

## Democracy and the All-Affected Principle

*By Eerik Lagerspetz*

The All-Affected Principle has an important status in recent theoretical discussions on democracy. According to the principle, all who are affected by a decision should have a right to participate into making it. The principle is supposed to ground the right or optimal boundaries of democratic decision-making units. This paper is basically a critique of the principle. In the first parts of the paper, the All-Affected Principle is distinguished from some related principles. However, even a more precise version of the principle is still troubled by ambiguities. It is argued that Robert Goodin's expansive reading is the only coherent one. However, if it is accepted, the principle cannot be used for its original purpose. The last parts focus on some largely unexamined aspects of the principle. First, the principle also works as a means of exclusion, not only of inclusion. Second, if, as the principle says, participation rights are based on interests, it is by no means obvious that these rights should be equal. Third, the principle cannot provide us with a non-institutional starting point. Nevertheless, a much weaker form of the principle may be plausible.

### *Introduction*

The *All-Affected Principle* – also known as the “Congruence Principle”, the “Symmetry Principle” (Agné 2006), and even as the “Democratic Principle” (Zürn 2000) – has acquired an important status in recent theoretical discussions on democracy. The principle says, roughly, that *all who are affected by a decision should have a right to participate into making it* (Dahl 1970, p. 64). In recent discussions, the role of the All-Affected Principle is usually to work as a justificatory device which helps to avoid the paradox of democratic self-constitution. Democracy is, according to the traditional definition, rule by the people – but who *are* the people? How should the criteria for membership of the *demos* to be determined? This question cannot be answered in a democratic way, for example, by taking a vote, without entering into an infinite regress. For how can we decide on who should be entitled to participate in *that* decision? The standard version of the Principle gives one possible answer to the problem. It is typically expressed as a deontological principle, purported to be independent of any institutional context. The very fact that a person is a *patient* – that a person is a subject of a causal or quasi-causal influence which

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originates from intentional human action – is considered as a source of the right to be a political *agent*. Thus, the minimal requirement for the application of the principle is that those who are affected are able to be political agents.

From the principle, one is supposed to derive the right or optimal boundaries of democratic decision-making units (Arrhenius 2005; Näsström 2011). In the present interconnected world, the principle is likely to undermine the relevance of the existing boundaries of states and other decision-making units. Many people think that a consistent application of the principle will inevitably lead to global democracy. However, in this presentation the potentially expansive implications of the All-Affected Principle are not the only concern. Suppose that it would be really possible to establish a global democracy. Would it remove the problem of political boundaries from the agenda? Certainly not. For even the most ardent cosmopolitans would agree that the world government should not have the power to decide on every possible issue. Only a handful of very important, genuinely global issues should be entrusted to it. Most issues should remain to be decided at regional, national or local levels.

This paper is basically a critique of the All-Affected Principle. In the first parts, I try to find the most plausible formulation of the somewhat vague principle. First, I shall distinguish it from some other related principles. A more precise version is still troubled by ambiguities. I argue that Robert Goodin's reading of the principle (Goodin 2007) is the only coherent one. However, if it is accepted, the principle cannot be used for its original purpose, for determining (at least in principle) the boundaries between democratic units. In the last parts I focus on two often-mentioned but usually unexamined aspects of the principle. First, it also works as a means of exclusion, not only of inclusion. Second, if, as the principle says, participation rights are based on interests, it is by no means obvious that these rights should be equal. Third, the principle cannot provide us with a non-institutional starting point. Nevertheless, a much weaker version of the principle may be defensible.

### 1. *Some related principles*

The All-Affected Principle should be distinguished from two apparently similar but distinct principles. First, there is the *Discourse Principle* formulated by Jürgen Habermas (1996, p. 107): an action norm is valid only if it could be accepted by all affected in a rational discourse. In spite of the appearances, the Discourse Principle has no necessary connection to the All-Affected Principle. It does not say that those affected should *actually* accept norms in rational discourse, or that they should have rights to give their assent or dissent. The Discourse Principle is satisfied by a hypothetical claim: If all the affected *could* counterfactually accept the norm in question, it is valid. The Discourse Principle does not presuppose agency (Skirbekk 1997). For example, the members of future generations cannot actually participate in our deliberations; hence, the All-Affected Principle does not cover them. Beckman (2009, Chapter. 7) treats the problem of future generations as one aspect of the All-Affected Principle, but I think this is based on a mistake. The members of future generations are not political agents in our present world. The interests of the members of future generations may, in some sense, be represented in the process of deliberation, for example, by nominating someone to act as the representative of those interests. However, such a surrogate form of representation is *not* a form of participation. Representation is related to participation only when the represented are actually able to authorize their representatives. The surrogate representation of the unborn is not a matter of rights – it is only one possible arrangement which might improve the moral quality of the resulting decisions.

Another similar-looking principle is called by Sofia Näsström (2011) the *All-Subjected Principle*. It says that all persons subject to a government's dominion should be able to participate in decision-making (Miklosi 2012, p. 485; Goodin 2007, p. 49; Beckman 2008). Näsström (2011, p. 121) claims that the All-Subjected Principle, unlike the All-Affected Principle, assumes that democracy is bound up with the existence of a state. Actually, the All-Subjected Principle only assumes that there is an authoritative “government” or legislator. Unlike the All-Affected Principle, it is not meant to be applicable even in an institutional vacuum. However, there is no need to equate the

legislator with the modern state. Historically, the All-Subjected principle, unlike the All-Affected Principle is closely tied to the extension of franchise in modern democracies. When Olympe de Gouges, an early feminist declared in the French Revolution: “If women have a right to enter to the scaffold, they should also have the right to enter to the Legislative Assembly”, she was appealing to the All-Subjected Principle.

The All-Subjected Principle emphasizes the *legal* rather than causal consequences of decisions. Beckman (2008, p. 360) argues that “since everyone within a jurisdiction is equally affected by the decision (because they are equally subjected to the political authority making the decision) it is possible to know *ex ante* who will be affected”. If this is true, it is true by stipulation. Those who are subjects of a government are bound to obey it – and if they do not obey voluntarily, they may be coerced to do it. Are they thereby “affected”? Yes, in a tautological sense that by enacting rules and other legally binding precepts the government necessarily affects the legal positions of its subjects. In the empirical sense, however, many laws and precepts enacted by a government may be practically irrelevant for most of its subjects. For example, many legal duties which are part of the legal system of my home country are such that I, as a middle-aged academician with very little personal property, am unable either to obey or disobey them. Of course, even these parts of the Finnish legal system might have some indirect effects upon me, and they might become directly relevant for me in some imaginable future. But some parts of the legal system of some other country *might* have similar indirect effects and they *might* become equally relevant. While there is a sense in which we are necessarily “affected” by all laws of our respective countries, it does not follow that we are *causally* affected. This observation is actually central for the arguments put forth in this paper.

## 2. *The full version*

The following amended version of the All-Affected Principle does, I think, capture the fundamental intuitions of the proponents: *All competent adults should have an equal right to participate in decision-making if and only if their interests are likely to be in a significant way affected by the decisions.* The amendments require some

comments. By adding a reference to “competent adults” I simply want to sweep aside controversies about the rights of children, animals, future generations, and natural objects. The additions “equal right”, “interests” and “significantly affected” deserve further comment. “If and only if” is central for the purposes of this paper, for it raises the issue of over-inclusiveness, ignored by most theorists who have written about the topic.

I shall start with the notion of “affecting”. When is somebody affected by a decision? By distinguishing the All-Affected Principle from the All-Subjected Principle I have already excluded purely normative connections between decisions and those affected. However, to say that it must be a *causal* connection generates all kinds of problems. The notion of causality is, as such, subject to philosophical problems, and things do not become easier if we add that the relation in question is, at least partly, a *social* causality relation. The standard examples of effects covered by the principle are often cases of natural spill-over effects, for example, of chemical pollution or of increased risk caused by nuclear reactors (e.g. Näsström 2011, p. 123; Goodin 2007, pp. 49-50). However, the wider discussion on the All-Affected Principle is usually connected to the complex effects of globalization. In this context the physical, chemical or biological concepts of causality are not sufficient. Generally, people may be affected in very different ways, and most of them are potentially relevant for the application of the principle.

It is clear - so clear that it is usually left unmentioned – that only *negative* effects or “harms” may create rights to participation. J. S. Mill famously argued that “the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others”. When extending the notion of being affected (and perhaps also the notion of interest) in order to cover issues such as the consequences of globalization, the supporters of the All-Affected Principle should be aware of the problems which have traditionally troubled attempts to apply Mill’s Harm Principle. While the All-Affected Principle is used for very different purposes than the Harm Principle, the problems of application are partly similar. The challenge is to define “harm” in way that would exclude external or “nosy” preferences (for example, the “harm” felt by a religious fundamentalist when

contemplating the possibility that his neighbours may have homosexual relationships) and trivial harms while not lapsing into a paternalistic version of objectivism.

### *3. Goodin's argument*

The main problem faced by the All-Affected Principle is the fundamental inadequacy of all purely causal notions of effect. Non-events (including non-decisions) are not, according to the standard approaches, possible links in causal chains. If we adopt a causal interpretation of “affecting”, only those people whose actual situation, specified, for example, as the set of opportunities open to them, changes because of the decision (Beckman 2008, p. 355). As Robert Goodin has remarked in his seminal article (Goodin 2007), this interpretation is not only over-restrictive, but actually leads into paradoxical results. More often than not, the content of the decision determines which interests are actually affected by it. The problem is that quite often, the question of who is causally affected by a particular decision can be answered only when the decision has been made.

Suppose that there are only two decision alternatives – for example, either accepting a project or doing nothing. A decision with one content would change the situation of only *A* (in a significant way), while choosing another alternative we would change the situation of only *B* (in a significant way). The “actual effect” interpretation would imply that only *A* is entitled to participate in the first case and only *B* in the second case. However, it is plausible to say that whichever alternative is chosen in our example, the interests of both *A* and *B* are affected. Our intuition is that an adequate version of All-Affected Principle would mandate the participation of both *A* and *B*. Perhaps the proper formulation of the principle is that all who *could* possibly be affected by a decision should have right to participate? The consequences of this move seem to be dramatic. *Any* resource, say, one dollar or an hour of one's time, used for one purpose, could equally well be used for some other purpose. The conclusion seems to be that all people in the world have potential interests in all decisions made, and are therefore entitled to

participate in making them. Many would see this a *reductio ad absurdum* conclusion. Goodin, however, is willing to subscribe to it:

If (as I believe to be the case) the “all affected interests” principle is the best principled basis upon which to constitute the demos, and if (as I have argued) the best interpretation of that principle is the expansive “possibilist” form, then it does indeed provide good grounds for thinking that (at least in principle) *we should give virtually everyone a vote on virtually everything virtually everywhere in the world.* (Goodin 2007, p. 64; my emphasis)

Less surprisingly, Goodin admits that the arrangement envisaged in the last sentence is not practically feasible. He continues: “If, as many would insist, that is wildly impractical then we need to begin thinking what arrangements might *best approximate* that ideal in some practice that is feasible” (*idem*, my emphasis). There are several problems related to the notion of *approximation* of a strictly unattainable ideal (cf. Räikkä 2014). One problem is that “best approximation” presupposes a measure of betterness or closeness; otherwise it would be impossible to judge whether one institution or decision lies closer to the ideal than another. If the ideal is a complex one, to be described only in terms of a conjunction of several requirements, its different aspects have somehow to be weighed. Otherwise we may end up with a version of the Condorcet paradox in which arrangement *C* is closer to the ideal than arrangement *D* in one sense, *D* is closer than *E* in another sense, but *E* is closer than *C* in a third sense.

Arrhenius (2012) compares the All-Affected Principle with the principle of utility maximization, arguing that while the former cannot be used as a decision method, it may, like utilitarianism, work as an ideal which may justify practical decision-rules. However, I think that the problem of approximation undermines the analogy. First, in utilitarianism, the requirement of utility maximization is the *single* supreme principle. Second, utility is supposed to be explicable in cardinal terms. Hence, there *is* a well-defined measure of closeness. The principle of utility maximization is, at least in theory, able to solve all disagreements between competing decision-rules of lower level. If, for example, it is practically impossible to compare the utility values of all logically possible options, utilitarianism requires us to choose the

utility-maximizing option from some manageable subset. By contrast, the All-Affected Principle cannot be but one normative requirement among many. Consider the following situation. Group  $F$  is the total group of all who are affected by some decision. (If Goodin is right,  $F$  necessarily consists of all humankind.) Group  $G$  is a subgroup of  $F$ , for example, the group of all the members of some state.  $H$  is a subgroup of  $G$  (and hence a sub-subgroup of  $F$ ) for example, the group of all the members of a local community. Now, if a decision cannot, for practical reasons, made by all the members of  $F$ , does it follow from the All-Affected Principle that the second-best solution is to make it at the level of  $G$ ? No, it does not. For the same (or other) reasons which made it impractical and perhaps even immoral to transfer the decision to the level  $F$  may also be reasons against transferring it to the level  $G$ .

Now we are able to see the basic problem of Goodin's expansive "possibilist" reading of the principle. People became attracted by the All-Affected Principle mainly because they thought that it would provide normative guidelines for drawing the boundaries between decision-making units, a task the standard democratic theories were unable to perform. However, according to Goodin's interpretation, the consistent application of the principle implies that in the ideal case, there are *no* justifiable boundaries. Ideally, "everyone in the world (...) should be entitled to vote on any proposal or any proposal for proposals" (Goodin 2007, p. 55). This is, of course, unfeasible. In any feasible approximation of the ideal the participation rights have to be limited; there should be boundaries. But the All-Affected Principle has already exhausted its usefulness. Boundaries are necessary but they cannot be drawn by using it as a normative yardstick. Thus, something else is needed. We are back in square one. Hence, those who still think that the All-Affected Principle could be useful in solving the boundary problem should take Goodin's interpretation as their main target. They should either show that Goodin's conclusion does not follow from the standard version of the All-Affected Principle, or they should formulate a nonstandard version supported by the same intuitions which made the standard version initially appealing. Actually, this argument should be sufficient, for it moves the burden of proof to the shoulders of the proponents of the All-Affected Principle. However, I

think that the principle has other interesting aspects which have not yet been sufficiently examined. By studying the principle and its background justifications more closely it may be possible to put more structure into it. For the sake of argument, I shall assume that there is some way to avoid Goodin's extreme conclusions.

#### *4. On over-inclusion*

The reverse side of the All-Affected Principle, as I have already indicated, seems to be that *only* those who are affected should have right to participate. The background justification of the Principle is the value of self-government. As Näsström (2011, p. 123) says, the Principle “draws its normative force from the modern notion of self-rule. (...) The central thrust is that citizens should be not determined by decision-making powers beyond their own control.” From the ideal of self-rule follows an often unarticulated aspect of the Principle: Those who are *not* affected by a decision are *not* entitled to participation. This consequence is not self-evident, but a further consideration shows why it is needed. Consider the following extreme case: One thousand people (Group *I*) are affected by a decision. Therefore, they are all allowed to participate in making it. At the same time, one million people (Group *J*) who are *not* affected in any significant way are equally allowed to participate. Clearly, the basic idea behind the All-Affected Principle is violated. Those who are really affected are not masters of their own fate. They are at the mercy of the unaffected. An inclusion principle arising from the fact of being affected would pick *those and only those* who are really affected.

Goodin claims that over-inclusion is never a problem. He argues as follows. Suppose that people vote only on the basis of their (significant) interests. If some issue affects only the interests of the small sub-group *I*, those in the one-million large group *J* are, *ex hypothesi*, likely to cast their votes randomly. If there are only two decision alternatives about 500 000 members would vote for one alternative, and the remaining 500 000 for another alternative. These votes would cancel each other, and those who really have something at stake, the members of Group *I*, would determine the outcome. Hence, says Goodin, “it makes no difference to the political outcome,

therefore, if we enfranchise people whose interests are not affected. All that we have to worry about is ensuring the inclusion of everyone whose interests are affected.” (Goodin 2007, pp. 58-9) Actually, if people are supposed to vote only on the basis of their interests, and if those in Group *J* literally had no interests at stake, they would abstain, leaving the issue to the members of Group *I*. If this were true, it would *always* be better to submit a decision to a larger group. Suppose first that the groups initially made their decisions separately. If the larger Group *J* then decides to annex the smaller Group *I*, no harm is done as long as the members of Group *I* retain their equal rights to participation. In effect, all demands for secession, autonomy, regional devolution or decentralization within democratic countries would be pointless. Unfortunately, the supposition is not realistic. In real life, people often vote on the basis of the trivial or mistaken interests, or of nosy preferences, or old deeply-rooted prejudices. The problem in Goodin’s argument is that the minority’s ability to rule itself becomes conditional to the majority’s contingent preferences. As Beckman (2014) has argued, *the right to exclude* may be as significant for self-government as the right to include.

If this argument is correct, we should be worried about possible cases of over-inclusion and not only of under-inclusion. For example, it is by no means clear that all those who are, in modern democracies, included into the *demos* are causally affected by the decisions made by them or by their representatives. Most decisions affect sub-groups only: such as the elderly, families with children, workers working in specific industries, ethnic minorities, sexual minorities, farmers, people suffering from a specific handicap, people living in a certain territory, or those with specific consumption habits *etc. etc.* In fact, modern democracies do try to cope with at least one such discrepancy in a systematic way. Many decisions are delegated to the local level, mainly because they are considered to have only local effects. However, the spatial distribution of effects, while important, is only one of the possible dimensions, and there are very few systematic attempts to take the other dimensions into account. Hence, it should not be taken as granted that the All-Affected Principle is already (with some exceptions)

consistently applied *within* modern democracies, and that the only question is how to extend its application to transnational or global contexts.

### 5. *On equality*

The proponents of All-Affected Principle usually take it for granted that those who are affected have *equal* rights to participation. This unquestioned supposition establishes the connection between the All-Affected Principle and democracy, for democracy is traditionally considered as the government of equals. However, there is no immediate reason why the sheer fact of being affected in some way should establish equal rights. An effect upon my interests may be trivial, significant, or dramatic. Clearly, these are, at least partly, relative notions: a monetary loss considered as significant in most contexts may pale in comparison if other people literally have their lives at stake. Even if interests which are trivial in all comparisons are discounted, it is not self-evident that all the remaining interests should be treated as equals. As David Miller says

insofar as the [All-Affected] principle is meant to reflect the underlying idea that people should have an equal opportunity to advance and protect their interests politically, it seems that in applying it we should try to ensure that each person's capacity to influence a decision should correspond to how significantly he or she will be affected by its outcome. (Miller 2009, p. 216)

Here, it might be useful to glance backwards. Before the twentieth century, there was no presumption for equal rights in political participation. Contrary to what is sometimes thought, there was plenty of participation and collective deliberation even before the advent of modern democracy. However, there was no presumption that all people had a right to participate in *equal terms*. Especially in local elections, multiple-vote systems were widely used until the beginning of the twentieth century. In Belgium, for example, land-owners had one additional vote and citizens with higher education two additional votes; in Saxony, voters had 1 to 4 votes; and in the Swedish and Finnish local elections voting rights were graded: voters had 1–100 votes, depending on the amount of taxes they paid. After the Sturges-Bourne Act in 1819, English local government votes were also graded, the maximum number of votes being 6. Another traditional method to weigh interests was to create

special constituencies. In Prussia, for example, voters were divided into three classes on the basis of the taxes paid. Each class elected a third of the electors, and they in turn elected the deputies to the *Landtag*. The two classes of the high income taxpayers – 13–20 percent of the adult male population – could therefore dominate Prussian politics. In the Danish local elections, the high income taxpayers – one fifth of all – elected a half plus one of the members of the communal councils, while in France after 1831, three fourths of the members of the communal councils were elected by those with high incomes. (Mellquist 1974, pp. 30-33.)

It is interesting that the pre-democratic unequal systems of representation partly justified themselves by referring to the *unequal effects* of decisions. Of course, these political systems based on unequal representation were instruments of class domination, and the theories which justified the systems were elements of the ideology of the ruling classes. Nevertheless, these ideologies were at least internally consistent: the interests of some people – those who had more possessions or paid more taxes – were more affected by the public decisions than those of the rest of the population. Therefore, the more affected were entitled to have more influence. Nowadays we might perhaps adopt a different measure of “being affected” than just, say, the amount of taxable property. But *if* the fundamental justification of the rights to participation in decision making is that the decisions have an impact upon people’s interests, it is natural to think that these rights should, in principle, be allocated according to the magnitudes of the impact.

All these practices were swept away by successive waves of democratization. This equalization process has been unidirectional. Although there have been coups and revolutions in democratic states, in the twentieth century no democratic state has peacefully returned to less inclusive or less egalitarian practices (Colomer 2001). There are almost no cases in which large formerly enfranchised groups would again become disenfranchised without violence and a break-up of the established constitutional order. This is true even of age limits, which are the least “political” of all the exclusion principles. These limits are almost never moved upwards. It is significant that in established democracies, any attempt to curtail the present participation rights

or to make them more unequal would be rejected almost unanimously. Participation rights are not considered as bargaining chips tradable for other goods or as instruments which could be used for the purposes of social engineering. Economic and other hardships are not compensated by giving the worst-off additional votes.

Several theorists have argued that a system based on equal votes and the majority principle is defective because it treats unequal interests in an equal way. G. D. H. Cole, a radical Guild Socialist once stated that

to count once is to count about nothing in particular: what men want is to count on the particular issues in which they are interested. Instead of 'One man, one vote', we must say 'One man as many votes as interests, but only one vote in relation to each interest'. (Cole 1920/1989, pp. 89-90)

Closer to our times, Jones (1983), and Brighthouse & Fleurbaey (2010) have advocated decision-methods which would, in different ways, take into account the various interests of voters and to balance them in a fair way. All these proposals are built on a common presupposition that (1) the issues, (2) the affected interests, and (3) the magnitude of the effects of possible decisions are already fixed and knowable. Moreover, (4) there must be a consensus on what is the fair way to balance them. All these factors together determine how, and by whom the decision is made. In other words, the proposed non-egalitarian decision methods are built on the supposition that *the most important divisive problems in politics have already been solved*. In normal politics, political disputes are largely about the issues (1)-(4). As Waldron (1999) says, the "mechanical" principle of majority is widely accepted because recourse to a "non-mechanical" procedure would reproduce rather than resolve the decision-problem in front of us.

To sum up, the principle of approximate voter equality has a near-absolute status in modern democracies. Thus, it seems that there is actually a tension between the principle of political equality of citizens and the interest-based All-Affected Principle. It is not clear why the unequal systems used in the past would not be compatible with the All-Affected Principle. But surely, they are incompatible with democracy. Then, we should conclude that the

underlying idea of democracy is *not* just that people should have an equal opportunity to advance and protect their interests politically.

#### 6. *On citizenship*

The role of the All-Affected Principle in recent discussion is to challenge the existing political boundaries. The argument is that by just taking the existing nation-states as granted we actually ignore important moral and political questions, and by trying to determine the boundaries in a democratic way leads into an infinite regress. According to the argument, we need a pre-institutional starting point. However, the All-Affected Principle cannot give us the starting point, for the following reason. People's interests are largely created and shaped by political institutions, in the present world largely by the states. Therefore, it is equally misleading to take some hypothetical institutionally unaffected interests as the starting point and then ask how, given the interests, the proper boundaries of decision-making units should be drawn.

We have seen that the principle of political equality – inclusive suffrage and equal voting rights – cannot be justified by supposing an equality of interests. Our significant interests are not causally affected by all the decisions made within our states; certainly, we are not *equally* affected by them. We may, however, be “affected” in another sense. Consider decisions that would have (causal) effects only on members of an ethnic or sexual minority, or on drafted soldiers, or on immigrants. I do not belong to any of these categories. Any causal effect flowing from the decisions would be an indirect one. I may be personally unable either to obey or to disobey the decisions; hence, I am not subjected to them. Nevertheless, the decisions are directly relevant to my interests *as a citizen*, that is, as a member of a particular democratic polis. They are made also in my name, by representatives elected by *us*, in a country which is constituted by *us*. We may be concerned, worried, or delighted by similar decisions made elsewhere, in other countries, but they do not concern us in the same way, as citizens. All the citizens are “equally affected” by political decisions made by their government because these decisions concern *res publica*, public matters, and the decisions are made on the behalf of all citizens.

The “fact” that the citizens are equally affected is a normative supposition, not an observation about the independently existing causal structure of the world. In the causal sense, I may be affected more by the decisions made, for example, by the government of the United States than by those made by my own government. This fact does not create a right for me to participate in the political process of the US, although it may create a duty to the US government to take my interests somehow into account.

It is significant that the All-Affected Principle is *not* offered as a justification of equal rights to participation outside the context of politics. Private firms, universities, the media, bureaucracies, churches, hospitals, armies, international organizations etc. make decisions which have significant effects upon the people living and working inside their spheres of influence. Quite often, there are institutional means for those affected to express their opinions and interests and even to participate into the internal decision-making of the organizations. These practices may be justified in terms of something like the All-Affected Principle. However, in organizational contexts the relevant forms of participation do not usually amount to a right to *equal* participation. In many cases, organizations apply practices compatible with the traditional corporatist model: various interest groups may have their representatives in governing bodies, or there may be regular consultation or negotiation processes in which the interested parties are represented. The affected people are represented as members of the affected groups, not as individuals. As individuals, they are not entitled to equal power. It seems that a claim to equal power makes sense only in the particular context of the modern state.

### *7. Conclusion*

The conclusion of this paper is that the All-Affected Principle does not provide us with the missing Archimedean point. However, two qualifications should be made. The practices adopted by various institutions and organizations show that the widely shared intuition underlying the All-Affected Principle needs not be *totally* mistaken. A weaker version of the principle still appears as plausible – although even that version is plausible

only if the consequences of Goodin's expansive reading can somehow be controlled. In most contexts, the fact of being affected does create a *prima facie* right *to be heard*. If the decisions made in some organization have a significant effect upon my life and my interests, I do have a right to present my viewpoint to the decision-makers. I may have a formal right to be informed and consulted, a right to defend myself in public or to respond to criticism, to make an appeal, a complaint, or a lawsuit, sometimes even a right to demand a re-consideration of a decision. This general right to be heard – which may take different institutional forms in different contexts – arises from the “raw” causal fact that my life is in a significant way affected by the decision. In many contexts, the practical application of the right is strictly tied to this fact; those who cannot prove that they are affected in the relevant sense - those who are not employees, customers, members etc. of the relevant organizations - have no right to be heard. In a sense, the right to participate in the nation-wide political decisions *may* also be seen as an instance of the weaker and more general right to be heard. But without additional premises, the right to be heard is insufficient to explain why hearing should take the form of equal, democratic participation. This could be explained only by appealing to the specific nature of the context, the modern state.

The All-Affected Principle is often used as a cornerstone in defences of global or transnational democracy. From my arguments it follows that the principle cannot have such status. It does not follow, however, that there is *no* case for global democratic institutions. There are difficult collective action problems on a transnational or global scale – global warming is only one example. It is possible that such problems cannot be solved without strong global institutions. In order to work, such institutions have to possess sufficient powers, including, perhaps, coercive powers, and, in order to prevent the misuse of these powers, these institutions may need democratic elements.

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