

Abstract

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Both eco-authoritarian and democratic scholars have claimed that a liberal democracy cannot pay due attention to the environment. However, such claims call for profound analysis. The author of this study argues that much in the debate on liberal democracy and environmental concern can be more stringently elaborated. *First*, in the green literature there has been a tendency to compound philosophical and institutional objections against liberal democracy, which makes any stringent analysis of compatibility between liberal democracy and sustainable development difficult. *Second*, it is unclear what many critical voices actually mean when they refer to liberal democracy. In this study it is suggested that it be distinguished between liberal democratic ideal-types, which allows to cover systematically different liberal democratic interpretations of central concepts and ideas, and also to define frameworks within which sustainable development ought to stay if it is to be considered compatible with liberal democracy. *Third*, the issue of compatibility between the specific *liberal* democracy and sustainable development has not yet been thoroughly investigated. Thus, additional studies can make important contributions to the overall understanding of this complicated relationship. *Finally*, most compatibility studies have been accomplished by comparing liberal and ecological *values*, or ecological *values* and liberal *institutions*. A less fully explored line of analysis is the one developed in this study, i.e., the issue of compatibility between *sustainability policies* and *liberal values*.

The overall objective of the dissertation is twofold:

(1) To bring order into the compatibility debate by:

- (a) Defining two different ideal-types of liberal democracy, classic/protective liberal democracy and social/developmental liberal democracy by chiselling out and interpreting a set of core liberal democratic values, and then determining the restrictions that each value and combination of values impose on policy, i.e., establishing criteria for judging compatibility.
- (b) Suggesting environmental *policies* based on scenario-analysis – an approach that clearly shows how the policy suggestions have been developed, and why.

(2) Based on the results in aim 1a and 1b, a compatibility analysis is carried out in order to investigate if, or under which conditions, it can be concluded that environmental policies cannot be considered compatible since they violate liberal-democratic policy restrictions and core values.

The main conclusion of the study is that 1) sustainability policies can hardly ever be considered compatible with the core ideas of classic/protective liberal democracy, and 2) it is difficult to logically conclude that sustainability policies must be incompatible with the core values constituting social/developmental liberal democracy. To conclude otherwise, requires information that goes beyond the objective of the thesis.

Key words: compatibility, democracy, equality, equality of opportunity, liberal democracy, liberalism, liberty, neutrality, perfectionism, sustainable development.

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