



Leeds University Business School Research Staff Conference 2025

30th June 2025

LUBS Research Staff Conference 2025

About the Conference

Location: Cloth Hall Court, Quebec Street, Leeds LS1 2HA

The LUBS Research Staff Conference will provide an opportunity to showcase our research excellence and support the development of collaborative research practice. The conference aims to provide a space for colleagues to come together to share their research with peers, identify synergies in our research, foster collaboration across centres and departments and establish a platform for interdisciplinary research. The conference will include a morning plenary session, presentation sessions and a researcher support session.

There will also be an *Impact track* running over the day that will enable a select number of participants to present research that aims at influencing non-academic knowledge users such as policy makers, for-profit and non-profit organizations, and public sector organizations.

The Business School has research strengths across many fields and disciplines, with theoretical, methodological and empirical depth that can offer insights and solutions to the most challenging and pressing of issues, be they corporate, policy-related or more societal.

Programme

09.00–09.30	Arrival and refreshments
09.30-09.55	Opening (Herringbone Suite) Chair: Annie Wei Welcome address by Professor Niall Hayes (Deputy Dean) Launch of <i>Insights</i> with Professor Krsto Pandza and Hannah Preston
09.55-11.00	Morning plenary session Digital Horizons: Expanding possibilities and connecting worlds (Herringbone Suite)

	Chair: Annie Wei Speakers: Professor Danat Valizade, Professor Paul Glover, Alex Dutton-Waugh
11.00-11.15	Refreshment break
11.15-12.30	First Parallel sessions (Breakout Rooms)
12.30-13.30	Networking lunch (Merchants Hall)
13.30-13.50	Researcher support session Research Support: Infrastructure and Development (Herringbone Suite) Chair: Omar Al-Tabbaa Speakers: Jo Garrick and Han Jin
13.55-15.10	Second Parallel sessions (Breakout Rooms)
15.10-15.25	Refreshment break
15:25-16.40	Third Parallel sessions (Breakout Rooms)
16.45-17.45	Drinks Reception and awards presentation (Merchants Hall)

LUBS Research Data Centre stand – throughout the day in Merchants Hall

Find out more about how the Centre provides unparalleled access to over 30 comprehensive databases and cutting-edge research software. Chat with Dr Han Jin, the LUBS Research Data Centre manager about the Centre's unique approach to data management which prioritizes accessibility, relevance, and readiness of resources, facilitating efficient and productive research across a variety of domains.

'Launching Insights – a platform to connect our academic research with business and policy communities' 09.40 – 09.55

(Herringbone Suite – 1st floor)

Summary: Find out more about *Insights*, our dedicated hub where external audiences can access clear, actionable research tailored for real-world application

Opening Plenary Session 09.55 – 11.00

‘Digital Horizons: Expanding possibilities and connecting worlds’

(Herringbone Suite – 1st floor)

Summary:

This plenary will examine debates around digital technologies and their relationship with the wider economy. In particular, it will examine points of crossover between academic research into digitalization conducted by LUBS researchers and contextualise this in relation to the wider regional “ecosystem” in West Yorkshire.

Professor Danat Valizade will speak about the Digit research centre, which has used cutting-edge methods to shed new light on UK employers’ use of digital technologies including Artificial Intelligence. Professor Paul Glover will examine the use of Artificial Intelligence in research, reflecting on its ethical and practical implications. Alex Dutton-Waugh will connect these discussions with the work of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and reflect on technological priorities for our region.

Panel: Professor Danat Valizade, Professor Paul Glover, Alex Dutton-Waugh

Chair: Charles Umney

Panel Members Bio’s:

Professor Danat Valizade

Danat Valizade is a Professor of Quantitative Employment Research in the Business School. Prior to joining the Business School, he held senior positions within the trade union movement in Russia and taught labour history and employment relations at St Petersburg University of Humanities and Social Sciences. Professor Valizade published in leading international peer-reviewed sociology, management and industrial relations journals and obtained external funding from the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA), the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), the European Parliament, the National Highways and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). He has also led the work on a nationally representative analysis of employers’ digital practices at work as part of the ESRC research centre on digital futures at work (Digit).

Professor Paul Glover

Professor Paul Glover is the current Chair of Petrophysics and the Director of Leeds University Petrophysics Laboratory in the School of Earth and Environment.

Professor Glover has always had an interest in the interaction between the provision of energy, resources and the environment, and was the founder of the Section dedicated to this subject within the European Geosciences Union. Previously he has held similar positions at Universite Laval in Canada and academic positions in the Universities of Aberdeen, Montpellier II (France), Tohoku (Japan) and UCL.

He has also worked for BP and Gastem Inc. and is the University of Leeds' representative on the Environmental Industries Commission. Until recently he was the Chair of Leeds University's Working Group on AI Technology in Research (WAITR).

Alex Dutton-Waugh

Alex Dutton-Waugh is an Inclusive Economy Manager at the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, with over 10 years of public sector experience working across a range of economic programmes. He previously led the Combined Authority's Growth Hub, where he coordinated a portfolio of initiatives and partnerships to embed and deliver business support to SMEs across West Yorkshire. Currently, Alex is part of the Innovation & Productivity team, where he leads the development of policy interventions aimed at fostering innovation and boosting productivity across the region.

First parallel sessions: 11.15 – 12.30

Session 1: Organizational Change & Digital Transformation

Tweed Suite (2nd floor)

11.15-11.35	Redefining Resistance: A Participant Observation Study of Digital Transformation in a Family-Owned Manufacturing SME	Xi Chen
11.35-11.55	Rethinking Platform Work through a Learning Lens	Bianca Mirea
11.55-12.15	Technological frames of reference in the UK warehousing industry	Charles Umney
12.15-12.30	Q&A	

Session chair: Andy Charlwood

Session 2: Big-Data, AI and Human-Centred Technology

Denim Room (2nd floor)

11.15-11.35	Thriving in the Age of AI: How Growth Mindset Reduces Job Replacement Anxiety and Drives Performance	Lynda Song
11.35-11.55	Robots with Hearts: How Human-AI Task Configurations Impact Ethical Perceptions	Linhao Fang
11.55-12.15	A Big-Data Analysis of the Thematic Landscape in International Relations Perspectives on the 75-Year-Old Commonwealth of Nations	Skylar Wan
12.15-12.30	Q&A	

Session chair: Xanthe Whittaker

Session 3: Supply Chain & Urban Logistics

Cotton Room (1st floor)

11.15-11.35	Parking Preferences of Delivery Drivers in the Paris Region: Understanding the role of anticipation using hybrid choice models	Romain Crastes dit Sourd
11.35-11.55	Collaboration to achieve social value in a large infrastructure supply chain	Chee Yew Wong
11.55-12.15	From Apprenticeship to Adversary: Navigating Competition Informal Industrial Clusters	Selorm Agbleze
12.15-12.30	Q&A	

Session chair: Annina Kaltenbrunner

Session 4: Making a difference in a rapidly changing world

Wool Room (2nd floor)

11.15-11.35	Crisis as Catalyst: Rethinking impact through entrepreneurialism, policy Innovation and renewal	Gary Dymski
11.35-11.55	Encouraging sustainable food consumption through nudges: an experiment with menu labels	Arianna Buratto
11.55-12.30	Q&A	

Session chair: John Palfreyman

Research Support: Infrastructure and Development 13.30 – 13.50

(Herringbone Suite – 1st floor)

The session, led by Jo Garrick and Han Jin from the Research and Innovation Office, will discuss the essential frameworks supporting researchers and researcher development.

Jo will discuss opportunities for research funding development and application to internal schemes and how researchers can effectively communicate their research. Jo will also talk about how engaging with the training and professional development programme can advance skills and knowledge and build a collaborative research culture. Han will talk about the data management infrastructure and how this is supported through the Research Data Centre.

Chair: Omar Al-Tabbaa

Second parallel sessions: 13.55 – 15.10

Session 1: People, Systems and Technology

Wool Room (2nd floor)

13.55-14.15	Digital Transformation in Practice: Navigating Resistance and Enabling Change through a Knowledge-Based Partnership in Manufacturing	Xi Chen
14.15-14.35	A Test of Two Psychological Theories of Aircraft Accidents	Peter Ayton
14.35-14.55	Strategic Value Creation or Exit in Private Equity: The Antecedents to Secondary Buyouts	Deirdre Coveney
14.55-15.10	Q&A	

Session chair: Sally Chan

Session 2: Meta-Analytics Tools

Cotton Room (1st floor)

13.55-14.15	MetaRho: A Shiny App for Meta-Analysis of Correlation Coefficients	Pekai Li
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14.15-14.35	Decoding the Smart Money Effect: Insights from UK Equity Funds	You Zhou
14.35-15.10	Q&A	

Session chair: Heila Sha

Session 3: Beyond Measured Impact

Tweed Suite (2nd floor)

13.55-14.15	Rethinking the value of culture and creativity in regional renewal: insights from a Yorkshire-based policy innovation project	Gary Dymski
14.15-14.35	Just Transition in 14 Countries	Vera Trappmann
14.35-14.55	To Be Balanced or Focused? Corporate Venture Capital and AI-Medical Startups' Innovation Strategy	Haoyu Zhang
14.55-15.10	Q&A	

Session chair: Louisa Hill

Session 4: Emerging Topics or Interdisciplinary

Denim Room (2nd floor)

13.55-14.15	Buy Now Return Later? The Impact of Installment Payments on Product Returns	Dionysius Ang
14.15-14.35	Grand Challenges: Implementation of Surgical Technology within the NHS	Emma Findlay
14.35-14.55	Corporate Directors' Media Coverage, Corporate Earnings Management, and Corporate Bribery	Skylar Wan
14.55-15.10	Q&A	

Session chair: David Spencer

Third parallel sessions: 15.25 – 16.40

Session 1: Consumer Behaviour & Marketing Practices

Denim Room (2nd floor)

15.25-15.45	Brands and Bands: Do Brand Names in Songs Help or Hinder Song Popularity?	Sourindra Banerjee
15.45-16.05	Barriers to Consumer Acceptance of Cultivated Meat in the UK	Ekin Kosegil
16.05-16.40	Q&A	

Session chair: Antonino Sgalambro

Session 2: Workplace Discretion, Agency & Wellbeing

Tweed Suite (2nd floor)

15.25-15.45	Work-life balance among people who work long hours in Hong Kong – a qualitative investigation	Winnie Lam
15.45-16.05	Narcissism and wellbeing in midlife and beyond	Alan Piper
16.05-16.40	Q&A	

Session chair: Dimi Georgakakis

Session 3: Crisis, Well-being and Public Health

Wool Room (2nd floor)

15.25-15.45	Time, Process and Uncertainty: A Pragmatist Perspective on the Keynesian Revolution	Bill Gerrard
15.45-16.05	The Impact of Covid-Zones on Health and Well-being: Evidence from Kolkata	Suman Seth
16.05-16.25	Discretion and Power in Work: 'Thinking Professionals' and Confused Managers in the Fire and Rescue Service	Irena Grugulis
16.25-16.40	Q&A	

Session chair: Nick Williams

Session 4: Regional Development & Culture

Cotton Room (1st floor)

15.25-15.45	Do Firms Operating in Low-Middle-Income Settings with Management Certifications Have Higher Climate-Friendly Productivity?	Manhal Ali
15.45-16.05	The Illusion of Ranking: Why ESG Scores Fail to Distinguish Firms in High Dimensions	Nabi Omidvar
16.05-16.25	The Growing Pains of Devolution in England: A Case Study of the Yorkshire and Humber region	Andrew Mycock
16.25-16.40	Q&A	

Session chair: Joshua Weller

Thank you to the conference leads – Professor Charles Umney and Professor Omar Al-Tabbaa for their time and contribution to the conference planning and organization.

ABSTRACTS

Abstracts are provided in surname alphabetical order

From Apprenticeship to Adversary: Navigating Competition in Formal Industrial Clusters

Selorm Agbleze

Keywords: Competitive dynamics; apprenticeship; informal economy

Acknowledgements: Co-Authors: Shelter Teyi, Copenhagen Business School and Diane Holt, MOD, LUBS. This research was partly supported with funding from International Research Collaboration fund, LUBS.

Research Problem

This study investigates how competitive perceptions influence the dynamics between incumbent entrepreneurs and new entrants—specifically former apprentices—in informal industrial clusters in Ghana. It addresses the tension between skill transmission and competitive threat in environments lacking formal regulatory frameworks.

Theoretical/Conceptual Reference Point

The research draws on competitive dynamics and institutional literatures, emphasizing how social norms and informal rules shape entrepreneurial behavior and competition.

Methodological Approach

Using a qualitative design, the study conducted in-depth interviews across four informal industry clusters in Ghana. Participants included both master entrepreneurs and their former apprentices who had transitioned into competitors within the same cluster.

Key Findings

Findings reveal that competition between master's and former apprentices is underlined by norms that deviate from those guiding general competition in clusters. However, when masters innovate at the firm level, they disrupt these norms, increasing exposure to rivalrous behavior from former apprentices, thus reshaping competitive dynamics

Do Firms Operating in Low-Middle-Income Settings with Management Certifications Have Higher Climate-Friendly Productivity? The Moderating Role of Business Corruption

Manhal Ali

Keywords: Environmental Performance; Management Certifications; Firms

Due to climate change, developing countries face grave health, food security, financial risks, and economic catastrophe. Given the key role of private enterprises in developing countries, this study examines the role of firms' voluntary investments in management certifications in fostering a more environmentally-inclusive led productivity. Using data on around 9,000 Indian enterprises from the World Bank Enterprise Survey, our analysis finds that certified firms are more likely to be associated with cluster membership of high productivity and use of pro-environmental strategies, and are 10%-14% more likely to belong to this green productivity cluster. Furthermore, energy efficiency and access to larger markets as two potential mechanisms. The relationship, however, is lowered by the firm's engagement in informal payments, i.e., business corruption. Our study offers important implications in developing countries with institutional constraints and on how to minimise the economic growth and environment trade-off, thus leading to a more sustainable development.

Buy Now Return Later? The Impact of Installment Payments on Product Returns

Dionysius Ang

Keywords: Buy-Now-Pay-Later; Product Returns

Acknowledgements: Stijn Maesen (Imperial College London)

"Buy Now, Pay Later" (BNPL) installment payments are increasingly popular in online retail. Prior research has examined the impact of BNPL installments on consumer spending, but not on returns. This research combines consumer-level transaction data and experiments to investigate how BNPL installments influence product returns. A difference-in-differences analysis reveals that the adoption of BNPL installments is associated with a reduction in product return rates. In addition, this reduction is more pronounced for higher- (vs. lower-) priced items. Follow-up experiments identify mechanisms driving the effect of BNPL installment payments on product returns. Despite paying equal amounts, BNPL installments (vs. delayed lump sum) payments feel less depleting on the budget, making purchases more justifiable, thereby lowering product returns. These findings reveal a novel effect of BNPL installments on product returns and provide important insights for retailers.

A Test of Two Psychological Theories of Aircraft Accidents

Peter Ayton

Keywords: Teamwork; Monitoring & Intervention; Risk Management

Acknowledgements: Dr Tom Becker (City St George's University of London)

Last year at this conference we showed clear evidence of a crew assignment effect: our analysis of 841 aircraft accidents and incidents showed significantly more events, and significantly more fatalities, when captains are the “Pilot Flying” and co-pilots the “Pilot Monitoring” – despite captains and co-pilots adopting these roles equally frequently. This year we propose and test two theories to account for this observation. The status hierarchy theory is that status affects behaviour: co-pilots are less willing to intervene than captains when “pilot monitoring”, and/or captains are less willing to respond to intervention than co-pilots when “pilot flying”. The cognitive workload theory is that, when “pilot flying”, Captains’ strategic command efficacy is impeded. We find a larger crew assignment effect with younger co-pilots but, despite age related decline in pilot performance, no effect of captains’ age - findings consistent with the status hierarchy theory but not the workload theory.

Brands and Bands: Do Brand Names in Songs Help or Hinder Song Popularity?

Sourindra Banerjee

Keywords: Brand name dropping; Popularity; Relatability

Acknowledgements: Abhishek Borah, Brendon Rhodes, Raoul Kubler and Giovanni Luca Cascio Rizzo

This study examines the phenomenon of brand name dropping (BND) in lyrics of songs. BND is defined as references to mere brand names to integrating brands into the cultural and artistic elements of music. This study specifically addresses the questions: What is the impact of BND on the popularity of the song? How do luxury brands impact the relationship between BND and song popularity? Does relatability mediate the relationship between BND and song popularity? Data to address these questions are collected using state-of-the-art generative artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms in computational linguistics. The data collected is of millions of songs from Spotify and websites such as AZ Lyrics. We find that as brand mentions in a song increases, the ranking of the song in the Billboard 100 goes up, supporting the hypothesis that brand names in songs reduce song popularity. We find that as the total count of brand names goes up, the ranking goes down for songs that lyrics with brand names that are not luxury focused and we find that as total count of luxury brand names goes up, the rankings increase. In our mediation analysis, we find that the negative relationship between BND and song popularity is mediated by the listener’s relatability to the song. The finding of this study allow us to make substantive, methodological and managerial contributions.

Encouraging sustainable food consumption through nudges: an experiment with menu labels

Arianna Buratto

Keywords: Environment; Food consumption; Nudge

Acknowledgements: I am the main author of this work, as it was conducted for my PhD thesis. The second author, who will not be presenting, is Dr. Lorenzo Lotti.

Finding ways to steer consumers' food choices towards vegetarian and plant-based meals is important to reduce our diets' environmental impact. This paper investigates how nudges in restaurants can be effectively used to increase sales of vegetarian and plant-based dishes. We partnered with two restaurants, which can host up to 130 guests in total and are in the same building, and we tested the effect of three nudge-based interventions on the sales of vegetarian and plant-based dishes. We found that removing

the symbols for vegetarian and plant-based dishes increased the sales of those starters by 10.2 pp., and of those mains by 6.2 pp. When a low emissions symbol was added to the menu to replace the symbols for vegetarian and plant-based dishes, it did not affect sales. However, when the same nudge was made transparent through a statement explaining its purpose on the menu, the sales of those starters increased by 14.1 pp. This result suggests that nudges can be used ethically and still be effective. Overall, these findings support the use of nudges as low-cost interventions to tackle the issue of unsustainable food consumption in the hospitality sector.

Redefining Resistance: A Participant Observation Study of Digital Transformation in a Family-Owned Manufacturing SME

Xi Chen

Keywords: Digital Transformation; Family business; Resistance to Change

Acknowledgements: Xi Chen, under the supervision of Prof. Chee Yew Wong, Dr. Jyoti Mishra, and Dr. Matthew Davis

Despite increased attention on digital transformation, family-owned SMEs often face entrenched resistance to change, which is deeply rooted in their unique cultural dynamics. This resistance, which evolves and reshapes over time, presents a significant barrier to successful digital transformation. Drawing on organisational change theory, resistance literature, and ethnographic approaches, this study explores resistance within a fifth-generation UK manufacturing SME over 30 months of fieldwork. The research uses observational diaries, workshops, communications, and employee interactions as data sources, with a 2024 survey added to capture cultural shifts. The key findings reveal that resistance manifested through passive disengagement and subtle social cues, such as eye-rolling and ironic communication. The ERP implementation triggered both operational and structural changes, with leadership interventions and cross-functional teams gradually reshaping behaviours. This study highlights the need for digital transformation strategies in family businesses to address historical power structures, cultural norms, and relational dynamics.

Digital Transformation in Practice: Navigating Resistance and Enabling Change through a Knowledge-Based Partnership in Manufacturing

Xi Chen

Keywords: Digital Transformation; Manufacturing Industry; Resistance to Change

Acknowledgements: Xi Chen, under the supervision of Prof. Chee Yew Wong, Dr. Jyoti Mishra, and Dr. Matthew Davis

Digital transformation initiatives often fail in SMEs due to entrenched resistance, unclear business structures, and deeply rooted organisational cultures. The gap between strategic intent and operational reality remains a significant challenge. Grounded in organisational change and resistance literature, this study explores the role of academic-industry collaboration in driving transformation, using the Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) model as a framework to examine how embedded support can overcome cultural inertia. Over 30 months, the KTP Associate led a transformation effort in a fifth-generation family business, gathering data through observational diaries, a digital culture survey, workshops, and stakeholder engagement during ERP and CRM implementation. The key impacts include raising digital awareness, promoting critical reflection on inefficiencies, enabling recognition of the need for organisational restructuring, and building a cross-functional group of digital champions. This case

highlights how academic-industry collaboration can drive technology adoption and catalyse deeper organisational transformation, offering valuable lessons for policymakers, innovation funders, and SME support services.

Strategic Value Creation or Exit in Private Equity: The Antecedents to Secondary Buyouts

Deirdre Coveney

Keywords: Private Equity; Divestitures; Secondary Buyouts

Acknowledgements: Strategic Research Fund, Professor Paul Nary, Professor Koen Heimeriks, Professor Sotirios Paroutis

Academic work has noted the increasingly important role of Private Equity (PE) ownership, examining who PE buys, and how they create value. However, recent work has indicated their new process, where PE firms buy and sell targets from each other, known as secondary buyouts (SBOs). By keeping targets away from the market for increasingly long times, regulators have noted their potential as 'pyramid' or 'Ponzi' schemes, yet we know little of the reasons for these SBOs. To examine the drivers of these exit forms, we use a novel dataset of 6,874 PE exits. We find that there are clear selection and governance drivers, with little evidence of the timing drivers practitioner literature suggests. This contributes to the literature on corporate governance and value creation, exploring if SBOs appropriate additional value for the owner, or whether the value creation strategy is best practiced through additional rounds of financial ownership.

Parking preferences of delivery drivers in the Paris Region: Understanding the role of anticipation using hybrid choice models

Romain Crastes dit Sourd

Keywords: Choice modelling; Revealed preferences; Transportation

This study explores the determinants of parking choices for commercial vehicles in the Paris Region (France). The analysis is based on data from the Paris Region Urban Goods Movement Survey (UGMS), which offers insights into the behaviour of delivery drivers. By examining real-world decision-making, the dataset allows us to consider spatial and temporal characteristics as well as the role of parking decision within the delivery process. A choice modelling approach is applied, where whereby drivers select parking locations based on urban environmental attributes, service type, and a latent variable reflecting anticipated delivery difficulty. This difficulty is inferred from observed delivery times and service characteristics; furthermore, temporal variations are incorporated to assess driver behaviour, including fluctuations in parking preferences throughout the day. Our findings provide valuable insights for policy-making and operational strategies. These results, as well as our modelling approach, can also be incorporated into broader frameworks such as agent-based models.

Rethinking the value of culture and creativity in regional renewal: insights from a Yorkshire-based policy innovation project

Gary Dymski

Keywords: Culture; Value; Regional Renewal

Acknowledgements: This paper will be co-presented by Lesslie Valencia Vera, and Gary Dymski; Prof Andy Brown and YPIP Co-Director Kersten England are contributors to this research.

This paper explores the multi-dimensional value of culture in regional renewal, building on the work of the 2024-26 Yorkshire Policy Innovation Partnership (YPIP) project – especially in Bradford, the UK's most ethnically diverse city and the UK City of Culture for 2025. The key to making culture a focal point for regional development is recognizing that the region's economy is embedded in the diverse communities that comprise it. Unleashing the region's creative potential starts with recognizing that the value of culture is multidimensional. And while only some of these dimensions can be monetized, increasing regional cash-flows depends on affirming culture across these dimensions. Combining a system-of-systems economic approach with a spatialized social Minsky framework shows how financial fragility and human frailty can be mutually reinforcing. Overcoming this dynamic requires building intersectional solidarity and enabling local enterprises, for-profit and social, as hubs connecting cultural life, creativity and innovation.

Crisis as Catalyst: Rethinking impact through entrepreneurialism, policy Innovation and renewal

Gary Dymski

Keywords: Impact; Policy Innovation; Universities

Acknowledgements: Co-author Prof. Kiran Trehan, Pro-VC for Engagement and Enterprise, University of York

The growing emphasis on research impact in UK universities, particularly as defined by the ESRC as “excellent social and economic research” benefiting society and the economy, has created an engagement imperative for academic institutions. Yet, some prevailing models conceptualise impact as a linear, transfer from university to society, often assessed through frameworks like the “theory of change.” This perspective requires critical re-evaluation. Universities are not isolated entities but are embedded within complex, dynamic relationships with communities, public institutions, SME's and industries. The current impact agenda reflects broader institutional crises across these sectors. Effective engagement must therefore involve co-produced knowledge and collaborative enterprising innovation, grounded in shared understandings of evolving social contexts. Reimagining impact as a reciprocal, enterprising process opens pathways for more meaningful contributions to policy and practice. When research aims at affecting society, it must be critical by design.

Robots with Hearts: How Human-AI Task Configurations Impact Ethical Perceptions

Linhao Fang

Keywords: Human-AI collaboration; Perceived Ethicality; AI Task Types

Acknowledgements: Linhao Fang (Presenter and 2nd author) Kshitij Bhoumik (First author, in audience available for Q&A) Reika Igarashi (co-author from other institution, not joining the conference)

Recent advancements in robotics and conversational Artificial Intelligence (AI) have expanded their capability to handle complex customer interactions. As businesses integrate robots for consumer encounters, they must decide how to allocate tasks

between in-store AI and human employees. While previous research has examined consumer responses to AI, limited attention has been given to how different task distributions influence consumer attitudes. Through four experimental studies, we demonstrate that assigning empathetic (vs. mechanical) tasks to in-store AI while relegating mechanical (vs. empathetic) tasks to human service employees leads to negative perceptions of brand ethicality and diminished brand attitudes. Furthermore, this effect is intensified for small brands, underscoring the moderating role of brand size in shaping consumer judgments. Our findings highlight an intricate ethical dilemma: despite AI's growing capabilities to automate socioemotional tasks, this can be perceived as ethically problematic compared to automating chores that frees human labour.

Grand Challenges: Implementation of Surgical Technology within the NHS

Emma Findlay

Keywords: Medtech; Implementation; Socio-technical systems

Acknowledgements: Helen Hughes, NIHR, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

Surgical care accounts for over one-third of hospital admissions in the UK with over 10 million annual operations. Innovation in domains such as machine learning, augmented reality, and genomics can facilitate earlier detection, quicker diagnosis, and more effective treatment of surgical conditions with safer and earlier recovery (Department of Health & Social Care, UK, 2024). This talk will discuss the strategic involvement of LUBS Management and Organisations researchers within the NIHR HealthTech Research Centre (HRC) in Accelerated Surgical Care. The aim of the HRC is to help cutting-edge technologies find their way into surgical pathways within the National Health Service (NHS) more quickly and effectively. This is a socio-technical challenge for the NHS and requires nuanced understanding of the organisational system change required to encourage widespread implementation success. I will present an overview of the exciting activity happening within the HRC and showcase our inter-disciplinary research with substantial real-world impact.

Time, Process and Uncertainty: A Pragmatist Perspective on the Keynesian Revolution

Bill Gerrard

Keywords: Dynamic analysis; Equilibrium; Probability

A key strand in radical/fundamentalist/post-Keynesian thought has been that Keynes's treatment of time, process and uncertainty is central to his break from orthodox economics. Chick (1978) argues that Keynes's revolution lies in his choice of analytical methods and his complete overthrow of static analysis. Keynes's General Theory provides a detailed account of how to develop a dynamic analysis of economic processes. Rejecting the orthodox conceptualisation of equilibrium as an allocative, market-clearing outcome, Keynes's method of shifting equilibrium involves three stages of analysis that progressively relax the temporary closure assumptions of static equilibrium analysis to encompass dynamic processes in historical time. It is further argued that central to Keynes's dynamic analysis of economic processes is his more pragmatist conception of logical theory of probability as an evidence-based approach to decision-making, representing a move towards the study of human logic in contrast to the pre-WW1 analytical/formal logic of A Treatise on Probability.

Discretion and Power in Work: 'Thinking Professionals' and Confused Managers in the Fire and Rescue Service

Irena Grugulis

Keywords: Discretion; Skill; Power

Discretion and autonomy are central to work (Fox, 1974; 1966). There are many studies of declining discretion (Braverman, 1974; Taylor and Bain, 1999; Joyce et al, 2023; Felstead et al., 2002; Henseke et al., 2018) but few of attempts to increase discretion. This paper attempts to address that gap and examines an attempt to increase the discretion that firefighters could exercise in work. It argues that front-line discretion was inextricably intertwined with organisational power relations and that increasing firefighters' freedom of action raised issues for management. Actions which would previously have been grounds for disciplinary action were now harder to classify. Subjected to this confusion, firefighters relied on moral standards to gauge their own behaviours. Their core task was to save lives and protect the public. Disciplinaries were a secondary consideration.

Barriers to Consumer Acceptance of Cultivated Meat in the UK

Ekin Kosegil

Keywords: Cultivated Meat; Consumer Acceptance

Acknowledgements: Dr Gulbanu Kaptan

Cultivated meat is an innovative food, produced by cultivating animal cells in a controlled environment. It has the potential to positively impact the environment and increase their source efficiency. By 2030, it is expected to contribute £2.1 billion to the UK economy. However, consumer acceptance is necessary for its successful introduction. We aim to identify the barriers affecting UK consumers' acceptance of cultivated meat. We conducted an online survey with a representative sample of 769 UK consumers. Our results indicate that perceived naturalness, disgust, expected taste, and perceived health risks are significant predictors of acceptance. Familiarity with cultivated meat, trust in scientists, and trust in the food industry were identified as moderating the relationships between these predictors and acceptance. We found disgust as the strongest predictor. The results will be discussed in light of the literature and the implications for the businesses will be provided.

Work-life balance among people who work long hours in Hong Kong – a qualitative investigation

Winnie Lam

Keywords: Work-Life Balance; Qualitative research; Asia

Acknowledgements: Co-authors: Kristin Hildenbrand, Kara Ng, Dannii Yeung; former research team member: Ciara Kelly

Research problem:

The operationalisation and understanding of work-life balance are dominated by Western conceptualisations and theories. Despite the growing number of studies examining work-life balance in Asian context, many of them applied western theories or measurements. This study aims to investigate to what extent such approach of studying and conceptualisation can be directly applicable to Asian context.

Theoretical reference:

Culture, collective consciousness and context can affect people's values and the norm. People living in that context may have their ways of understanding differ to the mainstream western based literature. Qualitative investigation is needed to unpack that.

Methodological approach:

Data were collected between April and May 2019 in Hong Kong via semi-structured interviews with 32 participants.

Key findings:

When evaluating their work-life balance, participants tended to compare with others beyond looking at their individual situation. Participants articulated a multi-layer approach in understanding of what factors influenced their work-life balance.

MetaRho: A Shiny App for Meta-Analysis of Correlation Coefficients

Pekai Li

Keywords: Meta-analysis

I have developed MetaRho, a specialized Shiny application that streamlines the meta-analysis process for correlation coefficients without requiring users to have R coding knowledge. This user-friendly tool, which I built using R and the Shiny framework, offers a complete workflow from data import to advanced analytics through an intuitive interface. Researchers can easily upload correlation data in CSV or Excel formats, select from multiple methodological approaches, and apply measurement error corrections with simple point-and-click operations. The application automatically generates customizable forest plots and conducts thorough heterogeneity and publication bias assessments. While MetaRho leverages sophisticated R statistical capabilities in the background, the interface completely shields users from coding complexity, making advanced meta-analytic procedures accessible to researchers across disciplines, regardless of their technical background in R programming.

Rethinking Platform Work through a Learning Lens

Bianca Mirea

Keywords: Communities of practice; Legitimacy; Digital labour platforms

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To what extent can communities of practice emerge and develop on digital labour platforms, where formal training is largely absent and social embeddedness is weakened by infrastructural design? What becomes of apprenticeship when “masters” are replaced by transient customers and peer interactions are inhibited by platforms?

Legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) presupposes social embeddedness, physical copresence, shared artefacts and a master conferring legitimacy - elements essential to the transition of novices into fully accepted members of a professional community. Platform workers, by contrast, enter isolated marketplaces in which “masters” are ostensibly absent and “peers” unreachable. Existing platform research gravitates excessively toward the theme of control: ratings as discipline, clients as auditors, algorithms as overseers, leaving unexplored how novice platform workers cultivate expertise and attain legitimacy in online marketplaces.

This research aims to reframe the client not merely as a disciplinary agent but as a possible surrogate master and pivotal learning resource, exploring the extent to which social interactions coalesce into an emergent, if fragile, apprenticeship infrastructure. Employing a mixedmethods design—digital ethnography, interviews with platform clients, freelancers, the project contributes to the literature on platforms and learning by illuminating the reconfiguration of communities of practices on DLPs.

The Growing Pains of Devolution in England: A Case Study of the Yorkshire and Humber region

Andrew Mycock

Keywords: Devolution; Economy; Region

Acknowledgements: Paul Hayes, Andrew Brown (LUBS), Neil Barnett (Leeds Beckett University), Peter O'Brien (Yorkshire Universities)

The ‘devolution’ agenda in England has evolved in a piecemeal fashion, often characterised as a ‘top down’ process involving ‘deals’ of a contractual and limited nature. The variable pace of its bespoke geographical roll-out has left an incomplete, complex patchwork of mayoral and non-mayoral Combined Authorities (CA’s) and County-based deals with differing levels of funding and responsibilities. This has created a plethora of tensions concerning the redistribution of powers across and within the new spatial configurations of government to stimulate local economic growth. This paper is based on in-depth interviews with Chief Executives and political leaders of local authorities (LAs) and CAs across the Yorkshire and Humber region as new governmental arrangements are either embedding or being established. It sheds new light on how these tensions are playing out.

The Illusion of Ranking: Why ESG Scores Fail to Distinguish Firms in High Dimensions

Nabi Omidvar

Keywords: ESG metrics; Aggregation bias; ESG scoring

Acknowledgements: Uei Han; Iain Clacher

This study critically examines the aggregation of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) metrics within composite indices, exploring the extent to which meaningful differentiation between firms is lost in the process. Leveraging insights from high-dimensional geometry and multi-objective optimisation, we demonstrate that as the number of constituent ESG indicators increases, inter-firm contrast diminishes. Specifically, the construction of Pareto fronts from raw ESG data reveals a collapse in front diversity, with most firms becoming non-dominated with only 7-10 metrics. This phenomenon, rooted in the curse of dimensionality, arises independently of the specific aggregation method, whether simple weighted averages or more sophisticated functions. Our findings suggest that any attempt to reduce ESG performance to a single scalar score is inherently arbitrary and potentially misleading, as it masks the multidimensional trade-offs intrinsic to ESG assessments. This raises fundamental questions about the interpretability and normative validity of aggregated ESG scores in decision-making contexts.

Narcissism and wellbeing in midlife and beyond

Alan Piper

Keywords: Narcissism; Wellbeing; Midlife

Lauded psychotherapist and narcissism expert Otto Kernberg claimed that midlife crises were almost solely a narcissistic phenomenon. This article takes this claim as inspiration and investigates the relationship between grandiose narcissism and wellbeing in midlife and beyond the common midlife low in human wellbeing with a nationally representative dataset. Importantly, and following previous research, I consider grandiose narcissism in two different ways: an agentic admiration aspect (example statement: "Being a special person gives me strength") and an antagonistic rivalry aspect ("Most people are basically losers"). The results offer support to previous small and largely homogenous sample investigations regarding wellbeing, additionally showing that the midlife low is substantially deeper (shallower) and longer (shorter) for those who exhibit the rivalry (admiration) aspect of grandiose narcissism. Of particular note and novelty is the finding that those who exhibit the rivalry trait experience almost no recovery from the common midlife low: scoring highly for antagonistic rivalry narcissism, thinking negatively about others, is very bad for wellbeing in late midlife; a result that aligns well with the discussed theories.

The Impact of Covid-Zones on Health and Well-being: Evidence from Kolkata

Suman Seth

Keywords: Covid-19; Subjective Well-being; India

Acknowledgements: Bhaskar Bhattacharya and Indranil Dutta

The Covid-19 pandemic imposed unprecedented lockdowns across cities and countries, which led to significant reduction of economic activity and substantial impact on individual physical and mental health. In this paper, we examine how the Covid-19 restrictions impacted the physical, mental and economic well-being of residents in Kolkata, the third largest Indian city with a population of 15 million, based on a unique data set surveying individuals coming for health tests at a local diagnostic lab in Kolkata. The samples were collected during May/June 2020. By dividing the sample across high restrictive zone (i.e., red/orange-zone) and low restrictive zone (i.e., green-zone), we find that the individual life-satisfaction consistently worsen in the red/orange-zone compared the green-zone. Additionally, we have information on individual level of blood Cortisol levels that we use to examine direct stress response and to study directly the lockdown effect on stress and anxiety.

Thriving in the Age of AI: How Growth Mindset Reduces Job Replacement Anxiety and Drives Performance

Lynda Jiwen Song

Keywords: AI integration; Growth mindset; Job replacement anxiety

Acknowledgements: This study is conducted in collaboration with Dr. Lu Dai, Dr. Queyu Ren, and Professor Cynthia Lee.

The rapid pace of AI integration and digital transformation in the workplace has given rise to significant concerns about job displacement, with many employees fearing that their roles may become obsolete. This study explores how a growth mindset, the belief in the ability to develop one's skills and intelligence, can buffer against these anxieties and positively influence employee performance. Drawing on data from 622 participants, our research examines a serial mediation model where growth mindset promotes greater engagement in learning activities, which in turn reduces job replacement anxiety and

enhances job performance. The results highlight that employees who score higher on growth mindset are more likely to embrace active learning in the workplace, mitigating fears related to job displacement and fostering improved performance outcomes.

Just Transition in 14 countries

Vera Trappmann

Keywords: Just Transition; Climate change; Work

Acknowledgements: Hans-Böckler Foundation

The climate crisis and more recently energy security has put decarbonisation at the top of the agenda of most governments. Societal actors have asked for a just transition, emphasising that the elimination of fossil fuels as well as the dematerialisation of the economy should not happen at the expense of workers.

The presentation presents Just Transitions, policies, initiatives and strategies within 14 countries, Germany, UK, Spain, Poland, USA, Russia, China, Malaysia, Nigeria, South Africa, Chile, Brazil and the Canadian province Québec.

An emphasis is put on understanding who drives the transition for whom, what justice and what transition do we actually find on the ground. The presentation is based on more than 200 interviews across those 14 countries.

Technological frames of reference in the UK warehousing industry

Charles Umney

Keywords: Warehousing and logistics; Technology; Frames of Reference

Acknowledgements: Co authors: Abbie Winton and Gabriella Alberti

This presentation explores the diverse assumptions and priorities that different actors assign to technology in the UK warehousing industry. Drawing on the concept of “technological frames of reference”, it proposes a novel framework for distinguishing between competing perspectives on technology, identifying variation in terms of 1) organisational priorities, 2) technological priorities, and 3) conceptions of workers’ agency. Through examining a qualitative dataset based on interviews with managers and technology developers, site visits, and documentary analysis, it uses this framework to generate a threefold taxonomy of frames found in UK warehousing: “human fallibility”; “logistical puzzle-solving”; and “workers as beneficiaries”. Its main contribution is to provide new analytical tools for use in the sociology of work, which can facilitate more in-depth examination of how managers and other actors understand and engage with technology.

A Big-Data Analysis of the Thematic Landscape in International Relations Perspectives on the 75-Year-Old Commonwealth of Nations

Skylar Wan

Keywords: Big Data; Machine Learning; Literature Review

This study examines the thematic landscape of international relations perspectives on the Commonwealth of Nations, now 75 years old. We analyze the titles, abstracts, full texts, and citation information of all research papers published in this field over the past 75 years, encompassing a dataset of 481,000 articles and 42 billion words. Our primary method is a computational algorithm known as probabilistic topic modeling, which we

use to objectively examine the field's latent thematic landscape based on this extensive volume of scholarly texts. We identify emerging issues and longstanding dilemmas in this field, including climate change, democratization, cultural exchange, education, human rights, development, civil society, international business, and international trade. This "big-data" approach allows us to provide time-specific snapshots of various research topics and track their dynamic evolution over time. Additionally, we analyze the pattern of individual papers' topic diversity and how this diversity influences their impact over time. We conclude with recommendations for future studies on international relations perspectives on the Commonwealth of Nations.

Corporate Directors' Media Coverage, Corporate Earnings Management, and Corporate Bribery

Skylar Wan

Keywords: Corporate Finance; Directors of Boards

Acknowledgements: Steven Boivie; Lorenz Graf-Vlachy; Erik Hompler

The role of media coverage in corporate governance has traditionally been framed as an external monitoring mechanism encouraging directors to oversee managerial actions. However, the literature has largely overlooked corporate directors' own reputational concerns when subjected to media scrutiny. Directors often face conflicting reputational demands from diverse audiences, including shareholders, stakeholders, and managers, requiring them to navigate complex trade-offs in their governance decisions. Drawing on reputation management theory, this study explores how media attention may shape directors' behavior, particularly regarding corporate earnings manipulation and corporate bribery. Using a dataset of 7,158 firm-year observations from 2,165 firms listed on the Shanghai and Shenzhen Stock Exchanges (2010–2021), our analysis suggests nuanced relationships between media coverage and corporate misconduct. The findings indicate that consistent media attention on directors is associated with reduced earnings manipulation but increased bribery. Disparities in media attention among board members appear linked to higher earnings manipulation but lower bribery, while predominantly positive media portrayals are associated with reduced bribery but elevated earnings manipulation. These results provide preliminary evidence of the complex and multifaceted role of media coverage in shaping directors' reputational management and governance practices, warranting further investigation.

Collaboration to achieve social value in a large infrastructure supply chain

Chee Yew Wong

Keywords: Social value; Collaboration; Supply chain

Acknowledgements: LUBS IESF grant; Ying Zhang; David Loseby, TransPennine Route Upgrade (TRU) Alliance

Under the UK Public Services (Social Value) Act (2012), large commercial contracts are required to help tackle economic inequality, improve health and wellbeing and community cohesion. To understand how this act propagates upstream to suppliers, this study interviewed ten companies from the supply chains of TransPennine Route Upgrade (TRU) Alliance (rail project). The findings show increased awareness and efforts in the supply chain, driven by the prospect of using social value contribution as future tender strength. Main social value created cover areas like apprentice, volunteering (community work), local employment, work placement, local spend and SME spend, though multi-party public-private collaboration. Material and indirect

suppliers not mandated could have contributed to the TRU project. Supply (of labour) shortage plus the nature of contract/work (precarity) made it harder to implement apprenticeship and local employment. There is potential in cross-sectoral maturity (e.g., highway and rail) to further integrate social value into suppliers.

To Be Balanced or Focused? Corporate Venture Capital and AI-Medical Startups' Innovation Strategy

Haoyu Zhang

Keywords: Corporate venture capital; AI-medical startup; Innovation strategy

Acknowledgements: Youngbin Joo; Krsto Pandza

To develop composite products like AI-enabled medical devices (AlaMD), start-ups must balance innovation across multiple technological domains while navigating resource constraints. Focusing on whether corporate venture capital (CVC) can serve as an innovation enabler or a strategic controller, we examine how CVC influences start-ups' innovation strategies—whether it promotes balancing among multi-domains or focusing on a particular domain. Our empirical analysis of AlaMD start-ups shows that CVC investment forces start-ups toward a focusing strategy, with such effect weaker for later-stage investments and more independent CVCs. This study offers new insights into CVC's dual role in shaping start-ups' innovation trajectories, focusing on entrepreneurial ventures' technological resource allocation, and its broader implications for inter-organizational knowledge acquisition in emerging industries.

Decoding the Smart Money Effect: Insights from UK Equity Funds

You Zhou

Keywords: UK Mutual funds; Fund flows; Fund performance

This research investigates the dynamics of the smart money effect. We find the smart money effect does exist within the UK equity fund market, revealing that this phenomenon is particularly pronounced in smaller funds. Our findings also indicate that the smart money effect is strongest during periods of high investor sentiment, suggesting that investors are more likely to chase past performance in favorable market conditions. Additionally, we observe that the effect is more significant when economic policy uncertainty (EPU) is at moderate levels, highlighting the impact of market dynamics on investor behavior. Overall, our research contributes to the understanding of how investor sentiment and market conditions influence fund performance in the UK equity market.