

PARLIAMENTS, CLIMATE CHANGE AND INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE

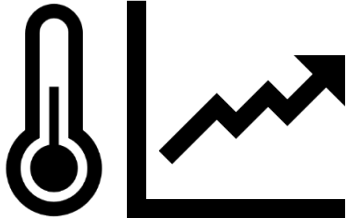
Michael Rose

Satellite Event of the World Forum for Democracy | 6 October 2021

Parliaments



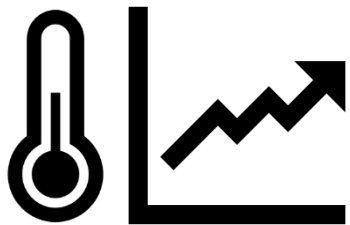
Intergenerational
Justice



Climate Change



Parliaments



Climate Change

4-year election cycle vs. long-term climate change

Democratic myopia

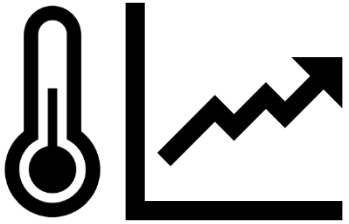
- Orientation towards voters relevant for **(re-)election**
- Demonstrate **short-term policy success**
- **Long-term** policy effects are **uncertain**
- **Example disaster control:** Aid payments after flood disasters are rewarded in the next election, but spending on disaster prevention is not despite a 15x higher effectiveness ([Healy/Malhotra 2009 study on the USA](#))

Climate change governance failure

- Too little, too late
- Current development path would lead to 2.7°C increase until 2100 ([NDC synthesis report 2021](#))



Climate Change



Intergenerational Justice

Intergenerational Justice

- Justice between **young** and **old** & **present** and **future generations**
- Brundtland's definition of **sustainable development**: meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs
- **Sustain living conditions**, resources, capabilities, democratic institutions and freedom (self-determination of future generations)
- Do not burden **costs** on future generations without corresponding benefits

Climate change as intergenerational injustice

- **Cause**: carbon-based economy (**past** and **present generations**)
- **Solution**: Can be fought effectively only today (**present generation**)
- **Most affected**: The living conditions and freedom of **young** and **future generations**



Intergenerational Justice



Parliaments

Democracy

- Ideal: **Everyone affected** by collective decisions should have a **voice**
- Both **present** and **future generations** are **affected** by today's (non-)decisions

Electoral political representation

- **Only present generation is represented** in democratic decision-making
- The youngest and future generations cannot elect their representatives
- **Young generation** often **under-represented** both in electorate and in parliament
 - High minimum **voting age**
 - **Power positions** held by the elderly; demographic change in Europe
 - Different **voting behaviour** of the young generation



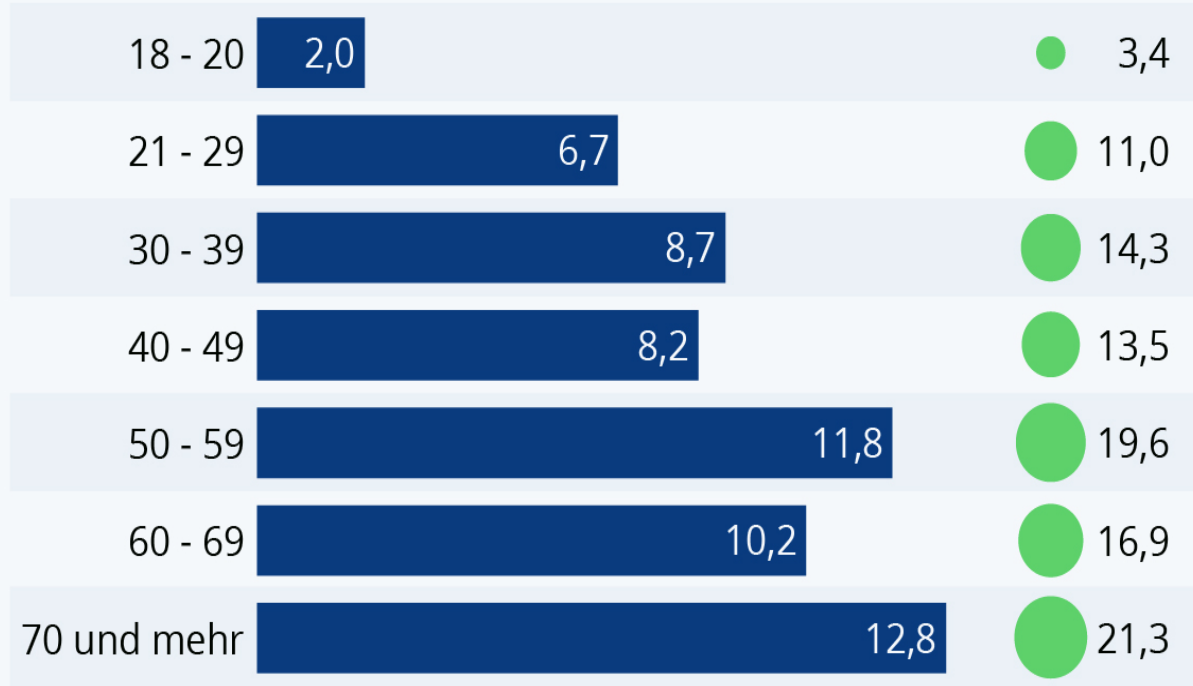
Die Alten stimmen über die Zukunft der Jungen ab

Geschätzte Anzahl der Wahlberechtigten in Deutschland nach Altersgruppen 2021



Anzahl (in Mio.)

Anteil (in %)



Quelle: Bundeswahlleiter

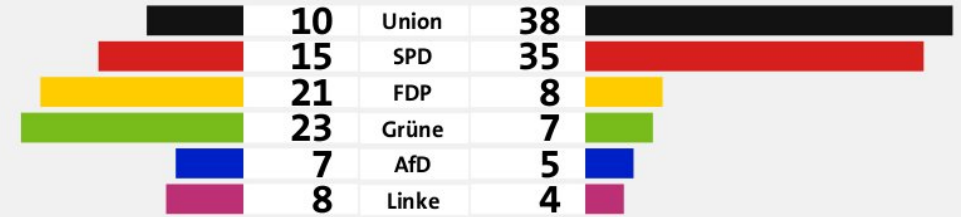


Bundestagswahl 2021

Wahlverhalten nach Altersgruppen

Unter 25 Jahre

70 und älter



Infratest dimap, in %



https://www.tagesschau.de/wahl/archiv/2021-09-26-BT-DE/charts/umfrage-alter/chart_892124.shtml

Example German Federal Elections in 2021

- Voters **18 – 29** years old: 14,4%
- Voters **60 years and older**: 38,2%
- Voters **below 25** years: 44% for Liberals and Greens, 25% for Christian and Social Democrats
- Voters **70 years and older**: 15% for Liberals and Greens, 73% for Christian and Social Democrats



Intergenerational Justice



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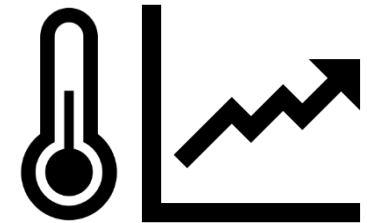
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 - Different **voting behaviour** of the young generation
- Not-yet-existent **future generations incompatible** with our traditional concepts of political representation



Parliaments



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Climate Change



Reforming our parliamentary systems

Young generation

- Lower voting age
- Youth quotas in election lists of political parties
- Youth councils; climate councils

Future generations

- Create institutions for future generations that introduce the basic interests of future generations into the political decision-making process



Parliamentary Committee for the Future

- Finland, since 1993
- Responds to the Government's Report on the Future
- Recommendations, advice, research
- Technology impact assessments

Parliamentary Advisory Council for Sustainable Development

- Germany, since 2004, MPs from all parties
- Motto: "Don't live today at the expense of tomorrow!"
- Advice, monitoring, check of the Government's sustainability impact assessments of draft legislation

The Knesset Commissioner for Future Generations

- Israel, 2001-06
- Independent commissioner + office
- Advice, monitoring, legislative initiatives, investigations, de-facto suspensive veto

Parliamentary Commissioner for Future Generations

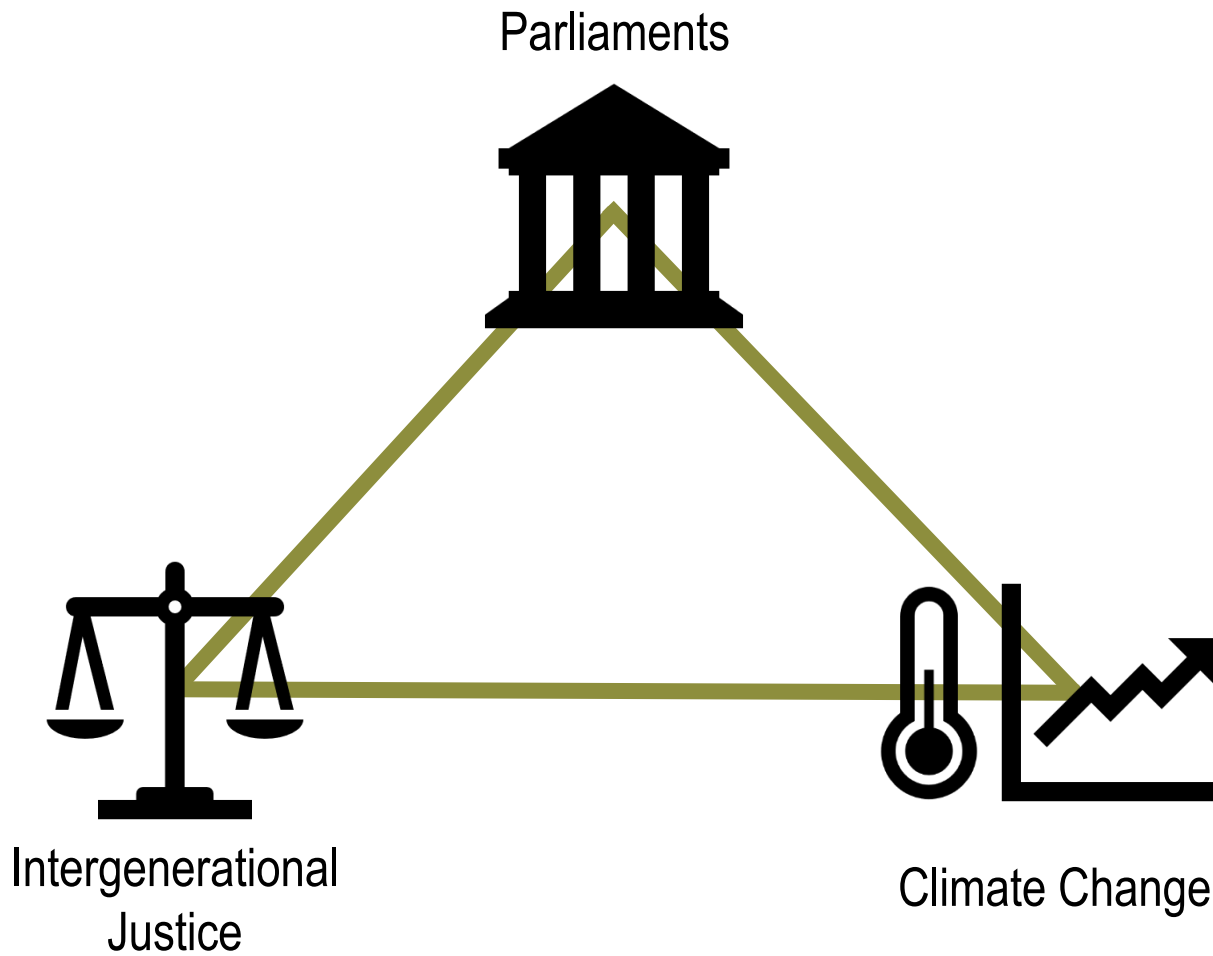
- Hungary, 2008-11, demoted to Deputy Commissioner in 2012
- Independent commissioner/ombudsman + office
- Advice, monitoring, initiatives, investigations, suspension of administrative decisions, legal right of action

Reforming our parliamentary systems: Selected proposals for Germany

Strengthen the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Sustainable Development

- Make it a **permanent standing committee** with large supporting office
- Conducts substantive and early quality checks of the Federal Government's **Sustainability Impact Assessments**
- Critically analyses and responds to the Federal Government's **Manifesto for the Future**
 - Government announces long-term (30 years) plans for Germany's and Europe's future, outlines measures for coping with long-term challenges, draws on analyses and recommendations of the Council for the Future (see below)
- Elects half of the members of a **Council for the Future** with a two-thirds majority
 - 15 academics with diverse background, seven-years-term, permanent office + staff
 - Right of requesting relevant information, comments early in-house draft bills, conducts expert advice, policy analyses and recommendations that have to be answered by the addressees
- Co-organises annual public **Future Day**





For additional analyses and proposals, see Michael Rose & Jonathan M. Hoffmann (2020): Seven Building Blocks for an Intergenerationally Just Democracy. FRFG position paper, available at <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3761346>

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