

Three Challenges for Long-Term Decision-Making in Democracies: Boundaries, Knowledge, and Incentives

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Three Challenges:

- ▶ Temporal boundaries: how can we include those who are not present, and so cannot participate in decisions that will affect them?
- ▶ How can we know what those in the future might want or choose, so they can be represented?
- ▶ What kinds of incentives might we have to attend to the interests of future beings?

Long-term issues:

Collective decisions and collective omissions that affect future people, societies, institutions, and our environment, built and natural.



Institutions for long-term decision-making need to be:

- ▶ Responsive to those affected
- ▶ Deliberative
- ▶ High Capacity
- ▶ Trustworthy, stable, inter-temporal
- ▶ Democratic
- ▶ Democracy needs defending against eco-authoritarians and meritocrats; almost no examples of other regime types doing better.

The boundary problem

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- ▶ The All Affected Interest Principle
- ▶ Justinian Code: “what touches all must be approved by all.”
- ▶ The All Affected Interests Principle v. the membership/statist view of democracy
- ▶ In an interconnected world, decisions reverberate across boundaries
- ▶ The principle is usually used to think about cross-jurisdiction problems; we need to think about its temporal requirements

Specifying the All Affected Interests Principle

- ▶ A democratic principle (or norm) of inclusion, not a principle of political organization
- ▶ Relevant *interests* are those related to the goods of self-development and self-determination
- ▶ The relevant *affected* interests are those that significantly impact chances and opportunities for self-development and self-determination through (a) relationships of co-dependence and co-vulnerability, and (b) externalities of organized collective entities or structural phenomena such as markets
- ▶ Thus, scope of the principle is relative to effects that impact individuals' capacities for self-determination and self-development
- ▶ And claims for inclusion are proportional (not equal), relative to fundamental interests

The AAIP: included in *what*?

- ▶ The AAIP would expand entitlements for inclusion into complexes of effects for which there may not be organized collective agents
- ▶ These kinds of situations are not an argument against the AAIP. Rather, the AAIP should help to identify normatively important patterns of effects—latent constituencies (including latent future constituencies)—for which there are no responsible collective entities.

What can “inclusion” mean for future beings?

- ▶ Inclusion through representative relationships
- ▶ Representation isn't “democratic” because principals don't yet exist
- ▶ Analogy to representation of non-speaking beings: trees, whale, babies...
- ▶ These kinds of representation already exist– organizations like Greenpeace, or the Eduskunta's Committee for the Future

The AAIP as a principle of social justice

- ▶ Democracy provides individuals with influence over those collective interdependencies necessary to underwrite self-determination and self-development, and to protect against the harms of domination and oppression
- ▶ The AAIP captures these kinds of social justice relevant effects
- ▶ It follows that the AAIP is a principle of *proportional* (not equal) entitlement
- ▶ The AAIP should be viewed as a principle of equity, not equality
- ▶ What we owe future generations isn't equal consideration of their interests, but equitable consideration of essential interests

A knowledge problem

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- ▶ How can we know what the interests of future beings might be?
- ▶ This problem simply dissolves once we have a social justice account of the AAIP
- ▶ We should maintain conditions of self-development and self-determination (social justice): secure environments, sustainable sources of food and energy, clean air and water, education and healthcare, pension systems, systems that provide basic income security, etc.

Future institutions

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- ▶ The problem of identity is dissolved by institutional continuity
- ▶ The magic of institutions: they can make promises and take on commitments and obligations to future beings
- ▶ Need to invent institutions in those issue areas identified by the AAIP

Incentives?

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- ▶ Why should human beings today take the social justice interests of future beings into account, especially if they are costly?
- ▶ Two contrasting observations:
 - ▶ Humans tend to discount future rewards in favour of more immediate pay-offs
 - ▶ Humans are historical animals: few would wish to leave worlds that are worse than the worlds they inherited. Institutions function as repositories of investments

The marshmallow test...

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What characteristics institutions need to pass the marshmallow test:

- ▶ **Scope** that matches issues
- ▶ **Ownership**, so that rewards of investments are not captured by those who make no investments
- ▶ **Trustworthiness**, so that individual investments can scale in time and space
- ▶ **Deliberativeness**, so as to align interests, relate individual to collective reasons, and help to establish ownership of outcomes
- ▶ **Capacity** or power to address long-term issues, so that long-term incentives have a place to land. Need to integrate democratic innovations with “legacy” democratic institutions

Conclusion

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- ▶ Boundaries
- ▶ Knowledge
- ▶ Incentives
- ▶ Let's leave a better world to our children's children....