

Call for Papers: IGJR issue 2/2018 and 1/2019

How attractive are political parties and trade unions to young people?

The IGJR publishes articles from the social sciences/humanities, reflecting the current state of research on inter-generational justice. Its editorial board consists of about 50 internationally renowned experts from ten different countries. The 2/2018 and 1/2019 double edition will have the additional help of Professor Ann-Kristin Kölln, University of Aarhus, who will be serving as guest editor.

The topic of the 2/2018 and 1/2019 double issue will be:

“How attractive are political parties and trade unions to young people?”

We welcome submissions to the issue 2/2018 and 1/2019 that illuminate the complex relationship between young people and political parties and trade unions.

Submission Requirements

Submissions will be accepted until 1 July 2018 / 1 February 2019. Entries should be up to 30,000 characters in length (including spaces but excluding bibliography, figures, photographs and tables.) Articles may be submitted electronically through the IGJR homepage (see “Submissions”).

Topic abstract

Political parties are intrinsically linked to the functioning of modern democracies. They provide fundamental linkage mechanisms of representation and participation that connect citizens with the state (Keman 2014; Webb 2000). Party members and affiliates, more generally, are in this respect one of the linking mechanisms that are beneficial for the effective functioning of political representation.

Members are often described as the “eyes and ears” (Kölln/Polk 2017; Kölln 2017) of parties in the electorate because of their communicative role. They bring new policy ideas to the party and communicate the party’s programme within society. In addition, members are among the primary sources of political personnel because party membership is often an informal prerequisite for acquiring political office. From this representative perspective and following the notion of “descriptive representation” (Mansbridge 1999), members’ social makeup should ideally reflect that of the general population.

Although party members have hardly ever been entirely representative of the population in their demographic characteristics (Scarrow/Gezgor 2010), the general decline of party membership seems to affect younger generations disproportionately. They enrol less often in parties, rendering the parties’ age-profiles all too often considerably older than the broader electorate that they hope to embrace (Bruter/Harrison 2009; Scarrow/Gezgor 2010).

For instance, the share of young members (under 26 years old) in German parties is at most 6.3% (LINKE) but can also be as little as 2.2% (CSU) (Niedermayer 2016). In contrast, around one quarter of the general population belongs to this age group. And even though the age-profile of Swedish parties is considerably better, with over 14% of members being under 26 years old (Kölln/Polk 2017), this figure is largely driven by members of the Green Party (Miljöpartiet) in which almost 26% are under 26 years old. In other countries, hardly any of these problems seem to exist. According to 2017 figures from the United Kingdom, the share of members aged 18-24 reflects the general population of 8.9% quite well: group size estimates suggest that 18-24s make up 14.4% of the Green Party, 13.2% of the Conservative Party and 11.5% of the Labour Party, with only the Scottish National Party and UK Independence Party (UKIP) below the 8.9%, at 6.9% and 6.7% respectively (UK Party Members Project; <https://esrcpartymembersproject.org>).

Overall, however, the statistics suggest not only an age problem in political parties across many European democracies, but also substantial country- and party-level differences. German parties seem to be doing particularly poorly in the descriptive representation of the young, while other countries and individual parties are apparently much better in engaging younger generations.

Trade unions are facing similar problems in recruiting young members across Europe (Gumbrell-McCormick/Hyman 2013). Reasons for this pattern might be found in the dominant political issues that trade unions care about. Younger people are confronted with the rapidly changing nature of the workplace as well as the rise in temporary work and zero-hour contracts, and are probably more interested in salaries, entry requirements and work contracts, rather than in end-of-career matters such as pensions and retirement ages. The skewed age profile of trade unions could shift the discussion more towards the latter concerns, deterring younger generations and reinforcing existing age problems.

Given members’ importance and their overall age profile, it could be argued that political power or access to it is unequally distributed between the young and old. Parties and trade unions might be disproportionately representing older rather than younger generations because of their own social-demographic makeup. This could create an unjust distribution of political influence between living generations.

Articles could approach the topic through a broad range of questions, including:

- Is the unequal representation of young members in and for political parties and trade unions problematic from a democratic perspective?

- What about the age structure of employers' associations? Could the underrepresentation of younger members be viewed as a problem here as well?
- How great is the reluctance of young people to engage in and for political parties and trade unions from an internationally comparative perspective, for instance OECD-wide? What can we learn from a historically comparative perspective?
- Why do young people avoid political parties and trade unions?
- Why are some parties and trade unions better than others in engaging younger people?
- What can parties and trade unions do to attract more young members or affiliates and to retain them? What lessons can be learned from examples in which specific parties or unions have accomplished this, such as recently the British Labour Party?
- What role can the youth organisations of political parties and trade unions play in increasing the attractiveness of their mother organisations?
- Do regulations prohibit specific reform measures which could render parties and unions more attractive for young people? What role do membership fees play?
- What would be the consequences if young people permanently and irrevocably eschewed political parties?

We welcome submissions from all fields, including (but not limited to) political science, sociology, economics, and legal studies. Philosophers and/or ethicists are invited to contribute applied normative research.

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Intergenerational Justice Prize 2017/18: Note that this topic is closely related to the subject of the Intergenerational Justice Prize 2017/18, promoted by the Foundation for the Rights of Future Generations (FRFG) and the Intergenerational Foundation (IF). The prize is endowed with 10,000€ and has 1 July 2018 as its deadline. Young researchers may also wish to participate in

this essay competition, and it is hoped that this edition of the IGJR will contain a selection of the best prize submissions in English. For more information, see "Prizes" under "Research" at www.if.org.uk.

References

Gumbrell-McCormick, Rebecca / Hyman, Richard (2013): *Trade Unions in Western Europe: Hard Times, Hard Choices*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Keman, Hans (2014): *Democratic Performance of Parties and Legitimacy in Europe*. In: *West European Politics*, 37 (2), 309–330.

Kölln, Ann-Kristin (2017): *Has Party Members' Representativeness Changed Over Time?* In Anderssoon, Ulrika et al. (eds.): *Larmar och gör sig till. SOM-undersökningen 2016, SOM-rapport no. 70*, Gothenburg: SOM-Institut, 387–400.

Kölln, Ann-Kristin / Polk, Jonathan (2017): *Emancipated party members: Examining ideological incongruence within political parties*. In: *Party Politics*, 23 (1), 18–29.

Mansbridge, Jane (1999): *Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent "Yes."* In: *The Journal of Politics*, 61 (3), 628–657.

Scarrow, Susan E. / Gezgor, Burcu (2010): *Declining memberships, changing members? European political party members in a new era*. In: *Party Politics*, 16 (6), 823–843.

Webb, Paul (2000): *Political parties in Western Europe: linkage, legitimacy and reform*. In: *Representation*, 37 (3–4), 203–214.

For a list of recommended literature, see "Announcements" on www.igjr.org