

UNITED WISDOM

Convenience Today and the Cost to Future People

Freedom and Action

Andrey Zarinsh & Maria Evilkut

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@andrey.zarinsh @ilkutki

Convenience Today and the Cost to Future People

Epigraph

> *those who are to be born.*

Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France, a brief expression from his discussion of connections between generations. Burke's political teaching is not adopted here as a compulsory system for the reader.

What this article is about

Imagine a summer club given a shared space for one season. Participants choose inexpensive temporary decorations: installation is quick, they support activities and look good in photographs. Dismantling is postponed until autumn. By then, the team will have left and others will receive the space. The budget covers installation but not removal. A reassuring explanation appears: future users can decide what they want. In practice, they are already being left work for which nobody has accepted responsibility.

This is closer than a conversation about humanity centuries ahead, yet reveals the same moral difficulty. A present group benefits, part of the cost moves through time, and the people expected to pay it have no part in choosing. Not every consequence can be foreseen. But uncertainty about the future differs from a known task conveniently omitted from today's plan.

This article considers deferred costs, the difference between necessity and preference, and future people's room to decide. It neither calculates materials' environmental impact nor prohibits enjoying present benefits. Historical sources offer distinct perspectives; we develop our own approach, identifying what is known, assumed and unresolved.

I. Cheaper Today Does Not Always Mean a Lower Overall Cost

A choice usually has a visible price: the purchase amount, preparation hours and effort of current participants. It matters because actual resources are limited. Our hypothetical club has no unlimited budget, and we have no reason to demand any expensive alternative simply for an appealing moral image. Yet a budget ending with installation does not describe the whole process. Dismantling, storage or removal will follow. If these actions are actually required, omitting them from today's calculation does not make them free. Their cost merely becomes invisible to the group making the decision.

@andrey.zarinsh @ilkutki

The first distinction is therefore between reducing costs and transferring them. We might choose a simpler option requiring less work throughout. Or we might obtain a small saving today by leaving the next stage to others. Both make the current budget more attractive, but their moral content differs. Checking does not require immediately expressing everything in money. Sometimes naming the action is enough: who will dismantle it, where will it go, and when will the space be cleared? If there are no answers, acknowledging an incomplete decision is more useful than calling the transfer successful efficiency.

A deferred cost need not be financial. New users will spend time discovering what has been left and who owns it. They may find themselves bound by someone else's plan when they wanted to begin differently. Room to choose is also part of what we hand over. Our scene does not establish that the decorations will necessarily obstruct the next club. It establishes something else: the current participants have not clarified handover conditions or planned their own part. A possible difficulty should not become a proven injury; a known gap should not be hidden behind the absence of a final complaint either.

Ordinary honesty begins with the calculation's boundaries. If we have compared installation costs only, we should say so. If completion costs are unknown, they deserve a separate question. The lowest initial price might remain a good choice after checking, or it might lose its advantage. Moral consideration need not secure a particular outcome in advance. Its task is to prevent an advantage from being called a complete saving while some required actions sit outside the calculation. This clarity already changes the discussion's grounds and makes the next decision assessable.

II. An Absent Future Person's Cost Is Not Zero

At the club meeting, objections from those present are easy to see. One person wants to pay less, another to begin activities sooner, and another to retain family time. Future users are not yet at the table, and their difficulties create no immediate inconvenience for the people discussing. Absence of a voice can therefore become absence of attention. These are different things. Being unable to receive a reply now does not mean that consequences affect nobody. What matters is an available account of what will be left, rather than an invented conversation with someone from the future.

In Burke's Reflections, the social connection extends beyond those alive today to include future generations. This belongs to his religious and political argument; it is neither a modern environmental standard nor a prohibition of every change. A limited question is useful here: can today's group regard a shared continuation as its concern alone? Our scene develops the answer separately, without attributing a club budgeting exercise to Burke.

We need not know future users' names to notice some likely needs. They will need to understand handover conditions, obtain access and know which actions have already been assigned. This does not mean they must share our tastes or way of life. Attention to the future includes leaving room for difference. Describing compatible conditions is usually more modest than imagining happy descendants grateful for the exact fulfilment of our project. We are responsible for what we can pass on, rather than entitled to determine their entire future lives.

Equally, we cannot declare ourselves infallible representatives of absent people. Someone speaking for the future remains a present participant with personal preferences. Their proposal also needs its grounds and costs examined. It is better to identify an assumed need and the degree of certainty than to insist that every descendant would choose our option. The future gains a place in discussion without its voice being appropriated. We consider potentially affected people while acknowledging that we cannot obtain their agreement to every detail of our plans.

III. An Unknown Future Differs from Known Unfinished Work

Saying that we do not know what autumn will bring can honestly express limited knowledge. It can also close a question whose answer is already available. The team does not know the next club's membership or programme. It does know that the current decorations have a period of use and that nobody has been assigned completion. These kinds of uncertainty must not be combined. General uncertainty about the future does not erase the specific incompleteness of today's decision. We can begin with what lies within our power without claiming to predict the space's entire next life.

In Ecclesiastes 7:8–14, human limitation is considered before God, alongside patience and reflection on changing circumstances. This is a religious context, rather than a risk-prediction model. We do not derive permission to ignore consequences. For this article, modesty about knowledge matters: distinguish choosing with incomplete information from asserting that a future result is already guaranteed.

It helps to divide information into three parts. Known: the team leaves at the season's end. Assumed: the decorations may be useful to subsequent users. Unestablished: who will confirm a desire to retain them, and who will arrange completion if they are not retained? This account cannot fill the gaps itself, but allows different questions to be addressed to different people. Known conditions can receive an assigned action; assumptions can seek confirmation; open questions can have a clarification deadline and an alternative if confirmation never arrives. This is more precise than promising that everything will somehow work out later.

Uncertainty sometimes supports a cautious, reversible step, and sometimes requires action now because delay also has a cost. This article offers no universal prohibition on acting. The

distinction concerns grounds: what makes the chosen option reasonable with the information available, and which part of the outcome remains open? Answering makes limited knowledge part of the decision. If uncertainty is mentioned only to end discussion, it becomes convenience for the present side paid for by someone else's future work. We can acknowledge prediction's limits while also accepting responsibility's limits.

IV. Today's Necessary Benefit Must Be Named Precisely

Present people have real needs. The club may provide an affordable meeting place, and its budget may not permit elaborate equipment. Care for future users gives us no reason to dismiss those circumstances. But the importance of an activity does not establish the necessity of every decorative detail. It helps to name the purpose, the means and the reason for choosing those particular means separately. If the purpose is holding meetings, attractive photographs may have additional value, but should not silently receive the same weight as being able to open at all. Distinguishing these helps find a way to preserve the main benefit with less deferred cost.

Our scene allows several options to be compared. A simpler format without some decorations would reduce the impressive effect. Something the team can dismantle before leaving would require a different schedule. An agreed handover could preserve some work if the next party actually wanted it. None of these is declared equally available beforehand. Time, resources and venue conditions must be checked. The moral question is not who names an ideal alternative first, but how honestly today's group has considered real ways to avoid leaving its own unfinished stage to others.

Sometimes alternatives really are limited. We should then say precisely what makes the current option necessary and how much deferred cost remains. This may justify a particular compromise; it does not turn every remaining cost into nothing. Even without better means, information, a deadline and responsibility can be arranged. The importance of today's assistance does not destroy the significance of future completion. Naming the remainder helps distinguish a difficult decision from self-justification: the person neither hides the cost nor pretends that a good purpose has itself fulfilled every obligation.

It is also dangerous to speak about the future as though every present convenience were morally suspect. People live now, rather than merely preparing life for others. Rest, companionship and beauty can be goods in their own right. The question arises when an absent other side is used as a free extension of our resources. We can enjoy the present while taking responsibility for handing over conditions. There is no need to choose between complete sacrifice today and complete indifference to tomorrow. We should make the cost visible and consider proportionately who ought to participate in meeting it.

V. Preserving Choice Does Not Mean Keeping Everything Unchanged

Discussion of future people can suggest a duty to leave a place wholly unchanged. Yet every group using it changes something: acquiring objects, creating rules, wearing down equipment or leaving information. Complete immobility is neither always possible nor always desirable. A better question is how far our changes restrict others' future possibilities and whether we have provided for reconsideration. New equipment sometimes improves what is handed over. A gift sometimes requires maintenance that nobody accepted. An appealing image of an inheritance cannot answer this question by itself.

Our club might leave decorations in good condition and regard that as an advantage. The next team might use the space differently. If retaining something entails cost, storage or a required programme, the handover has further conditions. They should be identified before declaring a gift. A recipient can assess usefulness against their own task, rather than our effort and expenditure. Even when the future party is unknown, it is possible to provide intelligible options to accept, change or remove what is left without inventing consent. Respect for the future appears in accessible choice, rather than compulsory gratitude.

Distinguishing reversible changes from difficult ones also requires specificity. Temporary decorations are easier to remove when methods, space and dismantling resources are known. They become a practically burdensome inheritance when nobody knows their arrangement or who is responsible. Formal reversibility differs from accessible reversibility. Saying that something can always be changed skips who can do it and what cost has been left to them. A less impressive option that the next party can reconsider may be preferable to a larger plan declared a gift without describing its obligations completely.

This reasoning does not establish the technical suitability of materials, structures or disposal methods. Those questions require relevant information. It offers a moral way of comparing options: do not count future work as free simply because change is theoretically possible. Unknown consequences deserve investigation proportionate to a decision's significance. Known completion costs should not be replaced by a promise of general flexibility. Future people's freedom then acquires practical conditions: accessible information, resources for reconsideration and honestly preserved room to choose.

VI. Responsibility Can Be Handed Over Only with Clear Conditions

The team may offer future users useful decorations. Offering something and transferring responsibility are different actions. To describe an accepted handover, we must know who received the important conditions and what they actually accepted. In our scene, saying that they will decide for themselves does not mean agreement to pay for removal or make sense of unfamiliar belongings. If the recipient is unknown, imagined willingness cannot substitute for consent. A temporary decision can include completion by the current team if a real agreement does not emerge by a specified deadline.

A clear offer describes both the object and what remains to be done. What is being left, and in what condition? What actions will be needed? Which costs are known, and which remain unevaluated? When must the space be available? This conversation can be uncomfortable precisely because it makes an attractive gift less simple. Concealing conditions does not improve its moral value. If the next party declines after hearing the full account, this is not necessarily ingratitude. They may have honestly assessed their task and resources. Respect includes accepting that answer without rewriting their interests.

Until agreement is confirmed, the former team should not treat the proposed handover as completed. It can record that an offer has been made and a reply is awaited. It can specify a deadline after which a prepared completion plan takes effect. These states differ because each carries different responsibilities. Uncertainty can be communicated directly instead of hidden beneath the word settled. This precision lets participants plan departures and resources, rather than discovering in autumn that everyone had relied on someone else and nobody had accepted the work.

Once agreement exists, enough information should be retained for performance. An ordinary activity need not become an enormous archive. A clear list of what has been transferred, conditions, the responsible contact and a confirmed deadline may suffice. The point is not to keep the agreement's memory only in the mind of someone who will soon leave. The next party can then check what it received and on what grounds. The current party gains a boundary for its own task. Handover becomes an actual change of responsibility rather than a convenient word spoken during a conversation about savings.

VII. A Shared Place Is Not the Present Users' Exclusive Possession

Permission to use a space for one season does not describe every right over its subsequent life. Even where certain changes are allowed, moral consideration does not end with formal possibility. We can ask how present participants' temporary advantage relates to continuing shared use. In Psalm 24, the earth belongs to the Lord: a religious ground distinct from contemporary ownership arrangements. We use it as a separate perspective on limiting claims, rather than evidence about this club's specific legal rights.

In our scene, sharing means the current group is not the last party to need the place. Completion of the season therefore belongs in its decision now. Permitted changes, considerate handover and fair cost allocation can be discussed. We cannot consider the last word spoken merely because today's participants physically occupy the space. Their position gives them opportunities, and those opportunities create reason to consider later users. Temporarily commanding attention does not mean unlimited possession of a place's continuing life.

Sharing also does not mean every present participant must personally provide for all future expenses. Responsibility has an arrangement: organisers' powers, the conditions of using the venue, accepted roles and available resources. If one volunteer cannot change the budget, that matters. They can raise a question, identify who is responsible or limit their own promise. Moral clarity is not achieved by requiring one person to do what depends on an entire organisation. It begins by locating a decision precisely and refusing to turn collective uncertainty into the personal guilt of whoever notices it.

How the next user can discover what remains also matters. If information is available only to the old team, a shared place effectively becomes dependent on private memory. Clearly handed-over conditions let someone new decide without reconstructing the entire history. This is a small but substantive form of respect for future people. It does not promise an ideal space. It allows them to distinguish deliberately transferred things from accidentally abandoned ones, and an agreed task from work left without an owner. That distinction helps prevent convenient uncertainty from being passed on again.

VIII. Duties to the Future Do Not Require Identical Sacrifices Today

Two people may both support attention to the future while assessing today's cost of change differently. One can readily pay for a more expensive option; another would lose access to an important activity. Responsibility therefore cannot be measured by one amount or an identical refusal. Our club should consider which costs participants can bear, what depends on the organiser and what belongs to the shared conditions. A requirement sounding identical for everyone can distribute the actual burden very unevenly. The moral purpose does not remove the need to see that difference.

A possible response is more than buying something expensive. The club can reduce decorations, reserve completion time, agree on shared help or retain a useful part with real consent. Each possibility needs checking rather than a promise that everyone can afford it. The cost of one prestigious option should not become the sole sign of care. Sometimes a less visible solution—clear handover, timely dismantling or giving up something unnecessary—better fits actual circumstances. Responsibility concerns our relation to cost, rather than the right to display high expenditure to others.

Limited means cannot, however, serve as universal justification for a known transfer. If the team can reduce an optional detail and provide for completion, it should explain why it retains the detail while leaving work to unknown people. The question concerns a specific alternative, rather than the moral ranking of poverty and wealth. An option may truly be impossible, or it may simply have been overlooked. Distinguishing these respects limitations while retaining standards for a decision. We recognise actual conditions without treating every desire of today's group as a necessary boundary to its resources.

Proportionality also concerns how extensively a choice is examined. A small reversible action and a substantial change with lengthy consequences do not require identical research. Yet even a small action benefits from clear completion if a known remainder will pass to others. The greater and longer a potential cost, the stronger the grounds for clarifying information and conditions. This article offers no numerical threshold that automatically settles every case. It helps match a choice's scale to available checking, so neither moral feeling nor a desire to hurry replaces an explanation of the specific next step.

IX. Recording a Decision Connects Intention to Consequence

Club members can sincerely decide to remove everything in autumn. A collective intention still does not determine who will be there, what resources they can use and when they will finish. Moral discussion therefore needs a transition to performance. A short record helps: the chosen option, accepted remainder, responsible person, available resources and checking deadline. This cannot guarantee a future result. It makes today's promise definite enough to notice fulfilment, or acknowledge in time that circumstances have changed and another conversation is needed.

If the team is leaving, completion should be planned with that fact rather than against it. Some work can be done beforehand, a real performer can agree to help, or the original scope can change. It is not honest to leave a task to the team if the team will no longer exist as an acting party at the relevant time. Again, an unknown future differs from a known organisational limit. Recording helps reveal both. It turns the convenient word later into an assessable condition: precisely when, using which resources and based on whose accepted participation should an action occur?

After handover or completion, the bounded result should be confirmed. Has the space been cleared? Were retention conditions accepted? Did the new party receive information? What remains undone? Checking allows actual circumstances to be described without exaggeration. It does not prove that future users will be pleased with everything or that every possible impact was minimised. It confirms a particular handover and the absence of a specific unfinished stage, or honestly records that it remains. This language protects the future from a pleasing report in which intention quietly substitutes for completed work.

If performance changes, those relying on it need to be told. Honest reconsideration retains the history: what was promised, what circumstance arose, what is now possible and what is still unagreed. Another person's silence should not be declared acceptance of a new cost. Nor should every change become a personal catastrophe. Sometimes timely communication and a bounded new decision reduce what is left for others. What matters is not using the current group's departure to make a consequence invisible to those who had an opportunity to change it earlier.

X. Care for the Future Begins with an Honest Ending to the Present

Attention to future people does not require knowing all history after us. It requires not declaring invisible costs absent or unknown recipients already willing. Our scene needs several distinctions: total cost versus initial price, future uncertainty versus unfinished work today, a useful gift versus imposed work, and a possible change versus accessible resources for making it. These cannot produce one uniquely correct budget. They reveal questions that should be addressed before current convenience becomes another person's obligation.

Historical sources offer distinct grounds. Burke's connection between generations belongs to his political reasoning. The psalm retains its religious account of the earth's belonging to God. Ecclesiastes retains human knowledge's limits before God. We do not merge them into one teaching about contemporary ecology. The practical comparison is our own: life's continuation and limits to our claims help examine what today's group usually sees only within its season. Different grounds need not prevent a shared question when the limits of comparison are explicit.

Present people also belong in moral consideration. Their needs, work and joy cannot be erased by an attractive image of descendants. Yet future people should not become a free part of today's budget merely because they cannot yet object. A more honest decision connects the sides: retaining an important present benefit, naming an unavoidable remainder, seeking an available alternative and arranging a clear handover. Unresolved conflict deserves acknowledgement. A named difficulty permits further action; a hidden difficulty merely changes when and to whom the task of dealing with it will fall.

The club may achieve neither a perfect space nor the most beautiful celebration. It may achieve a more limited but intelligible arrangement: the team knows what it will do before departing, the next party knows what it receives, and unresolved questions have someone to address. That is a specific improvement we can check. At this scale, care for the future becomes more than a grand moral speech. It becomes an ability to end today's activity without secretly imposing its continuation on those who neither participated in our choice nor promised to pay for our convenience.

What this means in practice

Choose one decision whose consequences will remain after your participation: a purchase for a shared activity, temporary use of a place or a change to a common arrangement. If no suitable real decision is available, use the club scene. The exercise is an original aid to clarification; research has not established its effectiveness.

Record today's benefit and visible cost. Then extend the account through completion: what must be removed, transferred, explained, maintained or reconsidered? For each action, identify who is responsible now and who will be affected later. Separate knowledge from assumption. Do not call a future recipient willing when consent is absent, or describe an unknown consequence as proven injury.

Check the main purpose and the chosen means. Which details are necessary, desirable or reducible? Examine one available alternative. Identify its cost to current people and the remainder for future ones. If comparison requires specialist information, identify the question and a competent source instead of inventing technical certainty.

Determine the next step: clarify a completion budget, obtain real handover confirmation, assign responsibility or reduce the scope. Specify a deadline and an assessable result. Afterwards, record what was actually done and what remains open. You need not confirm every future person's welfare. You can confirm that a particular known cost was considered and that your unfinished stage was not declared someone else's consent without grounds.

Key quotation

> *The earth is the LORD's*

Psalm 24:1 in King James Version numbering, a brief opening fragment. The religious ground is not converted into a conclusion about contemporary ownership rights.

Connections between traditions

Source or perspective	Its own ground	Question for this article	Limit of comparison
Burke, Reflections	Generations connected within a social order	Who is absent from today's choice?	Political teaching is not a universal ban on change
Psalm 24:1–6	The earth belongs to the Lord	Can we regard continuation as ours alone?	Not a legal definition of possession
Ecclesiastes 7:8–14	Patience and limited knowledge before God	What is known and what is assumed?	Neither prediction nor permission for inaction
United Wisdom	A shared club's hypothetical season	Who completes the action and accepts what remains?	Original practice without guaranteed outcomes

@andrey.zarinsh @ilkutki

Sources

• Edmund Burke. Reflections on the Revolution in France, Works, volume III, Project Gutenberg 15679. John C. Nimmo, London, 1887; title page checked. Reflections is dated 1790. A continuous selected context from temporary holders of society's inheritance through generational partnership and necessity was read, displayed lines 1815–1829. The epigraph is a brief expression from 1825; reading the entire work is not claimed.

• Psalms, King James Version, Wikisource. Psalm 24 was read in full, 24:1–10; this article uses 1–6. Edition numbering is retained. The key quotation is a brief opening fragment of 24:1.

• Ecclesiastes, King James Version, Wikisource. Continuous selected 7:8–14 context was read; no literal quotation is used. Religious grounds are not replaced by an environmental prediction. Edition rights are not declared established worldwide; full source texts are not imported.

Tags

future, generations, convenience, cost, consequences, responsibility, handover, completion, choice, uncertainty, information, budget, shared resource, space, conditions, remainder, consent, possibility, reversibility, necessity, means, care, work, time, boundary, inheritance, present, Burke, Psalm, Ecclesiastes

About the authors

Andrey Zarinsh is the author and founder of United Wisdom. He explores inner transformation, the unity of traditions, intercultural dialogue, and contemporary spiritual discipline. Instagram: @andrey.zarinsh.

Maria Evilkut is a co-author of United Wisdom. Alongside her research, she seeks to test these ideas in practice and observe how principles of unity and mutual understanding work in real life between people and cultures. Instagram: @ilkutki.