

INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH SEMINAR



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Democratic Self-Defense in Times of Autocratization

Johannes Gerschewski (WZB Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin)

Abstract

Currently, we are witnessing a “wave” of autocratizations across the globe. The number of countries that experience a loss of their democratic quality is increasing. In this context, the talk addresses the question what liberal democracies can do to defend themselves. How can they stem their weight against autocratization processes? An intuitive answer can be found in the works on “militant democracies”.

The basic idea is that democracies can and should rely on legal means to save democracy against its enemies. These means range from measures against the abuse of parliamentary institutions, the protection of the independence of the judiciary to controversial instruments like banning of political parties and the curtailment of political rights – under certain circumstances. Being initially developed by German émigré scholar Karl Loewenstein in the 1930s, the talk asks what lessons can be drawn from these classic writings. How – and to what extent – can these ideas be translated to today’s challenges?