

Going Global?

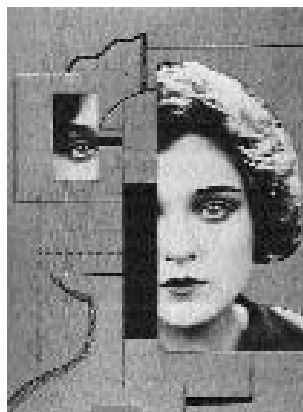
David Chandler asks if the 'new global movements' advance a radical agenda - or a retreat from politics

According to the radical guidebooks advertised in the *Guardian* and the *New Statesman* every week, a new worldwide revolution is in progress. From the Zapatistas in Chiapas to the radical farmers protesting against genetically modified crops in Latin America and India and the anti-privatization struggles in South African shanty towns, a new global movement is heralded: against globalization and capitalism, for justice, autonomy and civil society; a movement so large and diverse that it is often simply termed a new 'movement of movements'.

This global revolution, many argue, is different: its membership is largely outside the West and much of its politics and its techniques were first developed in the global South. Paul Kingsnorth, in his best-selling *One No, Many Yeses*, subtitled 'a journey to the heart of the global resistance movement', asks: 'Has a movement this big ever existed before? Has such a diversity of forces, uncontrolled, decentralised, egalitarian, ever existed on a global scale? Has a movement led by the poor, the disenfranchised, the South, ever existed at all?'

There is an apparent happy coincidence here: just as it seems that domestic politics is in terminal decline, with falling voting

figures and widespread disillusionment with the political process, the global sphere is suddenly filled with the dynamic promise of radical change. Today it seems that every campaign group, political party, non-governmental organization (NGO), and government and local authority is busy making global links and 'making a difference' at a global level. Why is the global sphere so attractive to individuals and groups involved in politics?



POLITICAL COMMUNITY EXTENDED

A distinguishing feature of this new global activism, its proponents argue, is that it captures a key aspect of global progress: *the extension of political community*. The political sphere is no longer limited to narrow national politics. The radical movements, attempting to institute 'globalization from below',

bring politics and morality together by expanding the sphere of moral concern and by developing political strategies that avoid and bypass the constraints of state-based politics. Global political activism restores collective values and morality as a counterpoint to the narrow individualism or political apathy reflected in the institutions of formal, state-based, politics.

Richard Falk, Professor of International Law and Practice at Princeton University,

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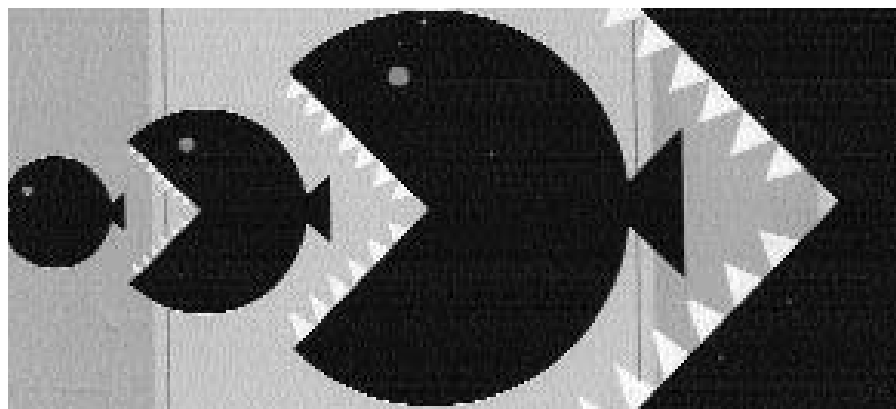
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asserts: 'If there is to be a more benign world order enacting a transformed politics of non-violence and social justice, it will be brought about by struggles mounted from below based on the activities of popular movements and various coalitions'. Whereas state-based political action reinforces frameworks and hierarchies of exclusion, new social movements 'from below' herald new forms of emancipatory political action, which seek to recognize and include diversity, and build new forms of global 'counter-hegemonic' politics. 'Globalisation from below extends the sense of community, loosening the ties between sovereignty and community but building a stronger feeling of identity with the sufferings and aspirations of peoples, a wider "we".'

Rather than capturing state power, the goal of the 'global revolution' is to constitute alternatives to the enclosed space of territorial politics. The global revolution demands autonomy, not power. The state-level focus of old movements limited their progressive potential. Mary Kaldor, Professor in Global Governance at the London School of Economics, states: 'It was through the state that "old" movements were "tamed". This was true both of workers' movements, which became left political parties and trade unions, and anti-colonial struggles, which were transformed into new ruling parties.' Growing global interconnectedness, held to have emerged with the end of the Cold War, has allegedly undermined the importance of territorial boundaries



Central America or Asia, global campaigns against landmines or third world debt... what has changed are the opportunities for linking up with other like-minded groups in different parts of the world, and for addressing demands not just to the state but to global institutions and other states... In other words, a new form of politics, which we call civil society, is both an outcome and an agent of global interconnectedness.

For Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, sovereignty is a 'poisoned gift', where ostensible revolutionaries 'get bogged down in "realism"'; as new structures of domestic and international domination become established, the result is 'the opposite of the nationalist dream of an autonomous, self-centred development'. The agency of the new global revolution, they write, is to be found in disparate forms of resistance 'from below', from the 1992 Los Angeles riots to the Palestinian *intifada*.

Hardt and Negri acknowledge, with the concept

of 'incommunicability', that these essentially local struggles are isolated from any broader political movement: 'This paradox of incommunicability makes it extremely

difficult to grasp . . . the new power posed by the struggles that have emerged.' But these struggles, they argue, do have a universal character, in as much as they challenge facets of global capitalist domination: the Los Angeles rioters, for example, challenged racial and hierarchical forms of 'post-Fordist' social control;

or the Zapatistas in Chiapas the regional construction of world markets. 'Perhaps precisely because all these struggles are incommunicable and thus blocked from travelling horizontally in the form of a cycle, they are forced instead to leap vertically and touch immediately on the global level'.

Andrew Linklater, for his part, has argued that the nation state restricts the bounds of moral reasoning to the 'boundaries of political association'. In a globalized social environment, man's capacity to 'participate in the control of his total political environment' is restricted by the territorial limitations of sovereignty. The solution is the 'actualisation of a higher form of international political life [which] requires [a] radical critique of the state' and the formation of a broader, more inclusive community. Although 'the universal communication community may never be realised completely', he argues, 'it is an important ethical ideal which permits the critique of defective social arrangements'.

ISOLATED INDIVIDUALS

Contrary to Linklater, however, there is no necessary link between a critique of existing political communities and a constitution of new collectivities on the global level. Linklater's concern with the morality of exclusion would, in fact, question the morality of any social institution, from the private sphere of marriage and friendship networks to the public sphere of collective association and government.

The radical critique of 'defective

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'For Hardt and Negri, sovereignty is a "poisoned gift", where ostensible revolutionaries "get bogged down in 'realism'"

and spatial barriers, blurring the distinctions between regions and states, and to have 'opened up new possibilities for political emancipation':

Whether we are talking about isolated dissidents in repressive regimes, landless labourers in

Islam, Memory, Identity

Maria Holt looks at how Palestinian women in the camps of Lebanon have been shaped by nationalist politics, religion and their status as refugees



Lebanon, Palestinians have struggled to survive in an increasingly inhospitable environment. As a result of their particularly harsh conditions of exile, the refugees have created a resistance movement and a revolutionary institutional

framework in Lebanon. Women have benefited from opportunities which might not have been available to them under normal circumstances.

Most of the refugees are Muslim; their religion, arguably, has helped them cope with the trauma of exile. Islam has always occupied a central

position in Palestinian national, political and private life. As 'one of the many elements of Palestinian identity' (Nels

Johnson), it has been put to various uses over the last century. An 'expression of the dominant class interests and outlook' until the late 1920s, it became 'a populist idiom' between 1929 and 1939 in response to what Palestinians perceived as

escalating British and Zionist encroachment. Much later, during the first *intifada* in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (1987-92), and even more since the second, '*al-Aqsa*', *intifada*, which began in 2000, Islam has been associated with the politics of anger and frustration. It is the most significant source of opposition to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), as well being a source of hope to many Palestinians.

However, although there has been a significant increase in Islamic political activism in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, there is little evidence to suggest that, in Lebanon, Islamist movements are taking the place of secular parties. Political Islam's impact on Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon is two-pronged: on one side are the majority of women who regard religion as a private matter - a source of comfort and protection - and the Islamist trend as potentially negative for women's rights; on the other, women who identify strongly with a social tendency they see as both capable of liberating the nation and as a positive influence on their personal lives.

WOMEN IN THE CAMPS

When the Palestinians first arrived in Lebanese exile, Julie Peteet has written, women's 'traditional role as socializers of children was infused with new significance . . . as a specifically Palestinian identity was emerging and memories of the past were highly valued'. As the majority of women at that time were illiterate, the community relied on the oral transmission of memories. With the establishment of the United Nations Relief & Works Agency (UNRWA) in 1950 to meet the basic needs of Palestinian refugees in the countries bordering Palestine, and the provision of free educational facilities, most girls for the first time had the opportunity to go to school. However, in the absence of home, Palestinians preserved a strong attachment to familiar religious and cultural practices and symbols; Islam remained, for those Palestinians now living outside their country, a focus of identity and a link with the familiar. Islamic political activism did not develop at this time.

More than half a century ago the majority of Palestinians fled their homes as the state of Israel came into being in an atmosphere of violence and terror. An estimated 90,000 took up what they assumed was temporary residence in

'The refugees have created a resistance movement and a revolutionary institutional framework in Lebanon'

Lebanon in 1948. But this turned into a longer-lasting arrangement. The almost 350,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon today have no real memory of their homeland and little hope of returning to it.

Throughout their years of exile in



Traditionally, women had stayed at home to care for their families and, as a result, had relatively less contact with the larger community. However, such barriers could not be maintained in exile: slowly, social dynamics began to change. The camps are small, claustrophobic environments in which it is impossible to remain isolated. Rosemary Sayigh and Julie Peteet note that, in Shatila camp in Beirut ‘as in Palestinian villages, outer doors are usually left open during the day, and women inside call out to passers-by to stop in for a chat and a coffee’. But this does not mean that gender hierarchies or notions of ‘proper behaviour’ disappear.

The Palestine Liberation Organization’s commitment to an ‘armed popular revolution’, together with greater autonomy within the camps, provided opportunities for some women. After the Cairo Agreement of November 1969 (in which the then PLO leader Yasir Arafat and Emile Bustany, commander of the Lebanese army, reached an agreement that the Lebanese authorities would ‘tolerate’ the presence and activities of the Palestinian guerrilla movement), the Palestinian resistance movement took control of the camps; this enabled the camps to become a key popular base for the guerrilla movement. Though the Palestinian resistance movement could never hope to match Israel militarily, it did succeed in establishing a framework in which a national identity could develop and flourish; this identity was rooted in revolutionary secular – rather than Islamic – values. The PLO is essentially a secular liberation

movement and, although Arafat occasionally paid lip service to Islamic texts and symbols, the organization tended to take a pragmatic approach. At the same time, as Michael Hudson argues, ‘solidarity between the Palestinian resistance and the Lebanese Arab-Muslim nationalist groups grew, and...the Palestinians...served as a catalyst for Muslim nationalist discontent’.

Some believed that women’s liberation would result from their participating in the national struggle. During the period between the Cairo

‘A woman in Rashidiyya camp described herself as “a fighter for Palestine”, ready to encourage her five children to join the fight and even to become a “martyr” herself’

Agreement and the Israeli invasion of 1982, women’s status underwent notable change. A woman in Rashidiyya camp in southern Lebanon told me how she was raised in the PLO: she described herself as ‘a fighter for Palestine’, ready to encourage her five children to join the fight and even to become a ‘martyr’ herself. Two women in Ain el-Hilweh camp in Sidon described how, during the June 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, women were solely responsible for their families as all the men had been killed or were in prison. The camp was evacuated of its inhabitants and its houses destroyed. But the women continued to cook and wash clothes,

which provided a basic level of survival.

A widow in Bourj el-Barajneh camp in Beirut recalled how, during the 1982 invasion, she and her family saw people being killed and ‘shattered into pieces’ by the bombing. Life was very difficult, she said; they had to go to the bakery ‘but it could take half a day to get bread’. Another woman in the same camp described the Israeli invasion as ‘a tragedy’. Many people were killed and injured. A woman in Rashidiyya, who was imprisoned by the Israelis, told me that her experiences gave her the power and determination to keep fighting; she was proud to be in prison, not just for herself and her family but for a larger cause. Another former prisoner, in Ain el-Hilweh camp, echoed her sentiments. Her experiences, she said, gave her ‘a kind of honour’ in Palestinian society.

Much has changed across the generations. In the words of a woman in Rashidiyya camp, women now have a larger role in society, whereas before they just took care of the house and the children. Her grandmother was married at 14 to a man of 60; now women have more choice about who to marry. A woman in Ain el-Hilweh camp remarked that the life of her grandmother was ‘simple and beautiful’; but now, as a result of the wars and the fighting, women have many

problems. Women working with organizations in some of the camps referred to the effects of religion on women and society. One said that, although it does not condone violence, Islam is sometimes used to justify the ill treatment of women by men. Religious traditions, she said, are more important than religion itself. If a woman is beaten, it is assumed that she has done something to make her husband angry.

According to another woman, people have misunderstood the *Qur’an*; it should empower women. The most important thing, she observed, is to educate members of the community, men and women. Most

agree that violence against women is shameful. Yet the issue remains shrouded in ignorance. There is pressure on women to abide by traditional practices at a time when they are keen to take advantage of educational and other opportunities. In some cases, men feel their authority is threatened; they respond with violence, which, although considered dishonourable, is often accepted as inevitable. This problem is being addressed through educational programmes for women and the establishment of counselling centres to support women victims of violence.

THE AL-AQSA INTIFADA AND HIZBULLAH

The *al-Aqsa intifada* has had a profound effect on the Palestinian diaspora. In the words of Gershon Baskin, it has created 'a new Palestinian narrative'. This narrative contains a powerful element of Islam as a source of resistance. The question then arises as to how relevant this 'new narrative' is to Palestinians living in Lebanon, whose expectations of a satisfactory resolution to their plight are not high. A woman leader in the south explained that 'all Palestinians, wherever they are, face the same suffering. And all consider the cause is their own cause; they are suffering as one people'. In addition, the 'live coverage of the current *intifada*...has been a powerful mechanism for generating solidarity and nationalist sentiment among Diaspora Palestinians'.

Palestinians have also been inspired by the success of the Lebanese Islamist group Hizbullah, which drove the Israelis out of southern Lebanon five years ago (and which - 'by virtue of the historical sanctity of Jerusalem' - regards the liberation of Palestine as an 'Islamic duty' for the entire *umma* [Muslim community]). In the words of Shaykh Hasan Nasrallah, Secretary General of Hizbullah: 'O our people in Palestine...you can regain your land without any negotiations over a village or a street...your way to Palestine and freedom can be realized through resistance and uprisings. You have to activate a real and true resistance... We give this ideal Lebanese pattern to our people in Palestine as a gift and an example to follow'.



RETURN

Almost everyone I met said that the main problem for Palestinians in Lebanon is that they have no civil or national rights. Julie Peteet suggests that the Palestinian community is 'seeking to redefine itself as a legal minority': this is simultaneously a process 'of accommodation in seeking a minority status for a distinctly Palestinian presence in Lebanon and a form of resistance against further displacement'. A Palestinian woman leader stressed that the Palestinian presence in Lebanon is temporary because Palestinians want to return to their land. However, until they can do so, they have the right to live in dignity and civility.

Everyone spoke of wanting - after



years of violent conflict and upheaval - to live in peace, but also of needing the tools with which to lead a normal and secure life. A second dominant theme was return, in the sense of nostalgia, entitlement and getting away from the uncertainty of the present situation. Though few of the refugees in the Lebanese camps have seen their homeland - most were born in Lebanon - and while physical return to their former homes may be unlikely, the right of return lies at the heart of Palestinian communal aspirations. It has been enshrined in international resolutions and national declarations. It is regarded, more broadly, as a sacred cause for all Muslims. The refugee community has managed to create for itself a unique identity based on 'geography, experience and legal status' (Peteet). Islam is an integral component of this identity.

Dr Maria Holt is a Research Fellow at CSD. She carried out fieldwork in the Palestinian camps of Lebanon in 2000-03 for her PhD thesis, "Testimonies of Violence: a Comparative Study of the Impact of Violence and Islamic Teachings on Palestinian and Shi'i Women in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations in Lebanon". The full article, with references, can be found on the CSD website at <http://www.wmin.ac.uk/SSHL/pdf/CSDBulletinHolt.pdf>

CSD Interview

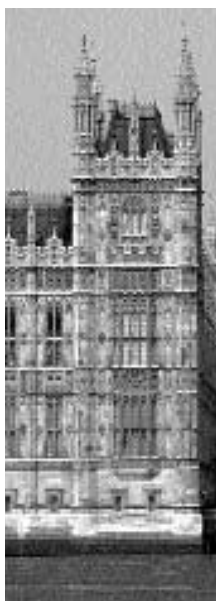
Bhikhu Parekh talks to John Keane about the Westminster model, reform of the Lords, and what he has learnt since becoming a peer

Since the nineteenth century Westminster, the ‘mother of parliaments’, has commanded wide respect in Britain and elsewhere. Why do you think this has been so?

Three factors have played a part. First, the Westminster model was popular in those countries that were part of the British Empire; people looked to the metropolitan power for guidance and models. Secondly, in the nineteenth century Britain was the most industrialized country in the world and exuded an enormous amount of prosperity and power - with which the Westminster model came to be identified. Thirdly, Britain was widely admired for its respect for individual liberty; in the colonies, struggling for independence, this mattered a great deal.

It's worth bearing in mind, though, that the Westminster model had no appeal outside the Empire. The United States self-consciously tried to break with it; the French - who admired British liberty from Montesquieu onwards - were never fascinated by it; nor were the Germans, the Swiss, or anyone else in Europe. The fact that its appeal was limited in this way is very suggestive.

What were your emotional and political reactions to Westminster before you became part of it?



Growing up in India one was enormously fascinated by the Palace of Westminster. Here was a place from where we were ruled, sometimes wisely, often unwisely; where many of our leaders, as supplicants, queued up to seek appointments with ministers and MPs. Having seen it function from within the country, my views changed: I thought several things about it needed to be set right. When I entered the House of Lords in April 2000, my views became clearer. In my maiden speech, I said I felt somewhat out of place in it. I could hear or see the

ghosts of those viceroys and governor generals who had made a mess of India - especially Mountbatten, who had been responsible for the chaos surrounding the partition of the country, during which about half a million people became refugees, and thousands died. I occasionally said to myself, ‘what am I doing here? As a

‘I could hear or see the ghosts of those viceroys and governor generals who had made a mess of India’

lifelong socialist, why am I allowing myself to be called a Lord?’ There was a small anomaly in my being there; but I think over time I began to feel reasonably comfortable. The Lords is a

seductive place! It is also a wonderfully generous and self-critical place.

One of the main claims made in defence of the Westminster model is that, driven by a cabinet system anchored in parliamentary procedure, it provides efficiency in decision-making: it allows decisions to be made quickly, without the process being blocked by other institutional powers; it allows for voters to be presented with clear alternatives. Has this efficiency argument ever impressed you?

Walter Bagehot summed up the essence of parliamentary democracy when he said that it was characterized by ‘singleness and unity’. What this really means is that the Westminster model has five features. First, centralization of power: all power relating to the British state is concentrated in one institution, namely parliament. Secondly, sovereignty of the legislative branch. The judiciary has little independent power; it functions within the framework of the laws laid down by parliament. Thirdly, with the rise of the universal franchise - and, accompanying this, of political parties - the domination of the legislature by the executive. This is not inherent in the parliamentary system but it has come to be the case. Fourthly, parliamentary democracy entails representative government (government by representatives) but not representative democracy (government by the people through their representatives). We elect people and leave them more or less to do as they please. Finally, political power does not correspond to electoral strength. In the elections of 1983, 1987, 1997 and 2001, the government had a huge majority but its percentage share of vote was in the low 40s.

While this system might produce a stronger form of government than in countries with proportional representation - Germany and Italy, for example - it also has its disadvantages; such as the domination of political parties, and within them increasing centralization of power and the prime minister's dominance.

A certain Napoleonic style of government?

Yes, we often have plebiscites between two prime ministers rather than choices between two parties. The disadvantages of this have become more obvious in recent years. This is partly because the system functions well only as long as society is composed in a certain way and certain unspoken conventions are observed. Once the social structure begins to change and the conventions are ignored, the disadvantages begin to outweigh the advantages.

In 2000, the Wakeham Commission made a number of proposals for dealing with the Lords: for example, no major extensions of the Lords's powers; the end of Prime Minister's patronage; the introduction of quotas for women; and the recommendation that some portion of the Lords be directly elected - for instance, on a regional basis at the same time as European elections. What is your opinion of these proposals?

While the Wakeham Commission has been a great success intellectually - it produced many interesting ideas which continue to inform public debate on the nature and composition of the House of Lords - it has not been so politically. And this for the simple reason that how its recommendations are implemented depends on cross party consensus and ultimately on the government of the day.

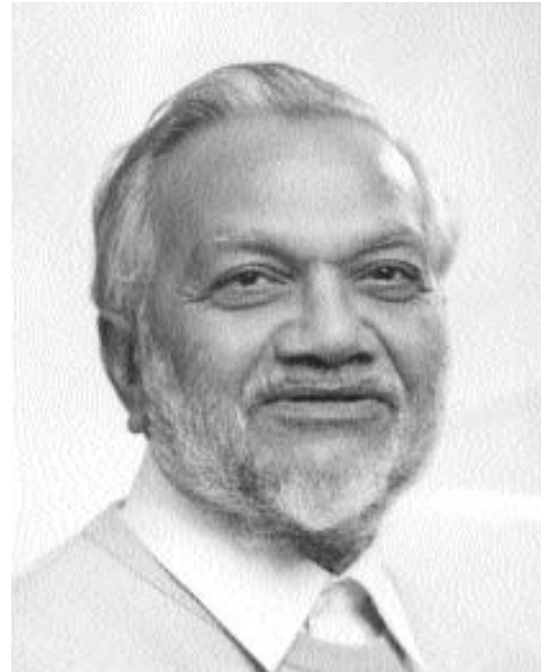
But should the House of Lords be reformed?

There are several ways of taking some of the Wakeham Commission's ideas further. I would rationalize the vocabulary of the House of Lords. I wouldn't call it the House of Lords, or its members Lords. I have always felt uncomfortable being called a Lord, as have many other Peers. Once you enter the Lords you are in a totally artificial environment. You are constantly called 'my Lord' by doormen, receptionists, chamber attendants, even in restaurant; and this can be an

extremely corrupting experience. You begin to think you belong to a different, privileged, species. The fact that you carry this title with you to your grave, and have access to the best club in the country, which others covet and where you can entertain friends and exercise patronage, tends to breed a certain sense of distance and superiority.

Also, it's not widely known that when addressing one's fellow peers one says 'My Lords', yet 25 to 30 per cent of members are women. I'm surprised that women Peers don't seem to mind being called 'Lord'. When I raised this question with senior members, I was told that 'Lord' is gender-neutral and includes ladies. This cannot be right because lady Peers then wouldn't need to call themselves Baronesses. There's a lot of confusion about all this.

Moreover, although the House of Lords is the upper house of Parliament, the title 'Member of Parliament' is confined to members of the House of Commons! I also do not see the point of referring to the House of



'Once you enter the Lords you are in a totally artificial environment. You begin to think you belong to a different, privileged, species'

Commons as 'another' (often corrupted as 'the other') place. At a different level it might be a good idea for the state opening of Parliament to take place in the Westminster Hall rather than the heavily overcrowded chamber of the Lords.

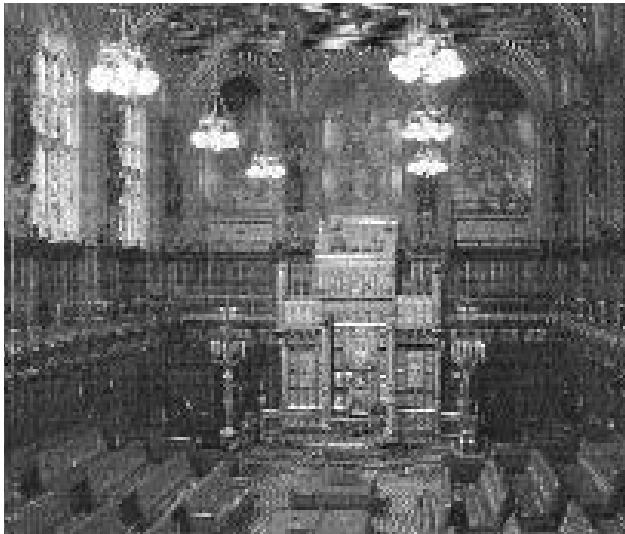
The Wakeham Commission wants to reduce the membership of the House to around 550 . . .

In my view, 550 is too large. The total membership of the various scrutinizing committees that do much of the House's vital work does not exceed 200, which is also just about the right number for a vigorous debate. Since not all members can attend

regularly, I'd prefer a membership of about 300. The US Senate does its job with 100 members, and upper houses in many other European countries are only just a little larger. Smaller membership enhances a sense of individual responsibility and should encourage attendance and participation.

The Wakeham Commission assumes the 'pre-eminence' of the House of Commons on the ground that it is the 'primary democratic forum'. This was fine as long as the House of Lords consisted of hereditary Peers. Once we elect all or most of its members or appoint them

on the basis of their ability to represent vocational, ethnic, professional, cultural and religious views and interests, I do not see how the House of Commons alone can be seen as a primary democratic forum and enjoy pre-eminence. Democracy is about representing people by including the full diversity of their views, interests and identities. Although of the greatest importance, election is only one way of ensuring this, and it does not always have a fully representative outcome. It would be strange to say that a government elected on a 36 per cent of votes cast in an election where only 61 per cent of the electorate voted, and thus representing barely a quarter of the electorate, is fully representative of



power, the amount of legislation that we get through in each session has increased by between 10 and 20 per cent. The bills are also bulkier and far too detailed. Yet these bills are not carefully scrutinized in the Commons. The House of Lords thus has to do the detailed business of scrutinizing itself. I have been struck since I arrived how

persuade one's fellow Peers unless one talks in a language they share and which appeals to a broadly shared body of ideas. I would like the Lords to be a reflective body where big issues with long term implications for our society are vigorously debated, and whose deliberations are widely circulated and discussed.

But by what entitlement would a reformed Lords revise legislation?

It must enjoy legitimacy. The legitimacy of the House of Lords can come from several sources, such as indirect elections, regional representation, the inclusion of marginalized groups, and professional expertise. There are several important groups and areas of life which are inadequately represented in the House of Commons. For example, it had no Hindus until recently, and they are clearly an important and highly successful minority. It had no or very few businessmen, industrialists, professors, scientists, and artists. If these groups and professionals can't be in the Commons, they should be in the House of Lords. We might, for example, introduce a system so that, say, presidents of the British Medical Association, the National Union of Students, the Association of University Teachers, etc. are appointed to the House of Lords by

often elementary mistakes are made in the legislative drafts that come from the Commons. Since well-crafted legislation is so important, the House of Lords has a very important scrutinizing function, and that must affect its composition.

Equally importantly, the House of Lords is a place for great debates. The House of Commons does have big debates, but they are limited by virtue of the kinds of people who get into the House of Commons, party discipline, constraints of time, etc. The House of Lords is unique. I can't think of any chamber in the world where there might be three or four ex-prime ministers, as many ex-foreign secretaries and ex-chancellors of the exchequer, senior civil servants who have run great departments, retired officers of the armed forces, distinguished professors, scientists, and so on. With such a concentrated expertise, the quality of debate can be enormously high. It can be high also because the Lords is no longer dominated by a single political party: today, the Conservatives and Labour each have around 200 members, the Liberal Democrats 69, and cross-benchers about 185. This means that no legislation can get through unless it commands cross-party support; so the government is often forced to compromise. Likewise, when debates take place one cannot hope to

the British people. Since this is unavoidable in a modern society, we need to find other forms of representation to supplement it. If the House of Lords can ensure this then it, too, becomes a 'democratic forum', and enjoys as much legitimacy as the House of Commons. This would obviously entail important changes. The House of Lords will have what Wakeham calls the 'authority and confidence' to exercise its powers effectively. Over time we might even introduce the practice of secretaries of state coming to the Lords to participate in its debates and answer questions, as they do in some other European and Commonwealth countries. All this will no doubt significantly change our constitution, but it is changing anyway in important ways, and it would do no harm to take a clear and comprehensive view of these changes.

With what would you replace the name 'House of Lords'?

It's not difficult to think of an alternative name: the Upper House; or the Senate; or, if one was elected to the second chamber by regions, local authorities, constituent national units, the Federal House. Once the name changes, one would become a member of the Upper House: say, an MUP, or a Senator.

The powers of the Lords are very important. It is increasingly clear that the House of Commons is heavily committed to enacting legislation rather than staging big debates or holding the executive fully accountable. Since Labour came to

'The legitimacy of the House of Lords can come from indirect elections, regional representation, the inclusion of marginalized groups, and professional expertise'

virtue of their office.

Similarly we might appoint members of ethnic, religious and other minorities. These individuals enjoy legitimacy because of where they come from. Elections cannot secure their presence, and hence the House of Lords must retain an appointed element. Election is not the only way to make a place representative.

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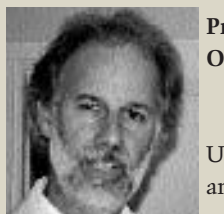
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Elective modules

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Students may only begin the Masters in International Relations in September but all other courses in September or February

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CSD's Masters programmes (one year full-time, two years part-time) offer innovative and intellectually challenging theoretical and empirical frameworks for postgraduate study in International Relations, Politics, Political Theory, Asian Studies and International Studies.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

For initial enquiries about CSD's PhD programme, contact Dr Simon Joss: joss@wmin.ac.uk

For more detailed information, and the PhD students' web pages: <http://www.wmin.ac.uk/csd>

THE DEMOCRACY CLUB

Based at CSD, and meeting at least once a month, the Democracy Club aims to: encourage participation among CSD staff and students and visiting researchers in discussions about democracy, considered as a language, a way of life and a set of institutions; invite distinguished outside speakers, from home and abroad, to share their views with the Club's participants; explore contacts with policy-makers and practitioners of democratic politics and to encourage awareness of the strategic difficulties of building and preserving democratic institutions; provide intellectual, moral and strategic support for the second phase of CSD's Islam and Democracy research programme; focus attention at CSD on the need to seek new sources of research funding in this area; provide support for the annual Democracy Lecture to be hosted at CSD from the spring of 2005; and strengthen CSD's ties with other research and policy-making bodies elsewhere in Europe and the wider world. The club is informal and self-organizing.

John Keane



Democracy Club speakers to date: *GADO (Godfrey Mwampembwa)*, the well-known editorial cartoonist on Kenya's *Daily Nation*, who spoke about corruption, freedom of the press in East Africa, and the opening of democratic spaces since the introduction of multiparty systems.

Professor Chantal Mouffe, whose talk was entitled 'On the Political'.

Professor Benjamin Barber: 'The Infantile Ethos and the Decline of Capitalism'

Professor John Keane: 'What's So Good About Democracy? The Need for Fresh Thinking About an Old Ideal'

On Tuesday, 21 June 2005 at 6 pm Professor *Peter Ronald deSouza* of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in Delhi, will talk on 'Political Nomadism in India. The struggle between the fence and the field in a representative democracy'

Democracy Club on the web: <http://www.wmin.ac.uk/csd>

SUMMER SCHOOL FOR DEMOCRACY

Each year, CSD and the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Belgrade jointly hold a three-week summer school. The main participants in the summer school are junior faculty members, outstanding postgraduate students, and research associates. Normally, around 25 participants come from Serbia and Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Slovenia, and Albania, and five from the United Kingdom. For more information contact CSD.

SUMMER SCHOOL 2005

Identity and Multicultural Diversity

RECENT SUMMER SCHOOLS

2001: Good Governance: Globalisation and Localisation

2002: the Consolidation of New Democracies

2003: Democracy, Globalisation and Security

2004: Globalisation, the European Union, and the Western Balkans

CSD TRUST FUND

In support of its long-term development plans, the Centre for the Study of Democracy has established an interest-earning fund, the CSD Trust Fund.

The Fund aims, broadly, to supplement CSD's current revenue base (drawn from taught Masters' courses, research student fees, government research grants, and individual research contract sources) and so to provide for the things that we urgently want to do. CSD needs additional funds to encourage staff development and to support our publications, seminars, and conferences; and to enable us to appoint additional teaching, research, administrative and library staff. Support is also needed to create an enlarged community of resident scholars and postgraduate students; and to publicise better the work and good reputation of CSD on a European and global basis.

The establishment of the CSD Trust Fund, and the launching of an appeal to raise an endowment to support these various appointments and activities, was initially supported by a modest grant from the University. The CSD Trust Fund operates strictly under the auspices of the University of Westminster Prizes and Scholarships Fund, to whose Trustees it is directly accountable. Decisions about fund-raising and disbursements are initially formulated by a CSD Trust Fund Working Group, which includes several CSD staff, senior University representatives, well-placed patrons of the appeal, and a representative of the CSD Council of Advisers. In principle, the functions and activities of the CSD Trust Fund are kept quite separate from the governing institutions of the Centre, including its commitments to the wider University structures.

Requests for further details and offers of financial support should be directed to:

Dr Simon Joss, Centre for the Study of Democracy, University of Westminster, 100 Park Village East, London NW1 3SR.

CSD STAFF NEWS

David Chandler has edited a special issue of *International Peacekeeping*, 'Peace without Politics: Ten Years of State-Building in Bosnia' (Vol. 12/3, 2005). Routledge will publish a book version later this year. A paperback edition of *Constructing Global Civil Society: Morality and Power in International Relations* (Palgrave-Macmillan) will appear later in 2005.

Simon Joss has been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, and appointed a member of the *Sciencewise* (Office of Science and Technology) and *Society Activity* (Wellcome Trust) committees. He recently gave a paper on 'webs of accountability' at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade.

Chantal Mouffe's book *On the Political* has just been published by Routledge in the series 'Thinking in Action'. Professor Mouffe has a chapter on right-wing populism in Europe in *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, edited by Francisco Panizza (Verso, 2005).

In March 2005 **John Owens** presented a paper to the British Library/Institute for the Study of the Americas conference on George W. Bush's prospects in his second term; and a paper on changes in the constitutional balance of power in the US since 9/11 to the Institute for Democracy, Cape Town. The latter paper will appear in a special issue of the US journal *Politics and Policy* (2006), which Professor Owens will co-edit.



The Centre for the Study of Democracy (CSD) is the postgraduate and post-doctoral research centre of Politics and International Relations at the University of Westminster.

Well known for its inter-disciplinary work, CSD is led by a team of internationally recognized scholars whose teaching and research concentrate on the interplay of states, cultures and civil societies. CSD also supports research into all aspects of the past, present and future of democracy, in such diverse areas as political theory and philosophy, international relations and law, European Union social policy, gender and politics, mass media and communications, and the politics and culture of China, Europe, the United States, and Muslim societies.

CSD is located in the School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Languages (SSHL) on the Regent Campus, and works alongside the influential Policy Studies Institute. It hosts seminars, public lectures and symposia in its efforts to foster greater awareness of the advantages and disadvantages of democracy in the public and private spheres at local, regional, national, and international levels. It offers a number of MAs on a one-year full-time, or two-year part-time, basis (see page 10 for details). CSD's publications include a series of working papers entitled *CSD Perspectives* and this bulletin.

THE BULLETIN

aims to inform other university departments and public organizations, and our colleagues and under-graduates at the University of Westminster, of CSD's research activities. The *Bulletin* comprises reports of 'work in progress' of our research students and staff and contributions from visiting researchers and speakers. Comments on the content of this *Bulletin*, or requests to receive it, should be directed to The Editor, *CSD Bulletin*, 100 Park Village East, London NW1 3SR. As with all CSD publications and events, the opinions expressed in these pages do not necessarily represent those held generally or officially in CSD or the University of Westminster.

An unelected form of the functional representation that G.D.H. Cole and others had in mind?

No. I am thinking of major organizations or sectors of our society, which may or may not be based on functions. For example, the National Union of Students does not represent a function. Regional or local authority representation is not functional either. Since Britain is a parliamentary democracy, there is a constant tendency to concentrate power in parliament; as a result, unlike Germany, the United States and several other countries we have not allowed local identities to grow, and local government has increasingly become an extension of central government. Local democracy is important because democracy is about what happens not just at the centre, but also at the local level. I would like to revitalize local democracy by giving it a role in composing the House of Lords.

When James Bryce, in the early twentieth century, looked at the defects of the Westminster model, he thought that nothing could happen to remove these unless public opinion put pressure on politicians and government. Do you see any prospect of this? Without such pressure surely the reforms proposed in the Wakeham report don't stand a chance?

Popular pressure can work. There was a time when proportional representation was a taboo subject in the Labour Party; now it is being talked about. There is growing intellectual, moral and political pressure for changes in the House of Lords. Such pressure does not automatically translate into government policies; but it does force government to think. Although political parties generally accept changes only when these are in their interest, they dare not oppose



them if they fear that by doing so they would alienate public opinion or appear selfish.

Do you see signs of another scenario: a slow-developing sclerosis of this Westminster model? Can you imagine its gradual loss of legitimacy and permanent outflanking by other processes - such as the Europeanization of parliamentary life, American power, devolutionary pressures, or big business media jostling for the attention of citizens whom they claim to 'represent'?

I agree that during the past three decades, several new institutions and practices have sprung up that have profoundly altered the character of our parliamentary democracy and require the Parliament to redefine its role.

'Unlike liberty, which signifies the silence of the law and a common law tradition, rights are created by the law and form the basis of constitutionally protected citizenship'

Devolution is one, as a result of which Parliament in Westminster is no longer the sole focus of national politics and identity. An increasing proportion of our legislation comes from the European Union, and Parliament is no longer the sole law-

making body.

We in Britain had long argued that the principle of parliamentary sovereignty implies that people periodically alienate their sovereignty to Parliament, that 'the people' as such have no constitutional status. This is why we ruled out the referendum - it was as a threat to parliamentary supremacy. This changed in the 1970s when we allowed a referendum on Europe. Since then, the referendum has become an integral part of our constitution on all matters affecting the character of the British polity.

There is also another profound change at work. Parliamentary democracy is based on the supremacy of the legislature, and the judiciary plays a subordinate role. The relationship between Parliament and the judiciary is changing. During Margaret Thatcher's administration, the judiciary felt that neither the Parliament nor the executive could be trusted to respect the civil liberties of the British people, or to observe the unspoken conventions regulating their relations.

The judiciary therefore became quite active, and had the full support of the British people. The incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into the domestic jurisdiction has increased the role and powers of the judiciary yet further; and we will soon

have the supreme court. For centuries, ours has been a culture of liberty; it is now being replaced by a culture of rights. Unlike liberty, which signifies the silence of the law and a common law tradition, rights are created by the law and form the basis of constitutionally protected citizenship. The difference between the two is not verbal but substantive.

In the light of all this, the old idea of parliamentary sovereignty does not capture our constitutional reality. Parliament still occupies a privileged place in our political life, but it is no longer its centre. As in many other countries, the sovereignty of the British state has moved downward, upward and sideways, making Britain a highly complex polity. If the Westminster model is not revised to take account of these changes, it could atrophy.

How would you sum up what you have learnt since your appointment to the House of Lords? How has your political philosophy altered?

I see better than before that political power consists in shaping people's political imagination, that is, their understanding of what is politically realistic and possible. After all, all political decisions are informed by what their agents consider possible, and those who influence their perception of the range of possibility exert the greatest power over them. This is why the media wield disproportionate power. They mediate the popular, including politicians', perception of political reality, structure their political common sense, and rule out a host of radical ideas by ignoring, marginalizing or ridiculing them. I wonder how we can open up political space and expand the popular political imagination. One also



therefore naturally worries about our 'free press'. Since most of it is privately owned, proprietors of newspapers exercise enormous influence for which they are accountable to no one. They dictate government policies and priorities and are assiduously courted by politicians. Such a mediocracy undermines democracy - and one wonders how to tackle it without curtailing free speech.

Deliberative democracy, the favourite theme of many a liberal thinker and to which I've long been

'I see better than before that political power consists in shaping people's political imagination, that is, their understanding of what is politically realistic and possible'

drawn, seems to offer an unrealistic account of political life. Political decisions are seldom based on a calm and dispassionate exchange of views with a view to arriving at the best course of action. Much of politics is pragmatic, concerned to balance competing interests, win elections, curry popularity, and to avoid necessary but tough decisions. Rational deliberation does occur, but within strict limits. Certain points of view are never considered and arguments are often little more than rhetorical devices to justify decisions taken on other grounds. Examples of this are the war on Iraq, and the ignoring of growing inequality.

And your political philosophy?

My political experience has led me to rethink my view of political philosophy and its political relevance. Political philosophy has two dimensions, analytical and normative. It carefully analyses, clarifies and distinguishes concepts, but this has little relevance to the practice of politics, where language is necessarily fluid, messy, and used for rhetorical purposes. Political philosophy, further, reflects on the human condition and offers a

normative framework, but this is too general and indeterminate to be of much practical help. I sat on the Select Committee on Human Rights for nearly two years. In one of our early meetings, I raised some questions about the meaning of the term 'human rights', their cultural basis, their inflationary expansion, and so on. My increasingly impatient colleagues found this 'little tutorial' irrelevant and somewhat self-indulgent. After all, 'everyone' knew that we needed human rights, that Britain had incorporated the European Convention

into domestic jurisdiction, and that our job was to get on with the task of implementing rights! Political philosophers problematize what politics takes for granted. They stand at a distance from what is going on, and deals

with it at a certain level of abstraction. This inevitably limits their political relevance.

Political philosophy does, of course, have a public role, but it is elucidatory and critical rather than prescriptive. And it cannot play this role unless it is more closely embedded in political life than is generally the case. If it is to be politically relevant, political philosophy needs to derive its problems from within political life, and theorize them at a level that does not lose touch with political reality.

This interview was conducted on 26 April 2005. Professor Lord Bhikhu Parekh is a member of CSD.

Citizen Participation and System Effectiveness?

Gabriele Abels *critically the hopes raised by the greater participation of citizens in technology assessment and science policy-making and suggests ways of improving 'participatory technology assessment'*

Since the 1960s, the 'participatory revolution' has popularized many forms of political activism, both unconventional - sit-ins or squatting - and conventional: demonstrations or petitions. Since the 1990s, demands have grown for direct democracy to be institutionalized, for example in plebiscites.

The starting point for demands for 'more' or 'better' or 'enhanced' citizen participation is the apparent limitation, in a mass democracy, of the old democratic idea of representative democracy. Critics of representative democracy point to the importance of what Fritz Scharpf has called 'input legitimacy': that who participates, how, and to what effect - the *nature* of 'citizen participation' - is important in legitimizing a political system. It seems that, today, 'output legitimacy' alone - the effectiveness of the system - is not sufficient for securing legitimacy. At the same time, the role and function of the state have changed fundamentally: the state is often conceptualized not as a Leviathan intervening in society from above but as a moderator between social actors and a promoter of societal self-regulation.

These trends have deeply influenced the development of technology assessment (TA) and science policy-making. In particular,

participatory technology assessment - or pTA - though not yet well-established, nor the most widely used TA instrument, has become increasingly popular in the last fifteen years.

CLAIMS AND WEAKNESSES

Advocates of pTA place high hopes in the potential benefits of citizen participation. By including the views and interests of groups usually excluded from the political process, it broadens the cognitive and normative basis of technology governance, initiates social learning, helps avoid social conflict, promotes public interest in technology, and increases the acceptance and legitimacy of political decisions. In so doing, pTA procedures can solve the 'democratic dilemma' highlighted by Robert Dahl: namely, the potential irreconcilability of citizen participation (citizens exercising 'democratic control over the decisions of the polity'), and system effectiveness (the political system needing the capacity 'to respond satisfactorily to the collective preferences of its citizens').

However, pTA - to date - has suffered from a number of weaknesses. First, its

focus on citizen participation and thus on the input side of legitimacy *does* tend to neglect policy outputs or effectiveness. This reflects - a second weakness - a (somewhat one-dimensional) conceptualization of pTA in terms of deliberative democracy. Deliberative democracy is well-equipped to address issues of knowledge and complexity through equal and fair discourse in which the 'better argument' prevails. However, it often focuses too narrowly on *citizens'* participation without giving due consideration to the role of interest groups in technological governance.

In short: (1) there is no automatic link between citizen participation and system effectiveness. The impact of most pTA procedures on the political process is not at all clear. Indeed, critics of pTA have argued that these procedures have failed to provide policy advice to policy-makers. (As a result, some pTA advocates now concentrate on the

'pTA procedures can solve the "democratic dilemma" highlighted by Robert Dahl: the potential irreconcilability of citizen participation and system effectiveness'

impact of pTA on *public* debate.)

Moreover (2) pTA procedures are valuable; but they cannot substitute for the institutions of representative democracy. We have to think more deeply, therefore, both about the role of pTA in representative democracy in general, and about the institutional design of pTA procedures in particular. We can do this - as a starting point for future research - first by creating a typology of models of pTA currently in use and, secondly, by assessing these models strengths and weaknesses.

MODELS OF PTA

There are seven such models, each of

which has a distinct *form* (this refers to, *inter alia*, types of participants, the allocation of roles amongst participants, and procedural rules) and *function* (the issues tackled, target groups addressed, and the procedure's objectives and its effectiveness).

1. The *dialogue procedure*. This involves interest groups who either represent or are directly affected by the issue under discussion. This model has two key *formal* aspects: all participating groups are equal; and the procedural rule is argumentation (though there may be an element of bargaining): each interest group explains its stance and develops an understanding of the others' views. With regard to *function*: the procedure is applied not to general evaluative debates about technology but to more concrete planning processes (for example, the development of planning



standards). The target groups are policy-makers, other interest groups, and the general public. The objective is to initiate dialogue between competing interest groups, to explore goals, to identify consensus, and to scrutinize areas of disagreement. The intended effect of the procedure is to clarify competing viewpoints, serve as a clearing-house for competing interests, overcome blockages in the decision-making process, and to filter out policy alternatives. It is a pluralist procedure, but has deliberative elements. (An example of it in use is the recent dialogue between Unilever and environmental groups about genetically modified [GM] plants)

2. *pTA* in a more narrow sense. This is pure argumentative discourse between experts and stakeholders: an example is the procedure at the Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB) on herbicide resistant plants in the early 1990s. Participants are selected

because they represent relevant scientific or social viewpoints. Scientific experts hold the key position; stakeholders are forced to argue. The model is applicable to general debates about technologies. Addressees are policy-makers and the general public. The key objective is for arguments between experts and counter-experts to achieve a scientific consensus on uncontested knowledge; this, in turn, will produce policy alternatives and legitimacy for subsequent political decisions. This model seems technocratic, but is, in fact, deliberative.

3. The *legal public hearing*. This model, the only one closely linked to decision-making, is used in many planning processes (for example, about environmental and biotechnology issues). It provides the greatest access to the public, involving as it does those affected (often locals and scientific experts) by the issue under consideration. Public administrators are in a key position: they are the addressee and they take the final decision. Procedural rules are severely restricted by the procedure's legal framing: administrators only consider those arguments valid in law. Affected persons have an advisory role. The objective is deliberation in a Habermasian sense, that is, to influence decision-making with good arguments. This model fulfils five normative functions: it informs both affected citizens and the administrator; it represents interests; it offers legal protection to the applicants and those who are affected by proposed planning and it increases the legitimacy of the final administrative decision. This model is highly deliberative.

4. The *consensus conference*, probably the most widespread and the best known *pTA* model. This model includes procedures such as citizen juries and citizens' forums. The participants are lay people and experts, with the former in the key position: they set the agenda and question the experts. The lay panel is usually made up of randomly selected citizens; the experts are chosen. The objective is to foster communication between lay people and experts so that the

technology under debate can be normatively evaluated. The outcome - the citizens' report - is intended to foster and enlighten public and political debate. The consensus conference, which may have an agenda-setting function, is a deliberative procedure. There are many examples of this model being used in the field of biotechnology: the UK consensus conference plant biotechnology in 1994 is one.

5. The *extended consensus conference*. This model includes selected interest groups. Lay people are in key positions: the interests groups deliver a statement that is evaluated by the lay people with the help of experts. Output and main functions are the same as in model 4. An additional aspect is that interest group statements explore the aims of proposed development objectives. The procedure is deliberative with some pluralist elements. An example of this model is the Citizen Foresight Project on GM Food (Brighton, UK, 1998).

The final two models involve interest groups in the deliberative process and are targeted at policy-

'pTA has operated in the main with a limited concept of democracy and democratic theory'

makers and the general public. In the *voting conference* (6) lay people, experts and politicians evaluate scenarios or statements developed by interest groups. No group takes the lead; they have equal procedural rights. A key objective is to evaluate the views of different interest groups. The voting aspect means the procedure can serve as a filter for competing policy options. An example is the Voting Conference on Drinking Water in Denmark in 1996.

The last model (7) is the *scenario workshop*. This tends to debate local issues. Lay people, policy-makers, experts and interest groups deliberate in separate groups and with each other; all participating groups enjoy equal rights. Participants are selected according to how representative they

are. The procedural rule is that participants evaluate pre-given scenarios. The main objectives of the model are to influence the planning process and to initiate a dialogue between various actor-groups that will increase understanding of different viewpoints. The model, an example of which is the Future Search Conference Traffic in Copenhagen in 1998, has an agenda-setting function and can overcome blockages in the decision-making process; it is expected to increase the political legitimacy of the results. This is a participatory-deliberative model that contains some pluralist elements.



SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

These models have noticeable similarities: 1) They are oriented towards the legislative and/or executive branch of governments - however, they all (even the third model) have an advisory character: they are not a substitute for political decision-making. 2) Founded on theories of deliberative democracy (with some input from participatory or pluralist democracy), their key procedural rule is argumentative communication: their aim is to produce with good arguments for political and administrative decisions. 3) They foster and enlighten general public debate.

At the same time, they differ: 1) in the number and diversity of participants involved: in most cases participants are representatives - for example, of interests, the people, science; 2) in the absence, for the most part, of the public - only the legal hearing is an exception to this; 3) with respect to which group dominates - lay people, experts, interest groups (a few models are 'balanced': all groups have equal procedural rights); and 4) in the expectations about a model's performance or effectiveness. The legal hearing has a precise function (which it often fails to fulfil). Most models do not - especially those (such as consensus conferences) dominated by lay people; this makes it hard to evaluate a model's impact. Assumed indirect effects are empirically hard to prove.

CONCLUSIONS: THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL

An important factor influencing a model's effectiveness is how key positions are allocated: when lay people dominate, the normative functions of the procedure are diffuse. The dominance of experts, by contrast, may produce arguments that are socially and factually stronger - which will increase the legitimacy of the results and contribute to system effectiveness. *Balanced models* (where lay and expert participants have equal procedural rights) seem promising in this respect, but only if they stick to rules of procedural justice. Balanced models also allow interest groups and even policy-makers to be integrated in the deliberative process itself. This is an

'Balanced models allow interest groups and even policy-makers to be integrated in the deliberative process'

innovation on institutions of representative democracy, and in several respects. First, it creates a direct link between citizen participation and system effectiveness (in Dahl's understanding of this as the capacity 'to respond satisfactorily to the collective preferences of ... citizens').

Secondly, if interest groups are integrated, they are forced into a deliberative mode of communication - and thus have to defend their interests with arguments that take the public interest into consideration. If pTA neglects interest group politics, it can marginalize itself. (Though an empirical problem is how to persuade interest groups to participate in these new deliberative-governance procedures.) Thirdly, by unravelling the viewpoints of various social actors the balanced-model procedure may be better suited to promoting *public* education, discussion and deliberation.

To date, then, pTA has operated in the main with a limited concept of democracy and democratic theory. Recent developments in pTA that aim at integrating stakeholders, especially interest groups, in the deliberative process are more likely to address Dahl's democratic dilemma, because they tackle the fact of pluralism in representative democracies. Participatory TA could thus become an effective part of policy- and decision-making procedures. However, it still has to *prove* that it can add to the quality of public and political deliberations. To do this, more comparative empirical studies about the performance of pTA are needed. As is a coherent institutional design of pTA, adaptable to specific social and political contexts, and informed by all relevant theories of democracy.

Last but not least, while we may be able to integrate participatory and representative institutional designs at the national level, this does not address the influence of globalization on societies, economies and national politics. What this may imply for participatory TA is another urgent question we need to address.

Dr Gabriele Abels is an assistant professor at the Institute for Science and Technology Research (IWT) at Bielefeld University, Germany. This is an edited version of a paper she presented to the CSD Seminar on 23 November 2004. The full version of the paper is available online at <http://www.wmin.ac.uk/SSHL/pdf/CSDBulletinAbels.pdf>

Nano Knows Best?

Grey goo, cyborgs and the amplification of weapons of mass destruction: these were some of the potential hazards of nanotechnology flagged up by the vociferous Canadian NGO Erosion, Technology and Concentration when, in February 2003, it demanded a moratorium on the commercialization of nanotechnology. In the same month, the UK Better Regulation Taskforce called for early, informed dialogue between scientists and public about the impact of, and a new regulatory framework for, nanotechnology. The government replied that there was no obvious focus for such a debate but that it would keep its position under review.

Nanotechnology entered the public sphere when Prince Charles made international headlines with his reported fears about self-replicating nanomachines that could smother the world in grey goo. In the ensuing public controversy the UK government commissioned the Royal Society and the Royal Academy of Engineering (RAE) to investigate the opportunities of, and uncertainties linked to, nanotechnology. Prince Charles further stoked the debate when, in July 2004, he published an article in the *Independent on Sunday* that warned of the potential dangers of nanotechnology. Acknowledging that

Alison Mohr examines current debates in the UK on nanotechnology from a participatory governance standpoint

at the same rate as the technology' and for risk assessment to 'keep pace with commercial development'.

THE ROYAL SOCIETY REPORT

Written by an Expert Working Group, the Royal Society/RAE report, *Nanoscience and Nanotechnologies: Opportunities and Uncertainties* (July 2004), consulted stakeholders and drew on the group's expertise (in engineering, chemistry, nanotechnology, political philosophy, environmental science, and environmental and occupational medicine) to consider current and future developments in nanotechnology. The report addresses social issues such as impacts on human health and the environment; safety, ethical and societal concerns; the current state of scientific knowledge; potential future uses of nanotechnologies; and areas where additional regulation may be needed. The report recommends ways both of realizing nanotechnology's many possible benefits to society and of minimizing possible future uncertainties and risks.

The Expert Working Group also commissioned a public opinion survey by the British Market Research Bureau (BMRB). This ascertained that public awareness of nanotechnologies in Great Britain is low: only 29 percent had heard of 'nanotechnology'; while

even fewer, 19 percent, could define it. Of the 19 percent, 68 percent - despite hitherto predominantly negative media coverage - felt the technology would improve life; 4 percent thought it would make life worse. Two BMRB workshops that explored these views in depth revealed that the public had positive views about new advances and potential applications (for example, medicine, the creation of new materials, improvements to the quality of life), as well as concerns about the technology's financial implications, its impact on society, the reliability of new applications, and long-term side effects and controllability. Workshop members also deemed governance important: in particular, how to ensure that the development of nanotechnologies is socially beneficial. Inevitably, those surveyed compared the technology with GMOs and nuclear power.

The Royal Society/RAE Report recognizes that, given that Research Councils are currently funding research into nanotechnologies, participatory governance would be an appropriate subject for initial dialogue. It recommends that now - at a stage when it can inform key developmental decisions and before deeply entrenched or polarized positions appear - a constructive and proactive debate about the future of nanotechnologies should take place.

In its published response to the Royal Society/RAE report (February

'Public awareness of nanotechnologies in Great Britain is low: only 29 percent had heard of "nanotechnology"; only 19 percent could define it'

the technology is a triumph of human ingenuity, he nevertheless called on those promoting nanotechnology to show 'significantly greater social awareness, humility and openness' than they did with regard to genetically modified organisms (GMO). The public, he warned, will accept nanotechnology only 'if a precautionary approach is seen to be applied', and he urged 'regulatory processes' to be 'encouraged to develop

2005), the UK government asserts its continuing commitment to a public dialogue that will inform the direction of research and development and of appropriate regulation. Yet, unless the government, in its forthcoming research programme, provides the resources needed to underpin the development of regulation and dialogue (both stakeholder and public), it will fail to honour its commitment.

A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

On the surface, the Royal Society/RAE report's consideration of the social and ethical impacts of, and of stakeholder and public dialogues about, nanotechnologies signals a new approach to technological (participatory) governance. However, in both its analysis and subsequent recommendations, the report still prioritizes risk: to human health and to the environment. This is not surprising, according to a working paper by the Institute for Environment, Philosophy and Public Policy (IEPPP) at Lancaster University and the think-tank DEMOS: when faced with new technologies, policymakers revert to familiar tools and (ideological) frames of reference. Just as risk assessment models developed in the nuclear industry in the 1970s shaped subsequent policy discussions about GMOs, so discussions about nanotechnology are likely to be shaped by models devised for GMOs.

Nanotechnology is at an earlier developmental stage than was



biotechnology when public controversy surrounding GM technology erupted in the late 1990s. The particular technological applications and potential impact of nanotechnology are thus difficult to define for public deliberation. Research into the distinctive character and properties of nanotechnology is therefore essential if an adequate customized regulatory framework is to be developed. Wider social consideration and negotiation 'upstream' of the decision-making process may strengthen the social acceptability and legitimacy of nanotechnology. (Indeed, one of the criticisms of the UK-government-funded *GM Nation?* public debate in summer 2003 was that it took place too late to influence the direction of GM research or to alter the institutional, economic and political commitments of key actors.) One reason why public debates on human

biotechnology are thought to have been successful is that deliberative processes began early and kept pace with scientific developments.

Nanotechnologies have revolutionary potential. The challenge to those involved in nanotechnology research and development is to articulate at an early stage, by exposing them to public scrutiny, their visions and expectations of, and concerns about, the technology.

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The joint research conducted by the Institute for Environment, Philosophy and Public Policy (IEPPP) at Lancaster University and the think-tank DEMOS (see article) was an early reflection on established technological governance processes and their usefulness for engaging the public in the nanotechnology debate. A new European Commission-funded project also aims to establish communication and social debate on nanotechnologies and nanosciences, but this time at the European level. *NanoDialogue*, which aims to inform wider publics and raise awareness of research and development in the field, is coordinated by the Fondazione IDIS-Città della Scienza in Naples and comprises 11 organizations (one of which is CSD) with expertise in scientific research, public participation and science communication. The project

THE NANODIALOGUE PROJECT

particularly aims to encourage a social dialogue between members of the research community, citizens and other civil society actors in order to ascertain each of these groups' main concerns and expectations. Innovative methodology involving a coordinated series of participatory workshops and public activities (exhibitions, science shows, European Collaborative for Science, Industry and Technology Exhibitions (ECSITE) conferences) will promote this dialogue. The proceedings and subsequent citizens' recommendations (that will highlight key social concerns) will feed into national and European research agendas, public debates and ethical deliberations on nanotechnologies and nanosciences. Finally, and by example, it is hoped that the project will encourage new forms of technological (participatory) governance.

social arrangements' actually privileges the standpoint of the abstract, isolated individual. Kaldor, for example, describes global civil society as 'a move away from state-centred approaches' and towards 'more concern with individual empowerment and personal autonomy'. Falk, describing how global solidarities accompany an increasingly atomized and fragmented domestic political realm, writes of '...transnational solidarities... between... varieties of "citizen pilgrims" ... [who have] already transferred their loyalties to the invisible political community of their hopes and dreams, one which could exist in future time but is nowhere currently embodied in the life-world of the planet'.

This interconnectedness is, in fact, the flipside of a lack of connection domestically. Kaldor: 'Air travel and the internet create new horizontal communities of people, who perhaps have more in common, than with those who live close by.' The transfer of loyalties to an 'invisible political community' is merely a radical re-representation of the rejection by these 'citizen pilgrims' of the constraints of a real and all too visible political community - the electorate.

Today's global 'revolution' lacks a clearly defined sphere of the political. Political life depends on collectivities, on a shared project of political engagement; the privileging of the individual above the social makes any form of politics impossible. Naomi Klein describes well how, without such a shared project, there can be no political debate, no testing of ideas. Invited to a post-Seattle New York conference on 'Re-imagining politics and society' she is 'struck by the futility of this well-meaning exercise. Even if we did manage to come up with a 10-point plan - brilliant in its clarity, elegant in its coherence, unified in its outlook - to whom, exactly, would we hand down these commandments? ... The ideas and plans being hatched ... were destined to be swept up and tossed around in the tidal wave of information - Web diaries, NGO manifestos,



academic papers, homemade videos, *cris de coeur* - that the global anti-corporate network produces and consumes each and every day.'

There is no need to win an argument, convince an audience, or reach a consensus. As Klein notes: 'If somebody feels that he or she doesn't quite fit into one of the 30,000 or so NGOs or thousands of affinity groups out there, she can just start her own and link up.'

The belief that it is not necessary to have an allegiance beyond the autonomous individual appeals to many people, disillusioned and frustrated as they are with the formal political process. What is popular about radical politics is precisely its distrust of the old projects of the left and of politics as a formal process of engagement. This stance is not radical, motivated by a desire to replace the state with something else; rather, it encapsulates a broader distrust of

'What is popular about radical politics is its distrust of politics as a formal process of engagement'

traditional democratic processes and of politics itself. By placing the autonomy of the self at the centre of their ethical code, global radical approaches tend to reduce political community to the individual, not extend it.

DOMESTIC DISENGAGEMENT

Radical global theorizing is predicated both on the rejection of domestic political engagement by disillusioned radical and liberal commentators, and on their search for new 'spaces' of politics and new 'communities' where

they can project their radical demands without the constraints of having to engage with their own societies.

This desire to solve the problems of global politics, before addressing questions at the national or local level, and the perception that we can 'make a difference' globally (but not, it is alleged, nationally), are unique aspects of a deep estrangement from our own political circumstances.

Western governments, too, view domestic problems of legitimacy, trust and collective engagement as potentially resolvable through global or international activism rather than domestic initiatives. They also attempt to find answers abroad - in Africa, the Balkans or elsewhere - to the existential political vacuum left by the lack of certainty, mission, political ideologies and 'big ideas' deeply felt since the start of the 1990s.

The more our connections with other members of society break down, the more we find 'imagined communities' in global space. The idealized normative community and 'thick interconnections' of global civil society invoke Christian imagery of an ideal harmony as a counterpart to our fragmented, estranged and profane earthly existence. It is precisely the fictional, fantasy aspect of 'global space' that allows individuals, organizations and institutions, from NGOs to leading Western governments, to project their idealized visions of themselves onto the global plane.

Advocates of global civil society seek to avoid political responsibility and accountability. However, the task of those who wish to engage in the project of emancipatory politics is surely the opposite one: to start to restore relations of trust and collective responsibility. If we cannot engage, politically, socially and intellectually, with those closest to us we will never be able to construct a broader sense of shared community or revitalize politics.

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