Looking to philosophy of science to help guide interdisciplinary research

Interdisciplinary research is widely advocated in the contemporary landscape but it can be very challenging for researchers to actually do. In this talk I will suggest that there are some good ideas from the philosophy of science that could help researchers work in interdisciplinary ways. While some disciplinary differences are necessary, I will argue that several widely-endorsed differences are unnecessary and, therefore, we would benefit from them being questioned. These include divisive norms related to natural/social entities, realism/relativism, qualitative/quantitative methods, induction/deduction and causation. A central question that will be raised is whether the prominent ‘paradigms narrative’ serves to help or hinder collective research endeavours.

Dr Gareth Wiltshire is a lecturer at Loughborough University (UK). He uses methods and theories from social science to conduct empirical research in two main areas: exercise and health for organ transplant recipients; the social determinants of physical activity and health inequalities. In recently years, he has worked on papers that discuss how ideas from the philosophy of science (specifically critical realism) have implications for the practice of qualitative research.