

# How to Do More-Than-Human Politics:

## *Towards an Ecocentric Model of Democratic Representation<sup>1</sup>*

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**Abstract:** Drawing on the Øens Have workshop, a performative experiment in multispecies sense-making, this article argues that environmental political theory remains limited by a sociocentric conception of representation that excludes nonhumans as agents of political articulation. Rather than merely extending human representation to other species, the article proposes a transfiguration of representation itself, recognizing that representative claims already emerge across species lines. From this perspective, the Øens Have experiment shows how representation might become a multispecies practice of mutual attunement—an ecocentric reorientation that not only widens the field of representation but transforms its ground, inviting us to imagine politics otherwise.

**Keywords:** Democracy, ecocentrism, experimentation, more-than-human, performance, representation, sense-making, swarming

### **Prelude**

“Grow ears on the bottom of your feet.”

Not the sort of instruction you expect at a workshop on environmental politics. But there it was—spoken aloud, offered without irony—as if the feet might know something the mouth does not. And we listened. Through contact, through posture, through a kind of reverent absurdity. Not just to each other, but to the ground. To worms. To wind. To something more entangled—at once near and far, present and absent.

It was May 2022, in Copenhagen. We were fifty or so human beings from many walks of life—students, artists, scholars, activists, private citizens gathered not to elect delegates or draft resolutions, but to explore, with and on our own bodies, what it might mean to found a more-than-human community.

We painted our faces. We sat back-to-back, eyes closed, humming until our senses began to reattune. We slithered and hopped across a city farmyard alongside chickens, rainworms, and microbial collaborators. We tried, in short, to unlearn the habits of a politics that speaks for or about the more-than-human world, but fails to let it speak back.

The invitation came from the Laboratory for Aesthetics and Ecology,<sup>2</sup> in collaboration with the research project “Vital Politics: Rethinking Normativity in the Anthropocene.” Our meeting place was Øens Have,<sup>3</sup> a farm-restaurant and experimental commons rooted in the industrial residue of Refshaleøen. Once a workspace for shipbuilders, Øens Have now straddles the line between asphalt and soil, between reclaimed waste and cultivated hope. Here, tourists sip kombucha among raised beds while cranes and concrete whisper reminders of the past.

We, too, ate and drank—while trying to give shape to political declarations that might hold open space for the nonhuman, without collapsing it into metaphor or mouthpiece.

Declarations, of course, have long histories. Some are carved in stone. Some are passed by vote. Others are imposed by force. The question we faced was not just what to declare, but who gets to declare? Who is heard? Who is presumed silent? What if no single body—not even a human one—can stand in for the chorus it claims to speak?

We all struggled to answer these questions, intellectually as well as emotionally.

In a teach-in braided from biology, political theory, and climate activism, we encountered the persistent paradigms that shape the figure of the political subject. We also had to confront our own deeply embedded habits of seeing, sensing, and speaking. “Slow-walking” was one tactic used during the two days to help us deliberate otherwise. Another was embodying an animal of one’s choosing.

In both cases, responses spanned a wide spectrum of feeling—from embarrassment to wonder, from joyful laughter to quiet discomfort, even grief. Grief, perhaps, for the speed and separateness we had once mistaken for freedom.

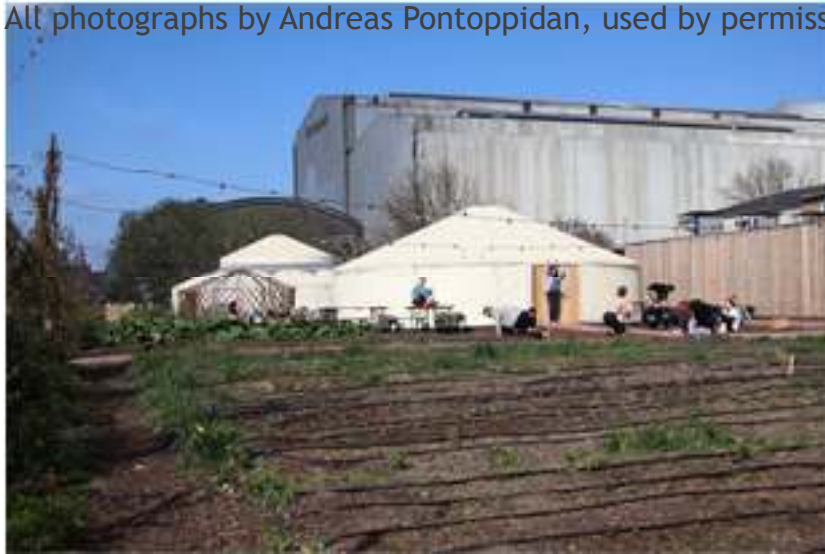
Still, we managed to articulate a set of tentative principles, always subject to further revision. Many favored invocations such as “Give way,” “Spread out,” and “Be plural.” Or, as one participant expressed it, speaking from the perspective of the grass snake they had embodied:

Practice listening. Open yourself to all the other flows and beings that exist outside, and within you. Listen with more than your ears and listen carefully. Then listen some more.

If representation is traditionally about standing in for, here it became more about standing with. Or even becoming-with. A trembling togetherness, partial and provisional, that resists closure. A kind of listening that begins— perhaps—with the ears on the bottom of our feet.

### Images from the Øens-Have workshop

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representative claims emerge on both sides of the human-nonhuman divide. This is no small task. It calls for a different way of sensing the world and a redistribution of power and privilege—one that redraws boundaries of inclusion and exclusion and, ultimately, redefines what counts as “life.” The goal of this article is to explore how such a transfiguration might take shape and how it can be rendered legible within ongoing debates in environmental political theory and related fields.

But first a brief word on method. While the argument developed here is couched in theoretical-philosophical language, it is—as indicated in the prelude—grounded in the lived experiences and materials gathered during the Øens Have workshop. This mixed approach is no doubt vulnerable to critique from both sides of the disciplinary aisle: from philosophers, who may find the argument insufficiently rigorous, and from anthropologists, who may view it as overly selective, if not too far removed from the empirical texture of the event itself. These concerns are certainly important. Still, I maintain that it is both necessary and justifiable to mix and cross-pollinate disciplinary demands—not only to move beyond the “sociocentric bias”<sup>7</sup> that has long prevented democratic theory from engaging seriously with ecological questions, but also to open up new insights into the shifting conditions under which political representation takes place in a more-than-human world. Simply put, debates about representation are in need of what William E. Connolly calls “shock-therapy”<sup>8</sup>—an effort to dramatize encounters with radically different cultural settings in which experience and experiment are reconfigured. For Connolly, such shocks can “open a door to creative thinking,” pushing democratic theory beyond its inherited frames. The Øens Have workshop takes up that invitation. In so doing, it joins a growing constellation of experimental practices—from Joanna Macy’s “Council of All Beings,” to Bruno Latour’s “Theater of Negotiations,” and the Danish civil society initiative “Assembly of Species.”<sup>9</sup>

The article proceeds as follows. The next section maps existing interventions and contributions conceptualizing democratic representation in a more-than-human world. Section 3 turns to the sensorial shifts involved in the transfiguration of representation outlined above. Section 4 explores concrete practices of more-than-human representation, outlining a new approach to organizing democratic representation, inspired by a politics of swarming. The final section concludes with broader reflections on the future of democratic representation in a more-than-human world. Short interludes from the Øens Have workshop appear throughout, illustrating how more-than-human representation takes shape and is experienced by participants in a performative experiment like the one described.

## 2. Beyond nature advocacy

Questions about whether—and how—nonhumans should be represented in democratic systems have occupied environmental political theory for the past ten to fifteen years. A key inspiration is the so-called “constructivist” turn in democratic theory, which treats representation not as a matter of delegation or trust, but as the making of “representative claims.”<sup>10</sup> According to Michael Saward, such claims are subject to contestation and negotiation, creating an ongoing and often surprising call-and-response dynamic between the maker of the claim and the audience to which it is addressed.<sup>11</sup> Building on this framework, environmental political theorists such as Andrew Dobson, John Dryzek, Jonathan Pickering, and Robyn Eckersley aim to advance an eco-centric vision of democratic representation—one that extends political consideration beyond the human. For Dryzek and Pickering, this means cultivating an “ecological reflexivity” that listens and responds to signals from the Earth system.<sup>12</sup> For Dobson, it entails embedding nature directly into decision-making through reserved seats in parliament.<sup>13</sup> Eckersley extends the idea through what she calls “nature advocacy”—one that “recognizes non-human species for their own sake.”<sup>14</sup> Such recognition, she argues, drawing on insights from critical political ecology, is the first step in the “battle” against the “representation deficits” that haunt contemporary approaches to nature.<sup>15</sup>

Any critical assessment of these conceptual and practical advances in environmental political theory should not come at the expense of diminishing their value for rethinking the scope and parameters for democratic representation in a time of ecological urgency. That said, it is striking how much the contributions by Eckersley and others remain constrained by the very sociocentric bias they seek to overcome; that is, the tendency, as already noted, to reserve full political agency and reflexive capacity for humans. Dryzek and Pickering, for example, treat nonhumans as “quasi-agents,” explicitly reserving reflexivity for humans alone: “Humans may well be the only agents capable of activating the cognitive processes necessary for reflexivity.”<sup>16</sup> Similarly, in Eckersley’s version of nature advocacy, the decisive question turns on access to and use of language. While Eckersley acknowledges that “representing those who cannot represent themselves (such as a nonhuman species...) is by no means a straightforward task,”<sup>17</sup> she also insists that only humans can make representative claims—whether by occupying a reserved seat in parliament or, as she proposes in her own work,<sup>18</sup> by serving as officers in an independent, statutory Environmental Defenders Office. Notice how this extension of democracy to the more-than-human world remains bounded by a human monopoly on political voice. Indeed, despite wanting

to extend the demos to everyone affected by ecological crises, nonhumans included, Eckersley does not anticipate nature advocacy by any others than the “self-appointed guardians or trustees who want the community at large to share in the duty they feel towards their ward,”<sup>19</sup> because, in her account, only humans possess the kind of language that can render such advocacy meaningful.

As I have argued elsewhere,<sup>20</sup> taking this mode of theorizing a step further, moving from sociocentrism to a model that is zoe- and/ or ecocentric, is essential for fully grasping the ecological and planetary dimensions of political life. Two reasons stand out in particular. First, we must move beyond sociocentrism because it obscures our understanding of who or what speaks and exercises power inside and across specific collectives. Second, we need a conceptual language other than sociocentrism to imagine alternative ways of organizing political life—a task that feels especially urgent given the current political stalemate. These issues, I would argue, become particularly apparent in current debates about democratic representation: Because sociocentric frameworks presume that only human voices can participate in deliberations about the future, they overlook how ecosystems, species, and material infrastructures exert forms of agency that shape political possibilities. In this context, envisioning humans as speaking on behalf of other species is not sufficient. The real challenge lies in reimagining democratic deliberation and decision-making so that they acknowledge nonhuman agency without collapsing into technocracy or instrumental environmental management. As I have already indicated, this requires transfiguring democratic representation itself—redefining who or what counts as a political subject and how representation operates across human and nonhuman domains.

To make this transfiguration more tangible, allow me to introduce an example, which is close to the Øens Have experiment and also performs what Connolly calls “shock-therapy”: a sudden jolt that unsettles our settled assumptions and opens us to unfamiliar forms of political life. The example I have in mind is the honeybee colony. Despite the name, a colony has no ruler. It is collectively governed by its many thousand workers, who each contribute to decision-making processes.<sup>21</sup> These contributions become dramatically visible during a “swarming” event, when, in spring or summer, a majority of the workers departs with the queen to found a new hive. For hours or days, they hang from a branch in a dense, beardlike cluster, facing a decision that will determine their survival: where to build their new home. Alongside the workers and the queen, a subset of honeybees called “scouts” scour the landscape, evaluate potential sites, and report back—not in words, but in “lively dances” that convey location,

quality, and urgency.<sup>22</sup> Competing dances clash in a kind of embodied debate, until one option gains consensus. Then, in unison, the colony lifts off, following its chosen scouts to the new site. In a sudden, swirling cloud, the bees break from the branch and stream after the scouts—like a living ribbon in the air—until they settle in a dark crevice or hollow tree that will become their new home.

What unfolds here is a communicative process of negotiation, contestation, and collective choice without human language or cognition—enough, I would argue, to jolt us into seeing that representative politics might just as well be danced out on a branch in the summer air, and that it is our definitions, not theirs (at least not exclusively), that must shift.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the fact that a particular utterance—or even an entire language—does not occur in a register easily discernible to the human ear is not sufficient reason to exclude it from the domain of democratic theory. One way to develop this intuition is by extending the call-and-response dynamic that much of contemporary environmental political theory invokes but has thus far reserved for humans alone.<sup>24</sup> The maker of representation need not be a human agent at all, but may be a nonhuman being: an animal, a plant, a fungus, or an ecological system expressing a need, responding to harm, or signaling interest through behavioral, chemical, or communicative cues. Likewise, the audience evaluating the representative claim—whether affirming, contesting, or calling for its refinement—may also include nonhuman participants. The result is a multiplicity of overlapping claims to representation, each grounded in the embodied perspective of a particular configuration of human and nonhuman life and each contributing a kind of reversibility akin to other registers of lived experience, including, as Merleau-Ponty emphasized, perception and touch.<sup>25</sup> This reversibility unsettles the rigid human/nonhuman divide that undergirds much sociocentric thinking, revealing instead a shared capacity for claim-making and world-making that cuts across species lines.

Before we turn to the challenges and dilemmas of reattuning one's senses to this extended call-and-response dynamic, it is worth pausing to consider another implication of the argument, one that illuminates why nature advocacy, by itself, may prove an inadequate augmentation to the repertoire of representative politics. The issue at stake concerns the relationship between, on the one hand, representation as the act of rendering a person, a community, or an object recognizable—what we might call “representing-as”—and, on the other, representation as the act of speaking on behalf of someone or something already rendered recognizable—what we might call “representing-for.” While the constructivist turn in democratic theory readily accepts the entan-

gement of these two aspects of representation,<sup>26</sup> calls for nature advocacy, almost by definition, privilege the latter over the former, assuming that an organization or office can simply “speak for” nature without first reconfiguring the perceptual, affective, and conceptual frames through which nature is recognized in the first place. Such an assumption, I want to argue, undermines the very goal of nature advocacy. Not only does it overlook the profound entanglements of human and nonhuman life that make more-than-human representation necessary to begin with, it also risks reducing representation to an abstract, intellectualized exercise—one detached from the embodied, sensory, and relational practices through which the grounds for political voice are continually made and remade. Put differently, while nature advocacy calls for a more attentive and responsive engagement with the world, its reliance on “ecological reflexivity” constrains—if not undermines—this very ambition.

The next section of this article extends this concern to consider how democratic theory might better attune itself to the expanded call-and-response dynamic outlined above. My goal is to show how such attunement demands more than conceptual or discursive refinement—it calls for practices that rewire perception, unsettle habits, and open new channels of responsiveness. To see what this might look and feel like, let me take you to another encounter at the Øens Have workshop.

### Interlude 1

How, then, do you “grow ears on the bottom of your feet”?

At the Øens Have workshop, participants attempted this in one of the first sensorial exercises: slow walking. This proved more difficult than expected.

The loss of balance required more—not less—energy to avoid toppling, like a child taking first steps. Several participants struggled. Yet something shifted.

Once attuned to the ground beneath them, the world spoke back.

For some, the sound of each step inspired care for the creatures in the soil; for others, it sparked a whimsical desire to vanish into the Earth as a posthuman avatar. One participant described how “pedestrian listening” invigorated their imagination and their nonprofit work on a more-than-human constitution for Denmark.

Slow walking was only the beginning, however. The main activity, led by the “Becoming Species” group, invited participants to inhabit the

lifeworlds of other species—a demanding task, given how deeply modern life disavows human-nonhuman entanglements.

Many later spoke of feeling suspended between hope and despair.

The facilitators deepened this disorientation: first, by asking participants to dehumanize themselves with face paint; second, by choosing a species to know more intimately—not only in form but in habitat, diet, and dangers; and finally, by setting these imagined beings free to explore the surroundings.

The result was a vivid spectacle: worms wriggling on the ground; butterflies and horses drifting or galloping; fish moving as if through invisible water.

The nonhuman world, meanwhile, responded in its own ways. The resident chickens shifted repeatedly between hostility, curiosity, amusement, and indifference toward the newcomers.

During one teach-in on the rights of nature, a bee interrupted the discussion, prompting laughter at the participants' presumed agency. That laughter perhaps eased the next challenge: On day two, Zeenatt Hasan and colleagues from Linnaeus University served a microbial meal alive with bacteria, yeasts, and molds.

The act of eating something living provoked embarrassment but also delight, as participants tasted, felt, and digested the world anew.

It seemed as if another representation, another kind of democratic deliberation and engagement came into life.

### **3. Engendering more-than-human representation**

The palpable presence of affects, emotions, and perceptions in experiential encounters such as the one at Øens Have is rarely acknowledged in debates on representative politics—even in scholarship that explicitly engages with ecology and the more-than-human.<sup>27</sup> Resonating with what we already have seen, the exclusion of these embodied experiences reflects, in part, sociocentrism's persistent grip on how we relate to nature and the more-than-human. As ecofeminists<sup>28</sup> and theorists of African American Religious Naturalism<sup>29</sup> have long observed, the enduring disavowal of embodied, sensorially inflected experience stems from a similarly deep-seated devaluation of nature itself. The consequences are as far-reaching as they are tangible. Nowhere are the tremors of a dancing bee scout recognized as expressions of communication and intelligence. Nowhere do the sounds of climate change—whether the cracking of ice or the shifting of wind—register as shaping

how humans sense and narrate the world, to themselves or to others. What remains is only a ghostly trace of the nonhuman, rendered mute, insentient, or both.

To counter our blindness toward the more-than-human world, debates on democratic representation must engage with scholarship that emphasizes the political significance of affect, emotion, perception, and other sensorially inflected experiences. In this respect, more-than-human representation is no different from studies of freedom,<sup>30</sup> mobilization,<sup>31</sup> and deliberation,<sup>32</sup> all of which involve a micropolitical dimension demanding scrutiny and theorization. In the context of democratic representation, this work begins with attention to what—or who—counts as an agent. This focus is important not only because agency is required for representation, but also because conceptions of agency serve as crucial indices for determining what can and should be represented in the first place. To some,<sup>33</sup> framing the question in this way risks an illegitimate form of anthropomorphism, in which human standards dictate what is appropriate for all other species. Yet, we might also understand such anthropomorphic reasoning as a form of sensorially inflected propaedeutic: human agents, on the one hand, imagine what alternative ways of encountering the world might look and feel like; on the other, they use these imaginings to decenter their own perspective. This approach—akin to what Jane Bennett, in *Vibrant Matter*, calls “strategic anthropomorphism”—allows human agents to acknowledge the vitality and agency of nonhumans without reducing them to mere projections of human experience. By cultivating this careful, reflective form of anthropomorphism, democratic theory may eventually expand its understanding of not only agency but also representation, creating space for more-than-human voices to meaningfully shape political discourse.

From encounters like the one at Øens Have, we learn how deeply entrenched resistance to this orientation to democratic representation is—and how much effort it takes to loosen its grip on our collective ability to imagine another kind of politics. Take the embarrassment felt by many workshop participants: At first, it registered as a sense of wrongfulness, but gradually it came to signal that something was beginning to shift. As participants later reflected in interviews with observers of the workshop, embarrassment moved from acting as an obstruction to acting as an invitation—from the discomfort of transgression to the stirrings of joyful affection. Yet the same can be said, in reverse, of joy: Typically celebrated as the pinnacle of affective life, it can also give way to mourning, to unease with acting as though there were no sorrow in the world. This ambivalence was palpable throughout the workshop, where many participants expressed doubts about their own transformation. Several

also came to see their joy as complicit in, or even betraying, the violence perpetuated by anthropocentric attitudes toward nature and the nonhuman. In that tension between joy and unease lay one of the workshop's most vital lessons: that affective transformation is not a matter of replacing one feeling with another, but of dwelling in the instability between them. To feel otherwise, the participants discovered, requires lingering in discomfort—allowing the boundaries between self and world, human and more-than-human, to blur and re-form in unfamiliar ways. As one of the contributors to the Øens Have workshop suggested when asked for advice about how to politically engage and represent the more-than-human world:

My first impulse was, go for a walk, and I guess my second impulse is, try to take the walk differently from how you normally take it. Looking to be receptive to and oriented towards things in the world that you might not normally think of as effective self-representers, imagining them as asking for representation and seeing that representation as a response to them. Not as a kind of self-authorization to speak for everyone.<sup>34</sup>

As part of a sensorially inflected propaedeutic to more-than-human representation, this kind of advice reminds us that the mingling between humans and nonhumans—an entanglement that might one day push representative politics toward an ecologically attuned future—is always uneven, bumpy, and uncertain, as Brian Massumi and others observe.<sup>35</sup> The tipping point emerges when a contingent distribution of affects and perceptions begins to reverberate within and across species. In such moments, participants move in and out of their many worlds, drawing on affective energies that can give rise to new forms of political representation. Put differently, as participants open themselves to the worlds around them—human and nonhuman alike—and as those worlds speak back through various modes of interruption (some radical, some subtle), the actions once prescribed for one side begin to trespass onto the other.<sup>36</sup> The “scouting” and “evaluating” that zoologists and neurobiologists use to describe honeybee behavior begin to resonate differently for those who normally identify as human. Likewise, the “deliberation” and “intelligence” that Western philosophy since Descartes has reserved—which environmental political theory largely continues to reserve—for humans alone, suddenly appear to extend to animals, plants, and other nonhuman species as well. In this sense, expanding on the call-and-response dynamic discussed earlier in this paper, representation becomes less a human prerogative than an ongoing negotiation among the many beings that share and shape our worlds.

At this point, it may be helpful to underscore just how deep the transfiguration runs. Indeed, experiences such as those gathered at the Øens Have workshop suggest that we should resist measuring representative acts by their capacity to encapsulate or immobilize the object of representation. Instead, we might begin from the premise that ideas and identities are contingent formations—always in motion, always susceptible to re-formation through relational encounter. Since representation is never fully at ease with itself, even in strictly human contexts, and since its structure is inherently unstable and paradoxical, representative acts become experiments in how an affirmative, playful sensibility can stretch, twist, and bend representation into new shapes. Such acts prepare representation, as it were, to give birth to new versions of itself—versions that dramatize the performative nature of signification, where the representational act not only refers to but also enacts new ontological configurations. In this sense, representation ceases to function as a mirror of reality and instead becomes a site of material-discursive emergence, where the boundaries between representation and represented, subject and object, are continuously reconfigured. Seen from this angle, more-than-human representation does not extend an already human practice outward, but rather reveals how representation has always been an interspecies negotiation—an entangled process of world-making in which human and nonhuman agencies co-constitute the very conditions of sense and expression.

All this suggests that the sensorial work required to make more-than-human representation effective relies on an affective ripple effect, in which each sensation inspires and amplifies the next. Does such a transfiguration suffice in the face of today's multiple ecological crises? Some, particularly within the eco-Marxist tradition,<sup>37</sup> would answer no: A sensorially inspired politics of democratic representation is too fragile to produce meaningful change, and it may even hinder the deliberate action needed to transform our political systems. Yet what eco-Marxists see as a weakness may actually be a strength, enabling more-than-human representation to take hold in ways often overlooked in discussions of democracy and ecological thought. Why? Because the internal split inherent to the call-and-response dynamic positions humans and nonhumans as “double scouts,” moving between competing regimes of sensation—some anthropocentric, others more attuned to a more-than-human world. Together, these divergent yet overlapping perspectives reflect what Scott Gilbert, Donna Haraway, and Lynn Margulis<sup>38</sup> describe as the holobiont, empowering is a series of affective ripple effects that push representation closer to the “phase transitions” or “tipping points” discussed earlier. The discomfort of inhabiting another

species' life-world shifts to the discomfort of assuming human superiority or categorical difference from the nonhuman. Similarly, the gratification of exploiting natural resources for personal ends diminishes, replaced by a subtler joy of authentic ecological connection. In both cases, participants still face tension and uncertainty, yet they begin to experience and engage the world in profoundly different ways.

Another way of saying this is that representation's paradoxical structure and mode of becoming imbues it with an element of excess and immediacy that, from the perspective of this article, is worthy of affirmation as it heightens attunement to the creative vitality embedded in all kinds of life, human and nonhuman. Importantly, attention to this vitality does not displace concerns about how actors and events are represented and how these representations, in turn, prefigure the kinds of relations and communities one might imagine in a time of multiple ecological crises. Every time the politics of representation is reconstituted—every time a tipping point is breached and a new set of habits and practices takes hold—the world as such appears anew, engendering a potentially infinite series of feedback loops in which past experiences are represented and mixed in with new ones. How this gets worked out more precisely, and what it means for the political organization of representation, is the issue to which we now turn.

#### **4. How to represent a swarm?**

Considering how deeply the proposed transfiguration of representative claim-making cuts, it should not come as a surprise that more-than-human politics entails a different model for organizing and empowering democratic representation. Rather than restricting democratic representation to the act of granting someone else the power to speak on one's behalf—or, relatedly, to the confirmation or denial of one or more claims to representation—the call-and-response dynamic explored in the preceding pages points to a more explorative, less hierarchical endeavor in which an externally diverse and internally divided set of entangled agents participate in constant flow of practices of “representing-for” and “representing-as.” We have already caught a small glimpse of this alternative organization of representation in our previous discussion of how honeybee colonies decide where to build the next beehive. From this follows a politics of representation that looks less like a formal mechanism and more like an emergent process—one that unfolds through distributed attention, responsiveness, and shared attunement. To develop this idea further, I suggest we turn to the phenomenon of “swarming,” whose logic

offers a more sustained account of collective intelligence and ecological coordination in action.

Swarming has, in recent years, become a generative figure not only within political theory but also in emerging debates on more-than-human representation.<sup>39</sup> William E. Connolly describes swarming as a process “composed of multiple constituencies, regions, levels, processes of communication, and modes of action, each carrying some potential to augment and intensify the others with which it becomes associated.”<sup>40</sup> From this account follows an interest in distributed responsiveness and mutual attunement—qualities increasingly invoked to rethink what it means to represent across species, scales, and modes of being.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Manuel DeLanda identifies swarming as a promising—but often overlooked—mode of coordination and knowledge-sharing within complex systems.<sup>42</sup> While his focus lies in the animal world, DeLanda emphasizes that such dynamics exceed it: “In an insect colony,” he writes, “the whole colony has a kind of swarm intelligence...One [member] finds food and then the others follow him as if the whole colony was an intelligent being.”<sup>43</sup> From the standpoint of more-than-human politics, such distributed intelligence invites us to imagine representation not as a singular act of standing-in-for but as an emergent choreography in which agents, human and nonhuman alike, modulate, amplify, and translate one another’s signals. Swarming, in other words, does more than blur the line between human and nonhuman; it points to a mode of representation that is collective, affective, and performative.

Building on our earlier discussion of an expanded call-and-response dynamic—where both the maker of representation and the audience evaluating the maker’s claim may be nonhuman—these considerations underscore how different a more-than-human politics might look once we embrace it all the way down. Rather than insisting on a model grounded in control and command, more-than-human politics follows a rhizomatically inspired framework,<sup>44</sup> one that mirrors the entangled agents it seeks to mobilize and represent. Rather than confining representation to a specific institution or territory, it understands representation as an ongoing, open-ended process—one in which the relationship between the representative and the represented remains fluid, continually contested, and subject to refiguration.

To better appreciate these conceptual and practical shifts, I propose the following five propositions as central to a model of more-than-human representation. 1) Representation emerges through multiple media—some articulated in linguistic terms, others expressed through embodied, sensorial forms of engagement. 2) Representation is

ubiquitous insofar as it is not confined to specific sites, such as parliaments or political committees, but occurs across diverse environments, including those inhabited by plants, animals, and other nonhuman beings. 3) Representation need not always be sanctioned by election but can also be legitimized through other means such as sortition, self-nomination, or rolling membership. 4) Representation often entails overlapping allegiances and responsibilities across species and places and therefore cannot be tied to a singular identity or interest. 5) The basic unit of representation shifts from one rooted in political territory to one grounded in ecological relations and entire ecosystems. Notice how this latter shift in unit foregrounds the interdependence of all living and nonliving entities within shared habitats, emphasizing that representation must encompass the dynamic exchanges that sustain ecological systems. As such, Proposition 5 also advances a rethinking of the “all-affected principle”—extending the notion of who counts as “affected” beyond human communities to include the more-than-human assemblages that shape and are shaped by political and ecological processes (see also Eckersley 2000). In other words: By recognizing ecosystems as political constituencies, Proposition 5, supported by the preceding four propositions, situates decision-making within networks of reciprocal care, responsibility, and interdependence, rather than within bounded human jurisdictions or anthropocentric notions of impact and interest.

Some—especially within more mainstream strands of democratic theory—might worry that this vision of more-than-human politics lacks representativeness and thus remains one or two steps removed from anything that could be called genuinely democratic. One set of concerns centers on the procedures that determine who, or what, gets represented in the politics of swarming and more-than-human representation—an issue that becomes increasingly complex when one considers the staggering diversity of species on Earth (current estimates range from 5.3 million to 1 trillion<sup>45</sup>). Another set of concerns targets the very premise—central to many of the activities at the Øens Have workshop—of “speaking” on behalf of another species and thereby claiming to represent it both performatively and politically. At best, skeptics might argue, such efforts risk falling flat due to the limits of human imagination and experience; at worst, they amount to acts of anthropomorphism that reinforce the primacy of human discourse and, in doing so, reaffirm—rather than challenge or subvert—the assumption of human superiority and exceptional responsibility.<sup>46</sup> Might these very tensions not compel us to reconsider what “representation” and “democracy” could mean in an entangled, more-than-human world?

One way to begin answering this question is by challenging the double standards embedded in the critics' objections. Contemporary forms of representation—focused almost exclusively on human needs and interests—are rarely as procedurally transparent or as fairly delimited as critics of nonhuman representation tend to assume. Consider, for example, the persistent underrepresentation of ethnic minorities and other marginalized groups in liberal democracies<sup>47</sup>—a challenge that questions the efficacy of the existing, human-centered model of representation, making it both normatively and pragmatically unproductive to demand a higher standard from an emerging model of more-than-human representation. Indeed, why reject experimentation when existing systems so clearly fail on their own terms and are in evident need of renewal? Moreover, as proponents of human representation point out, it is hardly unusual for representatives to “speak for” those they represent, even without explicit authorization. Interest groups, for instance, often advance claims on behalf of workers, consumers, or other social constituencies who may not initially recognize themselves in those claims and who might only come to do so after the representative act has occurred. This dynamic reflects what Ernesto Laclau<sup>48</sup> and other theorists identify as the performative dimension of representation itself.<sup>49</sup> From this perspective, more-than-human representation does not break with established democratic practice but rather exposes and extends its performative logic. To put it differently: Acknowledging that some degree of anthropomorphism may be present, as we already discussed, more-than-human democratic representation need not be seen as a complete departure from existing frameworks but as an expansion of them into other, more-than-human domains of political life.

Importantly, I do not advance these counterarguments in the belief that the objections can—or should—be resolved to everyone's satisfaction. Rather, my aim is to redefine the terms of the discussion and to resist the assumption that more or better theory alone can provide the solution. As the workshop at Øens Have dramatized, theory in general—and environmental political theory in particular—is always bound to the practices that sustain, renew, or interrupt it. Without experimentation in new practices of representation, the grip of anthropocentrism on democratic thinking is unlikely to loosen, and the objections outlined above, if accepted uncritically, risk stifling innovative approaches before they even have a chance to take shape. Better theories are not perfect theories, nor are they likely to win universal endorsement. Yet by cultivating receptive and responsive practices of more-than-human representation, a politics of swarming may move society closer to the democratic ideal of pluralism—an ideal shared by many traditions—by

attuning participants to forms of contestation and creativity that they have too long ignored.

## Interlude 2

We gathered by the chicken pen. A loose circle, shifting. The second morning of the Øens Have workshop. A small swarm of bodies, thinking, sensing, not quite settled.

The chickens worked nearby, heads dipping, beaks striking the soil—tap, tap. Their rhythm folded into our speech, a counterpoint. Were they listening? Approving? Indifferent? We could not know, at least not according to our usual epistemologies. We could only guess, and even guessing felt presumptuous.

We were meant to draft a declaration—a founding statement for our more-than-human polity.

Yet once again the form began to crumble. Who could speak for whom? Could a declaration itself become porous enough to let other agencies pass through?

Our talk circled, like the chickens. We worried at our limits. And yet, in the pause between our doubts, something stirred: a faint sense that representation need not begin in language.

We remembered the day before. How performance had shown us that knowing could move through bodies, gestures, sounds. That confusion, even embarrassment, was not the end but the entry point. That care might swarm—distributed, tentative, rhythmic—among beings who do not share a tongue.

When we returned to the larger group, we found the same tension everywhere. Others, too, had stayed with the trouble. One group folded the chickens' clucks into their declaration, letting sound swarm through speech. Another hissed and fluttered, bodies becoming syntax.

Representation, we began to see, was not a stable platform but a field in motion. A murmuration of attempts. A swarm of unfinished voices learning, briefly, to move—together.

## 5. Concluding remarks

Like most interventions of its kind, the Øens Have workshop did not yield definitive conclusions or a ready-made political manual. Rather, it opened an experimental space for engaging the underlying assumptions

that must themselves be transfigured before any effective response to our current ecological crises can take shape. Central among these, as I have tried to show, is a limited yet pervasive conception of representation—anthropocentric and static—that constrains our very capacity to imagine what a more-than-human community could, or should, look like. As long as democratic ideals, institutions, and practices remain tethered to a sociocentric legacy that downplays how every representation also acts—that each representation is a new presentation, and that every represented object exceeds its frame—we will continue to need alternative techniques for becoming attuned to nonhuman self-presentations and for entering more reciprocal relationships with nonhuman beings, systems, and forces. The Øens Have workshop made this tangible, revealing how movement, attention, and relational awareness can themselves become modes of representation. In this sense, a true transfiguration of the concept of representation is not merely metaphorical but methodological: a way of practicing representation otherwise.

The playful gestures enacted during the Øens Have workshop helped us track how such a transfiguration might come into being in practice, extending the call-and-response dynamic already at work in contemporary environmental political thought. Consider, first, the expectations that shape the very act of representing. Faced with a task that felt both urgent and impossible, participants risked embarrassment as they experimented with unusual grammatical forms, rhetorical styles, and nonverbal, embodied expressions in their founding declarations. Each of these responses was, on its own, strikingly inadequate to the challenge of more-than-human representation. Yet, in retrospect—both from personal experience and from follow-up interviews with selected participants—these seemingly awkward moments, from recording chickens to writhing on the floor, proved unexpectedly generative. Their effects were more durable and multifaceted than one might have imagined. Through the sensorial co-mingling described earlier, the possibilities of representation expanded as participants grew more confident in experimentation itself. To speak on behalf of another species no longer seemed presumptuous; nor did the claim to represent one's new species in a collective conversation about founding a community grounded in care for the more-than-human world. Representations of nonhuman life no longer appeared as flawed or incomplete, but as relational enactments of care. In place of finality, each act of representation became part of an aporetic process that generated its own evolving index of success.

To be sure: When measured against the traditions that sustain current practices and institutions of representation, these interventions and

proposals may seem insignificant—if not naïve. Two assumptions, in particular, stand out as pillars intersecting with the transfigurative work emerging from the Øens Have workshop. The first amplifies the “backgrounding” gesture of earlier sociocentric traditions, including what we today call ecomodernism,<sup>50</sup> suggesting that nonhumans are not only silent and irrational but also, by extension, demoted to the status of “resources” whose exploitation can be optimized, expanded, or perfected. This gesture reduces the representation of nature and other nonhuman modes of life to a plantation: a mostly smooth and regular space governed by logics of mastery, discipline, and control, and valuable only insofar as it serves particular humans’ ends.<sup>51</sup>

A second, more ambivalent response begins with an experience of surprise—nature, it is now felt, cannot be endlessly exploited after all—and gestures toward a reckoning with this belated realization. Yet the reckoning remains half-hearted. Rather than internalize the vital force of the nonhuman—the very experience of surprise—as an invitation to less anthropocentric practices of representation, that force is tamed into the language of natural “limits” or planetary “boundaries.” Both responses resonate with managerialism, understood as the attempt to master the natural world, precluding any genuine reckoning with the plantation as the enduring template of extractive modernity. The goal, you might say, is not to affirm the swirling powers of the nonhuman but to recalibrate its exploitation—diminishing it just enough to appear respectful of its limits, and thus to keep serving human needs.

While contemporary environmental political theory aspires to move beyond anthropocentric accounts of human-nonhuman relations, there remains a striking silence on how to realize this ambition within representative politics. The reason, I have argued, lies in the reluctance to acknowledge nonhumans as representational agents in their own right. This hesitation continues to delimit what counts as participation, voice, value, and political presence in the more-than-human field. The experiences and insights gathered at the Øens Have workshop urge us to confront this all-too-modern assumption directly. Nonhumans—from plants to animals, from microbes to glaciers—not only act in their own right but also contribute, independently and in collaboration with others, to a series of representative claims that extend representation’s call-and-response logic beyond the sociocentric premise that representation is for humans alone. The interventions that shaped the Øens Have workshop were intended to unsettle this premise and, in doing so, to demonstrate in practice what a truly ecocentric model of representation might entail: one in which political agency is distributed across human and nonhuman actors, and representation emerges as a dynamic, multispecies process of

mutual attunement rather than a privilege reserved for human voices alone—a reorientation that does not simply widen the circle of representation but transforms its very ground, compelling us to imagine politics otherwise, from the more-than-human world outward.

## Epilogue

As the gathering at Øens Have drew to a close, the air still carried the murmurs, gestures, and traces of our shared experiment — an attempt to compose new declarations for a truly more-than-human community. One where the entanglements of humans and nonhumans are recognized, and the sustenance of all species remains at the center of political concern.

In reimagining what it means to represent and to swarm, the participants moved — sometimes awkwardly, sometimes with grace — toward possibilities that might reorient how politics feels, sounds, and moves.

No one left believing that the question of representation had been solved. Yet many spoke of a subtle shift, a sense of expansion, of having touched some- thing that could carry on beyond the workshop’s time and space.

From this collective experiment emerged several declarations — provisional, porous, and alive.

Two of them, lightly revised here, remain as offerings rather than conclusions, as a way to reimagine what democratic representation in a more-than- human world might look like—what it might become.

## DECLARATION I

1. Decomposition is life
2. Give way
3. Be patient
4. Wait
5. Spread out
6. Be substantive
7. Be plural

## DECLARATION II

We hold the following maybe-truths to be quite promising: that a declaration should not only be a set of words and concepts but also something that must be lived and felt.

1. Practice listening. Open yourself to all other flows and beings that exist outside you, and within. Listen with more than your ears, and listen carefully. Then listen some more. Keep listening.

2. Move. Your body is a pathway to the world, and into other worlds. Different bodies, human or otherwise, move in different ways and at different speeds. Experiment with moving otherwise. Squirm like a snake. Flower like a plant. Grow like a mushroom.

3. Cohabitate. All living beings depend on other beings and places to survive. Think about what it means to take up space but also to give space. What are the other forms of life that your life depends on, that you can live with. And how to negotiate and co-exist with those beings whom you cannot live with?

These are not legal articles as much as they are embodied invitations. They are the continuing open-ended work we must undertake alongside others, to learn to inhabit this planet.

## Notes

1. I would like to thank Stephanie Erev for an ongoing and generative conversation about the issues explored in this paper, as well as for her extensive and original contributions to the conceptualization and execution of the event on which it is based. My thanks also go to Dea Antonsen and Ida Bencke, founders of the Laboratory for Aesthetics and Ecology, for organizing the Øens Have workshop amidst their many other commitments. I am likewise grateful to the workshop participants for sharing their experiences and for granting permission to use the texts produced during the two days we spent together. Credit for the images included in this paper goes to Andreas Pontoppidan. I dedicate this article to the memory of Bill Connolly.

2. “About—Laboratory for Aesthetics and Ecology” (Laboratory for Aesthetics and Ecology, 2019), <https://labae.org/about>

3. See “What Is Øens Have,” <https://www.oenshave.dk/en/oenshave>.

4. Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Duke University Press, 2019), 55.
5. By transfiguration (See Nathan Widder, “The Micropolitics of the Drives,” *Theory & Event*, 19(3) [2016]), I mean the altering of a concept together with its practices—working simultaneously on both its sense and its form.
6. Lars Tønder, *Power in the Anthropocene* (University of Edinburgh Press, 2025), 21-25.
7. William E. Connolly, *The Fragility of Things: Self-organizing Processes, Neoliberal Fantasies, and Democratic Activism* (Duke University Press, 2013), 99.
8. Joanna Macy, “Council of All Beings,” (2017), <https://www.rainforestinfo.org.au/deep-eco/Joanna%20Macy.htm>; Bruno Latour’s “Theater of Negotiations,” chapter 8 in *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, trans. C. Porter (Polity, 2017); for the “Assembly of Species,” see Mads Ejsing, “Nonhuman Political Representation: Between Legal Affirmations and Sensorial Transformations,” in *Oxford Handbook of Multispecies Justice*, Danielle Celemajer et al., eds. (Oxford University Press, forthcoming); and Lars Tønder, “Democratic Representation in a More-Than-Human World,” also in the *Oxford Handbook of Multispecies Justice*.
9. Lisa Disch, “The ‘Constructivist Turn’ in Democratic Representation: A Normative Dead-End?,” *Constellations* 22 (4): 487-99.
10. Michael Saward, *The Representative Claim* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 35.
11. John S. Dryzek and Jonathan Pickering, *The Politics of the Anthropocene* (Oxford University Press, 2018), 18.
12. Andrew Dobson, “Representative Democracy and the Environment,” in *Democracy and the Environment: Problems and Prospects*, W. M. Lafferty and J. Meadowcroft, eds. (Edward Elgar, 1996), 124-139.
13. Robyn Eckersley, “Representing Nature,” in *The Future of Representative Democracy*, S. Alonso, J. Keane, & W. Merkel, eds. (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 239.
14. Eckersley, “Representing Nature,” 237-238.
15. Dryzek and Pickering, *Politics of the Anthropocene*, 35.

16. Robyn Eckersley, "Ecological Democracy and the Rise and Decline of Liberal Democracy: Looking Back, Looking Forward," *Environmental Politics*, 29(2), 220.

17. Eckersley, "Representing Nature," 253; see also L. Beckman and E.A. Page, *Perspectives on Justice, Democracy, and Global Climate Change* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 527.

18. Eckersley, "Representing Nature," 237.

19. See chapter 1 in Lars Tønder, *Power in the Anthropocene* (University of Edinburgh Press, 2025).

20. See Thomas Seeley, *Honeybee Democracy* (Princeton University Press, 2010), 5.

21. Seeley, *Honeybee Democracy*, chapter 4.

22. Additional evidence for this intuition emerges from other parts of the nonhuman world. Mammals such as apes and dolphins, for instance, have demonstrated the ability to recognize themselves in mirrors—evidence of a distinctly nonhuman mode of self-representation (Bekoff, "Awareness: Animal reflections," *Nature* 419 [2002]: 255). Likewise, Suzanne Simard's *Finding the Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest* (Vintage Books 2022) research on forest ecologies and Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses* (Oregon State University Press, 2003) work on mosses reveal how plants communicate and respond through complex mycorrhizal networks, actively signaling distress and coordinating growth.

23. See also Tønder, "Democratic Representation in a More-Than-Human World."

24. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Northwestern University Press, 1968), 134.

25. See Thomas Fossen, "Constructivism and the Logic of Political Representation," *American Political Science Review* 113(3)(2019): 824-837.

26. For exceptions, see Romand Coles, *Visionary Pragmatism* (Duke University Press, 2015); Anatoli Ignatov, "Practices of Eco-Sensation: Opening Doors of Perception to the Nonhuman," *Theory & Event* 14(2); 2011; Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Duke University Press, 2020); for an overview and critique, see Lars Tønder, "Affect and Reason in Divided Societies: Entanglement, Conflict, Possibility," *Distinktion* 22(3) (2021): 247-258.

27. Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (Routledge, 1993).

28. Carol Wayne White, *Black Lives and Sacred Humanity: Toward an African American Religious Naturalism* (Fordham University Press, 2016).

29. Elisabeth Anker, *Ugly Freedoms* (Duke University Press, 2021). 30. Coles, *Visionary Pragmatism*.

31. Ingrid Helene Brandt, *Lingering Democracy: Stories of Democratic Participation amid Climate and Ecological Crisis* (Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Copenhagen, 2024)

32. See, inter alia, Alissa Kautz, "Humanising the Nonhuman: An Ecocritical Toolbox for Anthropomorphic Agency," *Ecozon@* 15(2): 173-188.

33. Bonnie Honig and Lars Tønder, "How to do More-Than-Human Politics," unpublished online interview, n.d.

34. Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Duke University Press, 2010); Mort Schoolman, *A Democratic Enlightenment: The Reconciliation Image, Aesthetic Education, Possible Politics* (Duke University Press, 2020); and Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, D. Heller-Roazen, trans. (Stanford University Press, 1999).

35. While this feature of entering in and out of multiple worlds may seem unique to humans - and not applicable to, say, honeybees - there is a greater similarity between the two examples than you might think. Honeybees also live in multiple regimes of perception and need to adjust to (and learn from) not only their own internally constituted swarm but also the environment around them. This is particularly obvious in the case of the bee-scouts' attempts at bridging between the many worlds upon which the hive depends. The challenges that this work implies are accentuated in a time like ours where climate change causes whole worlds to break down and/or reorient previously established coordinates of time and space. See also Niels M. Schmidt et al. (2016).

36. See especially Andreas Malm, *How to Blow Up a Pipeline: Learning to Fight in a World on Fire* (Verso, 2020).

37. See Scott Gilbert, "Metaphors For A New Body Politic: Gaia As Holobiont," in *A Book of The Body Politic: Connecting Biology, Politics And Social Theory*, B. Latour, S. Schaffer, & P. Gagliardi, eds. (Cini Foundation, 202), 75-88; Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, and Lynn Margulis, *Sources of Evolutionary Innovation: Speciation and Morphogenesis* (MIT Press, 1991).

38. This interest in swarming counters previous accounts, prevalent in much of contemporary political theory, which associate swarming with a flurry of irrational drives with neither goal nor care for the world. As Andrew Poe notes with reference to debates in eighteenth century Germany: “While best translated as ‘swarm’ or even ‘swoon’, Schwärmerei was also quickly adopted as a common phrasing of fanaticism, where Schwärmerei and Fanaticismus become interchangeable.” (See Poe’s *Political Enthusiasm: Partisan Feeling and Democracy’s Enchantments* [Manchester University Press, 2022], 28.) Behind this dismissal, noted but not embraced by Poe, lies an all-too familiar tendency to disavow the sensorial dimension of politics by relegating it to the private sphere, where it is made to linger alongside other, allegedly inferior categories such as “body,” “woman,” “animal,” and “labor.” At times, contemporary political theorists have allowed this kind of “schwärmerie” to enter into the public sphere, but then only on the condition that it serves the experience of belonging to a predefined political order. For Habermas (*The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory* [MIT Press, 1998]; also see Markell, “Making Affect Safe for Democracy: On ‘Constitutional Patriotism,’” *Political Theory* 28(10) (2000): 38-63), whose own aversion to swarming harkens back to post-WWII debates about Nazi Germany’s use of aesthetics for political gains, this admission centers on the need for a “constitutional patriotism,” which enables citizens of different stripes to rally around a set of shared principles and rights enshrined in the nation’s constitution. As I argue in the following, this account grossly diminishes what a politics of swarming is and can do.

39. William E. Connolly, *Facing the Planetary: Entangled Humanism and the Politics of Swarming* (Duke University Press, 2017), 125.

40. Stephanie Erev, “Belonging to Spontaneous Order: Hayek, Pluralism, Democracy,” *Democratic Theory* 6(1)(2019): 1-26; Tønder, chapter 5 of *Power in the Anthropocene*.

41. Interview with Manuel DeLanda, by K. Pirc, 1994. [https://www.cddc.vt.edu/host/delanda/pages/interview\\_pirc.htm](https://www.cddc.vt.edu/host/delanda/pages/interview_pirc.htm)

42. DeLanda interview, 3.

43. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 6-12.

44. See also Dryzek, “Political Inclusion and the Dynamics of Democratization,” *American Political Science Review*, 90(3)(1996); Jane Mansbridge, “Rethinking Representation,” *American Political Science Review*, 97(4) (2003), Robin Eckersley, “Deliberative Democracy,

Ecological Representation, and Risk: Toward a Democracy of the Affected, in *Democratic Innovation: Deliberation, Representation, and Association*, M. Seeward, ed. (Routledge, 2006).

45. Compare with Lasse Thomassen, “Representing the People: Laclau as a Theorist of Representation,” *New Political Science*, 41(2) (2019): 329-344; Andreas Malm, *The Progress of this Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World* (Verso, 2018).

46. For a recent overview, see Robert Rohrschneider and Jacques Thomassen, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Political Representation in Liberal Democracies* (Oxford University Press, 2020).

47. Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (Verso, 2005).

48. See also Thomassen, “Representing the People.”

49. Asafu-Adjaye et al., *An ecomodernist manifesto* (2015), <https://www.ecomodernism.org/manifesto-english>.

50. See Chao’s “Plantation,” *Environmental Humanities* 14(2): 362. I borrow the term “plantation” from Chao and from Anna Tsing’s notion of “plantation science,” (from “Arts of Inclusion, or How to Love a Mushroom,” *Mañoa*, 22(2), 201) which describes a form of knowledge production that absorbs and then disqualifies local knowledges in order to establish a top-down order governed by experts. Like plantation science, managerial modes of politics teach us to “strive for control of human and nonhuman land- scapes.” In this framework, nonhumans—alongside many other margin- alized human constituencies—are denied representation within the body politic, appearing instead as “resources” whose efficient management secures the stability and progress of that body and it