



ATHENS INSTITUTE

Abstract Book

**23rd Annual International Conference on
SMEs, Entrepreneurship and Innovation:
Management – Marketing – Economic –
Social Aspects**

27-31 July 2026, Athens, Greece

**Edited by
Demos Vardiabasis & Olga Gkounta**

2026

Abstracts
23rd Annual International
Conference on SMEs,
Entrepreneurship and
Innovation:
Management – Marketing –
Economic – Social Aspects
27-31 July 2026, Athens, Greece

Edited by
Demos Vardiabasis & Olga Gkounta

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Preface

This book includes the abstracts of all the papers presented at the 23rd *Annual International Conference on SMEs, Entrepreneurship and Innovation: Management – Marketing – Economic – Social Aspects* (27-31 July 2026), organized by the Athens Institute.

A full program can be found before the relevant abstracts. In accordance with Athens Institute's Publication Policy, the papers presented during this conference will be considered for inclusion in one of the 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. 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 work and consider the future developments of their fields of study.

To facilitate the communication, a 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, 2011-2026*

Year	Papers	Countries	References
2026	25	19	Vardiabasis and Gkounta (2026)
2025	29	17	Vardiabasis and Papanikou (2025)
2024	52	21	Vardiabasis and Gkounta (2024)
2023	33	15	Vardiabasis and Gkounta (2023)
2022	29	17	Vardiabasis and Gkounta (2022)
2021	27	15	Papanikos (2021)
2020	16	12	Papanikos (2020)
2019	27	18	Papanikos (2019)
2018	24	16	Papanikos (2018)
2017	29	18	Papanikos (2017)
2016	18	13	Papanikos (2016)
2015	24	15	Papanikos (2015)
2014	16	14	Papanikos (2014)
2013	29	20	Papanikos (2013)
2012	23	18	Papanikos (2012)
2011	32	22	Papanikos (2011)

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, 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.

Gregory T. Papanikos
President

Editors' Note

These abstracts provide a vital means to the dissemination of scholarly inquiry in the field of SMEs, Entrepreneurship and Innovation. 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. The 23rd Annual International Conference on SMEs, Entrepreneurship and Innovation: Management – Marketing – Economic – Social Aspects, accomplished this goal by bringing together academics and scholars from 19 different countries (Brazil, Canada, China, Croatia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Portugal, Serbia, South Africa, Taiwan, Türkiye, UK, 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.

Demos Vardiabasis & Olga Gkounta
Editors

**23rd Annual International Conference on SMEs,
Entrepreneurship and Innovation: Management –
Marketing – Economic – Social Aspects
27-31 July 2026, 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 Athens Institute.

Dr. Gregory T. Papanikos, President, Athens Institute & Professor (Adjunct), University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA.

Dr. Demos Vardiabasis, Vice President of Business and Public Affairs & Professor of Economics, Pepperdine University, USA.

Dr. Chris Sakellariou, Vice President of Finance, Athens Institute & Associate Professor of Economics (Retired), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

Dr. Frederic Jallat, Deputy Director (Management & Marketing), Business, Economics and Law Division, Athens Institute & Professor, ESCP Business School, France.

Dr. Anica Hunjet, Deputy Director, Business and Law Division, Athens Institute & Head of Department, International Postgraduate Joint University Doctoral Study "International Economic Relations and Management", University North, Croatia.

Dr. Henry Thompson, Head, Economics Unit, Athens Institute & Emeritus Professor, Auburn University, USA.

FINAL CONFERENCE PROGRAM
23rd Annual International Conference on SMEs, Entrepreneurship and
Innovation: Management – Marketing – Economic – Social Aspects
27-31 July 2026, Athens, Greece

PROGRAM

08:30-09:15 Registration 09:15-10:00 Opening Speech and Welcoming Remarks Speakers: Gregory T. Papanikos, President, Athens Institute & Professor (Adjunct), University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA.
10:00-11:30 Session 1 Moderator: Raid Suleiman, Professor, Al-Hussein Bin Talal University, Jordan. Stephan Goetz, Professor and Director, Penn State University and The Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development, USA. Luyi Han, Assistant Professor, Penn State University, USA. Zheng Tian, Assistant Research Professor, Penn State University and The Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development, USA. Xiaoyin Li, Postdoctoral Scholar, Regional Research Institute, West Virginia University, USA. Heather Stephens, Director and Professor, Regional Research Institute, West Virginia University, USA. <i>Title: Determinants of Self-Employment and Income: Evidence from Confidential U.S. Administrative and Census Data.</i> Laima Gerlitz, Head of European Project Center, University of Wismar, Germany. <i>Title: BIOCENTUM: A Quintuple-Helix Innovation Model for Mobilising Businesses, Citizens and Municipalities Around Urban Biodiversity – Lessons from the URBIO BAUHAUS Project.</i> Ewell Mnelisi Xaba, Researcher & Lecturer, Durban University of Technology, South Africa. <i>Title: Tapping into Loyalty, the Online Grocery Experience in South Africa.</i>
11:30-13:00 Session 2 Moderator: Stephan Goetz, Professor and Director, Penn State University and The Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development, USA. Demos Vardiabasis, Professor, Pepperdine University, USA. Burhan Yavas, Professor, Pepperdine University, USA. Samuel Seman, Professor, Pepperdine University, USA. <i>Title: Foreign Direct Investment and Financial Markets.</i> Kagiso Phake, Lecturer, North-West University, South Africa. <i>Title: Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in Addressing Unemployment Challenges in Mahikeng Local Municipality.</i> Abilio Zacarias, Researcher, ISEG Research, University of Lisbon, Portugal. <i>Title: Characteristics of Board Chairs for More Effective Recruitment During Financial Crises.</i> Rachel Nefertari Boveja, Faculty Member, Indiana University – Political Advocacy and Civic Engagement Program, USA. <i>Title: Space Diplomacy: Collaborative Policies for the Future of Space Governance and Law.</i>
13:00-14:00 Session 3 – Symposium on “The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Teaching, Research, and Publishing: Personal Experiences from Users” Moderator: Gregory T. Papanikos, President, Athens Institute & Professor (Adjunct), University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA.

1. **Bob Uttl**, Professor, Mount Royal University, Canada.
Title: Undergraduate Students' Knowledge, Perceptions and Attitudes towards AI.
2. **Raid Suleiman**, Professor, Al-Hussein Bin Talal University, Jordan.
Title: AI in Jordanian Universities in Education.
3. **Sabrina Joseph**, Provost and Professor, The American University of Rome, Italy.
Title: 'From Principles to Practice: Developing Robust AI Policy for Universities.
4. **Gisele Tchamba**, Faculty Member, Adventist University of Africa, Kenya.
Title: From "Tool" to "Partner": AI in Research, Evaluation, and Statistical Practice.
5. **Laima Gerlitz**, Head of European Project Center, University of Wismar, Germany.
Title: Human Expertise in the Age of AI: Personal Experiences in Teaching, Research and Publishing.
6. **Xinyu Xiao, Researcher**, Chinese Academy of Science and Technology for Development, China.
Title: Becoming Better "Supervisors": Teaching, Research and Publishing in the Age of Human-AI Collaboration.

Interventions:

1. **Wensupu Yang**, Associate, SAMI Consulting, UK.
2. **Spiro Doukas**, Professor, American Public University, USA.
3. **Daphne Vidanec**, Full Professor, Baltazar University of Applied Sciences, Croatia.
4. **Afsin Sahin**, Professor, Ankara Haci Bayram Veli University, Türkiye.
5. **Asanbe Comfort**, Professor and Chair, Psychology Department, City University of New York, USA.

14:00-15:00 Lunch

15:00-16:30 Session 4 – Microsymposium on Foresight

Moderator: Lampros Pyrgiotis, Research Fellow, Athens Institute.

1. **An-Chun Teng**, Assistant Professor, Ming Chuan University, Taiwan.
Title: When Natural Disasters Become Governance Crises: Media Narratives of Crisis Management and Disaster Governance in Taiwan.
2. **Samaneh Ebrahimabadi**, Researcher, Finland Futures Research Center, University of Turku, Finland.
Title: Temporal Dimensions in Corporate Foresight: Gaps, Approaches, and Future Directions.
3. **Wensupu Yang**, Associate, SAMI Consulting, UK.
Title: Using LLM-as-a-Judge for Scenario Development: A Methodological Framework for Evaluating Scenario Logics and Narratives.
4. **Like Yuan**, Director, Chinese Academy of Science and Technology for Development, China.
Xinyu Xiao, Researcher, Chinese Academy of Science and Technology for Development, China.
Zheng Qin, Researcher, Chinese Academy of Science and Technology for Development, China.
Rong Guo, Vice President, Chinese Academy of Science and Technology for Development, China.
Kaiyuan Long, Researcher, Chinese Academy of Science and Technology for Development, China.
Title: Technology Foresight in China: Methods and Practices.

16:30-17:15 Session 5

Moderator: Olga Gkounta, Researcher, Athens Institute.

1. **Daniel Weissglass**, Assistant Professor, Duke Kunshan University, China.
Title: Confucian Constitutionalism: Expressive Harms of Doctrinal Public Discourse.

2. Naila Keleta-Mae, Professor and Canada Research Chair, University of Waterloo, Canada. <i>Title: Black And Free: International Expressions.</i>
18:00-20:00 Session 6 – Visit Aristotle’s Lyceum This is not a guided tour, and participation in this visit is not included in any conference registration fee. It requires pre-booking. It includes visits to Aristotle’s Lyceum, the Panathenaic Stadium (Kallimarmaro), the National Garden, the statues of Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Euripides, and Syntagma Square, where the tour concludes in front of the Hellenic Parliament. Click here for more details.
20:30-22:30 Athenian Early Evening Symposium (Sequence of Events: Ongoing Academic Discussions, Dinner, Wine and Water, Music, Dance) Tuesday 28 July 2026
09:30-11:00 Session 7 – Microsymposium on “Library and Information Science” Moderator: Olga Gkounta, Researcher, Athens Institute.
1. Raid Suleiman, Professor, Al-Hussein Bin Talal University, Jordan. <i>Title: Challenges of Disappearance Printed Arabic Newspapers Archive in the Digital Environment (A Case Study: AL-Hussein bin Talal Newspapers Archive).</i> 2. David Bodoff, Senior Lecturer, University of Haifa, Israel. <i>Title: Attribution Theory for Understanding Information Search.</i> 3. Mor Deshen, Lecturer, Bar-Ilan University, Israel. Noa Aharony, Lecturer, Bar-Ilan University, Israel. <i>Title: Artificial Intelligence Literacy among LIS Professionals: An Emerging Research Landscape.</i> 4. Sibongile Ngwenya, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of South Africa, South Africa. Omwoyo Bosire Onyancha, Professor, University of South Africa, South Africa. <i>Title: An Informetric Study of the Co-existence of Open Science and Intellectual Property Rights.</i> 5. Chekra Allani, Assistant Professor, Arab Open University – Kuwait, Kuwait. Banan Daraiseh, Assistant Professor, Arab Open University, Kuwait. Areej Al Siaghy, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist and Attending Physician, University of Connecticut, USA. <i>Title: Bibliotherapy for Mental Wellbeing in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: The Role of Children’s Literature in Educational Libraries.</i>
11:00-12:30 Session 8 Moderator: Ewell Mnelisi Xaba, Researcher & Lecturer, Durban University of Technology, South Africa.
1. Milan Radojicic, Assistant Professor, University of Belgrade, Serbia. <i>Title: Re-Examining the CEAI Factor Structure in SMEs and Large Organizations in Serbia.</i> 2. Tamila Kartsivadze, Assistant Professor, Batumi Navigation University, Georgia. <i>Title: Social Media Marketing Challenges and Opportunities in Georgia – Analysis of Modern Approaches.</i> 3. Norizan Abdullah, Researcher, University of Southampton, UK. Paul Smith, Professor, University of Southampton, UK. Olga Maslovskaya, Professor, University of Southampton, UK. <i>Title: The Association between Sectoral and Business Characteristics and Entrepreneurial Outcomes in Brunei.</i>

12:30-14:00 Session 9

Moderator: Louis Kontos, Associate Professor, John Jay College of Criminal Justice (CUNY), USA.

1. **Maria Santos**, Professor, ISEG Research, University of Lisbon, Portugal.
Title: The Management of Ethics: A Case Study.
2. **John Trougakos**, Professor, University of Toronto, Canada.
Milad Moghaddas, PhD Student, University of Toronto, Canada.
Daniel Beal, Associate Professor, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, USA.
Title: Anxiety at Work: Key Themes and Future Directions.
3. **Crain Soudien**, Professor, University of Johannesburg, South Africa.
Title: Assessing South African Higher Education's Management of Its International Policy for Academic Staff.
4. **Marcela Ribeiro De Albuquerque**, Professor, State University of Northern Paraná (UENP), Brazil.
Luis Ricardo da Silva Miguel, Student, State University of Northern Paraná (UENP), Brazil.
Erica Patente Nascimento, Professor, State University of Northern Paraná (UENP), Brazil.
Title: Financialization and the Supplementary Health System in Brazil: A Bibliographic Study.

14:00-15:00 Lunch

16:45-20:30 Session 10

Old and New-An Educational Urban Walk

The urban walk ticket is not included as part of your registration fee. It includes transportation costs and the cost to enter the Parthenon and the other monuments on the Acropolis Hill. The urban walk tour includes the broader area of Athens. Among other sites, it includes: Zappion, Syntagma Square, Temple of Olympian Zeus, Ancient Roman Agora and on Acropolis Hill: the Propylaea, the Temple of Athena Nike, the Erechtheion, and the Parthenon. The program of the tour may be adjusted, if there is a need beyond our control. This is a private event organized by the Athens Institute exclusively for the conference participants.

21:00-23:00

Ancient Athenian Dinner

Wednesday 29 July 2026
An Educational Visit to Selected Islands
or Nafplio & Mycenae Visit

Thursday 30 July 2026
Visiting the Oracle of Delphi

Friday 31 July 2026
Visiting the Ancient Corinth and Cape Sounion

Norizan Abdullah

Researcher, University of Southampton, UK

Paul Smith

Professor, University of Southampton, UK

&

Olga Maslovskaya

Professor, University of Southampton, UK

The Association between Sectoral and Business Characteristics and Entrepreneurial Outcomes in Brunei

Entrepreneurship is reflected in the creation of new businesses and their performance. However, firm emergence and performance vary across economic sectors and business characteristics. Empirical evidence on the role of sectors and business characteristics in entrepreneurship formation in Brunei is limited. This study examines the associations between sectoral and business characteristics and entrepreneurial outcomes, focusing on business entry and performance (measured by revenue and employment) in Brunei. This study uses the Annual Census of Enterprises (ACE) data from 2017 to 2022. New firm entry is analysed using negative binomial regression, and firm performance is analysed using a multilevel model. The key findings show that new firm entry rates vary across sectors, with higher rates in wholesale and retail trade and accommodation and food service activities. In contrast, firm performance, measured by revenue and employment, is determined more by internal firm characteristics, such as size, age, and ownership form, than by industry sector. This contributes to the entrepreneurship literature by examining how sector and firm characteristics shape firm entry and performance in Brunei using longitudinal ACE data. It also demonstrates how official data collections can be used to infer entrepreneurial activities. The findings provide insights into varying patterns of firm emergence and performance, offering evidence relevant for shaping Brunei's entrepreneurship policy.

Chekra Allani

Assistant Professor, Arab Open University – Kuwait, Kuwait

Bibliotherapy for Mental Wellbeing in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: The Role of Children's Literature in Educational Libraries

In an age of growing concern about students' emotional well-being, children's literature offers a valuable space for emotional identification, reflection, and resilience. When literary texts are carefully selected to help readers understand and process emotional experiences, they can serve a bibliotherapeutic function. This process resonates with the Aristotelian concept of catharsis, through which engagement with narrative may evoke, release, and transform emotions. The present study explores AI-enhanced bibliotherapy as a structured educational approach. It examines how the emotional power of literary narratives can be combined with the supportive capacities of artificial intelligence.

Using a survey methodology, data were collected from 123 teachers across selected Kuwaiti schools. The study examined their awareness, perceptions, and concerns regarding the use of literature to support students' emotional well-being. The findings reveal considerable interest in bibliotherapeutic practices, alongside recurring challenges. These include limited teacher training, time constraints, curriculum integration, lack of resources, AI awareness, and ethical concerns.

Drawing on these findings, the study proposes the AI-Enhanced Bibliotherapy Model (AEBM). This five-stage educational framework encompasses the identification of emotional needs, AI-assisted text selection, guided reading, creative response, and light monitoring. Within the model, AI serves as a carefully mediated pedagogical aid rather than a substitute for teachers, books, or human interaction. By bringing the Aristotelian concept of catharsis into dialogue with contemporary AI-assisted literary engagement, the study presents stories as forms of emotional scaffolding. The study does not claim to treat clinical conditions but proposes a preventive educational approach that can provide early emotional support, particularly for neurodivergent learners, and may help prevent associated emotional difficulties from escalating to a level requiring clinical intervention.

David Bodoff

Senior Lecturer, University of Haifa, Israel

Attribution Theory for Understanding Information Search

The literature on information search has developed theories and models about how people seek information, including models of how searchers utilize the affordances that are found in libraries or the Internet, such as online card catalogs and search engines. A search session consists of numerous iterations; in each iteration, the searcher submits a query (or AI prompt), observes results, and plots his/her next steps. One key driver of how this process unfolds, is the attributions that the searcher makes regarding the reasons for any shortcomings in the results he/she has gotten so far, e.g. whether the query/prompt was not well formulated, the search engine or AI is imperfect, a website was misleading, and so on. The searcher's next actions depend upon the searcher's attributions regarding the cause of failure. Prior research in the field of information search has not adopted a theoretically-grounded approach to understanding these causal attributions. Attribution theory provides theory-based predictions and explanations regarding the searcher's attributions, which are a key driver of how a search session unfolds. On the flip side, the case of information search raises interesting new questions and challenges for established attribution theory. For these reasons, we view the inter-relating of AT and theories of information search as promising significant opportunities for theory development of both.

Rachel Nefertari Boveja

Faculty Member, Indiana University - Political Advocacy and Civic
Engagement Program, USA

Space Diplomacy: Collaborative Policies for the Future of Space Governance and Law

Space Diplomacy is no longer the topic of science fiction, it is a firm reality that nations are not only taking seriously, but have been implementing steps to oversee, for decades. Managing national borders seated on the earth's crusts is one way to exact sovereignty on a planet. Defending those borders has caused world leaders to enact many laws and regulations which protect their interests, citizens, and quality of life. Borders on earth have been drawn on maps, divided up by walls and given symbolic names so that everyone knows where they are at any given time and exactly who rules that space. Yet, what happens when world leaders must make the case for who has the right to govern *fluid* space, more specifically, the space above the divided earth we all live on? And to whom, does the responsibility go to protect the earth and what needs to happen for all to feel protected? The ongoing battle for space governance and space diplomacy seeks to answer this question for those living on earth as well as those who seek to explore the borders beyond this planet. For now, those rights fall to those nations of which that air space sits directly above. This paper outlines diplomacy research involving productive strategies for space governance and successful collaboration. It will demonstrate how currently working together across the globe can aid in the future of the space race, cohesively rather than competitively. Space Diplomacy, after all, gives humans another chance to create something together, for the benefit of all.

Mor Deshen

Lecturer, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

&

Noa Aharony

Lecturer, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Artificial Intelligence Literacy among LIS Professionals: An Emerging Research Landscape

The rapid integration of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly generative AI (GenAI), into information environments has positioned Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals at the forefront of supporting AI literacy. Despite the growing body of research on AI literacy, systematic evidence focusing specifically on LIS professionals remains fragmented.

This study aims to map and synthesize existing research on AI literacy among LIS professionals, examining how the concept is defined, measured, and operationalized, as well as identifying associated variables, methodological trends, and research gaps.

A scoping review methodology was employed following the PRISMA-ScR framework.

The findings reveal a rapidly expanding yet uneven research landscape, characterized by a predominance of quantitative, self-report survey designs and a strong geographical concentration in the United States and South Asia.

Among LIS professionals, AI literacy is commonly conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive understanding, practical application, critical evaluation, and ethical awareness. However, measurement practices remain highly fragmented, with most studies relying on self-developed instruments and only limited use of validated scales.

AI literacy is associated with demographic, behavioral, and attitudinal factors, including age, education, professional experience, motivation, and institutional support. At the same time, qualitative insights and context-sensitive analyses remain underrepresented.

This study provides a comprehensive synthesis of AI literacy research focused on LIS professionals. It highlights key conceptual and methodological gaps and underscores the need for validated measurement tools, mixed-method approaches, and longitudinal designs. The findings contribute to advancing a more coherent understanding of AI literacy in LIS and offer directions for future

research and professional development in an AI-driven information landscape.

Samaneh Ebrahimabadi

Researcher, Finland Futures Research Center, University of Turku,
Finland

Temporal Dimensions in Corporate Foresight: Gaps, Approaches, and Future Directions

For future management to function as a dynamic capability, firms must intentionally and repeatedly shape—or realize—the futures they envision. They cannot rely solely on chance or short-term problem solving to achieve desired outcomes. Understanding such sustained engagement with the future requires examining how time itself is conceptualized.

A review of the corporate foresight literature reveals frequent references to the critical role of time in foresight activities, yet its conceptualization and operationalization remain fragmented. While corporate foresight studies extensively discuss methods, organizational integration, and outcomes, comparatively little attention has been paid to how timing, temporal horizons, and the dynamics of change are incorporated into foresight practice.

This paper presents a systematic review of academic literature on corporate foresight focused on temporal dimensions (databases: Scopus and Web of Science; period: 2005–2025). The review examines how studies approach time—as a planning horizon, a trigger for initiating foresight activities, or a factor shaping the updating of strategic insights—and highlights the absence of a comprehensive framework integrating these perspectives. By synthesizing existing knowledge, the study clarifies how time is conceptualized in corporate foresight and outlines gaps that require further empirical investigation.

Laima Gerlitz

Head of European Project Center, University of Wismar, Germany

**BIOCENTUM: A Quintuple-Helix Innovation Model for
Mobilising Businesses, Citizens and Municipalities
Around Urban Biodiversity - Lessons from the URBIO
BAUHAUS Project**

Urban biodiversity loss, compounded by intensifying climate pressures and development demands, poses a growing governance challenge for municipalities across Central Europe. This paper presents findings from the transnational participatory pilot testing of the BIOCENTUM (Biodiversity-Centered Urban Mindset) node model, implemented in four partner cities - Kranj (Slovenia), Pula (Croatia), Érd (Hungary), and Wrocław (Poland) - within the framework of the URBIOBauhaus project and the principles of the New European Bauhaus (NEB).

The BIOCENTUM model operates as a collaborative governance platform structured around the Quintuple Helix framework, integrating local authorities, academia, business actors, civil society, and aesthetic/creative stakeholders in co-creating nature-based urban biodiversity interventions. Drawing on Living Lab methodology, participatory design thinking, and iterative co-creation formats including World Café workshops, "Project in a Day" design sprints, open calls, and citizen science the nodes generated context-specific biodiversity action plans and pilot interventions tailored to each city's ecological and social conditions.

Despite marked differences in local challenges ranging from urban heat islands and habitat fragmentation in Kranj, coastal ecosystem vulnerability in Pula, community stewardship gaps in Érd, and light pollution impacts on nocturnal biodiversity in Wrocław the testing phase confirmed the model's flexibility and transferability across diverse urban contexts. Shared cross-cutting findings include the indispensability of multi-stakeholder governance, the importance of early, visible pilot actions as catalysts for community ownership, the role of data-informed engagement in grounding co-created solutions, and the value of embedding NEB principles of sustainability, inclusion, and aesthetics as operational design criteria rather than abstract guidelines.

The paper discusses key methodological lessons, the transnational added value of the BIOCENTUM approach, and strategic recommendations for institutionalising biodiversity as a structural element of urban planning. It also outlines a pathway toward a scalable

Urban Biodiverse Transition Roadmap applicable to other Central European municipalities seeking to integrate biodiversity governance into mainstream urban development processes.

Stephan Goetz

Professor and Director, Penn State University and The Northeast
Regional Center for Rural Development, USA

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**Determinants of Self-Employment and Income: Evidence
from Confidential U.S. Administrative and Census Data**

Self-employment, as one form of entrepreneurship, can be a critical path to an individuals' economic opportunity and mobility, but access to resources and success vary dramatically across demographic groups and geographic regions. Research on entrepreneurial activity in nonmetropolitan areas remains relatively limited compared to urban settings, and for reasons of data availability, few if any studies have examined how individual characteristics interact with regional economic factors across different population segments in determining self-employment outcomes. This paper examines how individual characteristics such as age, gender or race) influence self-employment income across different geographic contexts, and the role of local economic factors (e.g., labor force participation, natural amenities, social capital, credit access, and industry composition) in determining entrepreneurial outcomes.

We find nonlinear age effects in that self-employment first rises and then falls with age for most groups; population density is negatively associated with income in nonmetro areas, and positively in metro areas; natural amenities positively affect white entrepreneurs in nonmetro areas but have negative or insignificant for minority groups. Access to loans or credit consistently benefits most groups, with strongest effects for nonmetro white males and Hispanic females, while social capital has effects negative effects for nonmetro females, and positive effects in metro areas for white males. The local manufacturing share is positively

associated with self-employment income in nonmetro areas, and negatively in metro areas. In addition to discussing policy implications of the findings, we present limitations of the work and ideas for future research in this area.

Tamila Kartsivadze

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Social Media Marketing Challenges and Opportunities in Georgia - Analysis of Modern Approaches

The rapid development of digital technologies and the growing popularity of social media platforms have significantly changed the way businesses are conducted around the world. Georgia, as a country with an emerging economy, faces unique challenges in the process of digital transformation. Social media marketing represents both an opportunity and a challenge for Georgian businesses.

This study examines the challenges and opportunities of social media marketing worldwide. The study analyzes the barriers and opportunities for Georgian businesses in the process of digital transformation. Special attention is paid to the challenges of small and medium-sized enterprises in the effective use of social media for marketing purposes.

The conclusions and recommendations are developed based on the research we conducted, "Consumer Attitudes towards Managing Businesses with Social Media in Georgia" and "Business Representatives' Attitudes towards Managing Businesses with Social Media in Georgia".

Naila Keleta-Mae

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Black And Free: International Expressions

This paper maps out the discipline of Black Studies from a Canadian perspective; examines connections between Blackness and freedom are interconnected through the examination of two sites of Black expressive culture: Art Biennale in Venice (2024) and the Accompong Town celebration of liberation in Jamaica (2024). Together, these sites provide historical and contemporary examples of the pursuit of freedom for Black people from the 18th to 21st century. These sites were selected for their cultural significance and prominence in the region and community while the findings reported in the paper are meant to determine the extent to which each site is a case study in freedom as a form of expressive culture.

Art Biennale began in 1895 as an exhibition of Italian Art but it has evolved into a large international event supported by national governments, art dealers, and private sponsorships. Art Biennale was of particular interest because it provides a unique opportunity to engage with the work of Black artists from countries in a range of geographical regions. Accompong Town is a village in Jamaica where descendants of the Maroons have lived autonomously since the 18th century. The Maroons were Africans who escaped enslavement by the Spanish and waged wars against the colonial authorities. I visited in 2024 for the town's annual celebration of the signing of a treaty in 1739 with the British. This reading of Art Biennale and Accompong Town will be theoretically and methodologically underpinned by feminist, critical race, performance studies, and autoethnography.

This paper is part of my larger research-creation project called Black And Free that I started in 2017 and have developed into sub-projects including commissions to Black visual artists; two art exhibitions; international research site visits; and multi-year partnerships with private, public, and community organizations. The pursuit of freedom has been a central preoccupation of Black people ever since the advent of the TransAtlantic slave trade in the 16th century, when Europeans led the taking of Africans from their lands to build European settlements in North America and the Caribbean (Bakare-Yusuf; Cooper; Fanon; McKittrick; Williams). For the past five centuries, Black people in these geographical regions have used visual art, performance, theatre, events, rituals, and other means of expression to imagine and advocate for freedom in public and private spheres that influence everyday life

(Brand; Collins; Crenshaw; hooks). My research-creation project, *Black And Free*, has brought together scholars, artists, students, and the public in the examination of how Black expressive culture constitutes distinct ways in which Black people express agency, explore power, and create conditions in which freedom can be imagined and lived.

This conference paper draws on research supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Sibongile Ngwenya

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&

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An Informetric Study of the Co-existence of Open Science and Intellectual Property Rights

The concept of Open Science (OS) is spurring new visions, principles, and practices for how research and innovation are performed. However, there seems to be a lot of debate around the co-existence of OS and Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) in an environment where there have always been tensions between IPRs and access to knowledge. This article presents results of an informetrics analysis of scholarly literature on the intersections of OS and IPRs (1970-2024) using Scopus and VOS Viewer. 3 459 documents were retrieved, mostly being articles (2 404) in English (3 325). The keyword map showed varied cluster colours and numerous keywords. Trends in the growth of scholarly literature on OS and IPRs indicated by the colours progression, showed that very little research on the subject took place before the year 2000. The highest number of documents came from the United States (981) and the global north dominated funding for scholarly discourse on the intersections of OS and IPRs. The study concluded that the co-existence of OS and IPRs is a topic that has gained attention among scholars especially in the global north and has been growing over the years earning support from leading journals and institutions. To improve scholarly output on the intersection of OS and IPRs, the OS approach needs to be clearly defined and the IP framework reviewed. It is also essential to boost open collaborative research and strengthen the capacity of the Global South to participate in the OS and IPRs discourse.

Kagiso Phake

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Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in Addressing Unemployment Challenges in Mahikeng Local Municipality

The EPWP programmes in South Africa were designed and implemented as intervention strategies that would assist in reducing unemployment especially in disadvantaged communities. The development of such programmes in South Africa came as a response to the United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development Goals. In South Africa such programmes were developed and implemented to address SDG 1: No poverty, SDG 2: Zero hunger and SDG 8 which is decent work and economic growth. This study's main objective is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Expanded Public Works Programme and to understand how it addresses the unemployment challenges in Mahikeng local Municipality. To achieve this, the study relies on the Keynesian economics theory of unemployment as the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

The study further explained that unemployment in South Africa remains one of the most pressing socio-economic problems in the country which in turn results in a high poverty rate, high inequalities, which then leads to problems of high crime rates and social unrests. A qualitative approach was used for this study and data was collected using semi-structured interview guide, interviews were conducted with both the EPWP officials and the EPWP participants in Mahikeng Local Municipality. Thus, the study relied on a case study analysis approach. The findings of the study revealed that the EPWP programme was developed for short-term employment opportunities and bared no long-term economic opportunities for its participants, this came because of the programme having limited skills development training, no job placements upon completion of the programme and limited to no resources during the undertaking of the programme. The study concluded that for the EPWP programme to be effective, the duration of the programme must be made longer, the Programme should re-design its structure and provide its participants with skills that are job market ready, through this the programme will be effective with regards to creating long-term employment.

This study therefore seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in addressing unemployment challenges in Mahikeng Local Municipality. The study

furthermore investigates how the programme is implemented in the respective local municipality.

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&

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Re-Examining the CEAI Factor Structure in SMEs and Large Organizations in Serbia

This study re-examines the dimensional stability of the Corporate Entrepreneurship Assessment Instrument (CEAI) in Serbia by assessing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and large organizations separately. Using firm-size-specific subsamples, it evaluates the factorability of the 48-item instrument and compares factor retention, item-loading patterns, and cross-size consistency of the latent structure. Rather than assuming that the original CEAI configuration is invariant across organizational contexts, the analysis investigates whether firm-size-related structural heterogeneity emerges and whether context-sensitive measurement refinement is warranted in a transitional economy. By framing organizational size as a potential source of measurement instability, the study contributes to comparative construct validation and provides evidence on the robustness and interpretive limits of CEAI outside its original institutional setting.

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Financialization and the Supplementary Health System in Brazil: A Bibliographic Study

The supplementary health sector in Brazil (the private healthcare system) has become increasingly susceptible to the impacts of financialization, a process wherein financial logic dictates the operation of markets and social services. Understanding this phenomenon is critical, as the capital accumulation processes of healthcare providers in Brazil may influence public access to rights guaranteed by the 1988 Federal Constitution. This qualitative and bibliographic research aims to survey and analyze academic studies addressing the presence of financialization within the Brazilian supplementary health system. The study draws upon scientific articles, dissertations, and theses sourced from national and international academic databases. The methodology entails the construction of a theoretical-analytical framework grounded in political economy, emphasizing key concepts and perspectives on the subject. The research is justified by the necessity of understanding how financialization shapes the supplementary health sector and its potential to exacerbate inequalities in healthcare access. The findings include a bibliographic synthesis that contributes to the critical development of social actors and enriches the academic discourse on the relationship between healthcare provision, markets, and financialization in the Brazilian economy.

Maria Santos

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The Management of Ethics: A Case Study

Corruption knows no boundaries, occurs worldwide, and is susceptible to jeopardising business competitiveness and market confidence while also undermining economic and democratic development. This article analyses the procedures that companies and institutions adopt to ensure conformity and compliance with the legal and regulatory framework in effect for the sector and designed to prevent infringements and to detect irregularities, as well as to minimise risks. We furthermore consider how compliance programs influence senior management decisions and contribute towards establishing ethically responsible business practices. The empirical research was based upon a case study of a multinational company running a worldwide compliance program. We focus our analysis on the compliance policies in effect within the context of the organisation within the scope of three secondary objectives: i) studying how compliance programs are integrated into the respective sustainability strategy and its underlying justifying logics, ii) analysing whether or not leaders drive such ethical cultures and how this is actually achieved in the workplace, and iii) identifying just which initiatives and development action plans have been put into effect and how these influence strategic decision making and employee behaviors. The case study showed that sustainability is seen as a key factor in strengthening competitiveness. This occurs by channelling innovation in products and services toward sustainable practices and by directing company management to focus on the long term. Regarding the compliance program, although it is described as a way to strengthen ethical culture, attention is often given to other tools. These include business behaviour guidelines and training programs. The study highlights the importance of formal mechanisms that implement ethical standards. Examples include guidelines, tools, and compliance programs, supported by training initiatives and communication channels. These mechanisms actively put programs into practice and raise awareness about ethics within the organisational culture. The study concludes that anti-corruption corporate policies can be effectively implemented. It also shows the influence and effectiveness of compliance programs on strategic leadership at both top and middle management levels. In summary, the research demonstrates how ethics are incorporated into employee targets and objectives.

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Crain Soudien

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Assessing South African Higher Education's Management of its International Policy for Academic Staff

In 2019 the South African Department of Higher Education and Technology (DHET), the department responsible for the oversight of universities, developed “The Policy Framework for the Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa”. In this paper I look at the ways in which the universities have worked with this policy. Two important elements about the policy were, i) the embedding of Africanisation *in* the idea of Internationalisation, and ii) an explicit commitment to the government’s employment equity policy which stipulates that each institution should develop a plan for the medium to long term employment of historically under-represented demographic groups, particularly that of black South African nationals. The purpose of the paper, working with a critical understanding of the DHET policy and its commitment to giving priority to the employment of academics designated as African South Africans, and the broad internationalisation literature which suggests that the presence of foreign academics in higher education institutions is good for the educational experience of students and is good for raising standards of excellence, is to begin an evaluation of the approach emerging in South Africa. I ask what the dangers are, what opportunities and risks are developing and what a reasonable forward looking path might look like. I do so through a description and analysis of internationalisation trends in the country’s 26 universities, and an analysis of the contribution international staff are making to teaching and research in key disciplines and fields.

Raid Suleiman

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**Challenges of Disappearance Printed Arabic Newspapers
Archive in the Digital Environment
(A Case Study: AL-Hussein bin Talal Newspapers Archive)**

This study reviews the most important global and Arab experiences in digitizing printed newspapers and the importance of this in preserving global documentary heritage. Therefore, this study aims to diagnose the current state of printed newspaper archives and the digital transformation in the world and the Arab region. It also examines the challenges facing the archiving and digitization of printed newspapers, presenting global and regional experiences, including the experience of Al-Hussein Bin Talal University in Jordan in archiving and digitizing articles published about the late King Hussein Bin Talal in Egyptian newspapers.

One of the most important findings of the study is the necessity of digitizing printed newspapers to preserve documentary heritage and transmit it to future generations, and to avoid destroying the original printed newspapers after digital archiving, as scanned documents do not perfectly reflect their analog counterparts. The results also indicate that digitizing previous issues of printed newspapers has enabled researchers to access them. Otherwise, obtaining information from printed newspapers is difficult, and newspaper digitization processes face significant financial challenges. Furthermore, the study reveals that the archiving of internet content and multimedia elements is fragmented or nonexistent. In the Arab world, efforts are underway to digitize traditional newspapers, but these efforts represent only a small part of the process. If the digitization of printed Arabic newspapers is not accelerated, the Arab world will lose an important documentary legacy of printed newspapers. This can only be achieved through collaborative projects.

An-Chun Teng

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When Natural Disasters Become Governance Crises: Media Narratives of Crisis Management and Disaster Governance in Taiwan

This study examines how a natural disaster is transformed into governance and political accountability issue through media narratives. Using the 2025 Hualien Mataian River overflow disaster in Taiwan as a case study, the research explores how Taiwanese mainstream news media framed crisis causation, responsibility attribution, and political accountability during and after the disaster.

Drawing upon Crisis Communication and Media Framing Theory, the study employs quantitative content analysis to examine 175 news articles published in three major Taiwanese newspapers: *China Times*, *United Daily News*, and *Liberty Times* between September 23 and October 23, 2025. The analysis focuses on three main dimensions: crisis causation, responsibility attribution, and politicization.

The findings reveal that although media coverage predominantly framed the disaster as a natural issue caused by extreme weather conditions, a substantial proportion of news reports simultaneously attributed responsibility to government institutions and specific political actors. The results further demonstrate significant differences among newspapers in their attribution of responsibility. While some newspapers emphasized central government accountability, others focused on local governments and individual political leaders. In addition, over two-thirds of the news items involved political accusations or accountability-oriented discourse, indicating a strong tendency toward the politicization of disaster coverage.

The study suggests that contemporary disaster reporting is no longer limited to the dissemination of environmental risks and physical losses. On the contrary, disasters are increasingly turning into governance crises, and media coverage influences the public evaluations of government performance, accountability, and crisis management capabilities. The findings contribute to understanding of the relationship between media framing, crisis communication, and disaster governance, while also highlighting the importance of media literacy in interpreting politically contentious disaster issues.

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&

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Anxiety at Work: Key Themes and Future Directions

According to the World Health Organization, employee experiences of anxiety in the workplace contribute to more than 12 billion lost workdays annually, resulting in productivity losses exceeding one trillion USD each year (World Health Organization, 2024). In recognition of the substantial costs associated with maladaptive workplace anxiety, organizational scholars have increasingly sought to better understand this phenomenon. Since the beginning of the 21st century, research examining the role of anxiety in the workplace and its implications for employees has grown considerably. However, the prevailing assumption that anxiety yields predominantly negative consequences for employees is not as straightforward as it may initially appear. Broader conceptual theorizing and a growing body of empirical work suggest a more nuanced and complex picture. Indeed, the study of work-related anxiety presents several complexities: anxiety can manifest in multiple forms, it can be experienced both between and within individuals, and its antecedents and consequences are wide-ranging and varied.

The purpose of this presentation is to examine the key themes in the study of anxiety in the workplace over the past 25 years. This period reflects work that is most relevant to contemporary and emerging work contexts and encompasses the majority of research conducted on the topic. Our focus is on anxiety experienced at and within the workplace in its broadest sense, rather than solely on specific forms of workplace anxiety often defined in relation to employee performance. Additionally, we concentrate primarily on articles published in leading organizational psychology and management journals, enabling us to highlight key findings regarding both the detrimental and potentially beneficial consequences of employee anxiety that are most influential in shaping the current state of the organizational literature. We emphasize that the aim of this presentation is not to provide an exhaustive review of every study examining anxiety within organizational contexts. Rather, our

objective is to synthesize key insights and overarching themes, while identifying important gaps that warrant further scholarly attention. In doing so, we also aim to offer practical insights that may inform employees and organizational leaders.

In the discussion that follows, we pursue five primary objectives. First, we provide a broad conceptual discussion of anxiety in the workplace and distinguish it from related constructs. Second, we examine the importance of distinguishing between trait and state anxiety how research at each level contributes to understanding workplace experiences. Third, we outline the conditions under which anxiety may produce not only detrimental outcomes but also functional and potentially beneficial consequences for employees. Fourth, we highlight research trends across the diverse range of domain-specific anxieties experienced by employees, as well as across the organizational contexts in which these phenomena occur. Finally, we discuss promising directions for future research and identify key considerations for practitioners, with the goal of providing insights that can guide both scholarship and practice on workplace anxiety.

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&

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Foreign Direct Investment and Financial Markets

Foreign direct investment (FDI) occurs when a firm invests resources in business activities outside its home country. Evidence indicated that FDI had played a significant role in the global economy as cross-border investments increased in 1990s through early 2000s.

Capital markets are subject to swings in value and when capital moves across borders, these swings are amplified by the lack of knowledge of domestic institutions and exchange-rate risk. Foreign companies that undertake direct investments (buying of factories, building infrastructure) help alleviate a lack of domestic savings and investment to speed up GDP growth in the FDI receiving country.

The primary hypothesis in this paper is that stock market variables are among the key determinants of FDI inflows. We contribute to and expand upon the literature on the linkages between FDI and financial variables along the lines of Grave, Vardiabasis and Yavas (2019) and Yavas and Malladi (2020). This objective is carried out by studying the financial variables, (i.e., returns and volatilities of the stock markets) along with the traditional factors (GDP growth, exchange rates, and inflation rates) frequently found in FDI literature. The paper's contribution is to include the long-ignored financial variables.

The literature on the determinants of FDI is extensive. Two distinct approaches may be noted. Macro approaches draw on modern international trade theories to explain the location of multinational production. Micro or firm-level approaches explore the motivations behind FDI and try to explain why, and which firms are more likely to become foreign investors. Both approaches examine exogenous or endogenous variables that give firms ownership advantages for international expansion. These advantages include such things as management expertise, technological skills, firm size, etc. (Dunning, 1973). On the other hand, exogenous variables that affect a firm's FDI decisions, such as market size and labor costs and market imperfections which imply some location advantages for establishing in a host country have been suggested among the FDI determinants (Bergstrand & Egger,

2007; Buckley & Casson, 1976; Carr, Markusen, & Maskus, 2001; Markusen, 1984). The brief review of the FDI literature above indicates that the exclusion of the capital market or financial variables is a gap/omission to be addressed. This paper attempts to include financial variables among the determinants of FDI. In so doing, the paper will help improve the understanding of such phenomena as market entry and its timing. Therefore, we propose to include as financial variables both returns and volatilities of the equity market of the FDI receiving country among the determinants of incoming FDI flows.

The rationale is as follows: if stock market returns and volatilities in the target country result in an undervaluation of the firm's capital this may affect FDI decisions and their form. Companies might favor mergers and acquisitions (M&A) over establishing new operations through greenfield investments. Similarly, the timing of investments may be affected. In times of high volatility, delay to the start date of investment projects is prudent and this may foreshadow less investment. This paper asks whether and when equity market returns and volatilities may influence the pattern and timing of FDI decisions by MNEs.

One can argue that both the decision of "where" to invest (location) and "how" to invest (mode of entry) as well as the timing of investment are affected by the equity markets' performance. Using multinational companies as the focus, we find that the 2007-2008 financial crisis altered FDI (greenfield and M&A), trade, and other entry strategies. MNEs have responded to the financial crisis by focusing on growth opportunities outside their home country regions, expanding their geographic diversification and investments in secondary markets.

We collected data from selected MNE executives to gain insight and answers based on their experience, history, and investment expertise. To help design the survey, a literature review was conducted, and key challenges of cross-border investments (FDI) were discussed with managers from multinational enterprises across various industries. The names of the target company executives gathered through the students of the Executive MBA program of a University in California. The participants included in the sample were from large MNEs, with at least 5000 employees and at least \$5bn in annual revenue located in California, MN, NY, MA, GA, WA, and Texas. Various industries from multiple regions were deliberately included in these efforts.

All of the respondents indicated that their firms track the market following unstable market activity particularly if related to their financials. The main idea expressed is that market volatility increases and equity returns decline during crises. During normal times, however, MNEs focus on key countries where innovation is extremely fertile and

opportunity to impact their industry and core business is relevant. Key evaluation focus is related to the core capabilities of the business and potential to impact financial performance. Although macro variables like equity returns and volatility are tracked, evaluation primarily centers on micro conditions specific to the target M&A company and its capabilities. All of the firms responding to the survey indicated that they track financial market trends as part of their M&A diligence process.

All the interviewed executives agreed that stock market volatility affects corporate strategy as does the amount of cash holdings of the company. These two factors represent a firm's rating and the ability to sustain the company under threatening market conditions. This is in line with the findings of Meier et al. (2013) in that high pre-crisis levels of debt had a negative impact on firm value during the latest financial crisis, supporting the hypothesis that financial flexibility has value.

Daniel Weissglass

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Confucian Constitutionalism and the Oppressive Marginalization of Non/Anti-Confucians

In the book *Confucian Constitutionalism: Dignity, Rights, and Democracy* (Kim 2023), and elsewhere throughout their work, Kim argues that public discourse governed by Confucian values can provide a viable alternative to Liberal conceptions of public reason which demand we not depend on particular conceptions of the good life in contributing to public discourse - without bringing about the oppressive harms of ideological that motivates the Liberal model. In Kim's own words: "Even if [some citizens] may find all or some of these values (as traditionally understood and practiced) offensive, how would this fundamentally invalidate the political legitimacy of Confucian democracy if, first, these values are accommodated to and modified by democratic institutions, values, and practices and, second, all citizens enjoy political equality, and their basic rights and liberties, including the right to form a voluntary association based on their own comprehensive doctrines, are fully protected by the constitution? The state in question might not be a liberal state, but what makes this Confucian "democratic" state oppressive?" (Kim, 2023, p. 86).

In response, I answer this question by highlighting two significant harms for non-Confucians which arise from Kim's model of Confucian public reason for non- or anti-Confucian citizens:

1. Hermeneutic injustice in light of the forced adoption of a hermeneutic framework for public discourse which may impair their ability to make public meaning from their values and experience.
2. 'Expressive marginalization in which they and their values are explicitly identified as relatively less important than others.

I argue that these are significant oppressive harms which fall on paradigmatic citizens (i.e., roughly those we would expect to be citizens prior to any deep theorizing), and are therefore objectionable. I then examine three possible responses that Kim might make: that such harm occurs with equal severity in Liberal systems (they don't), whether Kim's arguments successfully show that such harms will be rare (they don't), and whether non-/anti-Confucian's may simply deserve such treatment (they don't). I then flag some potential paths for further efforts to respond

to these threats while retaining Kim's general approach to Confucian public reason.

Ewell Mnelisi Xaba

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Tapping into Loyalty, the Online Grocery Experience in South Africa

Online grocery retailing is gaining traction globally, and South Africa is no exception. This study aimed to investigate the factors influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty towards online grocery platforms within the South African context. Despite the increasing adoption of online grocery shopping initially driven by the restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic recent trends suggest a reversion to traditional brick-and-mortar shopping. This shift shows the urgency for online retailers to better understand their customer base to mitigate potential cannibalisation. A quantitative research approach was adopted, using a descriptive survey design to collect primary data from 637 online grocery shoppers through a structured online questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were analysed using SPSS version 29.0 to establish the demographic profile of respondents. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) via the latest SmartPLS software was employed to test the hypothesised relationships. The Partial Least Squares SEM approach was chosen due to its suitability for complex model estimation, predictive accuracy, and efficacy under resource constraints. The findings indicate that perceived convenience, trust, website usability, product variety, and delivery efficiency significantly influence customer satisfaction. In turn, satisfaction strongly correlates with customer loyalty. These results highlight the importance of enhancing digital service quality and trust mechanisms to sustain consumer retention. This study contributes to academic discourse by contextualising online consumer behaviour within an emerging market. It further offers practical recommendations to South African online grocery retailers, providing strategies for retaining existing customers in an increasingly competitive omnichannel retail environment.

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Using LLM-as-a-Judge for Scenario Development: A Methodological Framework for Evaluating Scenario Logics and Narratives

Generative AI is increasingly being used in strategic foresight to support scenario development. However, as AI systems make it easier to generate large numbers of candidate scenarios, the bottleneck shifts from production to evaluation: which alternatives deserve further development, which narratives are useful, and which outputs are fit for a particular user and strategic purpose?

This paper proposes a three-stage methodological framework that adapts "LLM-as-a-judge" – the use of large language models as evaluative agents, originally developed in machine-learning evaluation – for AI-assisted scenario development.

First, judges support scenario logic evaluation: because the human mind can compare only a handful of alternatives, foresight has traditionally collapsed a large combinatorial space of drivers and uncertainties into a 2×2 matrix or four-to-five scenarios. Pairing LLM generation with evaluation may relax this constraint by making it easier to explore a wider range of candidate configurations. Second, judges evaluate scenario narratives against selected foresight-specific criteria, such as plausibility, novelty, distinctiveness. Third, judges assess whether scenarios are sufficiently *tailored* to the intended user and strategic decision context.

We propose a recursive workflow – generate, judge, critique, filter, revise, re-evaluate – through transparent human-machine feedback loops. We demonstrate it on an illustrative set of AI-generated candidate scenarios, running them through multiple loops, and report initial findings on both its promise and its limitations. Two challenges stand out: how far judge evaluations can be aligned with the end-user's purpose, and how to scale automation without displacing the human sense-making that gives foresight much of its value.

The paper contributes a practical bridge between AI evaluation methods and scenario-development practice and outlines an open evaluation harness for future practice-based validation.

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Technology Foresight in China: Methods and Practices

China's research and practice in technology foresight began in the post-reform era. In the 1980s, foresight studies in China mainly focused on economic and social development. In the 1990s, China began to place greater emphasis on foresight studies related to science and technology. In 1992, the State Science and Technology Commission, the predecessor of the Ministry of Science and Technology, organized a study on the selection of key national technologies. In May 1995, it released a list of key technologies in four major fields: information technology, biotechnology, manufacturing technology, and materials technology. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the Ministry of Science and Technology has organized the fourth, fifth, and sixth rounds of national technology foresight programs. These activities have provided important analytical support for the formulation of China's national science, technology, and innovation strategies and plans, and have gradually become a regular component of science and technology governance.

In addition to technology foresight exercises organized by national science and technology authorities, China's national academies, professional associations, and science policy research institutions have also conducted foresight studies. From 2003 to 2005, the Chinese Academy of Sciences organized the project "Technology Foresight for China over the Next 20 Years." In 2015, the Institute of Science and Development of the Chinese Academy of Sciences launched a major

consulting project entitled “Technology Foresight and Development Strategy in Key Areas Supporting Innovation-Driven Transformation,” thereby initiating a new round of research on technology foresight for China over the next 20 years. In 2015 and 2021, the Chinese Academy of Engineering and the National Natural Science Foundation of China jointly organized studies on China’s Engineering Science and Technology Development Strategy toward 2035 and 2040, both of which incorporated technology foresight research. From 2019 to 2020, the National Academy of Innovation Strategy of the China Association for Science and Technology also carried out technology foresight research toward 2035 in six fields: integrated circuits, intelligent transportation, cybersecurity, advanced materials, life sciences and health, and new energy. In addition, several Chinese provinces have conducted technology foresight studies for local industries, providing support for regional science, technology, and industrial development.

In these technology foresight processes, Chinese researchers have applied a range of methods, including vision and needs analysis, literature review, Delphi surveys, expert panels, key technology selection, and technology roadmapping. Over time, they have developed an approach that combines qualitative and quantitative analysis, as well as expert judgment and data-based assessment. More recently, China has also begun to incorporate artificial intelligence and big-data analytics into technology foresight. Against this background, this report reviews the development of technology foresight in China and introduces its major methods and practices.

Abilio Zacarias

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Characteristics of Board Chairs for More Effective Recruitment During Financial Crises

Purpose - Analysing the board of directors of companies is a relevant and timely topic despite having already been the focus of many studies over recent decades. As a representative of the shareholders, the board is the most senior management body of a company. Boards appoint a board chair who, ultimately, represents the company. Thus, understanding the most suitable type of candidates for recruitment for board leadership positions holds great interest. Therefore, knowing what kind of candidates should be nominated, what characteristics they should have for board leadership in times of financial crisis, those able to contribute towards better company performance, certainly holds great interest.

Methodology - This research provides a quantitative description of the trend in Portuguese companies through the study of a sample. This study was transversal, deployed questionnaires for the data collection process with the intention of returning generalisable results. The study applied information collected by surveying the person in charge of the day-to-day management of 1,000 largest non-financial companies and the 100 largest financial companies in Portugal. We processed the data through StataNow 18.5, applying multivariate analysis (MANOVA) to the variables.

Findings - The study affirms that many boards in the sample run dual leadership structures. Agency theory and stewardship theory postulate different characteristics for the board chair, but our results provide proof for either perspective. These results are in line with the conclusions of a group of researchers that maintain there is a lack of substantive and systematic evidence of any causal relationship between board leadership and the performance of companies. On the other hand, they did validate the behavioural theory of firms (BToF) in concluding that experience interlinks with levels of organisational performance.

Originality - Analysing companies not listed on financial markets is also relevant not only because of their representativeness in the economy but also because they receive very little research attention with this study thus unprecedented. This article also reaches beyond the scope of Anglo-Saxon countries.

Practical implications – The characteristics that board chairs should hold to ensure more effective organisations.

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