

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

European Master's Degree in Human Rights and Democratisation  
2014/2015

# Intergenerational Justice

An evaluation of our moral and legal obligations towards  
future generations

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis firstly discusses our moral obligations towards future generations. The thesis will demonstrate that future people have interests that can be affected by the actions or inactions of present generations. It will be argued that future people have a right to have their interests protected, which, subsequently, founds duties on present generations. Three different theoretical approaches to what this should entail will be investigated: a Rawlsian egalitarian, a libertarian and a sufficientarian approach to intergenerational justice. This study will defend the sufficientarian approach, as it will be shown that this approach is best able to cope with the metaphysical and practical challenges to intergenerational justice. It will furthermore be argued that intergenerational sufficientarianism should be formulated within a human rights framework, because human rights specify minimum moral thresholds. The thesis will then go on to assess whether the current international and national legislation adequately reflects our obligations towards future generations. A concern for future generations has been expressed in several international conventions and declarations as well as in a number of national constitutions. It will be argued, however, that these pronouncements are too imprecise to provide sufficient protection for future generations. This study, as a result, will highlight the changes that could be made to existing legal documents to render them useful for the protection of future generations. A number of other suggestions to further the protection of future generations will also be described and assessed.

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