

Democrats without borders
A critique of transnational democracy

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Abstract

Some scholars claim that globalisation compels us to radically rethink democracy both in theory and practice. This dissertation disputes such claims by arguing against two suggested normative models of transnational democracy: cosmopolitan democracy and deliberative democracy.

The argument is arranged in two parts: The first part addresses the normative foundations of transnational democracy. Central in justifying claims for transnational democracy, the so-called all-affected principle states that those who are affected by political decisions have a right to participate in making them. Criticising the all-affected principle, I argue that a better criterion for determining the boundaries of democratic communities is a principle according to which all who are subject to the law ought to be included. Next, I criticise another central normative claim in transnational democratic theory: That there is no tension between human rights and democracy. However, by defining democracy as the implementation of a rigid scheme of human rights, cosmopolitan democracy leaves little scope for democratic politics. Deliberative democracy, on the other hand, insists that democracy and human rights are internally related or co-original, but this claim is problematic too, not least because it cannot justify international human rights in the absence of global democratic procedures.

Turning in the second part to the practical feasibility of transnational democracy, I argue that while cosmopolitan democracy suggests an ideal political order based on the dispersion of sovereign authority, it fails to acknowledge how a multi-level order would undermine central cosmopolitan objectives. Moreover, cosmopolitan democracy presents an ambiguous account of change in international order. Some theorists suggest that deliberative democracy provides a more feasible way of realising democracy in multi-level transnational governance, but I argue that in such settings, deliberative democracy has difficulties to overcome the problem of scale by means of representation.

Keywords: transnational democracy, cosmopolitan democracy, deliberative democracy, globalisation, human rights, democratic theory, international order.