



Democracy and Distribution: Why Inequality Persists and Even Grows in Democracies and What can be Done About It

Invitation

Ian Shapiro

WZB Distinguished Lecture in Social Sciences

Thursday, November 22, 2018, 6 p.m., Room A 300

Moderated by **Wolfgang Merkel**

Discussant: **Mattias Kumm**

Our event location is wheelchair-accessible. If you need support, please inform Friederike Theilen-Kosch: friederike.theilen-kosch@wzb.eu

Nineteenth-century elites feared that expanding the franchise would lead to substantial downward redistribution of their wealth and income. Some on the left agreed, concluding that there might be a “parliamentary road to socialism.” In the twentieth century, this expectation was formalized as the median voter theorem, which predicts downward redistribution in democratic capitalist systems because median income and wealth is always below average income and wealth, and politicians have strong incentives to be responsive to the median voter. In fact, there is no systematic tendency toward downward redistribution in capitalist democracies, many of which have become more unequal over the past four decades. This is true even in proportional representation systems, which used to be thought more responsive to median voters than single member district systems. Shapiro will discuss theoretical and empirical reasons for these developments, and what can be done about them. He will argue that inequality is best tackled indirectly in democratic politics, by focusing on reducing economic insecurity rather than by trying to build coalitions to tackle inequality head on.

Ian Shapiro is Sterling Professor of Political Science and Henry R. Luce Director of the MacMillan Center at Yale University. He is one of the leading scholars in political theory worldwide. In particular, he is renowned for his contribution to theories of democracy and the state.

The Lecture is part of the WZB Distinguished Lectures in Social Sciences.

To register, please reply by November 16, 2018 to Friederike Theilen-Kosch: friederike.theilen-kosch@wzb.eu

*The WZB provides for child care during the lecture. Please respond by **November 8, 2018** to Friederike Theilen-Kosch: friederike.theilen-kosch@wzb.eu*

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