

# Research Connections



**LEICESTER CASTLE  
BUSINESS SCHOOL**  
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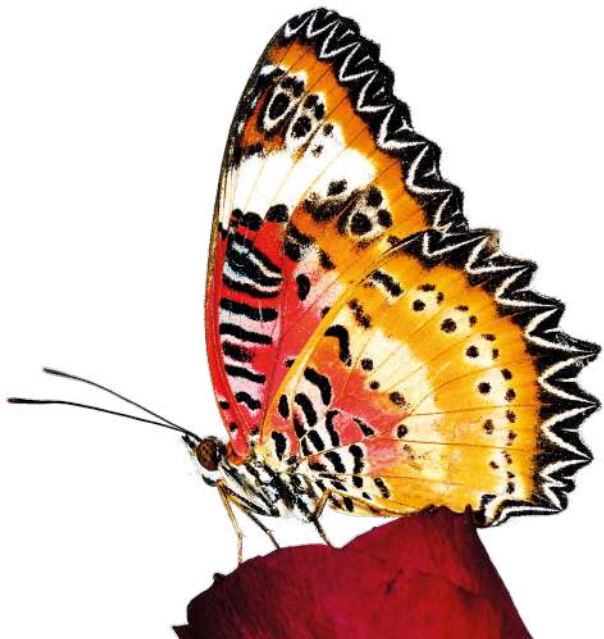
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## Foreword

**Public value should be at the heart of a modern business school's research activity. Our, already VUCA\*, world was turned upside down in the early months of 2020 as we saw the COVID-19 virus rampage quickly across the globe. Scientific researchers at the cutting edge of treatment and immunity breakthrough stepped up to the mark. But so too have the social scientists, who continue to work on the grand challenges of our age and, in these uncertain times, examine how society can respond.**

We embrace the public value ethos in our Faculty of Business and Law at De Montfort University. The articles in this, our first, edition of Research Connections, were drafted before the globalised spread of COVID-19, and yet they speak to the values most needed for a resilient world – as we emerge from the effects of the pandemic crisis.

The future of work is the focus of Jonathan Payne and Caroline Lloyd's article – asking what cost we might put on the price of increased productivity through robotics and AI. Dave Walsh and Laura Pajon-Moreno examine another side to the world of work – modern slavery is a scourge in some industries, but there is much that can be done in partnership working with the police.

Partnerships are at the heart of Kassa Woldesenbet-Beta's approach to working with small and medium enterprises, and they are crucial to a better understanding of cyber crime issues – as Edward Cartwright has found.

As social distancing measures bore down on pubs, cinemas, theatres and all 'non-essential' businesses in the wake of COVID-19, creative industries were among the first to feel the brunt of the measures. This followed a context of low investment, compared with other parts of the globe – as Rachel Granger shows in her article.

We know too, that incidences of domestic violence increased during the time that citizens were told to 'Stay Home. Save Lives'.

This was not just in the UK, but figures from across the globe showed an increase. Vanessa Bettinson's work on the leading edge of the academic support for the legal team defending Sally Challen, demonstrates the very real need to properly understand coercive control, particularly, within the debate on domestic and family violence.


In the first part of 2020 we saw the importance of the state in guiding the country through the pandemic crisis. The NHS, rightly, were recognised as vital to the response and resources were, properly, boosted. Local councils played their part in the work to support citizens who needed to apply for universal credit following unemployment, sharing public advice messages and keeping vital local services going. For too long the role of local councils – and local councillors – has been underestimated, argue Colin Copus and Steven Griggs. Human capital, and character, are at the heart of our public value approach – Peter Stokes debates this further. Valeria Guarneros-Meza's article explores the issue of environmental conflicts in Mexico.

Finally, whilst travel and data collection came to an abrupt halt, it is important to ensure our international connections and interdisciplinary research continue. In his reflection on running Enterprise 'boot camps' in Africa, Seun Kolade demonstrates the value in this work. But that is not to say that we should return to 'business as usual' necessarily, in terms of flying around the world to undertake our research. Kate Wilkinson Cross writes the closing article in this magazine by highlighting some of the issues that researchers should consider to improve environmental sustainability.

I hope you enjoy this inaugural issue of our research magazine.

**Professor Jo Richardson**  
Associate Dean Research

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\*Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous





## Might we need more robots? Comparing food and drink processing in the UK and Norway

*Jonathan Payne and Caroline Lloyd*

The last few years have seen a number of gloomy publications predicting that robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) will destroy vast numbers of jobs, with dire economic and social consequences. These warnings have been heard before – most recently in the 1990s when microcomputers were accompanied by prophecies of a ‘jobless future’. However, although some jobs were lost at the time, many more new ones were created.

Much of the research in this field either involves abstract assessment of technological capabilities and the potential to replace humans, or focuses on engineering or computing challenges and possibilities. There is very little research that examines the societal context and how these technologies are actually impacting on jobs. Investment can be costly and risky for employers, with no guarantee technology will be taken up. There are decisions over when and where to invest, and whether jobs will be replaced or changed. The same applies to how jobs are ‘redesigned’ around technology and its impact on skills. Comparing countries offers the opportunity to examine the societal context and address the role of institutions, interests and power. The power of social actors, such as employers and trade unions, and the roles they play are different across developed countries. These may have an important bearing on the development of robotics and AI, take-up and work outcomes. Our research focuses on Norway and the UK. We have undertaken ‘scoping’ interviews with robotics/AI scientists, developers and funders, along with representatives from employer associations and trade unions, and examined their views on the pace of technological change and the impact of robotics/AI on jobs. The second phase of the research, funded by the British Academy and Leverhulme, examined the use of autonomous-guided vehicles in hospital logistics and the

implementation of robotics in the food and drink processing sector. Here, we provide a brief overview of our findings from the scoping project, along with some examples from five food and drink processing companies, three in Norway and two in the UK.

### Tech capabilities and the jobless future?

Talking with robot researchers and developers can be rather sobering in terms of what these technologies cannot do, and the timescale over which current limitations might be overcome. Computers can now outperform humans at certain rule-bound problems and the rapid processing of information; they can beat a world chess champion or master the game ‘Go’. But when it comes to replicating human behaviour, using contextual knowledge, intuition and language capability, AI still has a very long way to go. As one Norwegian researcher put it, ‘there’s a lot of artificial, and very little intelligence.’ Similarly, physical robots struggle to match human flexibility and dexterity. While a robot can pick up bottles and place them in a box, grasping wet fish, of varied size and shape, or arranging a piece of lettuce for a sandwich, present major challenges. Robotic vacuums can clean large empty spaces but a hospital ward is a different proposition. Some commentators argue these ‘limitations’ will soon be overcome. Our interviews with robotic developers suggest this is likely to be a gradual and lengthy process. In addition, the creation of a technological solution does not mean it will be developed and manufactured on a scale that is cost effective for organisations. As a UK technology implementer put it, we are probably looking at ‘evolution... [not] revolution where suddenly everything changes.’ Across the interviews, predictions of mass technological employment met widespread scepticism.



It was, however, argued that there is a greater incentive for organisations to invest in technology in Norway. High labour costs and generous unemployment benefits encourage the use of automation to boost productivity, as well as providing a strong safety net for those who lose their jobs. In the UK, there is less incentive to invest in robotics/AI, due to significantly lower labour costs. Shareholder 'short-termism' also remains a problem for capital investment, with interviewees describing many companies as 'risk averse' or requiring investments to be paid back in two or three years.

### What is happening to jobs in the food and drink processing sector?

In the food and drink processing sector, automation has been taking place for decades, although at an uneven pace. Robots are a further step in this direction, being used primarily in those areas that have been difficult to automate with traditional technology, such as palletising and picking/placing, which can help replace routine and physically demanding tasks. Selecting and installing a robot is not straightforward as it requires bespoke adaptation to the workplace and training for workers. The expectation is of the gradual replacement of some workers, with a greater potential future impact on labour-intensive activities like sandwich making, although these are areas where workable solutions still evade robot developers.

In Norway, high labour costs are seen to provide an important push towards automation and the greater use of robotics. In the three Norwegian companies in our study, wage costs for an operative are between two to three times that of UK workers. There is also close cooperation between pro-technology unions and local management focused on productivity enhancement. Some workers have been upskilled to operate the new computer systems, with workers gaining formal certification, skilled worker status and higher pay through the

industry-level collective agreements.

In the two UK companies, the driver for investment is more varied. One company is using robots to increase output and reduce bottlenecks caused by manual processes, such as feeding machines and packing. The use of robots and computer-controlled machinery has removed some jobs, but employment is still increasing as the company is growing. There are changes to the work of line operatives and craft engineers, with jobs requiring less mechanical and more computing skills. Workers are also trained and supported to achieve accredited qualifications.

The second UK company studied, cited recruitment challenges as a key driver for investing in robots. Wages are close to the statutory minimum, and a more buoyant local labour market has made it difficult to recruit and retain staff. This factory uses a highly manual process across much of the plant, partly due to technological constraints involved in roboticising sandwich production. Robots are gradually being introduced to displace workers in areas like packing, but, in a context of low pay, the process is constrained by the relative cost of capital investment compared to any potential labour savings. Under current plans, it is anticipated only a handful of jobs will be lost each year.

### Sharing Productivity Gains

Norwegian trade unions are powerful and influential policy actors, and have been central to shaping and maintaining an institutional context which provides high wages and relatively generous social protection. This 'social pact' helps support union-management cooperation at the workplace around productivity-enhancing automation. In the UK, relatively cheap flexible labour, along with short-term shareholder pressures, disincentivises capital investment, with damaging implications for productivity. Social partnership at the workplace has weak institutional support, and workers who lose their jobs have less protection

in terms of unemployment benefits and retraining opportunities. In this context, any productivity gains are less likely to be shared with workers who are also more exposed to the risks associated with technological change.

Important questions are raised for further research. To what extent and at what pace will technological constraints be overcome? Can robotics and AI solve the UK's productivity problem if we do not also address institutional barriers to diffusion? While countries have different starting points, a central question is: what can be done to shape the process of technological change to support decent work and protect displaced workers?

This is an abridged/edited version of an article published in *British Academy Review* no.36.

Jonathan Payne is Professor of Work, Employment and Skills and Director of the People, Organisations and Work Institute (POWI) at De Montfort University. Caroline Lloyd is Professor at the School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University. They have recently received a Leverhulme Research Grant (£160,633) for a new project, 'Digital Technologies and Job Quality: Do Trade Unions Make a Difference?', which will commence later in 2020.





# Tackling Modern Slavery

## *Dave Walsh and Laura Pajon Moreno*

**Modern Slavery (MS) is a global problem affecting 40 million victims. The UK has been at the forefront of initiatives in the response to MS, both through legislation and policy making that has ensured that law enforcement tackles modern slavery amongst its priorities. Research examining the investigation skills of those law enforcement officers involved in modern slavery investigation showed there were shortfalls in evidence and information gathering. We asked police whether the skills that they were measuring were indeed those that were core to human trafficking (HT)/modern slavery (MS) investigations. We then sought to examine the essential activities in HT/MS investigations by asking senior and experienced UK professionals, what were the key actions that investigators should undertake (Pajon & Walsh, 2018a). One of the main actions identified in this research was multi-agency collaboration. However, there was no common understanding demonstrated as to how to undertake multi-agency collaborations. In light of this, we developed a theoretical framework model for practitioners that included the principles to ensure active collaboration and information sharing.**

Following a workshop in the East Midlands in 2018, Leicestershire Police contacted us to work with them in the design and implementations of a Modern Slavery partnership in their policing area. We knew levels of public understanding of modern slavery and its victims were low, and that this was also applicable in setting the priorities of the partnership. These priorities were (i) the investigation and prosecution of MS crimes; (ii) the safeguarding of its victims; and (iii) the raising of awareness of both public and professionals in identifying and responding to suspicions of MS.

This research revealed the importance of multi-agency partnerships and has led to the introduction of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Modern Slavery Action Group (LLRMSAG), which involves a large range of agencies including those from the law enforcement community, faith groups, statutory agencies (such as Fire and Rescue service, Local authorities), charities and NGOs, business sector.

The multi-agency partnership has also succeeded in developing a consensus of priority areas such raising awareness both of their own staff, as well as the public. Steps taken to improve the situation includes the creation of a webpage to enable both practitioners and citizens to access information concerning modern slavery (while providing relevant guidance to identify, and to respond effectively to, signs of modern slavery). The LLRMSAG now conducts regular public awareness campaigns.

The UK's Modern Slavery Act (2015) requires businesses to submit an annual return, demonstrating what they are doing to stop modern slavery in their supply chains. But our research showed a degree of non-compliance which could effectively be turned around through training and awareness raising.

The research team engaged with a small working group representing law enforcement and businesses who have produced newsletters aimed at SMEs to advise how they can identify and report suspicions of modern slavery, while managing such risks. Training has also been provided to suppliers of a major employer in the East Midlands. Further research conducted over several phases during the period 2018-2020 aimed at reducing legislative non-compliance. In the first phase, we identified that 134 of 353 companies in the East Midlands, affected by the legislation, remained non-compliant three years

after the introduction of the legislation. Following these findings, the UK Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner sent non-compliant companies a warning that they were exposing themselves to risks, and appealed for their compliance.

The second phase of the project found that the non-compliant rate had now reduced to 84 companies. We communicated with these companies a) encourage their compliance b) offer guidance on how to become compliant at the most basic levels and how to identify/report suspicions, and c) understand why such companies hitherto were non-compliant.

As a result of this further work, the rate of non-compliance was reduced to seven companies. These findings are being published in the Modern Slavery Research Consortium Bulletin. A toolkit, alongside a podcast, has been produced and is freely available to assist companies enrich their statements in the future, as well as providing guidance on identification of exploitation.

Dave Walsh is Professor of Criminal Investigation.

Laura Pajon Moreno is a VC2020 Lecturer.





# Enabling SMEs' participation in public-procurement: the role of co-production of knowledge

Kassa Woldesenbet Beta

**Researchers at the Centre for Enterprise and Innovation have actively been engaging in research aimed at co-creation of knowledge to address the significant problems businesses, communities, public bodies and society face.**

The 'Supply to Public Sector Project (S2P)' is a collaborative research project, working with local stakeholders: local public bodies in and around Leicester including the Leicester City Council, local SMEs, and four groups of consultants. Working with these three stakeholder groups necessitated a co-production of knowledge between us (researchers) and non-academic communities to address the major problems both the SMEs and public sector buying organisations face when engaging in procurement. We predicated on an understanding that co-production of knowledge is a collaborative endeavour of academic and non-academic actors. The co-produced knowledge relates to the momentous challenges both the SMEs and the public sector buying organisations face and the ways in which these identified challenges should be addressed. Although we are motivated by an engaged scholarship approach, we faced three challenges in co-production of knowledge: a) addressing power relations; b) integrating different perspectives on procurement and its engagement; c) delivering negotiated interventions and following -up their outcomes and impact. These challenges required us to assume at least three roles as –reflective researchers, intermediary or conduit for knowledge transfer and facilitator of joint learning for action. At times, we found ourselves

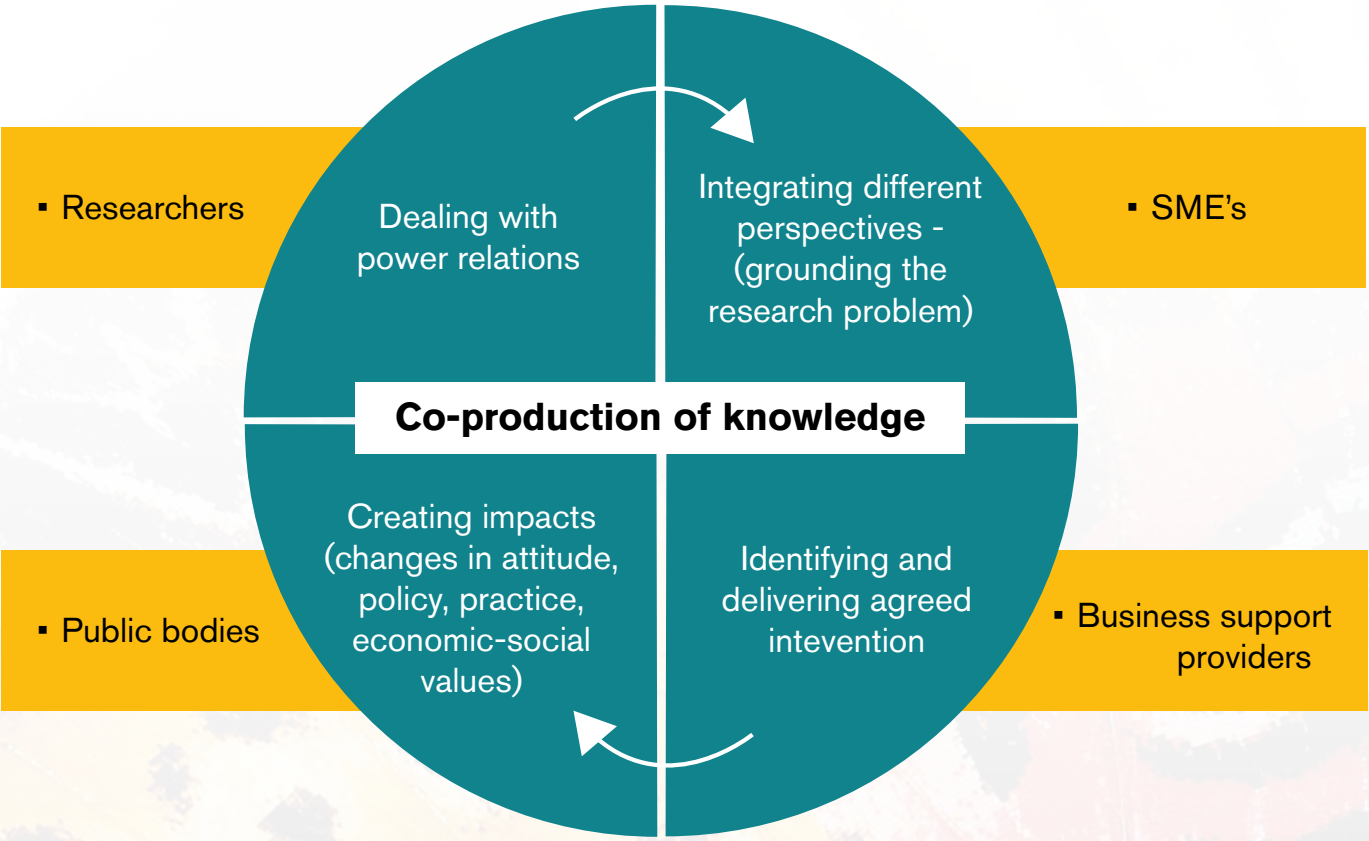
'in a situation of divided identity' with competing values and status; but assuming multiple roles or social categories were essential if we were to make any impactful engagement. The core argument here, is that researcher's ability to adapt to these challenges, roles and 'divided identity' is critically important to make relevant our research to policy and practice (i.e., generating impact), See figure 1.

*Dealing with power relations:* Co-production of knowledge requires stakeholders to be conscious of the influence of power relation and how to deal with it. We started the S2P project with an understanding that not all the stakeholder groups have equal power. Co-creation of knowledge entails two basic values: 1) contribution of each stockholder is valued and should not be privileged over the others; 2) communication should not be seen as a one-way transfer from a knowing subject to a supposedly ignorant one. We had several meetings with the LCC project team and four groups of consultants to discuss each stakeholder groups' viewpoints on the relationship between SMEs and public sector market. This evolving knowledge was further enriched with viewpoints of the SMEs' participants.

*Integrating different perspectives on procurement engagement:* We wanted to explore why SMEs' participation in public procurement is very low in the UK and further afield. Why are some SMEs able to engage, but not others? How do under-represented small businesses (businesses owned by ethnic women, disabled, etc.) fare in this process? Based on extensive research, we know that:

- SME's strategic choice to engage or not engage with the public sector is influenced by the complex interplay of the institutional, the public sector market and firm resource contexts.
- Not all SMEs are interested in engagement because of differentiated levels of knowledge, attitude and capacity.
- SMEs, with higher levels of developed capability are, however, able to engage. Tailored business support also adds value.
- Inadequate access to information act as major barriers to engagement.
- Move to supply large purchasing organisations (LPOs) is extremely challenging for smaller suppliers because of the power of LPOs contributes to a tightening of control over work practices and work organisation.

Figure1: Knowledge creation process in S2P project





The four groups of consultants and the project team also shared their perspectives and insights based on their experience of working with SMEs and public sector organisations. To a certain extent, integrating different viewpoints was achieved through gaining a thorough understanding of the complex, multi-layered problems both the SMEs and the public sector buying organisations face in procurement by obtaining insights and perspectives of all the stakeholders involved. In doing so, we reached to a consensus regarding the main problems, their causes and how to address them. Commitment to enabling constructive dialogue between seemingly contrasting positions and interest was instrumental to make this project successful.

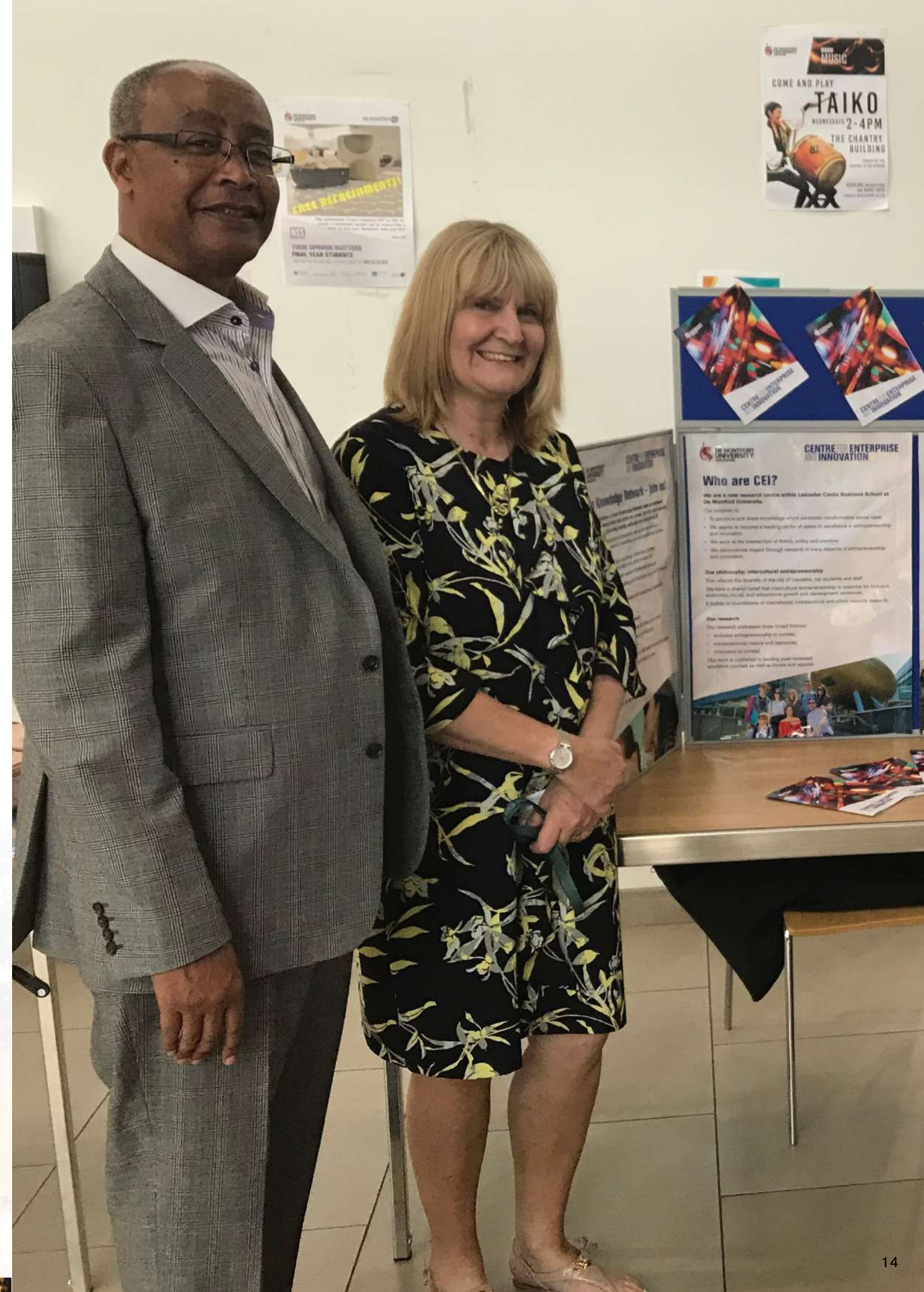
*Delivering negotiated interventions:* By integrating different perspectives, the S2P project was set to achieve two aims: a) help change the procurement culture of the public sector buying organisations; b) encourage local SMEs across Leicester and Leicestershire to access procurement and supply chain contracts from public and private sector buyers. To achieve these aims, a delivery partnership was established between Leicester City Council and our research centre in order to provide a vehicle for catalysing change in both demand and supply side practices based around the concept of *supplier diversity*. From 2010-2013, the project provided 1700 hours supplier support to over 200 local SMEs and 800 hours of buyer support to 10 public sector organisations to address both the supply and demand side problems of public procurement. Business supports provided took the form of thematic workshops and intensive one2one, tailored, business support to address the market failure and help develop thresh-level capability for tendering.

*Tracking outcomes and impact:* We found that business supports provided by the S2P project were instrumental in revitalising some of the local SMEs engagement and in driving procurement policy changes in LCC. In 2012-14, the research team played an important role in the set-up and delivery of a new interim structure, the Local Procurement Taskforce (LPTF) led by the City Mayor in order to drive a required change in the City's procurement policy and strategy. Benefitting from the decades-long research inputs, the LPTF primarily focused on the City's corporate procurement strategy and delivery, with great focus on streamlining the procurement process and *sourcing locally social value*. LCC made noteworthy changes in the ways it makes information available on the procurement opportunities and established targets to source locally. As of 2017, the LCC procurement spend on local SMEs increased by 10% (from 57% to 67%); this equates to increase of £46 million in 2016/17. This is a remarkable impact in the context of the public sector spending with SMEs fell to 24% in 2015/16 and 22.5% in 2016/17. 25% of participated SMEs have seen changes in their attitude for tendering, were able to develop networks with other businesses, and put in place organisational policies required for tendering. Further, the S2P project contributed to over £32 million of value added to the local economy and helped increase in the number of SMEs sub-contracting from the large contractors.

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# How to improve cyber-security in small organisations

## *Edward Cartwright, Department of Economics and Marketing*

**In an ever more digital world it is essential that small businesses and charities recognise the growing threat of cyber-attack. Yet most organisations are not implementing some of the very basic measures recommended by government; measures that would dramatically reduce the probability of an attack and the damage from attack. It is the equivalent of a business leaving the office with the windows open and keys in the door. So, how can we get small organisations to act?**

A big part of the problem is that many small organisations completely underestimate the threat of cyber-attack. 'We do not use cyber' or 'the criminals would not be interested in us' are common things we hear from small businesses and charities. Data from the latest UK Cyber Breaches Survey shows, however, that 31% of small businesses and 19% of small charities suffered a significant cyber-breach in the last 12 months. At a local level, over £600,000 was lost by Leicestershire businesses last year to hacking and over £800,000 to mandate fraud. These are big numbers and the consequences of an attack, particularly to a small organisation, can be devastating. To illustrate, consider a fictitious, but all too plausible, example. The trustee of a charity receives an email purporting to come from the Charity Commission with updated guidance on policy. He clicks to download the attachment. Unbeknownst to him that click means a criminal now has complete control over his computer. The criminal bides his time and notices that the charity makes a payment of £10,000 every month to a supplier. The criminal impersonates the supplier and informs the charity's treasurer that their bank details have changed. The treasurer updates the details and £10,000 duly goes off to the criminal.

Only when the supplier asks to know why they have not received this month's £10,000 do things begin to unravel and the police get called. At this stage the £10,000 is long gone, with potentially critical consequences for the charity's finances. But that is only the beginning of the problems. The charity now realises that financial details of all donors have potentially been accessed and so these donors need to be contacted and informed. Will they be willing to donate in the future? Perhaps most worryingly, the charity provides a service to vulnerable people and the details of all these people have been accessed. The criminals are now actively targeting these people by impersonating the charity.

In this example, one click of a mouse causes complete havoc. That is the frightening reality of cyber-crime. The good news is that there are simple things an organisation can do to counter the threat of cyber-crime. These are encapsulated in the guidance from the National Cyber Security (including 10 steps to cyber-security). In this particular example the advice to Take Five and challenge the unexpected may have stopped the trustee clicking on the link or the treasurer changing the bank details. And better management of data might have stopped the criminals having access to sensitive information on donors and recipients. A cyber-response plan (and potentially cyber-insurance) would also help the organisation cope better with the attack.

That brings us back to the question of why organisations are not heeding the cyber advice that is widely available? In our research we are exploring that question, while also proposing and testing possible interventions. In doing so we collaborate with Cyber Protect Officers who are on the front-line in dealing with this problem. For example, as part of a project funded by the Home Office we are testing the benefits of a

cyber-security health-check. The health-check, which lasts, around an hour is run by KITC Solutions, a student-led consultancy at the University of Kent, and designed to run through the basics of the National Cyber Security Centre guidance. (Any organisations interested can still sign up at <http://cyberprotect.our.dmu.ac.uk/>).

The key objective of the health check is not to 'cover everything' but more to demystify cyber-security and empower the organisation to take control of their own risk. We want organisations to have critical knowledge and also know where to look to become informed on an ever changing threat landscape. The feedback and results of the cyber-security health-checks we have run so far has been very positive. Whether it be organisations that 'are doing things right' or the sole-trader 'who hasn't got a clue' we can make a difference. Based on our research we are now producing recommendations for how to perform a cyber-security health-check and train the people to perform them. The biggest challenge we have found in our research is getting organisations to sign up to the cyber-security health-check. This is despite it being promoted by a number of regional police forces. Our experiences are consistent with the general picture, we get from Cyber Protect Officers and others, of organisations simply not taking the cyber-threat seriously, until it is too late. We have attempted to quantify this problem by estimating, based on data from the Cyber Breaches Survey, the proportion of small organisations that fall into certain types.

We estimate that around 20% of small organisations are following best practice. This does not mean such organisations are safe but they are doing the 'right things'. And our research suggests those doing the right things also have a better awareness of their vulnerability. We estimate a further 20-

30% of organisations are procrastinating. These organisations are aware of the threat, have an understanding of what to do, but still not acting on advice. A further 20% we categorise as over-confident because they systematically underestimate the threat to the organisation. A final 30-40% we categorise as devolving responsibility. These are organisations that seem to recognise the threat, and potentially know what to do, but think it is someone else's problem to fix – maybe law enforcement, internet providers, Microsoft, banks etc.

Based on our research we are now proposing a set of interventions that can target different types of organisation. While a cyber-security health-check may be appealing to those following best practice or procrastinators it is not going to reach those who are over-confident or devolve responsibility. Ultimately, there seems to be a growing recognition that some form of regulation or compliance will be needed to reach such organisations. It is important, however, that this comes hand in hand with a positive culture around reporting and understanding cyber-crime. The trustee in our example made a simple mistake that anyone could make. We need to allow an open culture in which we recognise the challenge, rather than chastise those who make simple mistakes.



# Creative Business in Urban Society

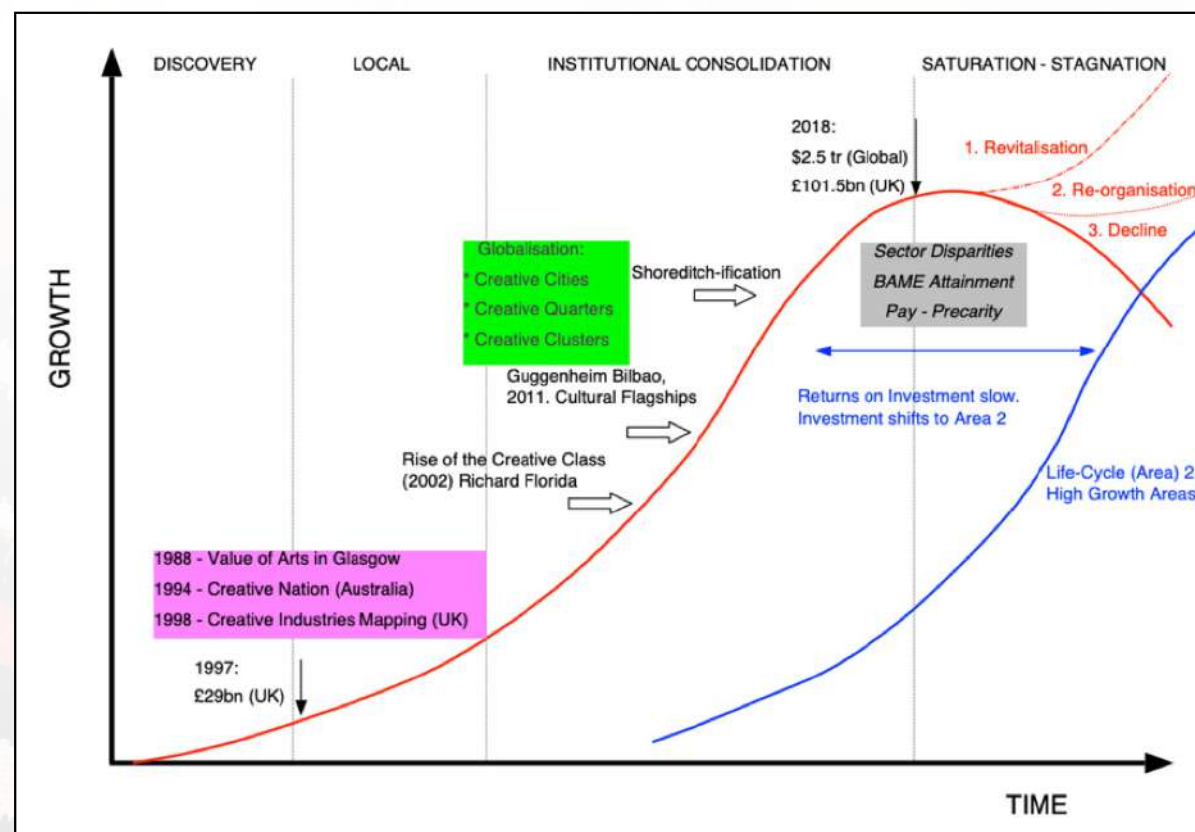
## Rachel Granger

In economic terms, investment in the creative industries is divisive. Behind the rhetoric and statistics lie some hard truths. Following a decade of consolidation, the UK's creative industries show signs of splintering, with precarious working conditions, pay, and also a life cycle that is slowing in the UK but growing overseas. There is no doubt that the frailties of the creative economy have been exposed through the Covid-19 pandemic. Economic consumption of arts and culture is price-elastic and under furlough has collapsed, while creative and digital producer services have slowed sharply. In economic terms then, the contribution of the creative industries to economic growth has been brought under the spotlight. Given that the creative industries are the cornerstone of the UK's industrial strategy and the life blood of

many cities and businesses, their loss from the economic landscape is potentially catastrophic.

There is an argument that investment in culture and creativity is a social choice and in economic terms, a merit good. With little evidence that creative graduates drive innovation, one might question the rationale for continued investment in a creative sector with limited returns. The need for creative skills however appears to lie in urban living and what is quickly emerging as a refocus on urban policy in the post-covid landscape – as a space for economic recovery, for trialling new policy approaches, for tackling the Climate Emergency, and for considering service innovation, quality of life, citizen engagement, all of which require creative and design skillsets.

### The Creative Life Cycle (Granger, 2019)



There are two key aspects of urban living that are ground in the creative economy. First, there is compelling evidence that Smart Cities are predicated on the creative industries.

As DMU's research on Leicester's Smart Audit reveals, Leicester's creative industries have a density and diversity of skills in arts, design, media, and immersive technologies that act as powerful value chains in smart sectors. The creative industries require highly connective ecosystems that enable proximity for innovation to occur, and these same hubs and platforms, together with the motivations of creative workers around sharing, connecting, and gifting, provide anchors for a smart economy, and a ready-made network for open innovation. It comes as no surprise then, that while some areas of the creative industries are contracting, by and large, its digital sub-sectors are growing and diversifying; creating a new life cycle tied to the growth of smart cities.

The second key point, is that cities need the creative industries more than ever. Historically, urban economic growth has emerged in waves, tied to key innovations but also aligned to successful leadership in towns and cities. Victorian-style chess clubs and faith groups for example, provided key social spaces for ingenuity and insight, that enabled cities to moot ideas, gather resources, and make decisions - in short, the type of collective decision making and leadership that drives economic growth and capitalises on new opportunities. In the absence of such spaces, how will the ideas and vision needed for cities to overcome covid take effect?

The answer lies largely in creative and design skillsets but also new ecosystems built around creative spaces. Leicester's new Urban Innovation Lab draws on the skills, ideas, and processes found in creative industries, that enable sense-making and problem resolution in our towns and cities. An innovation lab co-designs and tests new ideas - it experiments,

makes, plays, and creates new visions of urban space, from which new policy and strategies can emerge.

The Lab's first set of ideas, which will become 'live briefs' were created from the gifting of ideas and voluntary use of artistic and digital skills from 50 creative workers who came together in the autumn to devise the Urban Innovation Lab. The Lab currently works with over a hundred creative agencies to implement new ideas for Leicester as disruptive projects – and involves an array of redundant buildings and disused tram stops, sustainable use of waterways, new approaches to the high street, and tackling of local issues such as knife crime and homelessness. At the very heart of Leicester's urban innovation are the ideas and skills of creative workers, and the use of creative business skills for civic society.

Rachel is a professor in urban economies, and author of 'Value Construction in the Creative Economy', 2020 and 'Creative Splintering and the Creative Life Cycle', 2019. Rachel is also co-founder of Leicester's Inno House, based at Friars Mill, leads the City's Innovation Lab with the mayor, and is lead for the Citizen Sensor and Creative Time Bank in Leicester based in FLOKK Lab at DMU.

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# Understanding Coercive Control

*Vanessa Bettinson*

**Interdisciplinary research on sexual and domestic violence exposed me to the glaring omission in criminal law, that other disciplines and policy had begun to tackle: the use of coercive control in many relationships featuring domestic abuse.**

Coercive control has since been depicted to a broader public audience in various dramas, with the Archers show producing early on an effective storyline with the characters Rob and Helen Titchener. One listener opened a Just Giving page and hundreds and thousands of pounds was raised for the charity Refuge. Coercive control describes the patterns of behaviours adopted by a perpetrator of abuse, which may be made up of physically violent or psychological, criminal or non-criminal conduct, or a combination of each. The purpose of the behaviour is to undermine the victim's autonomy through the micro-regulation of everyday activities. Resistance results in punishment for the victim, whether that be a physical act of violence or a more subtle, bespoke threat of humiliation, degradation. Once the victim's autonomy is undermined, dependency is encouraged and the victim is bent to the will of the abusing perpetrator.

The damage to a victim can be extensive, spanning mental health issues and physical manifestations of the trauma caused from complaints such as head and back aches or digestive difficulties all the way through to death caused either directly or indirectly by the perpetrator. On average two women a week each year are killed by a male partner or ex-partner, and it is estimated that a further 2 a week commit suicide as a direct consequence of the coercive control they suffer. This is not a problem experienced by a small minority of people either, as official national statistics indicate that 1 in 4 women in their lifetime will suffer domestic abuse and between 2017-2019 1 in 7 men reported acts of abuse by their partner.

Given the extent of the harm and the prevalence of domestic abuse, I was disturbed by the limitations of criminal offences to address coercive control. In the main, offences would only address incidents of abuse, rather than the cumulative effect that had on the victim. Where incidents could be combined in harassment laws, judicial interpretations were generally unhelpful and blind to the dynamics of an abusive intimate relationship. The creation of an offence that would provide legal reform in this area, was welcome. When the Serious Crimes Bill was introduced, I provided written evidence to the Parliamentary Committee about the draft offence of coercive and controlling behaviour in an intimate or family relationship. I was the only academic to do so in respect of this provision. Once implemented, I undertook a series of public engagement events around England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Interest is Scotland for a domestic abuse offence increased and I responded to the subsequent government consultations that took place. The very different looking offence in s. 1 Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2019 came into force 1 April 2019.

Whilst progress had been made with the introduction of coercive control-based offences in both the English and Welsh and Scottish legal jurisdictions, what remains is a space for further informing of the law around defences. The case of Sally Challen came to my attention. The issues around coercive control and the criminal law seemed to be engaging with age old debates about whether women who kill their abusive partners should be murderesses or guilty of manslaughter. I thought about the role of coercive control in previous cases and how this could be reflected in the law either by judicial interpretation of existing legislative provisions or with specific legal reform by Parliament. This was published and preceded the Sally Challen's hearing that took place late February 2019.

The article drew attention from Challen's legal counsel, who contacted me about the legal issues of the case.

Challen's appeal was successful to her as an individual. Her conviction was quashed and a re-trial ordered. Eventually, the prosecution accepted a plea of manslaughter instead for

reasons of diminished responsibility and she was released after serving 9 years imprisonment. As a precedent, the place of coercive control as a partial defence to murder has not been secured, although it can now be included in evidence to support the partial defences of loss of control and diminished responsibility.





# Giving a 'voice' to councillors

## Colin Copus and Steven Griggs

**What do we want our local councillors to do? This is a question that it is not always easy to answer. Indeed, government departments, local authorities, political parties, national associations and think tanks have spilled much ink on re-designing the institutions of local political leadership. Over the years, councillors have been associated with an array of leadership functions and styles, from stewards, community leaders and advocates onto scrutineers and entrepreneurs. But, arguably, the 'voice' of councillors, and their everyday 'work', have been lost in these national policy debates. At best, local re-organisations have seemingly by-passed councillors, being done to them rather than with them. In fact, central government departments have often reproduced policy narratives in which councillors are presented as part of the problem rather than part of the solution to the future of local democracy.**

Countering such embedded views, the Local Governance Research Centre (LGRC) has sought to put the 'voice' of elected members at the forefront of debates over the future of local government, delivering evidence-based critical evaluations of the everyday practices and political leadership of councillors. Importantly, it has done so during a time in which government has relegated the role of councillors down its political agenda while embarking on ten years of austerity. Then throw into the mix: elected mayors, devolution and city deals, and reorganisation, not least the introduction of local economic partnerships. These changes have, somewhat paradoxically, brought into question the role of councillors, the necessary skills and capabilities to deliver local political leadership, and the shifting balance of influence between so-called frontbench and backbench elected members.

There is little doubt that councillors increasingly navigate a complex local landscape. In a typical week, they move, for example, across

an array of different arenas, participating in council meetings and committees, ward walks, neighbourhood meetings, combined authorities and partnerships, housing and care companies, while increasingly balancing social media profiles and public and private identities. To say that they wear 'multiple hats' is perhaps something of an over-simplification. Indeed, local councillors hold together the fragmented spaces or worlds of the politician, the officer and the community, exercising their democratic voice in a pluralistic leadership environment. They also have to navigate a fragmented landscape of public and private organisations which deliver public services, make public policy and spend public money with no direct lines of accountability. Councillors are engaging with such organisations strategically and operationally to improve service delivery and ensure accountability. That they have all of this under ten years of austerity governance has brought into stark relief the emotional work labour of being a councillor and the "dirty work" of making cuts. Service budgets have been drastically reduced, service delivery and commissioning has been rethought and redesigned. New financial approaches and income generation streams have been devised, new managerial paradigms developed and service managers, senior executives and service deliverers challenged to sustain the provision of public services. Indeed, the question on many minds is why you would want to become a councillor?

In fact, *The Voice of the Councillor*, a one year inquiry undertaken by the LGRC into the everyday practices of elected members across England and Wales, concluded that the powers and responsibilities of councillors are increasingly out of step with the nature of their work - set as it is within a broader sub-regional, regional, national and international context. Councillors require and should be able to demand more useable information and data from councils and external bodies.

Traditional organisational structures of local authorities do not always support all councillors in the work they do within the council, within their communities and with the vast array of external organisations with which they now interact. Yet, the findings of the study also pointed to the 'elephant(s) in the room' in debates over the future role of the councillor: the role of central government, the fragmentation of Whitehall, and the reluctance of the centre to 'let go'. Even in the negotiations for forging devolution deals, the centre is still reluctant to fully grasp the implications of localism and devolution to ensure that councillors have the powers to respond locally to rapidly changing political, economic and social forces. New problems and new demands require new solutions and councillors can only meet those challenges if they have the support, resources and powers to do so. Put alternatively, redesigning the roles and functions of the councillor will do little to advance the interests of local government unless it is part of a broader and public dialogue over the restructuring of centre-local relations. As it stands, localism is little more than passing down to local government the impacts of nationally determined cuts to public services.

Of course, it is not all 'bad news'. Councillors are at the forefront of a wave of new municipalism, not only in the United Kingdom, but in towns across the world, but epitomised by Barcelona, Cleveland and the Fearless Cities network. New forms of municipal entrepreneurship, community engagement and wealth generation have emerged in places such as Birmingham, Dumfries and Galloway, Islington, Lewisham, North Ayrshire, Preston, Swansea, Wakefield and Wigan. Novel forms of entrepreneurship, combining revenue-raising commercialisation and trading in local markets, have arisen as councils have sought to fill, albeit partially, the holes in funding. There has been a plethora of housing and energy companies created. But equally, councils

have engaged in real estate development and the acquisition of property portfolios; launched public service mutuals in collaboration with communities; and exploited procurement policies as a tool to support local businesses and social enterprises. Indeed, under the conditions of austerity governance, local authorities have reframed commercialisation and entrepreneurship to deliver forms of entrepreneurship for the public purpose.

Such new municipalism holds out the promise of new forms of local stewardship and community well-being. It challenges those who bemoan the capacity of local authorities to deliver change, such that we lose sight of local government as a politically representative and governing institution. However, over time, new municipalism itself rests on the changing relationship between central and local government and putting in place a collaborative partnership between the tiers of government that ensures the capacity for local political leadership. We need to continue to support councillors in influencing and shaping the activities of a range external bodies and holding authorities and external organisations to account; linking their ward representative roles to strategic responses to policy problems; and developing councillors work with communities to enhance citizen engagement and participation. But this support cannot take the place of a broader dialogue over the future of our local communities and how they are governed.

Political parties and central government should, as *The Voice of the Councillor* argues, recognise that an irreversible shift in the relationship between central and local government is necessary to improve the governance of the country. Only then will we begin to truly invest in our local councillors.



# Human Capital, Wellbeing and Character – an Ongoing Dialectic

*Peter Stokes*

The International Standards Organization (ISO), in concert with national standards bodies such as the British Standards Institute (UK), is currently designing global standards on Human Capital. Ultimately they hope the standards will be adopted by a majority of organizations worldwide. Like many potent dialectics, the attempted definition, operationalisation and fusion of a functionalistic view of human capital with the more everyday subjective notions of, for instance, well-being and character, seemingly juxtapose opposites. Nevertheless, simultaneously (and perhaps somewhat paradoxically) within this apparent tension there is also scope for a potentially harmonious blending of these elements. Human capital (i.e. the skills and various knowledge bases a person brings to an organization) constitutes a term which aligns labour and human beings within the canon of the capitalist market (aligned with kindred terms such as financial capital, fixed capital, working capital - often termed 'hard' management elements). These sit readily within Enlightenment modernistic beliefs wherein human actions, projects and behaviours can be readily scientifically measured and assessed and ultimately their value and efficiency supposedly quantitatively determined.

In contrast to 'hard' management factors, character, values, beliefs and attitudes inevitably play a role in shaping cultures and atmospheres and are frequently collated within the 'softer' aspects of management. These aspects might be seen as engendering alternative capitals beyond a modernistic view of human capital such as for example social capital (i.e. concerning the social and political networks and inter-connections that emerge and operate between individuals) and spiritual capital (i.e. concerned with faith and belief systems

– formal and informal - underpinning actions and associations). In research conducted in three UK companies in various sectors (legal, IT, manufacturing) staff were asked about how they considered good and bad management behaviour and from where they thought their driving beliefs for these values (sic: capitals) were derived?

The results were striking. While some respondents mentioned an explicit belief in, for example, a formal religion or a corporate vision, many cited family members – especially a parent or grandparent – as providing the role-model and the guiding wisdom in relation to how they behaved at work. Paraphrasing, sentences akin to: 'my Mum always says...' or my Grandpa always had a saying for people like that....' were very common in the way people talked about, and made sense of, their work experiences and environments. Findings such as these raise challenges for human capital standards projects – how do we capture and codify the idiosyncratic, the everyday and the lived experience exhibited by individuals in multifarious work-settings and cultural contexts? As the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998) noted regarding modernism, it has a tendency to try to create 'meta-narratives' that seek to generalise in a macro-manner. And, for many, in equal measure they often prompt 'incredulity' regarding their plausibility and ability to portray and reflect lived experiences.

Attempting to construct human capital standards which reconcile competing visions of organizational concepts and practices that have emerged through centuries of national cultural, legal and constitutional structural histories will inevitably involve complex global negotiations. Recent research has analysed these issues and sought to recognise the possible merits of the ISO work yet, at the same time acknowledge that perhaps not all more 'human' aspects of organizations are easily or readily categorised.

In essence, perspectives - whether individual, group or national – shape culture, and are reciprocally shaped by culture, at all levels.

It might be argued that the ISO project to create a global set of standards for nature and operation of business management and organization begs such questions. Nevertheless, the over-arching intent of such projects is also of course to create knowledge bases which

may engender efficiency, effectiveness, equality, transfer of knowledge through shared meanings and understandings. This may seem idealistic in some regards but this project is already in motion. The success of its development and the reconciliation of the 'hard'/'soft' management dialectic and subsequent roll-out remains a work-in-progress the consequences of which are yet to be felt.





# What can we, academics, do to reduce environmental violent conflicts in Mexico?

*Valeria Guarneros-Meza*

**Organizations such as Global Witness report the increasing rates of human rights violations against land and environmental defenders around the world. Latin America is one of the global regions reporting higher number of cases and Mexico is one example in this pattern. Since the new president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, took office in December 2018, several dozen murders of this kind have been reported, the most recent being the murders of two environmental activists protecting the National Monarch Butterfly Sanctuary in February 2020 against loggers and avocado farmers with links to the narco-economy.**

These atrocities prompt journalists and academics to ask themselves what is to be done to minimise this type of violent conflict? Are the participative institutions existing in the country strong enough to prevent these conflicts? And how should governments and multi-lateral organisations intervene in order to mediate conflict when it has already burst into violence?

Through the FLACSO/Mexico-DMU joint research project 'Conversing with Goliath', we have generated a 12-year newspaper review of the extractive industry in Mexico: mining, hydrocarbons, hydroelectric-dam and wind-farm sectors. The sources consulted were online outlets with the highest circulation figures across the country, nationally and regionally.

Overall, our research is one of the first steps to provide answers to the questions raised above; and it complements previous efforts carried out by Environmental Justice Atlas and Latin American Observatory of Mining Conflicts by providing a broader systematisation and a more detailed data categorisation. The original newspaper review encompasses 964 newspaper articles mentioning 304 extractive projects with 879 conflictive issues reported between January 2006 and January 2019.

Results show, that in absolute terms, mining is the sector with highest number of conflictive issues, followed by hydroelectric dams and oilfields. In relative terms, gas pipelines (with environmental impact assessment) is the subsector with highest number of conflictive issues reported, followed by hydroelectric-dam projects. The states with more violent conflicts are found across southern and northern regions of the country. This finding demystifies the belief that violent conflicts only happen in less economically developed areas.

A documentary review complementing the newspaper database shows that Mexico has a broad regulatory landscape promoting citizen participation that in principle could help to minimise violent conflicts through dialogue, deliberation and negotiation. There are five institutional frameworks that support participation with regards to the extractive industry: environmental, human rights, agrarian, political and property rights.

Depending on how communities use these institutional frameworks they can welcome or reject an extractive project within their locality, obtain or not economic compensation (i.e. for businesses to have access to their land), and reach an agreement with or without violence. However, these options will always incur a trade-off.

For example, environmental participatory institutions are likely to be non-violent if communities accept compensation by the business promoter. Most interestingly the agrarian assemblies are the main initiatives to stop a project when combined with customary law of indigenous communities, other forms of protest (i.e. street blockages) and no economic compensation.

Violence is not entirely absent, but it is minimised as agrarian assemblies tend to use agrarian law to begin lawsuits and business interests against the business promoter; and, indeed government agencies favouring business interests. The strategy and tactics followed by indigenous, agrarian assemblies could then potentially be used by non-indigenous agrarian assemblies, who are impacted negatively by an extractive project.

Through the development of this newspaper review the research project obtained great support from other environmental NGOs based in Mexico. With Cartocritica we were able to geo-reference the location of the conflictive projects throughout the country. With support from the Heinrich Böll Foundation-Mexican branch, we were able to convene a press conference in February 2019, where all main national media outlets attended and published the potential impact of the newspaper database for environmental journalists and organisations.

As a result of the press conference, FLACSO and DMU jointly invested to extend the newspaper review until December 2019, create an online platform in which the database is publicly shared and ensure that partnership with the Heinrich Böll Foundation supports the initiative by providing an assistant to input future newspaper articles onto the platform on a weekly basis.

The project has contributed a rich database for civil society to access, monitor and historically observe violations against environmental activists as well as to assess whether citizen participation initiatives are relevant to stop these atrocities. In building pathways to impact, the research team has been learning how to deal with the challenge of other organizations not respecting the project's authorship and the terms of the creative commons license (CC BY NC) of the database. Developing impact does not come without legal and administrative challenges, with which academics must be ready to cope.





# Africa needs highly skilled entrepreneurs to drive a new era of growth

## Seun Kolade

**Smoke fills the air. It is lunch time, and a group of young people are huddled together in an abandoned building. They are mostly teenagers, with a few older ones in charge of proceedings. A few hundred metres down the road is a public secondary school. The abandoned building is one of a growing number of smoking joints in the town. This is Oyo, a historic town in Southern Nigeria, where drug-fuelled gangs have taken over the streets, unleashing terror in a town once known for relative peace and tranquillity.**

Oyo, like many other Nigerian cities, has witnessed a rise in the army of unemployed youths who have been driven to the margins of society. Many of them have some formal education, at least at the primary level. Indeed, they include a growing number of graduates who have struggled for years, post-graduation, to secure profitable jobs. Now disillusioned, many of them have been driven by grief and grievance to violent and socially destructive activities, to the detriment of all.

Africa has a booming young population. Sixty percent of the continent's 1.34 billion people are 24 years or younger. Africa's median age is 19.3 years. For perspective, Europe's median age is 42.5 years. In other words, while the developed world is grappling with population ageing, Africa has experienced rapid, and yet increasing, population explosion in recent decades. I have been working with a wide range of African partners to turn this challenge into a big opportunity to unleash the entrepreneurial agencies of young Africans.

The first iteration of the Enterprise Boot Camp, supported by DMU's Centre for Enterprise and Innovation, was held in Oyo town in August 2018. In a series of master classes and practical workshops, 60 participants were taken through important processes, steps and tips on starting

small, business planning, use of technologies, social enterprise, customer service, among others. The boot camp was organised in partnership with a local charity, Oyo Global Forum, along with other university and industry partners, as well as the government owned Bank of Industry, who provided information on funding opportunities for start-ups. The boot camp was very well received by participants, and also attracted attention in the national media.

Following the success of the Oyo Enterprise Boot Camp, new editions of the boot camp were held in four venues across three other Nigerian cities- Ogbomosho, Iwo and Ibadan- with 500 participants benefitting. While the Enterprise Boot Camp is targeted at the whole spectrum of the youth demographics, there has been a special interest in university undergraduates and recent graduates. This special interest is underpinned by two key related considerations: limited opportunities for graduate employment in the formal labour market; and the growing need in the continent for highly skilled entrepreneurs.

Since the turn of the millennium, there has been a surge in the rate of higher education enrolment in sub-Saharan Africa. According to one report, the number of higher education enrolments more than doubled from 2,344,000 in year 2000 to 5,228,000 in 2010. As of 2019, the number of enrolment has increased to 8 million. The problem is, this rapid expansion of the higher education sector is not matched by commensurate expansion of job opportunities. This is due, in part, to the fact that the public sector, which historically had been the highest employer of university graduates, has become saturated, and also faced increasing challenges of inefficiency and low productivity. In addition, there also debates and questions on the impact of massification of higher education on quality,

with many employers complaining about the mismatch between university qualifications and requisite skills and competencies in the labour market.

There is a wider point to make here: Africa's industrial and services sectors are not sufficiently developed to take advantage of enormous opportunities in the global knowledge economy, as the world moves on to what has been variously described as the fourth industrial revolution. This partly explains the limited capacity of the private sector to absorb new

labour. In effect, more than it requires qualified job-seekers, the continent needs a new cohort of innovative and ambitious job-creators.

This is the major rationale for Enterprise Boot Camps, and why DMU is actively and enthusiastically involved, working with partners across the continent to support the training of entrepreneurs who are poised to drive an exciting future of growth and prosperity in the continent.





# Questioning the Environmental Sustainability of Research Practice

*Kate Wilkinson-Cross*

**As a feminist academic with an interest in international environmental law, I spend much of my time reflecting on whether the 'doing' of my research is sustainable, or if it has unintended impacts which are not accounted for in current research practices and thus detract from any benefit my research has.**

Concerns over the sustainability and impact of my research stem from my work exploring the commoditisation of the environment within international law, and how such solutions for its protection are shaped by interconnecting, exploitative and gendered conceptual frameworks underpinning dominant discourses in Western society. These conceptual frameworks maintain institutions and practices of oppression and domination of the environment, together with other subjects and other subjects cast as 'other' due to their race, sex, gender or nonhuman status. Therefore, I am increasingly conscious of how internal and external drivers within higher education may lead to unacknowledged (and unanticipated) incentives and performance management regimes which are inherently unsustainable.

Let us consider both the human and environmental cost of doing research. 'Human' in this context includes considerations of the way in which gender, class, and race intersect and impact on academics' capacity to research. There is significant evidence demonstrating that current research strategies and practices negatively impact female and minority ethnic academics. The adoption of the internationalisation agenda and the knowledge economy within higher education institutions requires researchers to become more mobile and agile in their research. This does not account for the unpaid and undervalued labour that female academics perform both within research institutions and outside of work.

As a result, many are unable to exploit such opportunities, thus leading to economic, professional and emotional costs.

Turning to the environmental cost of research, one of the most visible and tangible costs is academic travel. Some call international work-related travel an 'exercise in privilege' and one that can entrench environmental injustices. For example, 15% of academics are globally responsible for 70% of conference air travel and they are primarily located in the global north. Professors from the University of Montréal travel on average 33,000 km, per person and generate 10.76 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, while women are disadvantaged because the increasing requirement for international mobility for career progression conflicts with their continued unpaid and undervalued caring responsibilities. Air travel is quick, and it can often be cheaper than alternative options. However, evidence indicates that many of the trips, and planned activities (such as conference attendance), may not result in the perceived outcomes while also having additional gendered and financial impacts on scholars. This is because researchers with caring responsibilities or other demands on their time and energy outside of work may not be able to take advantage of such travel. Further, even where the researcher has someone else to perform those tasks for them while they travel, such additional costs are usually hidden. This evidence needs to be balanced against other research which indicates that missing research or networking opportunities can reduce new opportunities for collaboration, the ability to publish high impact output and to maintain professional visibility. Nevertheless, these tensions between the environmental unsustainability of travel and the professional benefits of travelling should be acknowledged and addressed within the higher education sector.

In our University, we are in a good position to start unpicking these tensions and evaluate how we, as an institution, can ensure that our research is both sustainable and impactful. Part of this conversation could be to explore how the hierarchical notions of scale and quantitative indicators implicit within the terminology surrounding 'impact' and other external auditing of research value may privilege or exclude certain forms of engagement, voices, experiences, spaces and issues. By doing so, we could start to examine the extent to which our research practices sustain existing power relations resulting in unsustainable activity.

The impact of COVID-19 saw an imposed travel ban and physical social distancing measures resulting in the cancelling of conferences, the cessation of face-to-face data collection with human participants. In that space though, we started to find alternatives to progress with our research, through online measures. It is important that we evaluate how our research practices can become more reflective of our commitment to the objectives of the sustainable development goals. The enforced changing work practices during the 2020 pandemic have provided examples that we can learn from for sustained change in the future.







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