

# Youth Movements for Intergenerational Justice

A study into the nature, cause and success of youth movements, and why they are required by intergenerational justice and democracy

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Thomas Tozer

## ABSTRACT

It is a commonly accepted fact that young people are going through a politically challenging time. Just when they need politics to work in their favour and help them solve their problems, young people are finding themselves neglected by, and, consequently, apathetic to, politics. Against this background, I argue that an essential method for addressing the political challenges of the youth, thereby helping to bring about intergenerational justice and shift democracy closer to its ideal form, is for young people to create and execute successful youth movements. This paper begins by establishing the need for youth movements in three sections. First, the claim that young people are in trouble is established and given a political emphasis. Second, 'youth movement' is defined. Third, I argue that democracy requires intergenerational justice, and this, in turn, requires youth movements in order to prevent the political neglect and underrepresentation of the youth. In the next two sections of the paper, I analyse the source of youth movements and then, by drawing on examples of youth movements, I propose six key ingredients of a successful youth movement. Finally, I summarise the arguments given in the preceding sections and conclude that to achieve intergenerational justice, and hence take our politics closer to the ideals of democracy, it is vital that young people give themselves, and are given by the older generation, the best possible chance of creating successful youth movements.

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## Introduction

My research into youth movements revealed a surprising dearth of academic literature analysing youth movements as their own specific type of social movement. While much has been written about the cause and nature of social movements in general, the analysis of youth movements in particular is extremely lacking and so writing this paper proved to be quite a challenge. Often, I had to draw conclusions about the cause and nature of social movements from the sociological literature, and then work out how to apply these specifically to the youth.

Such a gap in the academic literature is both strange and concerning. It is strange because there is no doubt that there are many aspects to the situation of young people that are not shared by other social groups (Howker & Malik, 2013; Martin, 2012; Davis, 1990), and therefore if any sociological analysis is to fully capture youth movements then it needs to consider them independently as their own particular type of social movement. It is concerning because there is no doubt that the youth today are suffering in many different ways from the political neglect of the older generation (Howker & Malik, 2013; Martin, 2012; Davis, 1990), and so, as a powerful force of political change, it is now more than ever that youth movements need to be analysed and discussed. I hope that this paper can go some way towards helping to close this academic gap.

In section 1, I discuss the nature of the ‘youth problem’, emphasising its political aspects. Section 2 then provides a definition of ‘youth movement’ by first defining a social movement and then suggesting the context in which a social movement can be regarded as a ‘youth movement’. Section 3 brings together the first two sections of the paper by arguing that the ‘youth problem’ is a problem for intergenerational justice and, hence, for democracy. The second part of section 3 then proposes that youth movements offer a crucial method to help solve the youth problem, establish intergenerational justice and bring about a genuine democracy: I outline how the six failings of democracy identified by Bobbio (1987) are reflected by a politically underrepresented youth, and contend that youth

movements are an essential force for overcoming these failings. Therefore, I argue, democracy requires intergenerational justice, and intergenerational justice requires youth movements. Having established the need for youth movements, section 4 then proffers an analysis of the source of youth movements, drawing principally on the sociological analysis of the source of social movements provided by Le Bon (2001 [1896]) and Turner & Killian (1957).

The first four sections of this paper are largely based on sociological and political theory, with occasional examples of youth movements used to demonstrate particular points. Section 5 then moves away from theory as I attempt to determine the factors that give a youth movement the best chance of achieving political success and shift my analysis to historical examples of youth movements. By drawing on youth movements such as the 2011 Chilean student movement, 2010 English tuition-fee protests, 1960s American student movement, and the 2014 Hong Kong student protests, among others, I propose six key ingredients of a successful youth movement, and refer to these respectively as: timing, strategy, connect to society, motivation, demands, and the internet.

Finally, my conclusion implores politicians to encourage and support the creation of youth movements, and I suggest that to have the best chance of success any youth movement should try to use the six key ingredients of a successful youth movement identified in section 5. I hope that as well as contributing to the sparse literature currently available on youth movements, this paper will also help to persuade both the younger and the older generations of the importance of youth movements as a force for political change. If the older generation gives young people the opportunity to form new youth movements, and the youth do their best to ensure that their youth movements are successful, then this brings great hope that we can solve the 'youth problem', establish intergenerational justice and hence take our political system closer to the ideals of democracy.

## Section 1 – The ‘youth problem’

In the present day, it is uncontroversial to assert that young people are in trouble. The 20<sup>th</sup> century has increasingly seen the youth identified as a group that needs to be treated independently from the rest of society, and the ‘youth problem’ is regularly described and discussed (Davis, 1990).

Since the 1950s, British society has experienced a great outburst of youth subcultures and movements, and a wide array of social problems have been associated principally with the youth (Davis, 1990, p. 1). In particular, the counterculture of the 1960s is seen principally as a movement by the youth against the politics of that time (Howker & Malik, 2013, pp. 200-201), and it is on young people’s political problems that this paper shall focus. Political commentators frequently refer to the political apathy of young people; they often comment on the lack of participation in, and awareness of, political affairs by the youth (Davis, 1990, p. 96). The extremely basic knowledge that many young people have about the political process, and the reticence with which they are prepared to accept that politicians are able to deal with the issues affecting them, can be seen as a threat to democracy (Davis, 1990, pp. 96, 99).

On a plurality of fronts, the electoral engagement of young people today, compared with the young people of 40 or 50 years ago, is less (Martin, 2012, p. 86), and there are many ways in which we can see that young people today are disengaged with politics. Among all the main political parties, only a very small percentage of members are less than 25 years old: in the UK in 1990, the percentage ranged from 1% of the Conservatives to 12% of the Green Party (Davis, 1990, p. 101). In 2012, in the UK, only 66% of people aged 23-32 said they identified with a political party, compared with 84% of people aged 73-82 (Keen, 2014, p. 13).<sup>1</sup> And in 1986 the gap between the percentages of the oldest and youngest groups interested in politics was seven percentage points, but the most recent

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<sup>1</sup> There are many other statistics given in the report by Keen (2014) that demonstrate young people’s disengagement with politics.

reading is more than double this at 16 percentage points (Lee & Young, 2014).

In terms of voting in the UK, the young are less likely to feel it a civic duty to vote than the rest of the population: statistics in 2012 revealed that 45% of young people feel that they have a duty to vote compared with an average of 62% of the population, and 73% of those aged 65 or over (Lee & Young, 2014). Furthermore, in the UK in 2011-12 those aged 16 to 24 were more likely to state that they had no interest at all in politics (42%) than those aged 65 and over (21%), as is demonstrated by the graph:

*No interest in politics [in the UK]: by age, 2011–12* (Randall, 2014):<sup>2</sup>



At the time of the 2010 UK general election, the average age of an MP was 50 (Rhodes, et al., 2011, p. 43), demonstrating that UK parliament dearly lacked the presence of youth. In that election, 50% of people aged 18-34 turned up to vote, compared with 75% of those 55 and above (Howker & Malik, 2013, p. 197).

It is therefore clear that an effort must be made to improve the political lot of young people. However, it is not just for the sake of young people that this effort must be made, and neither should it be made only in an attempt to improve the level of their political involvement. The young must be looked after because their generation carries the future of the world on their shoulders; at the moment, with this generation—referred to by

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<sup>2</sup> Respondents were asked: 'How interested would you say you are in politics?' This chart shows the percentage of those who answered 'Not at all interested' [from the report by Randall (2014): page 5 of the pdf ].

Howker & Malik (2013) as the 'jilted generation'—afflicted by poor housing and job prospects, and today's undergraduates leaving University with debts of approximately £43 500 each, the future looks bleak (Howker & Malik, 2013, pp. 263, 202, 240).

Often, the older generation has expressed a shocking lack of sympathy for young people. Howker & Malik (2013) write:

Young people have been labelled as 'Kippers', 'Neets', 'iPods' and 'Boomerang Kids' and they have been lectured almost constantly about 'responsibility' by politicians. ... All of them [political leaders], at one time or another ... have said that if the jilted generation just took some more accountability for themselves, stopped being anti-social and so short-term, things would work out okay (Howker & Malik, 2013, p. 242)

Even the counterculture of the 60s, identified above as an attempt by the young to challenge the politics of that time, was seen by most serious thinkers as 'reactionary' and as a problem or threat, even (Davis, 1990, p. 212). It was seen as too contradictory to portray the views of the youth, since it embraced a diverse range of phenomena which were sometimes quite adult, and sometimes quite contradictory (Davis, 1990, pp. 210-211).

However, it is a mistake for the older generation to think of themselves as free from blame for the 'youth problem'. It is quite plain that politicians today are more interested in the vote of young people's parents' generation than the vote of young people themselves (Howker & Malik, 2013, p. 195), so it is unsurprising that they place little emphasis on the needs of the youth. The counterculture of the 1960s was a movement against the political system that the older generation had created and enforced (Howker & Malik, 2013, pp. 200-201), and this can only imply that the politics of that period did not sufficiently represent the needs of young people, or at least did not give young people a *feeling* that their needs were being adequately represented in politics. As shall be discussed in section 5, it is true that the movement espoused quite unclear goals and there are many ways in which it could have been improved, but the point is that the

movement only arose because young people felt that the politics of the time did not represent them and their wishes.

Without doubt, there are various reforms available to policy makers, such as increased provision of civic education, which could quite easily increase the level of political engagement among young people (Martin, 2012, pp. 119-134). It is important that the older generation appreciate this because although they may no longer be alive in 50 years' time the young people of today will be, and therefore, as mentioned above, looking after young people means looking after the future of the world (Howker & Malik, 2013, p. 263). Furthermore, as will be established in section 3, improved political representation of the youth is required by intergenerational justice and, hence, by democracy.

### **Are young people really so uninterested in politics?**

Although this paper has so far argued that young people are in trouble, the truth is not quite so clear-cut. According to the analysis of Martin (2012, pp. 19-35), young people's voting habits should be thought of more as volatile than in decline – the picture is rather more complicated than the way it is often painted in academic literature. For example, many young people undoubtedly have an interest in politics but no any active involvement in party politics; they may be engaged in political actions but may not vote or express strong party affiliations; they may understand political issues but harbour doubt that they are able to effect political change (Davis, 1990, p. 97).

In fact, young people are actually more likely to engage in non-electoral forms of political activity, such as taking part in a demonstration or signing a petition, than older people, and their interest in such forms of political expression is increasing (Martin, 2012, pp. 87-101). They also have a distinct advantage in the present day: their aptitude for using the internet to engage with politics. Indeed, as will be discussed in section 5, the internet is increasingly used by the young as a tool for political action and discussion (Martin, 2012, pp. 102-117). It is my belief that the

internet's role in effecting political change will continue to increase and help young people to express their views and organise political action.

Although there is no magic solution to the youth problem (Zukin, et al., 2006), this paper will now argue that youth movements are a key force for solving it and, although they cannot offer a guarantee of political progress, they nonetheless give great hope that intergenerational justice, and a genuine democracy, are possible. As a preliminary to discussing the importance of youth movements for intergenerational justice, this paper will now proceed by, in the next section, defining 'youth movement'.

## **Section 2 – Defining 'youth movement'**

A youth movement is a type of social movement that is created and executed principally, if not entirely, by the youth. Therefore this section of the paper will define a youth movement first by defining social movements, and then by specifying what sort of youth engagement is required for the social movement to be considered a 'youth movement'.

### **What is a social movement?**

There is no easy way to define a social movement (Crossley, 2002, pp. 1-7). Social movements come in a diverse variety of forms, often with very different goals and contrasting movement strategies. However, there are a number of characteristics shared by more or less every social movement. I will outline what these characteristics are and then define 'social movement' on the basis of these shared characteristics.

The first quality shared by all social movements is that members of the movement feel like they are in a group. Social movements develop a sense of group morale which gives the movement a feeling of collective identity and purpose (Crossley, 2002, p. 32).<sup>3</sup> They create a persuasive ideology

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<sup>3</sup> This identity and purpose will be arising from collective discontent and hope of a new system of living (Blumer, 1951, p. 199). Although this is a characteristic shared by all

that formulates the key beliefs of the group and which, they hope, will draw in new recruits. The social movement will always have a goal in mind – this may be only quite a general goal which results in the movement moving in a general direction which is persistent, if slow and unorganised; the women’s movement, which operated in many spheres such as the home, politics, industry and travel, and which aimed quite generally at the improving the way women are treated, is an example of this (Blumer, 1951, pp. 200-202). The other possibility is that a social movement will be very specific in its actions and have very well-defined goals – these such movements tend to be revolutionary or reform movements (Blumer, 1951, pp. 200-202). In each case, the social movement possesses a sense of group identity and purpose. Eyerman & Jamison (1991) summarize the nature of social movements neatly, describing them as ‘moments of collective creation that provide societies with ideas, identities, and even ideals’ (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, p. 4).

Social movements also function to give people knowledge about how things are, and how things should be, in their social environment. Eyerman & Jamison (1991) argue that as well as the instrumental and strategic actions that define the praxis of social movements, social movements can also be defined as ‘producers of knowledge’ (1991, p. 94). Indeed, Eyerman & Jamison (1991) give an explanation of social movements that centres around the notion of ‘cognitive praxis’, the idea that a social movement alters the collective memory and historical path of the population within which the social movement has arisen. Social movements allow entrepreneurs, the movement’s scholars and the collective force of everyone in the movement to attempt to change people’s understanding of society and their social environment (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991).

Social movements, therefore, have an important impact on society. Crossley (2002, pp. 7-9) condenses the ways in which social movements are important into three: first, part of a social movement will transform

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social movements, I have chosen to leave discussing it until section 4 because it is more relevant to an explanation of the source of social movements than it is to defining social movements.

the basic linguistic and domestic habits that shape our lives and therefore play a key role in the world that we seek to explain; second, they are the principal agent for engendering change within society; and third, their existence, and the way in which they both struggle and make progress, give us the opportunity to understand how the political structures of our society work.

Therefore, this paper shall define a social movement as an enterprise which brings people together as a group by forming a collective identity and a group ideology and goal; it will arise from some kind of collective dissatisfaction with the current social system and give hope of a new way of living; it will produce knowledge about the social situation and how it can be changed. Such movements are important because they transform our basic habits, are key agents of social change, and allow us to understand how our political structures function.

### **What is a youth movement?**

As mentioned above, a youth movement is a type of social movement. But what is youth precisely, and what type and degree of youth engagement is required for a social movement to be classified as a 'youth movement' rather than, for example, a movement that has lots of youth membership? These are the questions that I will answer in the remainder of this section.

Sociologists have generally failed to define youth in a way free from sociocultural or historical context (Manning, 1973, p. 1). In an attempt to define youth more objectively, therefore, this paper shall take Manning's (1973) definition of youth: youth may be seen as a group who are principally excluded from adult commitments but who 'espouse the same symbols and objectives' (Manning, 1973, p. 1). I take this to mean that the youth who make up a youth movement will be free from many of the responsibilities of adulthood, but they will support the same sort of politically mature goals as adults such as fairness, equal political representation for all groups in society, and an end to racial segregation.

Springhall (1977, p. 13) argues that a youth movement can be identified (for the purposes of his study) ‘by its willingness to admit unlimited numbers of children, adolescents, and young adults, with the aim of propagating some sort of code of living.’ In claiming that a youth movement will propagate a code of living of some sort, Springhall is merely locating youth movements in the context of social movements because, as discussed above, all social movements will espouse some kind of group ideology and hope for an improved life system. Yet the first part of Springhall’s definition, that a youth movement must be willing ‘to admit unlimited numbers of children, adolescents, and young adults’ (1977, p. 13) does not fully capture the unique quality of youth movements; it is easy to envisage a social movement, such Germany’s 20<sup>th</sup> century National Socialism movement, which is very happy to admit many young people who propagate the movement’s cause, but which cannot be considered a social movement because it is run by, and for the aims of, the older generation at least as much as the younger generation.

Therefore, I will add a further clarification to this definition of youth movements: for the purposes of this paper, a youth movement shall be defined as a type of social movement, defined above, that not only admits many young people but which also is founded by, and principally intends to further the aims of, the younger generation, even if the movement is subsequently supported by much of the older generation too.<sup>4</sup>

### **Section 3 – Why democracy requires intergenerational justice, and intergenerational justice requires youth movements**

This section will establish that democracy requires intergenerational

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<sup>4</sup> Although this definition is sufficient for the purposes of this paper, it is worth noting that there are other important characteristics shared by most youth movements that I do not have space to mention here. For example, one significant element usually present in youth movements is that, alongside its political aims, the youth movement will also have a non-political side that simply allows young people to form friendships and find comfort in their formless opposition to a civilization offering little warmth or ideals to young people (Laquer, 1973, pp. 71-72).

justice, and that intergenerational requires youth movements, in two parts. First, I will explain the notion and value of democracy, and why it requires intergenerational justice. Second, it will be shown that the appearance of our political system as a genuine democracy is an illusion. In particular, the underrepresentation of young people fails the principles of intergenerational justice and democracy, and an effective method to change this and increase the political influence of the youth is for young people to create and successfully execute youth movements.

### **Democracy requires intergenerational justice**

Rousseau (2008 [1762], p. 67) defined democracy as the form of politics that occurs when the sovereign bestows the whole, or the majority, of the power of government to the people, and more citizens are magistrates than merely private citizens. The aim of such a political structure is to ensure that politics represents the views of everyone equally, as opposed to being based on the whims of just one or a few people in parliament. Two key principles of democracy, therefore, are popular control and popular equality: a country's citizens should control politics and be equally represented by it (Phillips, 1995, pp. 27, 28). In this way, democracy requires that the government is not only 'for the people', but also 'by the people' (Phillips, 1995, pp. 27, 28).

Although democracy is now the dominant state form across a great deal of the world, it was only at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, aided by the American and French revolutions, that democracy began to garner popular appeal among political thinkers (Dryzek & Dunleavy, 2009, pp. 18-26). From the time of its birth in ancient Athens in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, democracy had been hugely unpopular; but the innovation of representative democracy, rather than the direct democracy of Athens, was the key that enabled democracy to flourish (Dryzek & Dunleavy, 2009, pp. 18-26). In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, for example, Hobbes (1994 [1651], pp. 118-127), argued fervently that a monarchy is preferable to democracy because it enables strong rule, keeps the ruler's interests in line

with the public interest because the King would get more in taxes if everyone was prosperous, and, unlike in an assembly, there could be no problem of disagreement arising from envy.

Nowadays, however, asserting that democracy is the best form of government is uncontroversial, even from the perspective of Churchill's famous dictum that 'democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried.' Democracy is seen to have two principal instrumental benefits: by forcing people to consider the perspectives of others and enabling them to consider many different sources of information, it produces relatively good laws and policies; and it improves the character of participants (Christiano, 2006). It is also thought to be inherently good for the way in which its methods promote the liberty and equality of all individuals (Christiano, 2006). Since it has, over the past three centuries, generally shown that it is capable of protecting the freedom and security of individuals, we can conclude that Hobbes's fear of democracy was misplaced, and democracy fulfils the aim of politics (Tozer, 2013).<sup>5</sup> For all these reasons, this paper contends that genuine democracy is the ideal political form that we should be aiming for.

What, then, does genuine democracy require? It requires that citizens are active and self-helping in political decision-making, rather than passive and ignorant (Mill, 2008 [1861], p. 46). So that a state's politics can be justified to all citizens, political decision making must be based on appeals only to general beliefs that are presently accepted, common sense, and the conclusions of science 'where these are not controversial' (Rawls, 1996, p. 224). This approach is not only helpful for society, it is, I argue, essential for democracy to be genuine because without such an approach the political process will not be carried out in a way that aims to determine people's views and represent these equally, and so it will contravene the

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<sup>5</sup> This sentence makes a bold statement; many people may contest the claim that over the past three centuries democracy has generally shown that it is capable of protecting the freedom and security of individuals. At the very least however, it is impossible to deny that democracies have avoided Hobbes's state of nature, and he considered this the principal task of politics (Hobbes, 1994 [1651], pp. 74-110). Therefore even from a Hobbesian perspective, democracies have shown themselves to be an effective political form.

need for active citizens and the principle of equality. Equality is the basis of a democratic division of power (Brown, 1950), and therefore ‘democracy, to be genuine, must be founded on the doctrine of equality’ (Brown, 1950, p. 47). Basing democracy on a doctrine of equality means that society must be based on laws and principles that treat everyone equally, regardless of their age, race or position in society, and everyone must have access to their basic rights – in particular, everyone must have access to their right to take part in politics (Rawls, 1999; Anderson, 1999). The principles of treating everyone equally irrespective of their age, and of giving all generations an equal stake in politics, are, I argue, the defining principles of intergenerational justice.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, democracy requires intergenerational justice.

However, the mere election of genuine representatives, in which everyone’s vote carries equal political weight, is not enough for intergenerational justice and democracy to be genuine – we also need to be sure that these representatives continue to represent everyone (Brown, 1950, p. 70). That is with the caveat, though, that on some occasions political divergences in representation can be justified, for example representing the interests of mentally ill people with mentally healthy people; the under representation of a particular group doesn’t have to be a bad thing (Phillips, 1995, p. 39). Except for very particular circumstances however, a genuine representative democracy will require that every citizen is represented equally, and that the representatives continue to represent these citizens after they have been elected.

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<sup>6</sup> I take intergenerational justice to mean that people have the political rights that they would have chosen behind a veil of ignorance, this veil being such that people do not know what generation they will be in when the veil is lifted (Rawls, 1999, pp. 118-123). This veil of ignorance would logically result in people choosing a political system which is such that everyone is treated with equal fairness regardless of their age, and everyone has an equal stake in politics – therefore, I define intergenerational justice by these two principles. Nevertheless, people behind the veil would choose some rights, such as the right to vote, to only apply to the appropriate people in society. For example, people may choose to give voting rights only to citizens of 18 or over; intergenerational justice does not require giving a baby the vote.

## **How democracy is failing intergenerational justice, and why youth movements can help**

This paper has already established the contention that democracy requires intergenerational justice, and intergenerational justice requires that all citizens are treated as equally important, irrespective of their age. However, the section 1 of this paper established that the younger and older generations are not on an equal footing: the younger generation have less influence in politics, politicians make less effort to represent their views, and, probably as a consequence, the younger generation are less interested in traditional politics than the older generation (Howker & Malik, 2013; Martin, 2012; Davis, 1990). In all these ways, democracy today is failing to uphold intergenerational justice, and so democracy itself is failing: the younger generation is being neglected by politics. If we are to make the transition from the illusion of democracy to genuine democracy and bring about intergenerational justice, the ‘youth problem’ must, therefore, be addressed.

The older generation may counter by reiterating the argument that was heard earlier: some political divergences are beneficial (Phillips, 1995, p. 39), and with more knowledge and experience of life the older generation have a better idea of what is good for the younger generation than the younger generation themselves, so the under representation of the youth is no bad thing. This example of under representation may be contrary to democracy, but it is beneficial for the younger generation and society as a whole.

But this is to deny the benefits of democracy. As discussed above, democracy produces good laws and policies, improves the character of participants, and is intrinsically valuable for the way in which it promotes the liberty and equality of all individuals (Christiano, 2006). If we wish to see these benefits, the two key principles of democracy—popular control and popular equality—must be upheld (Phillips, 1995, pp. 27-28), and therefore the younger generation must be represented to the same extent as the older generation. Intergenerational justice, also, demands that the

youth are politically represented to the same extent as the older generation, and even if people were to deny that intergenerational justice is required by democracy, its political value is very clear – justice is the first virtue of any social institution (Rawls, 1999, p. 3), and so intergenerational justice is an essential requirement of politics. Moreover, the claim that the older generation know what is best for the youth better than the youth themselves is highly contentious. Only young people themselves have a direct insight into the views and needs of the younger generation, and, as shall be seen in the final part of this section, it is in fact often the younger generation that are most responsive to the potential for political change and most resistant to undemocratic politics. Therefore, we should strive to uphold democracy and intergenerational justice and, for this aim, it is essential that the representation of the youth in politics is improved and increased.

It has already been said that a key principle of democracy is that the citizens are able to control the government: democracy means government ‘by the people’ (Phillips, 1995, pp. 27-28). Yet in democracies today, this is clearly not the case. The private citizen has little idea of what is going on and no ability to effect political change (Lippmann, 1993 [1927]), and he or she feels like a ‘deaf spectator in the back row’ (Lippmann, 1993 [1927], p. 3). Bobbio (1987, pp. 26-36) explains six ways in which our democracies fall short of the ideals of democracy. Although Bobbio (1987, pp. 26-36) intends these to be six ways in which democracy is failing in general, the underrepresentation of the youth is an example of this wider phenomenon, and I will explain the six failings of democracy by relating them specifically to the ‘youth problem’.

The first two failings of democracy that Bobbio (1987, pp. 26-36) identifies are that democracies are now more interested in representing large groups and organizations than individuals, and that democracies now give renewed energy to the particular interests of big groups above impartial political representation. In particular, large corporations, trade unions, political parties and so forth are represented far more than the needs and views of the youth.

Social movements, however, provide a crucial channel for groups and issues that currently lack a voice in politics to become visible (Tilly & Wood, 2013, p. 159). Youth movements, defined above as type of social movement that intends principally to further the aims of the youth, are therefore the social movement that gives young people a voice in politics. In this way, we can see how, with respect to the under representation of the younger generation, youth movements can begin to establish intergenerational justice and thereby resolve the first two problems of democracy that Bobbio (1987, pp. 26-36) identifies.

The next two problems with democracy that Bobbio (1987, pp. 26-36) points out are that politics is run by elites who impose themselves,<sup>7</sup> and that places such as big businesses and bureaucratic institutions consistently evade democracy. With respect to the ‘youth problem’, then, the issue here is that young people have little say in who represents them and makes the laws, and, though they may have strong views about the place of big business and bureaucracy in society, they have very little influence over these things. This is a problem for democracy because liberty, understood as the ability to decide the laws under which you are governed—or, from the perspective of representative democracy, to at least decide who it is that will determine these laws—has always been the guiding principle of democracy (Bobbio, 1987, p. 30).

This situation can be improved by social movements. Social movements have a direct causal impact on democracy because, whether explicitly or as an indirect consequence of their actions, they give people more power over the decisions affecting them by expanding the range of participants in public politics, making these participants more equally weighted and creating barriers to oppose the translation of inequalities into public politics (Tilly & Wood, 2013, pp. 141-144). Specifically, youth movements enable the youth have more say in who represents them and a more significant influence on decisions concerning large groups. This is because

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<sup>7</sup> Of course, according to some thinkers this a good thing – Mosca (1939), for example, argues fervently about the benefits of society being run by elites. Mosca’s argument, I believe, can be refuted by the benefits of democracy given above. However, while there is a great deal that can be said about elite theory, a discussion of this topic is sadly outside the scope of this paper.

youth movements are likely to bring about a greater range of participants in public politics; they make these participants more equally weighted because all participants will want to attempt to resolve the problems raised by the youth movement so that they gain approval, and hence votes, from both the younger and the older generations; and, by virtue of their strong opposition to any such plans, and the problems this would cause for politicians, the actions of youth movements will make politicians far more reluctant to try to translate inequalities into public policy.

Finally, Bobbio (1987, pp. 26-36) contends that the rise of invisible power (for example the Masons and the mafia in Italy) in politics, especially in this technological age, giving those in power greater control over their subjects than ever before, and the increasing political ignorance and apathy of citizens, completely undermine democracy – democracy requires active self-helping citizens (Mill, 2008 [1861], p. 46). The problem for the youth in this case is that they do not know what is transpiring in the political world around them, and they have little motivation to get involved themselves.

Once again, a powerful force to change this problem in general is social movements, and to change the problem for youth in particular a powerful force for change is youth movements. Social movements allow people more power over the decisions affecting them (Tilly & Wood, 2013, pp. 141-144) for the reasons given above, and, as a result of having more power, people will be more incentivised to learn about what is going on in politics and how they could influence it. Social movements also help to raise awareness of political issues, thus helping to eliminate political ignorance and apathy. Quite possibly, if there were social movements intended specifically to challenge the rise of invisible power then this may even cause the government to reduce it; at the very least it would bring much of it into public attention, rendering it in some sense less ‘invisible’. Youth movements would have all the above effects: the younger generation would naturally become more politically active and interested, and more inclined to challenge the rise of ‘invisible power’. In all these ways, therefore, youth movements function to reduce the undemocratic treatment of young

people, bring about intergenerational justice, and shift democracy closer to its ideal form.

It is important to remember from section 1 of this paper that, although young people are less engaged in traditional politics than the older generation, they are actually more likely to engage in non-electoral forms of political activity, for example signing a petition or taking part in a demonstration, than older people, and their interest in such forms of political expression is increasing (Martin, 2012, pp. 87-101). Indeed, students, in particular, have historically been more responsive to political change than any other group apart, perhaps, from the intellectuals (Lipset, 1973). Their role was noted, for example, in the French revolution of 1848, various Chinese movements during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in the Russian revolutionary movement which was largely a student movement until 1905 (Lipset, 1973). Furthermore, young people espouse more consistent adherence to the ideals of honesty, democracy, equality etc than the older generation, making them more likely to resist the failures of democracy and try to improve it; and they do not yet have jobs, so they have more time to be able to spend on student protest (Lipset, 1973).

Furthermore, young people in the 1960s were brought up in an atmosphere of individuality and scepticism about authority and the values of money and status (Flacks, 1973), and I would say that young people today are brought up in an atmosphere that is just as open as the atmosphere of the 1960s. For this reason, it was almost inevitable that they would become social critics (Flacks, 1973), and, I would argue, it is almost inevitable that the current generation of youth will become social critics, if they have not already. For all these reasons, youth movements provide the perfect opportunity for young people to get more involved with politics. Not only will youth movements help to improve democracy and intergenerational justice in a number of different ways, they give young people the ability to express themselves and effect political change in the way that they want. This brings great hope that through youth movements, young people can become more involved in politics, the 'youth problem' can be solved and intergenerational justice can be established.

There are many examples of youth movements that are in direct support of democracy, such as a protest in Spain in 2011 echoing the pro-democracy rallies that, earlier in 2011, revolutionised Egypt; students who were killed protesting in 1968 against the military dictatorship in Brazil; Chilean students protesting in 2011 against the deep inequality in education, even though Chile's education system was probably the best in the region; and the 2014 Hong Kong student movement in which students and activists opposed Beijing's decision that fully democratic elections in Hong Kong be ruled out for 2017 (BBC News, 2011; Kurlansky, 2004, p. 83; Long, 2011; The Economist, 2011; BBC News, 2014a; BBC News, 2014c). Of course, there have also been non-democratic youth movements in the past, such as the student movement in Germany after WWI, which was strongly nationalist – the Nazi student association emerged in Germany universities as a leading force in 1930, a long time before Hitler became its leader (Laquer, 1973, p. 65). But generally, as mentioned above, the youth espouse more consistent idealism to the values of honesty, democracy, equality etc than the older generation (Lipset, 1973), so it is natural that youth movements tend to be highly supportive of democracy.

Aiming at the ideals of democracy will encourage and support the formation and proliferation of social movements because each element of democracy—equality, protecting citizens' rights, consulting with citizens, representing all members of society etc—contribute to social movement activity (Tilly & Wood, 2013, pp. 138-141). Furthermore, although some specific actions of social movement members may not directly support democratic improvement, such as blocking construction of a highway or opposing abortion, cumulatively many different social movements contribute to improved democracy (Tilly & Wood, 2013, pp. 141-144). This is because social movements can create coalitions across important political boundaries – an example of this is the Coptic Christian Egyptians joining with Muslim Egyptians to oppose the long-standing president Hosni Mubarak in 2011 (Tilly & Wood, 2013, pp. 141-144). Social movements also aid democracy when they bring together people with different skills from contrasting parts of society, bringing citizens who were previously excluded from political activity into the movement, and

they allow connections to form between newly mobilized groups and the current political actors (Tilly & Wood, 2013, pp. 141-144). In this way, democracy supports social movements, and social movements support democracy.

Indeed, although social movements can carry with them dangers that should, of course, be opposed, whatever their scale they benefit humanity (Tilly & Wood, 2013). If many social movements are available, this indicates that an institution is functioning democratically and they usually support it, providing a medium of expression through which many groups and issues that were previously invisible gain a political voice (Tilly & Wood, 2013, p. 159). Tilly & Wood (2013, p.159) claim that we should scan future social movements carefully in order to refute the pessimistic forecast that that triumph of 21<sup>st</sup> century social movements is very unlikely. Social movements are therefore an indicator that a democracy is healthy and functioning as it should be.

With respect to youth movements, then, by bringing together different groups of youth, allowing youths with different skills to support the same skills, involving youth groups that previously would have remained excluded from politics, and forming alliances between the newly mobilized youth groups and politicians, youth movements will help resolve the democratic underrepresentation of young people. The conclusion of this section, therefore, is that democracy requires intergenerational justice, and intergenerational justice requires youth movements. In order to better understand youth movements and to give young people the best chance of creating and executing successful youth movements, the next two sections of this paper will examine the causes of youth movements and the factors that make them successful.

## **Section 4 – The source of youth movements**

Le Bon (2001 [1896]) famously wrote that when many people are assembled, the resulting crowd takes on an unconscious nature of its own,

giving rise to unconscious actions, and the crowd's unconscious actions will then have a bearing on the psychology and conscious actions of the individuals in the crowd. Although the individuals in a crowd may be highly intelligent, the collection of these people will generally result in a great collective mental inferiority, and individuals will lose the ability to act intelligently, reducing their actions to the lowest common denominator (Le Bon, 2001 [1896]). This characterisation of 'the crowd' as a group that demonstrates uninhibited and impulsive actions, subject to contagion, remains a useful and edifying way in which to view 'the crowd' (Turner & Killian, 1957, p. 5).

If people only interpret their disadvantage individually then this will tend to lead to stress, rather than political unrest; the first step for a crowd of discontented people to become a social movement, or for a crowd of discontented young people to become a youth movement, is for them to view their discontent as a collective concern (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997, p. 107). By then developing a sustained sense of group identity and following a plan of action that requires more enduring action than crowd conditions are able to maintain, the crowd will be giving birth to a new phenomenon: a social movement or, in the case of young people, a youth movement (Turner & Killian, 1957, p. 307). The other possibility is that members of the public who share the same convictions as people in the crowd begin to supplement their informal dialogue with members of the crowd by organising some more lasting group activity, and by promoting the causes that the crowd espouses – at this time, the crowd has turned into a nascent social movement (Turner & Killian, 1957, p. 307). However, it should be noted that this attempt to explain collective behaviour should, according to Buechler (2011, pp. 57-74), be seen as distancing itself from the assumption of irrationality that pervaded Le Bon's analysis of the crowd. Indeed, Turner and Killian proffered a revised form of the 'Chicago school' approach that Le Bon had originally given (Buechler, 2011, p. 74).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> It is easy to think that student activism comes from students having an insufficient say in university politics, a lack of student participation in university affairs, or an impersonal relationship between students and professors. Although such causes of student activism may appear strikingly obvious, Libset (1973) gives a number of examples which prove that

According to Turner & Killian (1957, p. 523), for collective behaviour to increase in power so that it can become a source of change, this relies upon the widespread arousal of two things: 'discontent and a sense of expanding horizons'. Turner & Killian (1957, p.523) claim that there have been times in history when there has been social discontent but this has not been accompanied by new ideas, and, hence, it has only developed in a limited way. But when discontent is combined with an understanding of how better conditions can be achieved, a 'concrete possibility develops' (Turner & Killian, 1957, p. 523). Rather than being vague and obscure, the group's discontent becomes identified and, as a result, focussed (Turner & Killian, 1957, p. 523). This helps to explain Blumer's (1951, p. 199) description of social movements as collective enterprises that arise from a condition of dissatisfaction and hope for a new scheme of living: for a social movement to arise, what is required is that the group's hope for a new scheme of living is a focussed hope, not a vague hope, based on an understanding of how things can actually be improved in society.

The importance of a social, or youth, movement having a genuine understanding of how society might be improved is exemplified by the 1960s American student movement, in which students across campuses from Berkeley to New York engaged in strikes, sit-ins and many different protests to demand political reform. Flacks (1973) describes this clearly:

Once the material basis for human liberation exists, men will struggle against the institutions that stand in its way. The rise of the student movement in the United States and other industrial societies is a crucial demonstration of the truth of this proposition. For it is a sign that a revolutionary class consciousness appropriate to the era of monopoly capital, advanced technology and dying imperialism is in existence (Flacks, 1973, p. 116).

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these are not, in fact, causes of student activism. The difficulty in analysing the cause of youth movements is one reason why I have chosen to analyse the source of youth movements based on a traditional sociological account of the formation of social movements, rather than attempting to produce a theory that is unique to youth movements but which, on closer investigation, may turn out to be misguided.

That is not to say that the students in this movement all knew precisely what they were campaigning for – in fact, as shall be explored later, their aims were generally quite unspecific, and this factor that played a significant role in holding the student movement back (Nisbet, 1973). Rather, what Flacks is referring to is the fact that in the period of dying imperialism and advancing technology, a revolutionary class consciousness had emerged, and this new class consciousness came with a tangible vision of how society could be improved, even if the students lacked specifics on how this vision could actually be turned into a reality.

Another factor that helps to create youth movements is the presence of strong leaders. Strong leadership requires that leaders understand the ‘ideas, assumptions and moods of those with whom they seek to share a collective purpose’, and any leader must closely monitor the responses of the members for fear and hope about proposals for collective action if he or she is to be able to convince his or her members that the proposals are a good idea (Barker, et al., 2001, p. 10). Indeed, Barker, et al. (2001) argue that:

Movement successes and failures ... are all intimately tied up with their forms of leadership, the quality of ideas offered and accepted, the selections from repertoires of contention, organisation, strategy and ideology they make (Barker, et al., 2001, pp. 22-23).

By discussion with members and a clear and inspiring expression of the group’s aims, a skilled leader is therefore able to help turn a crowd of people who share a vaguely similar discontent into a social movement with a clear and focussed identity and ideology. Often youth leaders struggle because they find that their individual aims conflict with the movement’s aims, and they struggle to balance all their priorities (Mische, 2001). However, as long as the youth leader is able to do this to the best of his or her ability without neglecting the movement, if all the other causes of a youth movement given above have also been assembled then there is great hope that a youth movement will form.

Summarising all the above analysis and relating it specifically to the source of youth movements, then, we can conclude that youth movements will begin to form when a crowd of disaffected young people begins to view their discontent as a collective discontent, rather than seeing it as a personal issue, and so a sense of group identity and plan of action begins to form. Alternatively, a youth movement will form when young people from outside the group engage in dialogue with members inside the group and begin organising group activity and promoting the group's aims. The actions of the group and its sense of group identity will turn into the actions and identify of a youth movement when the group develops hope for a new scheme of living that is based on a tangible understanding of how things can be improved, and hence their discontent becomes focussed. It is also of great help for the group to have a strong leader.

As we shall see from the examples of youth movements that this paper will now discuss, given an environment that is conducive to young people discussing politics together the crowd that marks the first stage of a youth movement forming will often arise quite naturally. For example, by virtue of being a place that encourages thinking and discussion, and home to many politically motivated students, the university campus proved itself to be the perfect location for a large group of young people in a common situation to share feelings of political discontent and, hence, to join forces and found the American student movement (Lipset, 1973; Flacks, 1973, p. 108).

An absence of many such environments would make the formation of youth movements much less likely, and so one essential lesson to draw from the benefits of youth movements discussed in section 3 of this paper and the lessons in this section on how youth movements arise, is the importance of giving young people the opportunity to congregate together and discuss politics. This opportunity is essential for enabling young to become more engaged with politics, and in particular it is central to young people being able to form groups that can turn into youth movements. As such, places for young people to discuss politics together should be provided as widely as possible: in school, in the home, in town hall

meetings designed especially for young people, at musical gigs which are promoting democracy, in universities, on online forums and so forth. Ensuring that such places exist should be considered a priority by anyone who believes in the value of democracy and intergenerational justice.

However, it is worth noting that if a country's political system is very repressive, movement strength will not link to the movement's political outcome – mounting protest can just be followed by even greater protest and then even greater repression, as happened in France and Germany (Kolb, 2007, p. 224). Therefore, the recommendations that I make for youth movements in the next section are based on the assumption that the society in which a youth movement may form is at least open and tolerant enough for a peaceful protest to occur without immediately being violently quashed.

## **Section 5 – What makes youth movements successful?**

First, this section begins by briefly considering what it means for a youth movement to be successful. Then, by drawing on examples of youth movements, I will identify six key ingredients of a successful youth movement.

### **What does it mean for a youth movement to be successful?**

In general, any pursuit would be described as successful if, as a result of the pursuit, the pursuit's original aims were fulfilled. Applying this criterion of success to youth movements, however, is a bit more tricky, since the results of any social movement, including a youth movement, may refer to many different things such as increased public support, media coverage or changes to a government's economic plan (Kolb, 2007, p. 4). In evaluating the outcomes of social movements, Kolb (2007) chooses to focus on political outcomes: change with respect to politics, policy or polity. In this paper, I will also focus on the political outcomes of social

movements, but if a social or youth movement has brought about significant effects that do not necessarily translate into politics then I may mention these too.

In general, therefore, a youth movement can be considered successful if, as a consequence of the movement, the political system changes in a way that fulfils the original aims and vision of the movement. However, an outcome as perfect as this is very rare. Therefore, this paper will consider any political response that moves politics closer to the youth movement's vision, and hence closer to intergenerational justice and genuine democracy, to be an example of youth movement success.

### **Six key ingredients of a successful youth movement**

My analysis of youth movements has led me to identify six key ingredients of a successful youth movement. These are, respectively: beginning the youth movement in a time of political opportunity, such as during the period of an upcoming national election; clear and effective strategy and tactics; effort to connect the youth movement to the needs of society as a whole, rather than alienating it from everyone else; members with an unshakeable motivation to change the political system; clear and realistic demands of what the government must do before the youth movement will stop protesting; and making the best use of the younger generation's familiarity with the internet. Although most of these ingredients would apply to social movements in general as much as to youth movements in particular, this paper will discuss them principally in the context of youth movements, though I will also briefly refer to the social movements of the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street. The youth movements that I will mainly draw upon are: the 2011 Chilean student movement, the 2010 English tuition-fee protests, the 1960s American student movement, and the 2014 Hong Kong student protests.

#### **Timing**

A youth movement is able to increase its impact by timing its protests carefully so that they coincide with a time of increased political

opportunity, such as: the period shortly before a national election, a time of intense elite conflict, an occasion where there is a particularly open political structure, or a moment when the group who comprise the movement are viewed favourably by the public (Kolb, 2007). In times such as these, politicians will be more inclined to respect the movement and engage in dialogue with its members because they will be vying for the support of society. Politicians will not want to alienate a lot of young voters, nor will they want to give society the impression that they do not care about the youth, so the historical role a youth movement plays depends in part upon the political conditions of the society at that time (Laquer, 1973). Indeed, even weak social movements can achieve a lot of success if they are timed right – an example of this is the anti-Nuclear movement in the Netherlands which, though in many senses a poor example of a social movement, took place in the right political environment at the time for it to be a significant cause of the Netherlands' parliament voting in 1994 to phase out nuclear power (Kolb, 2007; World Nuclear Association, 2014). Conversely, even strong movements may not have the desired impact in an unfavourable political context (Kolb, 2007).

Youth movements can use also timing to their advantage by carrying out their movement actions at the same time as another social movement is in play. The 1960s American student movement is an example of this, having emerged at a time when the southern civil rights movement was in full swing; this timing helped to turn the cultural alienation that the youth felt into political protest and eventually revolutionary action (Flacks, 1973). Another example is the May 1968 protests in France, in which student protests linked up with the wildcat strikes of up to ten million workers; for a few days, the power of these combined movements seemed like it might be able to overthrow the government (Ken Knabb trans., 1969). The combined weight of two or more movements puts the government under greater pressure to change than one movement alone would be apply to apply, and so even though the social movement may have completely different aims to the youth movement, by timing the two movements to coincide, the youth movement has a better chance of eliciting a response from the government.

Another example of the benefits of timing a youth movement to coincide with another social movement is the 2011 Chilean student protests about the inequality in Chile's education system: these protests arose very soon after other protests in Chile over the HidroAysén dam project and gas prices in Magallanes Province, and the government responded a number of times with proposals to assuage the protesters; after proposals on 18 August that the students rejected, the students launched a huge march of 100 000 people that same day (Long, 2011; *The Economist*, 2011; Clarín, 2011). Although the students eventually withdrew from negotiations on October 5 since they did not believe the government had addressed their concerns sufficiently, this was after the government had already made a number of proposals in response to the protests and approved a bill that prohibited indirect or direct state support of for-profit educational institutions on 31 August, a fundamental demand of the student movement (Araya & Leiva, 2011; Nuñez, 2011). By timing their protests to coincide with other protests, the Chilean student movement had greater weight and it was easier for the public to relate to, and empathise with, their cause. This was clearly a significant part of the reason why the government ended up approving a bill that fulfilled a key aim of the movement.

A youth movement also helps itself by arising at a time of a specific political issue, rather than during a time of general political malaise. Very often, such timing happens naturally because it is a specific political issue that causes sufficient discontent among young people to motivate them to create a youth movement. This can be seen in the case of the Hong Kong student protests, in which the two student groups, Hong Kong Federation of Students and Scholarism, announced plans to boycott classes in September 2014, very soon after the Hong Kong government announced plans that the Nominating Committee was to be inherited without change from the previous undemocratic system (Weng, 2014; *Apple Daily*, 2014). Although this movement includes members of the older generation as well as the younger generation, this limb of the Hong Kong protest movement was started by students for their aims—their fundamental aim being that Hong Kong should provide its citizens with fair, democratic and open

elections—and so, by the definition given in section 2 of this paper, it qualifies as a youth movement.

Finally, although the international Occupy movement, aimed at improving social and economic equality, does not meet the criterion of a youth movement given section 2 because it was not founded by and principally for the aims of young people, it is a good example of how a lack of timing can detract from the power of a social movement. Though Occupy spread rapidly, beginning in Wall Street on 17 September 2011 and growing within less than a month to span over 100 cities in the US and 1500 cities globally (Occupy Solidarity Network, n.d.; Thompson, 2011), and although it certainly spread awareness of its cause, the political success of the Occupy movement appears to be very limited (BBC News, 2012).<sup>9</sup> If Occupy had arisen in response to a more specific political issue, it is quite possible that this timing would have increased its chances of achieving political change since governments would have seen a more tangible reason to respond to them.

In conclusion, there are three aspects of timing that will help a youth movement and its political actions to succeed: timing the youth movement to arise in a period of political opportunity, timing it to coincide with another social movement, and timing it to quickly follow a specific political issue.

### **Strategy**

Having an effective movement strategy is key to the success of any youth movement. One aspect of strategy is timing, but because this is such an important part of strategy I have treated it as a separate category. Even the American student movement of the 1960s in large part ended up falling due to failed strategy: the rebelling mass were divided on questions of strategy and tactics (Flacks, 1973, p. 116), since no youth leader was espousing a clear and effective movement strategy. In section 4, this paper argued that that strong leaders are an important cause of youth movements arising; they are also a key part of a youth movement's

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<sup>9</sup> Here, I am judging success specifically in terms of political outcomes in the same way as Kolb (2007), as outlined at the beginning of this section.

strategy, since it is youth leaders who will decide on the actions of the movement and be responsible for expressing the movement's strategy to the members. Here, I will explain two aspects of strategy that give a youth movement the best chance of success: first, a strategy for how protesters look after each other; and second, a strategy for the how the youth movement protests.

If a youth movement is to be successful, it is essential that the members of the youth movement look after each other and are given an actual strategy to do so. Members of the older generation may object that the young are irresponsible and unable to look after each other properly, but this need not be true. Anyone, including a member of the youth, is able to improve their character and learn to cherish others, and everyone is the same in their basic wish to be happy (Gyatso, 2012, p. 49; Gyatso, 1994, pp. 256-264). If youth leaders express this sentiment to the members of the movement, and explain that it is vital that everyone respects and looks after each other for the movement to be able to succeed, then there should be no reason why the members of a youth movement cannot coexist happily.

This has recently been demonstrated perfectly in the 2014 Hong Kong protests. Protesters showed genuine concern for each other, spraying one another with water to keep everyone feeling fresh, passing up donations of food, giving out free shirt fresheners, and meticulously picking up any litter (Dissanayake, 2014; Popovic & Porell, 2014). Demonstrating such courteous behaviour to each other not only means that the members of the movement continue to live and protest happily together, it also has caught the attention of people all over the world – some on social media have even referred to these protesters as 'the politest protesters' (Dissanayake, 2014), raising international respect for the protesters and support for their cause.

The second essential element of a youth movement's strategy is a strategy for the protests that the movement will engage in. Although there are many different ways of protesting that have been demonstrated over the years, they are all included within two: peaceful protest, and unpeaceful protest. While there is no doubt that unpeaceful, violent protest can

certainly create quite an impact, I will argue that by far the most effective strategy a youth movement can adopt is to engage in peaceful protest.

An example of the power of peaceful protest among young people can once again be found in the Hong Kong student movement. The principal activist group in Hong Kong is 'Occupy Central with Love and Peace' (OCLP), which published a document entitled 'Manuel of Disobedience' several days before the Occupy Central campaign was due to start (The Independent, 2014). This remarkable document details the philosophy of the movement, the movement's tactics, the precise procedure that should be followed if someone is arrested, and in particular it implores protesters to 'avoid physical confrontation, but also to avoid developing hatred in [their] heart' (OCLP, 2014). The very clear tactics and philosophy expressed in this document make it easy to see how the Hong Kong protests have been able to function so smoothly without the protesters engaging in any violence, despite the fact that on one day the police attacked unarmed protesters with tear gas, pepper spray, shields and batons (Buckley, et al., 2014; BBC News, 2014a). This puts the Hong Kong youth movement into a morally advantageous position. When members of the OCPL movement were attacked and the police stood by and allowed this to happen, the Hong Kong Federation of Students were able to respond by lambasting the government for allowing peaceful protesters to be attacked (BBC News, 2014b). The Hong Kong student protesters understand that their peaceful non-violent values will win them sympathy and expose the illegitimacy and moral vacuity of the government if it opposes them with excessive force; these protesters are not merely youthful idealists, but 'savvy political operators who understand the secrets of successful nonviolent resistance' (Popovic & Porell, 2014). Indeed, it is their good nature that makes these protesters such a powerful force (Popovic & Porell, 2014).

This is in stark contrast to the 2010 England student protests, when 50 000 people took part in a protest against rising university fees on 10 November, and the movement became violent after a faction of protesters stormed the office complex that houses the Conservative party HQ,

resulting in 35 arrests and 14 injuries (BBC News, 2010a). In 2009, the president of the National Union of Students (NUS), Wes Streeting, had warned that if the government decided to plunge students into greater debt then there would be a significant backlash (Curtis, 2009), but this backlash did not have the desired effect. Even though it was only a small minority of the demonstrators who became violent, the violence that did ensue was shocking, and even included a protester dropping a fire extinguisher from a roof at police officers on the ground below; this led the Prime Minister, David Cameron, to condemn the clashes as ‘unacceptable’ and tighten his resolve to raise tuition fees (Harrison, 2010; Dodd, 2010; BBC News, 2010b). Indeed, a vice-chancellor from a London university even said that anti-fees campaign would be undermined by the violence and that it ‘could not have gone better for the government. George Osborne will be delighted’ (Cook & Stothard, 2010). Had the student protests not turned violent, the youth movement would have had far more public support and it would have been much harder for the government to completely ignore their objection to rising university fees. Therefore it is clear that violence takes from the legitimacy of youth movements and seriously reduces their chances of success.

In conclusion, to secure moral legitimacy, have the best chance of being supported by the public, make a youth movement’s proposals much harder for the government to dismiss, and to keep relations good between protesters, two elements of strategy are required and it is best if these can be articulated clearly to the movement’s members by a strong leader. First, members of the movement must respect and care for each other, and be given strategies for doing this. Second, the movement’s protest strategies must be clear and peaceful.

### **Connect to society**

It has already been said in section 4 that youth movements will begin to emerge when discontented youths start to recognize their discontent as a collective problem. Once a youth movement has formed, to be successful it must then view its collective discontent as connected with the problems of society as a whole, like the activist students in West Germany who began

protesting in the mid 1960s and argued that the problems of the university could not be separated from the problems of society at large (Habermas, 1971, p. 15). This will enable the movement to gain the attention of other members of society who, rather than thinking that the movement is only relevant to young people, will think that the issues it is protesting against and the values it espouses concern them too, and so the youth movement will gain greater political weight.

Part of the reason that the 1960s American student movement endured for as long as it did was that in the late 1960s it began to extend beyond merely the young 'intelligentsia' (those vocally involved in critiquing cultural values) to students at non-elite campuses, high schools and the armed forces – vast numbers of youths were searching for a less repressed and more spontaneous style of living (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997, p. 109). The 2011 Chilean student protests did even better than that, by connecting their protest against what one professor described as 'educational apartheid' with a host of other issues in the country; as mentioned above, their protests came at the same time as a number of significant public issues concerning environmentalists, copper miners, gay rights campaigners, transport workers and farmers (Long, 2011). Indeed, many Chileans wanted social progress, and that was why the students were able to enjoy broad support (Long, 2011). By gaining the support of society, the Chilean youth movement therefore increased its political weight.

Finally, the 2014 Hong Kong youth movement must once again be recognised for its efforts to connect its protests with society as a whole. Since the class boycott movement had strong influence over a number of secondary school students, parts of society expressed significant resistance to the Hong Kong youth movement. Rather than ignoring these criticisms, however, Scholarism, one of the two student groups leading the movement, encouraged students to obtain the consent of their parents before attending a school boycott, and they organised meetings with the parents of secondary school students to explain the motivations for the events (Apple Daily, 2014). This is another move that, by attempting to

connect their youth movement to society as a whole, gave the 2014 Hong Kong protests a greater chance of effecting political change.

### **Motivation**

Youth movements are far more likely to be successful if their members have an unshakeable determination to change politics; otherwise, members will quite easily be deterred by the stresses of resisting the established social order. Nisbet (1973) argues that the two reasons that the 1960s American student revolution died were that the white middle class who made up most of the movement were too soft to be good revolutionaries, and the revolution did not arise from any clear interest of the students or visible commitment to the values of the academic world. If youth movements are to succeed, they may well require sustained effort over a long period of time, and this is impossible unless the members have a very strong determination to achieve their aims.

As well as giving the protesters a sense of resilience, a strong motivation will often inspire others to support a social movement. I believe, for example, that the significant level of Western support for the Arab Spring was largely due to people feeling inspired by the steadfast resolve of the people in the Middle East demonstrating for freedom; indeed, it all began simply with the 26 year old Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi setting himself on fire in December 2010 and inspiring the wave of protests that became the Arab Spring (Fahim, 2011).

One of the best ways to ensure that the members of a youth movement have a strong motivation for achieving political change is for the youth leader to express clearly and persuasively the movement's ideology, so that all members accept and agree with it. An example of this is the 2014 Hong Kong protest movement publishing the movement's philosophy and encouraging all members to read it before the movement began to engage in protest actions (Popovic & Porell, 2014). This approach gives members an opportunity to ensure that they espouse the same aims and values as the movement before protesting, thus making it more likely that they will have genuine, lasting support for the movement. Therefore, a key

ingredient of successful youth movements is the steadfast motivation of the youth members to achieve political success.

### **Demands**

Another key ingredient of a successful youth movement is for the movement to make clear and realistic demands of the government. If its demands are not clear then there will be little that the government can do to appease the youth movement, and so it will have little incentive to do anything; and if its demands are unrealistic then the government will simply wait the movement out. An example of the problems caused by unclear political proposals are exemplified by the 2011 Occupy Wall Street movement; at the heart of the movement were questions of finance, corporate governance and taxation – legitimate issues, but the problem was that the movement did not translate these issues into any clear demands of government (Financial Times, 2011; Bond & Burgis, 2011). As such, there was little that the government was incentivised to change, since Occupy's goals were so unspecific that even if the government had implemented policy changes this would never have silenced the movement. It is unsurprising that governments soon got tired of this movement, and a crackdown by the authorities around the world saw the Occupy movement begin to dissolve away just two months after it began (Bond & Burgis, 2011).

The year 1968 saw the worldwide escalation of many social conflicts. According to Heuermann (2013) it was the clear vision of students in 1968, fighting against political repression and campaigning for peace, that enabled them to achieve some civil liberties even though they were 'eventually put on the road to economic serfdom'. Thus, some analysts argue that the American student movement is an example of a successful youth movement: student protests contributed to ending the Vietnam war, transforming the culture of American colleges, advancing civil rights, and integrating many of the counterculture values into the mainstream (Shmoop Editorial Team, 2014).

However, I do not believe that the American student movement should be considered successful, even though, according to the criterion of success

given at the beginning of this section, it did arguably achieve some political success. Laquer (1973, pp. 75-76) argues that the American student movement of the 60s was sparked off by race conflict, Vietnam and later the crisis of the university, but instead of offering rational alternatives to the problems they identified, the movement 'preferred a total, unthinking rejection and so became politically irrelevant' and, aside from banal populism, they 'failed to produce a single new idea'. The campus revolts were more an attempt at revolutionising a social order but they failed to offer any specific or realistic ways that this could be done (Nisbet, 1973). I would argue that the American student movement could have achieved far greater success if only it had taken the time to formulate clear and realistic demands of government.

The importance of having clear and realistic goals is also demonstrated by the 2010 England student protests. Students were marching to oppose raising the University tuition fee cap from £3920 to £9000 a year (Cook & Stothard, 2010), but, in a time of great economic pressure, it was unrealistic to think that the government was going to completely abandon this fee rise. I believe that the protests would have had a greater chance of success if, instead of protesting against the fee rise per se, the students had objected to the amount by which the fee rise was to occur and proposed an alternative. For example, if the students had requested that the fees only rise to £6000 a year, then the government may have seen accepting such a proposal as a way that they could help to resolve the economic situation while also avoiding the wrath of students across the UK. If a youth movement espouses unrealistic goals then the government will take no notice of such a movement.

There are few examples of youth movements proposing entirely realistic goals – most youth movements tend to be overly idealistic in the demands they make of government. While a steadfast commitment to political ideals is a key aspect of any social movement, it pays to make suggestions of government that they are actually likely to consider. Although many of its goals were not fulfilled, the 2011 Chilean student movement, for example, did propose the realistic goal that indirect or direct state support of for-

profit educational institutions should be prohibited, and a bill to this effect was approved 4-1 by the Chilean Senate (Nuñez, 2011). This clearly demonstrates the possibility of change that accompanies a youth movement when it makes clear and realistic political demands.

### **The internet**

The final ingredient of a successful youth movement that this paper proposes is effective use of the internet, and in particular social media, by young people. Though usage levels are still low, young people are increasingly using the internet as tool for political action and discussion; Obama's 2008 campaign, for example, was very effective in its means of mobilizing the young by using the internet (Martin, 2012, pp. 102-117). The internet makes communication and organisation much cheaper and easier, while making repression harder and more costly (Aelst & Walgrave, 2004, p. 97; Buechler, 2011, pp. 220-222; Tilly, 1978; Tkacheva, et al., 2013, p. 212). Although the internet is threatened by both commercialization and government control, it is nonetheless able to provide citizens with a new and incomparable space for communication, offering an empowering sense of what being a citizen can mean (Dahlgren, 2004, p. Xiii). Since young people nowadays use the internet so frequently, this opens up the possibility of young people engaging in significant levels of political discussion and organization over the internet.

It may be objected, however, that the internet's role in politics is often overstated; research suggests that, in fact, most people who are very politically active on the web are 'political junkies' already (Aelst & Walgrave, 2004, pp. 121, 97). It seems that every positive account of how the internet can assist political activism is accompanied by a way in which the internet redirects movement energy in useless directions, or exposes movements to 'surveillance, sabotage and e-repression' (Buechler, 2011, pp. 220-222). Davis, et al. (2002) document activism in the 2000 US election that was inspired by the internet, and make a good case for the internet's potential to help civic engagement, arguing that the public will use the internet for political purposes if they are given a chance to do so. However, they believe that there are drawbacks as well as benefits – the

internet may be the next step in mobilizing political participants across the country, but it also has shown that it can be used for undemocratic activities, such as raising money for illegal protests (Davis, et al., 2002).

Yet there are many examples of how young people have proactively used social media and the internet to support social and youth movements in recent years. Indeed, the 2011 Egyptian protest that caused Mubarak to step down, many other protests of the Arab Spring, protest in Spain and Greece in 2011, and the 2014 Hong Kong demonstrations are just a few examples of protests in which the youth have used Facebook and Twitter as a key tool for organising protests (Tkacheva, et al., 2013, p. 212; Vargas, 2012; BBC News, 2011; Euronews, 2011; Sing Pao, 2014). Like everything, the potential of the internet is accompanied by various drawbacks and dangers, but young people have clearly shown their aptitude for using the internet as an effective method by which to organise youth movements. If the youth are to give their youth movements the greatest chance of success, they must take advantage of their superior computer- and internet-literacy skills in the discussion and organization of youth movements.

## **Conclusion: Intergenerational justice requires youth movements**

This paper has argued that intergenerational justice, and hence democracy, requires youth movements in sections 1-3, and in sections 5-6 it analysed the source of youth movements and the particular factors that make them successful. I will now summarise the arguments of sections 1-3 that lead us to conclude that intergenerational justice requires youth movements, and then recommend that the older generation should see their commitment to genuine democracy as requiring them to give the youth opportunities to form youth movements. I will also suggest that any aspiring youth movement makes use of the analysis given in sections 5-6 in

order to give themselves the best chance of creating and executing a politically successful youth movement.

That the youth are going through a troubling time, especially in terms of their political interest and involvement, is commonly accepted, and was established formally in section 1 of this paper. This is not only a problem for the youth and therefore the future of the world, as I argued in section 1, but also, as I demonstrated in the first part of section 3, it is a problem for intergenerational justice because intergenerational justice requires that all generations are treated equally and have an equal stake in politics. Because one of the key principles of democracy is equality, democracy requires intergenerational justice and therefore the underrepresentation of the youth also means that our democracy is not genuine. If we wish to see the benefits of a genuine democracy, rather than the illusion of democracy that we have now, then it is essential that we bring about intergenerational justice: the younger generation needs treated as equally important to, and they must have the same political stake as, the older generation. How can we go about establishing intergenerational justice and improving the political lot of the youth? In part two of section 3 I showed that youth movements (defined in section 2) offer a key force for achieving these aims: youth movements both support democracy and are supported by it.

Therefore, if the older generation understands the benefits of democracy and the value of intergenerational justice, it is their responsibility to encourage young people in the creation and execution of successful youth movements. The youth must be provided with many arenas in which they can communicate and share their discontent and concerns, whether this is in school, at home, in town hall meetings for the youth, at musical gigs which are promoting democracy, in universities, or on the internet. It is in these places of discussion that the possibility of a discontented, unorganised crowd turning into a focussed and organised youth movement will emerge in the way that I described in section 4. Young people, for their part, must take advantage of these opportunities to discuss politics with each other. So that they are interested in making the most of these opportunities, it is important for young people to understand that by

creating youth movements it will become possible for them to gain a more substantial stake in the political process, as explained in section 3.

To then give their movement the best chance of success, I would implore the members, and especially the leaders, of any youth movement to adhere as closely as possible to the six ingredients of a successful youth movement that I listed in section 5: timing, strategy, connect to society, motivation, demands and the internet. Now, more than ever, democracy and intergenerational justice require youth movements in order that the youth can gain a stake in politics: it is up to both the older and the younger generations to see that these youth movements are able to arise and have the best chance of achieving political success.

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