



university of
 groningen

faculty of philosophy

Social Deliberation and Opinion Aggregation

Mini-workshop, organized by the Department of Theoretical Philosophy

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Michael Morreau (University of Trömsö)

Give me your biased, your unschooled, Your ignorant masses...

A jury theorem is presented for range voting, where individuals contribute judgements in the form of scores or grades. Unlike the Condorcet jury theorem for majority voting, this one does not require that individuals are competent to choose among the options before them. Instead there is a requirement concerning the distribution of errors among all the voters. According to the grading jury theorem, a sufficiently large group of voters that satisfies this holistic condition can be almost certain to judge correctly -- even if its individual members are vanishingly unlikely to do so by themselves. Nor does the group need to be large: 6000 (a quorum in the ancient Athenian assembly) can do nicely, and the more voters there are the better. All this casts an optimistic light on the possibilities for epistemically sound democratic decisions in an age of polarization, media bubbles and alternate facts.

Eric Pacuit (University of Maryland)

To discuss or not to discuss...that is the question.

In this talk, I examine the role that discussion plays when aggregating probability distributions of a group of experts. During a discussion period, the experts have an opportunity to debate, share their evidence, and discuss the current group forecast. Does discussion always reduce disagreement among experts, and, ideally, improve the group opinion? Results from the social epistemology and economics literature suggest that discussion and sharing evidence may lead to polarization rather than agreement. I will critically examine these different models of belief polarization and discuss implications for structuring discussion among a group of experts aiming at an accurate group forecast.

Aidan Lyon (DelphiCloud)

The Business of Aggregation

I'll discuss what the problem of judgement aggregation looks like from a business perspective. I'll argue that approaching the problem from the point of view of business -- as opposed to that of the armchair -- offers substantial philosophical advantages.

Anya Farennikova
The Wisdom of Outliers

I contrast two kinds of outliers – those emerging in context of a classical Wisdom of Crowds effect, defined by diversity and independence, and the Delphi Method, in which diversity and independence are frequently (and purposefully) violated. I argue that the Delphi Method breeds a special category of outliers, whose epistemic deviance is critical to success of the Delphi Method. I unpack their deviance, explore why and when they emerge, and argue that we can mine the wisdom of Delphi outliers by considering patterns in evolution of Delphi crowds during structured forecasting.

Jan-Willem Romeijn (University of Groningen)
Diversity in problems and opinions

This paper addresses the problem of aggregating probability distributions of experts who differ both in their opinion, and possibly in the problem that they are forming their opinion on. How can a decision maker piece apart these two sources of disagreement, and make optimal use of the diversity among the experts? She might cluster experts who seem to be conceiving of the problem in a similar way, and so form different teams that each produce an opinion on a shared problem conception. I will present a transparent and unified model that automatizes this process, and thereby offer insight into the parameters that determine a problem set.