



GREEN REPUBLICANISM AS A NON-NEUTRAL AND CONVIVIAL POLITICS

O REPUBLICANISMO VERDE COMO UMA POLÍTICA NÃO-NEUTRA E CONVIVIAL

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Abstract. *Green republicanism can be described as a subset of republican political theory that aims to promote human flourishing by ensuring a non-dominating and ecologically sustainable republic. It expands the republican idea of social interdependence with the natural world, and therefore requires promoting and protecting the autonomy within those interdependencies. As such, green republicanism will focus on moving away from the current situation of ecological unsustainability while protecting freedom as non-domination. In this article, I offer a green republican justification for non-neutrality while remaining non-perfectionist. Furthermore, I argue that participation and deliberation is essential in defining the concrete politics that should guide green republicanism. To do so I examine the idea of conviviality and argue that green republicanism is the political theory best placed to ensure the objective of conviviality: it allows individuals to confront their views and to cooperate, acknowledging the finitude of the planet's natural resources.*

Keywords: *Republicanism; ecology; conviviality; neutrality; contestation.*

Sumário. *O republicanismo verde pode ser descrito como um ramo da teoria política republicana que visa promover o florescimento humano garantindo uma república não dominadora e ecologicamente sustentável. Expandindo a ideia republicana de interdependência social à natureza, torna-se uma teoria em que a autonomia se exerce dentro dessas interdependências, devendo ser protegida e promovida. Como tal, o republicanismo verde concentra-se em afastar-se da atual situação de insustentabilidade ecológica enquanto protege a liberdade como não-dominância. Neste artigo, ofereço uma justificação republicana verde para a não-neutralidade, se bem que permanecendo não-perfeccionista. Continuo argumentando que participação e deliberação são essenciais na definição das políticas concretas que devem guiar o republicanismo verde. Para isso, analiso a ideia de convivialidade e defendo que o republicanismo verde é a teoria política*

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mais bem posicionada para assegurar os objetivos deste conceito: permitir que os indivíduos confrontem pontos de vista e cooperem, reconhecendo a finitude dos recursos naturais do planeta.

Palavras-chave: *Republicanismo; ecologia; convivialidade; neutralidade; contestação.*

o. Introduction

Republican political theory has received renewed interest in the last couple of decades.¹ Republicanism as a political theory has its roots in Ancient Greece and Rome, with figures such as Aristotle or Cicero among its main thinkers. Central to the definition of republicanism are the notions of freedom as non-domination, contestation, civic virtues, participation in the political life of the community, public over private interest, combatting all forms of corruption, and also the defense of a state based on the rule of law.

The revival of republicanism results, at least partly, from the need to find answers to some of the most pressing questions of the 21st century, including global environmental challenges (Slaughter, 2005, p. 210). Despite the lack of research on the commonalities between republican and green political theories, there are several areas of overlap between them (Barry, 2008, 2012, 2017; Barry & Eckersley, 2005; Barry & Smith, 2008; Cannavò, 2012, 2016; Curry, 2000; Lambacher, 2013; Slaughter, 2005, 2014; Wall, 2014).

Green republicanism can be defined as the subset of republican political theory that overlaps with green political theory. Accepting that we are currently living in a situation of ecological unsustainability (Barry, 2012), green republicanism is interested in promoting conceptions of the good that, on the one hand, promote ecological sustainability and, on the other hand, preserve and promote freedom as non-domination. As such, and unlike other approaches to republicanism, green republicanism is non-neutral regarding the common good.

Together, these two conditions imply that some conceptions of the good that might promote ecological sustainability—deep ecology, eco-authoritarianism or

¹ Among many others, the following authors have made a crucial contribution for this revival: Honohan (2002), Laborde and Maynor (2008), Lovett (2010), Pettit (1997, 2012), Skinner (1978, 1998), and Pocock (2016).

eco-fascism, to name a few—are excluded as they imply an increase in terms of domination (cf. Gorz, 1980). Similarly, views of republicanism that disregard the ecological limits of the planet and the need to promote ecological sustainability will not fall under green republicanism. The latter element has been associated to most accounts of republicanism, reason why Audier (2019) claims that a green form of republicanism, based on a post-productivist view of the economy, is essential in order to face the present and future ecological crisis.

The acknowledgment of social interdependencies is central to republicans (Honohan, 2002). It is because the former exist that there might exist relationships of domination. In a more demanding argument, green republicanism expands the idea of interdependency to the natural world, making freedom a social *and* ecological matter. On this line of reasoning, Audier (2015, p. 114) focuses on the interdependencies that link the individual to society and to the local and global environment to argue that the task of eco-republicanism—or green republicanism as we prefer to refer to it—“the construction of collective and individual autonomy within the interdependency”.

Thus, green republicanism acknowledges both “the human dependence on natural forces outside of control, the embeddedness of humankind in metabolic phenomena on which we depend to survive, and the limits of our comprehension of the world” (Fremaux, 2018, p. 233). But this has not always been the case; in fact, some republicans have defended mastery of the natural world as a way of promoting non-domination (Audier, 2019). As Bookchin argues, analysing the relation between man and nature, “the counterpart of domination of nature by man (...) has been the domination of man by nature”. So, he follows, both Marxism and liberalism—and republicanism, one could add—“see the former as a desideratum that emerges out of the latter” (Bookchin, 1990, p. 119). This conclusion is clearly problematic when thinking of sustainable development and of ecology from a green republican perspective.

Unlike other republican approaches, which agree that the domination of the natural world is a condition for human survival, green republicanism accepts that the existing dependencies on natural forces should not lead to a need to dominate such forces but rather to accept them and promote human flourishing within them. This is not to say that humans will have to live in an untouched (and quite

often fictional) natural world, but rather that the acceptance of the existence of such nature (as well as the interdependence of humans and nature) will require the former to determine rights and duties that allow for human flourishing while also considering the natural limits imposed by nature (Bookchin, 2005). Understood as such, green republicanism opens space for a politics of conviviality. This concept, which is mostly associated with Ivan Illich, refers to a way of living in society, cooperating and rivalling, within the natural limits of the planet.

However, even if one is non-neutral regarding the common good and the need to move to a situation of ecological sustainability and convivial republicanism, the definition of this idea is subject to discussion. I argue that a critical aspect of green republicanism is the need to promote civic participation and deliberation regarding the future of communities and that, unlike other green approaches, consensus might not be the final goal. This is so because the approach to move away from ecological unsustainability cannot be depoliticised, be it by a technocratic view or by a mystic approach to nature. On the contrary, green republicanism aims to educate citizens regarding the ecological challenges ahead of them and to give them a place to express their doubts, certainties and thoughts.

The rest of this article is organised as follows. In the next section, I argue that green republicanism is non-neutral while remaining non-perfectionist. In section 2, I discuss the concept of conviviality and argue that green republicanism offers the conditions for the promotion of a convivial way of living. Finally, in section 3, I argue that green republicanism requires the creation of places for civic participation and contestation.

1. Non-neutrality as a green republican condition

In times of ecological urgency, green republicanism is non-neutral regarding the common good. The concept of neutrality is not straightforward and

different definitions and approaches thereof have been presented.² As Merrill (2014, p. 1) notes, “is mostly within liberal theory that the debate on neutrality has been conducted in its contemporary form”. However, Merrill follows, even among liberals, there are those who defend neutrality as condition of liberalism (“liberal neutralists”) and those who claim the pursuit of the neutrality ideal shall be abandoned (“liberal perfectionists”).

Patten, who argues against the liberal turn away from neutrality, presents a reinterpretation of the idea of liberal neutrality and argues that the state violates neutrality “when its policies are more accommodating, or less accommodating, of some conceptions of the good than they are of others” (Patten, 2012, p. 257). Neutrality in this sense “refers to neutrality in the treatment of differing conceptions of the good, and not neutrality in the actual effects of whatever policies, institutions, and so forth we ultimately adopt” thus demanding that “public policies, institutions, and so forth ought to be equally accommodating of all worthwhile conceptions of the good” (Lovett & Whitfield, 2016, p. 125).

Surprisingly, discussions on the (non-)neutrality of the state are not very common within republicanism. Philip Pettit, for instance, has no reference to it in his *On the People’s Terms* (2012) and in *Republicanism* (1997) only says that his vision of republicanism can be seen as neutral because it “is motivated by the assumption that the ideal is capable of commanding the allegiance of the citizens of developed, multicultural societies, regardless of their more particular conceptions of the good”, which is why “republicans satisfy neutrality through having the state acknowledge only the ecumenical or non-sectarian good represented by the freedom of its citizens” (Pettit, 1997, p. 96).

A notable exception to the lack of research on the links between neutrality and republicanism is presented by Roberto Merrill (2007) who has looked into how the different conceptions of republicanism relate with neutrality. He distinguishes three variants of republicanism: the first close to communitarianism and represented, among others, by Sandel (1996), the second close to liberalism and represented by Pettit and a third, which he refers to as

² See, among many others, Dworkin (1978), Goodin and Reeve (1989), Merrill and Weinstock (2014), Raz (1986), Wall and Klosko (2003).

critical republicanism, represented by Laborde and Maynor. In the first variant the idea of neutrality is rejected, in the second neutrality is considered as a shared value and, finally, in the critical variant, as I shall argue below, neutrality is rejected while a robust and paternalistic perfectionism is rejected as well.

Political neutrality, it must be said, is incompatible with perfectionism. This fact is relevant because republicans can be divided between those who defend a sort of perfectionism and those who prefer an anti-perfectionist approach (such as Pettit). Perfectionism, in this political sense, is understood as the arrangement of political institutions and the adoption of state policies “that promote or impede perfectionist values in various ways and to varying degrees” (Wall, 2017). Whereas the non-neutrality regarding the common good would not pose a problem for those having a perfectionist approach to republicanism, those who defend non-perfectionism would have a harder task.

Lovett and Whitfield detail why that is the case. They claim that as the promotion of political engagement and civic virtues, which can be done with measures such as mandatory voting, subsidies for political activities or republican education programmes, is a core aspect of republicanism the neutrality principle would always be violated.³ They thus conclude that republicans cannot endorse neutrality because “a firm commitment to neutrality must rule out any measures that would afford favourable treatment to those conceptions of the good in which active political engagement and civic virtue are valorised relative to those conceptions of the good in which they are regarded with indifference or even abhorrence” (Lovett & Whitfield, 2016, p. 127). For this reason, since republicans cannot reject the principles of perfectionism based on the defense of the principle of neutrality, those among them who do not want to endorse the principles of perfectionism must find other justification.

Considering that at least some forms of perfectionism are compatible with republican theory, green republicanism, even with a non-neutralist approach to the common good, does not necessarily need to be perfectionist. As Lovett and

³ The authors present the concept of toleration, defined as the theory where “public policies, institutions, and so forth should impose no special disadvantages on any worthwhile conception of the good” (Lovett & Whitfield, 2016, p. 126); if these republican measures will not obey the neutrality principle, if well designed they might respect the toleration principle.

Whitfield argue, perfectionist principles, on top of encouraging or discouraging certain concepts of the good, must do so based on the objective value of those conceptions and not simply because of their instrumental use. As they put it, “to support Calvinism merely because it promotes economic prosperity, say, might not count as perfectionist, while doing so because it genuinely reflects the will of God obviously would” (2016, p. 122). Similarly, defending that the state should promote ecologically sustainable conceptions of the good because they are essential to put us back into a situation of sustainability and reduce ecological-related domination can be seen as an instrumental way to ensure not only human flourishing (and the preservation of the natural world) but also a sane eco-system and, ultimately, human survival.

Of course, to accept this argument one needs to agree that we currently live in a situation of ecological unsustainability and that, if no changes are observed, the consequences will impact—even if at different levels—most of the planet and the majority of human population, resulting in an increase of possible sources of domination. Several studies highlight and support this statement and there is scientific consensus regarding the anthropogenic origin of the increase of greenhouse gases, which are the main contributors behind some of the most pressing ecological problems, namely global climate change. Regarding the planet’s ecological sustainability, the idea of ecological footprint and the indicators of Planetary Boundaries are of particular interest.

The ecological footprint measures how much nature is being used against the total nature available, concluding that according to the amount of goods and services that we currently use, humanity needs the regenerative capacity of 1,6 Earths (WWF, 2016). The Planetary Boundaries are a particularly interesting concept. It defines the boundaries for nine Earth system processes that should not be trespassed if the planet is to remain within a “safe operating space” (Rockström et al., 2009; Steffen et al., 2015). Among the nine system processes, the limits of four of them—climate change, biochemical flows, land-system change and biosphere integrity—have already been crossed, which “may lead to dangerous levels of instability in the Earth system and increasing risk for humans” (WWF, 2016, p. 12).

Accepting these facts, whatever conceptions of the good that intend to promote ecological sustainability and reduce ecological domination can be supported, whereas conceptions that will not do so—or, worse, which will contribute to the worsening of the ecological unsustainability—shall be discouraged. The exact definition of the common good, however, shall not be determined in advance but rather through civic and political deliberation (Pocock, 2016). We then face a situation where there is a non-neutral approach to the common good but where the range of conceptions of such common good is wide enough to avoid perfectionism.

This means that green republicans need to pose themselves the following question: can a non-neutral approach to the common good that promotes sustainability and discourages unsustainability be itself dominating? As the answer is probably yes, they will need to find a good justification to avoid the risk of domination. The answer probably lies in the fact that domination only occurs if the kind of interference that individuals face is uncontrolled (Pettit, 2012). This means that a suitable degree of control by the people needs to be guaranteed and a plural *and* democratic debate ensured (Sandel, 1996). Guaranteeing popular control would reduce the risk of domination on green republican grounds while promoting civic engagement.

An interesting approach to neutrality that can inspire green republicanism was presented by John Maynor (2003). In his account of republicanism, which he claims to be a neo-Roman one (as opposed to its neo-Athenian version), Maynor argues that there are two interdependent forms of power that are associated with freedom as non-domination. The first is reciprocal power—manifested in values and ideals such as civic virtue and citizenship—and the second is constitutional power, which corresponds to the republican institutions (e.g. legislative, executive, judicial) that are intended to support reciprocal power. These two forms of power are relevant to the discussion of neutrality because:

(...) the type of instrumental goods associated with both the reciprocal and constitutional power of non-domination help to constitute republican liberty and secure individuals from external or internal threats to their freedom. This allows a modern republican state to put forth richer and more robust forms of republican values and virtues. In making this move, modern republicanism abandons liberal neutrality. (Maynor, 2003, p. 69)

The goods associated with the reciprocal and constitutional powers shall then be promoted by the state, breaking away from neutrality. Maynor presents two arguments to justify this. The first is that the state shall “actively promote these goods because they help form a resilient and secure system of liberty that offers individuals certain benefits unavailable to them otherwise”; the second refers to the fact that the promotion of these non-dominating virtues and values will expose individuals to “different ways of life and alternative dimensions of personal identity” thus contributing to the development of the self (Maynor, 2003, pp. 70–71).

It follows that such approach can be considered as quasi-perfectionist since it demands

individuals to attain certain substantive values and virtues (...) [securing] them from any actual or threatened arbitrary interference and thus enhance the choices available to them (...) [ensuring] a vast range of final ends which are consistent with republican liberty, which individuals can pursue while securing them from any interference that does not track their interests. (Maynor, 2003, pp. 80–81)

In this sense, the ideals and virtues promoted by the state are not only instrumental but also constitutive and intrinsically valuable as part of republican freedom.⁴

The state could then intervene—even if only in a controlled way—by promoting the ideals and values of reciprocal power, which would reduce domination and, via constitutional power, regulate life choices that would promote non-domination. As such, by ranking different conceptions of the common good according to how they would promote non-domination, the state would be non-neutral without limiting the freedom of its citizens, assuming thus a quasi-perfectionist form, as citizens would nevertheless have the power to discuss and agree on which of those (non-dominating) conceptions of the good they would prefer.

Elsewhere, I have defended the need to define some ecological limits at both the production and the consumption sides, arguing that such limits would not necessarily curtail freedom understood as non-domination (Pinto, in press).

⁴ Iseult Honohan presents a somehow similar argument regarding political participation, when she argues that “political activity can be intrinsically valuable without being the sole, or ultimate value in human life. A concern for common goods does not fundamentally and of itself conflict with freedom” (Honohan, 2002, p. 11).

However, such limits would have different impacts in terms of freedom. Taking climate change and potential policies to counter it as an example, one could say that both taxes on carbon emissions and a limitation on the total number of flights authorised would impact the agent's freedom. This said, the curtailing of freedom is bigger in the second scenario since flying would still be possible (even if at an extra cost).

Two comments need to be made at this point. The first is that individuals do not have a fixed conception of the good and that the latter might change as a consequence of the state's non-neutral policies. From a green republican perspective, this is indeed one of the expected outcomes because forming green citizens—as opposed to simply consumers—can be seen as an objective of green republicanism. So, by promoting non-dominating and ecologically sustainable conceptions of the good, the state would be exposing citizens to different ideals and, by promoting green civic virtues and allowing them to experiment with different ways of living that they would not otherwise have experienced, contributing to a change in their behaviour. Andrew Dobson argues that this is part of the building of an environmental citizenship (Dobson, 2003, 2007). According to him, behaviour change towards sustainable development that is driven by environmental citizenship considerations is more likely to last than behaviour driven by financial incentives.

The second remark is that not all conceptions of the good that promote ecological sustainability could be supported under a green republican approach. I have already referred the need for some ecological limits that might not curtail republican freedom but there might be other approaches. Think, for example, of the drastic measures that are advanced by eco-authoritarians and deep ecologists who argue, even if with very different political reasons, that losing some freedom is the price to pay to ensure ecological sustainability (cf. Ophuls & Boyan, 1992; Hardin, 1968). But the challenges posed to green republicans are not only those of extreme measures as proposed by eco-authoritarians. These measures and limits could indeed promote the reduction of ecological-related impact but would most certainly promote different sources of domination and thus could not be supported by green republicans. The challenge lies, then, on the definition of ecologically sustainable ways of living that promote non-domination. A possible

solution lies in the promotion of conviviality, which I will discuss in the next section.

2. Conviviality as an expression of green republicanism

How can all the different elements of green republicanism discussed so far be brought together? A possible answer lies on the concept of conviviality. This idea has made a surge in the recent past (in particular in France) thanks, among others, to the publication of the *Manifeste Convivial* (Convivialist Manifesto) in 2013 as well as to the work of several authors from different academic fields.⁵ However, the author who has worked the most to promote the concept of conviviality is arguably Ivan Illich, who defined it as follows:

I choose the term 'conviviality' to designate the opposite of industrial productivity. I intend it to mean autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment; and this in contrast with the conditioned response of persons to the demands made upon them by others, and by a man-made environment. I consider conviviality to be individual freedom realised in personal interdependence and, as such, an intrinsic ethical value. I believe that, in any society, as conviviality is reduced below a certain level, no amount of industrial productivity can effectively satisfy the needs it creates among society's members. (Illich, 1975, p. 24)⁶

In the French edition of the book, which is slightly different from the English one, he adds that a shift from productivity to conviviality includes a shift from having repetitive needs to the spontaneity of the gift (Illich, 2014, p. 28; cf. Mauss, 2002).

There is a lot to unpack in such a small paragraph, so let us do it separately. First, what does Illich mean when he suggests that industrial productivity represents the nemesis of conviviality? According to him, the industrial mode of production refers to a system based on the permanent creation of needs—real or perceived—that individuals are constantly asked to fulfil. This is linked to an economic growth-dependent system, which is why Illich claims that an essential element in moving to a “post-industrial age” is “to set pedagogical limits on

⁵A number of those has contributed to a special edition of the *Revue du MAUSS* (2014) focusing on conviviality and with the title “Du convivialisme comme volonté et comme espérance”.

⁶The world of Illich while defining the tools for conviviality was rather different than the one of today and not all of his proposals would fit green republicanism. Take for example the need for “deschooling” he proposes. A green republican approach would rather foster a civic form of education with a focus on green republican values (cf. Peterson, 2011). Here I focus only in the aspects that are somehow linking conviviality and green republicanism.

industrial growth” (Illich, 1975, p. 10). This approach is similar to the promotion of a post-productivist society defended by green republicans.

On that topic, Illich defined the concept of radical monopoly, which would occur when one "industrial production process exercises an exclusive control over the satisfaction of a pressing need and excludes non-industrial activities from competition” (Illich, 1975, p. 69). For such a monopoly to emerge, individual and small-scale production is replaced with standardised industrial products in such a way that most needs—including the simplest ones—can only be met by the market. Additionally, as the only way for the market to thrive is by selling the goods that it produces, Illich concludes that “radical monopoly imposes compulsory consumption and thereby restricts personal autonomy” (Illich, 1975, p. 67).

Green republicanism could play an important role in this context. By promoting the expansion of the activities of the autonomous sphere, i.e. the activities that do not belong to the market nor the state spheres (Van Parijs, 2010) (at the expense of the activities within the market sphere), green republicanism could serve as a way to not only limit and avoid the creation of a radical monopoly, but also to define a different and alternative economic system, one that is not dependent on economic growth and is less impacting in ecological terms. Think for example of cooperatives or organisations within social economy that are under less pressure to impose the selling of their products and, as such, are less dependent on economic growth (Barry, 2017).

Second, it is interesting to note that Illich highlights dependencies and relationships, both personal and with the surrounding environment. The terminology used refers to republican arguments, namely when he claims that conviviality is individual freedom realised in personal interdependence. So, as argued in section 0, freedom is always a matter of interdependency, both with others and with nature. According to Illich, then, conviviality is a matter of both freedom *and* autonomy, both conditioned by existing interdependencies. Comparing this to the description of Audier of an eco-republicanism, which he says is based on “the construction of collective and individual autonomy within the interdependency” (Audier, 2015, p. 114), the similarities between conviviality and green republicanism are once again made clear.

Third, Illich refers to autonomous action against a conditioned response. He adds that individual autonomy needs to be preserved by convivial tools, which shall be limited by the conditions for survival, the conditions for the just distribution, and the conditions for convivial work. So, as Deriu (2014) notes, “convivial tools for Illich are a condition for the realisation of autonomy understood as the power to control the use of resources and on the satisfaction of our own needs”.

But what does Illich mean when referring to tools? In a rather wide definition he claims that tools are “all rationally designed devices, be they artefacts or rules, codes or operators” (Illich, 1975, p. 34). As such, rules and other tools need to be created and to be in place in order to promote conviviality. But that creation also needs to involve citizens in a participatory process, “constantly adjusted under the pressure of conflicting insights and interests” (1975, p. 27). Again, the links with green republican political theory are substantial and he later clarifies that from this participatory process the result shall not be a single or a limited number of tools. On the contrary, a large and plural number of tools shall be encouraged to “encourage a diversity of life styles” (1975, p. 29).

The overlaps between green republicanism and conviviality are indeed substantial, and that is made clear in the subtitle of the already referred Convivialist Manifesto *A declaration of interdependence*. The interdependence between humans is a central element of republican theory and, as I have argued, such interdependence is expanded to the natural world in the framework of a green republican theory. The manifesto refers to both connections.

On the one hand, it highlights the fact that humanity, even if organised in different political communities defined by borders, shares some common principles that make individuals interdependent. On this issue, recurring to a terminology close to the one used by republicans, Humbert (2018, p. 23) says that the convivialist principle of common humanity means that discrimination between individuals can only be the result of some arbitrary will. On the other hand, the dependence that we have regarding nature should make us abandon the idea of being its masters and accept that we are part of it. By doing so, the signatories of the Manifesto argue, we shall give back to nature as much, or even more, than we take or receive from it.

Conviviality, the Manifesto argues, is the principle within existing doctrines that “allows humans to both rival and cooperate, having full conscience of the finitude of natural resources and a share concern about the care for the planet and our [human] belonging to that planet” (Alphandéry et al., 2013, p. 25). In this sense, conviviality can be seen as a complement to existing political theories, namely (green) republicanism. However, according to the Convivialist Manifesto, in order to be legitimate and convivial, any political theory needs to obey to the following four principles:

1. Principle of common humanity: despite differences, there is only one humanity, i.e. a principle of fraternity;
2. Principle of common sociality: social relationships is the greatest wealth of humanity, i.e. a principle of equality;
3. Individuation principle: each individual needs to have the possibility to express her singular individuality, without harming others, i.e. a principle of freedom/liberty;
4. Mastered and creative confrontation principle: expressing singular individuality will naturally lead to opposition between individuals, which is legitimate as long as it is not a destructive one.

Alain Caillé, a leading figure of the convivialist movement in Europe, argues that in order to build the new kind of society based on conviviality, one needs to both preserve but also go beyond existing political ideologies (Caillé, Humbert, Latouche, & Viveret, 2011). He links four political philosophies—communism, socialism, anarchism and liberalism—to the four principles of conviviality. Communism is associated with the principle of common humanity, socialism with the principle of common sociality, anarchism with the individuation principle and liberalism with the confrontation principle. Liberalism, however, shall be seen in the wider sense, which is why he argued that on its original form it is not dissociable from republicanism.⁷ Additionally, he argues that the best way to face the environmental, economic and social challenges of the present is by bringing together these four principles, without privileging one at the expenses of

⁷ See <http://www.lesconvivialistes.org/theorie/democratie/196-convivialisme-et-autres-doctrines-politiques> where he associates at least one part of liberalism to the republican theory coming from Ancient Greece and pre-imperial Rome.

another. Green republicanism, I argue, could offer a ground to bring the four principles together, obeying the moral, political, ecological and economic considerations discussed in the Convivialist Manifesto.

First, at the level of the moral considerations, convivialists defend a number of conditions that relate closely to green republican theory. It is argued that all individuals need to be recognised as having equal dignity and, as such, have the possibility to access the minimum material conditions to pursue their own conception of the good life. Moreover, it is specifically referred that all individuals shall have the possibility to enjoy recognition by others, by having the opportunity—should they so wish—of participating in political life and in the decision-making processes that impact their lives and the life of their communities.

Furthermore, in what is yet another connection with republican theory, they argue that there is a duty for each citizen to oppose corruption, both passively—refusing benefits in exchange of money or power—and actively—opposing corruption in the others to the point of “one’s means and courage” (Alphandéry et al., 2013, p. 30). Two strong republican elements are present in this consideration: not only the opposition to all forms of corruption is central to republicanism, as courage is one of the republican cardinal virtues (Honohan, 2002).

Second, the Manifesto discusses the political considerations of conviviality. On top of the already referred need to respect the four guiding principles, convivialists present a number of proposals. That list includes ensuring a minimum of resources and a basic income protecting everyone from living in a situation of misery. But it includes as well a maximum income that would contribute to avoiding the creation of individuals with extreme wealth going beyond a point of common decency, which would thwart the principles of common humanity and common sociality. It is important to mention at this point that the principles of an economic floor and an economic ceiling are essential parts of a republican political economy (Casassas & De Wispelaere, 2016; Casassas, 2018).

Such political considerations also include other aspects that are specifically linked to green republicanism. In particular, the argument that a convivialist

approach would favour the preservation of the common goods—the commons—and foster the creation and consolidation of new common goods for all the humanity is particularly relevant. Indeed, a group of self-proclaimed commoners replied to the Convivialist Manifesto arguing that “the commons can be seen as the foundation of the convivialist society, commoning as its living expression” (Acksel et al., 2016). They continue by saying that “the rules of commoning shall be set by equal peers whose needs are at the focus of a shared process”.

Green republicans will have a particular and unique approach to the management and preservation of the commons, favouring a multi-level approach. While some commons might be managed directly by local communities (e.g. a local forest), others, such as the oceans or the radio spectre, will require the state or supranational political entities to coordinate their management. Green republican institutions need to consider this fact and allow room for citizen participation in the decision-making processes that impact those commons.

Other relevant point is the call for the multiplication of community and associative activities, to be constitutive of a global civic society, and in which the self-government principle beyond the rule of the state or of the market would be a rule. These are precisely the domains of the autonomous sphere that I claim that green republicanism should privilege. This is relevant because the autonomous sphere has a critical role in both green republicanism and convivialism. Alphanéry (2014, p. 92), for example, links the success and advances of convivialism to the promotion of activities of the social economy, i.e. of the autonomous sphere.

Third, green republican elements are also present in the ecological considerations. The Manifesto opens the list thereof by claiming that humans can no longer consider themselves as masters of nature. Even the terminology that is used refers yet again to republican theory. In this set of considerations, the authors propose a shift to renewable energies as well as a more radical proposal: whatever is taken from nature shall be given back at least in the same amount. This is of course not without difficulties, and detailing exactly what it implies is a complicated task.

Fourth, regarding its economic considerations, the Manifesto highlights the need to balance the market, the state and the associative economy (the

autonomous sphere) in order to ensure an economically plural model that can promote prosperity without growth. Accepting the existence of market practices and the desire for profit-making, they clarify that those activities are only legitimate if they respect the already mentioned principles of common humanity and common sociality, and only if these are coherent with the ecological considerations discussed in the previous paragraph. Green republicans would probably accept these points.

3. Green republicanism and the need for contestation

Having established green republicanism as non-neutral and convivial, I now argue that the definition of the common good shall be made in a cooperative and participatory process. The Convivialist Manifesto highlights this need as well. After presenting some initiatives that are associated with the autonomous sphere and that are followed by millions of people and at different scales, from the “slow food, slow town, slow science movements” to the “economy of digital contribution (e.g. Linux, Wikipedia)” and mentioning consumption and production cooperatives, the manifesto claims that they have in common the “research of conviviality” of a way of living together that valorises social relations and cooperation (*con-vivere*) (Alphandéry et al., 2013, pp. 13–14).

However, they subsequently argue that, as part of living in a society where groups and individuals have different interests, conviviality implies opposition and confrontation. This approach must nonetheless allow “opposition without massacring, taking care of the others and of nature”, making “conflict a force of life and not of death and rivalry a means for cooperation” (Alphandéry et al., 2013, p. 14). As Barry (2012) puts it, green republicanism should create spaces where citizens of good faith can disagree, and disagree robustly and honestly.

Contestation is an essential aspect of republicanism; it is only when having the opportunity to contest the decisions made by the state that individuals can be truly free. As Pettit (1997) argues, having the possibility to contest a decision taken by the state is an essential condition to ensure non-domination. Republicanism argues for a dispersal of power and the promotion of a model of democracy that is based on contestation as a way of securing freedom as non-

domination. In that sense, Pettit claims that “non-arbitrariness requires not so much consent as contestability” (Pettit, 1997, pp. 184–185; 2012). Contestation and deliberation among citizens is an essential part of republican theory, especially because it gives citizens a way of better controlling the state and reducing its power of uncontrolled interference—*imperium*—while contributing as well to reducing the potential of domination amongst each other—*dominium* (Maynor, 2003).

From a republican perspective, political participation can be seen as “a means to protect liberty (...) encouraging a political culture that is hostile to domination” (Viroli, 2001, p. 11). If intended to promote freedom as non-domination, political participation cannot simply be reduced to the voting right in elections. However, direct democracy will hardly be an alternative (Pettit, 2012). Political participation, from a republican standing point, shall allow individuals to deliberate and, to that end, shall create the spaces where deliberation is possible.

Nevertheless, green republicanism would want contestation to take place not only after the decisions by the state have been made but rather during the actual process of decision-making (cf. Honohan, 2002; Maynor, 2006). More than simply providing citizens with a saying and with the possibility to contest decisions once they are taken, green republicans want to give people the capacity to initiate and to be co-authors of the politics that will impact their lives. This, of course, involves a series of different conditions such as having enough economic means, or enough time to commit to such exercises, as well as having the knowledge or access to a team of experts that could support individuals during the decision-making process. This is particularly relevant regarding the kind of politics and measures required to move away from a situation of ecological unsustainability, which might demand structural change regarding current patterns of consumption and production.

Green republicanism would then need to think about the type of institutions in which citizens could participate, deliberate and cooperate in a more permanent basis, hence keeping a close contact with the elected political representatives and legislators. On top of providing the possibility to recur to the courts, to an ombudsman or other forms of contestation, green republicanism shall give

individuals the possibility to bring new subjects of discussion forward and bring such discussions to elected politicians. Green republicanism is thus interested in forming proactive rather than reactive citizens.

As Stuart White argues, political participation through deliberation and contestation “entails a willingness, and capacity, to think in terms of the common good (...) [and this is why] the democratic citizen must try to form some conception of the common good, and use this to consider whether there are good reasons for other citizens to accept specific policy proposals” (White, 2008). Regarding environmental topics, when individuals disagree and in cases where compromise is inappropriate, they might still be willing to resolve such disagreements through argument (Dryzek, 2002).

Additionally, unlike most green political theory approaches that are based on consensus-seeking, the kind of deliberation and participation model preferred by green republicans is based on confrontation and opposition of ideas.⁸ Barry and Ellis (2011) propose that the discussion of how exactly the common good is determined needs to be done in a participatory and agonistic way. This is because those actions will need to be agreed collectively as some will be on the losing side and risk being dominated as a consequence of the politics that is promoted to foster sustainability. Think for example of the closure of a coal-based energy plant to give place to a solar park: despite creating jobs and improving local air quality, those who will lose their jobs will see their freedom reduced as their risk of being dominated increases. This participatory process needs to be a continuous task since individuals will not have fixed and immutable conceptions of the good.

Citizens’ assemblies and juries that put together criteria of inclusivity, deliberation and citizenship (Smith & Wales, 2002) are a good source of inspiration for green republicans. These juries, already tested and in place in some countries, consist in putting together a group of randomly selected people so that they can comment on and review a specific set of proposals, contributing therefore to policy formation. The duration of such juries and the amount of topics discussed is variable but the process often lasts for several days. From an

⁸This is the proposal of Strong Democracy presented by Barber (2003, p. 151) who, by transforming the idea of conflict, wants to turn “dissensus into an occasion for mutualism and private interest into an epistemological tool of public thinking”.

environmental perspective, there are some indications of positive outcome of those juries (Kenyon, Nevin, & Hanley, 2010; Ward, 2007).

The exact scope and geographic extension of citizens' assemblies is open for discussion. One can think of assemblies at communal level to discuss more day-to-day issues. There can also be national assemblies working together with the national Parliament and being consulted before the legislation process. At the European level, one can think as well of a European Assembly with representatives from the different Member States. The essential aspect of these assemblies is that citizens can participate fully and that their opinions are taken into account. More than replacing representative democracy, citizens assemblies could serve as a way to empower citizens by giving them a stronger voice *during* the legislative process. In a moment of ecological crisis and when the definition of ecological limits is arguably required, citizens need to be involved in this decision-making process and to have a say on how such limits are defined and implemented. It is thus not surprising that different ecologist groups and activists such as the ones from the Extinction Rebellion are claiming that citizens' assemblies are essential in order to answer the climate crisis.

4. Conclusion

In this article I have argued that green republicanism can be considered as the subset of republican political theory that overlaps with green political theory. As such, it will only accept the promotion of freedom as non-domination as long as this does not imply an increase of the current situation of ecological unsustainability and, in parallel, it will only be interested in conceptions of ecological sustainability that do not imply a reduction of republican freedom.

Having defined green republicanism, I argued that it is non-neutral regarding the common good as it will promote conceptions thereof that will actively try to bring the planet to a situation of ecological sustainability. Nevertheless, being non-neutral does not imply that green republicanism shall be perfectionist, as the exact definition of the politics and measures to move away from unsustainability need to be defined and agreed in a way that allows citizens to add their contributions in a non-dominating way.

A convivial form of politics is, I argue, a possible expression of green republicanism. Conviviality is mostly linked with Ivan Illich and has seen a renewed interest in the last decade. The concept refers to the principle within existing doctrines that “allows humans to both rival and cooperate, having full conscience of the finitude of natural resources and a share concern about the care for the planet and our [human] belonging to that planet” (Alphandéry et al., 2013, p. 25). As such, a green republican and convivial theory needs to ensure that citizens have the means to participate and confront their ideas.

More than simply having the possibility to contest decisions taken by their governments in order to ensure that they are not dominated (cf. Pettit, 1997), green republicanism is interested in having proactive citizens that, after discussing and confronting their ideas, might be co-authors of—or, at least, have a say regarding—the laws that rule them *while* the former are being drafted. The need for rules and measures to promote ecological sustainability is particularly evident given the urgency and the dimension of the challenge ahead. Who better than citizens to agree on the measures that will ensure their future?

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