

Inequality-aware Market Design Seminar Series

Stefanie Stantcheva: Zero-Sum Thinking and the Roots of U.S. Political Divides

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Details

When: 28 Jun 2023 @ 17:00 GMT+2

Where: GRAPE

Speaker this week
[Stefanie Stantcheva ↗](#)
Harvard University

Stefanie Stantcheva is a Professor of Economics at Harvard and founder of the Social Economics Lab. She studies the taxation of firms and individuals, as well as how people understand, perceive, and form their attitudes towards public policies.

Abstract: We examine the causes and consequences of an important cultural and psychological trait: the extent to which one views the world in zero-sum terms – i.e., that benefits to one person or group tend to come at the cost of others. We implement a survey among approximately 15,000 individuals living in the United States that measures zero-sum thinking, political preferences, policy views, and a rich set of characteristics about their ancestry. We find that a more zero-sum mindset is strongly associated with more support for government redistribution, less support for immigration, and more support for race- and gender-based affirmative action. We find that zero-sum thinking can be explained by the experiences of an individual's ancestors (parents and grandparents), including the amount of intergenerational upward mobility they experienced, whether they immigrated to the United States or lived in a location with more immigrants, and whether they were enslaved or lived in a location with more enslavement. The findings underscore the importance of psychological traits, and how they are transmitted intergenerationally, in explaining current political divides in the United States. Find the paper [here ↗](#).

Should you have any queries please contact the seminar organizers at IMD@grape.org.pl.

