

Strategies for Taxing Wealth: an academic and policy exchange

Monday 15 June 2020

Session 1 | The Politics of Major Tax Reform | 10.30am-12.30pm

Signup link via Zoom for session 1 [here](#).

Chaired by Dr Nora Waitkus (LSE International Inequalities Institute)



Nora Waitkus ([@nora_wait](#)) is a sociologist looking at inequality and socio-economic stratification in contemporary capitalist societies. She is mainly interested in exploring and explaining cross-national variation and institutional drivers of wealth inequality and concentration. Her work further deals with class position, wealth portfolios and wealth accumulation using quantitative approaches and longitudinal data.

Public Attitudes on Public Spending, Tax and Wealth with Robert Palmer

Tax Justice UK (TJ-UK) has carried out a six month public attitudes project in collaboration with Survation to understand people's views on public spending, tax and wealth. Through a combination of focus groups and polling, TJ-UK has found that people are fed up with austerity and support higher taxes, including on wealth. A key element of the project has been to explore the most persuasive ways of framing tax changes. The findings also give an insight into popular attitudes around wealth, for example that there is strong support for the idea that wealth is largely deserved.



Robert Palmer ([@robertnpalmer](#)) is the Executive Director of Tax Justice UK, a new organisation campaigning for everyone in the UK to benefit from a fair and effective UK tax system. Previously he was at Global Witness, where he led a global movement to challenge how corrupt officials abuse the financial system.

What About Wealth Taxation? The News Media Coverage in Germany with Hendrik Theine

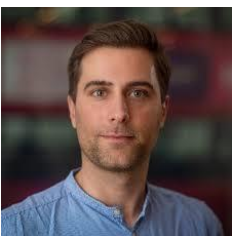
The paper explores the media coverage of wealth and inheritance taxation over the early 21st century (2000 to 2018) based on a large-scale corpus of German daily and weekly newspapers. Drawing on text mining methods and corpus linguistics, it shows that wealth and inheritance taxation is a relatively infrequent topic over the entire period, with the exception of a few intense months of increased reporting. On those occasions (increased media reporting on the topic of wealth and inheritance taxation), the prevailing topic of coverage is the debate over politics. Furthermore, this debate centres on the possible reform processes and the connected difficulties of finding compromise between different actors. Based on social network analysis, the paper also explores the power of agents (both on the organisational and individual level) as the primary definers of social reality. It shows that market-liberal and conservative organisations and economists dominate the news over social-democratic and left-wing ones.



Hendrik Theine ([@tricks_y](#)), PhD is a post-doc researcher at the Institute for Heterodox Economics, WU - Vienna University of Economics and Business. His research focusses on critical political economy analyses in the areas of media, and transformation of work within platform capitalism. Based on a pluralist perspective, he uses both qualitative and quantitative methods, for instance, discourse analysis, text mining and network analysis.

What Determines Taxes on the Rich in Peacetime? with Julian Limberg

Mass interstate warfare is one of the main drivers of taxing the rich. We still know relatively little, however, about the dynamics of taxing the richest members of society in the absence of warfare. One of the major empirical challenges of furthering this research agenda is measuring the tax burden on the rich. To overcome this problem, we propose a comprehensive approach using Bayesian latent variable analysis on a wide array of taxes and indicators. We employ this novel measurement to identify the main determinants of taxing the rich in 19 OECD countries from 1965–2015. In particular, we argue that the extent to which economies have transitioned from Fordism to the knowledge economy has crucially driven taxes on the rich.



Julian Limberg ([@JulianLimberg](#)) is a Lecturer in Public Policy in the Department of Political Economy at King's College London. Prior to joining King's, he was a post-doctoral researcher at the Geschwister Scholl Institute of Political Science, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. He holds a PhD in Political and Social Sciences from the European University Institute in Florence, Italy. Julian's research lies at the intersection of comparative public policy and political economy. In particular, he is interested in the dynamics of inequality, tax policy-making, and fiscal capacity building over the long run of history. His research has been published in journals such as the *Socio-Economic Review*, the *European Journal of Political Research*, the *Review of International Organizations*, and the *Journal of Public Policy*.

Session 2 | Wealth Taxes: modelling and enforcement | 1.30pm-3.30pm

Signup link via Zoom for session 2 [here](#).

Chaired by Dr Luna Glucksberg (LSE International Inequalities Institute)



Luna Glucksberg ([@luna_inequality](#)) is an urban anthropologist looking at inequality and socio-economic stratification in contemporary society. She has worked extensively on elites and how they reproduce; on the roles of women and family offices in the reproduction of dynastic families; and on how philanthropy can be used by elites to strengthen their own family dynamics.

The Long-Run Redistributive Power of the Net Wealth Tax with Alejandro Esteller-Moré

There is a growing social and academic debate about the possibility of having an annual wealth tax. Until a few years ago, it looked quite difficult to implement and control, but recent technological innovations, that could ease the periodical valuation of wealth, and improvements in international tax information sharing might make possible a “modern wealth tax”. Nonetheless, there are still a few challenges to face regarding its design. In this paper, taking advantage of the Spanish experience, the only EU country with a wealth tax, we have simulated its redistributive impact in the long run. This impact might be substantial if all wealth was valued at market prices and compliance was high. Our results also show that family business exemption and the common ceiling income and wealth taxes are very regressive. We provide a tax simulator (SIMPA) that helps to assess the effectiveness of alternative reforms, with more comprehensive tax bases.



Alejandro Esteller-Moré ([@aestellermore](#)) is professor of Economics at the University of Barcelona, and director of the IEB program on Tax Systems Analysis. He is Editor of the Spanish Review of Public Economics. More info: <https://sites.google.com/view/aestellermore/>



José María Durán-Cabré is Associate professor at the University of Barcelona and Director of IEB.

Towards an Asset Register for the UK and Beyond with Andres Knobel and Louise Russell-Prywata

Piketty and Zucman have proposed a global public financial register or global asset registry to link taxpayers to assets - of all types - that they own. This linkage between taxpayers and assets is a prerequisite to enforcing a wealth tax, but is far from straightforward. This session will present findings from the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation (ICRICT)/Tax Justice Network's work to scope out pathways to create an asset register in the UK and beyond, and policy implications from OpenOwnership's work to create transnationally linkable beneficial ownership data.



Andres Knobel is a lawyer and researcher at the Tax Justice Network. His work focuses on financial secrecy and tax havens, specifically in relation to banking secrecy, beneficial ownership registration, automatic exchange of bank account information and abusive regimes of trust law.



Louise Russell-Prywata ([@ LouiseRP](#)) is an anti-corruption specialist with 15 years' experience spanning policy analysis, programme management and organisational development to advance complex social change. She is Director of Policy and Programmes at OpenOwnership, an international policy-and-tech initiative driving the global shift towards transparency over who owns companies. Louise is also a Senior Atlantic Fellow at the London School of Economics, where her research focuses on elite corporate networks. Previously, Louise worked within and consulted for a variety of civil society organisations and international projects targeting governance and anti-corruption issues, including five years with Transparency International UK.

Tax Evasion by the Wealthy: measurement and implications with Daniel Reck

This paper combines random audit data with new data on offshore bank accounts to estimate the size and distribution of individual income tax evasion in the United States. Evasion through offshore financial institutions is highly concentrated at the very top of the income distribution. Random audits virtually never detect this form of evasion. Our findings highlight an important limitation for the use of audit data for the study of inequality and tax evasion, and attempt to correct for this limitation for the case of offshore tax evasion. Data from random audits alone suggests relatively little tax evasion in the top 1% of the income distribution, but accounting for offshore tax evasion changes the estimates significantly.



Daniel Reck ([@danhreck](#)) is an Assistant Professor of Economics at the LSE. His research interests are in public and behavioral economics. His recent work examines the impact of enforcement on tax evasion via offshore financial accounts, the implications of tax enforcement data for the distribution of tax evasion and the measurement of inequality, and the analysis of optimal policies in the presence of behavioral frictions. Prior to joining the LSE in 2017, he completed a PhD in economics at the University of Michigan and a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of California Berkeley.