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SOCIAL EPISTEMIC INEQUALITIES, REDUNDANCY AND EPISTEMIC RELIABILITY IN GOVERNANCE

ABSTRACT:

In this paper I argue that social epistemic inequalities, exemplified by expert structures and their introduction into various social and political processes, may be a collective epistemic virtue only if they are discovered under the conditions of free possibility of redundant disagreement. In the first part of the paper, following Snježana Prijčić Samaržija's work in *Democracy and Truth*, I explicate the epistemic value of social epistemic inequalities, and address the epistemic defectiveness of both the complete social disregard for any expertise (flat epistemology) and the rule of experts. In the second part of the paper, I argue that social epistemic inequalities governing a large and complex population of epistemically suboptimal agents may be a collective epistemic virtue, reflective of discovery of epistemically reliable processes, if they can be contested and, in principle, withstand redundant disagreement.

KEYWORDS

institutions, experts,
disagreement, virtue,
governance

1. Introduction

The present paper provides an account of the following claim: social epistemic inequalities, exemplified by expert structures and their introduction into various social and political processes, may be a collective epistemic virtue only if they are discovered under the conditions of free possibility of redundant disagreement.

These days the public and the media appear particularly concerned with the matters squarely falling under the rubric of concerns in social and, particularly, institutional epistemology, the study of epistemic merit of system-level institutional arrangements (Anderson 2006). The ubiquity of disinformation campaigns and the wild, unsurveyable complexity of the 21st Century media landscape have given rise to a mood akin to epistemic panic. Under this uncomfortable and unpredictable polyphony, the old fears about the epistemic quality of democratic decision-making have been creeping up across the population (Foa and Mounk 2016). While perhaps some of us are wary of our own ability to make good decisions, it appears that we are more strongly concerned about the ability of others, those with which we disagree, to do so. On

the other hand, however, the suspicion towards experts has been steadily petrifying. They resemble “elites” that hold too much power, and have plans concerning us in which we don’t have a say. A considerable number of members of populations have just recently discovered that experts may be wrong or have vested interests, and their reaction to this sudden insight has not been exclusively sophisticated. Some appear to have accepted that the experts are good as long as they are *our* experts. In some cases, politicians have gleefully encouraged “throwing the baby out with the bathwater” and gorged on epistemic destruction, betting on disinformation warfare and epistemically detrimental attacks on facts, science, knowledge, common understanding and governance.

In such times, the discussions of epistemic reliability in democracy, and more broadly governance, appear timely. Snježana Prijic Samaržija’s project in *Democracy and Truth: The Conflict Between Political and Epistemic Virtues* (2018) is complex, but for our purposes here may be described as deflating the “continuous dread” (Prijic Samaržija 2019: 184) that finding a “unique place” (ibid: 145) for experts within the political process presents to democracy. I will of course not engage here with all the manifold, astute and fine-grained arguments that Prijic Samaržija develops to defend the hybrid approach, the harmonization of political and epistemic virtues, within the framework of reliability democracy. I will focus on two particular points in her argument – 1) that experts may have a unique place within the epistemic labour of the population, including the political processes; and 2) that their authority must be derived from an epistemically reliable process. I will argue that the fundamental reliable process is withstanding redundant pluralism.

The plan of the paper is as follows.

In Section 2 I will give a coarser defense of the claim of experts’ unique place, purely finding that social epistemic inequalities may be a collective epistemic virtue, and offer two pertinent clarifications – firstly, that if we define experts as those epistemic agents that are more likely to attain knowledge, “the people” may be regarded experts in certain epistemic tasks (for instance, those of governance), and secondly, that delegating the totality of epistemic labour to experts is as epistemically void as is denying all expertise.

I will then in Section 3 provide a robust systemic precondition for the *derived* authority of recognized experts (ibid: 190–191) – that their epistemic reliability as well as their unique place in governance hinge primarily on their capacity to in principle¹ withstand the free possibility of redundant disagreement. In a population in which disagreement is impossible, no expertise is possible. I will furthermore provide brief remarks on the interpretation of this understanding for the purposes of applied institutional epistemology.

1 As I will note in the next Section, epistemic agents are necessarily epistemically sub-optimal, and therefore, there is no guarantee that reliable social epistemic inequality will *actually* withstand disagreement – *epistemically suboptimal agents might, obviously, make a wrong decision*. However, I will argue that precisely in order to keep their sub-optimality “in check”, their commitments (in this case, for instance, decisions) must be made under the conditions of free possibility of disagreement.

My aim in this paper is to show that the search for knowledge in a population requires both the formation of social epistemic inequalities and the freedom to contest them. This does not entail that any objection to the found social epistemic inequalities has the same or relevant weight, and that they must immediately crumble under any pressure – quite the contrary, it entails that those social epistemic inequalities which withstand contest may have epistemic merit. Those that are protected from any contest, on the other hand, are highly epistemically dubious.

2. The Unique Place for Experts in the Epistemic Labour of the Population

2. 1. Social Epistemic Inequalities are a Collective Epistemic Virtue

While the sociological aspects of contingent historical expert structures are surely of interest for epistemological investigations (it is most certainly relevant to explore, for instance, which social and non-epistemic conditions are at play in the real-world expert communities, and how can we mitigate their epistemically defective features), the focus and the target of Prijic Samaržija's argument are experts in a strong sense – those member of the population that practice “epistemic virtues better than others” and are “comparatively the best guides to truth, or at least to avoiding false and detrimental solutions” (ibid: 189). I will likewise refer to and concern myself here with experts in a similar sense, namely according to the following “philosophical definition of experts”:

Within a population of epistemic agents, “experts” are those agents that are more likely to attain knowledge.

This strong definition of experts allows us an epistemological inquiry into their social epistemic standing which cannot be undermined by the objection that real-life expert structures are riddled with epistemically suboptimal and at times purely anti-epistemic social tendencies. Surely there is broad class of cases in which some epistemic agents, exemplified here by human individuals, are wrongly recognized as experts.

Furthermore, there are certainly cases in which rightly recognized experts are still wrong – but the definition lightly survives those, claiming merely that these agents are more likely, but by no means guaranteed, to attain knowledge. One of the founding insights in institutional epistemology (IE), the study of system-level institutional arrangements in terms of their conduciveness to knowledge, is Friedrich Hayek's finding that all possible epistemic agents are epistemically suboptimal (Hayek 1978). They do not have access to the totality of relevant evidence, make inferential mistakes and errors, and are prone to conserving suboptimal strategies in the search for knowledge. This is a strong constraint on the design of social epistemic systems. It follows that experts may be wrong.

It does not follow however that all agents are equally ignorant regarding all possible matters. Some agents are more likely than others to be right in some cases. Those more-likely-to-be-right agents may be such because they are better acquainted with processes which are more likely to produce a good epistemic outcome. Or, in other cases, there are process which are more likely to lead to the recognition of those agents which are more likely to be right. In both cases, the agents recognized as more likely to be right are such due to particular processes which exhibit epistemic reliability. In both cases, moreover, the population does feature agents which are more likely to be right.

Institutional arrangement which fails to harvest expert knowledge for purposes of problem-solving or decision-making, as well as the one which fails to allow for the expert structures and reliable processes to form in the first place, is most certainly, quite evidently, and perhaps most importantly *trivially*, epistemically defective. Some processes, and some social and inferential norms, are more likely to produce good epistemic outcomes. Some agents following these norms are more likely to attain knowledge. In this broad understanding, with regards to the totality of epistemic labour in the large and normatively complex population, this appears to be quite a non-controversial stipulation.

I will refer to the formation of expert structures and such discriminative epistemically reliable processes as “social epistemic inequalities”. Social epistemic inequalities are an epistemically sound and necessary development within any large and normatively complex population of epistemic agents – they are a collective epistemic virtue in the sense that they may be conducive to knowledge. Given the epistemic suboptimality of the population, social epistemic inequalities need not necessarily bring about knowledge – but their opposite, the “flat epistemology” within which it is held that all agents are equally likely to attain knowledge in all areas, undermines the division of epistemic labour as the possibility of diversification of strategies in the search for knowledge and makes it impossible to track the more successful strategies. It specifically undermines *learning*.

Lastly, I would like to add to this understanding a particular argument with regards to the *anti-social* definition of epistemic autonomy which appears when political matters are involved. As Prijic Samaržija makes masterfully clear in her analysis (Prijic Samaržija 2018: 218–221), delegating a part of epistemic labour to a reliable epistemic authority is not at odds with epistemic autonomy. Not only can I *autonomously* decide to delegate parts of epistemic labour to those that (I believe) know better than me, but in a variety of situations I would be quite epistemically challenged if I were to do otherwise. As John Stuart Mill notes, “(n)o one but a fool, only a fool of a peculiar description, feels offended by the acknowledgement that there are others whose opinion, and even whose wish, is entitled to greater amount of consideration than his.” (Mill 1861: 166–167) It may appear that when political decision-making is involved, the epistemic autonomy is defined by retaining authority, but this need not be so. While for instance Mill’s scholocracy may be politically and epistemically problematic (which is something I will not examine here), it does not follow

that any inclusion of experts in political or governance processes results in a moral, political, social or epistemic catastrophe. As I will point out later, under the “philosophical definition of an expert”, I as a member of “the people” may as well be an expert when it comes to democratic decision-making. I may however delegate decision-making on my behalf in a certain political matter to agents I believe to be more likely than me to make the right call. In a complex socio-political system and taking into account my limited epistemic capacities, it may be quite wise of me to do so. Crucially, my autonomy is not violated by this act – it is asserted. Furthermore, this delegation of authority may be a reliable epistemic action, and a responsible one. If those I have given my confidence to fail to deliver, I will certainly think twice before giving them the power of decision next time.

Thus, social epistemic inequalities may be a collective epistemic virtue. They make it possible for us to organize and diversify the strategies in the search for knowledge, and they allow for the discovery of the better or less bad ones. It is epistemically sound to find some strategies, and some agents better at those strategies, reliable and refer to them when particular problems are to be solved.

I will now further explicate two relevant aspects of the present account of social epistemic inequalities – firstly, that under the philosophical definition of experts “the people” may be recognized as expert at some epistemic tasks, and secondly, that neither flat epistemology nor the rule of experts have epistemic merit.

2. 2. The Philosophical Definition of an Expert Allows for “The People” and Other Democratic Institutions to be the Most Reliable Knowledge-producer at Some Epistemic Tasks

While particular trained individuals may be experts at some tasks, “the people” may be more likely to attain knowledge in other and particularly certain political tasks. Various aggregative procedures perform in an epistemically reliable manner (Sunstein 2006). Hélène Landemore has shown how inclusive deliberation and majority rule outperform rule of the few because the inclusion is the function of epistemically instrumental introduction of more cognitive diversity into collective decision-making (Landemore 2013; Landemore 2014). Elinor Ostrom argued, with regards to the governance of common resources (Ostrom 2005: 263–265), that the inclusion of all affected by the regime in the governance procedures exhibits considerable epistemic benefits.

As in the case with all other experts, the knowledge of “the people” needs to be harvested through appropriately designed, reliable, problem-solving and decision-making processes. Likewise, if “the people” are wrongly recognized as experts at some tasks this may be epistemically detrimental – as is the case with any other wrongly recognized expert involved in an epistemically unreliable process. The exhaustive description of institutional arrangements most conducive to knowledge would certainly feature both a variety of public deliberations and a variety of voting procedures to harvest collective intelligence.

2. 3. Neither Flat Epistemology “Democracy” Nor the Rule of Experts are Epistemically Justified

It is largely a fantasy that we must choose between flat-epistemology democracy or delegating the totality of epistemic labour to experts (rule of experts) in our design of social epistemic systems. There is a variety of complex institutional arrangements between those two extremes, and the epistemic situations are complex, non-unitary and in real world “always leave room to revisions” (Prijić Samaržija 2018: 234). More to the point, both of those two extremes are epistemically defective.

Flat epistemology, where there are no social epistemic inequalities, disallows the formation of reliable epistemic processes and makes it impossible to harvest the collective and individual intelligence from the population. It is not the case that everybody’s contribution has immediately the same weight, and it is not the case that every possible disagreement is as epistemically valuable as any other. However, democracy, and institutional epistemology in general absolutely, need not refer to any flat epistemology. Since it is not uncommon to encounter a strawman argument to the contrary, neither public deliberation nor voting need to, or should at all, be justified by the equal epistemic value of every possible contribution.

The epistemic value of public deliberation as a feature of democratic politics has never been justified by invoking flat epistemology. If anything, its precise epistemic merit is in weeding out those reasons which do not withstand public and expert scrutiny, however suboptimal it may be given our design constraints. The lack of scrutiny resultant from prohibiting the imperfect game of giving and asking for reasons among diverse agents would lead to considerably more epistemically distortive developments than does the burden of comparatively more suboptimal agents providing stupid dissent. While it appears that certain decision-making procedures require particular design of deliberative situations to make them more likely to be conducive to better outcomes (Sunstein 2006), this does not deny the epistemic value of public deliberation. Freedom of speech is epistemically instrumental (Fricker 2015, Mill 1859), particularly if we were to regard it as an exercise fundamental to the constitution of an epistemic agent (Talissee 2009). As noted, the ability to participate in solving a problem one is invested in, as well as mere cheap talk, can be of impressive benefit in certain critical epistemic situations (Ostrom 2005). Furthermore, as Elizabeth Anderson shows, the possibility of disagreement after the decision has been made is an epistemically relevant feature of democratic politics (Anderson 2006) – it allows for the feedback on the tested policies. The continued disagreements may also allow for piecemeal improvements of all positions concerned (Gaus 2018).

The epistemic value of one vote per individual in periodical elections is also not justified by such flat-epistemological claims. This particular democratic procedure however certainly has considerable epistemic merits – just to name a few, 1) it harvests the information on the preferences of the population, 2)

it protects against epistemically detrimental tyrannies of unaccountable decision-makers, 3) it makes it possible for the diverse pool of voters to find the best solution through the aggregation in which their errors in judgement cancel each other out (Anderson 2006, Landemore 2012). I do not wish here to claim that investigations into any potential reform or upgrade of this particular procedure should be abandoned – we may yet find that certain tweaks to it may produce even better results, both politically and epistemologically (if we are to take these as distinct). The research into this is beyond the scope of this paper. However, one person-one vote in representative democracy is certainly a social innovation and an epistemic discovery of considerable quality, particularly when opposed to the rule of few².

The experts we have recognized through our currently arguably most reliable processes are prone to a variety of suboptimalities (Gaus 2008) – however, even if our processes were more, or most (if such a state were recognizable) reliable, their suboptimalities would still have to be kept in check. The rule of experts is subject to suboptimal epistemic lock-in – those that are more likely to attain knowledge are not guaranteed to attain it and delegating the totality of epistemic labour to them leaves us without the institutional mechanism for avoiding them getting stuck following a suboptimal strategy. Under the rule of experts, there are no real experts because their expertise are derived from an epistemically unreliable process – the one which cannot stave off the threat of conserving the suboptimal strategy in the search for knowledge. If a particular set of agents from the population are recognized as experts, moreover, it simply cannot respond to Hayek’s challenge of harvesting and utilizing the dispersed knowledge in the population – these “experts” are clearly then not real experts since they fail to develop and follow epistemically reliable processes of harvesting collective intelligence. However, if we were to follow the philosophical definition of experts, we might recognize “the people” as an expert. The absolute rule of “the people”, the delegation of the totality of epistemic labour to them, would then be subject to the same objection.

The totality of epistemic labour in politics cannot be delegated to experts. Neither the people nor the particular trained individuals should be the exclusive epistemic authority in the totality of political decision-making and problem-solving. However, it would also be wrong to deny them the unique place, and not delegate a part of epistemic labour to them. There can be reliable epistemic processes in politics from which we derive epistemic authority. Some of them involve particular trained individuals, some the people. Democracy as a governance type of epistemic merit may as well include both types of procedures, and it is more likely to discover the reliable ones if the search for them takes places under the constitutional guarantee of freedom to disagree. I will offer further explication of this understanding in the next Section.

2 For further investigations into restricting suffrage, see also Kuljanin 2019.

3. The Unique Place for Disagreement in the Epistemic Labour of the Population

Prijic Samaržija emphasizes that experts may be in disagreement and this need not devalue their authority – the fact of disagreement certainly does not necessarily point to an epistemic defect in the process (Prijic Samaržija 2018: 240). She also notes, rightly, that disagreement is a non-desirable state from the individual perspective – we are “naturally inclined to” (Prijic Samaržija 2018: 234) and, moreover, *invested* into resolving disagreement. But is disagreement a non-desirable state from the system point-of-view?

I would propose that an institutional arrangement conducive to the discovery of reliable epistemic processes must retain a distinct unique place for institutionalized redundant normative pluralism, and thus free possibility of redundant disagreement.

3. 1. Withstanding Redundant Pluralism is the Foundational Reliable Epistemic Process

It is the institutionalized conditions for disagreement provided by the democratic order which allow for the reliable norms to be discovered, and from which the minimal justification of authority of social epistemic inequalities, particularly in the matters of governance, may be derived.

Investigations in the division of epistemic labour and institutional epistemology provide a unique place for disagreement within the epistemic projects of populations. To have a clearer understanding of the epistemic value of freedom to disagree, it is crucial to stress that collective epistemic virtues are irreducible to individual epistemic virtues (Mayo-Wilson et al 2011). It is in the epistemic interest of the collective that certain agents pursue alternative strategies, both conflicting with the dominant ones and altogether distant (investigating some other area of problem space). The central reason for the epistemic benefit of redundant investigators is that they provide the “hedge” against the suboptimal strategy lock-in of the dominant investigators. For instance, Zollman (2010) shows that even when pluralism is transient (and thus a single correct decision is to be made), a prolonged redundant disagreement is epistemically beneficial because it hedges against “jumping to conclusion”. His modelled scientific community benefits epistemically from groups which conserve strategies even after presented evidence to the contrary. Epistemically reliable processes require utilizing and maybe even incentivizing *individual* epistemic vices (Kitcher 1990, Mayo-Wilson et al 2011). Furthermore, Scott Page (2008) shows in his seminal work in IE that redundant pluralism of non-experts is more epistemically beneficial for the task of solving complex problems than is delegating the task to experts. In his and Hong’s research, experts have the right “toolbox” for a particular set of problems. However, when the problem is complex inasmuch as nobody has the right “toolbox” for it, in their model, the expert toolbox is particularly badly equipped because it

lacks the diversity of perspectives, interpretations, heuristics and predictive models.³ Diversity Trumps Ability because ability leads to a suboptimal lock-in where diversity allows for “building upon” a variety of local peaks and thus is *more likely* to avoid suboptimal lock-ins.

Knowledge is moreover conditioned on withstanding pluralist pressures. As John Stuart Mill (2003) argued, being exposed to the free possibility of disagreement is the fundamental practice required for the justification of a true belief. Expanding this argument, Miranda Fricker argues that the universal possibility of Epistemic Contribution, as a possibility of agents to give into the pool of shared epistemic resources, is epistemically instrumental (Fricker 2015). Knowledge must withstand the possibility of being contested, and thus some, at epistemic tasks such as governance presumably considerable, disagreements.

The distinction between *globally sustained and locally transient* pluralism within problem space must be made. Globally sustained pluralism allows for the conditions of free disagreement and thus institutionalizes the justification “compulsion”. Globally – at the level of the totality of problems, and thus large-scale governance – sustained normative pluralism is epistemically instrumental. The freedom to disagree is deeply conducive to knowledge within a population of suboptimal epistemic agents in a wicked learning environment, where the proximity to knowledge is indeterminable, as exemplified regularly by social and governance problems (Rittel and Webber 1973). Locally, at the level of particular problems, pluralism *may* be transient – it would be epistemically void otherwise, primarily because it would disallow the formation of social epistemic inequalities and thus globally sustained redundant pluralism. The pool of agents and norms solving the problem need not always include *all possible* disagreements. Certain norms may not withstand disagreement and certain norms may become institutionalized. Moreover, and crucially, specific normative communities – groups of agents following sufficiently similar norms – should be able to exclude according to some epistemic standards. This is precisely the possible development of social epistemic inequalities which the globally sustained pluralism should “pressure” into reliability. However, even at the level of particular problems redundant disagreement need not be quickly stifled to form beneficial epistemic procedures. Incentivizing groups pursuing an alternative strategy, and accommodations to disagreements in epistemic protocols of groups – adversarial procedures – have fundamental epistemic value. They, again, protect against a lock-in on a suboptimal epistemic strategy. It is instructive both at the global and the local level that Anderson (2006) recognizes Dewey’s account of democracy *epistemically* superior to all others precisely because it allows for disagreement before the decision-making, at the point of making a decision through majority rule and after the decision

3 Somewhat similarly, when each new level within an organization features problems different from those at previous levels, promoting random members may be conducive to better organizational performance than would promoting the best member from the previous level be (Pluchino et al 2010).

has been made. Disagreement at the scale of a population (or any grouping of communities) does not entail impossibility of decision-making. Majority rule, Anderson argues, makes decision-making possible while preserving disagreement – if consensus were necessary, the disagreement would likely be socially suppressed by the urgency of a response to the problem for which the decision is required. And, moreover, making the decision is crucial for harvesting the feedback on its effects and consequences, and thus, in the experimentalist account, for learning.

Lastly, certain problems are unsolvable from the perspective of Reason-as-such (Case 2016) – and some continued disagreements, as has been recently recognized by researchers in “New Diversity Theory”, allow for continuous upgrade of normative strategies of all involved (Gaus 2018). Even where a single solution is impossible, the conditions of redundant pluralism are, again, crucially, conducive to learning.

Free possibility of disagreement, and thus redundant normative pluralism, is the minimal protection against getting “stuck” at a suboptimal epistemic lock-in and the minimal condition for the discovery of knowledge. I will now lastly provide brief and tentative remarks on the “expression” of epistemically instrumental pluralism for the purposes of applied institutional epistemology.

3. 2. Remarks on Pluralism in Applied Institutional Epistemology

Interpreting these insights for application in policy and institutional design should surely not be reduced to referendums. It would build on investigations into democracy, common pool resource arrangements, polycentric experimentalist learning systems, open source policy-making and a diversity of mechanisms for harvesting the unique information from populations and communicating epistemic content across diverse normative communities. Epistemic injustice, both in its testimonial and hermeneutic variant (Fricker 2007), harms our collective *epistemic* capacities by denying us the resource of deep expertise distributed among our neighbours and our strangers – and a thorough and comprehensive systemic inclusion of agents historically subject to oppression (and similar forms of collectively epistemically detrimental social disadvantage) is the highest priority for any applied institutional epistemology. More broadly, the protection of redundant investigators through universal access to sustenance, epistemic resources and the possibility of Epistemic Contribution should, I strongly believe, be pursued. The complex properties of superadditivity of “toolboxes” of diverse investigators should be studied in applied institutional epistemology (AIE) (Page 2008), or even specifically, their intractability and nurture.

Furthermore, these understandings of the epistemic value of pluralism might be of particular relevance when it comes to situations of crisis. As noted earlier, redundant disagreement does not deny the possibility of making a decision. Democracy is epistemically valuable because it can allow for dissent after the decision has been made – and thus the feedback is possible in the

experimentalist account. Certainly there are crisis situations in which we must make a decision and stick to it. However, the intuitiveness of such a response to a crisis situation may be misleading. If we understand the crisis as a problem of provision and management of common good, Ostrom's work (2000, 2005) shows that redundant teams of designers and providers are epistemically beneficial, and on the other hand, and more to the point, that highly centralized "serial" systems are extraordinarily fragile and *more risky*.

Our intuitions about reducing complexity and pluralism in situations we recognize as crisis may lead to epistemic catastrophe (Heinrich 2009). Prijjić Samaržija's deeply relevant insight is that epistemic situations are non-unitary and "always leave room to revisions" (Prijjić Samaržija 2018: 234). The mitigation of threats to epistemic development and progress cannot be reduced to a panacea. Climate breakdown as a case of crisis, for instance, requires i) policies which can "fit" into lives of the population, and thus the proper recognition of experts (for instance, a gasoline tax may fail to take into account the unique information and *expertise* of lower middle class citizens); as well as ii) a diversity of epistemic developments and investigators with regards to scientific, technological and social innovations. While the scientific consensus is crucially informative, and the epistemic reliability of climate scientists may easily withstand contest, there is no single set of experts to which we can delegate solving all the wicked problems we face.

Epistemic governance in the times of climate crisis should surely not panic, stifling disagreement, centralizing the power structures, and draining the pool of possible Epistemic Contributions. A *learning* population must be inclusive – regulatively, since the identity of the problem-solver is always unknown, there are always too few learners for any wicked problem. If the population is to learn, it must protect redundant investigators. (Also, if the individual-level advice should be given, we should all perhaps occasionally mistrust our experts more than others.) The complex and dynamic systems of social learning, particularly in wicked environments, should be studied. Enduring common pool resource institutions should be of interest, as well as varieties of experimentalist and polycentric political economies. A robust *infrastructure* of epistemic inclusion, particularly that of constitutional liberal democracies with efficiently declining transgenerational poverty and social exclusion rates, should be exhaustively examined to appropriately respond to the threat of epistemic degradation. Given the scope of the crisis, it certainly appears we can hardly afford getting stuck pushing a defective strategy in our troubled search for knowledge.

4. Conclusion

An agent may find that certain agents which disagree with them are particularly unlikely to attain knowledge or move away from absolute ignorance. An agent may find that actual real-world disagreement with those particular terribly stupid agents is epistemically undesirable waste of resources. This is most certainly an *epistemically valuable* discretion of normative communities

(including the group of inquirers the agent belong to in this scenario) – it would be epistemically distortive to deny the formation of expert structures or normative communities in this way. However, these normative communities may be wrong – and if they and their norms and procedures are to be recognized as reliable, they must be formed within the *system* which does not foreclose redundant pluralism.

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Društvene epistemičke nejednakosti, redundantnost i epistemička pouzdanost u upravljanju

Apstrakt

Centralna teza ovog članka je da društvene epistemičke nejednakosti, oprimerene stručnjačkim strukturama i njihovim uključivanjem u razne društvene i političke procese, mogu biti kolektivne epistemičke vrline samo ako su otkrivene pod uslovima slobodne mogućnosti suvišnog neslaganja. U prvom dijelu članka, slijedeći rad Snježane Prijic Samaržije u *Democracy and Truth*, ekspliciram epistemičku vrednost društvenih epistemičkih nejednakosti te pritom poseban fokus posvećujem razradi teze jednake epistemičke defektivnosti vladavine stručnjaka i potpunog društvenog neuvažavanja bilo kakve ekspertize (tzv. *flat* epistemologija). U drugom delu članka argumentiram da društvene epistemičke nejednakosti u kontekstu upravljanja velikom i kompleksnom populacijom epistemički suboptimalnih agenata mogu biti kolektivna epistemička vrlina, koja reflektuje otkrivanje epistemički pouzdanih procesa, tek ako te nejednakosti mogu biti izazvane i, u principu, „preživljavaju“ suvišno neslaganje.

Ključne reči: institucije, eksperti, neslaganje, vrlina, upravljanje