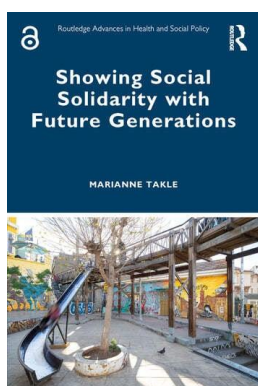


Book Review

Takle Marianne. 2025. *Showing Social Solidarity with Future Generations*. Abingdon & New York: Routledge. 174 pp. ISBN 9781032510385.

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Takle Marianne's book provides an in-depth analysis of how current policies respond to challenges that require long-term solutions. It is focusing on the influence that present generations have on the well-being of future generations – both the children and young people living today, as well as those in generations yet to be born. Based on four important policy documents – the UN 2030 Agenda with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), national policy institutions dedicated to future generations, constitutional clauses protecting them, and regulations on public debt and national economies – the author formulates a series of research questions: (1) To what extent are commitments to future generations effectively implemented? (2) What factors determine non-compliance with these commitments? (3) How do Germany and Norway differ in their implementation? (4) What lessons can be learned from a comparison of the experiences of the two countries? The book stands out for its rigorous methodology, based on a comparative design between Germany and Norway, and a detailed analysis of political documents, examining their roles, authors, recipients, and the actions they generate.

The book opens with an introductory chapter that outlines the broader context, the challenges facing future generations, and clearly explains the methodology, purpose, research questions, and overall structure of the work.

It is structured in two main parts. The first part, *Solidarity in Theory*, includes three chapters, while the second part, *Solidarity in Practice*, comprises four chapters.

Chapter 2, *What is Solidarity?*, explores the notion of solidarity, considered a modern political concept, presenting it as mutual support among equal members of a community. The origins of solidarity are examined in community relationships based on a feeling of sympathy among members (*Gemeinschaft*) and in institutionally regulated societal relationships (*Gesellschaft*). Thus, the definition of solidarity moves away from pre-political communities that impose family or traditional obligations. The chapter details the forms of solidarity – emotional, financial, and collective action – and introduces a distinction between a) an attitudinal dimension of solidarity, which encompasses values, attitudes, and motivations regarding reciprocity; b) and an institutional dimension, which involves the willingness to create institutional structures that put these commitments and norms into practice. The analysis is conducted at the macrosocial level, both national and global. Drawing on Stjernø's perspective (2005, 2015), the chapter traces the evolution of the idea of solidarity in classical sociology, socialist theory, and Christian ethics, showing its historical association with notions such as fraternity, unity, and community. Different forms of solidarity are distinguished by the types of relationships they involve, the objectives pursued, the boundaries, and the collective orientation. Finally, it analyses the tension between 1) universal solidarity, based on human rights and moral obligations towards all persons, and 2) national solidarity, built on identification, internal reciprocity, and concern for the cohesion and well-being of a political community.

Chapter 3, *Temporality, Narratives, and Generations*, explores how current generations anticipate their responsibility towards future generations, showing that this depends on how time is structured socially and institutionally. The author describes three forms of temporality: clock time (linear and abstract), event time (contextual), and natural time (cyclical), recalling Lucian Blaga's ([1935] 2011) distinction between fountain time,

waterfall time, and river time, through which he outlines different ways of relating to the past, present, and future. Drawing on this distinction, the chapter examines the relationship between temporality and nationalism, as well as temporality and cosmopolitanism. Nationalism is based on clock time, which allows for the simultaneous synchronisation of people in large communities (e.g., reading the same newspaper, celebrating national events on the same days – aspects that make community members feel that they are sharing a common experience, even though they do not know each other) and historical time, which narrates a common past and provides people with a common identity. These narrative and synchronisation mechanisms form what Anderson (1991) calls "imagined communities": a community whose sense of belonging does not depend on direct contact between members but on their awareness that they live in parallel with each other, sharing language, religion, customs, traditions, and a common history. Cosmopolitanism, as opposed to nationalism, focuses on the present and the future, examines events in real time, their global consequences (e.g., financial crises, pandemics), and emphasises how present actions shape the future. The notions of "social generation" (individuals born in the same period, exposed to the same social challenges), "global generation" (birth cohorts experiencing similar global processes) are reconsidered, and a distinction is made between historical generations (lost generation, baby boomers), ascriptive generations (Generation X, Y, Z and Millennials), and kinship generations (parent-child relationships, broader family and community ties, roles that change with age), in order to open the analysis to future generations, understood as both young people and unborn individuals, but significantly influenced by the decisions of the present.

Chapter 4, *Solidarity with Future Generations*, addresses the difficulty of applying the norm of reciprocity in relation to future generations: "How can a rule of exchange function in a relationship where the other does not yet exist?" This question helps to understand the idea of intergenerational responsibility, which is based on interests that transcend individual life and on the continuity of collective identity over time. However, this responsibility

is marked by substantial uncertainties about who will be born, what preferences they will have, and how many generations will feel the effects of current decisions. The chapter proposes a vision of solidarity that combines the dimension of justice through the concept of indirect reciprocity with the institutional dimension through the creation of constraints necessary for the protection of the interests of those who are absent. To illustrate how legacies (e.g., stable institutions, pensions) are passed on in concrete terms, the author analyses four key areas 1) the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2) national institutions that take future generations into account, 3) national constitutions, and 4) public debt.

Chapter 5, *The UN 2030 Agenda and Future Generations*, analyses the UN 2030 Agenda as an ambitious framework for sustainable development, integrating social, economic, and environmental dimensions and emphasising intergenerational responsibility. Although the commitments remain largely symbolic and implementation depends on individual states, the author believes that the Agenda creates a common vision, oriented towards long-term policies, backed by science and international agreements.

Chapter 6, *National Political Institutions for Future Generations*, analyses national institutions that take future generations into account, highlighting two types: those for implementing SDGs and those with a specific mandate to protect the interests of future citizens. The author compares two European countries: Germany and Norway, highlighting differences in structure and efficiency. Germany has parliamentary, governmental, and independent institutions that integrate long-term perspectives into SDG implementation, albeit with limited power. In Norway, there are no independent institutions for coordinating SDGs, and the Ombudsman for Children focuses exclusively on the rights of current children.

Chapter 7, *Constitutions, Protection Clauses, and Climate Lawsuits*, compares Germany and Norway in terms of young people's involvement in court cases to defend the interests of future generations, highlighting the procedural and legal differences between the two countries. German (e.g., Neubauer et al. v. Germany) and Norwegian (e.g., Norwegian Constitution,

Article 112) climate clauses show how young people are using legal mechanisms to voice their concerns about the environment and future generations. In Germany, the Constitutional Court has brought about significant legislative changes regarding emissions reduction. In Norway, although constitutional protection has led to certain limits on oil projects, the legislative framework is weaker, and references to future generations are absent, limiting the practical impact. However, both cases indicate a gradual shift in the state's responsibility towards the future, even if the practical impact varies.

Chapter 8, *Economic Debt and Savings for Future Generations*, explores the role of fiscal rules as instruments for protecting future generations. The author analyses the German debt brake, which limits regional borrowing, and compares it with the Norwegian model based on the Petroleum Fund and a fiscal guide that ensures the responsible use of oil revenues. The chapter also discusses the concepts of weak and strong sustainability, emphasising that both protect financial capital but not the environment. The tension between fiscal discipline and the need for investment in sustainable development is also highlighted.

In conclusion, Takle Marianne's book offers a comparative overview of two European countries – Germany and Norway – in terms of solidarity with future generations. The scientific rigor of the work derives from the detailed analysis of national and international political documents. A strength of the paper is its theme, which emphasises the need for awareness of intergenerational solidarity and encourages readers to reflect on their responsibility for the well-being of future generations. The book stresses that current policies should be designed more for their long-term impact and less for immediate benefit. However, one limitation of the study is that the analysis is restricted to only two countries. Extending the comparison to other EU member states and non-EU countries could reveal patterns and allow for a clearer understanding of how belonging to a supranational framework such as the European Union affects (positively or negatively) the effectiveness of policies dedicated to protecting future generations. Finally, the book is aimed

at the general public interested in social solidarity and intergenerational studies, specialists in various fields of the social and related sciences, and political leaders.

Acknowledgements

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