



Call for Papers

Information, Epistemic Norms, and Democratic Choice – Beyond and Below the State

July 6-8, 2017

International Workshop at the **TUM Study Center Raitenhaslach**, Burghausen

Keynote Speakers:

Hélène Landemore (Yale University), Kai Spiekermann (London School of Economics)

Conveners:

Felix Gerlsbeck and Lisa Herzog (Bavarian School of Public Policy/Technical University of Munich)

In recent years, there has been renewed interest in *political epistemology*, the study of the epistemic norms and conditions under which political procedures operate. In the field of political theory this field opens up a number of important questions:

- how to organize collective decision procedures – especially democratic ones like parliaments or voting publics – such that they result in decisions grounded in the best available knowledge;
- how (and why) best to bring a variety of cognitive perspectives to bear on political problems; or
- how best to process, test, and contest claims to expert knowledge within such procedures.

Political decisions affect the lives of the people subject to them, therefore authoritative procedures must employ good socio-epistemic strategies. So far the focus of political epistemology has almost always been the *state* and the decision procedures at the highest levels of political authority.

But the state is not the only locus of collective decision-making that has influence over people's lives. Sub-national governments, economic agents such as firms, unions, rating agencies and consumers' associations, powerful civic organizations like churches, interest groups, think tanks, or social movements, and organs of the state with wide

discretion such as regulatory agencies or central banks, affect people's lives and well-being as well.

This workshop therefore aims to expand this form of socio-epistemic analysis to non- or sub-state levels. Should such non-state decision procedures also conform to specific epistemic norms, and if so, are they the same norms that govern state action? What is the link between authority and epistemic quality at this level of analysis? Are epistemic norms compatible with other liberal norms governing non-state actors such as autonomy, freedom of association, or freedom of conscience? What interplay between "exit" and "voice" (Hirschman) – e.g. competition and participation – can assure sufficient epistemic standards? What responsibility do such actors have with regard to allowing the contestation of beliefs or the use of knowledge?

We welcome contributions from democratic theory, political science, epistemology, political philosophy, philosophy of economics, and more. We especially welcome papers relating to one or more of the following themes:

1) Workplace Regulation and Economic/Epistemic Democracy

If there are socio-epistemic reasons for states to be organized democratically, does that argument also apply to the internal structure of firms? Are the consequences of firms' and states' actions sufficiently similar to be analyzed from the same normative perspective? What difference does it make whether or not one assumes that at the aggregate level markets are able to effectively process knowledge? What is workplace democracy good *for* – i.e. what exactly is it supposed to achieve, for workers themselves, but also for society at large?

2) The role of non-state actors in disseminating and processing information and knowledge

Non-state and delegated actors like think-tanks, expert agencies, professional associations, but also universities and research institutes play a decisive role in modern societies through their roles in distributing, but also certifying or contesting, information that ends up decisively shaping political opinions and political decisions. If the epistemic argument for democracy holds, must these agencies also conform to epistemic norms, and if so, are these the same norms as those governing democratic decision-making? Should we try to revive notions of professionalism and professional ethics in order to improve epistemic processes? Or does this lead to dangerous tensions with democratic ideals?

3) Technological change and epistemic duties

New information technologies allow for new forms of horizontal communication, which in turn changes the ways in which citizens acquire information and test knowledge

claims. How do these developments change the normative landscape around collective decision-making? Do new possibilities also create new duties, because they lift feasibility constraints? How should these potential benefits be weighed against potential communicative risks of such technologies (e.g. echo chambers, online fire storms, distortion by algorithms)? Should democracies regulate such technologies in order to improve epistemic processes, and if so, how?

*If you would like to propose a paper for this workshop, please send an abstract of max. 300 words to felix.gerlsbeck@tum.de by **February 28, 2017**. Presenters with accepted proposals will be informed before the end of March. Papers will be circulated before the workshop, so presenters must send their finished papers to the workshop organizers on June 19, 2017 at the latest.*

The workshop venue is the Study Center Raitenhaslach, a beautiful former monastery near the Bavarian-Austrian border. For more information see: <https://www.raitenhaslach.tum.de/en/home/>

Hotel accommodation in Burghausen is available at a special workshop rate, and includes bus transfer to and from Raitenhaslach. A very limited number of bursaries are available for graduate students or academics without a fulltime scholarship or teaching position. If you would like to be considered for a bursary, please include a brief explanation of your situation in the submission.

