

Politicians, Policies, and the Reproduction of Wealth

Initiative: Perspektiven auf Reichtum: (Aus-)Wirkungen von Reichtum

Bewilligung: 02.04.2023

Laufzeit: 4 Jahre

Literature has established that public policies are crucial for the incomes of the wealthy and suggests policies are biased towards the preferences of better-off citizens. This project studies the role of politician characteristics for developing policies that may systematically favor the wealthy. The key questions are: How well do politicians' social and economic characteristics align with those of economic elites? How does this affect policy making? What are the consequences for the incomes of the wealthy? Answering these questions will bring crucial insights into the political mechanisms behind the reproduction of wealth. It will also provide tools and solid empirical evidence for the public to either hold politicians accountable or increase citizen trust in them if warranted by the evidence. The project follows two broad empirical approaches. First, for 50 democracies, data on economic/ finance minister characteristics and wealth-relevant policies between 2005-2020 will be collected and analysed. Second, in-depth case studies of four countries (the UK, Germany, Brazil, and South Africa) will be undertaken. In these case studies we 1. collect systematic data on MPs' social and economic characteristics, 2. study in-depth the characteristics of particularly relevant politicians, 3. track the trajectories of policies from their inception to their adoption, recording the role and policy positions of individual politicians, and 4. analyse the implications of these policies for top incomes. A combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches is used which allows to track the whole mechanism from politician characteristics to the proposed and adopted policies and thereby to the incomes of the wealthy.

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