Discrimination, Democracy, and Future Generations

Abstract: My plan is to explore the following two topics within this project:

(1) Discrimination and the non-identity problem

I will explore whether decisions affecting the existence and welfare of future people can be said to discriminate against future people. Theories of discrimination which define it, and analyse its moral wrongness, in terms of a comparative counterfactual welfarist account of harm (Cf. Lippert-Rasmussen 2014) risk falling prey to the non-identity problem. But could we make a case for discrimination against future groups, rather than individuals? And how do other theories of discrimination fare, which focus on alternative accounts of harm, or on e.g. the agent’s intentions, or the social meaning of her actions?

(2) Democracy and future generations

The principle of proportionality states: “*Power in any decision-making process should be proportional to individual stakes*.” (Brighouse & Fleurbaey 2008) How does the idea of ‘stakes’ play out when the decisions affect future generations? Which varieties of ‘power’ would be applicable in these cases? Combining different interpretations of these terms should give us some models of decision-making whose workability and attractiveness we can evaluate. If no plausible models emerge, we may have to go back to the principle of proportionality and assess its limitations.