

Democratic Responsiveness and Redistributive Politics

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We seek funding to organize an exploratory workshop that would be held in Geneva in early June or September, 2014. The workshop would bring together political scientists from Princeton and UNIGE to explore the topic of democratic responsiveness in the context of rising socio-economic inequality. Why democratically elected governments have not responded to rising inequality by engaging in compensatory redistribution is a "hot topic" in the study of American politics. Several Princeton faculty members (notably Martin Gilens and Thomas Romer) have contributed to this debate. Recently, students of European politics, including members of the department of political science at UNIGE, have begun to ask similar questions. The proposed workshop would serve as a venue for discussion of theoretical issues pertaining to the concept of "democratic representation" as well as new empirical research in this domain.

Our proposal builds on longstanding ties between the two departments. Simon Hug's PhD thesis was supervised by Christopher Achen, now at Princeton, and Hug collaborates with Helen Milner in organizing an annual conference on "the political economy of international organizations." Jonas Pontusson was Professor of Politics at Princeton prior to taking up his current position at UNIGE. It is also noteworthy that an UNIGE PhD student (Reto Wuest) is spending the current year as a visitor at Princeton, sponsored by Nolan McCarty. The workshop will provide an opportunity not only to explore common questions and potential collaborative research among the Princeton and UNIGE participants, but also to discuss how to organize a more regular, ongoing exchange of PhD students, and to raise funds for future workshops of a similar kind.

Several Princeton professors have expressed an interest in attending the workshop (Brandice Canes Wrone, Martin Gilens and Markus Prior, in addition to Nolan McCarty). Additional funding may be sought to allow some Princeton PhD students to attend the workshop as well. On the UNIGE side, the workshop will be open to members of the Department of Political Science and International Relations with interests related to its substantive themes. (In particular, we hope to include Nathalie Giger, Anouk Lloren, Damian Raess, and Reto Wuest, in addition to Simon Hug and Jonas Pontusson). We will also invite researchers from the Graduate Institute (Cedric Dupont) and the University of Lausanne (Daniel Oesch and Jan Rosset).