

Chapter 16

Youth quotas, diversity and long-termism: can young people act as proxies for future generations? *

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Abstract:

Young people are often referred to as guardians of the future or “trustees of posterity” - as Disraeli claimed in 1845. We may thus wonder whether empowering the young politically can be a fruitful way of increasing the representation of future interests. Drawing on this common sense connection, this chapter considers the proposal of introducing youth quotas in parliaments to increase the representation of the interests of future generations. It assesses whether the intuitive idea that young people are ideally suited proxies for future generations can resist careful scrutiny. The paper is structured along three lines of arguments in support for youth quotas: the higher stake, the stronger concern, and the diversity argument. I assess them in turn and show that, while the two first lines of arguments face serious difficulties, the last one shows more promise.

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1 Other proposals that rely on reforms to electoral laws to promote long-termism include enfranchising children and introducing proxy votes for parents.

"The Youth of a Nation are the trustees of Posterity"
(Disraeli [1845] 1998, 422)

*"Youth has always been the repository of anger about
the present and the harbinger of a better tomorrow."*
(Standing 2011, 66)

16.1 The proposal

Overcoming short-termism is one of the greatest challenges facing current political societies. As far as the loss of biodiversity and global warming are concerned, we have most probably passed many points of no return and will pass many more in the near future. Proposals for guardians or representatives for future generations are therefore widely discussed and experimented. Examples of such mechanisms include the Hungarian Parliamentary Commissioner for Future Generations, and the proposal for an International Ombudsperson for Future Generations.

This chapter considers a representative mechanism that has attracted little attention so far: the introduction of youth quotas in parliament (henceforth YQs). As Disraeli ([1845] 1998: 422) suggested as early as 1845 "the Youth of a Nation are the trustees of Posterity". Young people have a higher interest in long-termism than older people; we may thus speculate that youth-ing parliaments could help in furthering political long-termism. This chapter discusses whether the intuitive idea that young people can act as proxies for future generations can resist careful scrutiny. It assesses whether increasing the number of young parliamentarians below the age of 30 years old should increase our chances of meeting our obligations of justice towards future generations.

As a general rule, young people between the age of 18 and 30 years old are underrepresented in parliaments (Berry 2012; Inter-Parliamentary Union 2012). The global average age of parliamentarians is 53 years old when the median age of the

global population is 26 (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2012). Drawing on existing examples of youth quotas in the form of a few reserved seats for young people in parliament in Uganda, Kenya and Morocco, the UNDP (2013: 22) urges us to “consider the introduction of youth quotas in electoral laws” to enhance the political participation of young people in formal politics. The proposal I wish to consider consists in securing a significant number of seats (for instance at least 10% of seats) for young people under the age of 30 years old, thus ‘youth-ing’ parliaments.¹ In the UK, for instance, fewer than 3% of MPs are below the age of 30 years old when they are elected.

Youth quotas would be easier to introduce in proportional elections than in first-past-the post systems. In proportional systems with party lists, it is relatively easy for parties to meet quota regulations in general, because there is a larger pool of candidates to pick from. The Moroccan parliament, for instance, which has youth quotas (30 reserved seats for under 40 year olds) in place, operates with a list system, which facilitates the operation of these quotas. In non-proportional systems, parties would need to put forward young people in safe seats and it would be more difficult to meet their targets.²

YQs are primarily tools of justice between *overlapping* generations (Berry 2012, Bidadanure 2015, UNDP 2013). As I have argued elsewhere, youth quotas could contribute in enhancing the *substantive* representation of youth interests. The presence of younger MPs helps ensure that youth concerns (such as unemployment, underemployment, tuition fees, affordable housing) are sufficiently included in deliberations. Youth quotas can also play a *symbolic* role in attesting the political

1 Other proposals that rely on reforms to electoral laws to promote long-termism include enfranchising children and introducing proxy votes for parents.

2 There is very little data and research on the few experiments with youth quotas in Africa, and learning more from these experiments is critical to identify strategies for successful implementation elsewhere.

equality of young citizens. However small the substantive effect of quotas is on policy outcomes, there are independent reasons for youth quotas related to the positive effects of the descriptive representation of marginalised groups for their self-image, for undermining prejudices and for social cohesion. These two kinds of reasons offer a good basis for a *politics of youth presence* in parliament on grounds of justice between overlapping generations.³

This chapter takes on a more long-termist challenge: it focuses on whether we can also deploy an argument for YQs on grounds of justice for future generations. To be sure, the previously mentioned substantive arguments for YQs are also long-termist, since youth interests are in large part diachronic and concern their lifespan as a whole. Young parliamentarians can contribute to promoting the interests of the young, with implications for the next 30 or 50 years. In this chapter, however, I focus on a longer time frame. I ask whether and how YQs can also play a role in addressing our obligations of justice towards *unborn* future generations. Unless stated otherwise, when I use the phrase “long-termist”, it will thus concern the range of policy deliberations that take adequate account of the interests of distant future generations.

The arguments I highlight in this paper are not meant to be necessary or sufficient to the case for YQs. As I have already mentioned, there are several normative justifications for YQs that fall within the scope of justice between overlapping generations. Nonetheless, if YQs could be shown to serve the interests of distant future generations too – as I investigate in this chapter - this would give us an additional reason to support the policy. It would make us confident that increasing the number of young parliamentarians is not only justifiable on grounds of justice between *overlapping* generations, but also on grounds of intergenerational justice *tout court*.

³ For the full argument on why we need a “politics of youth, presence” see Bidadanure (2015). I draw primarily on Anne Philips (1995) and Jane Mansbridge (1999).

The chapter will be structured into three kinds of long-termist arguments for YQs (listed below). I evaluate the three arguments in turn and conclude by establishing under which conditions YQs can be instruments of justice towards future generations.

- *The higher stake argument*: young people should be better represented than they currently are because they have a higher stake in the future than older people (section 2).

- *The stronger concern argument*: young people should be better represented than they currently are because they are more concerned by the future than older people, which makes them better proxies for future generations (section 3).

- *The diversity and innovation argument*: more intergenerational diversity is likely to increase the competence of parliaments in solving complex problems, including long-term challenges, innovatively (section 4).

16.2 YQs and procedural legitimacy

There are at least two ways to approach the question of whether YQs are instruments of justice for future generations: a procedural angle and an instrumental angle. The first approach consists in establishing whether parliaments with young people are intrinsically fairer than parliaments without young people; while the second focuses on the impact the presence of young people in parliaments would have on long-termist policy outcomes.⁴

To take an analogy, gender quotas may be defended on both grounds too. We may argue that parliaments without women are *illegitimate procedures* because women are also affected by decisions being taken in parliaments and should thus get equal representation; and also because if there are too few women in parliaments, it is

⁴ An example of the instrumental approach to democracy is Philippe Van Parijs's Rawls-Machiavelli project, see for instance Van Parijs (1998).

largely due to background gender exclusion, marginalization and discrimination. *Instrumentally*, we may also defend gender quotas because gender imbalanced parliaments are more likely to sanction sexist policies. The two lines of argument overlap, but are independent. Even if it could be shown that the presence of women had little to no impact on policies, we could still consider that male-only parliaments are procedurally illegitimate. Let me start by assessing YQs on procedural grounds.

First, we may consider that it is straightforwardly unfair, on long-termist grounds, if there are no young people in parliament. We may simply consider that all stakeholders must take part in deliberations for parliaments to be fully legitimate. We are only borrowing the planet from our children, we often say. And yet, our children, at least those who are already born, are not included in deliberations. Babies, toddlers and young children may not be able to understand the challenges at stake or they may not be competent enough to contribute to the deliberations. But what about older teenagers and young adults? As Karl Hinrichs (2002: 51) points out “Undeniably, minor children are the first ‘future generation’, and when represented after pulling down the borderline between the two generations, the long-term, future interests can be taken care of more legitimately (...) since the basis of representation is broadened.”

To be justifiable to future generations, policies cannot have been deliberated and approved by older MPs alone. Ideally we would have people from the future in parliaments, but young people are the youngest competent stakeholders we can find. The introduction of YQs *increases the intergenerational legitimacy of parliaments* precisely because younger generations will have to experience a comparatively higher share of the long-term negative consequences of political short-termism than older generations. By “increases the intergenerational legitimacy” or “increases the long-term legitimacy” of parliaments, I mean that the introduction of YQs makes

parliaments more procedurally just in deliberating and deciding on policy issues that will importantly affect future generations. Young people have a higher stake in long-term issues being addressed adequately and given sufficient weight. Young people also have a higher *indirect* stake in long-termism than older age groups because they are more likely to have young children. This extends the time frame on which the interests of the current young, or at least those who are parents, overlap with the interests of future generations.

For instance, a person born in 1953 (62 years old today) could see a 2.3 degrees increase in temperature in her lifetime; a person born in 1988 (25 years old today) a 4.5 degrees increase; and a child born today could see a 6.3 degrees increase temperature in his lifetime.⁵ The younger people are today, the hotter it will get in their lifetime and the more risks of negative consequences associated with global warming they will be exposed to. The interests of the young (both directly and indirectly) are thus better aligned with those of future generations than older age groups' interests. If we understand procedural legitimacy in terms of the participation in decision-making of all stakeholders, then it seems fair to argue that increasing the number of MPs who have a higher stake in long-term issues can be defended on grounds of procedural legitimacy. We may thus argue that YQs increase the long-term legitimacy of parliaments by increasing the representation of future interests in parliaments.

However, there are at least two issues with this procedural long-termist argument for youth quotas. First, as Karnein and Roser (2015: 82-86) point out in their paper "Saving the Planet by Empowering the Young", the young are not really younger by *much* longer. One may seriously wonder whether the difference in

⁵ The guardian launched a simulation in September 2013 based on data provided by the University of Oxford and with the support of the Oxford Martin School entitled "Climate change: how hot will it get in my lifetime?". Users can type in their date of birth and see the expected increase in the global temperature in their lifetime.

temperature increase between 30 year-olds and 60 year-olds really makes a substantive difference to their interests. For instance, perhaps young generations (and their children) could still get away with using fossil fuels even if these are very unsustainable on the long run. The interests of the young may be *slightly* better aligned with the interests of generations to come than the interests of older people, but it is not clear that they are sufficiently more so for YQs to be justified on grounds of increased long-term legitimacy – at least, if we are concerned with a longer time frame that includes the interests of distant future generations.

This objection is of limited impact: it does not disqualify the argument that younger parliaments increase long-term legitimacy. Young people's interests may not be in line with those of very distant future people, but they are without a doubt further into the future than older age groups, especially if we include their indirect stake in their children's interests. Even though young MPs would only be younger than older MPs by a few decades, this is still an improvement from the current situation where there are few to no younger people involved in the deliberative process. Our starting point is a situation of endemic short-termism (Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generations, 2013). It is the failure of parliaments to address long-term issues effectively that casts doubts on the absence of young people in parliament.

Granted, however, if there is a procedural argument for youth quotas, it concerns the legitimacy of parliaments in deliberating about the “short” long-term. Having more young representatives increases the legitimacy of parliaments in sanctioning decisions that will have a significant impact for the next 20, 30, or 50 years. Current young parliamentarians will have to answer to their future constituents, neighbours, and children, which creates a heightened sense of long-term accountability and responsibility. As far as the much longer term is concerned, however, the view that

having younger MPs in parliament will increase the legitimacy of parliaments in taking decisions that affect people who will live in 150 years is weak.

A second objection to the higher stake argument for YQs may be that it mischaracterizes what is distinctive about parliamentary representation. Our first definition of procedural legitimacy was that “all stakeholders must take part in deliberations”. Another expression of procedural legitimacy, however, is that “all interests must be fairly represented”. MPs are not meant to be stakeholders themselves, but “representatives of the interests of stakeholders”. On this understanding of representation, it seems difficult to show that YQs increase the long-term legitimacy of parliaments when we have not shown yet that young people would in fact represent those interests better. In other words, on this understanding of procedural legitimacy, unless we show that the young would in fact be fiercer defenders of the interests of future generations than older MPs, there is no strong procedural argument for YQs on grounds of justice between non-overlapping generations. Another argument is needed to show why young people will be better at representing those interests.

Rather than asking whether the absence of young people in parliaments is procedurally unjustifiable to future generations, let us therefore move on to the *instrumental* question of whether such absence is detrimental to long-termist policy outcomes, or more positively, whether the presence of young people in parliament can be expected to have a positive impact on the representation of future interests. In this way, the next section will be concerned with determining whether we should in fact associate old age with short-termism and young age with posterity.

The instrumental approach to democracy is often contested. Dominic Roser and Anja Karnein (2015: 78-80), for instance, worry that the case for altering electoral institutions should not depend on the likeliness that it will bring about ‘the right

outcomes' (however defined), but rather that it is what democratic legitimacy requires. This objection has little bearing, however, on the discussion that follows for two reasons.

First, I do not take the case for YQs to depend exclusively on the instrumental discussion that follows. The legitimacy of YQs depends on a series of other considerations about the political marginalisation of current young people. And, as I have just suggested, there can also be a legitimacy line of argument for YQs on grounds of fair representation for *overlapping* generations: youth-ing parliaments may increase the legitimacy of parliaments in dealing with the next 50 years. Second, even though I now shift focus from procedural legitimacy to outcomes, if it turned out that the young were indeed better proxies for future generations, then the long-term procedural legitimacy of parliaments would increase with YQs, since it would ensure better representation of the interests of future generations.

Let us thus focus on the *consequences* that the introduction of YQs can have for the representation of the interests of future generations. What matters to us now is how different age groups and generations *perceive* and *integrate* long-term challenges in their thinking, rather than whether or not they have a higher stake in them. If we are going to enhance the young's political participation with the hope that it will contribute to the institutionalization of future people's interests, then we may want to make sure that they actually have a tendency to think long-term.

16.3 Generations, attitudes and long-termism

In order to establish whether youth-ing parliaments can have a positive impact on advancing the rights and interests of future generations, let me now turn to the question of whether we should expect younger MPs to be fiercer defenders of future interests. We are now concerned with whether there are age or cohort specific values,

goals or concerns that make particular age groups better suited to representing the interests of future generations. In particular, we want to find out whether the young are more “future-oriented”. Do young people discount the future less, care about the future more, and/or are more environment-driven than their older peers? If yes, then we should also think that the introduction of YQs in parliament would have a positive effect on advancing long-termism, all other things being equal. Let’s see if there is any truth in that.

Several studies in fact point to the contrary: the young tend to discount the future more than older people.⁶ Developmental psychologists often correlate young age with an inability to take adequate account of the future. One explanation is that benefits that are temporally distant are difficult to imagine, and the younger one is, the further a time difference of 20 or 30 years feels. Younger people may also care less for the distant future than older people because they are more concerned with their own more “urgent” development goals (Carstensen 1999). This evidence on youth and time discounting casts a shadow of doubt on the initial view that more young voices will serve future generations.

Moreover, as Karnein and Roser (2015: 87) claim, if prudence consists in reducing the likeliness of bequeathing high risks for an unsustainable planet to future generations, then those who are best placed to represent future generations’ interests are those who are risk averse. And yet, the authors argue, that is not what young people are particularly famous for. On the contrary, one could call upon the vast literature on how young people are more prone to risk-taking than older people (Palsson 1996; Karnein and Roser 2015). If those who are better able to vouch for future generations really need to be risk averse, then this evidence seems to seriously

⁶ See for instance: Freund, A. and Blanchard-Fields, F. (2014), Green, L. et al. (1999), Steinberg, L. et al. (2009) and Karnein A. and Roser D. (2015: 86-89).

undermine the case for empowering the young on grounds of justice for future generations.

If we are essentialist about the young to justify that they may be better trustees, we must recognize that there is some contradicting evidence that shows that the young may not promote future interests particularly well. The young green may do, but so will the old green. This seems to cast much doubt in the intuitive view that young people will be fiercer defenders of future generations than older people.

There is contrasting evidence, however, which suggests that it is no clear either that young people would be worse at promoting the interests of future generations. Several studies suggest that the elderly and adolescent will discount more than middle-aged people (Read and Read 2004; Albert and Duffy 2012). A British study found that a major trend was for “the elderly to discount the most, and for the middle-aged to discount less than either the elderly or the young.” (Read and Read 2004: 31). There is no consensus on the correlation of risk-aversion and age, however, since several studies suggest that we should not be too quick in equating youth with risky attitude.

Moreover, the evidence that suggests that the young tend to discount the future more and are less risk averse focus on the young’s own lifespan. Is it thus difficult to predict attitudes when it comes to deliberating about the distant future. The young may well be tempted to discount their own future, but when it comes to their children’s future, they may be less likely to do so. So let us move from age differences in time discounting over the life course to age and cohort effects on altruism and feelings of care for the future, hoping this may provide a more solid basis for the claim that increasing the number of young MPs will have a positive impact on long-termism.

Here again, however, there seems to be little evidence to substantiate the claim that young people care more about the future than older people. In spite of their slight higher and indirect stake in the future, the data seems to suggest that it is unreasonable to suppose that after a certain age people care less about future generations. In fact, some studies point in the other direction and argue that older adults tend to behave more altruistically than younger adults (Freund and Blanchard-Fields 2014).

When it comes to the environment, more specifically, and perhaps more relevantly for our subject matter, some studies show that older people are more environmentally conscious than their grandchildren. For instance, there is some evidence that grandparents recycle more than young people (ISRI 2014). In the UK, in 2010, more young people than any other age group did not know what was happening in their councils regarding recycling, and the young were less likely to recycle than older age groups (British Hearth Foundation 2010). A study by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in partnership with The University of Exeter, highlighted by Rafael Ziegler (2013) suggests that young people and children are increasingly ‘disconnected with nature’. It concludes that 80% of young Britons are “not connected to nature” (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds 2013). If young people and children care less about the preservation of biodiversity and the environment than older people, then the equation of young age with long-termism seems to be seriously undermined.

It would be inadequate, however, to go all the other way and argue that young people care about the future less than older age groups. Many studies also show that the environment concerns the young a great deal. A national study of attitudes to the environment in the US in 2004, for instance, showed that young adults 18-30 were more pessimistic and concerned about the quality of the environment than older age

groups (Wray-Lake 2010: 63). A national pool of High School students in 2007 also showed that most youth supported governmental actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Wray-Lake 2010: 63). Furthermore, young people have played an instrumental role in many green activists groups throughout the world and they tend to vote for green parties in higher proportion than other age groups (Wray-Lake 2010: 63).

In addition, the young's inability to care sufficiently for the future is not a permanent feature of youth and a lot can be explained by the kind of education and awareness that young people were exposed to. A study by the Pennsylvania State University, for instance, showed an important fluctuation in environmental attitudes between adolescents of successive cohorts in the way they perceive environmental challenges and their responsibility in it. This suggests that educational policies that aim at raising awareness and transmit skills to new cohorts of students would also have to play a critical role in the process of formation of young parliamentarians for YQs to have a positive impact on long-termism groups (Wray-Lake 2010: 63).

Last, the fact that current cohorts of young people in Britain or elsewhere recycle poorly can also be explained by cohort effects rather than age effects. It is not very surprising that the current cohort of young people, struggling with unprecedented rates of unemployment and social exclusion are not particularly good at being committed to long-term issues. Structural disadvantage surely contributes to their short-sightedness. When finding affordable housing is so arduous, and “settling down” takes so much longer than it used to, we should probably not find it surprising that many do not take time to find out how recycling works in their neighbourhoods.

This is not to deny that relying on the young to save the future is over-optimistic. We have learnt through this analysis of the evidence that we cannot easily correlate young age and long-termist attitudes. However, our discussion of the contradicting

evidence shows that we should also resist the opposite view that having more young people in parliaments would have a negative effect on long-termism.

In conclusion, this section has shown that we should not be too optimistic that young people will be better proxies for future generations than older people. The empirical data on future orientation, time discounting, altruism and environmental values is messy and cannot settle the question to know which age groups will be better placed to represent the interests of future generations. This suggests that we should not overly rely on the young in parliament to save the future and that it would be unreasonable to claim that young MPs will be better at defending the interests of future generations than older MPs. Age essentialism will not take us very far. The YQs proposal thus seems sub-optimal, at least as a tool of justice between non-overlapping generations.

One constructive teaching from this empirical analysis, however, is that younger cohorts *can be made to* be more future-oriented through targeted educational programmes. YQs *could* play a positive role in long-termist policies if younger cohorts were made more and more aware to the urgency of long-term challenges and were given the skills and inclusion required to play a constructive role in solving these complex issues.

16.4 YQs, intergenerational diversity and long-termism

Let me move on to a final argument for youth quotas on long-termist grounds. The *diversity and innovation argument* does not rely on an essentialist conception of young or the old like the previous argument; it does not make generalizations about their respective risk-aversion, or respective moral and non-moral motivations to promote long-termism. It shifts focus from the age of individuals and their propensity to be adequate trustees to the ability of representative bodies as a whole to bring about

long-termist policies. We may endorse an alternative collective understanding of expertise and argue that, what justifies youth quotas on collective grounds is not so much that ‘younger MPs’ will be individually better at defending long termist policies, it is that intergenerationally diverse parliaments – that is parliaments with age and cohort diversity are more likely to further long-termism than non-intergenerational ones.

As Anne Philips argues, one of the key potentials of descriptive representation is precisely the opening of possibilities that “would emerge under more favorable conditions”, that is if parliaments were more diverse (Philips 1995: 52). Both Anne Philips (1995) and Jane Mansbridge (1999) suggest that the descriptive representation of some groups is more likely to further innovation and change than non-diverse parliaments. Hélène Landemore (2012) also makes an interesting argument about cognitive diversity in representative bodies. She argues that diversity in fact trumps individual expertise and she vouches for a collective understanding of competence. Drawing on Page and Hong, she argues that cognitive diversity is what matters most to the quality of collective problem-solving.

Landemore defines cognitive diversity as the range of perspectives through which people approach a problem or a question. In a footnote, she suggests that, if there is a connection between cognitive diversity and other forms of diversity, like gender, then the argument of cognitive diversity may also be an argument for descriptive representation: “the argument suggests that positive discrimination is not just a good thing on fairness grounds but also for epistemic reasons. I will not enter that complicated debate here but it is one of the potential implications of an argument advocating the epistemic properties of cognitive diversity” (Landemore 2012: 261). One may want to take this intriguing thought of Landemore’s further in the context of

the descriptive representation of the young. I want to suggest that intergenerational diversity may increase innovation in problem solving and promote change too.

Age and cohort diversity increase cognitive diversity, so perhaps we can think that more intergenerationally diverse parliaments may be more competent than less intergenerational ones. There is in fact an extensive literature on the benefits of intergenerational practices and collaborations for the transmission of knowledge and the development of original and innovating problem-solving mechanisms.⁷ A study conducted on intergenerational partnerships by the Institute of National Economy in Bucharest, which tested the hypothesis that there could be a positive correlation between research performance and intergenerational practices (Zaman, et al. 2009: 607). Their study drew on research that shows that age diversity constitutes an advantage for innovation.

“Older researchers”, they argue, “bring greater abilities in doing research projects proposals, higher level of accumulated integrated knowledge in a certain scientific field, a wide relationship network and greater propensity and desire to cooperate. On the other hand, young researchers contribute to the teamwork with their enthusiasm, higher documentation and data electronic processing capacity, experienced gained along postgraduate or postdoctoral education programs they have attended abroad, greater mobility, greater ability to adapt to electronic systems and procedures for accessing national and international funds and the determination to build a career in research.” (Zaman, et al. 2009: 611)

⁷ The Beth Johnson Foundation’s Centre for Intergenerational Practices, for instance, provides much research on the benefits of intergenerational practices: The French President François Hollande, also introduced the “contrats de générations” (generational contracts) in firms to encourage the recruitment of young people and to facilitate their training processes, while protecting the job positions of senior workers. The launch of this programme was defended on the basis that intergenerational environments foster a better understanding and resolution of problems and spur more innovation and originality. See: Ministère du Travail.

Another interesting case of intergenerational cooperation is particularly relevant to the long-termist case for YQs. It concerns the integration of more intergenerational practices in WILD, a foundation for the conservation of wild life. WILD's president Vance Martin claims that: "Together, younger and older generations are more effective at reaching increasingly diverse audiences, developing widespread messages, implementing long-term strategies and developing relevant solutions for our global problems." This seems even more relevant to the question of whether more young people in parliaments could increase our chances of addressing long-term issues effectively.

WILD's Director emphasizes the importance of equality in status in those contexts: "youth and young professionals need to have the courage to expose who they are, insert their views and be proud of their convictions and experience, while at the same time understanding that others have more experience." This case provides at least one example of the impact intergenerational cooperation can have in the context of environmental justice.

One may then ask, if intergenerational collaboration fosters innovation and efficiency in firms, green NGOs and academic spheres, then why would it not do so in parliaments? This shift to a more holistic conception of expertise provides an indirect reason to introduce youth quotas in parliaments: if it can be shown that collaboration between young and old promotes innovation and efficiency, then the absence of young people in parliaments risks undermining the quality of parliamentary deliberations.

The diversity and innovation argument is thus at the border between procedural and instrumental justification for YQs. On the one hand, if we take seriously Landmore's account of the epistemic value of diversity, we may argue that diverse parliaments will reach better policy outcomes, whatever these may be. On the other

hand, we may directly consider that more diverse parliaments will be instrumental to long-termist outcomes for at least two reasons.

First, the experiments I have referred to show that one key component of increased innovation and efficiency follows from the collective learning that is spurred. Intergenerational diversity favours various forms of knowledge transfer. Older people transfer knowledge acquired through experience gained from past successes, failures and trainings. Younger people bring in the new techniques and skills they have just acquired. This enables more competent problem solving strategies. Given the fact that technologies, scientific knowledge and educational contents, techniques and strategies evolve through time, having younger cohorts in parliament will ensure that parliaments are not one step behind and benefit from the competences that younger members have to offer. From the current status quo of endemic short-termism, reforms that will bring in change and innovations are welcome. We need parliaments that are better at integrating long-term issues and, insofar as long-term challenges are instances of the complex problems diverse groups are better equipped to handle, diversity will be conducive to progress.

Second, a high level of cohort diversity has the additional advantage of minimizing risks that may be associated with specific cohorts being more short-termist than others. As mentioned in the previous section, while we could not find a linear evolution of attitudes to the future across the lifespan, there are likely to be some cohortal differences in attitudes based on the combination of age effects and period effects. Difference between cohorts will be explained by differences in educational strategies, scientific and technological discoveries, which in turn influence the way we think about and value the future. Having a broad variety of cohorts in parliaments not only ensures skills transfers and collective learning, but it also minimizes the risk that cohorts that - for a conjunction of reasons - are more shortsighted be

overrepresented. Young cohorts born in the 80s are currently absent from parliaments, which goes against this minimization of risks strategy.⁸

16.5 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have highlighted three arguments for YQs on long-termist grounds: a procedural argument, which linked YQs with an increase in long-term legitimacy (*the higher stake argument*); a generation-specific argument (*the strongest concern argument*) that attempted to tie the young's attitudes to the interests of future generations; and a diversity-oriented argument which praised intergenerational diversity's impact on long-termism (*the diversity and innovation argument*). The question I was wrestling with was: can YQs be defended on long-termist ground, that is on ground of justice for future generations? From the fairly intuitive common sense idea that the young are the trustees of posterity because of their higher stake in long-termism, we are left with a very qualified Yes.

First, YQs can increase the legitimacy of parliaments in dealing with policies that have a long-term impact, but this improvement in legitimacy concerns the relatively close future. The interests of the young and their children are only aligned with future generations that will live in the next few decades – not so much with those that will live 150 years from now. This does not mean that we cannot defend the empowerment of the young on procedural grounds, but it does mean that this approach is very limited when we are focusing on distant future generations.

⁸ It is important to note that, if diversity can have this positive impact for innovation, change and efficient problem-solving, maybe other proposals like Mackenzie's randomized chambers proposal could do just as well or better. However, the specificity of intergenerational diversity, as I pointed out, is the maximization of chances of transfers of knowledge from older generations to younger ones and vice versa. Moreover, as I pointed to in the previous section, the inclusion of younger generations offers the opportunity to rethink a politics of education oriented towards the future, and aimed at training the next cohorts of young representatives.

Second, as it stands, the stronger concern line of argument for youth quotas is weak. There are no robust and resilient reasons why young people will be fiercer representatives of future generations than other age groups. We are left with the intuitive sense that the young *should* be better able to fiercely advocate for the interests of future generations because of their higher direct and indirect stake in long-termism, but with little evidence that they actually will and with even less evidence that this would have any sort of impact on policy. Essentializing young people and their attitudes was not a promising strategy to advocate for empowering the young. In fact, it can even be counterproductive as the evidence can point to the young's inability to have a positive attitude to the future.

However, I suggested that education is a key in explaining how different cohorts relate to the future. This means that there is scope for targeting educational policies towards the better preparation of the young for long-term issues. If educational policies created very environmentally conscious people, then the case could be made that young people can be better proxies for future generations. This way, the young can be made to *become* trustees of posterity in parliaments, and elsewhere too perhaps. In the meantime, diversifying cohort membership in parliament can at least serve the purpose of minimizing risks of particularly non-future oriented cohorts dominating deliberations.

Third, the most solid argument for the introduction of YQs on long-termist grounds seems to be the diversity and innovation argument. If diversity promotes innovation and efficient problem-solving, then we may hope that this will have a positive impact in undermining short-termism, which can be partly seen as the result of poor problem solving. The possibilities for collective learning through bilateral transfers of knowledge increase the likeliness of more competent problem solving. Given our starting point of failure to integrate long-term interests into policy, reforms

that will bring in change and innovations should be welcomed. We are in dire need of parliaments that are better at finding solutions that do not unduly threaten future generations, and diversifying expertise is very likely to help.

YQs is a solution of limited scope, but it may contribute to increasing our chances of more long-termist policies if associated with a larger package of policies, including green educational policies and the largely compatible range of proposals introduced in this edited book. I hope that this chapter has accomplished the modest task of showing to those who are primarily concerned with the institutionalization of the rights of future generations in which ways empowering the young can contribute to furthering the interests of future people.

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