A Relational Egalitarian Solution to the Boundary Problem

Abstract. Who should have a say over governmental decisions? There are two prominent answers to this question. The first is the all-affected principle: it says that everyone whose interests are affected by government decisions should have influence over such decisions. The second is the all-subjected principle: it says that everyone subjected by government decisions should have influence over them. I argue that a relational egalitarian picture of democracy straightforwardly entails the all-subjected principle. According to this picture, democracy is valuable because it facilitates egalitarian relationships between citizens. It does that by giving them all equal political power. This, I argue, entails that all and only those subjected to the power of a state should have a say over that state's decisions. This is because having a say over a state's decisions gives one power over those subjected to those decisions. Thus, if you are subjected to those decisions but have no say over them, you are subordinated to those with a say. If you have a say over those decisions without being subjected to them, you subordinate those who are so subjected. So, to avoid subjecting people to subordination, the boundaries of the polity should match the boundaries of state power.

Keywords. The boundary problem · relational egalitarianism · democracy · power · global democracy

1. Introduction

Who should have a say over what a government does? Suppose the German government is deciding whether to approve a new power plant, to cuts its tax rates or to restrict its immigration policy. Who should have influence over such decisions? This question is at the root of what is often called the boundary problem.[1] The problem lies in determining what the boundaries of a democracy should be: who should get political influence in a democratic state? There are two competing solutions to this problem. The all-affected principle says that all those whose interests are affected by a government decision should have a say in it.[2] If a decision could make you better or worse off, than you should be given some influence over that decision. The all-subjected principle says that all those

---

[1] The term comes from Whelan (1983).

[2] For advocates, see Goodin (2007), Brighouse and Fleurbaey (2008), Owen (2012) and Fung (2013).

subjected by the government's decisions should have a say over those decisions.[3] If the government will force you to comply with its decisions, then you should have a say over what it decides. My aim in this paper is to show that a relational egalitarian picture of democracy straightforwardly supports the all-subjected principle. Insofar as democracy is about achieving egalitarian relationships, all and only those subjected to a state's power should have influence over its decisions.

The existing literature is evenly split between those who endorse these two contrary principles. And, on the face of it, there is much to be said for the all-affected principle. Interests are clearly of great normative import, and the fact that democracy allegedly promotes citizens' well-being is a common defense of democracy. It is appealing to answer a normative question about democracy in terms that are of general normative significance and that play a part in common justifications for democracy. Yet I think the all-affected principle is simply unsustainable. As I'll argue in Section 2, it both undergenerates and overgenerates. It says that some people needn't have influence over some decisions that they should have influence over, and that some people should have influence over some decisions they should have no influence over. On clear intuitive grounds, then, the all-affected principle is untenable. It has prima facie appeal, but it cannot be sustained in the face of contrary intuitions.

The leading alternative to the all-affected interests principle is the principle that, when you're forced to comply with a state's decisions, you should have influence over those decisions. As far as I know, the only justifications that has ever been offered for this idea are based on the idea that democracy protects autonomy.[4] The thought is that coercion is a weighty blow to our autonomy, and that to be forced to comply with a political decision means to be coerced into complying with it. So political decisions, or at least their enforcement, threaten people's autonomy. The further thought, which stems originally from Rousseau, is that democracy can draw the sting from this threat. When we have a say over a political decision, its enforcement no longer threatens our autonomy. In Rousseau's terms, "obedience to law one has prescribed oneself is liberty" (SC, 1.8.3) and so "the people, subjected to the law, should be their author" (SC 2.6.8); their authoring the law will stop state coercion from making them unfree. In contemporary terms, the claim is that being able to vote on what the state does means that the enforcement of state decisions doesn't impair our autonomy. So, to protect people's autonomy, at the least all those subjected to the laws should have a say over them.

---

[3] For advocates, see Lopez-Guerra (2005), Miller (2009), Beckman (2009) and Abizadeh (2008; 2012).

[4] See Lopez-Guerra (2005, 218–227), Miller (2009, 221–225), Abizadeh (2008, 39–48).

I do not think this is an adequate ground for the all-subjected principle. The basic issue is that this Rousseauian justification for democracy is very difficult to defend. It just isn't true that merely having a say over a decision means its enforcement won't impair my autonomy. Suppose that Socrates had had a vote in his own court case, that he had a say on whether he would be sentenced to death. Nonetheless, such a sentence would still clearly impair his freedom. Or suppose you're at a restaurant with your colleagues, and you're deciding how to split the bill. They all vote that you pay for everything, while you vote that everyone pays for what they ordered. If they coerce you into picking up the whole tab (for example, by threatening to deny you tenure), this is a blow to your autonomy. These cases have convinced many philosophers that merely having a say over a decision does not prevent the coercive enforcement of that decision from impairing your autonomy.[5] But then the Rousseauian defense of democracy is implausible and so, a fortiori, the Rousseauian justification of the all-subjected principle is hard to sustain. So, although we must reject the all-affected principle on intuitive grounds, we have no adequate underpinning for its leading alternative. This is a deeply unsatisfactory position to be in.

Fortunately, in recent years a different, non-Rousseauian, justification for democracy has been developed. This justification is rooted in relational egalitarian ideas about social equality and non-subordination. Relational egalitarians believe that people have a claim against being subjected to inegalitarian relationships.[6] They have a claim against being subordinated or dominated or made into social inferiors. Such inegalitarian relationships are in part constituted by asymmetries of power: to subordinate someone is in part to have more power over them than they have over you. And that, some think, justifies democracy: the equalities of power that characterize democracies are necessary to prevent relationships of subordination.[7] In Section 3, I argue that this picture of democracy provides an adequate underpinning for the all-subjected principle. If you're subjected to a state that you don't have power over, this gives those with power over that state asymmetric power over you. If you have power over a state you're not subjected to, this gives you asymmetric power over those who are subjected to that state. Thus, although the Rousseauian defense of this principle is untenable, it is also unnecessary; we can justify the all-subjected principle on egalitarian grounds. In Section 4, I show that this justification for democracy does not really commit us to global democracy, and that it provides straightforward solutions to the objections that have been raised to the all-subjected principle.

---

[5] For example, see Christiano (1996, ch.1), Kolodny (2014a) and Huemer (2013, ch.4).
[6] For some influential examples of this view, see Anderson (1999) and Scheffler (2003).
[7] For two versions of this view, see Kolodny (2014b) and Viehoff (2019).

2. The All-Affected Principle

It really would be simplest if the all-affected principle was sustainable. It's an intuitively attractive view, rooted in terms of clear more import. So let's start by showing why, unfortunately, it simply isn't plausible. We'll first need a clear formulation of the principle. In its most general form, the all-affected principles says that all and only those whose interests will be promoted or frustrated by a political decision should have influence over that decision. Here a decision is a choice between various options. A political decision is a decision made by a state. To have influence over a decision is to be able to make it more likely that some option is chosen. This does not require that one be able to decide on one's own which option will be chosen, but it requires one can make it more probable that a certain option is chosen. The notion of interests here is the notion that matters to well-being. One's interests are promoted when one's well-being is increased or (equivalently) one's life is improved. One's interests are frustrated when one's well-being is decreased or (equivalently) one's life if worsened. Thus, another way to state the all-affected principle is as the principle that we should have influence over a political decision if and only if it affect how well our lives go. Let us now see what seem to me some very serious problems for the principle.[8]

On the one hand, the all-affected principle undergenerates. It says that we shouldn't have influence over decisions when, intuitively speaking, we should. Here I want to draw the reader's attention to two problem cases for the principle. The first is the case of trivial decisions. These are cases where all the options leave people in roughly the same situation. Perhaps the best example is a close fought election with ideologically identical parties.[9] Suppose the As and the Bs are competing for office, but they both have basically the same policy platform and the same kinds of candidate. In this case, for most citizens, it doesn't matter who wins the election; government policy will be the same in any case. Yet, intuitively, people should get a vote even in such elections. Such elections aren't the only example of trivial decisions. Suppose we're deciding what to name our country or what flag to choose or when to have elections. None of these may make any difference to the well-being of most citizens. Yet, intuitively, citizens should have a say. The all-affected principle implies that people shouldn't have a say over trivial decisions when, sometimes, they should.

A second class of cases involve incommensurable options. Suppose you're deciding whether to be a doctor or an artist. It'd be misleading to call this a trivial

---

[8] I haven't seen most of the below cases in the literature before. But for somewhat different counterexamples to the principle, see Nozick (1974, 269–71) and Miklosi (2012).

[9] For this example, see Bergstrom (2007).

decision; it'll have a big impact on your life. But the life of a doctor and an artist are incommensurable, in the sense that neither is better than the other but nor are they equally as good. They are so different that they cannot be compared.[10] This also goes for many important political decisions. Suppose the state is deciding whether to raise wealth taxes or income taxes, whether to establish a national health service or a system of public health insurance, whether to invest in infrastructure or in technological research. The options here may often have incommensurable outcomes for you: the outcomes are very different, but neither are better or worse for you, yet nor are they equally as good. And so in none of these decisions does the state's choice actually affect your interests; none of them make your life better or worse. Yet, intuitively, you should nonetheless have an influence over these decisions. The all-affected principle implies, incorrectly, that people shouldn't have a say over choices between any incommensurable options.

Is there any way to revise the principle to resolve these issues? One might think that the issue is that it focuses on decisions rather than organizations. Following Fung (2013), one way to reformulate the principle is to thus focus it on organizations. Perhaps when your interests are affected by an organization's decisions, you should have some influence over that organization. This means you needn't be affected by each such decision to have a claim to a say over how the organization makes the decisions. You need just have a say over the organization's decision-making procedures. But we can rather easily modify the cases to address this reformulation. Let's see how to do this with the issue of incommensurability. Consider a governmental organization that only weighs in on choices that have big impacts on citizens' lives but in which citizens' lives would be incommensurable between different options. None of this organization's decisions affect the interests of citizens, in the sense that none make citizens better or worse off. Yet, intuitively, citizens should have an influence over this organization. So this reformulation does not escape the issue of undergeneration. Perhaps there is some other reformulation of the all-affected principle that does deal with the problem. But, on the face of it, the principle is not extensionally adequate.

Let's turn to the problem of overgeneration. The all-affected principle implies that some people should have influence over decisions that they shouldn't have any influence over. We'll just consider one class of cases to make this clear: cases when a group is deciding whether to do something supererogatory. Imagine that there's been serious flooding in Germany and a town council in England is deciding whether to send support. England is a wet place, prone to flooding; the council has the skills and resources to do a lot of good in the affected area. Yet, for all

---

[10] For more on incommensurability, see Raz (1986, ch.13).

that, they're not obligated to send relief. In this case, what the town council decides affects the interests of the inundated Germans; they'll be better off if the council offers a helping hand. So the all-affected principle says that the Germans should have a say in whether the council offers up its resources. Yet, intuitively, that is incorrect. It's perfectly permissible for the English to make this decision on their own. We might commend them for making the charitable decision, but they aren't obliged to give Germans a vote. So the all-affected principle implies that some people should have influence over decisions when they should have any such influence.

It's not obvious how one might revise the principle in order to evade this sort of counterexample. One way, inspired by a suggestion from David Owen (2012), is to say that one only has a claim to a say over a decision when one's legitimate interests are affected by it. Legitimate interests are those that the decisionmakers have an obligation to consider. Yet this revision doesn't address the counterexample. The Germans do have legitimate interests that are affected by the decisions of the English. The English are subject to obligations of beneficence; they should consider how their actions affect Germans' well-being (although they needn't let such considerations dominate their decision-making). So this version of the all-affected principle would still imply that the English council should give the Germans a say in its charitable program. Alternatively, one might say that the all-affected principle applies only to decisions when there is an obligatory option. It is only when an option in a choice set is required that all (and only) affected interests must be enfranchised. Yet this modification saps the all-affected principle of almost all of its force. For many political decisions, there is no obligatory option. Governments often face many options all of which have different virtues, and so none of which are obligatory. This revision leaves the principle silent in many practical political contexts. So, again, the all-affected principle simply seems extensionally inadequate.

The upshot of this is that the all-affected principle clashes sharply with our intuitions about who should and shouldn't get a say in particular decisions. These intuitions are, I think, evidence: when a view clashes with our considered judgments about cases, that is reason to reject the view. That grounds a strong prima facie case against the all-affected principle. Perhaps there is some way to reformulate it to deal with these counterexamples; but I don't know of any such way. I suspect that the principle is unsustainable. So we better hope we can find a proper ground for the all-subjected principle.

3. The Relational Egalitarian Argument

I've claim that grounding the all-subjected principle in a Rousseauian justification of democracy is problematic, because such justifications are doubtful. It just doesn't seem like getting to vote on the laws that we're forced to comply with makes that enforcement entirely compatible with our autonomy. This isn't fatal to the all-subjected principle; we might endorse it without having an adequate ground for it. But this position would be deeply unsatisfactory. Ideally, we would ground our solution to the boundary problem in a compelling account of what makes democracy valuable. It would be a failure if the boundary problem was "insoluble within the terms of democratic theory" (Whelan 1983, 16). Yet it is too soon to resign ourselves to such a failure. The challenges to Rousseau's view have sparked an alternative, relational egalitarian, justification of democracy. We will start by spelling out this position.

The basic idea behind this view is that people have claims against being subjected to certain sorts of relationships.[11] Consider the relationship of master to slave or lord to peasant. These are inegalitarian relationships, or relationships of subordination. This is, at least in part, because they are marked by asymmetric power: masters have more power over slaves than vice versa. People have a claim against subordination, and thus a claim against being subject to asymmetries of power. That means we owe it to people not to subordinate them and to free them from subordination. We wrong someone by wielding asymmetric power over them or by letting such power be wielded, in a way akin to how we wrong people by hitting them or breaking promises to them. The idea here, to emphasize, is that claims against subordination are a basic part of our moral furniture: they should not be understood in terms of the bad causal consequences of subordination or its tendency to generate other rights violations. We have a fundamental right not to be subjected to asymmetric power.

It'll be useful to say more about what asymmetric power is. Here, to be clear, we want to locate the concept of power that matters to inegalitarian relationships. There are, it seems to me, two natural views on this. One view says that you have power over someone when you can affect how well their life goes; you can impact their well-being. You have asymmetric power over someone when you can impact their well-being more than they can impact your well-being. But this is not, in fact, a very plausibly view. Consider a case of incommensurability. Suppose you're deciding whether to be a doctor or an artist and your father forces you to be a doctor; he is a powerful politician, and he calls up all the art schools (and, indeed, suppliers) and has you blackballed. Here your father exercises power over you in

---

[11] For this thought, see n.6 and n.7.

the sense relevant to inegalitarian relationships: you are subordinated by your father's power over you. But he might not have affected your well-being. The life of a doctor might be no worse than that of an artist and vice versa. So power doesn't consist solely in impacting someone's well-being.

A second, more plausible, view is that you have power over someone when you can affect how they act. Thus, you have asymmetric power over someone when you can have a bigger effect on how they act than they can have on how you act. This explains the paradigm cases of inegalitarian relationships neatly. Masters have much more ability to affect how their slaves act than vice versa; lords have much ability to affect how peasants act than the other way around. And, in the case just discussed, your father affects how you act rather than affecting your well-being. Thus, let us use this notion of power going forward.[12] We should think asymmetric power, in this sense, generates inegalitarian relationships. To be clear, I'm not denying that other senses of power may be important for certain purposes. But I'm claiming that the kind of subordination people have claims against can be understood, in part, in terms of asymmetric abilities to affect how people act. You have a claim against me being able to determine what you do without you having any impact over what I do.

That is the relational egalitarian background theory. Now let us see how it supports democracy. The important point is that influence over what the state does is an extremely important kind of influence. This is because the state has a pervasive impact on its citizens lives; it has a wide-ranging effect on what its citizens do. Primarily, this derives from the coercive tools the state has at its disposal. If you do not comply with a state decision, it can throw you in jail. It can send armed men to your house to take you away. This gives a well-functioning state a degree of power over its citizens that is simply unrivalled by any other organization within its territory. But to have power over an organization that has power over you just is to have power over you, at least in almost all realistic cases. So, if I have influence over what the state does, then this gives me power over you. If you don't have any influence over what the state does, then, ceteris paribus, you have no such power over me. Here the ceteris paribus clause asks us to imagine that you don't have power over me through some other non-state means: you don't, for example, have an armed gang of non-state thugs that can coerce me. When this clause holds, then asymmetric influence over the state yields interpersonal power asymmetries, and so violates claims against subordination. To avoid such asymmetries, all citizens must have equal influence over what the state does. But this just is to institute democracy. So, on this view, democracy is justified

---

[12] This view is widely endorsed. See Dahl (1957), Harsanyi (1962) and Forst (2015).

because it facilitates equalities of power, and that prevents people from subordinating one another.

This is the relational egalitarian picture of democracy. We now turn to how it provides a solution to the boundary problem. Consider any group of people who are subjected to a state's power. These are the people whose actions that state can impact. They are, primarily, people the state can tax or imprison or provide benefits to. Those with power over what that state does have power over everyone in this group. This is because they have the power to change the state's decisions, and that gives them power to alter what those in this group do. Thus, suppose some of the people in this group have power over the state and some don't. Then those with such power have power over those without it, but not vice versa. Now suppose, further, that all else is equal: this power inequality is not balanced out by some other kind of power inequality. Those without power over this state don't have some substantial alternative way to influence those with power over this state. Thus, in this case, the fact some lack power over this state leads to objectionably inegalitarian relationships: the powerful subordinate the powerless. But we should try to avoid such relationships, and so everyone in this group should have power over what the state does. So we establish the right-left of the all-subjected principle: ceteris paribus, if you are subjected to state power, then you should have a say over what the state does.

Should anyone else have a say over what the state does? No. For suppose that someone who isn't subjected to the power over a given state has influence over what that state did. Imagine, for example, that Americans had a large influence over what the Haitian state did, even though the Haitian state had little influence over American state. Then this would give Americans power over Haitians via their influence over the Haitian state, but Haitians would have no reciprocal power over Americans. And suppose, further, that all else is equal: the power the Americans have over Haitians via their influence over the American state is not balanced out by power Haitians have over Americans through some other route. Then this would create an asymmetry of power between Haitians and Americans, and that would subordinate the former to the latter. More generally, if those not subjected to a state's power have power over that state, then that generates relationships of subordination. So we establish the left-right of the all-subjected principle: ceteris paribus, you should have a say over what a state does only if you are subjected to its power.

Let's put this together. The version of the all-subjected principle that this gets us is[13]

---

[13] This is most like the version of the principle in Abizadeh (2012) and Erman (2014).

AS: Ceteris paribus, you should have influence over what a state does if and only if you are subjected to the power of that state.

Let's clarify two things about this principle. For one thing, the *ceteris paribus* clause at the start of this principle captures the assumption that, besides whatever influence you may have over the state, your power over other people is not asymmetrical. If it isn't, then we can balance out that asymmetry of power by not giving you power over the state. This is a simplifying assumption. It just lets us briefly express the core idea that being subjected to state power gives one a prima facie claim to influence over the decisions of that state. For another thing, note that (as in Fung 2013) this principle is focused on an organization—the state— rather than on particular decisions. This is simply because states bundle decisions together. I might be forced to comply with one state decision, and you another. So your influence over the first decision won't give you asymmetric power over me, as long as I have influence over the second decision. That makes it more illuminating to focus on influence over the state's decision-making than over every individual decision. With these points of clarification in mind this principle provides a solution to the boundary problem: the proper boundaries of a democratic state should be set at those subjected to the power of that state. And the solution is firmly rooted in contemporary democratic theory. It derives from a relational egalitarian account of democracy.

As it stands, this principle (AS) is a little crude. It just says when you should have some modicum of influence over state decisions, not how much influence you should have over the. Yet it is straightforward to extend it to cover the scalar nature of such influence. Specifically, the more you are subject to state power, the more influence you should have over the state's decisions. This is because if you're more subjected to state power than other people have more influence over you. Hence in order to avoid an asymmetry of power, you should have more influence over the state. This will give you more influence over other people, and so balance out your vulnerability. This extension has some interesting, and plausible, consequences. Roughly, it means that the most vulnerable to a state's power should have more influence over that state's decisions. If state decisions have a bigger impact on what you do (perhaps because you're too poor to emigrate), than you should have more influence over them. Those most vulnerable to state power should have the most influence over the exercise of that power.

Let's compare AS with two other versions of the all-subjected principle. A different version of this principle says that you should have influence over a state if and only if its laws apply to you.[14] A law applies to someone, roughly, if it tells them that they must do something. AS is starkly distinct from this law-based

---

[14] Goodin (2016) favors this as the version of the all-subjected principle.

principle. That's because a state's laws can apply to people even when that state has relatively little power over those people. Monaco could pass a law tomorrow that every Canadian with red hair must pay it $100 in tax. This would bring Canadians under the coverage of Monacan laws, but it wouldn't give Monaco any more power over Canadians. So, on AS, it doesn't matter whether the state's laws apply to you or not. It is a mistake to think that unenforced, and often unenforceable, rules have any deep significance to democratic theory. What matters is whether the state has power over you.

A second version of the all-subjected principle says that you should have influence over a state if it and only if it can coerce you.[15] AS is very closely connected to this coercion-based principle because, as I've mentioned, the ability to coerce is the primary source of state power. If someone can coerce you, they usually have very broad influence over what you do. Yet we need not interpret AS as equivalent to this coercion-based principle. Plausibly, there are ways states can influence what people do without coercing them. They can threaten them with the withdrawal of aid. They can pay them to do things. They can simply order them around and take advantage of their disposition to obey. None of these involve coercion in at least the "threatening violence" sense of coercion. So, AS is closely connected to, but somewhat broader than, the coercion-based version of the all-subjected principle. What matters is not whether the state can coerce you but again whether it has power over you more broadly.

That completes the relational argument for the all-subjected principle. This, in my view, provides it with a sound theoretical grounding. We can believe it without endorsing shaky Rousseauian ideas about democracy. I think that justifies taking it to be the correct solution to the boundary problem: the borders of the polity should match the borders of state power. In the next section, we'll explore some of the implications of this conclusion.

4. Implications

The most widely discussed implication of solutions to the boundary problem concerns global democracy. Specifically, several people who adopt the all-affected principle claim that it entails we should set up a world government where political decision are made democratically, or at the least that everyone should get a say over the decisions of every state.[16] Only by doing this, they think can we give everyone a say in every decision that affects them. Is global democracy required

---

[15] See Miller (2009) for this version of the principle.
[16] Most influentially, Goodin (2007).

by the relational egalitarian solution to the boundary problem? No.[17] Now, it is true that each state probably has a little bit of power over everyone in the world. Even tiny Monaco has some power over you; it can prevent you from going to Monaco. But that doesn't mean that Monacans have asymmetric power over you. That's because your state also has power over individual Monacans. If you have power over your state, then that can balance out the sort of power the Monacans have over you. The key point here is that the ceteris paribus clause in AS need not be satisfied when it comes to your relationship with Monacans. You have power over them through other channels than through direct power over the Monacan state; you have power over your state, and that gives you power over the Monacans. So the Monacans have no special reason to enfranchise you.

More generally, the relational egalitarian solution to the boundary problem is compatible with several alternatives to global democracy. One would be to split the world into equally powerful states and give everyone equal influence over their state. A second would be to allow states of unequal power but ensure that those in more powerful states had relatively less influence over what their state did than those in less powerful states. A natural way to think of this is in terms of population. If state power was a function of population size, and each state was democratic, then as states got more powerful each individual would have less power over what their state did. So states of unequal power could coexist without any asymmetries of power between individuals. The all-subjected principle in the version above, in contrast to the all-affected principle, does not commit us to global democracy.

Now, obviously, that doesn't mean the actual world is a world of ideal relational equality. There are vast differences of power between existing states, and they do not perfectly match differences in population. The United States, for example, is much more powerful than India despite having a much smaller population. Global democracy could solve this problem. So should we pursue global democracy after all? That seems doubtful. Global democracy is pretty obviously unfeasible in the medium-term. It is not the slightest bit clear how anyone would go about convincing the sovereign states that exist in the world right now to cede their power to an overarching world government. We can't even get European states to reliably cede their power to the European Union. Plausibly, we should try to pursue remotely feasible solution to our problems. And a more feasible solution to transnational inequalities is strengthening and making more democratic currently weaker countries. Really, that hinges on helping these countries grow economically; economic strength is the root source of national power. So global

---

[17] Goodin (2016) argues (incorrectly, on my view) that any tenable version of the all-subjected principle requires us to enact global democracy.

democracy might be nice, but our solution to the boundary problem doesn't require us to pursue such an obviously unfeasible target. We are likely better off supporting economic growth in low-income countries.

Let me consider the plausibility of some other implications of the all-subjected principle. Robert Goodin (2007) thinks it has two very implausible implications and on these grounds dismisses it. First, he imagines that Germany is deciding whether to build a big factory on its Northern coast which would drop pollution onto Scandinavia (2007, 49–50). He claims that Swedes should have a say in the German decision. But he also claims that Swedes aren't subjected to German laws, and so the all-subjected principle undergenerates. It says Swedish people needn't have a say in German decision-making when they should. It should now be clear where he's gone wrong; the laws might not 'apply' to Swedes, but Swedes are surely subjected to the power of the German state. The German state obviously has power over the Swedes. So that gives Swedes prima facie claim to have influence over the German state's decisions. That doesn't mean they must get the vote in Germany. They might have influence on Germany decisions via influence on the Swedish government. But, one way or another, the all-subjected principle has the correct implication in this case: it says that Swedes should have some power over German decision-making and so, a fortiori, on the decision of whether to build the factory.

The second issue Goodin raises concerns transients (2007, n.20).[18] He thinks temporary visitors to a country, such as tourists or ship captains, are subjected to the laws of that countries, and so by the all-subjected principle they should have a say over these laws. But, he thinks, intuitively they should have no such say. The correct thing to say about this case, I think, is that one can waive, temporarily, one's claims against subordination. Suppose, for example, that you become the pupil of some guru, or decide to take part in a BDSM relationship. In both cases you've voluntarily subjected yourself to someone else's asymmetric power. And in both cases, I think, that waives your claim against being subject to asymmetric power. You retain your right to exit the relationship of course; you haven't permanently alienated the claim. You've just temporarily waived it. The same is true, I think, for transients. By visiting a country, they waive their claim to not be subjected to the asymmetric power of that country's citizens. So, as long as they retain their ability to leave easily, denying them the vote is not problematic. That means we do have to modify the all-subjected principle somewhat. Really, it should say that you have a claim to influence over a state if and only if you're subjected to the power of that state and haven't waived your claim against subordination by those with influence over the state. But this reformulation is well

---

[18] He gets the example from Dahl (1989, 126).

within the relational egalitarian framework. This framework, then, can straightforwardly address the most salient objections that have been made to the all-subjected principle.

5. Conclusion

What are the proper boundaries of democratic decision-making? As we've seen, there are two main answers to this question: the boundaries might be drawn at all those who are affected by decisions or at all those who are subjected to those decisions. The all-affected principle has a lot of prima facie appeal, but it just seems unsustainable in the face of straightforward counterexamples. However, heretofore, the only justification that has been given for the all-subjected principle rests on a dubious Rousseauian justification of democracy. This is not a happy position to be in. Fortunately, so I've claimed, egalitarian justifications for democracy can resolve the issue. The all-subjected principle follows very straightforwardly from the view that democracy is valuable because it expunges asymmetries of power. And so it seems to me that the all-subjected principle is a fully satisfactory solution to the boundary problem. The boundaries of the democratic state should be drawn at the boundaries of that state's power.

Bibliography

Abizadeh, Arash. "Democratic Theory and Border Coercion: No Right to Unilaterally Control Your Own Borders." *Political Theory* 36, no. 1 (2008): 37–65.

———. "On the Demos and Its Kin: Nationalism, Democracy, and the Boundary Problem." *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 4 (November 2012): 867–82. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055412000421.

Anderson, Elizabeth. "What Is the Point of Equality?" *Ethics* 109, no. 2 (1999): 287–337.

Beckman, L. *The Frontiers of Democracy: The Right to Vote and Its Limits.* Springer, 2009.

Bergström, Lars. "Democracy and Political Boundaries." *Stockholm Studies in Democratic Theory* 3 (2007): 147.

Christiano, Thomas. *The Rule of the Many: Fundamental Issues in Democratic Theory.* Boulder: Westview Press, 1996.

Dahl, Robert. "The Concept of Power." *System Research and Behavioral Science* 2, no. 3 (1957): 201–15.

Dahl, Robert A. *Democracy and Its Critics*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.

Erman, Eva. "The Boundary Problem and the Ideal of Democracy." *Constellations* 21, no. 4 (2014): 535–46. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.12116.

Forst, Rainer. "Noumenal Power." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 23, no. 2 (2015): 111–27. https://doi.org/10.1111/jopp.12046.

Fung, Archon. "The Principle of Affected Interests: An Interpretation and Defense." In *Representation*, edited by Jack Nagel and Rogers Smith, 236–68. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013. https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812208177.236.

Gädeke, Dorothea. "Does a Mugger Dominate? Episodic Power and the Structural Dimension of Domination." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 28, no. 2 (2020): 199–221. https://doi.org/10.1111/jopp.12202.

Goodin, Robert E. "Enfranchising All Affected Interests, and Its Alternatives." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 35, no. 1 (2007): 40–68. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1088-4963.2007.00098.x.

———. "Enfranchising All Subjected, Worldwide." *International Theory* 8, no. 3 (November 2016): 365–89. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752971916000105.

Harsanyi, John C. "Measurement of Social Power, Opportunity Costs, and the Theory of Two-Person Bargaining Games." *Behavioral Science* 7, no. 1 (1962): 67–80. https://doi.org/10.1002/bs.3830070105.

Huemer, Michael. *The Problem of Political Authority: An Examination of the Right to Coerce and the Duty to Obey*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Kolodny, Niko. "Rule Over None I: What Justifies Democracy?" *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 42, no. 3 (2014): 195–229. https://doi.org/10.1111/papa.12035.

———. "Rule Over None II: Social Equality and the Justification of Democracy." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 42, no. 4 (2014): 287–336.

Lopez-Guerra, Claudio. "Should Expatriates Vote?" *Journal of Political Philosophy* 13, no. 2 (2005): 216–34. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9760.2005.00221.x.

Miklosi, Zoltan. "Against the Principle of All-Affected Interests." *Social Theory and Practice* 38, no. 3 (2012): 483–503.

Miller, David. "Democracy's Domain." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 37, no. 3 (2009): 201–28. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1088-4963.2009.01158.x.

Nozick, Robert. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. New York: Blackwell, 1974.

Owen, David. "Constituting the Polity, Constituting the Demos: On the Place of the All Affected Interests Principle in Democratic Theory and in Resolving the Democratic Boundary Problem." *Ethics & Global Politics* 5,

no. 3 (January 1, 2012): 129–52.
https://doi.org/10.3402/egp.v5i3.18617.

Raz, Joseph. *The Morality of Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Social Contract*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968.

Scheffler, Samuel. "What Is Egalitarianism?" *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 31, no. 1
(2003): 5–39.

Viehoff, Daniel. "Power and Equality." In *Oxford Studies in Political Philosophy
Volume 5*, edited by David Sobel, Peter Vallentyne, and Steven Wall, 3–
37. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Whelan, Frederick. "Democratic Theory and the Boundary Problem." *Nomos* 25
(1983): 13–47.