

WWZ research seminar

Tuesday, December 11, 2018, 12:30 – 13:45 pm, WWZ, HG, S 15

Prof. Dr. Nora Szech, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology

" The (In)Elasticity of Moral Ignorance "

Abstract:

Ignorance allows individuals to excuse questionable moral behavior. In this paper, we investigate the elasticity of preferences for moral ignorance with respect to monetary costs, monetary benefits, and social norm information. We elicit the demand curve for moral ignorance, and benchmark it against a morally neutral context. Demand for morally relevant information is weaker, and only moderately more elastic. Moreover, we observe a pronounced kink around zero for morally relevant information. This suggests that removing small costs and implementing small rewards for seeking morally relevant information could be a politically promising approach to fight moral ignorance in many people. Yet others are willing to forego large monetary incentives to stay morally ignorant. We then measure social norms regarding information avoidance. Although willful ignorance is widely considered morally inappropriate, norm provision only tends to foster costly information seeking to some extent. It does not reduce moral ignorance when ignorance is associated with some monetary benefit. We also find that moral ignorance is persistent across moral contexts.