Democratic representation within a globalized world

Who has a right to take part in decision-making regarding cross border issues? The ‘all-affected’ principle gives a very interesting and plausible answer to this ‘boundary problem’ (Whelan 1983, Arrhenius 2007) or ‘problem of inclusion’ (Dahl 1979, 1989). Anyone who is affected by a decision has a right to participate.

But how do we determine who is affected and what kind of democratic right ‘being affected’ implies? The main defect of the principle is that it is underdetermined. More advanced reformulations – such as Pogge’s legitimately affected principle (2002), Fraser’s theory of post-Westphalian democratic justice (2005), Gould’s importantly affected criterion (2004), or Benhabib’s analysis of ‘democratic iterations’ (2004) – are a step forward but are still far from giving a satisfying answer. So how do we enfranchise all affected interests? (Goodin 2007).

This research investigates the content and applicability of the all-affected principle. It has three parts. In the first part the different versions of the principle are critically examined and proposals are formulated for a more determinate content. Because the all-affected principle leads to a ‘multiplication of sites of representation and discursive involvement’ (Benhabib 2006), the second part examines how democratic representation can be organized within a globalizing world. The third part examines how centralized the regional and supranational institutions of deliberative democracy should be that we need to determine constituencies.

The author will argue (a) that the all-affected principle implies a dynamic of centralization and (b) that the relevant constituencies for global issues can only be established within a minimal world state. More centralization seems inevitable if it is very difficult to make clear distinctions between local, national, and transnational issues, and give strict criteria for determining the scope of democratic communities.