

Special Issue: Power and Sovereignty Across Generations

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Debates in intergenerational justice involve what different generations owe one another. These discussions tend to focus on a narrow set of concerns such as wellbeing and resources. Much less attention has been given to fundamental political concerns with power and sovereignty. This special issue seeks to address this gap in the literature, examining these issues both in the context of 1) *non-overlapping generations* as well as 2) *age groups*. In the first case, to what extent should generations be sovereign? In the second, are there reasons to worry about increasing discrepancies in power between younger and older citizens?

1) *Non-overlapping generations*

Non-overlapping generations have been the main topic in intergenerational justice. Recent debates have been dominated by ‘longtermism’, the view that positively influencing the long-term future is a key moral priority of our time, given the vast amount of wellbeing at stake. This view, however, may be in tension with generational sovereignty: the more the interests of the future dictate the lives of present generations, the more the latter’s sovereignty is threatened.

This raises the question: how much power should generations have over each other? At one end, there is the idea of full generational sovereignty. Famously, Thomas Jefferson claimed that “[t]he Earth belongs to the living and not to the dead” and that “by the law of nature, one generation is to another, as one independent nation is to another.” Of course, however, we may wonder whether Jefferson’s view is entirely compelling. But how, then, should we think about questions of power and sovereignty across non-overlapping generations, as well as related notions such as self-determination, subjection, freedom, domination, and relational equality? These issues are of philosophical as well as practical significance, as many nations have, for instance, begun to incorporate constitutional provisions for the long-term future.

2) *Age groups*

In terms of *overlapping generations*, there are also important questions related to the distribution of power across age groups. Virtually every society is ageing, meaning that the proportion of older individuals is increasing. For instance, the proportion of people aged 65 and over is in many countries over 20% or higher. This translates into higher responsiveness to the interests of older citizens versus those of the young, exacerbating political—as well as economic and social—inequality between young and old.

This raises questions about the kind of balance of power that should be secured for various age groups. On the one hand, we may think this is not a significant concern, if each person will come to belong to each age group across their life as a whole. On the other hand, we might think that there are good reasons to be concerned with power imbalances at each stage of people’s lives. While the literature is beginning to acknowledge the importance of power relations between age groups, the relevant concerns have not yet been spelled out in enough detail. In this regard, it is important to consider proposals including lowering the voting age, disenfranchising elderly, or youth quotas in parliament. And it is important to consider whether these issues should be thought in terms of wellbeing, resources, capabilities, non-domination, equal status, or something else.

It will be fruitful to consider these issues regarding age-groups in conjunction with those regarding non-overlapping generations, as there are important intersections. For example, it may be that we have reason to increase the power of the young in the interest of unborn future

generations. However, it could be that securing an appropriate balance of power between age groups will in some way prevent or hinder us from discharging our duties of justice towards future people.

Papers should be submitted by **May 31th, 2024**, and should be between 3.000 and 12.000 words in length. All submissions will undergo MOPP's double-blind refereeing process. Papers will only be accepted for publication in the Special Issue if they are approved for publication by both the guest editors and the journal's founding editors. Manuscripts are submitted via ScholarOne at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/mopp>.