



Who Elected Oxfam?

Non-elected actors, such as non-governmental organizations and celebrity activists, present themselves as representatives of others to audiences of decision-makers, such as state leaders, the European Union, the United Nations, and the World Trade Organization. These actors are increasingly included in the deliberation and decision-making processes of such institutions. To take one well-known example, the non-governmental organization Oxfam presses decision-makers and governments for fair trade rules on behalf of the world's poor. What entitles such "self-appointed representatives" to speak and act for the poor? As *The Economist* asked, "Who elected Oxfam?" Montanaro claims that such actors can, and should, be conceptualized as representatives and that they can – though do not always – represent others in a manner that we can recognize as democratic. However, in order to do so, we must stretch our imaginations beyond the standard normative framework of elections.

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A Democratic Defense of Self-Appointed
Representatives

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