

Generation: the politics of patriarchy and social change

Ben Little and Alison Winch

Editors' introduction

In this first instalment of our *Soundings* series on critical terms, we look at the idea of 'generation', a term which has become highly prevalent within political discourse since the financial crisis.¹ As with all the concepts in this series, the idea of generation is differently mobilised by different political actors. Right-wing thinkers use generation in a sense that can be traced back to Edmund Burke to mean the transmission of property and culture through time, while other commentators draw on meanings derived from Mannheim to refer to the experiences of particular cohorts at times of rapid political change. For activists on the left, it is important to distinguish between these different connotations of generation. The Burkean approach has regressive implications, for example in the justification of austerity as a way of protecting future generations from debt; and the Mannheimian understanding, although not as conservative, needs to be connected to an intersectional analysis that looks at other identity markers alongside those of age - such as class, race, gender and sexuality - so as to avoid flattening differences within cohorts and impeding solidarities between generations.

Deborah Grayson and Ben Little

Generation is a pivotal and structuring concept in contemporary politics, but not enough attention is paid to the way in which it operates. We aim here to outline some of the key questions a consideration of generation raises and can

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help illuminate, in the belief that it is a concept that opens a vital space both for challenging dominant paradigms and contributing to radical thought.

In mainstream political culture one of the most frequently recurring - and loaded - media archetypes is the battle between Baby Boomers and Millennials, who tussle in the homes and streets of Britain, pitching tuition fees against triple-locked pensions and free bus passes against impossible house prices. These stories have intensified since the financial crash, partly because it has had differential economic effects on specific age cohorts. But cultural differences centred on generation have also played a significant role.

This contemporary discourse is a recent manifestation of a recurring social theme that was most famously theorised by German sociologist Karl Mannheim in the 1920s.² Mannheim argued that generations are distinct social units formed by the historical, cultural and technological changes that occur at key times in people's lives. Since we live in a time of crisis and change, Mannheim helps to explain why generation is currently emerging as a topic of debate, but it does not explain why the media narrative of recent years has mostly focused on age-based inequality. Ben (and others) have argued elsewhere that its use in this context opens up insights into what it is like to grow up under neoliberalism, even if what comes through most often is a stylised conflict between generations.³

The world of Karl Mannheim was shaped by the changes wrought in German culture by the First World War. Eighteenth-century philosopher and Whig politician Edmund Burke, on the other hand, was writing in the wake of the French revolution - and seeking to reassert the old ways. Burke's understanding of generation is markedly different from that of Mannheim. It revolves around the idea of a natural order rather than theorising historical change: society was a contract between the generations. This difference explains Burke's appeal to conservatives. While Mannheim looked to explain periods of cultural change and the influence of new dynamic forces in rigid societies, Burke's perspective was focused on renewing tradition by linking the past to the future through the present, putting an emphasis on continuity rather than change.

At the heart of the 2017 Tory manifesto was a depiction of the social contract derived from Burke:

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a partnership between those who are living, those who have lived before us, and those who are yet to be born.⁴

Theresa May's references to generation in her awkward election stump speeches should not therefore be understood as part of a pitch dreamed up by election spin doctors: she was using the term in way that reflected an ideological position within a long tradition. (It should be noted, however, that, while Burke is often seen as a founding father of conservatism, his establishment of the basic principle of generational social contract is one that also appeals to liberals and environmentalists.)

This division of schools of thought on generation - theories of continuity contrasted to theories of change - has also framed scholarly understandings. Many commentators have pointed to two distinct approaches: on the one hand there is the biological or familial understanding of generation (lineage, family trees and so on can be seen through this perspective); on the other hand it can be understood dynamically, as a social and historical term, and this means that it can be a signifier of social rupture and cultural difference between generations.

Generation and common sense

While academics may seek to separate out these two understandings, common-sense discourse makes no such explicit division. People usually engage with the idea at both the social and familial levels without distinction. Indeed, what marks generation's explanatory power in dominant discourses is precisely its ability to obscure those differences. In seeking in this essay to unpack some of ways in which ideas of generation work to shore up a conservative world-view, we hope to make a contribution to a deeper understanding of the role of common-sense in sustaining the political order - and of the central importance of challenging it.

In some ways, generation has worked as a magic word, the 'open sesame' of patriarchal philosophy, present everywhere and understood familiarly, crossed-through with power and contradiction but framed as a natural phenomenon. And, inasmuch as it takes the predominantly white middle-class experience of generation as universal, it is closely connected to chauvinist discourses of race, class and sexuality.

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Indeed, generation tends to be deployed as an effective way of re-orientating longstanding struggles around class, gender, place and sexuality, through directing attention away from fault-lines based on historical and social division and instead locating division in internal disagreement, on the basis of age, within movements, groups and the wider society.

Thus, while generation can be indicative of new forms within a shifting conjuncture, it also has the power to obfuscate processes of oppression. It can be productive if it is carefully used in alliance with, rather than opposition to, existing understandings of cultural politics, but its powerful symbolism can also be used to disorientate.

In the following sections we look at two key ways in which generation operates, firstly through its connection to ideas about the family and property, and secondly through its connection to ideas about history and time.

Family and property

The Burkean generational contract binds together property and patriarchy. Its logic thus appealed to the emerging bourgeoisie of the eighteenth century as well as the established aristocracy of the period. Today it can bring together a new potential alliance of property-owners - everyone who has received (or will receive) an inheritance that could become the foundation for a livelihood (i.e. everyone who is not reliant solely on wages, including most home-owners). The question of inheritance and property is thus a key theme of generational discourse.

Burke's legacy has fed into some of the organisations, think tanks and debates that have grown up as generation has become more central to debate. The Intergenerational Commission was set up by David Willetts's Resolution Foundation to: 'fix the contract between generations that underpins our society'. This Commission competes for space in policy-makers' inboxes and media columns with the more established, more Mannheimian, but less well connected Intergenerational Foundation, which exists to promote: 'sustainable long-term policies that are fair to all generations - the old, the young and those to come'.

In these debates, an older conservatism is resurfacing that stands in an uneasy relationship with the Thatcherite neoliberalism that has for so many years

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dominated the Conservative Party. This partly manifests itself as anxiety about the future: neoliberalism has very short temporal horizons - the annual budget, the quarterly report, the rapid movement of markets (even if its core strategists took the long view in their assault on social democracy); in contrast to this the Burkean conservative asks for due care for the future and respect for the past. Moral panics about feckless youth, fear of the degradation of traditional social values and more recent concerns about the young being less materially comfortable than their parents - all these fit into a worldview that can be easily articulated to Burke's social contract: what is being passed on culturally, politically, materially? Will the young be suitable heirs? How can they be raised to honour the contract with past generations?

A neoliberal focus on individual acquisition does not easily find answers to these questions. Yet it is not truly incompatible with Burke. By 'preserving the method of nature in the conduct of the state', Burke sought to link the idea of the family with that of the church and the state:

In this choice of inheritance we have given our frame of polity the image of a relation of blood; binding up the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties; adopting our fundamental laws into the bosom of our family affections; keeping inseparable and cherishing the warmth of all their combined and mutually reflected charities, our state, our hearths, our sepulchres and our altars.⁵

It is not too much of a step for the modern conservative to add the market to this list of combined and mutually reflected charities (perhaps, in part, in place of 'sepulchres and altars'). This then makes available a space on which these contradictions can be held together, if not resolved. For neoliberal guru Milton Friedman, the basic productive unit was the 'family' or household, and he saw it as a natural right for children to inherit the accumulated wealth of their fathers.⁶ In this Friedman was arguing for freedom within capitalism, not for a generational social contract; but in seeing the family as a unit that operated in the market, he linked the market to the 'relation of blood'. Thatcher famously made a similar point when she argued that there was no such thing as society, just individual men and women and families. It is this valorisation of the family and its endurance through generations that makes possible a link between neoliberal economics and social-contract conservatism - the family plays a central role in reflecting and reproducing

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the patriarchal order in both these political ideologies.

For the way the family and its reproduction is imagined in contemporary conservative political culture tends to the traditional and the patriarchal. The ghost of Aristotle, for whom the ultimate purpose of man was to make more men - 'it takes a man to make a man', or, as some translate it: 'it takes a man to *generate* a man' - still lingers.⁷ And patriarchy is taken for granted in the traditional Christian account of social reproduction. The old testament is full of 'x begat y' and the importance of patrilineal authority, and this theme continues in the new. Thomas Aquinas, discussing Aristotle, states: 'In human generation, the mother provides the matter of the body which, however, is still unformed, and receives its form only by means of the power which is contained in the father's seed'.⁸ Throughout its long conceptual history (necessarily much condensed here) there has been a 'natural' rather than 'cultural' approach to generation: there has always been the idea that there is a biological order to things, that the links between family, social reproduction and the organisation of society are somehow pre-ordained and enduring.

Because of this long history - internalised in our shared cultural wisdom - mainstream 'generationalism' is able to operate as an unquestioned public discourse, and this has powerful and exclusionary effects.⁹ How can you participate in a generational politics that centres patrilineal logics if you are not involved (for whatever reason) in biological reproduction - or, if you are involved, are operating outside heteronormative understandings of family? How can you identify with an understanding of history that emphasises a smooth progress from one generation to another if you are a new participant in a society, particularly if you have been brought there under circumstances of distress, or if your ancestors were slaves and the legacy of that history persists? How can you conceptualise that progress if it simply doesn't reach your social and/or economic location, or if your relative socio-economic status was in crisis and retreat long before the financial crash - as is the case for many established working-class communities? Mainstream discourses are nevertheless able to capture people in generational subject positions and draw them consensually into the dominant logics; and in doing so they maintain subordination - a difference from the norm can never be completely overcome.

Transmitting knowledge and expertise about politics down the generations is not an incidental aspect of right-wing political practice: it is the very foundation of the conservative emphasis on tradition, and it enables an extremely effective praxis.

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There is an intrinsic advantage in the language of generation because it enables strong links to be made between the family and government. This provides conservatism with a moral rhetoric, and a way of justifying policy programmes, that resonates with something that people from all backgrounds hold most dear: their family. It invites families to think of the consequences if 'the credit card is maxed out', as a way of justifying neoliberalism, or places a moral emphasis on not leaving debt to the next generation to justify austerity. This is a politics which enables many core assertions to be glossed over, unexamined, as 'natural' common sense: it locates family, household and the intimate sphere in a temporal politics that is identifiable and recognisable.

History and social change

Interest in the concept of generation has tended to go through cycles, marking the periods in which change is felt to be occurring rapidly. It often presages or follows what we might call a conjunctural shift: these upsurges of interest in generation and generations can be mapped, albeit unevenly, onto moments of major change in society.

For Mannheim, generation was a way of signifying and understanding major social and cultural change. In seeking to understand how generation, like class conflict, could be a driver of history, he proposed that, as young people come of age they make 'fresh contact' with their surrounding culture, and this shapes their political views for life. The degree of significance of this process for a given period of politics depends on the scale and intensity of change taking place in society - economically, politically, culturally. He saw the emergence of highly politicised youth groups in 1920s Germany as representing a break with the socio-cultural and political norms of the pre-war era and setting the tone for the free-wheeling liberalism of the Weimar Republic.

It was the age cohort born after the Second World War that prompted American scholars to begin to explore the concept: the explosion of the counter-culture in the 1960s marked another burst of writing on the subject. Douglas Coupland, perhaps literature's most famous invoker of generation, then took up the baton in the 1990s, painting the youth culture of the period in the slackadaisical tropes of Generation X, who were said to be drifting aimlessly in the seeming post-political vacuum after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Meanwhile recent interest in Millennials is configured (in the

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Anglophone world at least) by the politico-cultural milieu of a post-financial crash society and the rise of digital media.¹⁰

In all these cases, a change in society was seen as being expressed in a difference of attitudes between generations. History could be at least partly understood as a story of generational succession.

Writing at a time of renewed interest in the term in the 1970s, classicist Laura Nash saw generation as a central concept in the myths of the Ancient Greeks:

Generation, then, is the reference point, in ancient usage as well as today, for a multitude of concepts, a very metaphor for existence. Like the verb to be, generation requires an adjective of context, a predicate of relativity, before it takes on meaning. Used sometimes with complacency ('my generation'), sometimes with belligerence ('your generation') ... generation marks allegiance, time of life, span of years, sameness with one group and otherness from the rest.¹¹

Sociologist Judith Burnett suggests that for the Greeks, generation was a form of mythical periodisation that expressed and indicated the passage of time and change: it provided 'boundary markers' that enabled the distinguishing of 'kinds of people' who lived in 'kinds of time'. Their conception of generation was figurative, attributing specific properties to people belonging to different eras: generations were 'endowed with properties (youthful, weak, heroic, fast) ... regarded as portents of what is to come or blamed for events which occurred, the genealogy of which can be traced back to them'.¹²

Burnett contrasts the modern conception of generation to that of the Greeks, based as it was on mythological rather than humanistic conceptions of time. But the mythological account gives an insight into the ways in which media uses of the term work at a commonsense level, and we believe it is worth dwelling on this.¹³ In Greek myths lineage marked the heroes as children of the gods, endowed with the flaws and virtues appropriate to their generational location. Contemporary generational myths often follow similar patterns: the heroic capacity of Heracles, the son of Zeus, resulted from his divine lineage, and so too did his troubles, passed on by his father's reckless behaviour; the Millennial son of the Baby Boomer is gifted a world of technology and wealth, but lacks the navigational tools of his forebears - whether financial or cultural.

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While We're Young (2014), a film directed by Noah Baumbach, represents a recent attempt to make sense of generational difference, in this case in the context of the world of documentary filmmaking. But the narrative soon collapses from socio-cultural difference into familial relationships. Ben Stiller's angsty Gen X lead is the son-in-law of Charles Grodin's heroic, but difficult, Boomer. Grodin ultimately favours Millennial Adam Driver's narcissistic 'fresh take' on documentary making: his incorporation of social media and a dubious relationship to truth offers something more exciting than Stiller's reverent approach. The film tries to explore what these generational figures say about a shift in social values, but in the end the narrative reproduces the familial dynamics of Greek myth - to the extent that the female characters primarily exist as plot devices to link one man to another, or as sexual conquests.

In locating the narrative conflict within the family, the film decentres the socio-cultural and economic changes that have accompanied the rise of these generational exemplars. It takes historical processes out of the picture, operating in the same way and with similar effects to the mythologisation of battles between babyboomers and millennials in the media. The movement from one socioeconomic settlement to another becomes invisible - and along with it the generational inequality of the new settlement.

Revisiting the ancient practice of using mythical archetypes to explore moral dilemmas and model behaviour brings to mind more recent writing on myth in society, and in particular the work of Roland Barthes. For Barthes, myth was a mechanism for transmitting ideological messages: it revealed and obscured in equal measure. His classic example from the 1950s, of a magazine-cover image of a young black soldier saluting the French flag, plays a similar role to the generational figures we have been discussing.¹⁴ The image represents an inclusive, post-racial France - patriotic, youthful, optimistic and diverse - while masking continuing colonial oppression. In the same way, the figures of the Millennial and the Baby Boomer hide differences of class, race and gender while also telling us something recognisable about changing times.

Political activism and the intergenerational contract

Generation has a long history in the service of patriarchy and the old order. It humanises the link between past, present and future, and makes the complex

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sweeps of time understandable through the medium of family relationships: ancestors, grandparents, parents, children and the unborn.

Whether in its Burkean or Mannheimian formulations, it is variously used to justify austerity; to lead attacks on welfare for both old and young (separately but similarly); and to make the case for a rebalancing of the economy in the hypothesised interests of the young/old (what those interests are depends quite clearly on where you sit on the political and age spectrum). It is a category of identity that can be effectively mobilised for many purposes.

The Tories have been more convincing in their invocation of generation than Labour, but Labour has occasionally been successful in ridiculing the right on this terrain. Tony Blair's first speech as leader lampooned Michael Portillo's claim that free markets let wealth 'cascade from generation to generation'; he counter-argued that socialism required different metaphors, such as community, solidarity and partnership.¹⁵ What these terms eventually came to mean under New Labour is another story altogether, but it is worth reflecting here on the effectiveness of this language at the time. Ed Miliband's 'British Promise' that 'the next generation should do better than the last' was much less convincing, wrapped as it was in the language and tropes of nationalism, family and a conformist idea of 'progress'.

Parts of the environmental movement have also attempted to capitalise on the power of this generational discourse, positing the rights of future generations to argue for effective action on climate change. Hungary is the first state to have an operational Ombudsman for Future Generations, and this is seen as a useful means of making a moral case about the abstract notion of intergenerational justice, to be considered alongside the needs and rights of existing citizens.¹⁶ Once again the moral force of the family is the pivot: who would want to leave a world devastated by climate change to their children and grandchildren? But such uses of generation repeat the problems outlined in the arguments above. The future generations are imagined as those of the global North, and the language assumes a normative family construction and universalises its logics, all the while excluding people in the global south who are already experiencing the effects of climate change.¹⁷ The structural problems of the conservative discourse on generation are just as present in the environmental argument. Climate change is one of the most challenging problems of our time, but linking it to a fundamentally conservative social understanding of society makes it very difficult to articulate the changes that are needed to tackle it. In

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invoking language that explicitly and implicitly reinforces the existing cultural and social configurations of capitalism, patriarchy and heteronormativity, it limits the actions that can be mobilised.¹⁸

The normalisation of patriarchal family formations in these questions of futurity has also been criticised by feminist and queer scholars; and here the idea of 'reproductive futurism', a term coined by Lee Edelman to explain understandings of time (though in a different context) may be a helpful aid to understanding. Edelman argues that time is structured by the all-pervasive figure of the child in need of protection: it is this which represents the possibility of the future: 'That Child remains the perpetual horizon of every acknowledged politics, the fantasmatic beneficiary of every political intervention'. To 'submit' to this politics - and it is one that is used by the left-wing environmental movement - is thus to authenticate this social order.¹⁹

As we have already noted, generation is seen as a pivot: the movement from the past to the present to the future revolves around it. And this sense of generational movement through history as a smooth progression lends weight to a wider view of history as progress. But many black activists and writers challenge this framing of history, arguing that it is important to recognise that the violence of past persists in the present. This is especially pertinent when understandings of generation are linked to the inheritance of property through the patrilineal line. How does this relate to someone whose subjectivity is owned, and whose ownership is legitimated by a particular concept of 'generation'? Dylan Rodriguez argues that America's 'racial chattel logic' is still present in the prison system, in which the prisoner is legally understood as the bodily property of the state. Racial slavery cannot be positioned in the past tense, because 'slavery shapes our spatial and political *present tense*'.²⁰ Hortense Spillers argues that there is an American 'grammar' that maintains subordination through a language and culture that is 'grounded in the originating metaphors of captivity and mutilation, so that it is as if neither time nor history, nor historiography and its topics, shows movement, as the human subject is "murdered" over and over again by the passions of a bloodless and anonymous archaism, showing itself in endless disguise'.²¹ Science fiction novels by writers such as Octavia Butler and Toni Morrison disrupt a linear and progressive understanding of time as a way of exposing its investment in white supremacy. Robbie Shilliam invokes the temporal sensibilities of Ras Tafari philosophy and the 'now time' of reparations:

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‘struggles of the ancestors must be redeemed because their suffering manifests in the conditions presently experienced by their dependants’.²²

Thinking generation with intersectionality

In the light of all this, is it possible to reclaim generation for left-wing and social justice groups - and to do so while still being attentive to people who are marginalised or excluded by conventional framings of generation? Is it possible to use the concept of generation as a political tool without ignoring class, or to talk about time and history without excluding those who continue to experience injuries of the past in present - and without assuming normative attitudes to reproductive sexualities?

We would argue that it is possible, but it is important in so doing to be aware of the complexities and difficulties we have outlined in this essay. In the academic literature, the tendency is to refine and clarify the concept. But this can mean that complexity is lost. For example, sociologists June Edmunds and Bryan Turner, who wrote extensively on generation at the turn of the millennium, offered an alternative master-narrative for social change in which class was replaced by generation: they argued for a generational dialectic whereby active generations change society and passive ones then consolidate these changes.²³ The political consequences of this position are quite obviously negative for the left. On the other hand, youth studies scholars such as Daniel Woodman and Johanna Wyn foreground generation as a key sociological area for exploration, but are at pains to argue it must be understood in relation to class, gender, race and sexuality.²⁴ Neither of these approaches is entirely satisfactory, but we have far more sympathy with the latter than the former.

For generation to be a productive concept it needs to be understood within a wider conjunctural and intersectional framework. As Kimberlé Crenshaw suggests: ‘Intersectional dynamics are not static, but neither are they untethered from history, context, or social identity.’²⁵ Generation is not an identity in the same way as class, race or gender: by definition the Millennial lacks the long histories that those established vectors of identity carry with them. We are always located in both a specific generational cohort, and a specific age group within our families, but we and our generation will pass from youth to age, and, as we do, this will be mapped on to specific historical moments. Generation is not an enduring category of person, and

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it is often invoked as a way of mythologising or personifying social change rather than as a fixed identity. Other identities also change over time but they have longer histories: the working class has a history going back to the industrial revolution; our ideas about women are shaped by millennia of patriarchal oppression.

However, when used in specific contexts the idea of generation can work helpfully to locate continuity and difference in relation to current activism. For instance, some Black Lives Matter activists - for example the Crunk Feminist Collective - locate their politics generationally, in relation to but also distinct from previous black feminist and black liberation movements. The idea of generation allows present-day activists to define themselves in continuity with, but also as different from, past generations of activists, including the civil rights movement generation, in relation to issues such as theory, tactics and strategy. This is not a question of continuity being seen as a line passing from father to son, or even from pre- to post- liberation. It is seen, rather, in shifts in approach: for example from one based on performative respectability to one immersed in hip hop vitality; or from one based on a male leadership bound up with religious authority to one of queer feminist inclusivity. For activists involved in BLM, generation locates a political movement in the legacy of previous struggle but it does this in order to challenge white supremacist capitalist patriarchy.²⁶

When using the concept of generation we need to be attentive to specific contexts in which it is being used, and be wary of the ways that the term can be used to gloss over difference. Generation can be an explanatory tool only if it is understood as intersecting with other axes of difference and inequality, such as class, gender, race, sexuality, place, ability. Generational identity is located differently from these other categories, given its different temporal framing, but, as long as it is understood in conjunction with an intersectional analysis, it can enrich and inform actions taken in the present. For inheritance is not just about property and status, it can also be about inspiration, knowledge and a deep well of emotional support.

In conclusion, and going back to the 2017 UK election with which we started this article, generation - located by the vector of age - can be seen to have played an important part in galvanising enthusiasm for Labour's 2017 election manifesto, as people who were previously alienated from politics became enthused by a genuine alternative. That people across ages and locations in the lifecycle are being re-enfranchised is exciting. Nevertheless, this new chapter in Labour's history is only

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going to be successful and genuinely socially-democratic if, as well as continuing to address young people as legitimate voters, it ensures that its policies and ideologies reach beyond patriarchal understandings of generation (whether based on Burke or Mannheim). A narrative based on generational conflict always carries the risk of diverting attention from deeper and more entrenched forms of inequality.

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Notes

1. The *Soundings* series on critical terms seeks to explore some of the main ideas at play in the current political conjuncture. The series was introduced in Deborah Grayson and Ben Little, 'Soundings critical terms: conjunctural analysis and the crisis of ideas', *Soundings* 65, 2017. Each instalment will outline the theoretical and historical background for the term under consideration, and provide empirical examples of its use, showing how subtle differences in the ways in which concepts are understood within different contexts and traditions can lead to very different interpretations of the best way to build a better society. The aim is to develop a rich toolkit of concepts, histories and understandings that enable us to think through what is possible, determine the direction of future interventions, and provide a space in which crucial differences and agreements within left activism can be explored.
2. Karl Mannheim, 'The Problems of Generations' in *Essays on the Sociology of*

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Knowledge, Oxford University Press 1952.

3. See Ben Little, 'A growing discontent: Class and generation under neoliberalism', in Stuart Hall, Doreen Massey and Michael Rustin (eds), *After Neoliberalism: The Kilburn Manifesto* Lawrence and Wishart 2014.

4. *Conservative and Unionist Manifesto* 2017, p9: <https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/manifesto2017/Manifesto2017.pdf>.

5. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Penguin 1968 [1790] p120.

6. Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, University of Chicago Press 1962.

7. For discussion of Aristotle's causality from which this slogan derives see Andrea Falcon, 'Aristotle on Causality', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2015 Edition, Edward N. Zalta (ed): <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/aristotle-causality/>.

8. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Volume 34, Charity*, R.J. Batten (ed), Cambridge University Press 2006, p149.

9. Jonathan White, 'Climate Change and the generational timescape', *Sociological Review* 2017.

10. See also Annie Kelly's article in this issue, which discusses the construction by conservatives in the US of an effeminate millennial generation that does not know how to defend the nation.

11. Laura Nash, 'Concepts of Existence: Greek Origins of Generational Thought', *Daedalus*, Vol. 107, No. 4, 1978, p2.

12. Judith Burnett, *Generations: The Time Machine in Theory and Practice*, Ashgate 2012, p21.

13. There is a wider argument to be made about the ways in which history is becoming understood in our society as an affective space for identity formation - an understanding of the past that has much in common with these mythological formulations. But there is not the space to go into this now.

14. Roland Barthes, 'Myth Today', in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers, Vintage 2009.

15. www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=200.

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16. www.if.org.uk/2011/08/16/a-parliamentary-ombudsman-for-future-generations/.
17. Philip Catney and Timothy Doyle, 'The welfare of now and the green (post) politics of the *future*', *Critical Social Policy*, Vol. 31(2).
18. See 'Climate Change and the generational timescape' (note 9) for a similar argument.
19. Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Duke University Press 2004, p3.
20. Dylan Rodriguez, 'The present tense of (racial) slavery: the racial chattel logic of the US prison', *Open Democracy*, 18.6.15.
21. Hortense Spillers, 'Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book', *Diacritics*, 17(2), 1987, p68.
22. Robbie Shilliam, 'RasTafari and reparation time', *Open Democracy*, 16.1.15.
23. J. Edmunds and B.S. Turner, 'Global generations: social change in the twentieth century', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 56, 2005.
24. Daniel Woodman and Johanna Wyn, 'Class, gender and generation matter: using the concept of social generation to study inequality and social change', *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol. 18, No 10, 2015.
25. Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, 'From Private Violence to Mass Incarceration: Thinking Intersectionally About Women, Race, and Social Control', *UCLA Law Review* 59, 2012, p1418.
26. See, for example, Andreana Clay, *The Hip-Hop Generation Fights Back: Youth, Activism and Post-Civil Rights Politics*, New York University 2012; and Khadijah White, 'Black lives on campuses matter: the rise of the new black student movement', *Soundings* 63, 2016.