

A Problem of Riches? The Moral and Political Economy of Wealth and Wealth Inequality

BIGSSS Conference Room 7.3280

28-29 November 2019

The concentration of wealth is a key component of the recent rise in economic inequality in many Western societies. Consequently, scholars across the social sciences have begun to study the long-term evolution, composition and unequal distribution of wealth as well as its causes and consequences both within and across nations. So far, however, the question of how societies react to the growing concentration of economic advantage has received little systematic attention. Is wealth inequality considered problematic by policy makers and citizens – and if so, why and with which consequences? This workshop aims to shed light on the political and moral economy of wealth and wealth inequality by addressing the following questions:

- » Do policy-makers, citizens or social groups seek to mitigate the concentration of wealth among a small elite, and if so, how?
- » Which policies regulate the accumulation of wealth (e.g., taxation) and how have they evolved over time?
- » What is the impact of economic conditions, party politics, interest groups or institutional arrangements on wealth-related policies?
- » How does the non-wealthy majority of citizens view the economic privileges of the well-to-do, and are they deemed legitimate?
- » How have policy developments favouring the wealthy (such as tax cuts) been justified in public and political discourse?
- » Are the wealthy judged as (un)deserving?

The workshop brings together scholars from sociology, political science, history and philosophy who work on topics that broadly relate to these aspects. Participation is open to others who are interested. They should register in advance by writing an email to Patrick Sachweh (sachweh@uni-bremen.de) or Till Hilmar (till.hilmar@uni-bremen.de) before 25 November.

workshop programme

Thursday, 28 November 2019

12:00-13:00 Arrival & Lunch

13:00-14:00

The historical origins of wealth taxation
Julian Limberg, King's College London

14:00-15:00

The revolution of equality and the taxation of wealth 1871-1945
Marc Buggeln, Humboldt University Berlin & Cambridge University

15:00-15:30 Coffee Break

15:30-16:30

Communicating tax cuts: How electoral institutions shaped discursive strategies to justify tax cuts for higher incomes in the US and Germany
Inga Rademacher, King's College London

16:30-17:30

Legitimate wealth? How Germany's wealthiest families are portrayed in the press
Nora Waitkus, London School of Economics & Stefan Wallaschek, University of Hildesheim

17:30-18:00

Concluding Remarks

18:00-19:00 Break

19:00 Dinner

Friday, 29 November 2019

09:00-10:00

Philosophical perspectives on the limits of wealth
Dick Timmer, University of Utrecht

10:00-11:00

Deserving and undeserving riches: Can public consensus identify a 'riches line'?
Ian Gough, Loughborough University & London School of Economics

11:00-11:30 Coffee Break

11:30-12:30

Wealth, inequality and deservingness: Research perspectives
Patrick Sachweh, University of Bremen

12:30-13:00

Concluding Remarks, Farewell