public decision-making processes. Instead, initiatives make it possible for individuals and groups to influence policy agendas *if* they have the backing of a minority of voters. The fact that successful initiatives only require the support of a minority of voters means that they can be used to 'mainstream' marginal opinions or to promote exclusive policies, such as those designed to deprive minority groups of their rights or standing within a community. In a study of Swiss and U.S. state initiatives, Bowler and Donovan (2001) conclude that voters are not as anti-minority as critics of these processes often make them out to be. Braunstein (2004) has found that "inclusive" initiatives that offer benefits to the community as a whole, are more likely to be passed than are "exclusive" initiatives that explicitly or implicitly aim to benefit (or harm) only certain sectors of a population (56).

We have already discussed concerns about how initiative processes may be used (and abused) by well-financed interest groups. To the extent that this is the case, initiatives may be viewed as a tool of exclusion: all those who are not well organized and well financed will be effectively deprived from using citizens' initiatives to advance their concerns. In order to address this potential power imbalance, some have suggested linking initiative processes to Information and Communications Technologies (ICT). In 2001, Estonia created an online portal that allows citizens to initiate petitions to challenge or recommend changes to specific government policies. Each petition must be refined and completed within fourteen days of being introduced. Those that obtain the required number of signatures are forwarded to the responsible government agency, which has one month to publish its response (Smith 2009, 160). A similar e-petition process is in place in Scotland but it does not include a provision requiring a response from government within a specified period of time. As Smith (2009) explains, it would be possible to link e-petitions to referendum processes — in which case a certain number of signatures gathered online would trigger a referendum. As he points out, "the use of the internet may make it easier for

grassroots groups and even individual citizens to launch propositions and gain the requisite number of signatures" (160).

E-petitions are of particular relevance to the current discussion because many policies that are designed to address long-term problems would produce diffuse public benefits while imposing concentrated costs on identifiable groups. Those who are likely to be saddled with the costs of such policies will have strong incentives to organize to oppose them, but it is much harder to effectively mobilize diffuse publics to pursue the common good (Olson 1965). E-petitions would make it easier for diffuse publics and unorganized groups of individuals to influence the political agenda on long-term issues and other concerns that are inherently difficult to organize around. From this perspective citizens' initiatives — and in particular e-petitions — may be viewed as tools to enhance the inclusiveness of democratic decision-making processes.

Gerber and Hug (2001) have pointed out that initiatives and referendums have both direct and indirect effects on decision-making processes. The direct effects are observed when initiatives are successful and citizens change laws in referendum votes. The indirect effects are more difficult to observe because they involve legislators and other decision-makers responding to, or trying to avoid, the political consequences of potential initiatives (88). As Smith (2009) points out, most "commentators on Swiss democracy argue that the *indirect* effect of direct legislation has been fundamental to the development of the country's 'consensus democracy'. Political elites have integrated different interests into the governing process as a way of anticipating challenges and overcoming the threat of initiatives and popular referendums" (120). From this perspective, initiatives and referendums can help make decision-making processes more inclusive simply by being made available to citizens and thus encouraging elected politicians to seriously consider all potentially relevant perspectives and concerns.

Participatory budgeting processes are also inclusive. All members of a community or neighbourhood are invited to attend local and regional meetings in the early stages of a PB process. In addition, each individual is entitled to be elected as a citizen delegate. In practice, however, only a small percentage of the population is actively involved in these processes (Abers 2000). Despite this, many PB processes have successfully encouraged individuals from normally marginalized groups to get involved. Indeed, in Porto Alegre, PB has successfully *reversed* par-

ticipation trends. Baiocchi (2003), for example, presents evidence that poorer residents and those with less education are actually overrepresented in PB processes in Porto Alegre, while wealthier residents and those with more education are underrepresented (52). Part of the explanation for this trend has to do with the fact that the rules of PB in Porto Alegre favour those who live in poorer neighbourhoods. Based on a quality-of-life index, PB funds in Porto Alegre are distributed such that regions with higher rates of poverty, less public infrastructure, and denser populations are guaranteed to receive proportionally more funding than wealthier regions of the city (Wampler 2007, 52). This provides residents of poorer regions with additional incentives to attend meetings, propose policy priorities, and elect larger numbers of delegates.

The fact that PB processes are inclusive does not guarantee that the decisions made in these processes *will* be sensitive to longer-term concerns. Inclusivity merely helps ensure that a fuller range of considerations are taken into account. The fact that PB processes have successfully encouraged non-elite citizens to participate is important because certain long-term issues, such as public transportation planning, affect elites and non-elites differently. PB processes are a potentially effective means of ensuring elite, non-elite, short-term, and long-term perspectives — in various combinations — are taken into account when public decisions are made.

Minipublics are also inclusive but in different ways and for different reasons. Unlike referendums, initiatives, and participatory budgeting processes, the typical minipublic is not open to all those who might want to get involved. Instead, those who organize minipublics must make decisions about which groups, perspectives, interests, and types of individuals should be included in each case (Warren 2008). Organizers also have to make decisions about which selection processes to use (e.g., Fung 2006). From this perspective, minipublics are exclusive: only those who are invited, through one means or another, are permitted to attend. Nevertheless, the very fact that minipublics erect gateways to participation means that each assembly can be made representative in the right ways. By using targeted recruitment or stratified random selection, it is possible to ensure that those interests and perspectives that are, or are thought to be relevant *to particular issues* are included. There is no other democratic institution that can achieve this level or specificity of representativeness. On a long-term issue such as education spending, a minipublic can be designed to *guarantee* the participation of young people, single parents, and individu-

als from other groups who are typically underrepresented in public decision-making processes but who are likely to have something to say about the issues being discussed.

8.2.3 Deliberation

Deliberation has several functions that can help make the democratic system more farsighted. As argued in Chapter 5, democratic publics can be held morally responsible for the consequences of their actions *if* they have the capacity to make intentional choices and act on those choices (Pasternak 2011). Deliberation is what makes intentionality possible for both individuals and collectivities. The individual engages in internal deliberations about personal and moral choices. At the level of the collectivity, intentionality depends on whether or not there are mechanisms in place that allow a society to talk to itself about the choices it must make. Public deliberation is thus a necessary condition for the realization of collective moral responsibility. As explained in Chapter 6, effective processes of deliberation can also help encourage longer-term thinking by creating political incentives that reward those who adopt farsighted perspectives or advance the potential interests of the future. As argued in Chapter 7, deliberation also makes it possible for a society to coordinate its actions in ways that are collectively intentional and goal-oriented.

A lot of work has been done on ways to make our democratic systems more robustly deliberative (e.g., Goodin 2003; Mansbridge 1999; Parkinson and Mansbridge 2012; Smith 2009). Free media, interest groups, educational institutions, court proceedings, public protests, think tanks and a range of other institutions and practices all help make it possible for a society to talk to itself about what it is doing and where it wants to go. Mansbridge (1999) has emphasized the role that everyday-talk (i.e. casual conversations about public issues in both private and public spaces) can play in helping to make our democratic systems more deliberative. Likewise, each of the four institutions profiled in this section can help enhance the deliberative quality of the democratic system overall.

Minipublics are often held up as exemplars of high quality deliberation. Nevertheless, it is useful to make a distinction between deliberative democracy and democratic deliberation. As Chambers (2009) explains, deliberative democracy involves large scale public deliberations at the level of society as a whole. Democratic deliberation, in contrast, focuses on discrete and of-

ten exclusive deliberative moments or processes (324). Minipublics can be viewed as 'moments' or institutions of democratic deliberation. As such, minipublics only indirectly contribute to the deliberative capacity of the system as a whole. Nevertheless, minipublics are attractive because they create controlled environments in which democratic deliberations can take place, and where collective decisions can be made in ways that are not dominated by the power dynamics that usually permeate political processes and public debates or deliberations. It is not possible to eliminate power dynamics entirely, but minipublics can be used to create environments that are conducive to high quality deliberation where participants can freely discuss public issues, raise objectives, listen to the concerns of others, and make collective decisions on the basis of persuasion and public reasoning rather than coercion or strategic action (see, e.g., Ratner 2008; Smith 2009). The extent to which participants in a minipublic are willing to engage in deliberation likely depends on the nature of the issue at hand. The British Columbia Citizens' Assembly was highly deliberative in part because it focused on an issue — electoral reform — that is not beset by deeply entrenched moral or political divisions. It may be more difficult to create highly deliberative environments on issues that intersect with questions of identity, religion, morality, or ideology. At the same time, controversial political issues are perhaps most likely to be addressed deliberatively in the type of controlled environment that a minipublic provides. Minipublics can help ensure that representatives of opposing viewpoints are included in the discussions, participants can be reminded of the rules of deliberation, and facilitators can help keep the discussions free and fair (see, e.g., Smith 2009).

A controlled deliberative environment can also help ensure that discussions adequately address the potential interests of future-others. As explained in Chapter 6, in a robustly deliberative environment, any argument or position that appears to promote the concerns of the present at the expense of the future can be challenge on those grounds. Those who speak for the interests of the future are most likely to emerge in deliberative environments that include a diverse range of perspectives. But in a controlled deliberative environment it is not necessary to wait for self-appointed representatives of the future to emerge. In a controlled environment, participants can be instructed to consider and deliberate both short- and long-term dimensions of alternative policy options. This does not mean that they *will* make choices that adequately balance the interests

of the present with those of the future, but it does make more likely deliberative outcomes that are sensitive to the future.

As discussed above, the challenge is to identity ways that minipublics can be fitted into the democratic system as a whole. The particular challenge, in this case, is finding ways to preserve the deliberative quality of a minipublic's recommendations once these have been released from the controlled deliberative environments in which they were produced. The idea that minipublics may be used as trusted information proxies to help voters make rational decisions on complex referendum questions, is one way that the deliberative qualities of a minipublic's recommendations can be preserved long enough to affect macro-political outcomes (MacKenzie and Warren 2012).

Like minipublics, participatory budgeting processes provide conditions that are conducive to high quality deliberation. During the early stages of a PB process the environments in which public deliberations take place are more spontaneous and less controlled than those created in minipublics. Nevertheless, in many respects the open meetings that start off PB processes are deliberative in nature. As Wampler (2007) explains, a deliberative convention has developed in many of the places where PB is used. According to this convention, at each meeting approximately 10 participants are allowed to speak for three minutes each. After 30 minutes all those present are asked to vote on whether they would like to hear more speakers or take a vote on the issue itself. This convention is deliberative in many ways: anyone is allowed to speak, each participant is given equal time to make his or her contribution, and the conversations are open-ended. Nevertheless, it is difficult to stimulate truly dialogical exchanges in large meetings where time is limited and each speaker is expected to make a pitch for one policy or another as opposed to a response to the concerns of others. Nevertheless, most observers agree that public meetings during the early stages of a PB cycle can be deliberative, and they are in many ways *more* deliberative than ordinary processes of partisan politics (see, e.g., Abers 2000; Smith 2009; Wampler 2007).

The later stages of a PB cycle are less inclusive but more deliberative. During these stages, citizen delegates work with city officials to prioritize projects and to distribute funds among agencies and between regions. These stages are more deliberative because, when done

well, PB processes effectively redistribute power so that no one participant (such as the mayor) or group of participants (council, public agencies, or citizen delegates) can make public decisions without support from the others. This arrangement makes talk and persuasion more attractive as a means of coordination simply because the use of power is made less viable by a balance of power. As Smith (2009) explains, although the mayor in Porto Alegre retains the right to veto a proposed budget on technical or financial grounds, "it is difficult for the legislature to apply its veto given the popular will that the budget represents" (50). When effective balances of power are produced, PB processes will be more likely to generate outcomes that are more deliberative and less strategic. As Warren (2007) explains: "Institutions should be designed to channel strategic intent into talk, with the hope that when participants can only get their way through talk, they will seek to persuade" (278). This does not mean that PB processes *will* make decisions that are more farsighted than those produced in more partisan and strategic political environments. Instead, PB processes should be viewed as a means of injecting deliberative considerations into budget making processes that would otherwise be decided in ways that are not inclusive and much less deliberative. In this way, PB can contribute something to the overall deliberative quality of the democratic system. Indeed, unlike minipublics, PB processes are deliberative *and* formally integrated into existing legislative institutions.

If minipublics can be viewed as exemplars of democratic deliberation, referendum campaigns might be viewed as exemplars of deliberative democracy. Ackerman (1993), for example, argues that citizens should always have the right to vote on constitutional amendments. He believes that giving this responsibility to citizens will encourage them to act in deliberative ways: "apathy will give way to concern, ignorance to information, selfishness to serious reflection on the country's future" (287). This is a rather optimistic assessment but it is worth considering. A referendum is an opportunity for a public discussion to occur. Because referendum campaigns do not occur in controlled environments, they will be affected by power dynamics and the disproportionate influence of dominant groups, individuals, and organizations. Given this, referendum campaigns cannot live up to the very high standards that are set by deliberative theorists (e.g., Cohen 1989; Habermas 1984). Despite this, the deliberative quality of a referendum campaign depends on a number of factors, many of which can be controlled, managed, or at least mitigated

by rules, procedures, legislation, and the use of other supplementary democratic institutions. When public interest is high, when many sources of information and commentary are available, when spending is controlled by public authorities, and when citizens understand the issues at stake, referendum campaigns can be very deliberative. Under these conditions, referendums can initiate high quality public deliberations and thereby make it possible, in a very real sense, for a society to talk to itself about its own collective future.

From one perspective, the 1995 referendum on Quebec sovereignty can be viewed as a highly successful public deliberation. The campaign was the culmination of a long-running and deeply emotional debate about the place of Quebec in Canada. The stakes were high and individuals were well-informed and engaged. The referendum issue dominated discussions in the media, on the street, in coffee shops, and, in many private homes as well. As a testament to the success of the campaign, 94 percent of eligible voters cast ballots (LeDuc 2002, 715) — a turnout rate that is ordinarily found only in places where there are mandatory voting laws (see, e.g., Ellis *et al*. 2006). The Quebec referendum was, in these ways, a highly deliberative and participatory opportunity for individual citizens to actively discuss and decide their own collective future.

Chambers (2001) disagrees. She argues that referendums, and in particular referendums on constitutional matters like sovereignty, create dynamics that tend to undermine deliberation. She makes three arguments. First, the prospects of a majority win can negatively affect the willingness of individuals to deliberate the issues. If there is a clear majority, arguments on both sides of an issue are likely to fall on deaf ears. Those in the majority will: 1) have no need to persuade those in the minority; and 2) they will have few incentives to listen to opposing arguments or seriously consider the concerns of the minority. Furthermore, as Chambers points out, even "in situations where there is no clear majority, referendums invite participants to approach debate strategically rather than discursively, that is it creates the incentive to find arguments that will sway only the needed number of voters" (241). Given this, majoritarian devices like referendums threaten to undermine the integrative functions of deliberative processes.

Second, referendums are often inflexible in the sense that they fail to give citizens opportunities to consider a range of alternative options or alter the wording of proposals. Third, and

relatedly, referendum processes present voters with an image of irreversibility: the implication is that once decisions are made in costly and sometimes emotional campaigns, these decisions should be viewed as final and decisive. This concern is especially relevant to constitutional proposals because these are meant to be entrenched outside the iterative processes of normal democratic politics. Chambers' concern is that the decisive nature of referendum votes can create a fear of losing that encourages participants to frame issues in zero-sum terms. She argues that these dynamics can overwhelm any incentives or desires that individuals might otherwise have to make concessions or act on more principled motives to cooperate. Chambers argues that the Quebec referendum on sovereignty produced all of these perverse dynamics:

> The referendum on sovereignty in which the vast majority of Anglo-phones (who are a minority) supported the 'no' and a small majority of Francophones (who are in the majority) voted 'yes' was extremely divisive. The campaign, outcome, and recriminatory aftermath threaten to undo the trust and recognition that has been slowly growing between the English and French of that province over the course of the past twenty years. The referendum on sovereignty was accompanied with little or no effort to engage citizens in deliberation outside of the intense campaign period prior to the vote. In particular, there was no attempt to respond to or answer minority fears about what would happen on the 'Day After.' There was a great deal of talk prior to the decision but very little of it was deliberative. The sovereignty debate has taken a further turn away from deliberation (Chambers 2001, 244).

These are real dangers that should be considered when referendums are used, especially on highly divisive and emotional issues such as national sovereignty. Indeed, Chambers' observations point to a rather gloomy prognostication: majoritarian rules create incentives that undermine effective deliberation but at some point critical issues must be subject to decisive votes. If this is the case, it is hard to imagine effective public deliberations on divisive and decisive political issues that must, at some point, be decided in majoritarian ways. But this is not the end of the story. Chambers argues that there are a number of ways to dull the sharp edges of decisive majoritarian votes and thereby create incentives for higher quality deliberations to take place.

Chambers argues that referendums, particularly those on constitutional issues and existential questions such as national sovereignty, should be supplemented with formal and informal consultation processes and deliberative opportunities:

> Citizen workshops, town hall meetings, and people's conventions as well as creative use of the media and the Internet to engage citizens should take place well before referendum dates are set or wording is formalized. Developing, encouraging, and funding a variety of civil society organizations to help promote deliberation also can serve as a healthy counterbalance to the referendum dynamic which sees all opinion coalesce under two umbrella organizations advocating the 'yes' or 'no' side (Chambers 2001, 250).

What Chambers is advocating is a systems-level approach to making referendum campaigns more robustly deliberative. It is not enough to simply rely on one institution — in this case the referendum campaign — to do all of the work. It is often useful to supplement institutions with others that can provide some of the democratic goods, incentives, or credentials that are in short supply in other parts of the system.

The 1992 Charlottetown referendum on constitutional reform in Canada was preceded by by five national conferences. These were, in effect, minipublics: each one engaged a broad-based group of approximately 250 people in intense weekend-long discussions about the constitutional accord. The conferences were designed to be open-ended discussions and they were broadcast across the country. Chambers (2001) argues that these conferences were highly deliberative (245). The challenge is to figure out ways that the deliberative outcomes that are produced in such events can be effectively transferred into the realm of the referendum campaign itself without being undermined by the countervailing incentives of majoritarian politics.

One approach to making referendum campaigns more deliberative is to make referendum votes less decisive. Following Tully (1994), Chambers (2001) recommends iterative referendum processes in which proposals would be voted on in stages. Citizens would, in effective, have opportunities to vote on draft proposals as opposed to final accords. At each stage of the process suggestions would be solicited and amendments could be made. This would make each vote less decisive and it would help reduce the sense of finality that often accompanies referendum votes. This approach would make the whole process of deciding issues through referendums even more robustly intentional: individuals would not only have opportunities to discuss their common future and vote on a proposal, they would have multiple opportunities to affect that future by shaping the proposals themselves.[4]

[4] Benjamin Barber (1984) has made a similar proposal for a multi-stage referendum vote.

Chambers also recommends disaggregating complex proposals into smaller sections and holding separate votes on each component part. This would help focus discussions on substantive issues, it would make public debates on the issues more manageable, and it would render non-deliberative bargaining more difficult and less useful.[5] Another option is to hold preliminary votes using multiple choice ballots. This was done in New Zealand when that country was engaged in reforming its electoral system. The first round of voting asked citizens to choose among a small number of possible electoral systems. The final round of voting asked citizens to choose between the alternative system selected in the first round of voting and the existing system (Mendelsohn and Parkin 2001). If decisive majoritarian processes create disincentives to deliberate, institutional arrangements that make each vote less decisive can help make referendum processes more constructive, accommodating, and deliberative.

Given the high levels of interest, participation, and resources that are required to make referendum campaigns deliberative, it is evident that these processes cannot be effectively employed to address everyday political issues. Multistage referendum processes are likely to work best on critically important issues such as constitutional reform or national sovereignty. They certainly cannot be used to initiate public debates on each issue that will, or might, have significant long-term consequences. Nevertheless, given the right issues and circumstances, multistage referendum campaigns can provide societies with very real opportunities to reflect on their collective intentions and thereby shape their futures together.

8.2.4 Membership

A sense of membership is also important when it comes to making individuals more sensitive to the potential interests of the future. As explained in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, membership is important because individuals, standing alone, have few incentives to look past their own limited temporal horizons. Membership in an intergenerational collective entity not only helps us make sense of ourselves as individuals *in time*, it also gives individuals additional reasons to think and

[5] Chambers (2001) also recommends making referendum votes less decisive by making them more provisional. As she points out: "This could include such things as transition clauses that say something to the effect – let's try this for five years and then review the result" (251). The problem with this proposal is that many institutions, like electoral systems, do not work well if actors know that the institutions are not well established. When institutions are tried on a temporary basis political actors who do not like them can always find ways to make them fail.

act in future-oriented ways. It is not that a sense of membership in an intergenerational collective entity *will*, in every case, motivate longer-term thinking, or encourage individuals to make decisions that fairly balance their interests with those of the future. The argument is that without some connection to a collective entity that can, in principle, persist through time, individuals will have few reasons to think and act in farsighted ways. In Chapter 5, it was argued that the very activity of making collective decisions together in democratic ways can help forge identifiable entities out of collections of individuals who have no strong affective ties to one another. If in general terms, membership in a larger community can help individuals make sense of themselves *in time*, then democratic membership has a critical function to play in giving individuals who very much see themselves as individuals some reason to think past their own temporal horizons.

Another reason that membership matters has to do with the concept of "role rationality" (see, e.g., Goodin 1986, 88-89). As explained in Chapter 6, when individuals are cast *as* citizens, and asked to perform in that role when making public decisions, they are also encouraged to adopt positions that are consistent with the expectations of that role. As citizens, individuals are expected to adopt positions that are not simply focused on their own concerns but that also take into account generalized concerns about what is (or may be) best for society as a whole. When it comes to making decisions that will have long-term consequences, a generalized perspective will include both current and future publics. This does not mean that individuals, when cast as citizens, *will* fairly weigh the concerns of the current period against the potential concerns of the future. What it means is that they *must* do so if their actions are to be consistent with the role of a citizen *in* an intergenerational collective entity.

All democratic institutions play some role in reinforcing conceptions of membership. The right to vote is seen by many as the quintessential symbol of membership in a democratic regime. But the right to vote is only one of many potential markers of membership in complex democratic systems. In general terms, the strength of an individual's conception of membership likely depends on the range of rights, responsibilities, and benefits that are available to individuals in any particular democratic regime. If this is the case, supplementary institutions that provide individuals with multiple additional ways of getting involved in public life, should help underpin and reinforce existing conceptions of membership. What is more, it is probably not neces-

sary for all (or even most) individuals to actively make use of additional participation opportunities. Conceptions of membership are likely to be enhanced by the presence of these institutions if individuals know that opportunities to influence public decisions exist and can be made use of when needed.

Each of the institutions that we are exploring in this section can help underpin and reinforce robust conceptions of membership. Referendums, in particular, help reinforce the idea that power rests with the people, and all those who are citizens have some role to play in making (particular) public decisions (e.g., Saward 1998). Of course, initiatives and referendums will do little to enhance conceptions of membership if these tools are chiefly used by well organized groups to promote their own interests. On the other hand, to the extent that these processes can be made more accessible to greater numbers and types of individuals and groups — through, for example, the use of e-petitions or the provision of public campaign funds — initiatives and referendums can help reinforce conceptions of membership by providing individuals with additional avenues to affect policy between election periods.

Participatory budgeting processes can also help reinforce robust conceptions of membership. PB provides individuals with multiple ways of getting involved in making public decisions. Individuals can participate as observers or speakers at public meetings, as neighbourhood organizers, and as elected delegates on regional budget forums or on municipal budget councils (Smith 2009). Each of these modes of participation sends a message that an individual is a part of a larger collective community — the neighbourhood, the region, or the city as a whole. In each case, by being cast as a citizen of one or multiple overlapping communities, the individual is encouraged to think and act in ways that are consistent with this role.

The ways that minipublics might be said to underpin robust conceptions of membership are complicated by the fact that so few individuals can participate in any one minipublic process. While every citizen has the right to start an initiative, to sign a petition, to vote in a referendum, or to get involved in participatory budgeting processes, even the largest minipublics can engage only a comparatively small number of individuals. Given this, minipublics would seem to be a rather inefficient and ineffective way of encouraging more individuals to think and act like citizens.

While it is true that minipublics only engage a small number of individuals at one time, these institutions could play a much larger and more significant role in the democratic system if they were to be used more regularly and on a wider range of public issues than is currently the case. Serving on a minipublic might, for example, become as common as serving on a jury, a duty that each individual can expect to be called upon to perform at least once during his or her adult life (Ferejohn 2008).

When it comes to encouraging longer-term thinking, what matters most is that those who *are* members of a minipublic come to understand themselves as citizens *while engaged in the process.* There are features of minipublics that can help encourage individuals to think in these terms. First, the members of a minipublic are not asked to be spokespeople of their own individual opinions and preferences. Instead, they are charged with the task of representing all those who are not involved (see, e.g., Brown 2006; Warren 2008). This requires each member of a minipublic to think and act empathetically, by imaginatively placing him or herself in the shoes of others. Second, random processes, when they are used, send a strong message to all citizens that they are qualified to serve on a minipublic — the only qualification *is* citizenship. In this capacity, random processes serve two functions: 1) randomness helps reinforce conceptions of membership among the public as a whole even though only small numbers of individuals are selected to participate at any one time; and 2) randomness encourages those who serve on minipublics to think of them as *citizens*, simply because there is no other basis or justification for their membership in a minipublic.

No single democratic institution or practice can itself underpin and maintain robust conceptions of membership. Even the vote cannot bear the full weight of democratic citizenship: opportunities to vote are intermittent and the ballot itself is a rather blunt tool that works best as a source of authorization as opposed to a means of influencing what representatives do once they are elected. Effective democratic systems can turn individuals into citizens if they provide individuals with multiple and diverse ways of influencing collective decisions at all stages of the electoral cycle. To some extent, all democratic practices, including protests, petitions, media debates, and court challenges, can help underpin and reinforce meaningful conceptions of membership. Citizens' initiatives, referendums, minipublics, and participatory budgeting processes pro-

vide individuals with additional modes of influence. When viewed together as components of the larger democratic system, these institutions can provide individuals with tangible reasons to think of themselves as members of a larger democratic entity that *will* affect the future in one way or another.

8.2.5 Popular Control

Inclusivity, deliberation, and robust conceptions of membership are democratic goods that can help encourage longer-term thinking. But it is not enough to simply encourage longer-term thinking; democratic entities must also have the capacity to act on their collective intentions. What is the purpose of generating long-term objectives and farsighted perspectives if these cannot be translated into policy outcomes and collective actions? As we saw in Chapter 5, the capacity to control one's actions is a necessary criterion for the attribution of moral responsibility. If a democratic society does not have the capacity to act on its intentions, or if its legislative processes do not adequately reflect the deliberative intentions of its people, the polity as a whole cannot be held morally responsible for its actions. In the most straightforward sense, the capacity to act on collective intentions is a necessary condition for reaching our collective goals.

Participatory processes are often criticized for being politically impotent. Many fail to provide citizens with any effective means of influencing policy decisions and collective outcomes (see, e.g., Smith 2009). To the extent that this is the case, even democracies that provide citizens with high quality opportunities to deliberate their collective intentions may be unable to effectively act on those intentions. From a systems-level perspective no single institution or practice can (or should) make public decisions in isolation of other parts of the system, and no institution should have complete control over democratic outcomes. In effective democracies, each component of the system is integrated with other components such that democratic outcomes in some way reflect the contributions of each part. In some cases the function of one part will be to challenge decisions or recommendations made in another part of the system. In other cases, two or more parts of the system will work in complementary ways (see, e.g., Mansbridge *et al.* 2012). In either case, the challenge is to identify some of the ways that supplementary institu-

tions can help provide increased levels of popular control over democratic decision-making processes.

Popular control can in principle be exercised at any stage of a decision-making process. In what follows I will consider only two aspects of the decision-making process: agenda-setting and policy outcomes. The power to influence the political agenda is akin to having some control over the steering-wheel of a car (or at least over its driver). A democratic society may have the capacity to talk to itself about what it is doing and where it wants to go, but without control over the political agenda it cannot even begin to steer itself towards its collective goals. Ultimately, in order to achieve its goals, a society must also have control over its actions and collective outcomes.

Controlling Agendas. Citizens' initiatives are agenda-setting tools: they provide individuals and groups with some means of challenging or circumventing the policy agendas set by elected officials. The citizens' initiative, itself, is not a means of controlling democratic outcomes; instead it is a tool that can be used to initiate debates and public decision-making processes on issues that might otherwise be ignored or marginalized in ordinary electoral arenas. In this capacity, citizens' initiatives can be understood as an extra-electoral yet democratic means of directing a society's attention towards specific policy objectives or future-oriented collective goals. As discussed above, e-petitions have the potential to make citizens' initiatives even more effective as tools of popular control (Smith 2009). Given the potential for spontaneous online organization, initiatives that are linked to e-petition processes could function as sensitive barometers of emerging public concerns. These processes need not be linked to referendums in every case. It is also possible to use initiatives and e-petitions to initiate public or legislative debates. The New Democratic Party of Canada has proposed an e-petition process in which successful petitions would trigger debates in the House of Commons. To guard against frivolous petitions, each successful petition would have to be sponsored by at least five Members of Parliament before it would trigger a parliamentary debate.[6] This proposal would not provide any measure of popular control over policy outcomes, but it would provide individuals — even those who do not have the money or organiza-

[6] This proposal was presented to the Canadian House of Commons as a Private Members' Motion (M-428) on Friday, May 10, 2013 (House of Commons, 2013).

tions to run conventional petition campaigns — some measure of influence over the political agendas of their elected officials.

Participatory budgeting processes are also agenda-setting tools (Smith 2009, 49). In principle, PB provides every individual with an opportunity to help shape the municipal budget. In practice, research shows that most PB participants, and especially those who become citizen delegates, are active members of civil society organizations (Wampler 2007, 31). This might suggest that rather than mobilizing previously unorganized individuals, PB processes simply provide well-organized community activists with new ways of shaping political agendas. Abers (2000) disagrees. She argues that PB processes can give new civil society organizations the impetus to form, and they can encourage otherwise inactive individuals to get involved in civil society groups. In either case, PB is an upstream process that provides some measure of popular control to individuals and groups who would otherwise have few opportunities to influence political agendas months before municipal budgets are set.

Participatory budgeting processes also encourage participants to consider policy trade-offs. Unlike citizens' initiatives, which can be used to place only one public issue on the political agenda at a time, participants in PB processes, and in particular citizen delegates, are required to think about how policy initiatives in one issue area or region of the city will affect other issues and neighbourhoods. Furthermore, citizen delegates have to explain to city officials and delegates from other areas why public money should be spent in their local areas. As Dryzek (1987, 1995) has explained, rational and farsighted collective action often requires coordinating actions across issue areas so that actions taken to address one issue do not undermine those taken to address other issues or problems. PB processes provide some measure of popular control over budgeting agendas and they do so in a way that encourages participants to consider policy trade-offs as well as the potential effects of their decisions on other policy issues and areas of the city.

At first glance, minipublics are not well-equipped to function as agenda-setting tools. Most minipublics are initiated by governments, bureaucrats, or researchers and the topics to be addressed (or excluded) are typically decided by organizers. As Amy Lang (2008) notes, "organizers of deliberative forums may undermine citizens' control over the outcome of their participation. Regardless of their intentions, organizers of deliberative forums create obstacles for citi-

zens: they set a mandate, control information, 'manage' the encounters among citizens and state agents, and interpret citizen input in order to communicate decisions back to governments and to the general public" (86). Furthermore, given the resources that are typically required to run minipublics, it is difficult to see why public authorities, organizations, or researchers would want to fund processes that do not address the issues that are of most interest to them (Smith 2009, 89). Given organizational demands, minipublics are not democratically 'organic': they are not initiated, funded, or managed by the participants themselves. This makes them less effective as agenda-setting devises, especially when compared to citizens' initiatives and e-petitions.

Nevertheless, within the confines of a set mandate, minipublic participants can in some cases exercise real control over the shape and outcomes of these processes. Using the British Columbia Citizens Assembly as a case study, Lang (2008) found that "over the course of the Assembly's meetings there was a second, *informal* agenda-setting process that was substantially guided by Assembly members" (87). Members of the assembly actively raised their own objections and concerns, articulated their own perspectives on issues and problems, developed their own solutions to problems, and many conducted their own research outside of the assembly process. Lang (2008) concludes that even though "they worked within a framework laid out by the official agenda, it was the unofficial agenda of citizen-identified problems that guided their decision-making" (87).

More recently, researchers have experimented with allowing minipublics to actively set their own agendas in the early stages of a process. In a recent minipublic on issues related to a relatively unfamiliar form of environmental pollution, participants spent the first day of meetings learning about the issues from experts in the field, and the second day deliberating their own agenda for the third and fourth days of deliberation. This approach was important to the success of this process because, given the relative obscurity of the topic, researchers were unable to identify potential public concerns in advance of the deliberations themselves (O'Doherty *et al.* 2013). In this case, as with the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly, participants exercised some control over the agenda *within* the process itself, but members of the general public did not have a role to play in initiating the process in the first place.

Minipublics might nevertheless play some role in shaping, and even improving, other agenda-setting processes. Ferejohn (2008), for example, has suggested that minipublics could be used to vet citizens' initiative proposals. In this scenario, citizens' initiatives would be used as the primary agenda-setting tool, and minipublics would be used as a secondary check on successful petitions. In this capacity, each minipublic would deliberate a successful initiative and make a recommendation as to whether a referendum on that topic should be held. Ferejohn (2008) argues that this process would help filter out propositions that are intended to change public policy in ways that would benefit specific groups at the expense of the public interest. In this role, minipublics would enhance popular control over political agendas, even though they are not well positioned to function as agenda-setting devices when viewed in insolation from other components of the democratic system.

Controlling Outcomes. The second aspect of popular control has to do with turning political agendas and decisions into actionable outcomes. Elected legislatures are the hallmark institutions of popular control in modern democratic systems. Elected governments have the political legitimacy to use the mechanisms of the state to coordinate collective actions through persuasion, incentives, threats of force, or force itself. Like all democratic institutions, elected legislatures and governments are subject to institutional biases that make doing some things easier than others. As discussed in Chapter 2, elected governments and legislatures are often subject to the myopic political imperatives created by short electoral cycles. A democratic system with multiple supplementary mechanisms of popular control will be better equipped to turn its collective long-term intentions into actionable outcomes. If the parts of the system are well calibrated, the influence of one institution can help expose, challenge, or compensate for the shortcomings of others. The capacity to match collective intentions to collective actions makes it possible for a society as a whole to not only take responsibility for its actions but to actually reach its collective goals.

Citizens' initiatives are tools designed to provide some popular control over political agendas. Referendums, by contrast, are purpose-built to provide direct popular control over (specific) policy decisions. Saward (1998) agues that referendums are the primary and most direct means of ensuring collective actions match collective intentions. This is the essence of his con-

cept of responsive rule, which he defines as the "necessary correspondence between acts of governance and the equally weighted felt interests of citizens with respect to those acts" (83). Saward (1998) goes on to ask: "What better way to maximize responsiveness of rulers to the ruled than by fostering a system in which the ruled themselves make the decisions?" (83). From this perspective referendums are the quintessential tool of popular control. As such, Saward (1998) argues that direct legislation tools such as referendums should not be seen as supplementary to our representative legislatures and elected governments. Instead, he argues that "representative institutions are only acceptable if they are necessary to the enablement of direct decision-making" (113).

There is much to be said for Saward's (1998) perspective on these matters: referendums provide a direct means of exercising popular control over collective decisions. Of course, the political reality of their use is often somewhat different. Referendums — especially those that are not linked to citizens' initiatives — can be used by elite actors for various strategic purposes. As Chambers (2001) points out, "the less citizens themselves have to do with the framing of the question the more referendums are a strategic 'card' to play by elites" (251). For example, referendums can be used to break political deadlocks if one group of elites believe that the people will favour (or can be made to favour) their position over that of their opponent's (Walker 2003, 5). Referendums can also be used to resolve tensions within political parties when there are internal disputes about policy, or to increase public support for government initiatives (Smith 2009, 122). There are also issues related to implementation. As Smith (2009) points out, a referendum "only cedes citizen control in the decision-making process: problems can arise when those decisions are implemented, since there is no oversight process built into the system. After a proposition has passed into law, popular control can be undermined by a reluctant or oppositional legislature or bureaucracy" (124). When referendums are used strategically by political elites they can become mechanisms of public control instead of devices of responsive rule (see e.g. Walker 2003).

There is also some danger in focusing on the referendum vote as *a moment* of popular rule. If societies are to have effective control over their own futures, they need to have some means of controlling their actions in intentional, goal-oriented ways. The referendum as a mechanism of popular rule is insufficiently intentional because the vote itself is purely aggrega-

tive and the ballot is secret. Under these circumstances, the collective outcomes produced by a referendum process may be collectively irrational even if each person's vote makes sense from his or her own perspective. This does not mean that voters *will* vote in self-interested ways, nor does it mean that referendums *will* produce outcomes that are collectively irrational. The point of the matter is that referendum voters are not called upon to publicly explain or justify their decisions, and this makes it easier to vote in self-interested ways. Referendum votes provide few incentives to encourage individuals to adopt other-regarding positions, especially when such positions would involve willingly bearing near-term costs for collective or long-term benefits. This means that a lot of the work that must be done to produce generalized other-regarding perspectives must be done prior to the referendum vote itself: in media discussions, public forums, private homes, coffee shops, or minipublic deliberations.

It is difficult to deny that referendums are the most (and perhaps only) direct means of exercising popular control over collective decisions (Saward 1998). The challenge is to figure out how some of the democratic goods that are produced in other parts of the system — goods such as other-regarding concerns and longer-term perspectives — can be preserved *at the moment of aggregation* and thus effectively translated into collective outcomes. As argued above, a systems-level approach to referendum politics — an approach that makes use of citizens' initiatives, e-petitions, staged or iterative referendum votes, multiple choice ballots, publicly funded campaigns, public discussion forums, or minipublic deliberations — can help mitigate some of the less desirable aspects of majoritarian voting and thereby make it possible to employ referendums as instruments of collective intentionality *and* popular control.

Participatory budgeting processes also provide some measure of popular control over collective outcomes. In PB, citizens are involved at all stages of the decision-making process: from agenda-setting at public meetings, to policy development, to decision-making itself, and finally, in the review of implementation processes. Unlike referendums, however, the popular control that PB provides is not direct. Instead, it is complicated by a number of factors including the official status of PB, the fact that parts of the process involve representation as opposed to direct legislation, and the (formal and informal) influence that elected officials and bureaucrats retain over PB delegates and their decisions (Smith 2009, 49).

With respect to the first of these factors, PB processes have not been codified into law and the powers that have been delegated to citizens are retained by officials. The mayor has the right to veto proposals made by citizen delegates. This said, this power has not been used, at least in Porto Alegre, where PB enjoys widespread political legitimacy (Santos 1998). Still, the fact that PB powers are not codified or protected by constitutions makes these processes vulnerable in cities where they are not well established and where elected governments are not committed to the principles of participatory governance (Wampler 2007).

With respect to the second factor, PB does not provide citizens with direct control over public decisions. Instead, decisions are made by citizen representatives working in conjunction with elected representatives and bureaucrats. This means that the popular control that PB provides is at least one step removed from the public itself. As with ordinary electoral processes, citizens exercise control only through their political representatives. Nevertheless, citizen delegates in PB processes are closer to their constituents than are elected councilors and mayors. Citizen delegates are drawn from and represent the neighbourhoods in which they live. Their terms are limited and they have few opportunities to become professional politicians *while* they are delegates. Citizen delegates are not paid for their participation, they are subject to recall at any time, and PB meetings are open to the public (Smith 2009, 51-52). These accountability mechanisms help ensure that citizens retain some level of control over their delegates and the PB process more generally, even when they are not actively involved in making decisions.

With respect to the third factor, there is some danger that citizen delegates will be either co-opted by officials or overwhelmed by the volume and technical aspects of government proposals. The danger of co-optation is mitigated somewhat by the accountability and transparency mechanisms that are worked into the system. There is some evidence, however, that citizens are at a disadvantage when it comes to scrutinizing and responding to government proposals and technical bureaucratic reports. As Smith (2009) explains, the "technical knowledge, experience and bureaucratic support available to officials places them in a powerful position vis-à-vis ordinary citizens" (55). The disadvantages associated with inexperience are not possible to overcome without undermining the popular aspects of the process itself: the more experienced delegates become the less like ordinary citizens they will be. The disadvantages associated with a lack of

bureaucratic support could, in principle, be overcome by providing citizen delegates with resources to access independent sources of expertise.

PB processes do not provide citizens with direct control over policy outcomes. Nevertheless, when done well PB can provide citizens with a degree of control that surpasses most other representative institutions. The particular strength of PB is that citizens are fully integrated into political and bureaucratic decision-making processes without becoming too closely associated with (or affected by) those processes. As testament to this, there is evidence that PB has produced tangible outcomes that are, broadly speaking, in the public's interest. In Porto Alegre, where the system works quite well, the rise of PB has been associated with lower levels of corruption in municipal politics, as well as increases in infrastructure spending in previously underserviced poorer neighbourhoods (Abers 2000; Baiocchi 2003).

Minipublics do not provide citizens with control over policy outcomes. Even those that have been empowered to make specific decisions *within* the policy making process have not been empowered to translate their decisions directly into policy. The Ontario and British Columbia Citizens' Assemblies on Electoral Reform were each empowered to trigger a referendum vote, but they were not empowered to act on their own policy recommendations (Fournier *et al.* 2011). Some scholars have recommended giving randomly selected assemblies the power to make policy decisions directly (e.g., Burnheim 1985; Leib 2004). These proposals have not been taken up by other scholars or practitioners because of questions about the political legitimacy of using randomly selected assemblies in this way. As Warren (2008) points out citizens' assemblies and other minipublics are representative institutions with few accountability mechanisms: the members are not elected and those they represent cannot reward them for good work or sanction them for bad decisions. This lack of direct accountability greatly limits the minipublic's potential as a mechanism of direct popular control over policy outcomes.

Even though minipublics cannot be viewed as instruments of popular control, they can nevertheless play some role in helping to shape democratic outcomes. As discussed above, minipublics can help inject deliberative concerns and considerations into decision-making processes that might otherwise be made in ways that are not sufficiently deliberative. This is especially important when it comes to referendum campaigns because without sufficient levels of de-

liberation before votes are taken, referendums are more likely to be divisive as opposed to integrative, and they are more likely to be myopic or even blind to the collective and future consequences of specific decisions. Minipublics can also help inject deliberative concerns and considerations into decision-making processes at the bureaucratic level. This is especially important when it comes to issues that the general public knows little or nothing about, such as scientifically complex issues or emerging concerns that have the potential to become politically salient but have not yet been discussed or debated in the public realm (e.g., MacKenzie and Warren 2012). With respect to emerging concerns — or future issues — those with vested interests are likely to know the issues and their interests well, but the general public is likely to be unorganized, ill-informed and therefore unaware and disengaged. This makes it difficult to obtain good representations of the public interest when conventional open-invitation engagement processes are used to address complex, unfamiliar, or emerging public issues. In contrast, minipublics that use random selection processes and involve substantive learning and deliberation phases, can provide decision makers in the bureaucracy (and elsewhere in the system) with well informed deliberative input on difficult to address public issues (MacKenzie and O'Doherty 2011). What decision makers do with the recommendations of a minipublic is another question entirely. When recommendations are disregarded, ignored, or suppressed minipublics will have no real impact on policy outcomes. Nevertheless, there are examples of minipublics that have had a demonstrable impact on bureaucratic decision-making processes (see, e.g., Burgess *et al.* 2008). When done well, minipublics can help indirectly shape policy decisions even though they do not provide citizens with any measure of direct control over policy outcomes.

In this section, I have argued that there are a number of existing institutions that can help produce each of the conditions that I have associated with longer-term thinking and farsighted action: independence from electoral cycles, inclusion, deliberation, membership, and popular control. No one institution can be relied upon to provide each of these goods. Nor can all of these goods be produced at *each* stage of any particular decision-making process. Nevertheless, when viewed together, each of the supplementary institutions examined in this section has some role to play in helping to make our democratic systems more effectively farsighted.

8.3 Proposed Institutions

In addition to the four institutions that are profiled in the previous section, there are a number of institutions that have been proposed but have not been tried or tested. Some of these institutions have been proposed as solutions to the democratic myopia problem itself. Others are general-purpose institutions that would help make our democratic systems more robust and thus better equipped to act in farsighted and intentional ways. Section 8.3.1, critiques a number of institutional proposals that are specifically designed to help mitigate the democratic myopia problem. Section 8.3.2, briefly examines a single institution — a randomly selected second chamber — that would alone provide many of the democratic goods that I have associated with longer-term thinking and action.

8.3.1 Future-Oriented Institutions

A number of scholars have proposed institutions that would, if effective, help counterbalance the myopic tendencies of electoral institutions. One approach is to recommend the creation of quasi-judicial supervisory bodies. Tonn (1991), for example, has proposed a Court of Generations for the United States of America. This institution would be housed in the judicial branch of the government. It would be made up of the members of the Supreme Court along with a Grand Jury of appointed citizens. One citizen would be appointed by each state and territorial government. Unless specially convened by Congress for a special session, the Grand Jury would meet every five years in order to review government legislation. The Grand Jury would be empowered to decide whether government actions pose "an intolerable threat to the security of the blessings of liberty to our posterity" (483). If the Grand Jury were to find evidence of such a threat, the Supreme Court would be empowered to make a final decision on the matter, and to constrain the actions of the government if necessary.

In a proposal that is similar to Tonn's (1991), Stein (1998) recommends creating an 'Ecological Council.' The members of this council would be elected *by* members of the legislature. The council would be charged with the task of reviewing all legislation and proposing amendments or revisions to law proposals that could pose significant ecological threats. Like the House

of Lords, this ecological council would not have the power to veto legislation, but it would have the power to delay the passage of bills into law.[7]

Quasi-judicial supervisory bodies like the ones proposed by Tonn (1991) and Stein (1998) would help provide some of the goods that I have associated with longer-term thinking and action. Most importantly, these bodies would be independent from the political dynamics of short electoral cycles. In Tonn's (1991) proposal the council would be run by appointed citizens as opposed to elected officials, and it would be conducted under the auspices of the Supreme Court. In Stein's (1998) proposal the members of the council would be elected *by* elected officials, and as a consequence they would not be entirely independent. Nevertheless, they would be at least one step removed from ordinary politics and they would not face the same political imperatives as elected officials. To provide further insulation from electoral politics, Stein (1998) recommends that the members of the council serve single terms of office that are longer than the terms of elected representatives.

The institutions that Tonn (1991) and Stein (1998) propose are also designed to help enhance the deliberative quality of decision-making processes. There is a good chance that the internal deliberations of these councils would be of high quality, given that their members would have few incentives to make decisions based on anything other than reasons and persuasion. Tonn (1991) argues that the Court of Generations could help stimulate on-going public discussions about the long-term impacts of our actions. In his proposal, the Court would also keep a historical record of its proceedings that could be used as the basis for intergenerational dialogues and communications (496). Stein (1998) argues that by giving the Ecological Council the right to delay legislation, this body would be empowered to initiate discussions and deliberation among lawmakers and the general public on critical environmental issues.

Quasi-judicial supervisory councils would be independent from the political dynamics of short electoral cycles, and under the right circumstances they would help enhance the delibera-

[7] Something like Stein's ecological council, the *Knesset Commissioner of Future Generations*, was created in Israel in 2001 but it has since been dismantled. As opposed to a council with appointed members, this office was headed by a single appointed officer who functioned as a well-resourced supervisor of the legislative process. The commissioner would evaluate law proposals, give advice before parliament and in parliamentary committees, and participate in some committee debates. The commissioner also had the power to demand information from government ministries and public corporations. Unlike most appointed bodies in democratic regimes, the Commissioner was granted power to initiate bills designed to promote the interests of future generations (see Ekeli 2009, 448; Shoham and Lamay 2006).

tive quality of decision-making processes, but they would not provide the other democratic goods that I have associated with longer-term thinking and action. First, they would not be inclusive. In Tonn's (1991) proposal, one individual would be appointed by each state or territorial government. Such a process would almost certainly favour those individuals who are already well connected politically. Stein's (1998) selection process would also favour elite actors. Given the exclusive nature of these selection processes, these bodies would be unlikely to include a full range of potentially relevant perspectives on the long-term issues that they are meant to address. To the extent that the councils are filled with elite actors, they would also do little to enhance the average individual's sense of membership in the larger democratic society. Lastly, these institutions would create a new layer of governance but they would do little to enhance popular control over political agendas or policy outcomes. In Tonn's (1991) model, the power to challenge legislative decisions would rest with the Supreme Court, a body that already possesses similar powers. In addition, the institution that Tonn proposes would only be empowered to *react* to legislation, even though many long-term problems are the result of inaction. In Stein's model the council would have the power to delay law proposals but the legislative chamber would (rightly) retain its supremacy. For these reasons, these proposals would do little to enhance the democratic quality of decision-making processes more generally. As such, these are not *democratic* solutions to the electoral myopia problem.

In contrast to Tonn (1991) and Stein (1998), Ekeli (2007) recommends adopting a constitutional clause that he calls the Posterity Provision. There are a number of existing constitutional clauses that are designed to help protect the future from the actions of the present. In most cases these are substantive clauses that aim to either: 1) protect future generations in general; 2) preserve the natural environment; or 3) prevent profligate public spending (Tremmel 2006). Ekeli's (2007) proposal is of interest because it includes both substantive and procedural elements. The substantive elements are familiar. According to Ekeli's proposal, the state would have a "duty to avoid and prevent decisions and activities that can cause avoidable damage to critical natural resources that are necessary to provide for the physiological (biological and physical) needs of future generations" (391). The procedural elements of Ekeli's proposal are innovative. Instead of empowering the courts to strike down legislation as unconstitutional, Ekeli's proposal would give

the courts three procedural powers: 1) to initiate environmental impact assessments; 2) to delay legislation until a new election has been held; or 3) to trigger a referendum on the issue at hand.

Ekeli's (2007) proposal has several democratic features. It would provide independent courts with some influence over decision-making processes on long-term issues, but it would not empower the courts to constrain elected legislatures. Instead, the Posterity Provision would give courts the power to reintroduce certain law proposals back into the democratic arena. Unlike Stein's (1998) Ecological Council, which would simply punt law proposals back to the legislature, the Posterity Provision would empower courts to delay certain pieces of legislation in ways that would, under certain conditions, generate inclusive public debates and discussions. The environmental impact assessments would provide both technical advice and public input if they included consultation processes. The other two components of the proposal — the power to delay legislation until the next election or trigger a referendum vote — would help initiate public debates *and* provide increased levels of popular control over public decisions that will have long-term impacts. The chief drawback of Ekeli's proposal is its narrow scope: it might help protect the future from environmental degradation but it would do nothing to address other long-term issues such as education spending, public pension plans, natural disaster preparedness, or budget deficits.[8]

In another proposal, Ekeli (2009) recommends giving procedural powers to delay law proposals to legislative minorities instead of courts. This proposal is based on the concept of a submajority rule, which can be defined as follows: "A voting rule that authorizes (i) a predefined numerical minority within a designated voting group (ii) to change the status quo (not merely to prevent change) (iii) regardless of the distribution of other votes" (Vermeule 2005, 76). Ekeli (2009) points out that while submajority rules are rarely used to make substantive decisions, they are commonly used to set procedural rules or to establish agendas for subsequent deliberation and voting (449). Inline with this thinking, Ekeli recommends giving any minority that makes up

[8] It is worth pointing out that Ekeli's (2007) proposal could be adapted to some of these other long-term issues. Nevertheless, this proposal could not be adapted to address all potentially relevant long-term issues. Some long-term issues will not be amenable to constitutional entrenchment. More fundamentally, Ekeli's approach requires us to anticipate the sort of long-term problems that might not be effectively dealt with by elected governments. By contrast, general-purpose institutions, such as the randomly selected second chamber described in Section 8.3.2, would be capable to responding to not only existing and familiar long-term problems or issues, but also those that have not yet been identified or entrenched in constitutions.

one-third of a legislative chamber two procedural powers: 1) the power to delay legislation until the next election if the minority agrees that a law would "inflict serious harms or risks upon posterity"; or 2) the power to trigger a referendum if the minority agrees that a law would "have a serious adverse impact on the life-conditions of posterity" (449). This proposal has many of the same advantages and drawbacks as Ekeli's (2007) other proposal. It would create new opportunities for inclusive public discussions to occur on critical environmental issues. Ekeli (2009) argues that these procedural rules would also incentivize lawmakers to anticipate and avoid potential challenges by writing law proposals that more fully consider and explain potential long-term consequences (432). But like Ekeli's (2007) other proposal, these submajority rules would be narrow in scope: they would focus on environmental problems to the exclusion of other long-term issues.

Ekeli's (2009) proposal would give duly elected representatives additional powers to challenge sitting governments on critical environmental issues. When compared to Tonn's (1991) and Stein's (1998) proposals for quasi-judicial councils, Ekeli's (2009) proposal can be viewed as a *democratic* solution to the democratic myopia problem: it would give additional powers to elected officials instead of appointed bodies or courts. But this also means that Ekeli's submajority rules would not operate independently from the short-term dynamics of electoral politics. Indeed, legislative minorities would have strong incentives to use submajority rules for partisan purposes. From one perspective this might not matter much: the rules themselves, whether used for genuine or strategic reasons, would encourage lawmakers to think about the long-term impacts of their law proposals. From another perspective, submajority rules might make legislatures more partisan and less constructive and deliberative. In order to prevent minorities from gaming the system, Ekeli would require them to present a *prima facie* case that a law proposal would pose significant risks to posterity. Once a *prima facie* case is presented, the burden of proof would fall to the majority to demonstrate why a law proposal does not pose a significant risk to posterity. Irresolvable disputes in these matters would be decided by the courts (450). This would help prevent legislative minorities from delaying legislation for partisan reasons, but it would also create a system that is similar in many ways to Ekeli's (2007) other proposal: in both

cases the courts would be empowered to delay legislation that poses significant risks to posterity.[9]

Each of the institutional proposals that considered here — Tonn's (1991), Stein's (1998), and Ekeli's (2007, 2009) — would provide some of the democratic goods that I have associated with longer-term thinking and farsighted action. Quasi-judicial councils would provide some independence from electoral processes, as would Ekeli's (2007) proposal for a constitutionally entrenched Posterity Provision. All four proposals would provide additional opportunities for public deliberations on critical environmental issues to occur.

Nevertheless, each proposal also has some drawbacks from a democratic perspective. Tonn's (1991) and Stein's (1998) proposals do not provide citizens with any additional control over political agendas or policy outcomes — and the councils that they propose would likely be more exclusive than inclusive. Ekeli's (2007, 2009) proposals would enhance popular control over policy outcomes but they would not provide citizens with any additional means of influencing political agendas or directing their societies toward specific collective goals or objectives. This does not mean that these institutions have no place in the democratic system. After all, no single institution can be expected to bear the weight of all our democratic demands. Still, all four proposals share one quite important drawback. They are designed to deal with only one type of issue: those having to do with environmental problems. In principle, councils, courts, or legislative minorities could be empowered to assess and respond to law proposals on other critical long-term issues. Such an approach might be possible but it would be difficult to implement because it would require either: 1) cataloging all potentially relevant long-term issues and giving councils, courts, or legislative minorities mandates to deal with those issues; or 2) giving unelected bodies and legislative minorities sweeping powers to deal with all potential and emergent long-term is-

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[9] There are two other institutional proposals that are not, in my opinion, worthy of much consideration. One is Dobson's (1996) proposal for a system in which a quota of legislative seats would to be reserved for representatives of future generations. These seats would be filled by members of environmental groups who would compete amongst themselves to be elected. The other is Ekeli's (2005) response to Dobson's (1996) proposal. In Ekeli's (2005) scheme a quota of seats would be reserved for what he calls "Future Representatives" who would be elected from "Future Parties" — a category that would include *any* type of party that demonstrates a genuine commitment to the future. These proposals are hard to defend from a democratic perspective. Dobson's proposal closes off reasonable debate about who should be granted the right to represent future generations. Similarly, Ekeli's scheme would involve reserving seats for certain parties based on their substantive policies, not based on their ability to win the support of voters. In principle, democratic institutions should — at least within reasonable limits — be neutral with respect to the substantive beliefs of political actors.

sues. Neither approach will do: the first is not feasible from a practical perspective and the second is not attractive from a democratic perspective. What is needed are *general-purpose* democratic institutions that have the capacity to respond to any and all types of long-term issues as these emerge. In the previous section of the chapter, I discussed four general-purpose democratic institutions: citizens' initiatives, referendums, minipublics, and participatory budgeting processes. I have argued that, together, these four institutions can provide each of the five democratic conditions that I believe are conducive to longer-term thinking and farsighted action: independence from electoral cycles, inclusion, deliberation, membership, and popular control. Another general-purpose institution, which has been proposed but has not yet been tried or tested, is a randomly selected second chamber.

8.3.2 A Randomly Selected Second Chamber

A randomly selected second chamber would be a general-purpose, permanent minipublic located at the heart of the legislative system. The membership would be rotated on a regular basis and individuals would be selected using stratified random processes to ensure the presence of politically relevant groups and perspectives. Similar institutions have been proposed by a number of scholars, each with different objectives and vastly different design components. Dahl (1970), for example, proposed an elaborate system of advisory councils, each made up of several hundred randomly selected individuals. In Dahl's (1970) scheme, there would be a council for every elected official in the country including mayors, state governors and even the president (149). Each council would pay attention to public and legislative debates, meet with their elected official, deliberate amongst themselves and offer advice and recommendations.

O'Leary (2006) has proposed a model that is in many ways similar to Dahl's (1970) proposal. O'Leary recommends creating randomly selected advisory councils for each of the 435 members of the U.S. Congress. Each council would be comprised of 100 citizens for a total of 43, 500 individuals. Each council would sit for one year and would meet face-to-face two or three times a month (90). O'Leary (2006) envisions two stages of development. In the first stage, the councils would provide informed and deliberative advice to their members of congress. In the

second stage, a national-level "People's House" — which would be made up of every member of the 435 local assemblies — would have the power to, among other things, say yea or nay to proposed bills, initiate their own law proposals, and break deadlocks by forcing votes in Congress (98).[10]

McCormick (2006, 2011) has recommended instituting what would in effect be a third house of Congress: the People's Tribunate. This house would be made up of fifty-one randomly selected individuals, each appointed for one year. An individual who has served in the Tribunate for one year would not be eligible to serve a second term. Members of the People's Tribunate would study and discuss government business and review law proposals. Each iteration of the Tribunate would have the power to veto one piece of legislation, call one referendum, and impeach one official from each branch of government (McCormick 2011, 184).[11] McCormick (2011) argues that the People's Tribunate would help address two shortcomings of our representative system. The first is that there are too few ways for citizens to effectively hold elected officials to account between election periods. The second is the lack of any formal or institutional distinction between the wealthy and those who are not wealthy. Modeling his proposal on the Roman Tribunes — who were common people elected to represent commoners and their inter-

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[10] Leib (2004) has proposed replacing citizens' initiative and referendum processes with randomly selected assemblies modeled on Fishkin's (e.g., 1995) Deliberative Polls. In Leib's (2004) proposal, these would not be standing assemblies. Instead, they would be *ad hoc* juries charged with deliberating those issues that would otherwise be dealt with through initiative and referendum procedures. Leib is one of only a small number of scholars who has recommended giving randomly selected assemblies the power to enact laws (12). Burnheim (1985) has also recommended giving randomly selected bodies legislative powers. In O'Leary's (2006) model, the randomly selected "People's House" would have the power to initiate bills but these would be dealt with through ordinary legislative procedures in Congress.

[11] This approach is designed to prevent more deadlock in an already heavily deadlocked system of government. Nevertheless, limiting the People's Tribunate to one veto, one referendum, and one impeachment each year might create certain undesirable incentives. First, members of the Tribunate might feel as if they *have* to exercise these powers, even if there are no bills to veto, no referendums needed, and no individuals worthy of impeachment. If they do not exercise these powers they might be accused of not doing their job. Second, it would be difficult to know *when* to exercise these powers. The Tribunate might agree to veto a bill early in their term, only to find that an even worse bill is introduced after they have exercised their veto.

ests — McCormick (2011) recommends excluding very wealthy individuals (i.e. those in the top 10 percent) from serving on the People's Tribunate.[12]

Rather than creating additional legislative chambers, advisory councils, or deliberative assemblies, other scholars have recommended reforming existing institutions. Barnett and Carty (2008), for example, have proposed replacing the U.K. House of Lords with a randomly selected body of citizens. This body would retain the powers that the House of Lords currently has to scrutinize, revise, and delay law proposals, but it would be granted three additional powers. It would have the power to insist that legislation be drafted in clear and accessible language. It would have the right return laws to the legislature if their likely effects are judged to be at odds with a government's stated objectives. And it would have the power to refuse the passage of laws that might be unconstitutional.

In a similar proposal, Zakaras (2010) has recommended replacing the U.S. Senate, as well as each state senate, with randomly selected Citizens' Chambers. Members of each Chamber would serve for one full legislative session, in addition to two months spent observing the previous session. Unlike existing senates, these bodies would not have the power to initiate legislation. Instead, they would review and deliberate law proposals and approve or veto bills. Nor would a Citizens' Chamber have the right to alter legislation. Instead, vetoed bills would be sent back to the elected legislature for further debate and redrafting. Following O'Leary (2006), Zarakas also recommends giving the Citizens' Chamber the power to compel votes on bills that are stalled by deadlock or languishing in legislative committees (457).

When compared to other proposals, Zarakas' design has a number of strengths. First it is relatively simple. It would not create a large number of separate assemblies or additional veto points in systems where second chambers already exist, thus avoiding multiplying existing collective action problems. Second, the proposal is relatively modest. It would not involve creating

[12] From a practical perspective it would not be necessary to impose restrictions on membership based on wealth. The use of random processes would ensure that the People's Tribunate is made up of individuals from all income levels in proportion to their numbers in the population. Given the small number of very wealthy individuals — and the opportunity costs for wealthy individuals to be involved in such an assembly — few (if any) representatives of this class would become members, thus preserving the socio-economic character of the institution without imposing legal restrictions on the participation of the wealthy. Nevertheless, as McCormick (2011) argues, there are symbolic, normative, and political reasons to make formal distinctions between elite and non-elite institutions. If nothing else, formal distinctions would function as a reminder that existing electoral institutions favour the participation of political elites (see, e.g., Manin 1987).

a new institution, it would simply involve reforming an existing institution that has a well established role to play in the democratic system. Third, and relatedly, it would create a participatory institution located right at the heart of the existing legislative system.

A randomly selected second chamber would provide many of the conditions that I have argued are conducive to longer-term thinking and farsighted action. First, despite being located at the heart of the legislative system, a randomly selected chamber would function independently from the short-term pressures of ordinary electoral politics. Members of the chamber would not owe their positions to their partisan credentials, to well-financed groups with dominant short-term interests, or to their status as economic or political elites. Most importantly, members of a Citizens' Chamber would not have to worry about re-election. They would be free to deliberate public issues and law proposals without being hindered by the myopic imperatives that face elected representatives.

Second, a Citizens' Chamber would be inclusive, at least from a representational perspective. It would not be *as* inclusive as elections and referendums, which provide every individual with a vote. Nor would a Citizens' Chamber engage as many individuals as would Dahl's (1970) or O'Leary's (2006) numerous advisory councils. But a Citizens' Chamber would be inclusive in the following way: every individual would have an equal opportunity to have an opportunity to participate. From a representational perspective, random processes make it much more likely that a broad range of interests, concerns, and perspectives will be included. Stratified random sampling can be employed to ensure that a Citizens' Chamber is adequately inclusive of those who are too often underrepresented in elected legislatures: women, cultural or ethnic minorities, low income earners, and young people. Random selection would also help ensure that each Citizens' Chamber is representative of both short- and long-term perspectives on each temporally complex issue. There is no guarantee that representatives of longer-term perspectives and concerns *will* emerge — especially on issues that are framed in zero-sum terms that pit the interests of the future against those of the present. Nevertheless, if both short- and long-term perspectives exist in the broader public they are also likely to be present in a representative chamber that has been randomly selected.

Third, a randomly selected second chamber would create an environment that is conducive to high quality deliberation. The deliberative capacities of elected representatives are too often constrained by partisan concerns and objectives. In a randomly selected second chamber, individual members would be free to debate public issues and law proposals on their own merits. Even though many individual members of a Citizens' Chamber would have partisan preferences of their own, they would have few incentives to engage in partisan wrangling. What is more, those who are conscious of their status as members of a non-partisan deliberative chamber, might feel compelled to behave in ways that are consistent with the nature and purpose of that chamber. This certainly appears to have been the practice adopted by those who were members of the Citizens' Assemblies on Electoral Reform (see, e.g., Fournier *et al.* 2011; Warren and Pearse 2008). In addition, a Citizens' Chamber could be provided with the bureaucratic and technical expertise that members would require to do their work in a well-informed manner.

If the environment created *within* a Citizens' Chamber is conducive to high quality deliberation, any law proposal that does not fairly balance present period concerns with the potential interests of the future could be challenge on those grounds. This does not mean that deliberations on long-term issues *will* end with decisions that fairly balance the interests of the present with those of the future. Nevertheless, as argued in Chapter 6, effective forms of deliberation should make farsighted collective decisions more likely. In addition to creating a space in which high quality deliberations can take place, interactions *between* the elected assembly and the Citizens' Chamber would help enhance the deliberative capacity of the legislative system as a whole. In essence, elected officials would be forced to justify their actions to the Citizens' Chamber (and the public) in deliberative terms. In these interactions, disingenuous justifications or particularized, self-regarding decisions could be challenged on those grounds. In existing legislative systems, elected representatives may be forced to explain their positions to the media but they are rarely engaged in genuine deliberative exchanges with those who have the power to block their legislative agendas.

Fourth, a Citizens' Chamber would represent an important symbol of citizenship, even for those who are not selected to become members of such a chamber. As Zakaras (2010) explains, like universal suffrage, random selection is a way of recognizing individuals as free, equal, and

responsible agents. It is also an affirmation of the moral equality of each individual. Unlike universal suffrage, however, random selection treats all individuals as equals with respect to their capacities to occupy public offices (461). A Citizens' Chamber that is based on the principle of random selection and located at the center of a legislative system would be a powerful symbol of the value and responsibilities of citizenship. As explained in previous chapters, any institution that reinforces conceptions of membership in the larger democratic society will provide individual actors with additional reasons to think and act in other-regarding ways. On long-term issues thinking and acting in other-regarding ways also means thinking about the potential interests of future-others. The fact that citizenship alone would qualify an individual to play an active role in the Citizens' Chamber would help reinforce strong conceptions of membership for those who are *and* those who are not selected to participate.

Fifth, although a Citizens' Chamber modeled on Zakaras' proposal would not have the power to set the political agenda or make public policy, it would have an influential role to play in shaping democratic outcomes more generally. In addition to increasing the deliberative quality of the legislative system overall, a Citizens' Chamber would function as a permanent standing committee charged with reviewing legislative proposals. None of the other supplementary institutions that we have considered in this chapter would provide a permanent check on the actions of elected officials. Citizens' initiatives and referendums can be used to challenge legislative agendas on a case-by-case basis, usually in exceptional circumstances. Similarly, the submajority rules proposed by Ekeli (2009) would be used only in relatively rare cases on issues pertaining to specific environmental threats. Participatory budgeting processes provide some oversight of government proposals, but only on issues related to PB funds and initiatives. A Citizens' Chamber would review *all* law proposals but unlike an elected senate it would not be populated by professional politicians. As such, a Citizens' Chamber would retain the character of a participatory institution while at the same time being made a permanent fixture in the legislative system. In this capacity, a Citizens' Chamber could play some role in helping to protect the future from the actions of present (partisan) majorities.

In Zakaras' proposal, the Citizens' Chamber is designed to function as an advisory review panel, but it would be possible to give the Chamber more control over political agendas. Al-

though most scholars agree that it would not be legitimate to give randomly selected assemblies law making powers (cf Burnheim 1985; Leib 2004), such assemblies might nevertheless be granted the power to *initiate* law proposals if these proposals were subsequently required to travel through ordinary legislative channels (see, e.g., O'Leary 2006). Giving a Citizens' Chamber the power to initiate legislation would provide citizens with an additional means of control over legislative agendas. This would further empower society to direct itself towards specific collective goals and objectives.

Lastly, a Citizens' Chamber would be a general-purpose institution. Unlike the proposals suggested by Tonn (1991), Stein (1998), and Ekeli (2007, 2009), the mandate of a Citizens' Chamber would not be restricted to environmental issues. A Citizens' Chamber would be obliged to deal with both short- and long-term issues as these emerged. It would thus act as a potential check on the power of legislative majorities, not only with respect to environmental concerns, but also with respect to a full range of other long-term issues such as education spending, investments in public infrastructure, public pension plans, or technological change and development.

Overall, a randomly selected second chamber would be a general-purpose institution that, although not purpose-built to address specific long-term issues, would provide many of the conditions that I have associated with longer-term thinking and farsighted collective action. It would be independent from the electoral arena. It would be inclusive and deliberative. And it would reinforce strong conceptions of membership. It would not provide direct control over democratic outcomes, but depending on the design of the institution, it would provide some level of popular control over political agendas and thus indirect control over policy outcomes.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that it is possible to build democratic systems that are effectively farsighted without overtaxing the democratic resources of the average individual. Together, the institutions that are discussed in this chapter can together provide each of the five democratic con-

ditions that I have associated with longer-term thinking and farsighted action: independence from electoral cycles, inclusion, deliberation, membership, and popular control.

Minipublics, citizens' initiatives, referendums, participatory budgeting processes, and randomly selected second chambers are examples of *democratic* institutions that are capable of operating independently from the political dynamics of short electoral cycles. In addition, each of these institutions is inclusive in its own way. Citizens' initiatives provide each individual with an opportunity to influence political agendas. Referendums are maximally inclusive because each vote has an equal influence on collective outcomes. Minipublics and randomly selected second chambers can be designed to be descriptively representative of all potentially relevant groups and perspectives. As argued above, effective forms of inclusion help ensure that both short- and long-term perspectives are heard and considered when public decisions are made.

The institutions that are discussed in this chapter can also help enhance the deliberative quality of the democratic system as a whole. Referendums can be exemplars of deliberative democracy on the large scale when they are supplemented by publicly funded information campaigns, high quality media coverage, formal and informal public debates, and organized discussion forums. Minipublics, by contrast, create environments that are conducive to small scale democratic deliberations. Depending on the stage of the process, participatory budgeting helps support both large-scale public deliberations and small-scale democratic ones. At the large scale, public deliberations are an opportunity for a society to talk to itself about what it is doing and where it wants to go. At the small scale, democratic deliberation can help encourage longer-term thinking by creating conditions that favour other-regarding positions including those that take into consideration the potential interests of future-others.

The institutions that we have explored in this chapter also help underpin and reinforce robust conceptions of membership. This is not surprising: *all* democratic institutions to greater or lesser degrees provide reasons for individuals to think of themselves *as* citizens. As explained in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, conceptions of membership are important because the individual, standing alone, has few reasons to think past his or her own limited temporal horizons. When situated in a *democratic* entity, individuals are not only encouraged to think of themselves as members of a collective entity that *will* affect the future, they are also empowered to help shape that entity for

better or for worse. This, in turn, makes it possible to hold individuals responsible for the short- and long-term consequences of the collective decisions that they make.

Lastly, democratic systems that are made up of multiple overlapping institutions and practices can provide individuals and groups with a larger number and variety of extra-electoral ways of influencing political agendas and affecting policy outcomes. As explained above, popular control over political agendas and collective outcomes is a *necessary* condition for effective farsighted action. It is not enough to simply encourage longer-term thinking. In order to engage in effective farsighted action, democratic publics also need to be able to: 1) steer themselves towards collectively identified goals; and 2) coordinate individual actions such that collective objectives can be achieved. Citizens' initiatives are designed to give individuals and groups some means of direct influence over political agendas. Referendums and participatory budgeting processes provide democratic publics with two very different means of directly affecting collective decisions and policy outcomes. Minipublics do not provide direct control over political agendas or policy outcomes, but they can be used, in various ways, to help shape decision-making processes by making them more inclusive and deliberative.

The democratic myopia thesis that is discussed in Chapter 2 is too often predicated on the assumption that legitimate democratic decisions must be made, at one point or another, in elected legislatures. Elected assemblies occupy a centrally important place in all existing democratic systems, but democracy cannot be reduced to electoral politics alone. I have argued that multilayered democratic systems can provide each of the five conditions that I have associated with longer-term thinking and farsighted collective action: independence from electoral cycles, inclusion, deliberation, membership, and popular control. No one institution is capable of producing all of these conditions, but each condition can be produced by different institutions at different moments in a decision-making process. What is more, by making use of divisions of participatory labour, each condition can be produced without overtaxing the democratic resources of the average individual. Of course, the institutions that are discussed in this chapter are not the only possible options. There are a large number of innovative democratic institutions that have been tried and tested, and there is no limit to the number and variety of institutional proposals that might be considered. By focusing on a small number of existing and proposed institutions, I have tried to illustrate that it is possible to design democratic systems that are practical, efficient, *and* farsighted.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

9.1 Concluding Thoughts

Political theorists have traditionally had very little to say about intertemporal political relations. In this dissertation, I have argued that an atemporal approach to political theory is not adequate because what we do (or do not do) today, will affect the future in one way or another. To complicate matters, our relations with the future do not simply involve relations between overlapping generations of children, parents, and grandparents. We now know that what we do today can affect future generations hundreds or even thousands of years from now. Most of our existing political theories were designed to help us understand relations between contemporary political actors. In many cases, the central assumptions of atemporal theories are not directly relevant to intertemporal relations. For example, many political theories and established institutions rely (at least to some extent) on self-interest as a motivating factor for political action. When it comes to intertemporal relations, self-interest becomes less and less relevant as the temporal distances between our actions and the consequences of our actions increase. When it comes to relations between non-overlapping generations, self-interest becomes almost entirely irrelevant because what happens in the distant future will not affect our future-selves or the future-selves of those we know and care about today. I have argued that, given the limited relevance of the individual in time, it is useful to think about intertemporal relations as relations between collectivities of individuals, and not as relations between past, present, and future individuals. In other words, it is useful to situate the individual in a collectivity of one type or another in order to make sense of the individual in time. The challenge is to identify a form of collectivity that helps us make sense of the individual in time but is nevertheless consistent with a philosophy of moral individualism.

Most of what we know about the nature of intertemporal relations comes from theories of intergenerational justice. Over the past four decades or so, an extensive body of literature on intergenerational justice has emerged (see, e.g., Barry 1989a; Beckerman and Pasek 2001; de-Shalit 1995; English 1977; Gosseries 2007, 2008; Mazor 2010; Miller 2007, chap 6; Partridge 1981; Rawls 1999; Sikora and Barry 1978; Thompson 2002, 2009; Tremmel 2006, 2009). Indeed, theories of intergenerational justice have a sort of intuitive appeal. Most scholars agree that 'location in time' is not a criterion that can be used to justify treating individuals and groups differently. Why should existing generations be allowed to deplete the earth of its natural resources without concern for the needs and interests of future generations? Presumably all individuals and groups have some claim to the resources that the earth itself provides. In a just world, the arbitrary fact of having been born during a particular era would not determine whether one lives in luxury or is instead consigned to a life of scarcity. The advantage of thinking about intergenerational relations in terms of justice is that claims of justice are typically granted priority over claims of other types. Unlike political agreements, principles of justice cannot be (legitimately) ignored or abandoned in response to changing expectations, objectives, or political exigencies. Claims of justice offer some measure of stability in a world of political change and uncertainty. Nevertheless, I have argued that we should not limit our focus to only those aspects of intertemporal relations that are relevant to theories of justice. Theories of justice can help us identify our duty-based obligations to the future, but they cannot tell us which specific actions we ought (or ought not) to take in order to adequately fulfill those duties. Doing what justice requires often involves distributing or redistributing scare resources; and disputes about resources always raise political questions about who gets what, where, when, and why. In addition, political judgements must be made whenever there are conflicts between competing principles of justice or obligations of duty. In general, claims of justice are *just* claims that must be made actionable in political processes.

I have also argued that when trying to understand the nature of intertemporal relations, we should not focus only on our duty-based obligations to the future. Obligations of duty are an indispensable component of any adequate theory of intertemporal relations, but many individuals and groups are motivated to do *more* for the future than duty would require. By limiting their at-

tention to claims of justice and obligations of duty, many theorists of intergenerational justice have downplayed or dismissed the relevance of supererogatory concerns and motivations (e.g., Barry 1978, 244; de-Shalit 1995, 11; Rawls 1999, 255). We are duty-bound to act in ways that will minimize the harm that the future might suffer as a consequence of our actions, but many individuals and groups also want to make positive contributions to the future. We strive to establish stable political regimes, defend principles that we believe in, make cultural contributions, fix social problems, develop new technologies, and make scientific discoveries. We do not do these things because we are obliged to do them; we do them, at least in part, because we want to make the future a little bit better. It is not always easy to make clear distinctions between those actions that aim to protect the future and those that aim to make positive contributions to the future. Given this, we need to think not only about our duty-based obligations to the future but also about how the actions of individuals and groups can be coordinated such that collectively-desirable goals and objectives can be identified, specified, and ultimately achieved. For this we need a *political* theory of intertemporal relations in addition to a theory of intergenerational justice. I have argued that democracy — in theory and in practice — can help provide the foundation for a *political* theory of intertemporal relations. The central claim is that democracy can help situate individuals in time by locating them in collective entities that are self-directed and thus capable of acting in collectively intentional, farsighted ways. Effective democratic systems are shaped and moved by the intentions and motivations of individuals, but they are also coherent identifiable entities that are capable of bearing collective responsibility for their actions and maintaining commitments over time even as their membership changes.

One point that has not been emphasized is the mutual compatibility of democracy and justice. As Iris Marion Young (2000) has argued, there is "a tight theoretical connection between democracy and justice; under ideal conditions of inclusive political equality and public reasonableness, democratic processes serve as the means of discovering and validating the most just policies" (17). Conditions of inclusive political equality help ensure that each individual or group possesses some of the necessary political resources to challenge injustice as they see it. The distribution of political power and influence makes it difficult for otherwise dominant groups to translate other forms of power, such as economic influence, social status, or education, into po-

litical influence over public decision-making processes. Ideally, democratic systems make it possible for any individual or group to effectively challenge unjust policies or actions. Deliberative processes of public reason-giving can also help promote justice because when individuals and groups are required to persuade others, they will be compelled to propose and defend normative claims that resonate with others. Unjust claims — or claims that are self-serving at the expense of others (including future-others) — are precisely the sort of claims that are difficult to defend in free and inclusive processes of public reason-giving. Following Young, Bohman (2007) has also argued "that democracy and justice are mutually dependent terms and that one cannot be achieved in any secure way without the other" (17).

The arguments that Young (2000) and Bohman (2007) make closely interlink with those that I have made throughout this dissertation. Equal and inclusive democratic processes of public reason-giving empower individuals and groups to challenge policies that they believe are unjust, including those that may be unjust with respect to the potential interests of future publics. Young (2000) is quick to point out that although there is a tight theoretical connection between democracy and justice, this does not mean that democratic processes will in every case produce justice. In a less-than-ideal world that is characterized by exclusion and the dominance of some political actors over others, actual democratic processes will not necessarily produce just political outcomes. As I understand it, Young's argument has do do with *degrees* of democracy: the more democratic our political systems are, the more likely it is that they will produce policy outcomes that are just with respect to the claims and interests of all those affected. The tight theoretical connection between democracy and justice is another reason why theorists of intergenerational justice might find it fruitful to think about intertemporal relations in democratic terms, even though actual democratic processes often produce outcomes that are demonstrably unjust with respect to the interests of those who will be affected in the future.

In Chapter 2, I critically examined some of the arguments that have been used to explain why existing democracies often fail to strike a fair balance between the interests of the present and those of the future. In that chapter, I identified five arguments that have been used to support what I have called the 'democratic myopia thesis': 1) *the short electoral cycles argument*; 2) *the myopic citizen argument*; 3) *the powerful economic actors argument*; 4) *the complexity argu-*

ment; and 5) *the non-presence of future persons argument*. I have argued that while related, each of these arguments is conceptually distinct. Indeed, each is based on a different set of assumptions and claims about the apparent source of the democratic myopia problem. The *short electoral cycles argument* locates the source of the problem in the structural incentives that encourage elected officials to support policies with demonstrable near-term net benefits. The *myopic citizen argument* identifies the short-sighted tendencies of voters themselves as the source of the problem. According to the *powerful economic actors argument*, democratic systems are rendered myopic because many economic actors have dominant short-term interests and disproportionate influence over collective decision-making processes. According to the *complexity argument*, democratic systems are rendered myopic because they give equal weight to the interests and concerns of everyone, even though many long-term problems are technically and conceptually complex and only a small minority fully understand and appreciate the likely long-term consequences of specific actions. The *non-presence of future persons argument* is an ontological one: those who will exist in the future represent a majority of those who will be affected by our decisions today, but they cannot be actively included in our decision-making processes because they do not yet exist. This ontological fact tends to bias our decision-making processes in ways that favour the present over the future. This is a dynamic that will affect every type of decision-making process, but it is a special problem for democracy because democracies are based on the normative principle that all those who are affected by decisions should be meaningfully included when those decisions are made. I have argued that although each of these five arguments contributes something to our understanding of how democracies work, the theoretical and practical relevance of these arguments should not be overstated. While applicable to certain types of issues and specific situations, these arguments — separately or together — cannot support the more general claim that democracies are by nature short-sighted.

By way of review, it may be useful to make explicit connections between the five arguments discussed in Chapter 2, and the five conditions that I have argued are conducive to longer-term thinking and farsighted action: 1) *independence from electoral cycles*; 2) *inclusion*; 3) *deliberation*; 4) *membership*; and 5) *popular control*.

The connection between the *short electoral cycles argument* and the first condition is straightforward. In Chapter 2, I argued that elected officials, and in particular those in government, face strong structural incentives to adopt policies that have demonstrable net benefits over the near-term. This argument is conceptually distinct from the *myopic citizen argument* because although voters are the ones who must judge their governments, elected officials face political and partisan considerations that voters typically do not have to confront. Governments, and to a lesser extent other elected officials, must *demonstrate* the benefits of their actions; and it is always more difficult to make credible claims for prospective benefits (that may or may not be achieved) than it is to take credit for more immediate, tangible ones. In addition, elected officials have to make partisan calculations about which political actors are likely to benefit from their actions in the future. There are good partisan reasons for elected politicians to refrain from investing their political capital, their reputations, and current revenues in long-term initiatives because the political rewards of any prospective benefits (such sustained economic growth) are likely to be reaped by *other* political actors. These dynamics do not mean that politicians will never make long-term investments. If voters (or powerful interest groups) are strongly in favour of long-term initiatives, politicians who act (or promise to act) on those issues may be in a position to reap immediate political rewards. If elected governments are relatively safe from electoral defeat they may have the flexibility to impose unpopular near-term costs without paying too high a political price (Jacobs 2011). If elected officials believe that *they* will get credit in the future for actions taken today, they may be willing to invest their political capital in farsighted legacy projects. Nevertheless, the political dynamics associated with short electoral cycles will tend to bias elected officials against making long-term policy investments (see, e.g., Kavka and Warren 1983).

It is useful to make conceptual distinctions between the *short electoral cycles argument* and the *myopic citizen argument* for the following reason: *if* the democratic myopia problem is primarily caused by the political incentives that elected officials face, any democratic institution that operates outside the realm of electoral politics might be used by those who are committed to long-term policy investments (of one type or another) to challenge the myopic tendencies of electoral institutions. In Chapter 8, I argued that supplementary institutions such as citizens' ini-

tiatives and referendums can provide those who have farsighted policy objectives with a legitimate democratic means of circumventing ordinary electoral processes. Of course, the prospects for using these and other supplementary institutions to advance long-term policy objectives will depend on whether or not individuals and groups can be convinced to support long-term policy initiatives, many of which may be associated with near-term costs. If the democratic myopia problem is primarily caused by the short-sighted views and expectations of individuals rather than the political dynamics of short electoral cycles, extra-electoral institutions such as citizens' initiatives and referendums are likely to exacerbate not mitigate the problem.

Although there are many good reasons for individuals and groups to discount prospective benefits in favour of immediate gains, the theoretical and practical viability of the *myopic citizen argument* hinges on whether or not individuals have fixed or pliable myopic tendencies. Evidence from experiments in economics and political science have shown that most individuals do not have fixed and strongly positive time preferences (see, e.g., Frederick *et al.* 2002; Jacobs and Matthews 2012). Instead, the preferences that many individuals have for the near-term over the long-term can be partly explained by contextual variables such as uncertainty or the fact that temporally distant consequences are often less salient than more immediate ones (Jacobs 2011; Jacobs and Matthews 2012).

If the myopic tendencies of individuals are not fixed or inherent it may be possible to persuade individuals and groups to support longer-term initiatives, especially if prospective benefits can be made less uncertain and long-term consequences more salient. Standard versions of the *myopic citizen argument* do not allow for this possibility. Standard versions of the argument are typically based on a model of democracy in which existing preferences are simply aggregated, registered, and reflected in policy outcomes (see, e.g., Thompson 2010). I have argued that this model of democracy sets up a false dichotomy: either democratic systems respond to existing preferences and opinions or they are not democratic. The implication is the following: if individuals are myopic and democracies respond to their concerns, democratic outcomes will also be myopic. Alternative models of democracy emphasize the extent to which the preferences, opinions, and expectations of individuals and groups can be shaped by the democratic process itself. I have argued that effective democratic processes — and in particular those that are robus-

tly deliberative — can help encourage longer-term thinking and underwrite farsighted collective actions in various ways.

With respect to concerns about policy uncertainty, I have argued that robust deliberative processes can help make farsighted initiatives and investments more politically secure over the long-term. Although democratic systems are characterized by provisionality and regularly alternating governments, leaders in democratic systems are not (for the most part) able to make decisions in arbitrary ways. As explained in Chapter 2, this is one characteristic that sets democracies apart from dictatorial systems. In robust *deliberative* systems, policy changes must be regularly explained and justified to those who are or will be affected. Deliberative practices of policy justification can help make long-term policies more politically secure by making it more difficult for each new generation of political leaders to abandon or undermine existing long-term initiatives for their own political purposes. In theory, it should be especially difficult for political leaders in robust deliberative systems to abandon long-term initiatives that: 1) enjoy widespread public support; 2) have well-founded justifications; or 3) are associated with significant public investments that have already been made.

In Chapter 5, I identify another possible source of policy stability in democratic systems. As Rousseau (1762) argued, democracy makes it possible for individuals to engage in self-legislation. The more opportunities individuals and groups have to influence public decisions, the more plausible it becomes to view democratically-made policies as self-imposed obligations or commitments. I have hypothesized that self-imposed obligations and commitments to the future are also those that are most likely to be maintained over the long-term. Self-imposed commitments are more likely to be recognized as legitimate by those who are expected to uphold the terms of those commitments. This, in turn, should make it possible to coordinate individual actions in ways that are consistent with those commitments, even when it is not possible (or desirable) to enforce compliance. This hypothesis is consistent with deliberative theories of law and authority (see, e.g., Habermas 1996; Warren 1996), but it directly challenges the claims of those who believe that democracies do not have sufficient capacity to impose restrictions on themselves (see, e.g., Heilbroner 1980; Ophuls and Boyan 1992; Shearman and Smith 2007). If uncertainty is an important source of future discounting, democratic practices that help make long-

term policies more politically secure and less uncertain should also help address this dimension of the *myopic citizen argument*.

In theory, deliberation can also help make the future consequences of certain near-term actions (or inactions) more salient. As Jacobs (2011) points out, in experimental research individuals often perceive long-term problems as being less important than near-term ones, even when the only objective difference between two problems is their location in time (46). Deliberation can help address this form of policy myopia because it has an educative function. Robust and inclusive deliberative environments are information rich: they provide participants with insight into the perspectives of others, and with opportunities to learn about factual claims that they might not have previously considered. The deliberative process itself provides incentives for participants to learn new things, reinterpret facts, and reassess their pre-existing positions or beliefs. These incentives are created because individuals and groups in deliberative environments must publicly justify their positions in terms that others might in principle accept. When the long-term consequences of near-term actions are known and appreciated by some, deliberation can help bring these concerns to the forefront by encouraging those who have not previously considered the long-term consequences of their actions to reconsider or justify their positions vis-à-vis their potential impacts on the future.

The educative functions of deliberation can also help address some of the issues raised by the *complexity argument*. By helping to make individuals and groups more aware of the long-term consequences of their actions, and by providing them with opportunities to learn from those who have technical skills and knowledge, some of the problems associated with uneven distributions of technical expertise can be mitigated in effective deliberative environments. As Alfred Moore (2011) has argued, although there is, by definition, a knowledge gap between those who possess expertise and those who do not, non-experts can make competent judgements about the claims and recommendations of experts if they base their judgements on relevant non-technical criteria (such as whether or not the professional processes used to assess technical claims are fair, unbiased, and robust). Deliberative processes can help provide the information that non-experts require to make competent judgements of expert recommendations. In addition, as argued in Chapter 2, inclusive democratic processes can help ensure that the technical recommendations of

experts do not get turned into public policy without due consideration of the normative claims and concerns of those who will be affected.

Deliberation can also help address some of the problems associated with the *non-presence of future persons argument*. As argued in Chapter 6, there are deliberative dynamics that can make it politically costly to ignore or dismiss the potential interests of future-others when the temporal dimensions of long-term issues are recognized and made explicit. In deliberative processes those positions that are explicitly self-serving at the expense of others will be more difficult to defend than those that are, at minimum, compatible with the interest of others (see, e.g., Mansbridge *et al.* 2009). I have argued that these deliberative dynamics help ensure that the potential interests of future-others who do not yet exist will not be ignored when public decisions on contentious long-term issues are made in sufficiently robust deliberative environments. Even if it were possible, it would not be necessary for future persons to be actively included in our deliberative processes today in order for their concerns to be adequately addressed. As I have argued, when the temporal dimensions of long-term issues are recognized and made explicit, those who can make credible claims to be on the side of the future will have a political advantage over those who cannot. This advantage is likely to emerge because future generations are widely recognized as vulnerable, innocent, and apolitical subjects of moral concern. In robust deliberative environments, those who cannot defend themselves against claims that their positions are (or may be) harmful to the future must either: 1) adopt alternative positions or policies that will not harm the future; or 2) pay the political costs associated with positions or policies that may be harmful to the future. On contentious political issues, the interests of the future are unlikely to be ignored because any positions that are (or might be) viewed as harmful to the future can be relatively easily challenged on those grounds by rival political factions.

I have also argued that it does not matter whether the motives of those who promote or defend the interests of the future are strategic or genuine: once the concerns of the future have been introduced into sufficiently robust deliberative environments, they must be addressed as genuine concerns regardless of whether or not those who advanced them are committed to their normative justifications. As Habermas (1984) has explained, in robust deliberative environments *any* claims can be challenged on factual, normative, or strategic grounds. If those who advance

the interests of the future are not genuinely concerned about the future, those who challenge them on those grounds can themselves be forced to explain why their positions *are* in the genuine interests of the future. These deliberative dynamics can help address the problem that is identified by those who have advanced the *non-presence of future persons argument* (see, e.g., Tremmel 2006). The votes of future persons cannot be counted and factored into our decision-making processes today, but there are aspects of deliberative processes that can help ensure that the (genuine) interests of the future are not ignored when today's decisions are made.

In more general terms, the problems associated with the *non-presence of future persons argument* are also relevant to the *membership* condition that is discussed in Chapter 8. One of the central arguments that I have made throughout the dissertation has to do with the relationship between thinking collectively and acting temporally. A sense of membership in an intergenerational collectivity entity (of one type or another) can provide individuals with reasons to think past their own temporal horizons. The idea of an intergenerational collective entity that is made up of past, present, and future members — each of whom is granted an equal moral status regardless of temporal location — can help address the conceptual source of the *non-presence of future persons* problem. In essence, the concept of an intergenerational collective entity can help bring future persons who do not yet exist into our moral purview by making them conceptual members of our exiting moral communities (see, e.g., de-Shalit 1995). I have argued that democracy, itself, can help form and support the sort of moral entities that are capable of acting in collectively intentional ways, and bearing responsibility for their actions over time. An important aspect of this has to do with the normative stipulations of the all affected interest principle. As explained in Chapter 5, once we are committed to the normative principle that all those who are (or will be) affected by decisions should have their interests represented when decisions are made, we are also normatively obliged to take into consideration the potential interests of those who may be affected by our actions (or inactions) at some point in the future. Membership in a democratic entity makes it possible for individuals to initiate and influence collective decisions; and this, in turn, means that each individual in a democratic system is partly responsible for any collective decisions that are made, including those that will affect the future. Of course, mere membership in a democratic entity may not be enough to compel individuals to think and act in

future-oriented ways — especially when there are near-term costs to be paid for long-term initiatives that will primarily benefit only future-others. Nevertheless, the *only* actions that are consistent with the roles and the moral obligations of those who are members of empowered democratic entities, are those that strive to strike a fair balance between the concerns and interests of both present and future members.

By conceptually integrating both present and future members into our intergenerational collective entities, it is possible to address the worst problems associated with the *non-presence of future persons argument*. The potential interests of the future are less likely to be ignored or summarily dismissed if future publics are conceived of as members of our existing moral communities. But inclusion is important for other reasons as well. As explained in Chapter 8, inclusive democratic processes are more likely to engage representatives of both short- and long-term perspectives. If current publics are not uniformly myopic — and there are many reasons to think that they are not — inclusion can help ensure that those with dominant short-term interests and perspectives are challenged in deliberative environments by those with longer-term commitments and concerns.

Inclusion is particularly important when it comes to addressing the problems associated with the *powerful economic actors argument*. As explained in Chapter 2, the problems identified by those who advance the *powerful economic actors argument* are not problems that are inherent to democracy itself. The problem, in this case, is that most existing democracies are not inclusive enough: those with economic resources (and dominant short-term interests) have more influence than those who do not have the resources to affect policy outside the voting booth. As argued in Chapter 8, multilayered democratic systems that provide individuals and groups with many alternative means of influencing policy, can help counterbalance the influence of otherwise dominant groups. Indeed, popular control, as a democratic ideal, can only be approximated in democratic systems that do not favour certain groups or types of political actors over others.

Interestingly, the *powerful economic actors argument* is not the only argument of its type. Others, such as Thompson (2010) and Van Parijs (1998) have argued that democratic outcomes are often rendered myopic because older voters with short-term interests are more politically active and policy savvy than those who are younger. If those at the end of their lives have dominant

short-term interests and more political influence than those who are younger, democratic outcomes are likely to be rendered myopic on a range of issues that affect different generations differently, including issues such as health care, pensions, mandatory retirement, education spending, and even environmental degradation.[1]

As with the *powerful economic actors argument*, the problems associated with the political influence of older voters have less to do with the dominant short-term interests of one particular group, and more to do with the fact that each institution (or type of institution) is likely to favour some interests, characteristics, or tendencies over others. I have argued that the influence of otherwise powerful groups can be counterbalanced in well-designed democratic systems that are made up of a variety of institutions, each of which is designed to work well for different types of individuals and groups. Participatory budgeting is a good example of an institution that works well for those who have typically had very little political influence. As explained in Chapter 8, participatory budgeting processes in Porto Alegre have successfully *reversed* familiar political participation trends: in those processes poorer individuals and those with less education are *overrepresented,* while wealthier individuals and those with more education are *underrepresented* (Baiocchi 2003, 53). This is a mark of success because PB was consciously designed to help enhance the participation and influence of those who are not well represented in other parts of the democratic system. The idea that democratic systems can (and should) be designed to provide different types of individuals and groups with multiple ways of influencing public policy, helps bring the otherwise elusive ideal of popular control closer to reality. As argued in Chapter 8, popular control is a necessary condition for the realization of effective farsighted collective action. It is not enough to simply encourage longer-term thinking in robust deliberative processes, or to conceptually conceive of future publics as members of our own intergenerational communities. In order to engage in effective farsighted collective action, democratic societies

[1] Although most members of older generations will not have to personally pay the long-term costs of our collective actions (or inactions), it is not at all clear that those of advanced age are more short-sighted than those of other ages. According to Van Parijs (1998) there is "at least some prima facie evidence showing that age-related self-interest affects voting behavior" (298). In lab experiments, Read and Read (2004) found that "older people discount [the future] more than younger ones, and that middle aged people discount less than either group" (24). There is evidence that younger people are more likely to think that global warming is a problem, and young people are also more likely to support specific government efforts to mitigate the effects of global warming (Krosnick *et al.* 2006, 25-26). Nevertheless, on a range of other long-term issues such as old-age pensions, medicare, and education spending, there appears to be little difference in the policy opinions of those of different ages (e.g. Fisher 2008; Jacobs and Matthews 2012; Rhodebeck 1993).

must have control over their own political agendas, policy outcomes, and collective destinies. Without control over the political agenda a democratic society cannot steer itself towards its own collective goals and objectives. Without some means of controlling collective outcomes, a society cannot act on its own intentions.

Overall, each of the five democratic conditions that I have associated with longer-term thinking and farsighted action — independence from electoral cycles, inclusion, deliberation, membership, and popular control — can, in various ways, help mitigate the problems identified in each version of the democratic myopia thesis. I have argued that while there are features of democratic systems that create and nurture short-term imperatives, democracies are not without resources for overcoming these challenges. Democracy is not just a system for *registering* existing views and preferences; it is also a means of *shaping* preferences and changing the expectations of individuals and groups. I have argued that effective democratic processes can help encourage longer-term thinking by extending the time horizons of individuals. At the highest level of abstraction, effective practices of public deliberation make it possible for us to talk to each other about what it is we are doing and what we want to achieve. At the lowest level of abstraction, well-designed democratic institutions make it possible for individuals to coordinate their actions in collectively intentional, farsighted ways. Far from being rendered myopic by the political dynamics of short electoral cycles, the immediate concerns of voters, the influence of those with dominant short-term interests, or the non-presence of future persons, democracy — in both theory and in practice — makes it possible for us (as individuals and collectives) to chart our own course into the future.

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