



**University of
Zurich** ^{UZH}

Department of Economics – Neuroeconomics Seminar

April 27, 2023 - 17:00 - 18:00

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What is special about the social brain?

Activity in several human brain areas have been linked to cognition in social contexts. A long-standing question, however, is how “special” are these brain areas?. Are they uniquely human? Are they uniquely concerned with social cognition? A series of experiments employing both recording of activity in these brain areas and examination of the impact of disrupting activity have begun to provide some answers. Recent results suggest that key parts of the neural circuit in medial frontal cortex and superior temporal sulcus can be identified in other primate species where they are also important for using socially derived information to guide behaviour. Part of what makes the areas important for social cognition is the way in which they can focus on 1) information about individual identity in a manner that is flexible and related to the demands of the current context; 2) information concerning diverse combinations of individuals that vary in composition and in fundamental features of their social attitude such as whether they are cooperating with us or competing with us.