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Intergenerational Justice, Consumption and Sustainability in Comparative Perspective

The creation of 'a society for all ages' is one of the United Nation's key goals. Intergenerational solidarity is fundamental if we are to achieve the social change necessary to fulfil this ideal. Yet this solidarity is threatened by environmentally unsustainable models of consumption that raise fundamental questions about justice between generations in the Global North, rising powers, and the developing world. However, intergenerational justice has overwhelmingly been researched from a Western perspective.

INTERSECTION will internationalise this debate through innovative, multi-method, cross-national research to explore inequitable consumption practices between different generations across time and space. The research will be located in three contrasting national contexts: China, Uganda, and the UK. These national contexts have been chosen because they are differentially positioned in terms of demographics (e.g. the composition and spacing of generations); cultural values (e.g. understandings of familial obligations, moralities and notions of personhood); histories; material cultures; patterns of consumption; environmental assets and problems.

INTERSECTION is organised into three core elements (theoretical; methodological and analytical) and three strands of enquiry - Strand A, Who is Entitled to What? Generational Views on Entitlements to Consumption; Strand B, Who Wins and Loses? Perceptions of Intergenerational Equity in Consumption; Strand C, Who Owes What to Whom? Strategies to Produce a Society for All Ages. It brings together expertise from Geography, Linguistics, East Asian Studies and English/African Studies.

The project will contribute to transnational questions about how to achieve cultural change in consumption practices and will inform government and international priorities in relation to building sustainable societies, and addressing intergenerational inequalities in national and international contexts. By highlighting the significance of non-Western and international ways of thinking about intergenerational justice and sustainability it therefore aims to contribute to the United Nations goal to produce a society for all ages.