

Conference

Public Research and Private Knowledge

Science in Times of Diverse Research Funding

Keynote Speakers

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March 26th - 27th, 2020

Ulmenweg 18, Hörsäle Medizin, Erlangen

Please register by March 10th, 2020 via www.ziwis.fau.de/public-research

Kindly supported by Universitätsbund Erlangen-Nürnberg



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Conference topic

The production and distribution of knowledge is a key process in scientific and scholarly inquiry. However, this process 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 research, e.g. 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 problem arising 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 way? Second, does it lead to a privatization of knowledge, and if so, what are the consequences?

Some key topics in this area of investigation are:

- Where do new sources of research funding come from? Which agents foster these changes? What are their primary motivations?
- What are the epistemic consequences? Whom do they affect? Are academic freedom or other norms threatened by these developments?
- Which (changes of) institutional structures have accelerated or slowed down these tendencies? Which historical idea of academic research is at stake?

This set of questions requires an epistemological assessment as well as a historical, sociological, and economic perspective. It is therefore the aim of the interdisciplinary conference of the Center for Applied Philosophy of Science and Key Qualifications at Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg to bring 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.

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