

Culpable Ignorance: Moral Knowledge in Organisations

Initiative: Freigeist-Fellowships

Bewilligung: 13.12.2020

Laufzeit: 5 Jahre

Organizational misconduct often stems not from bad motives, but from ignorance. For instance, silence of research departments about side effects delays the recalling of drugs. Lack of coordination between police departments hampers finding serial killers. Such ignorance is culpable if organizations could have known better. The project investigates what organizations have a duty to know, and which qualities help them to fulfil these duties. The research group approaches the question of organizational duties to know through the lens of vice epistemology, a branch of philosophy. An epistemic vice is a blameworthy intellectual failing that systematically gets in the way of knowledge. To answer the question of which qualities help organizations to fulfil their duties to know, the research group applies quantitative and qualitative research methods. First, the research group analyzes a database of corporate misconduct to assess the importance of culpable ignorance. Second, the research group identifies root causes of culpable ignorance through interviews with young professionals. Third, the research group develops a survey instrument to identify and measure epistemic vice in organizations. The project will help to better understand an overlooked cause of corporate misconduct, providing guidance to organizations and regulators to prevent culpable ignorance.

Projektbeteiligte

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