

Participation or Representation? Two Models of Bringing Women into Politics

The question of underrepresentation of women in decision-making is one of the most important issues of feminist thought. Within inquiry of this problem the terms „political representation of women” and „political participation of women” are often used as synonyms without considering their different sense. The aim of this thesis is to show that concepts of „representation” and „participation” refer to two different ways of justifying bringing more women into politics. The first type can be considered as stronger claim due to carrying two additional questions – who and what should women in politics actually represent. In my view representation is connected first with the issue of interests and second with some concept of women’s identity. The second type – participation – is presented as weaker claim in the sense of demanding “only” actual access to rights which are formally secured for women (or rather persons identified as women) on the basis of justice. Practical use of these two models is illustrated on the case of affirmative action and its justification.

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