

Erasmus Institute for Philosophy and Economics (EIPE)

Ph.D. Graduate: Dr. Attilia Ruzzene

Thesis title

Inferring causality in the social sciences

Supervisors

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Project description

Knowledge of causal relations has a crucial importance in the social sciences, and particularly in economics, for epistemic and pragmatic purposes. It serves to explain phenomena, predict outcomes and possibly help policy making. These tasks are addressed through a variety of methods: thought and natural experiments, structural econometric models, process-tracing, and methods of comparison. It is a common view in the field that diverse methods merely are alternative paths to equivalent results, and only differ in the scientific rigour each of them attains. In my thesis I question this view and examine some of these methods, their application, logic, and inferential import. Apparently, diverse methods contribute distinctively to the causal inquiry, and non-trivial complementarities arise from their combination.

Research interests

Philosophy of science, of economics and the social sciences; Quantitative and qualitative methods; Epistemology and semantics of causality; Causal knowledge and policy making

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