

CEACOP Speaker Series

Expert-citizen Relationships in Deliberative Systems

(Co-authored with John B. Min)

Dr. James Wong

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Abstract

The division of epistemic labor between experts and citizens is an empirical fact in any large and complex society, which is often considered productive for the epistemic performance of deliberative systems. However, defects in the systems, such as fake news and disinformation, can reduce the truth-tracking competence of deliberators, hence undermining the overall epistemic quality. This paper seeks to discuss how deliberative democracy should defend the division of epistemic labor given the defects in the deliberative systems. Drawing on the recent systemic turn of deliberative democracy, we argue that the functionalist or consequentialist account offered fails to provide a sufficient justification for the division of epistemic labor, because it can easily degenerate into (democratic) epistocracy which compromises the ideal of democratic self-government. In response to the problem, we develop an epistemic proceduralist account stipulating that the division of epistemic labor can be deliberatively justified only if the epistemic dimension is constrained by some minimal procedural conditions. In this way, we can devise a more desirable arrangement for expert-citizen relationships in deliberative systems.

Biography

Dr. James K. WONG is Assistant Professor of Social Science Education in the Divisions of Social Science and Public Policy at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST). His teaching and research revolve around democratic governance and citizen participation, politics of science, environment and sustainability, and ethics and public policy. He earned his PhD in Government from the London School of Economics and Political Science. He is Fellow of the British Higher Education Academy.

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