Political Deliberation and Compromise: Why People-Nature Reconciliation Must Be about People-People Reconciliation

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Abstract: *A new paradigm of nature-reconciliation has emerged in response to concerns about human alienation from nature. It now forms a guiding principle for conservation policy and private nature recreation alike. Environmental history shows that reconciling yourself with nature, as in influential environmental essays (e.g. Leopold, Carson & Naess) may provide the basis for subsequent societal discussions, contributing over time to shifts in paradigms on how we view nature. However, we argue that individual reconciliation bypasses a real issue: that people have different and competing ideals for what nature reconciliation is supposed to look like in policy and practice. Further, individuals' private musings rarely translate directly into policy and conservation plans. Consequently, we argue instead for a return to the philosophical roots of reconciliation in ancient Greek political philosophy, as well as contemporary political philosophers concerned with social pluralism and deliberative consensus. Viewed politically, people-nature reconciliation must first be mediated through a prior process of people-people reconciliation. Hence, we advocate a two-step reconciliation process in which individuals, experts, and the general public must first be reconciled to one another, and their often different and contradictory worldviews of nature, the environment and its meaning for us: people-people reconciliation. This entails achieving a political consensus or compromise on the legitimacy of conservation policy, across these differences. The second step -- people-nature reconciliation -- is then a function and consequence of such political consensus or compromise. Our two-step approach aims to avoid the shortcomings of a politically unmediated conception of reconciliation to nature, as demonstrated in recent restoration projects like rewilding. Our point is to show we cannot achieve broad people-nature reconciliation on the societal level merely by aggregating the diverse and conflicting views on nature of private citizens. Profound differences over what nature means for us, as diverse members of a political community, must also be dealt with deliberatively. Indeed, the implementation of any plans and policies on the societal level must be preceded by an overlapping political consensus.*

Keywords: Reconciliation; Philosophy; Rewilding; Ecological Restoration; Deliberation

1. Introduction

When it comes to reconnecting sustainably with the natural environment, the diagnoses for modern society are glum. As a result of industrialization, capitalism and urbanization humanity is estranged from nature. We are argued to suffer from the 'extinction of experience' (Pyle 1993) or a 'nature deficit' disorder (Louv 2005). Such conditions correspond to alleged collective and individual side-effects; including loss of public health (Soga & Gaston 2016) and of self-reliance (Morris 2013); ecological boredom (Monbiot 2013); psychological shame (Jordan III 2003) and mental disease that comes from missing opportunities for self-actualization in nature (Swan 1995). On a societal level, estrangement from the natural world is seen as a root cause of biodiversity loss and environmental degradation because it cycles unsustainable production and consumption patterns (Kareiva 2008, Miller 2006). As a response to this glum diagnosis, scholars, practitioners and industry increasingly endorse practices and processes that approximate nature reconciliation (Francis & Lorimer 2011, Keim 2011, Miller 2006).

Nature reconciliation broadly involves the approximation of lost or degraded people-nature interactions. It is predicated on the idea that when we re-establish a connection with nature, we can begin to value and protect biodiversity (Light 2008, Samways 2007). Reconciling has a distinctly nostalgic normativity from its Latin roots "bring back together" (Corlett 2016). But reconciliation is not necessarily backwards-looking, or necessarily an individual-level pursuit. It may also be tied to contemporary concerns with social pluralism. Here, it entails reconciling different actors with different conceptions of what nature should look like and consensus on the means by which nature reconciliation is to proceed. The central problem we are concerned with in this paper is that in the present case, reconciliation does not proceed in this socially pluralist way. Instead, reconciliation with nature is privately conducted through individual retrospection and such ideas become problematically off-limits to political deliberation by the broader public. The priority for nature reconciliation here generally appears to be on individual responsibility: reconciling yourself with nature privately (see for example Fletcher 2016), as means of achieving a broader societal nature reconciliation. This may be one avenue for nature reconciliation, if we consider the philosophers like Leopold (1946) and Carson (1962) whose introspective works have provided the basis for subsequent societal discussion and contributed over time to shifts in paradigms on how we view nature. However, individual reconciliation bypasses a real issue: that people have different and competing ideals for what nature reconciliation is supposed to look like in policy and practice and these are not easily aggregated into coherent landscape scale plans for societal nature reconciliation. Indeed, such ideas, before putting them into public policy, need first to be put to deliberation and compromise.

What are the material contexts of nature reconciliation that includes? One can discern broadly three types of nature reconciliation in recent years. First, urban reconciliation, which denotes restoration of and re-engagement of urban citizens nature in city landscapes, including initiatives of urban agriculture and permaculture (Francis & Lorimer 2011) where urbanites can dig their hands into the dirt. Second, the drumbeat to the conservation frame of rewilding is also beating faster and harder in policy, endorsing an 'unleashing wilderness' approach to restoring ecosystems (Foreman 2004, Nogués-Bravo et al. 2016, von Essen & Allen 2016a) and, in so doing, contributing to a crucial process of 'rewilding ourselves' (Taylor 2005). Finally, there is a host of informal, individual level processes of nature reconciliation that predicate on the same logic of wanting to reconnect with nature: contemporary hunting is often presented as a return to one's natural roots (Cahoone 2009, Causey 1989), and ecotourism, feeding wildlife, hiking, and even the sponsoring of wildlife through NGO donations can be argued to fall under the banner of reconciling with nature (Fletcher 2016, Orams 2002).

Reconciliation is used colloquially rather than technically by most natural sciences (Corlett 2016). Its lack of a precise definition is potentially problematic, inasmuch as there seems to be no shared conception of what nature reconciliation is supposed to entail, how it may proceed, and what its end goals are. At other times, an emerging critique to which this paper joins is that its endpoints may be too fixed (Palamar 2006) (and hence difficult to compromise) and not the subject of deliberation by those seeking reconciliation. We thus propose that reconciliation is indeed an appropriate umbrella term to apply to processes and paradigms that seek to re-connect

modern people with some conception of nature. However, we direct attention to the way in which the concept of reconciliation has increasingly unmoored from its political philosophical roots and been unreflectively applied in the ecological restoration context. Indeed, we contend this is problematic because reconciliation without its key moral and deliberative dimensions, as appear in the political understandings of reconciliation, is an impoverished or "incomplete reconciliation" (Murdock 2016). It may actually serve to alienate people further from their environment, as when ideas of restoring nature are implemented that fail to resonate culturally with local communities.

Instead, our thesis is that people-nature reconciliation is in need of a two-step process. We argue that there is no direct, or politically unmediated, process of people-nature reconciliation. Any possibility of people-nature reconciliation must first be mediated through a public, political process of people-people reconciliation. We support this claim through a discussion of reconciliation in the literature of political philosophy. Here, reconciliation is, above all, a concern with social pluralism, competing worldviews and conceptions of our fundamental interests in relation to each other and the natural world (for example, Hegel 1991, Hardimon 1994). Consequently, reconciliation must be achieved between different people with widely different views of the world, nature and the environment, as well our place in it. This indeed requires a political consensus or compromise across clashing worldviews and interests in order to establish a shared basis of legitimacy for conservation policy. People-people reconciliation, in this political sense, necessarily precedes any people-nature reconciliation that may be achieved on the basis of policy that can be seen as justifiable across divergent worldviews.

Our two-step process of reconciliation is a critical response to the increased embracing of romantic, nostalgic 're'-words in contemporary ecological restoration and nature recreation: reconnect, recover, recreate, reforest, rehabilitate, reinforce, reintroduce, remediate, repair, restore, , revegetate, rewild, reclaim, regenerate and reconstruct to name a few (Corlett 2016, Hobbs & Cramer 2008). These are now sounded by an increased number of businesses and private contractors who offer restoration services (Light 2005). The paper examines the political roots of reconciliation, not to critique the way in which it has migrated into the arena of ecological restoration (with journals such as Ecological Restoration and Restoration Ecology to name a few), but to 're'-invigorate its practical utility in this context.

As few transdisciplinary synthetizations exist of the concept, our paper illuminates the basic premises of reconciliation, what happens to its meaning when applied unreflectively in the ecological restoration context, and how its disciplinary archaeology can guide nature reconciliation projects in modern society. We commence with a literature review on the reconciliation concept, followed by a problematisation of the limits and problems of what we take out as two dominant streams in nature reconciliation. Finally, a discussion presents how the impoverished concept can be strengthened by looking to its political roots.

2. Reconciliation Across the Disciplines

While reconciliation is an ancient concept, the operationalization of the term as referring to repairing people's relations with the environment in particular is a distinctly post WW2 phenomenon (Keim 2011). Reconciliation is understood as the "*process through which right relations are formed out of harmed relations*" (Murdock 2016, p. 2). The public may be most familiar with reconciliation in the context of post-colonial peace negotiations, including South Africa's transition from Apartheid in which such a process was conceived of as a "talks about talks." In post-Apartheid South Africa, common ground between participants was an outcome and a prerequisite for the process of conciliation between them. Its post-colonial baggage has produced a school of thought that overwhelmingly approaches reconciliation as forgiveness (Jordan III 2003). This is visible not merely in the post-colonial context, but in the rewilding movement in which reparations are to be carried out to rebuild the "broken strands in the web of life" (Monbiot 2013). Ecological restoration here is part of a package deal of restitution (Light 2000). However, as Murdock (2016) considers, the forgiveness model has limitations inasmuch as aggrieved parties may not be around to "*consider, reject or accept the proposal and forgive the perpetrator*" (Murdock 2016, p. 38). This is either because harms are located in the distant past or, even more

problematically, because victims are non-human. The natural environment, ecosystems, and even non-human animals are prime examples.

Reconciliation is understood as something beyond forgiveness by other scholars. This means it is a contested concept, not least because of sizeable religious baggage (Doxtader 2003). Nonetheless, it is important to our argument in this paper that its origin is more political than religious. Indeed, Doxtader (2003) traces the concept to ancient Greece, where reconciliation denoted a mediated, interpersonal exchange aimed at establishing the common good and agreeing on the terms of collective life. It was an arguments-based process about "*who needed to reconcile, what this work entails, and how such activity shapes both the form and content of political life*" (Doxtader 2003, p. 283). In the context of Christianity, Doxtader suggests reconciliation gained new meaning through Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians, in which reconciling involved an asymmetrical process of gift-giving from God to humankind. Despite this variation in meaning, reconciliation is fundamentally an interpersonal phenomenon where that which is reconciled is a relationship between two or more individuals (Radzik 2009) – and not the individual's relationship with a non-sentient entity or idea (which doesn't have agency to be 'reconciled'). The reconciliation involves the transformation of something broken into something new and mended (Doxtader 2003). In the human context, this is relations, but in the context of nature reconciliation, it has increasingly been seen as physically repairing natural environments.

In this context of nature reconciliation, ecological reconciliation (Rosenzweig 2003), the concept of restorashyn (Palamar 2006) and the restorative efforts of rewilding (Foreman 2004) comprise the major schools of reconciliation. In the former movement, Rosenzweig (2003) has emphasized reconciliation as a crucial third 'R' to 'reserves and restoration' (reserves, restoration and reconciliation) through which natural habitats are restored in such a way as to harmonize with human needs. In rewilding, reconciliation has tended to operate in two different streams, the latter of which is largely commensurable with restorashyn, meaning a more open-ended, inclusive reconciliation process in which nature is included as an agent (Palamar 2006). By contrast, the first, ostensibly backward-oriented stream of rewilding came into being during the nostalgic phase of restoration ecology, which emphasizes the recreation and rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems and ecological processes to their former ideal states - whatever these may be (Foreman 2004). Here, people lament the losses of and seek to recreate particular landscape constellations and ancient species compositions (Chrulew 2011).

King (2009) discusses this backward-orientation in terms of an ultimately anthropocentric form of nature reconciliation, in which that which is restored are human "*feelings of comfort and belonging in a particular environment, by removing unnatural elements that alienate us, so that we can engage with a world perceived to be natural and familiar*" (King 2009, p. 15). Such reconciliation may be honest about using cultural perceptions for normative baselines to restore particular natural environments, as when they acknowledge 'generational amnesia': the tendency for people to use the natural environment in which they spent their childhood as a normative baseline toward which restoration should aspire (Miller 2006). More commonly, however, baselines for restorations predicate on 'objective' ecological assessments for what amounts to the appropriate "pre-disturbance" standard for the landscape (Harris et al. 2006). Here, then, reconciliation is the physical restoration of a lost state in the natural environment and, with it, the neutralization of human guilt over its degrading activities.

The second path to reconciliation through rewilding is a more forward-oriented take on reconciliation, in which the results are open-ended. The keyword is "autonomous restitution" (Light 2000, p. 408). Rewilding becomes a kick-starter to a more wild, unleashed and unpredictable nature left to 'ecological imagination' (Monbiot 2013). Hence, that which is reconciled is neither people's cultural nostalgia over the loss of a particular landscape encountered during childhood, nor a fixed ecologically ideal state in human or pre-human history. What is reconciled instead is a relationship between man and nature that is characterized by wildness and stochasticity, where humans let go of the control they previously asserted (Prior & Brady 2015). As Light (2000) argues, it is about "*restoring the part of culture that has historically contained a connection to nature*" (p. 407). To this may be added the emerging rewilding literature on 'novel ecosystems,' not bound by predetermined

trajectories of conservation managers (Morse et al. 2014). Indeed, this is what Palamar (2006) refers to in her term restorashyn. As a form of nature reconciliation, it rejects arbitrary endpoints for ecological restoration. Drawing from ecofeminism, restorashyn calls for people-nature reconciliation through "*a unique dialogue between the land, the species that inhabit it, and the human actors involved with the restoration process*" (p. 296). The natural environment, here, becomes a change agent.

The term reconciliation, however, also plays an important role in modern and contemporary political philosophy. In modern political philosophy, for instance, Hegel and Wood (1991) argued for a concept of reconciliation as establishing an ideal of dis-alienation. But here the concern is not with people's alienation from nature, but rather the alienation of many different social groups, or estates, from the modern state. Consequently, reconciliation is the ability of different groups with different interests and identities to recognize their freedom in and through participation in the various functions of civil society and state (Hardimon 1994). In contemporary political philosophy, reconciliation addresses the alienation of different social groups through disclosing fundamentally different identities and commitments and achieving a fusion of horizons (Taylor 1992). Alternatively, it depends on the willingness of diverse social participants to find reasons from within their different worldviews to deliberate and reach collectively binding public decisions on the basis of overlapping consensus.

While these conceptions of reconciliation from modern and contemporary political philosophy do not directly engage the question of people-nature reconciliation, as opposed to people-people reconciliation, we argue that they nonetheless provide a basis on which the problem of nature reconciliation can most fruitfully addressed. Here, reconciliation is brought back to its ancient political roots in mediated, interpersonal exchanges (Doxtader 2003). But the key difference is that it is not aimed at establishing the common good and agreeing on the terms of collective life. Instead of realizing one single 'common good,' reconciliation through public interpersonal exchanges is about fusing horizons and achieving political consensus across differences as in ecological restoration projects. Indeed, nature conservation is an arena in which tensions can run high following seemingly irreconcilable worldviews between multiple parties who all claim to have a stake in the natural environment (Murdock 2016). Given the pluralism of differences by which different people conceive of the 'truth' about the natural world in contrast with our highly urbanized lifestyles, along with its status as a 'good,' and its meaning for us, people-nature reconciliation has to be mediated through political processes of people-people reconciliation. In the section that follows, we demonstrate the problems that emerge when nature reconciliation projects fail to engage with this crucial dimension of estrangement, tending instead to private, predetermined or people-less approaches for reconciliation.

3. The Problems with Current Nature Reconciliation Approaches

The critique facing rewilding as means of restoring nature are not in themselves new. Following Pauly (1995), scholars have opposed the arbitrary benchmarks for restoration in much recent literature (Cossins 2014, King 2009, Monbiot 2013, Navarro & Pereira 2012). These oppositions are usually predicated on one of two things. First, they either dismiss the proposed benchmark on ecological or cultural grounds, by arguing for example, that the chosen course of restoration is misguided because it fails to take into account ecosystem processes of large herbivore grazing or large carnivore predation (Vera 2000). Most frequently, critiques of proposed benchmarks are followed by recommendations for 'less arbitrary' benchmarks of their own. This means that where one school of rewilding scholars looks to the Pleistocene to direction (Chrulew 2011, Oliveira-Santos & Fernandez 2010, Rubenstein et al. 2006, Zimov 2005), another looks to the Holocene (Hall 2014); and where one school endorses pre-industrial landscape ideals for restoration, other insist on recreating pre human settlement conditions (Burney & Flannery 2005). Within the latter, there is also disagreement about whether settlement and use of the land by indigenous populations should count, or if it was the establishment of western civilization that counts as settlement and thereby disturbance (Hobbs & Cramer 2008, Martin 2005). The result is a set of competing claims for the configuration of the ideal state, which is demonstrably the subject of much internal debate in the rewilding movement.

As mentioned above, the second opposition to fixed end-states for reconciliation has been in the form of the forward-oriented turn in rewilding, which eschews competing claims for benchmarks by eschewing nostalgia and romanticism around past ecosystems (Monbiot 2013). While ostensibly representing a more open-ended approach to reconciliation, the forward-oriented turn suffers from the same set of problems as the backward-oriented one, albeit in somewhat different ways. The backwards paradigm is worked out by elite scientific experts disillusioned with the contemporary conservation paradigm (Donlan 2005) and is thus problematic from the point of departure of reconciling the public at large with nature. Forward-oriented rewilding frequently operates with a shadow course of restoration that is at least as normative and predetermined in its ideal endpoints as the backward-oriented stream, although it is better cloaked in a discourse of ecological imagination, spontaneity and letting nature decide (von Essen & Allen 2016a). The predetermined normative baseline to be reconciled is people with their wildness, with the unleashed forces of nature and with a relationship with the natural environment that is characterized by letting go off managerial approaches of control. Its ecosystem may not be a fixed configuration of species and ecological processes, but it is reconciliation with a predetermined quality of wildness, often despite what the public and local communities in rewilded landscapes may want (Lorimer & Driessen 2014), given they view their landscapes as cultural legacies of managed and human-created nature. Light (2000) demonstrates in the US case that such ecological restoration tends to mean to locals the destruction of "*the aesthetically pleasing forests that now exist in order to restore the prairie and oak savannah ecosystems that were present prior to European settlement*" (p. 405). In European countries, rewilding is often opposed by people for ignoring the relationship between communities and their local landscape, entailing a forced displacement from the land rather than a reconciliation with it, in fact increasing alienation (Lorimer et al. 2015, Mason 2017).

One obvious way in which the backward-oriented approach to people-nature reconciliation is fallible is that it can either result in the disenfranchisement of the public from the natural environment - which is conceived to be colonized by rewilding initiatives based on arbitrary ecological blueprints that fail to resonate with people - or, if allowed to be closer to King (2009)'s understanding of restoration, whereby landscapes are restored to cultural conceptions of nature, reconciliation is inevitably vulnerable to the nostalgia, anecdotes and the selective romanticism of individual persons with diverse goals. When generational amnesia (valuing lost childhood environments) provides our conceptions of the landscape, we end up with a fragmented landscape that is quilted from the private desires of different citizens. Reconciliation, in this way, becomes not a 'people-nature' reconciliation, but a private individual process. While there is nothing a priori wrong about endorsing private spiritual reconciliation from taking place, it becomes a problematic approach when each citizen champions their own distinct worldview for the environment as a whole. This is mainly a problem when it comes to policy-making and, we contend, has been overlooked by those who champion individual responsibility for nature reconciliation before anything else (cf. Fletcher 2016).

In the operationalization of individual ideas for reconciliation into policy through mere aggregation, would be likely to confront the ubiquitous problem of competing views that cannot hold up as a shared plan for the landscape. To be sure, individual introspection can serve as inspiration for decision-making with time (e.g. Leopold 1946) but individual manifestos are rarely put into actual plans until they have been thoroughly the subject of public deliberation and academic discussion. Individual reconciliation may further work within one's private plot of land, which one is free to restore to whatever cultural standard and practices one prefers ("post-romantic gardening" as Monbiot, 2013 puts it), but part of the thrust of contemporary conservation is in devising holistic ways of managing the commons (Clausen 2016). The commons, in other words, cannot be a patchwork of private desires if they are to function ecologically or command responsibility-taking from the broader public. Indeed, nature reconciliation builds on defragmentation of the landscape, which requires landscape-scale plans and consensus (Taylor 2005).

The backward- and forward-oriented stream of rewilding are hence problematic in terms of entailing people-nature reconciliation that is one of three things: (1) it may involve the mere assertion of private conceptions of the natural environment, com-

pounding the problem of competing worldviews in policy-making over the commons; (2) it may involve reconciliation with normative baselines for ancient ecosystems worked out by ecological experts, which involve little public engagement and thus frequently result in disenfranchising the local people from their environment (Lorimer & Driessen 2014, Lorimer et al. 2015). The knee-jerk negative reaction of many hunting and farming communities toward rewilding, for one, is testament to the initiative often presenting as a top-down elite-driven pursuit guided by arbitrary contemporary and post-productive aesthetic standards for the natural environment that bitterly conflict with local communities' conceptions of the landscape as tied to a legacy of pastoral agrarianism (Epp & Whitson 2001). Tellingly, these people often charge rewilding proponents with imposing their (urban-based) responses to alienation from nature onto communities which have lived and worked in these natural landscapes for generations, and thus in need of no nature reconciliation to begin with (von Essen 2016). There is mounting evidence that rewilding (with its 'cores, corridors, carnivores' approach) is so heavily associated with the nature reconciliation of urbanites that the animals that are reintroduced become locally known as the "pets", "property" and "wards" of urban residents and their Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (Ojalammi & Blomley 2015, Pooley et al. 2016, von Essen & Allen 2016b). Finally, (3) reconciliation may be unmoored from people altogether, with political dialogue over values and goals over the natural environment migrating into a tenuous 'dialogue with nature' (Palamar 2006).

To be sure, dialogue with nature is purportedly open-ended in permitting spontaneity and autonomy on the part of natural ecosystems to help guide the rewilding process. But, crucially, this amounts to replacement of public deliberation on the commons with an abstract and not-likely-to-be-realized internatural communication tenuously trading on conservationists communicating with and channeling nature herself and her preferred course of restoration (von Essen & Allen, 2017). We suggest on the basis of empirical case studies that such a practice is now highly vulnerable to co-optation by human interests purporting to speak on behalf of the environment, particularly following the Aarhus Convention's granting of voice to ENGOs to contest matters on behalf of the environment. Scholars note that we are a long way from translating the voice of the environment in our extant representations and words (Carbaugh 2007, Eckersley 1999), and that speaking on behalf of nature and in particular 'the wild' (Epstein & Darpö 2013) is turning into a human political affair. While perhaps well-intentioned, ENGOs behind forward-oriented, open-ended rewilding schemes designed to proceed with nature's autonomy undertake an impossible or at least questionable task.

4. Reclaiming the People-People Dimension of People-Nature Reconciliation

Our argument in the above section has focused on the failure of the current approaches and interpretations of nature reconciliation to engage the general public in deliberation over conservation policies designed to reconcile people to nature. This indeed is problematic insofar as these approaches do not realize the political dimension that is, above all, needed for people-nature reconciliation on a societal level and which can translate into concrete and socially legitimate policy for nature: a shared, public conception of nature and the commons. Instead, they result only in multiple, competing conceptions of nature and its meaning for us. To this extent, they create the condition of pluralism and profound disagreement between people in regard to these competing conceptions, leading to a fragmentation of the commons that is not likely to stop the environmental crisis of today. This condition of pluralism is, however, explicitly addressed in the approaches to reconciliation in the political philosophy literature: here, we saw, the problem is reconciling people to one another through their participation in public institutions for reaching collectively-binding policy decisions they may accept as legitimate, even though some differences may be expected to persist.

Indeed, the phenomenon of societal, or people-people alienation, creating an impediment to environmental policy is to be seen in the 'top-down' version of the backwards looking approach, in which ecological experts impose their conception of normative baseline for ancient ecosystems absent widespread public engagement. Here, it might be acknowledged that such experts do not conceive of their preferred ancient baselines in term of private, personal beliefs and convictions, but rather as jus-

tified by paleoecological science. But the resulting disenfranchisement and alienation of large sectors of the public, especially hunting and farming communities, is surely a function of top-down ecological restoration projects clashing with profound, deeply-felt cultural self-identifications and self-affirmations in relation to nature. In this respect, the problem is whole communities of hunters or farmers may come to feel that the common worldview and deepest shared convictions that are the basis of their community-life are repudiated by such top-down impositions (von Essen 2016). When coercively enforced through law and public policy, such impositions both alienate these communities from nature, as they understand and find meaning in it, and from the elites responsible for imposing policies they do not support. In addition to this, the public at large may be alienated to the extent the latter may appear to have no understanding or interest in their point of view. In effect, the natural landscape under these conditions is viewed by locals as the urban and scientific experts' "playground" or experimental grounds for nature reconciliation schemes (Epp & Whitson 2001).

By contrast, the 'bottom up' and forward-looking approach to nature reconciliation looks to a dialogue of people with nature herself, in a process of internatural communication. This may have a certain rhetorical and metaphorical appeal. But, even when revamped in the language of fusing horizons, forward-looking internatural communication would still be a highly tenuous form of dialogue at best, vulnerable to the skeptical charge that what we think nature discloses to us is really nothing other than what we read into it based on our different worldviews. Indeed, ENGOs responsible for re-wilding projects claiming to speaking on behalf of (or 'with') the environment depoliticize what this process entails by claiming to channel nature in an apolitical way. A matter of some concern to decolonial feminist writers, such speaking for ultimately recolonizes the subject (Mohanty 2003). This is not just an issue of justice, but ENGOs often operate with agendas that are vulnerable to co-optation by donor agencies, rendering their ideas about nature less than pure (Mercer 2002, Rouet-Leduc & von Essen 2019).

Nonetheless, we are clearly left with a two-step process of reconciliation: (1) people-people reconciliation in open forward-looking public deliberation over the contents of conservation policy and (2) people-nature reconciliation achieved through the mediation of (1). This would mean that people-nature reconciliation would be a function of enough people, with different and opposing worldviews on nature and the environment, could come to see the contents of policy as legitimate from their various social perspectives, notwithstanding the persistence of differences between them on what nature means to us.

In this regard, we turn to Rawls (2005) philosophy of reconciliation for guidance as to how societal nature reconciliation ought to proceed. The key feature of Rawls' political philosophy is its rejection of any comprehensive conception, or doctrine, of nature as a basis for political legitimacy. Here, Rawls is not thinking ecologically in terms of 'nature and the environment.' Instead, he works out his own position in opposition to metaphysical claims about the nature of truth and goodness in natural law or natural right. The normative significance of this is that we may all have a comprehensive doctrine that explains the world, nature, and what it all means to us. But none of us is justified in insisting that our doctrine may rightly be the basis of justification for how the state enforces policy. That would amount to the fact of oppression (Ibid), in which one social faction imposes its doctrine on the rest of society. While we may all believe ourselves to be in possession of the whole truth, such as the ideal state for a natural landscape, we cannot legitimately impose that on others by means of state power.

Consequently, Rawls' point is that the pluralism of conflicting views about our relationship to nature is simply a function of the normal operations of human reason. Indeed, we cannot expect the pluralism of doctrines eventually to go away in some seamlessly unified outlook on the world and nature. This is not to say that people with different worldviews should not talk to one another about their different viewpoints on nature, in the interest of achieving a better understanding of where they do and do not agree. That, however, is a non-public dialogue to be conducted between universities, think tanks, NGOs, hunting and farming associations, and so forth. Nevertheless, from Rawls' political perspective, reconciliation is primarily about inclusive public deliberation. It is a process of diverse participants

finding reasons from within their comprehensive worldviews to support public policy contents. This entails reaching an overlapping political consensus on the basis of shared public reasons derived from different worldviews. Such a political reconciliation project thus depends on the ability of most people to reach consensus and moral compromise (Bohman 1996). Overlapping consensus and deliberative compromise is consistent with ongoing contestations and dissent (von Essen & Allen 2017) over persisting differences of outlook and interests in nature.

Applied to the nature reconciliation context, Light (2005) for example, is optimistic about the prospect of ecological restoration projects that trade on reconciliation to take a people-people reconciliation approach by pursuing in a participatory vein. Deliberating over the goals of such projects cultivate also opportunities for 'ecological citizenship' – a public spirit that creates moral relationships first and foremost with each other over our collective responsibilities to nature (Light 2008). Such relationships are integral to ensuring the protection and preservation of nature reserves by undergirding it in duties of being a good citizen. This would "*entail the development of specific moral, and possibly legal, responsibilities or expectations that all of us be held responsible for the nature around our community and respect the environmental connections between communities"* (Light 2005, p. 15). Consistent with Rawls's (2005) emphasis on deliberative compromise and overlapping consensus, ecological citizens would have to look beyond conflicts over their private interests in nature reconciliation. After all, ecological restoration initiatives are far more likely to be successful when undergirded by a moral dimension of compromise ensuring the political legitimacy of public policy decisions.

5. Conclusion

While acknowledging that private or individual reconciliation may provide the basis for subsequent societal discussions, we have argued instead for a political conception people-nature reconciliation realized through a lexically prior process of people-people reconciliation. Indeed, individuals, experts, and general public must first be reconciled to one another, and their often different and contradictory worldviews of nature, the environment and its meaning for us as the members of a shared political community. Not only does the attempted aggregation, sans political deliberation, of individual ideas and values likely produce conflict; it is also bound to be compounded by real material interests and stakes. This is most concretely manifested, for example, in hunting and farmer concerns, whose lifestyles and livelihoods are directly affected by competing views of nature. To be sure, there can be reconciliation without political consensus across different views of nature. Nevertheless, this remains on the individual and not societal level. Ultimately, successful public policies for nature reconciliation, binding together the diverse members of a pluralistic society, without deliberative compromise and overlapping political consensus.

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