

CfP: Conference “Public Research and Private Knowledge – Science in Times of Diverse Research Funding”

March 26-27, 2020

Center for Applied Philosophy of Science and Key Qualifications (ZiWiS)

Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg (Germany)

Topic:

The production and distribution of knowledge is a key process in scientific and scholarly inquiry. However, this process is not and has never been limited to universities and public research institutes alone, but extends to agents as diverse as the Research & Development Departments of companies, citizen scientists, and private non-profit research institutes. In recent years, these agents have shown an increased interest in basic - as opposed to applied - science, for example in fields of rising social significance such as AI or biomedical technology. These specific research interests in turn direct attention to the sources of funding, and, as a consequence, to the direction of inquiry and the accessibility of results.

The main problem that arises from this development can be expressed in two questions: First, does the influence of private funding change the selection of research topics in an epistemically or otherwise (un-) desirable direction? And second, does it lead to a privatization of knowledge, and if so, what are the consequences of this privatization?

Some key questions in this area of investigation are:

- Where do new sources of research funding come from, and how important a role do they play? Which agents foster the development, which methods do they use, and what are their primary motivations?
- What are the epistemic consequences, and who is affected by them? What is the impact of business interests on epistemic norms and ideals, and are there any (additional) sources of bias to be expected?
- Have there been any (changes of) institutional structures in the last decades that have stimulated or hindered these tendencies? Which historical idea of science is at stake? Which factors affected the practices of organizing the production and distribution of scientific knowledge during the second half of the 20th century?
- Is academic freedom threatened by these developments, and if so, to what extent? How could it be maintained? What are the epistemic effects of endowment chairs and industry-sponsored PhD projects?

This set of questions requires an epistemological assessment as well as a historical, sociological, and economic perspective. Therefore, the interdisciplinary conference of the Center for Applied Philosophy of Science and Key Qualifications at Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg (Germany) aims at bringing together researchers from all pertinent fields in order to further our understanding of this apparent organizational shift in knowledge production and distribution and to accurately evaluate the challenges and opportunities it presents.

Keynote speakers:

Manuela Fernández Pinto (Universidad de los Andes)

Bennett Holman (Yonsei University)

Naomi Oreskes (Harvard University)

Sergio Sismondo (Queen's University, Kingston)

Call for Papers:

There are several slots for presentations (up to 20 minutes for the talk, followed by 10 minutes for discussion).

Please send an anonymized abstract (approx. 500 words) and a separate document specifying your general information (name, contact, affiliation) by June 30th 2019 to ziwis-conference@fau.de. Notifications of acceptance will be sent out by August 15th. We welcome proposals from individuals at all stages of their career.

Please note that unfortunately we cannot cover expenses for travel and accommodation. The conference fee (80 € / 50 €) also applies to accepted speakers.

Conference Fee and Details:

Conference fee: 80 € (includes lunch and coffee breaks on both days; reduced fee for students: 50 €)

Conference language: English

Conference website: ziwis.fau.de/public-research

Organizers: Michael Jungert, Julia Böttcher, Jon Leefmann, Christoph Merdes, Sebastian Schuol

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