



ATHENS INSTITUTE

Abstract Book

**12th Annual International Conference on
Business, Law & Economics
5-8 May 2025, Athens, Greece**

**Edited by
Michael P. Malloy & Olga Gkounta**

2025

Abstracts
12th Annual International
Conference on Business, Law
& Economics
5-8 May 2025, Athens, Greece

Edited by Michael P. Malloy &
Olga Gkounta

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Preface

This book includes the abstracts of all the papers presented at the *12th Annual International Conference on Business, Law & Economics* (5-8 May 2025), organized by the Athens Institute.

A full conference program can be found before the relevant abstracts. In accordance with the Athens Institute's Publication Policy, the papers presented during this conference will be considered for inclusion in one of Athens Institute's many publications only after a blind peer review process.

The purpose of this abstract book is to provide members of the Athens Institute and other academics around the world with a resource through which they can discover colleagues and additional research relevant to their own work. This purpose is in congruence with the overall mission of the association. The Athens Institute was established in 1995 as an independent academic organization with the mission to become a forum where academics and researchers from all over the world can meet to exchange ideas on their research and consider the future developments of their fields of study.

To facilitate the communication, a new references section includes all the abstract books published as part of this conference (Table 1). I invite the readers to access these abstract books –these are available for free– and compare how the themes of the conference have evolved over the years. According to the Athens Institute's mission, the presenters in these conferences are coming from many different countries, presenting various topics.

Table 1. *Publication of Books of Abstracts of Proceedings, 2011-2025*

Year	Papers	Countries	References
2025	29		Malloy and Gkounta (2025)
2024	30	20	Malloy and Gkounta (2024)
2023	35	18	Frenkel and Gkounta (2023)
2022	30	17	Papanikos and Gkounta (2022)
2021	23	12	Papanikos (2021)
2020	20	10	Papanikos (2020)
2019	34	23	Papanikos (2019)
2018	29	18	Papanikos (2018)
2017	33	17	Papanikos (2017)
2016	31	17	Papanikos (2016)
2015	28	17	Papanikos (2015)
2014	28	25	Papanikos (2014)

It is our hope that through Athens Institute's conferences and publications, Athens will become a place where academics and researchers from all over the world can regularly meet to discuss the developments of their disciplines and present their work. Since 1995, the Athens Institute has organized more than 400 international conferences and has published over 200 books. Academically, the institute is organized into 7 divisions and 37 units. Each unit organizes at least one annual conference and undertakes various small and large research projects.

For each of these events, the involvement of multiple parties is crucial. I would like to thank all the participants, the members of the organizing and academic committees, and most importantly the administration staff of the Athens Institute for putting this conference and its subsequent publications together. Specific individuals are listed after the Editors' Note.

Gregory T. Papanikos
President

Editors' Note

These abstracts provide a vital means to the dissemination of scholarly inquiry in the field of business, law and economics. The breadth and depth of research approaches and topics represented in this book underscores the diversity of the conference.

Athens Institute's mission is to bring together academics from all corners of the world in order to engage with each other, brainstorm, exchange ideas, be inspired by one another, and once they are back in their institutions and countries to implement what they have acquired. 12th Annual International Conference on Business, Law & Economics accomplished this goal by bringing together academics and scholars from 14 different countries (Australia, Canada, Estonia, India, Italy, Mexico, Portugal, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, USA,)), which brought in the conference the perspectives of many different country approaches and realities in the field.

Publishing this book can help that spirit of engaged scholarship continue into the future. With our joint efforts, the next editions of this conference will be even better. We hope that this abstract book as a whole will be both of interest and of value to the reading audience.

Michael P. Malloy & Olga Gkounta
Editors

**12th Annual International Conference on Business, Law &
Economics, 5-8 May 2025, Athens, Greece**

Organizing & Scientific Committee

All Athens Institute's conferences are organized by the Academic Council. This conference has been organized with the assistance of the following academic members of the Athens Institute, who contributed by reviewing the submitted abstracts and papers.

1. Dr. Gregory T. Papanikos, President, ATINER.
2. Dr. Michael P. Malloy, Director, Business and Law Division, ATINER & Distinguished Professor & Scholar, University of the Pacific, USA.
3. Dr. David A. Frenkel, LL.D., Adv., FRSPH(UK), Head, Law Unit, ATINER & Emeritus Professor, Law Area, Guilford Glazer Faculty of Business and Management, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, Israel.
4. Dr. Srecko Devjak, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor, MLC Management & Law College of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

FINAL CONFERENCE PROGRAM
**12th Annual International Conference on Business, Law &
Economics, 5-8 May 2025, Athens, Greece**

PROGRAM

Monday 5 May 2025

08.30-09.15

Registration

09:15-10:00

Opening and Welcoming Remarks:

- **Gregory T. Papanikos, President, Athens Institute.**

10:00-11:30 Session 1

Moderator: Danijela Brecko, Associate Professor, MLC Management and Law College Ljubljana, Slovenia.

- 1. Kurt Klein, Professor, University of Lethbridge, Canada.**
Stavroula Malla, Professor, University of Lethbridge, Canada.
David Forestell, Researcher, University of Lethbridge, Canada.
Title: Is it Time for Canada to Institute Mandatory Labelling for Genetically Engineered Foods? Assessing the Evidence.
- 2. Massimo Bianchi, Full Professor (Retired), University of Bologna, Italy.**
Title: Changing the Context of Business Management Theory: Risks and Opportunities.
- 3. Salvador Sandoval Bravo, Professor, University of Guadalajara, Mexico.**
Title: Environmental Sensitivity and Pollution Taxes.
- 4. Gregory T. Papanikos, President, Athens Institute.**
Title: The Trump Effect on Globalization: If the First Time was a Farce, Would the Second be a Tragedy?

11:30-13:00 Session 2

Moderator: Kurt Klein, Professor, University of Lethbridge, Canada.

- 1. Chux Gervase Iwu, Professor & Chair, Entrepreneurship in Higher Education, University of the Western Cape, South Africa.**
Title: Positioning Entrepreneurship as a Discipline through Engaged Research.
- 2. Danijela Brecko, Associate Professor, MLC Management and Law College Ljubljana, Slovenia.**
Title: Introduction of Job-Specific Competencies into a Public Sector Organization: A Case Study.
- 3. Gyula-Laszlo Florian, Assistant Professor, Partium Christian University, Romania.**
Gabriel Dumitru Maghiar, Engineer Economist, Romania.
Title: Managerial Activities, and Performance of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises After the COVID-19 Global Crisis: A Comprehensive Overview in the European Union, with a Special Focus on Romania.
- 4. Christiana Kappo-Abidemi, Senior Lecturer, University of Mpumalanga, South Africa.**
Title: Exploration of the Interactions between the Selected Key Performance Areas and Human Capital Development of Academics in South African Universities.

<p>13:00-14:30 Session 3 Moderator: Christiana Kappo-Abidemi, Senior Lecturer, University of Mpumalanga, South Africa.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Morteza Hashemi, Assistant Professor, University of Nottingham, UK. <i>Title: The Value of 'Westoxication' as a Sociological Concept: Retrieving a Decolonial Approach in the Global South.</i>2. Sabrina Moretti, Associate Professor, University of Urbino Carlo Bo, Italy. Francesco Sacchetti, Associate Professor, University of Urbino Carlo Bo, Italy. <i>Title: The Reactions of Social-Health Networks to Catastrophic Events. The Case of the 2016 Earthquake in the Marche Region.</i>3. Baptiste Lebot, PhD Student, University of Toulouse-Jean Jaurès, France. Fenintsoa Andriamasinoro, PhD Supervisor, BRGM, Mineral Resources Division, Environmental and Social Assessment Unit, France. <i>Title: Evaluating the Role of Knowledge Co-Production in Addressing Post-Mining Risks.</i>
<p>14:30-15:30 Lunch</p>
<p>15:30-17:00 Session 4 - Microsymposium on Ethics and Human Rights Moderator: Paul Anisef, Professor Emeritus, York University, Canada.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Marzia Coltri, Extraordinary Professor, UNISA, South Africa & GUS Fellow, Lecturer, Arden University, UK. <i>Title: Menopause and Perimenopause: Ethics, Rights, Well-being.</i>2. Ujjwal Kango, Assistant Professor, Indian Institute of Management Sirmaur, India. <i>Title: The Ethics of Gig Work: An Ethnographic Study of Food Delivery Platforms in India.</i>
<p>17:00-19:00 Session 5 - A Symposium on What's Next for US Universities? Moderator: Gregory T. Papanikos, President, The Athens Institute.</p>
<p><u>Invited Speakers:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Mitra Esfandiarei, Professor, Biomedical Sciences Program, College of Graduate Studies, Midwestern University. <i>Title: The Future of Medical Research in the U.S. and Canada?</i>2. Jun Qu, Professor and Director, Center of Excellence in Bioinformatics and Life Sciences, State University of New York at Buffalo, USA. <i>Title: Striking a Balance of Funding Seeking and Conducting Research.</i>3. Steven M. Oberhelman, Professor (Holder of the George Sumey, Jr., Endowed Professorship), Texas A & M University, USA. <i>Title: Is There a Future for Classics in an Age of Woke Culture?</i>4. Robert Earle, David W. Wilson Ethics Fellow & Assistant Professor of Instruction, University of Northern Iowa, USA. <i>Title: Academic Freedom and the Right to Learn: Reflections from a US Educator.</i>5. Joyce Victor, Associate Professor, Wilkes University, USA. <i>Title: Experiential and Distance Learning.</i>
<p><u>Short Interventions</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. John Spiridakis, Chair of the Department of Education Specialties and Professor, St. John University, USA.2. Sonia Salari, Professor, University of Utah, USA.

3. Jan Reid, President, Coast Economic Consulting, USA.

Discussion

20:30-22:30

Athenian Early Evening Symposium (Sequence of Events: Ongoing Academic Discussions, Dinner, Wine and Water, Music, Dance)

Tuesday 6 May 2025

09:30-11:00 Session 6

Moderator: Ujjwal Kango, Assistant Professor, Indian Institute of Management Sirmaur, India.

- 1. Paul OConnor, Associate Professor, United Arab Emirates University, UAE.**
Title: The Disinformation Industry; Expert Knowledge as Normalizing Power.
- 2. Adalmiro Andrade Pereira, Senior Lecturer, Porto Higher Institute of Accounting and Administration, Portugal.**
Title: The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Cybersecurity and its Efficiency in the Cryptocurrency Market.
- 3. Istvan Peter, PhD Student, Babes-Bolyai University, Romania.**
Title: Student Employment and the Financial Challenges of the School-to-Work Transition: Economic Pressures during the Labor Market Integration.
- 4. Habib Mahmudov, PhD Student, Azerbaijan Tourism and Management University, Azerbaijan.**
Title: Social Marketing Mechanism Design for Social Problem of Crimes Committed among Children Aged 14-17 in Azerbaijan.

11:00-12:30 Session 7

Moderator: Adalmiro Andrade Pereira, Senior Lecturer, Porto Higher Institute of Accounting and Administration, Portugal.

- 1. Lehte Roots, Professor, Tallinn University, Estonia.**
Title: Instrumentalization of Schengen Borders.
- 2. Constantine, Katsanis, Professor, École de Technologie Supérieure ÉTS, Canada.**
Title: From Contracts to Collaboration: The Evolution of Legal Frameworks and Relationships in Infrastructure Projects.
- 3. Bandar Althubyani, Associate Professor, Islamic University of Madinah, Saudi Arabia.**
Ibrahim Aljohani, Professor, Islamic University of Madinah, Saudi Arabia.
Title: Public Order as a Factor Influencing on the Enforcement of Arbitral Awards under the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- 4. Tanel Kalmet, PhD Student, Lecturer, Tallinn University, Estonia.**
Title: Common Practices of the EU Intellectual Property Network as Soft Law and Beyond.

12:30-14:00 Session 8

Moderator: Jan Reid, President, Coast Economic Consulting, USA.

- 1. Daniel Kilvington, Reader, Leeds Beckett University, UK.**
Dina Karavaeva, Associate Professor, Russian Academy of Science, Ural

<p>Federal University, Russia. <i>Title: British Muslims In-Between Identities in Modern UK: Borders, Boundaries, Urban Spaces.</i></p> <p>2. Michaela Michalopoulos, PhD Candidate, McGill University, Canada. <i>Title: Beyond Traditional Crime: Routine Online Activity Theory in the Era of Big Data.</i></p> <p>3. Maye Ehab, Researcher, Institute for Employment Research (IAB), Germany. Stefanie Heyne, Researcher, University of Mannheim, Germany. <i>Title: Understanding the Gender Employment Gap for Syrian Refugees: A Cross-Country Comparison of Lebanon, Turkey, and Germany.</i></p>	
14:00-15:00 Lunch	13:00-14:30: Student poster section is organized in parallel by the Athens Institute & MLC College in Ljubljana .
15:00-16:30 Session 9 – Microsymposium on Ethics and Human Rights Moderator: Marzia Coltri, Extraordinary Professor, UNISA, South Africa & GUS Fellow, Lecturer, Arden University, UK.	
<p>1. Dipane Hlalele, Professor & Chair, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. <i>Title: Geographies of Ethics: A Critical Analysis of Rural Tourism, Community Development, Religion and Education.</i></p> <p>2. Robert Earle, David W. Wilson Ethics Fellow & Assistant Professor of Instruction, University of Northern Iowa, USA. <i>Title: Against Ignorance: The Normative Ethics Consensus Requiring Our Seeking to Know the Interests of Others.</i></p> <p>3. Matthias Huehn, Mary S. Carey Chair in Ethics & CST, Saint Vincent College, USA. <i>Title: The Common Good as the Opposite of the Collective Good: Theoretical and Practical Insights from Aristotelian and Thomistic Virtue Ethics.</i></p> <p>4. Stavros Prineas, Head of Anaesthetics, Blue Mountains Hospital, Australia. <i>Title: I Guess Therefore I Am.</i></p> <p>5. Maria Mut Bosque, Senior Lecturer, International University of Catalonia, Spain. <i>Title: The Erosion of Informed Consent: Transparency Failures and Vaccine Victims during the COVID-19 Pandemic.</i></p>	
16:45-20:00 Session 10 Old and New-An Educational Urban Walk	

20:30-22:00

[An Ancient Athenian Symposium: Continuous Dialogues, Timeless Flavors](#)

Wednesday 7 May 2025

An Educational Visit to Selected Islands
or Nafplio & Mycenae Visit

Thursday 8 May 2025

Visiting the Oracle of Delphi

Friday 9 May 2025

Visiting the Ancient Corinth and Cape Sounion

Bandar Althubyani

Associate Professor, Islamic University of Madinah, Saudi Arabia
&

Ibrahim Aljohani

Professor, Islamic University of Madinah, Saudi Arabia

Public Order as a Factor Influencing on the Enforcement of Arbitral Awards under the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Public policy plays an effective role in accepting or rejecting enforcing national and international arbitral awards submitted to national courts. National courts may reject enforcing the arbitral awards on the grounds that they are contrary to public order. Each state has its own policy, some adopt only the national policy, but others adopt both national and international policies. In a unique approach, Saudi Arabia has adopted the rules of Shari'a as a basis for public order. However, public order has a wide meaning than Shari'a. There are some issues that are acceptable in Shari'a but are contrary to public order. In this paper, we will discuss the idea of public order and its effect on the requests of enforcing arbitral awards submitted to the national court in in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

Massimo Bianchi

Full Professor (Retired), University of Bologna, Italy

Changing the Context of Business Management Theory: Risks and Opportunities

Although its original multidisciplinary, today proliferation of cross, trans and poli disciplinary approaches in management theories, after the diffusion of Critical Management Studies and the crisis of Business Schools, must be considered inside the changing of the general political economical context. The increasing relevance of BRICS in GDP and research compared to the declining incidence of industrial production in the Western world, ask a debate on main features of the evolution of managerial theories and applied practices. A model of analysis could be the one expressed in 20" years of previous century by Antonio Gramsci and in 50" years by the Economist Federico Caffè. The subject was the inappropriate approach of Political and Economical theories to problems emerging respectively after the first- and second-World War. Both scholars coupled the diffused eclecticism of Economics with the unrealistic proposals produced to face Italians structural problems, till now unresolved, like the underdevelopment of the south of the country and the well-known "questione meridionale". Furthermore, Caffè extended this analysis to the European situation in which, the scarce applying of Keynesian theories lead to a world crisis firstly economic and after political. In this context managerial theories must face today the crisis of main western economies comparing to the surge of BRICS and a different conception of the market oriented to less controlled exchanges and to a new perspective of free competition triggered by the revolution of IA and Digital Platforms. The paper discusses this perspective with its risks and opportunities for management theory and practics.

Maria Mut Bosque

Senior Lecturer, International University of Catalonia, Spain

The Erosion of Informed Consent: Transparency Failures and Vaccine Victims during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges to the fundamental right to free and informed consent, as guaranteed under Article 3 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (CFREU). This right entails a consent process that is voluntary, informed, and based on clear, accurate, and transparent communication between medical professionals and patients. However, during the pandemic, several measures and circumstances undermined adherence to these essential principles.

Coercive policies, such as the implementation of COVID certificates at the EU level and mandatory vaccination for specific professional groups in member states, conflicted with the concept of free consent. Consent could not be fully informed due to the simultaneous rollout of vaccinations and ongoing clinical trials. Furthermore, the dissemination of contradictory and opaque information hindered transparency. The healthcare system's collapse exacerbated the problem, preventing meaningful dialogue between patients and medical professionals. This lack of dialogue and the novelty of mRNA technology left medical professionals and the public largely uninformed about the vaccines' long-term side effects and efficacy, raising serious concerns about the obligation to provide truthful information. Among the most concerning consequences was the emergence of numerous vaccine victims who suffered adverse effects due to the lack of transparency about the unknown long-term side effects of the novel mRNA vaccines. These individuals represent a tragic outcome of policies that prioritized rapid implementation over patient safety and informed consent.

A significant failure lies in the lack of EU coordination to ensure compliance with Article 3 CFREU. While the European Commission negotiated advanced purchase agreements for vaccines on behalf of member states, it did not adequately enforce measures to ensure that all EU citizens could provide free and informed consent. The Commission's lack of transparency further compounded these issues. Investigations by the European Ombudsman, the European Court of Auditors, and members of the European Parliament revealed systemic opacity in vaccine procurement and communication processes. For instance, the General Court of the European Union ruled in 2024 that the Commission had violated public access rights by withholding vaccine-related documents. Similarly, ongoing cases, such as one involving text messages between the Commission

President and Pfizer's CEO, highlight the broader failures of transparency and accountability.

The implications of these shortcomings are profound, as they threaten democratic principles and fundamental rights, even in the context of public health emergencies. The pandemic underscored the critical importance of upholding the doctrine of informed consent as a cornerstone of human rights. Moving forward, we strongly recommend that, in the event of future health crises, EU institutions and member states must prioritize transparency, open communication, and public trust. A pre-established, coordinated action strategy must be implemented to protect the right to free and informed consent, ensuring that measures taken during emergencies do not undermine democratic principles or human rights.

In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic revealed significant violations of the right to informed consent within the EU, driven by a lack of transparency, coordination, and respect for ethical medical practices. To prevent a repeat of such failures, robust frameworks that prioritize transparency, accountability, and the protection of individual rights are imperative for future health emergencies.

Salvador Sandoval Bravo

Professor, University of Guadalajara, Mexico

Environmental Sensitivity and Pollution Taxes

Environmental sensitivity or environmental awareness refers to the understanding and perception of human activities' impact on nature, as well as the degree to which general culture modifies and affects the environment, whether beneficial or detrimental to man and nature, in the short, medium, and long term. A lack of environmental sensitivity translates into irresponsible and environmentally damaging behavior, while a high level of ecological awareness promotes proactive actions in favor of the natural environment. In this context, the level of environmental awareness influences consumer behavior, and their actions reflect their responsibility towards the environment.

The present study develops a theoretical model of partial equilibrium for the market of a homogeneous good, where two companies, one polluting, and one non-polluting, compete under Cournot conditions. The government implements a traditional pollution tax policy to regulate companies' emissions, considering a given level of environmental awareness among consumers. The optimal tax, which maximizes the welfare function, considers business profits, consumer surplus, tax revenue, and the social cost of polluting. After determining the optimal pollution tax, the following conclusions can be drawn regarding environmental policies.

First, if the social harm caused by pollution is significantly high, the government imposes a positive tax on polluting companies. This reflects a greater concern by the government for the damage that pollution causes to the environment and public health.

Second, if the damage caused by pollution is not very significant, the government does not impose taxes on pollutant emissions, prioritizing the profits of polluting companies and consumer surplus over environmental damage. However, in this same case, if consumers have a high level of environmental sensitivity, the government, although allowing the polluting company to continue emitting, tends to increase the pollution tax according to the degree of environmental awareness. On the contrary, if the level of environmental sensitivity is low, the government tolerates the emissions of the polluting company more, reducing the pollution tax. Thus, there is a direct relationship between the level of environmental awareness of consumers and the pollution tax that the government applies to the polluting company. That is, if environmental sensitivity increases, pollution taxes increase; and if environmental awareness decreases, pollution taxes go down.

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of implementing strategic environmental policies that promote the competitiveness of companies, tax revenue, and benefit consumers, especially when they have a certain level of environmental sensitivity, which directly influences the preservation or deterioration of the environment.

Danijela Brecko

Associate Professor, MLC Management and Law College Ljubljana,
Slovenia

Introduction of Job-Specific Competencies into a Public Sector Organization: A Case Study

In today's rapidly changing business environment, where innovation and technology continuously reshape the way work is performed, employee competencies have become a key factor for organizational success. Competencies, defined as a combination of knowledge, skills, abilities, motivation, and other personal attributes (Brečko, 2018, 2021a, and 2021b; Kohont, 2011; Mulder, 2014), are essential for achieving high levels of performance both for individuals and entire teams. The importance of competencies is evident in their impact on productivity, innovation, and adaptability, which are crucial for ensuring high-quality services in non-economic organizations.

We start presentation by exploring the definitions and understanding of competencies in professional and academic literature. To better understand their significance in workforce development, we compare competencies with professional qualifications, a concept much more familiar in public sector organizations. Additionally, we highlight the differences between evaluating job performance of public sector employees under the Public Servants Act and assessing competency development.

In the empirical section, we focus on the process of designing and implementing job-specific competencies for the role of an inspector. This process included a series of strategic workshops with employees, where we identified key skills, knowledge, beliefs, values, and attributes required for successful inspectors. Based on the outcomes of these workshops, we developed a survey involving all employees in inspector roles. Analysis of the survey results led to the identification of three key job-specific competencies for inspectors. Subsequently, we defined proficiency levels for these competencies and developed self-assessment tools to facilitate (self-)evaluation.

We will conclude the presentation with a proposed model for introducing competencies into public sector organizations.

Marzia Coltri

Extraordinary Professor, UNISA, South Africa &
GUS Fellow, Lecturer, Arden University, UK

Menopause and Perimenopause: Ethics, Rights, Well-being

Human rights and healthcare converge distinctly when examining how life changes like perimenopause and menopause impact emotional health, interpersonal relationships and human connections. This paper examines both medical and cultural factors of these natural transitions, emphasising their effects on physical-mental changes, social belonging and personal identity. Psychophysical symptoms, anxiety, cognitive challenges and mood alterations, as observed in counselling and health settings, can affect relationship quality and lead to stigma, isolation and misunderstanding. Medical and philosophical perspectives underline the importance of early recognition of physical and emotional symptoms. This approach, alongside appropriate healthcare and counselling is essential for supporting women during significant life changes. A key interpretation of these physical and emotional symptoms is also found in the Aristotelian concept of the "matter-form/soul-body" relationship. Creating supportive environments through education, workplace policies, empathetic communication, and governance involvement enhances well-being, human rights and strengthens relationships. Through case study analysis, this paper advocates for holistic support approaches integrating medical care with therapeutic interventions like Person Centred Approach, CBT, mindfulness and pluralistic approaches to improve understanding and connection during these significant life phases.

Robert Earle

David W. Wilson Ethics Fellow & Assistant Professor of Instruction,
University of Northern Iowa, USA

**Academic Freedom and the Right to Learn:
Reflections from a US Educator**

The major Mediterranean economies of Southern Europe—Italy, Greece, Spain, and Portugal—are bound by deep historical, cultural, and economic connections. Over the last two centuries, these nations have followed a remarkably similar economic trajectory: slower growth during the 19th century, leading to economic divergence from the rest of Europe, and a subsequent period of partial recovery and convergence in the second half of the 20th century. This pattern, often referred to as the "Latin development model," reflects their shared economic challenges and opportunities. This study explores the long-term convergence of these economies, with particular focus on the impact of their integration into the European Monetary Union and its role in shaping their economic alignment with the broader European region.

Maye Ehab

Researcher, Institute for Employment Research (IAB), Germany
&

Stefanie Heyne

Researcher, University of Mannheim, Germany

Understanding the Gender Employment Gap for Syrian Refugees: A Cross-Country Comparison of Lebanon, Turkey, and Germany

The rise in conflicts over the past decade has led to a significant increase in individuals seeking humanitarian protection abroad. The war in Syria alone has displaced over 5 million people, forcing them to seek refuge in neighboring countries like Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan, as well as in European nations such as Germany. Host countries face challenges integrating refugees into their labor markets. Although men and women seek refuge in similar numbers, women are more likely to travel with their families and take on most of the unpaid care work, placing them at an economic disadvantage. Refugee women face additional challenges due to their immigration status and forced migration, often referred to as a "triple disadvantage." As a result, they are less likely than men to be employed and tend to earn lower wages.

Much of the research to date has focused on employment gaps between immigrants and natives, with less attention paid to the specific refugee gender gap in host labor markets. Research shows that refugee women tend to have lower resource endowment, requiring significant post-migration investment. Understanding the mechanisms behind these gaps, particularly across different countries, is essential. This study extends the analysis to Lebanon, Turkey, and Germany to examine the gender employment gap among refugees. The key questions are: 1) How do gender employment gaps differ among refugees in the three countries? 2) What are the mechanisms that explain these gaps across different national contexts?

This study uses data from household and individual surveys conducted in Lebanon, Turkey, and Germany, including the Transnational Perspectives on Migration and Integration (TRANSMIT) data and the IAB-BAMF-SOEP refugee samples in Germany. Variables analyzed include pre-migration characteristics like education and work experience, as well as post-migration factors such as labor market conditions, legal residency, access to childcare, and health outcomes. The Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition analysis is employed to identify the factors contributing to gender employment gaps in each country.

Preliminary findings indicate that gender gaps are smaller in Lebanon and Turkey compared to Germany. Human capital factors are less significant in Lebanon and Turkey, likely due to higher economic pressure and fewer support schemes. In these countries, women are more likely to work in informal and precarious jobs to contribute to household income, regardless of their prior experience or skill level. Refugees in Lebanon and Turkey invest less in country-specific human capital, making this factor less relevant to the gender employment gap. Health concerns and unpaid care work play a crucial role in all three countries, while social networks seem to have a stronger impact on employment gaps in Germany.

These findings highlight the importance of local and individual conditions in shaping refugee employment outcomes. Addressing the gender gap requires a focus on healthcare, childcare, and policies that incentivize human capital investment. Such measures could lead to long-term improvements in the economic integration of refugee women, ultimately reducing gender disparities in labor market participation.

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&

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Managerial Activities, and Performance of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises After the COVID-19 Global Crisis: A Comprehensive Overview in the European Union, with a Special Focus on Romania

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on all aspects of life, particularly on the global economy. Although nearly five years have passed since the outbreak, its consequences remain perceptible to this day. The need for adaptation has necessitated the development of new strategies and innovative approaches. Organizations and leaders who managed to recover successfully were those who responded effectively to the challenges and swiftly adapted to the new circumstances.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) form the backbone of the European Union's economic structure, accounting for more than 99% of the businesses operating within the EU and providing employment to over 100 million people. As such, their status and performance are crucial to the region's economic stability.

The objective of this study is to provide a comprehensive overview of the changes observed in the SME sector following the COVID-19 crisis, with a particular focus on managerial activities, which are essential for effective leadership. The study analyzes the factors that contributed to successful crisis management, as well as those that hindered the speed of recovery. It highlights general trends observed in the member states of the European Union in recent years, with a particular emphasis on the situation in Romania.

Additionally, the study addresses the role of digitalization, which has emerged as a significant factor in driving business activities during and after the crisis. Both quantitative and qualitative data were utilized for data collection and analysis, ensuring a thorough examination of the topic.

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The Value of 'Westoxication' as a Sociological Concept: Retrieving a Decolonial Approach in the Global South

Jalal Al-e-Ahmad (1923-1969) was an Iranian public intellectual and writer mostly known for his concise, modern prose and politically relevant, bold critiques. One of his books was a famous monograph on the 'plague of our time' which he called westoxication. The Persian word for it is 'Gharbzadegi' which has been also translated into 'Westoxification', 'West-struck-ness', and 'Euromania'. This article tries to respond to this question: could we narrow this concept down to a more specific sociological phenomenon? I will argue for retrieving the concept of westoxication to refer to the subaltern/non-Western resistance toward decoloniality of knowledge or epistemic decolonisation in the Global South. Reviewing a few political incidents and intellectual debates in the Middle East, the argument is that Westoxication could be sociologically redefined to explain the internalised Eurocentrism in the Global South. Hence, it is a valuable and measurable sociological concept that could be retrieved and used. The main aspect of decolonising social sciences has been to include the non-Western intellectuals and social scientists into the mainstream intellectual trend. Thus, we see a revival of the focus on W. E. B. Du Bois and Ibn Khaldun. More and more the main figures of postcolonialism and decoloniality are also integrated into the teaching plans and their insights have been acknowledged. This article suggests that we should think of decolonisation as a long project with several phases. The first phase of decolonisation of sociological theory is recognising the crisis and institutional acknowledgement of a bias in our research and teaching. As mentioned above, this phase has been partially successful. Arguably, the next phase is to introduce, critically examine and update some key novel concepts that have been coined and improved by plenty of prominent non-Western scholars. These concepts are the gateways to capturing the unheard lived-experiences of the marginalised.

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**Geographies of Ethics: A Critical Analysis of Rural
Tourism, Community Development, Religion and
Education**

Researchers conducting research with vulnerable populations in rural African settings are confronted with distinctive ethical and cultural challenges due to the community context of their research, their methods of investigation, and the implications of their findings. An ethical approach to rural tourism, community development, religion as well education research should invariably acknowledge the effects of geography and location on the design, funding, implementation and reporting of research. The current study explores the geographies of ethics in rural tourism research conduct with and about rural people and communities. The problematic (problem statement) crystallises itself on the premise that dynamism imbues the ethics of research since no two rural spaces are identical and researchers may not necessarily be expected to be monolithic in their approach. Assuming that ethical judgements by their very nature ponder a variety of realities (relative or actual) and are therefore diverse, diversity foregrounds plurality, fluidity, and a multiplicity of geographies. For the purpose of this paper, the concept geography is understood as a space in a psycho-, socio-political and recursively constructed sense. Geographies include exceptionism, situationism, subjectivism and absolutism mapped across relativism and idealism as dimensions. Drawing from the Swedish metaphor of 'potato ethics', Fors (2023) recognizing the rural context as a vulnerable space, maintains that the holistic responsibility of those involved in rural communities should draw on work from the domains of care ethics, relational ethics, pragmatic psychology, feminist ethics of embodiment, social location theory, and reflections on geographical narcissism. So, the question of geographies of ethics in rural religiosity research becomes pertinent. The intention here is to ponder the ethical conduct of researchers with rural religious people and communities. Community Development with rural people thrives on building and enhancing local knowledge stocks of the environment and culture to influence the vitality and quality of life. Banks et. al. (2023) use the concept of 'ethics work' to highlight the cognitive and emotional efforts community development workers expend to identify and handle matters of responsibilities, rights, harms, and benefits. Rural tourism dates to the romanticism movement that began in the late eighteenth century (Ayazlar & Ayazlar, 2015). The first creative

tours in rural areas were rurally based on the holiday concept, but modern rural tourism began after the World War II era (Lane, 2009). Drawing from diverse international literature (+500 peer reviewed articles and book chapters) published in the last ten years on rural tourism, community development, religion and education, and using PRISMA as an analytical tool, this scoping review finds that some publications make no reference, even in the tacit sense, to ethical issues. We conclude with an observation that varying ethical geographies may create conflicting, competing, or crosscutting ethical obligations and ramifications, reflecting both the relative vulnerabilities of rural communities, power implicit in these scholarly relationships, and the diverse ethical frameworks.

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The Common Good as the Opposite of the Collective Good: Theoretical and Practical Insights from Aristotelian and Thomistic Virtue Ethics

How exactly individual flourishing and societal flourishing are connected is a central question in the social sciences in general and in business ethics in particular. This article argues that the main theories of flourishing and its relation to the common good have developed along a trajectory going from Aristotle via Aquinas to the current, prevailing understanding of the relation between individual and communal flourishing. The current concept of a collective good has no specific individual author but has its origins in the second political wave of the Enlightenment. These three concepts of the mutual good/advantage (Aristotle), the common good (Aquinas), and the collective good can be seen as existing on a continuum. Aristotle argues for politically embedded individuals who possess the potential and authority to achieve their own flourishing (eudaimonia). Aristotle's understanding of politically embedded eudaimonia is subsequently modified by Thomas Aquinas in light of his concept of persons who seek to flourish by sanctifying their souls and through friendship with God. The evolution of these ideas of the good or end culminates in modern approaches to flourishing that bestow authority upon political representatives to act for the sake of the collective good. Although the three concepts have developed along a historical continuum, the collective good is, in many important respects, the exact opposite of the common good and is threatening to replace not only the person endowed with dignity but also to invert the meaning of good. Re-embracing the pre-Enlightenment common good has major ethical and managerial implications.

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**Positioning Entrepreneurship as a Discipline through
Engaged Research**

Building entrepreneurship research capabilities and providing strategies for entrepreneurship teaching across faculties are necessary to realize productive entrepreneurship through higher education. Through academic leadership of entrepreneurship-related activities in universities, this should result in a better grasp of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and ways to contribute to it. A component of the entrepreneurial ecosystem is the university. The university's mission and goals, which encourage entrepreneurial teaching, research, and community participation, are related to creating a culture of innovation and entrepreneurial thinking among students, staff, and the larger university community. To accomplish this, entrepreneurship research should identify factors that encourage entrepreneurial uptake and how these factors might be incorporated into the curricula of both business-related and unrelated programs in South African institutions of higher learning. Research should also concentrate on how to recruit students to the field of entrepreneurship education and how entrepreneurial ventures and results transfer to higher living standards for communities. In addition to making a strong case for the reduction of poverty and inequality, South Africa's National Development Plan (2030) suggests the necessity to increase access to opportunities and employment through economic inclusion, education, and skills development, thereby fostering the respect for one another and inclusivity that is enshrined in the constitution. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, which aim to create broad-based, sustainable economic growth by encouraging policies that support entrepreneurship and, as a result, employment creation, provide yet another argument. Equally, the Africa Union Agenda 2063 argues that job creation is possible through well-educated citizens who focus on transforming the economy.

Using reflective practice and peer and student reviews, the researcher identified three key ways to position entrepreneurship as an appealing discipline over time. These three key elements are enhanced curriculum, engaging instructional approaches, and lecturer competency.

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Common Practices of the EU Intellectual Property Network as Soft Law and Beyond

In the preamble of the recast EU Directive 2015/2436 on the approximation of the Member States' trade marks laws, pp 39, the desire has been expressed that the Member States' industrial property offices (IPOs) cooperate with each other and with the EU Intellectual Property Office to promote convergence of practices related to trade marks. The same desire has been expressed also in the operative part of the Directive, Articles 51 and 52, where it is stated that the 'The offices shall be free to cooperate effectively with each other [...]'. In fact, the EU IP Network had started already before the Directive had been adopted, and it has adopted until now 14 Common Practices on several aspects and issues related to trade mark (and design) law, in particular the operations of the IPOs related to the examination procedures and evaluation of conditions for trade mark registration. As a rule, the IPOs are free to express their intent to implement any of the Common Practices after they have been adopted, and usually they declare the intent. The use of the Common Practices is widely promoted also among the trade mark community, applicants, and other affected parties.

The aim of the Presentation is to analyse the nature and effects of the Common Practices as an example of Soft Law that, although *expressis verbis* not binding, might still have important role to harmonise the IPOs' practice, easing the work of administrators, enhancing predictability and similar treatment of applicants, and benefitting the users of the trade mark system by cutting their costs. The author claims that the agreed practices could have some legal nature and effect, in the light of the jurisprudence of the EU Courts of Justice.

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The Ethics of Gig Work: An Ethnographic Study of Food Delivery Platforms in India

The rise of on-demand platforms underscores the need to investigate the ethical challenges posed by algorithmic management in managing gig workers associated with these platforms. Digital platforms utilise algorithms to direct, evaluate and discipline a distributed workforce leading to intensified monitoring and lack of worker voice, raising critical issues around transparency, accountability, and the erosion of worker autonomy. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2021-2023 on two food delivery platforms in two Indian cities, this study explores how these challenges manifest in practice. The author worked as a food delivery worker on one of these platforms. This study analyses the processes by which algorithms direct, evaluate and discipline food delivery workers. The findings present that algorithmic control is reinforced through end-users and human managers, reinscribing human agency in algorithmic management on labour platforms. Overall, this paper makes two arguments. First, it emphasizes that rather than automation, heteromation, that pushes several tasks to complementors (restaurants, customers) and human managers, is a better way to characterise algorithmic control. Consequently, we categorize the role of human managers and complementors within digital platforms into: computational labour and direct control. Second, we argue that increased access to worker data empowers human managers to exert more direct control, facilitating enhanced oversight, wage discrimination, and the manipulation of workers, thereby deepening power imbalances on digital labour platforms. This research contributes to ethical discourse making a case for misclassification of workers as independent contractors, and calls for policy interventions to protect workers' rights in digital labour platforms. Specifically, it emphasizes the need to improve algorithmic transparency, as algorithmic decisions on these platforms often remain opaque, leaving workers unsure of whether decisions are made by algorithms or manipulated by human managers under the guise of an algorithmic boss.

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Exploration of the Interactions between the Selected Key Performance Areas and Human Capital Development of Academics in South African Universities

The four identified key performance areas for the academic staff are teaching and learning, research, community engagement, and administration. All academic staff are expected to be competent in these areas. The pressure is even more on the academic staff with doctorate qualifications, who, by assumption, are expected to be more experienced and competent based on their level of academic achievement. Meanwhile, in recent times, there has been an influx of young academics with PhD qualifications who have never had any experience in the university business. An ongoing learning and development programme to develop academic capabilities, skills, and knowledge of young academics in order to be competent in all the key performance areas was introduced by the Department of Higher Education. The study explores the interactions between the overall administrative responsibilities of the academic staff, training for teaching and learning and the human capital development (HCD) programmes in South African universities. The study adopts a concurrent triangulation and integrative mixed-method approach for data collection using quantitative and qualitative methods. A self-developed Four Likert scale instrument was used with 245 respondents, while individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with 20 senior academic staff from the seven selected universities. Study participants were mainly academic staff with doctorate qualifications in South African universities. The reliability of the quantitative data collection instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and the result showed 0.85 internal consistency. Similarly, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to determine the validity of the instrument, and the three-factor model shows a reasonable fit to the data. Furthermore, a structural equation model (SEM) was fitted; overall, the analysis indicates that training for teaching and learning, serving as the explanatory variable, significantly influences both the overall administration of academic responsibilities and human capital development. Specifically, the estimate for the relationship between training for teaching and learning and the overall administration of academic responsibilities is 0.45 ($p = 0.007$), with a standardised coefficient of 0.40, suggesting a moderate positive influence of training for teaching and learning on the overall administration of academic responsibilities. Similarly, training for teaching and learning significantly influences human

capital development with an estimate of 0.48 ($p < 0.001$) and a standardised coefficient of 0.44, indicating a moderate to strong positive influence of training for teaching and learning on human capital development. There is also a positive relationship between human capital development and overall administration of academic responsibilities, with an estimate of 0.05 ($p = 0.057$) and a standardised coefficient of 0.24, although this relationship is marginally significant. These results suggest that variations in training for teaching and learning are associated with corresponding changes in both the overall administration of academic responsibilities and human capital development. Thematic analysis of the interview guide used for qualitative interviews was conducted. Based on the findings of both quantitative and qualitative analysis, the study recommends that the human capital development of academic staff, especially those with doctorate qualifications, should be focused on all four key performance areas in order to achieve the desired national quality education.

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From Contracts to Collaboration: The Evolution of Legal Frameworks and Relationships in Infrastructure Projects

Infrastructure projects are foundational to both economic and social development. These complex undertakings involve multiple stakeholders and are governed by intricate legal frameworks that have evolved in response to technological advances, shifting risk environments, and rising public expectations.

Legal reform, combined with insights from organizational theory and digital innovation, has supported a broader shift toward collaborative approaches. Collaborative contracting emerges not merely as a legal tool, but as a systemic response to the growing complexity of infrastructure delivery. As governments contend with implementation challenges, the trend increasingly points toward integrated, transparent, and adaptive contractual ecosystems.

This paper traces the evolution of contractual relationships in infrastructure projects over recent decades. It examines the impact of legislative changes, the transformation of project delivery models, and the rise of collaborative contracting practices. Particular emphasis is placed on how evolving legal frameworks have influenced project performance, including cost control, schedule adherence, and risk allocation.

Special attention is given to the role of government legislation – most notably Quebec’s Bill 62 – and to theoretical contributions from systems dynamics, especially regarding regulatory control and network-based governance structures. The analysis is grounded in recent Canadian case studies and legal commentary, providing both historical context and insight into emerging trends.

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&

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Is it Time for Canada to Institute Mandatory Labelling for Genetically Engineered Foods? Assessing the Evidence

All food products in Canada, including those that have been genetically engineered (GE), are regulated jointly by Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Health Canada, and the Public Health Agency of Canada. The country has a well-deserved reputation for provision of safe, healthy and nutritious food products.

Canada is one of the very few countries in the world that permits the production and sale of genetically engineered food products without mandatory labelling of their GE origin. Currently 65 countries have mandatory labelling laws for GE food products. Several Canadian consumer and environmental lobby groups believe the government is falling short of its responsibilities and have challenged not only the safety of GE foods but also the amount and veracity of information retailers are required to divulge.

The term Frankenfood was coined by some NGOs and highlighted in British tabloids in the early 1990s to describe GE food products. It was meant to create fear among consumers, to whip up hysteria, and to assert that these “unnatural” food products might be unsafe, unhealthy, and cause disturbance to ecological balance. Many influential environmental and social issue lobby groups have protested the introduction and availability of GE foods. They want GE foods to be banned from sale or at least labelled to contain the scary term of “contains GEs” to dissuade consumers from purchasing the products. In contrast, most Canadian scientists contend that mandatory labeling of these products would impose additional costs without enhancing the safety or quality of the food products.

While consumer surveys reveal that a large proportion of Canadian consumers prefer to know if they are purchasing a GE food product, Canadian grocers display and sell (presumably profitably) thousands of food products with unlabelled GE enhanced ingredients and attributes.

Indeed, almost all major food producing companies in Canada and the United States produce and market a large variety of GE foods.

Canola is the largest and most profitable export crop grown in Canada and it is almost 100% from GE cultivars. Three of Canada's most significant Canadian trading partners, the United States, China and Japan, have well-regulated GE labelling laws. However, these countries continue to import vast quantities of Canadian canola that is used for livestock feed, biofuel, or processed into vegetable oil.

With GE crops likely to continue expanding as profitable agricultural opportunities in Canada, voluntary labels are unlikely to fundamentally address the social concerns of the anti-GE movement. Since the United States, overwhelmingly Canada's largest trading partner, recently has imposed mandatory labelling of GE food products, Canada should begin the process to impose a mandatory labelling requirement for GE foods. Although many scientific papers have been published that justify voluntary labelling of approved GE food products in Canada, and the costs of imposing a mandatory labelling requirement are non-trivial, Canada cannot remain competitive in the long term as (almost) the only major producer of unlabelled GE foods.

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&

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British Muslims In-Between Identities in Modern UK: Borders, Boundaries, Urban Spaces

This research is devoted to the study of the identities of modern British Muslims (symbolically “migrant communities”), British citizens, based on statistical data, social reports, media, visual anthropology and author’s field materials 2012-2024 (London, Luton, Canterbury, Falmouth, Plymouth, Portsmouth etc in Cornwall, Bath, Reading, Brighton, Birmingham, Sheffield, Liverpool, Manchester, Oldham and etc., Leeds, Bradford, Blackpool, York, Newcastle, South-Shields, Sunderland in England; Edinburgh and Glasgow, in Scotland, Belfast in Northern Ireland). The work describes British Muslims, how their identity develops and what is the role of city structures and districts, e.g. by means of author’s anthropological photography and the means of visual anthropology on the whole. The author will tell who British Muslims are, what the dynamics of their identity/s are and what the role of cross-border identity (in-between ethnic Bangladeshi/Pakistani, pan-religious Islamic and national British). In relation to this group, in line with the concept of “active borders,” we can talk about co-interpretation of borders – joint interpretation of the meanings of history/space/memory both on the “hard” and “soft” borderlands. Young Muslims of the so called “2-3 generations” deal with two cultural worlds of their own families and cultural communities, as well as their peers, schools and society at large. In addition, peers are often drawn from a wide variety of immigrant cultures. Thus, “intercultural worlds”, including “worlds of memory”, can turn out to be not only “bicultural”, but much more multi-layered, giving rise to misunderstandings.

The work describes British Muslims are, how their identity develops and what is the role of city structures and districts, with the help of urban and visual anthropology. We are talking about specific places of communication: MOSQUE (territory for community socialization, mobilization and public discussions): SPORTS CLUB, STADIUM, SCHOOL (territories of external communication and competition); HOME as a territory of family socialization, protection of personal, family and local heritage; MARKET as a space for familiarization with urban cultures and an area for trading urban values. We are talking about 3 types of

communications, expressed in urban quartals allegory: 1. some ghettos presenting (not preserving) a micro version of the world that its inhabitants once left; 2. quarters of a cosmopolitan, commercial, literally multicultural order; 3. "quarters" that do not exist as such, a territory that sometimes remains an idea, a virtual space enclosed within the central and bohemian districts (Muslim entertainment, Muslim hipsters, politicized youth, who today form the British Islam image as unique phenomenon. British Islam in particular and Islam in general, placed in the Procrustean bed of so-called migrant identity or "diasporas", is an extremely promising research topic for science, illustrating the ambiguity of socio-cultural communication within the framework of most complex, "post-imperial", "post-colonial", in-between communities. The paper also touches upon the problem of "visibility" and the role of contemporary British-Islamic entertainment culture in the development of identities of this group of citizens of the United Kingdom.

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&

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Evaluating the Role of Knowledge Co-Production in Addressing Post-Mining Risks

In France, the cessation of mining activities—primarily driven by economic factors—has not eliminated the risks and nuisances associated with Post-Mining Territories (TPEM), including persistent pollution, land subsidence, and other related issues. The decline of this former industry has profoundly affected these territories necessitating their rehabilitation. However, this transition has given rise to tensions regarding the use of spaces identified as polluted and/or hazardous. These tensions are often linked to misunderstandings, mistrust among stakeholders and/or uncertainties inherent in the management of health and environmental risks (Busca & Lewis, 2018; Mottis et al., 2022).

My sociology of the environment' thesis explores stakeholder's perceptions and the strategies of risk management organizations - specifically states agencies such as BRGM and ADEME - in fostering participation in the management of health-environment risks. My research focus on whether or not future territory management integrate existing management plans of TPEMs. Using qualitative and pragmatic sociological approach (Dewey, 1927; Zask, 2008), the study reveals citizens' interest in contributing to experimental approaches to management. It also examines how institutional visions of participation influence society by either addressing or neglecting global environmental challenges. The objective of this communication is to present the existing tensions between different knowledge (institutional, empirical) and the mechanisms that give them legitimacy or not. It examines how knowledge circulates—or fails to circulate—between citizens and institutions, as well as the processes involved in producing expertise on TPEMs. Here, the existing and emerging controversies raise the question of the integration of other forms of knowledge into the processes of negotiations and public action decisions on those territories. At this stage, the integration of actors considered as “non-experts” remains complicated as post-mining management is still considered as the “exclusive domain of experts”. Decisions taken - particularly in environmental areas (Jasanoff, 1990) - on these degraded territories seem to operate in depoliticized ways. This observation is based

on the fact that those decisions are made through confined discussions between experts and public authorities (Akrich et al., 1988). There are no real public consultation with the populations concerned. This raises questions regarding science production (Latour, 2004) and citizen's place in these public action processes (Callon, Lascoumes, & Barthe, 2001).

In decision-making processes, a conflict of legitimacy between citizen knowledges and institutionalized knowledges (Fischer, 2000) is observed. These tensions are interesting because citizens, in direct interaction with their environment, hold specific expertise that is perceived as less reliable or less legitimate than scientific knowledge. Thus, in order to co-produce knowledge that is truly adapted to local contexts and mobilized by residents, questions arise of legitimacy and circulation of expertise in public action (Granjou et al., 2010). Actually, this knowledge, often ignored by institutions, can constitute levers of emancipation for citizens.

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Social Marketing Mechanism Design for Social Problem of Crimes Committed among Children Aged 14-17 in Azerbaijan

The problem of crimes committed by children aged between 14 and 17 has become more noteworthy in Azerbaijan in the last 5 years. With its wide range of juvenile delinquency at this age group, the importance of a timely action is extremely crucial. Although, traditional methods of these type of crime solving cases might be valuable, implementation of social marketing practices can significantly boost the process of mindset shift and behavioural change for not only the targeted age group, but also the age dimensions of 18-24, 25-29, and 30+ in Azerbaijan.

Formulation of a right social marketing mechanism with a sound and clear communication could have a positive effect on the representatives of this age group and ideally prevent the reoccurring and new scenarios related to different forms of crime in Azerbaijan. During the implementation phase the CSD-IES framework, an acronym created from the six stages of the framework: consumer research, segmentation, social program design, implementation, evaluation, and sustainability, can ease the whole process and bring clarity to the execution of the social marketing program designed particularly for the set social problem.

During the installation of the social marketing mechanism the continuous monitoring is necessary for identification and adjustment of missing points and errors. When the social marketing program is finalised, the final analysis on the ran social marketing program is required for identification of mistakes and forming alternative approaches for future reinstalments of the social marketing program for the set social problem. If all the mentioned points are done right the existing social problem of children crimes in the age group of 14 to 17 can be resolved successfully with almost to zero reoccurring instances.

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Beyond Traditional Crime: Routine Online Activity Theory in the Era of Big Data

This paper addresses a notable gap in sociological literature by examining the disconnection between widespread concerns about internet privacy and the limited actions individuals take to protect themselves. While existing surveillance studies within criminology have largely focused on state policing efforts, this research expands the scope to everyday online activities, an underexplored area within the field. Drawing on data from the 2022-2023 Survey of Canadians on Privacy-Related Issues, this study analyzes how privacy concerns shape user behavior. The findings reveal that although 89% of Canadians express concerns about the collection of personal information by social media platforms, only half have taken steps such as deleting or discontinuing accounts. Furthermore, just 38% of respondents ended business relationships with organizations following a privacy breach. This paradox – where individuals continue to engage with digital platforms despite evident distrust in big data corporations' ability to protect personal information – underscores the complexities of surveillance capitalism. By applying neutralization theory, this paper suggests that users rationalize their continued use of these platforms due to the pressures of modern digital life, where online activity has become routine and unavoidable. This behavior reflects a modern manifestation of neutralization strategies, where individuals justify their actions even as they acknowledge potential risks. This research further situates surveillance within a criminological framework that goes beyond the traditional focus on policing, which has dominated the discourse on surveillance in criminology. By exploring how corporate surveillance exploits routine online activities, this paper contributes to a broader understanding of how surveillance operates in non-policing contexts, specifically in the realm of consumer data exploitation. This extension of criminological inquiry into corporate data practices highlights the growing influence of big data in shaping user behavior, offering new insights into the dynamics of trust, privacy, and digital engagement.

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The Reactions of Social-Health Networks to Catastrophic Events. The Case of the 2016 Earthquake in the Marche Region

Introduction

In the field of healthcare, the tendency to seek organizational models based on the integration of all social and healthcare services emerges, as demonstrated by the WHO guidelines. In the Italian healthcare system, this has led to the creation of local integration systems that involve the definition of protocols and formal relationships between centers that provide social and healthcare services.

Catastrophic events, such as earthquakes or floods, cause rapid and unexpected changes that undermine the planned structure of the inter-organizational structure. Existing network configurations must quickly adapt to the new situation.

Our work presents the results of a study involving ASUR (Azienda Sanitaria Unica Regionale) Marche in the province of Ascoli Piceno, which was hit by the 2016 earthquake, and the University of Urbino Carlo Bo, aimed at studying the evolution of the structure of the inter-organisational network linking the centres involved in providing social welfare services in the field of mental health, as a consequence of the seismic event.

Methods

This study uses the tools made available by Social Network Analysis (SNA). Firstly, the network nodes, i.e. the centres providing services to the mentally ill, were identified through document analysis and qualitative interviews with privileged witnesses. Two types of interaction between the nodes were considered: 1) client referrals and 2) regular meetings between the staff of the different centres. The links were operationalised using data collected from official documents, databases and surveys. Some indicators of network integration, already discussed in the literature, were used for the analysis.

In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted to investigate the meaning and context of social relationships within the network.

Main Results

The results show that in emergency situations the network adapts and becomes denser allowing for greater adaptation to the emergency. This is consistent with the results of some studies. This improvement in the level of integration was partly maintained after the end of the emergency phase, despite the dismantling of the structures created to cope with the aftermath of the earthquake. This is due to the fact that the interventions activated during the emergency resulted in the formation of more intense and widespread interpersonal relations, which were maintained even when the formal system was abolished.

From the analysis of the data, it was also possible to identify the critical issues that may hinder the integration of social and health services; these include the difficulty of interacting with very different organisational cultures, territorial isolation and staff precariousness.

This study helped operators, both those who directly deliver social-health services and those who work in the administrative and technical IT spheres, to be more aware of the possibilities of integration, becoming an active part of the process.

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The Disinformation Industry; Expert Knowledge as Normalizing Power

The past decade has witnessed an explosion of concern about the spread of disinformation and misinformation online. The response has included not just government legislation and changes to the moderation policies of social media companies, but the emergence of an entire industry of academic research centres, fact-checking organisations, non-profits and private companies dedicated to identifying and exposing disinformation and tracking its spread. The rise of this 'disinformation industry' provides an exemplary case study of expertise; in contrast to more established policy fields or academic disciplines, we can witness a field of claimed expertise emerging in real time. The speed with which this novel field of expertise emerged raises obvious questions: Who has the authority to label something disinformation? What is the basis of their claims to expertise? What is the object of the specialist knowledge they assert? Moreover, the concept of disinformation itself is poorly defined, showing a tendency to expand from statements which can be shown to be factually incorrect to anything an observer disagrees with or finds offensive.

The paper will explore the emergence, structure, and discourse of the disinformation industry from the perspective of the sociology of expertise, arguing that 'disinformation' is not a natural object of knowledge 'out there' in the world but a discursive construct which serves to unify a variety of disparate and even unrelated phenomena under a single category. It emerged at a specific socio-political conjunction, offering a normalising concept which serves the interests of a coalition of political, economic and bureaucratic actors. This construct is an 'actant', to adopt a term Bruno Latour uses in a somewhat different sense; it intervenes in and changes reality. The construct 'disinformation' crystallises a coalition of interests, is employed as a weapon in political and institutional struggles, legitimates legislation and managerial interventions, secures funding streams for public and private sector organisations, opens up career paths and entrepreneurial opportunities, boosts some social and political actors and delegitimises others.

The disinformation industry therefore represents an effort to engineer reality in accordance with a set of normative claims, which

serve the interests of specific institutions and social groups, while asserting the objective, scientific character of these claims. It exemplifies 'governmental knowledge' - concepts, models and systems of classification which claim to be universal, objective truth, but whose real significance lies not in their concordance with external reality but in the 'normalizing power' (Foucault, 1977: 304) they exert over institutions and individuals.

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The Trump Effect on Globalization: If the First Time was a Farce, Would the Second be a Tragedy?

The American people, through their democratic vote, have brought Trump back to the White House, hoping that this time he will fulfil his promise to "make America great again" by retreating from the globalization process. This process has continued to accelerate at a nonlinear pace since the end of the Second World War. During Trump's first term in the White House, he did not succeed in deglobalizing the U.S., at least as measured by the KOF Globalization Index. The aim of this paper is to trace the historical process of globalization since 1970, the earliest year for which data are available. Three distinct phases of globalization are defined: hyper globalization (when the globalization index increases by more than 1% per annum for at least one decade), stagnated globalization (when the globalization index increases within the range of 0%-1% per annum for at least one decade), and deglobalization (when the annual rate of change in the globalization index is negative for at least one decade). The data reveal two cycles of stagnated globalization, one cycle of hyper globalization, and no cycle of deglobalization. This paper also examines the U.S. experience of globalization. The evidence demonstrates that despite the rhetoric during Trump's first presidency (2017-2020), the globalization process in the U.S. continued to follow its long-term upward trajectory. Furthermore, the paper concludes that the U.S. has always been great and that the slogan "Make America Great Again" is primarily a tool to maximize electoral support. However, if the objective is to maximize economic benefits – measured as per capita GDP – then globalization has been, and remains, the only sound policy approach. Finally, the paper discusses the future of globalization under the new Trump administration. The conclusion is that the U.S. will likely continue its global business as usual because this remains its best economic, political, and military strategy.

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The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Cybersecurity and its Efficiency in the Cryptocurrency Market

With the advancement of technology, we live in an increasingly digital era, which has led to a substantial increase in the demand for cybersecurity solutions. The frequent media coverage of scams and frauds has generated greater concern among individuals and companies, who are facing a scenario of continuous growth in cybercrime. As both personal and corporate attacks rise, it becomes essential for organizations to adjust their processes and behaviors to protect themselves against future threats. Cybersecurity should be analyzed in five categories: identification, protection, detection, response, and recovery. It is crucial for companies to validate their entire network, the access they provide to employees, data storage, continuous monitoring, the verification and identification of detection systems, the speed of analysis, the creation of automated response mechanisms, and, essentially, recovery planning, as the longer the recovery time, the higher the costs for entities. One tool that can improve the performance of processes in these five areas is Artificial Intelligence (AI). However, it is technology that requires a high investment. Considering the cost-benefit dichotomy of AI, this study was conducted using a qualitative methodology, aiming to understand cybersecurity today and how AI will benefit cybersecurity. One sector also vulnerable to attacks is the cryptocurrency market, which will be analyzed. The analysis will be supported by reports from various companies that interviewed executives and leaders in the security departments of different countries. The results indicate that although the investment in AI is high, a greater focus on technology could reduce costs associated with cyberattacks. It is also concluded that investing in AI and cybersecurity increases business value.

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Student Employment and the Financial Challenges of the School-to-Work Transition: Economic Pressures during the Labor Market Integration

The transition from education to the labor market (School-to-Work Transition, SWT) is a crucial and increasingly complex process shaped by financial necessity, institutional support, and sociocultural factors. While traditionally viewed as a period for skill acquisition and professional development, recent trends indicate that financial concerns are becoming the dominant factor influencing students' work engagement. Rising tuition fees, decreasing availability of scholarships, and increasing living costs push university students toward employment, often redefining their primary role as either students who work or employees who study.

Economic disparities between countries further shape this transition, as purchasing power parity affects how essential work-related income is for students. In regions with limited financial aid, students are more likely to prioritize income generation over academic excellence, which can impact their motivation, study completion rates, and long-term career trajectories. Different national models of school-to-work transition—liberal, employment-centered, education-focused, and protective—offer varying levels of institutional support, leading to disparities in how students navigate this transition.

Understanding the growing financial pressures faced by students is critical for policymakers and educators seeking to improve support structures and reduce dropout rates. Strengthening financial aid programs, expanding paid internship opportunities, and aligning education with labor market needs could facilitate a smoother and more equitable transition. Addressing these financial challenges is essential for ensuring that students complete their studies while gaining meaningful professional experience, ultimately benefiting both individuals and the broader economy.

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I Guess Therefore I Am

Generation of situation awareness (SA) is a key function of human consciousness, and a fundamental attribute of clinical human factors/ergonomics (HF/E) from which all others are derived. SA is the ability to form perceptions about elements in time and space (Perception - Level I SA), mental models that make sense of those perceptions (Comprehension - Level II SA), and projections about future states based on those models (Level III SA). Individual SA predicates individual clinical decision making, as well as risk perception and planning/prioritisation skills; shared (or team) SA requires communication, teamworking and leadership skills. Ergonomic sociotechnical designs of external environments (layout, displays, checklists, forcing functions etc.) work through by supporting individual and team SA, making it easier to see and do 'the right thing' and harder to do 'the wrong thing'. Taken together these comprise many of the basic elements of a clinical HF/E training curriculum.

Emerging research in neuroscience and artificial intelligence reveals that the true nature of human consciousness is not what we intuitively think it to be. Our bodies inhabit a dynamic physical universe, but 'reality' as we experience it turns out to be more than a mere live recording from which we extrapolate meaning: it is a filtered and embellished model constructed by our brains - a kind of 'practical hallucination' with much pre-determined meaning already baked into it, our 'best guess' of what should be happening and what is about to happen, designed through millions of years of natural selection to enhance our ability to function (and survive). As George Box famously said: all models are wrong, but some are useful. A better (i.e. more useful) model of consciousness and how it evolves and develops over time would help us better understand the factors that shape SA, which would in turn better inform other aspects of HF/E and human performance in clinical environments. This session presents some of the research relevant to this topic.

Lehte Roots

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Instrumentalization of Schengen Borders.

This paper explores the instrumentalization and intricate dynamics surrounding the Schengen borders and their implications within the European Union (EU). The author delves into the historical context and legal framework of Schengen borders, emphasizing their role in fostering integration while addressing challenges such as security concerns, free movement, and the management of external migration flows. Drawing upon legal analysis and empirical observations, the paper examines the evolution of Schengen governance, highlighting its impact on EU citizens, third-country nationals, and asylum seekers. Rooted in a multidisciplinary perspective, the paper underscores the complexities of border control mechanisms, the interplay between national sovereignty and supranational cooperation, and the need for ongoing adaptation in response to evolving political, technological, and humanitarian landscapes. Ultimately, it advocates for a holistic and collaborative approach to border management, acknowledging the imperative of safeguarding fundamental rights amidst changing societal paradigms and geopolitical realities. Instrumentalization - a new phenomenon has appeared as a concern for EU border countries and has emerged the need to find proper reactions to the situation created by third countries. This needs further elaboration and study.

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