Multi-Profile Intergenerational Social Choice

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Abstract. We reexamine Ferejohn and Page's (1978) approach to infinite-horizon social choice in a multi-profile setting. Starting out with Hansson's (1976) characterization of all social welfare functions that can be represented with ultrafilters as decisive coalitions, we strengthen one of Ferejohn and Page's (1978) results by proving that adding their stationarity axiom to Arrow's (1951, 1963) original properties does not merely lead to a dictatorship by the first generation but to an impossibility. We propose a domain restriction that requires the preferences of each generation t to depend on the outcome in period t only. In this context, Ferejohn and Page's stationarity property is compatible with Arrow's axioms but generation one has strong dictatorial powers. Furthermore, adding Pareto indifference leads again to an impossibility. Finally, we propose what we suggest is a more suitable multi-profile version of stationarity and characterize lexicographic dictatorships where the generations are taken into consideration in chronological order. The main conclusion is that, although the infinite-population version of Arrow's social choice problem permits, in principle, non-dictatorial rules, these additional possibilities all but vanish in an intergenerational context if, in addition, a weak stationarity axiom is imposed. *Journal of Economic Literature* Classification No.: D71.

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