



Brown Bag Series #27



Date: February 22, 2018

Time: 17:00 - 18:30

Venue: Collaboration Room 3 on the 4th Floor of the Building 18, Komaba Campus, UTokyo

Language: English

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Direct Democracy and Democratic Innovations

Challenging the common assumption that models of direct democracy and representative democracy are necessarily at odds, this presentation shows how practices of direct and representative democracy interact under different institutional settings and uncovers the conditions that allow them to coexist in a mutually reinforcing manner. Whereas citizen-initiated mechanisms of direct democracy can spur productive relationships between citizens and political parties, other mechanisms of direct democracy often help leaders bypass other representative institutions, undermining republican checks and balances. I will also show that the embrace of direct democracy is costly, may generate uncertainties and inconsistencies, and can be manipulated. Nonetheless, the promise of direct democracy should not be dismissed. Direct democracy is much more than a simple, pragmatic second choice when representative democracy seems not to be working as expected. Properly designed, it can empower citizens, breaking through some of the institutionalized barriers to accountability that arise in representative systems.

