

EINLADUNG ZUM KOLLOQUIUM

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(Zürich)

„What Empirical Network Analysis can do for Philosophy of Science: The Case of Model Transfer“

Philosophers and historians of science have recently started to discuss the role of empirical methods for their field. This is a pressing methodological issue, given that formal-mathematical models, experimental tools, ethnographic approaches, and simulation techniques are already accepted in philosophy of science, while historians of science draw increasingly on scientometric methods and tools from digital humanities. The need for discussing the usefulness of empirical methods is also fostered by the fact that the data relevant to study the development, the social organization, and the procedures of science are readily available. In this talk, I want to push the debate one step further by discussing the role of quantitative-empirical methods, such as network analysis. I argue that empirical network analysis is particularly useful for those areas of philosophy of science that draw on the traditional case study methodology – such as philosophy of science in practice and integrated history and philosophy of science – because it allows for mitigating a number of methodological challenges arising from the case study methodology. By focusing on the example of model transfer in science, I will discuss the advantages of empirical network analysis but caution that it cannot replace more traditional philosophical methods. Rather, I suggest, it must rely on them to fully develop its potentials. I support my claims by focusing on the study of model transfer in science.

Catherine Herfeld is an assistant professor for Philosophy of the Social Sciences and Social Theory at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. Her research interests fall into the fields of philosophy of economics, history of economics, Integrated History and Philosophy of Science, and empirical philosophy of science. In her work, she brings an Integrated HPS approach combined with quantitative-empirical methods to address philosophical questions mainly about economics, such as how model transfer into and from economics into other domains looks like, the nature of rational choice explanations, the history of rational choice theories, and the status of first principles in economics, among other issues. In April 2023, she will begin a new project - funded by an ERC Starting Grant - on 'Model Transfer and its Challenges in Science: The Case of Economics'.

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