



**UON**

**Connectivity and Transformation:  
An Interdisciplinary Approach Towards  
Impact Recognition in a Hyper  
Connected World**

**Final Programme**

**UON Annual Research Conference 2026**

**24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June 2026**

# Message from The UON ARC 2026 Organising Committee

Dear Delegate,

We are delighted to welcome you to the UON Annual Research Conference 2026. This year's theme, "*Connectivity and Transformation: an interdisciplinary approach towards impact recognition in a hyper connected world*", explores how the rapid growth of digital technologies, artificial intelligence, social networks and global connectivity is reshaping society, research and everyday life.

The conference programme reflects the breadth and interdisciplinary nature of these discussions, bringing together researchers from across UON to examine the social, economic, political, cultural and technological impact of an increasingly connected world. Through a diverse range of presentations and collaborative contributions, the conference highlights the valuable research taking place across the University and its positive impact on individuals, organisations and communities.

We extend our sincere thanks to our researchers, keynote speakers, Graduate School colleagues and delegates and we wish you all a stimulating and successful UON Annual Research Conference 2026.

Best wishes,

The UON ARC 2026 Organising Committee



## **PROGRAMME DAY I**

### **On Campus - Wed. 24th June 2026**

*Book your place at:*

[Registration Form - UON 2026 Annual Research Conference \(ARC\) on 24+25/6/26 – Fill out form](#)

*Leathersellers' Hide, Learning Hub 4<sup>th</sup> floor, Waterside Campus*

*Conference/Breakout Rooms on 2nd/3rd/4th floor: Learning Hub – LH223, LH230, LH317, LH319 & LH404*

Wellbeing Rooms: For the duration of the on-campus day we have booked a variety of 'quiet' rooms where anyone can go if they need to get away from the hustle and bustle of the conference venues. These rooms are Learning Hub - LH223, LH230, LH317, LH319 & LH404. Please feel free to use them at any time (particularly the first two rooms, which are the most likely to be free), if they are not used for presentation purposes at the time.

*Oral Presentations (other than in the Knowledge Exchange Project Showcasing Parallel Session) are expected to be 15 minutes long plus 5 minutes for questions. They can be organised so that the Q&A part is at the very end of the parallel session (i.e. after all presentations) or with a Q&A after each presentation at the discretion of the chairs and presenters (applicable both on campus/online days).*

- 8.30-9.00am**            **REGISTRATION & REFRESHMENTS** (Leathersellers' Hide)
- 9.00-9.05am**            **WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS & CONFERENCE OVERVIEW:**  
***Dr Xose Rosales, Graduate School & Organising Committee***  
(Leathersellers' Hide)
- 9.05-9.15am**            **OPENING SESSION** (Leathersellers' Hide)  
***Welcome by Professor Anne-Marie Kilday, UON Vice Chancellor***
- Plus announcement of The Graduate School's *Images of Research* winners (Leathersellers' Hide)
- 9.15-9.20am**            **WELCOME BY THE GRADUATE SCHOOL** (Leathersellers' Hide)  
***Prof. Matthew McCormack, Head of The Graduate School***
- 9.20-9.25am**            **WELCOME BY ORGANISING COMMITTEE** (Leathersellers' Hide)  
***Dr Triantafyllos Kanakis, Senior Lecturer in Telecommunications, Main ARC Host on Behalf of the Organising Committee***

**9.25-10.25am**      **Keynote Speaker 1** (Leathersellers' Hide)  
*Introduced by Dr Triantafyllos Kanakis, Senior Lecturer in Telecommunications*

***Prof. Dimitris Dalakoglou, Professor of Social Anthropology, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam***

**Title: Digital Societies and Human Transformation: Anthropological Perspectives on a Hyper-Connected Era**

- 45min: Talk
- 15min: Q&A

**10.25-10.30am**      **MOVE TO PARALLEL SESSIONS - Oral Presentations**

**10.30-11.10am**      **PARALLEL SESSIONS 1** (Leathersellers' Hide + LH319)

*If chairs are not available for any reason, presenters should chair each other's sessions. Lina El-Azhab will also be available as back-up chair, if needed. Oral Presentations are expected to be 15 minutes long plus 5 minutes for questions.*

<p><b>1a Perception and Practice</b>  Leathersellers' Hide  <i><b>Chair: Andrea Piroddi</b></i></p> <p><b>10.30-10.50am</b>  <b>Lee Waters</b>  Through the Stripes: What Ice Hockey Referees Actually Look at When the Game Explodes</p> <p><b>10.50-11.10am</b>  <b>Jenny Devers &amp; Brightlin Dhas</b>  Practice Readiness of Newly Qualified Occupational Therapists in the United Kingdom. A multi-stakeholder qualitative study</p> <p><b>Speakers Q&amp;A</b></p>	<p><b>1b Knowledge Exchange Studies</b>  LH319  <i><b>Chair: Adeboye Dada</b></i></p> <p><b>10.30-10.50am</b>  <b>Tanya Richardson</b>  Joining Academia with Practice: Knowledge Transfer Partnership in Action.</p> <p><b>10.50-11.10am</b>  <b>Kardi Somerfield &amp; Billy Little</b>  Beyond the Guest Lecture: A Case Study of Curriculum-Embedded Knowledge Exchange</p> <p><b>Speakers Q&amp;A</b></p>
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**11.10-11.40am REFRESHMENT BREAK** (Leathersellers' Hide)

**11.40-12.40pm PARALLEL SESSIONS 2** (Leathersellers' Hide + LH404 + LH319 + LH317)

*If chairs are not available for any reason, presenters should chair each other's sessions. Lina El-Azhab will also be available as back-up chair, if needed. Oral Presentations are expected to be 15 minutes long plus 5 minutes for questions. (Below in 2d: KE= Knowledge Exchange & Notice Some Different Starting Times in this KE Parallel Session.)*

<p><b>2a Health, AI in Agriculture &amp; Integrity</b> Leathersellers' Hide <i>Chair: Shaowei He</i></p> <p><b>11.40am-12.00pm</b> <b>Emel Thomas &amp; Helen Caldwell</b> 50 Families Co-producing Healthy Eating in the Digital Age: Community Engagement, Technology and Behaviour Change</p> <p><b>12.00-12.20pm</b> <b>Henrietta Farrugia</b> Agricultural professionals' perspectives on the adoption of Responsible Human-Centred Artificial Intelligence (RHCAI) in UK and Maltese agriculture</p> <p><b>12.20-12.40pm</b> <b>Ian Hall</b> Exploring the Disconnect Between Policy and Practice When Addressing Suspected Breaches of Academic Integrity: An Activity Theory Approach</p> <p><b>Speakers Q&amp;A</b></p>	<p><b>2b English Studies &amp; Writing</b> LH404 <i>Chair: Deborah Babalola</i></p> <p><b>11.40am-12.00pm</b> <b>Clare Moss</b> Spectrality and Trace in Snow Widows: Scott's Fatal Antarctic Expedition Through the Eyes of the Women They Left Behind (2022) by Katherine MacInnes</p> <p><b>12.00-12.20pm</b> <b>Catriona Lougher</b> AI Data-Analysis of English Classic Novels</p> <p><b>12.20-12.40pm</b> <b>Charlotte Dann</b> Connectivity and transformation through cross-university writing communities</p> <p><b>Speakers Q&amp;A</b></p>	<p><b>2c Health Studies &amp; Care</b> LH319 <i>Chair: Josephine Benefo-Agyei</i></p> <p><b>11.40am-12.00pm</b> <b>Kirstie Pope</b> Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) and the Media</p> <p><b>12.00-12.20pm</b> <b>Doreen Caesar</b> Routine referrals to third sector organisations following reablement to target loneliness among older adults aged 65years and over</p> <p><b>12.20-12.40pm</b> <b>Claire Davies</b> "Till death do us part" A descriptive phenomenological investigation into the lived experience of the transition to becoming an unpaid carer when a partner is diagnosed with dementia</p> <p><b>Speakers Q&amp;A</b></p>	<p><b>2d KE Project Showcasing</b> LH317 <i>Convener &amp; Chair: Pauline Bain</i></p> <p><b>11.40am-12.00pm</b> <b>Pauline Bain</b> Knowledge Exchange at the University of Northampton and Overview of Internal Funding Calls <i>Including: Short Film</i></p> <p><b>12.00-12.40pm</b> <b>Claire Drakeley</b> Protecting People, Strengthening Places – Implementing and Integrating Martyn's Law in Northamptonshire <i>Presentation followed by Workshop/Roundtable on: The Benefits of Working with External Partners</i></p> <p><b>Speakers Q&amp;A</b></p>
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**12:40-1.40pm DELIVERED LUNCH (Leathersellers' Hide)**

**1.40-2.40pm PARALLEL SESSIONS 3 (Leathersellers' Hide + LH404 + LH317)**

*If chairs are not available for any reason, presenters should chair each other's sessions. Lina El-Azhab will also be available as back-up chair, if needed. Oral Presentations are expected to be 15 minutes long plus 5 minutes for questions. (Below in 3c: KE= Knowledge Exchange & Notice Some Different Starting Times in this KE Parallel Session.)*

<p><b>3a Education Studies</b> Leathersellers' Hide <i>Chair: Tracey Redwood</i></p> <p><b>1.40-2.00pm</b> <b>Simon Sneddon</b> Hyperconnected and Climate Conscious: Connectivity, Evidence and Interdisciplinary Transformation in the Digital University</p> <p><b>2.00-2.20pm</b> <b>Ola Challabi</b> Exploring Student Engagement through Virtual Reality and AI: A Data-Driven Approach to Educational Transformation.</p> <p><b>2.20-2.40pm</b> <b>Alison Loddick</b> Where engagement aligns but disengagement diverges: Student and lecturer perspectives in higher education</p> <p><b>Speakers Q&amp;A</b></p>	<p><b>3b Health, Environment &amp; Communication</b> LH404 <i>Chair: Noman Jabbar</i></p> <p><b>1.40-2.00pm</b> <b>Deborah Babalola</b> Patient-Provider Interactions and Workplace Violence in Nigeria: A Qualitative Study of Healthcare Providers' Perspectives</p> <p><b>2.00-2.20pm</b> <b>Sian Davies-Vollum &amp; Debadayita Raha</b> Integrating Environmental Sustainability into Entrepreneurship: A Ghanaian case study</p> <p><b>2.20-2.40pm</b> <b>Believe Nwamae</b> Evaluating Channel Capacity of OTFS Modulation under Time-Varying and Doppler-Impaired Channels</p> <p><b>Speakers Q&amp;A</b></p>	<p><b>3c KE Project Showcasing: Working with the Community</b> LH317 <i>Convener &amp; Chair: Pauline Bain</i></p> <p><b>1.40-2.10pm</b> <b>Andy Hewitt &amp; Mel Jordan</b> Developing Kings Heath <i>Film plus presentation &amp; Discussion About Community Groups</i></p> <p><b>2.10-2.40pm</b> <b>Declan Ryan</b> How to Get the Most out of Community Engagement <i>Discussions and Best Practice</i></p> <p><b>Speakers Q&amp;A</b></p>
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**2.40-3pm COMFORT BREAK**

**3-4pm**

**PARALLEL SESSIONS 4** (Leathersellers' Hide + LH404 + LH317)

*If chairs are not available for any reason, presenters should chair each other's sessions. Lina El-Azhab will also be available as back-up chair, if needed. Oral Presentations are expected to be 15 minutes long plus 5 minutes for questions. (Below in 4c KE= Knowledge Exchange & Notice Some Different Structure & Starting Times in this KE Parallel Session.)*

<p><b>4a Roundtable Discussion</b></p> <p>Leathersellers' Hide</p> <p><i>Facilitators: Claire Drakeley, Dan Jasinski, Jordan Nunan:</i></p> <p><b>Title:</b> <i>Cross-curricular simulation learning: IRL vs AI</i></p> <p><b>3.45-4pm: Q&amp;A</b></p>	<p><b>4b Workshop</b></p> <p>LH404</p> <p><i>Facilitators: Louise Kirby &amp; Kirstie Pope</i></p> <p><b>Title:</b> <i>Towards best practice in researching with autistic people</i></p> <p><b>Q&amp;A</b></p>	<p><b>4c KE Project Showcasing: KE &amp; Commercialisation LH317</b></p> <p><i>Convener &amp; Chair: Pauline Bain</i></p> <p><b>3.00-3.25pm</b> <b>Kate Ewing &amp; Poppy Twigger</b> Innovating Perineal Repair Education: Designing and Piloting Realistic Simulation Models for Midwifery Training and developing for CPD</p> <p><b>3.25-3.40pm</b> <b>Tracey Redwood &amp; Dr Karen Graves</b> Storytelling Connects: Development of a novel card game ready for market</p> <p><i>Presentation followed by workshop</i></p> <p><b>Q&amp;A</b></p>
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**4-4.50pm**

**PARALLEL SESSIONS 5** (Leathersellers' Hide + LH317)

*If chairs are not available for any reason, presenters should chair each other's sessions. Lina El-Azhab will also be available as back-up chair, if needed. Oral Presentations are expected to be 15 minutes long plus 5 minutes for questions. (Below in 4c KE= Knowledge Exchange & Notice Some Different Structure & Starting Times in this KE Parallel Session.)*

<p><b>5a POSTERS</b></p> <p>Leathersellers' Hide <i>Chair: Adaeze William-Gauntlett</i></p> <p><b>Kimberley Morris</b> Student Midwives' and Nurses Engagement with Research and Evidence-Based Practice: A Literature Review</p> <p><b>Louisa Ejenavbo</b> Sustainable Finance Under Pressure: Building Organisational Resilience in the UK Financial Services Sector</p> <p><b>Andrea Piroddi &amp; Alessandra Piroddi</b> Identification of Dominant Features in Polyamine-Related Biological Data Using Machine Learning Techniques</p> <p><b>Clare Moss</b> Beyond Heroic Exploration: Contemporary Women's Life-writing of the Polar Regions</p>	<p><b>5b KE Project Showcasing: Engagement for Growth</b> LH317 <i>Convener &amp; Chair: Pauline Bain</i></p> <p><b>4.00-4.20pm</b> <b>Emmeline Child</b> Remanufacture for Scale <i>Presentation &amp; Sharing Experience</i></p> <p><b>4.20-4.50pm</b> <b>Tanya Richardson &amp; Brogan Read</b> KTP Plus Current Project - The Impact of Play and Learning Environments on Babies and Toddlers' Communication and Language</p> <p><b>Q&amp;A</b></p>
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**4.50pm Closing Remarks & Schedule for the Following Day (Leathersellers' Hide)**

*Prof. Matthew McCormack & Dr Xose Rosales, The Graduate School, on behalf of the Organising Committee*



**UON**

**Connectivity and Transformation:  
An Interdisciplinary Approach Towards  
Impact Recognition in a Hyper Connected  
World**



**FINAL PROGRAMME DAY 2**

**Online, Thurs. 25<sup>th</sup> June 2026**

*Online on Blackboard Collaborate*

*Book your place at:*



[Registration Form - UON 2026 Annual Research Conference \(ARC\) on 24+25/6/26 – Fill out form](#)

**Please refer to each session below for the Collaborate room links**

*If you are not presenting, please do not modify any collaborate online settings during slideshows so as to help presenters with their displays.*

*Oral Presentations are expected to be 15 minutes long plus 5 minutes for questions.*

**9.00-9.05 OPENING DAY 2 (Online)**  
**WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS & DAY OVERVIEW:**  
***Dr Xose Rosales, Graduate School & Organising Committee***

[Main Online ARC Conference Room A](#)

(All "Room A" links below and throughout are the same and thus connect to the same online room. They are repeated for convenience. The same is the case with all "Room B" links further down below and throughout too.)

LINK - Main Room A - UON Annual Research Conference - Thurs 25th June 2026:  
<https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/23d96b04c9dd4058bed9c9a024f34174>

**9.05-9.15 WELCOME TO ARC DAY 2 BY: (Online)**  
***Dr Cathy Smith, Dean of Research & Knowledge Exchange***

[Main Online ARC Conference Room A](#)

LINK - Main Room A - UON Annual Research Conference - Thurs 25th June 2026:  
<https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/23d96b04c9dd4058bed9c9a024f34174>

**9.15-9.30 WELCOME TO ARC DAY 2 BY ORGANISING COMMITTEE (Online)**  
***Dr Triantafyllos Kanakis, Senior Lecturer in Telecommunications***  
***Main ARC Host on Behalf of the Organising Committee***

[Main Online ARC Conference Room A](#)

LINK - Main Room A - UON Annual Research Conference - Thurs 25th June 2026:  
<https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/23d96b04c9dd4058bed9c9a024f34174>

**9.30-10.30 PARALLEL SESSIONS 1 (Online)**

*If chairs are not available for any reason, presenters should chair each other's sessions. Lina El-Azhab will also be available as back-up chair, if needed. Oral Presentations are expected to be 15 minutes long plus 5 minutes for questions.*

<p><b>1a Historical Studies and Sociology</b></p> <p><a href="#">Parallel Room A</a></p> <p>Main Online ARC Conference Room A</p> <p>LINK: Main Room A - UON Annual Research Conference - Thurs 25th June 2026</p> <p><a href="https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/23d96b04c9dd4058bed9c9a024f34174">https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/23d96b04c9dd4058bed9c9a024f34174</a></p> <p><b><i>Chair: Hu Zixuan</i></b></p>	<p><b>1b Health Studies, Creativity &amp; Welfare</b></p> <p><a href="#">Parallel Room B</a></p> <p>Second Online ARC Conference Room B</p> <p>LINK: Conference Room B - UON Annual Research Conference - Thurs 25th June 2026</p> <p><a href="https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/c32b0220657e44ee8c448d82a8d9d915">https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/c32b0220657e44ee8c448d82a8d9d915</a></p> <p><b><i>Chair: Josephine Benefo-Agyei</i></b></p>
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<p><b>9.30-9.50am</b> <b>Matthew McCormack</b> Transforming young bodies? Children's footwear in Georgian Britain</p> <p><b>9.50-10.10am</b> <b>Richard Whitehead</b> Urban Futures &amp; Cultural Pasts in transition: Photographic Documentary Practice and Industrial Heritage of shoe factories in Northampton, England, UK</p> <p><b>10.10-10.30am</b> <b>Federico Farini</b> Human Rights as Social semantics: a Paradoxical Form of self-description for Western Modernity</p> <p><b>Speakers Q&amp;A</b></p>	<p><b>9.30-9.50am</b> <b>Michael Maher</b> "Art of Complaining": Using photography to capture the experience of Care Experienced Youth</p> <p><b>9.50-10.10am</b> <b>Esther Jin</b> Achieving Collective Welfare in Multi-agent Reinforcement Learning via Suggestion Sharing</p> <p><b>Speakers Q&amp;A</b></p>
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**10.30-11.00am**    **REFRESHMENT BREAK** (Online)

**11am-12.15pm**    **PARALLEL SESSIONS 2 Roundtable** (Online)

**Main Online ARC Conference Room A & Room B - Thurs 25th June 2026**

<p><b>11am-12pm: Roundtable Discussion 2a</b></p> <p>Parallel Main Room A: <a href="https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/23d96b04c9dd4058bed9c9a024f34174">https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/23d96b04c9dd4058bed9c9a024f34174</a></p> <p><i>Rachel Evenden &amp; Members of the Exceptional Experiences &amp; Consciousness Studies (EECS) Research Group:</i></p> <p><b>Topic:</b> <b>Exceptional Human Experiences</b></p> <p><b>12-12.15pm: Q&amp;A</b></p>	<p><b>11am-12pm: Roundtable Discussion 2b</b></p> <p>Parallel Room B: <a href="https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/c32b0220657e44ee8c448d82a8d9d915">https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/c32b0220657e44ee8c448d82a8d9d915</a></p> <p><i>Kimberley Hill, Rachel Maunder; Sarah Mansbridge; Natasha Mansukhani and David Biggs</i></p> <p><b>Topic:</b> <b>Health, Education and Behaviour Change Research Showcase</b></p> <p><b>12-12.15pm: Q&amp;A</b></p>
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**12.15-12.45pm LUNCH BREAK (Online)**

**12.45-13.30pm 3MT: 3-MINUTE THESIS COMPETITION (Online)**

Main Online ARC Conference Room A

LINK: Main Room A - UON Annual Research Conference - Thurs 25<sup>th</sup> June 2026

<https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/23d96b04c9dd4058bed9c9a024f34174>

**Chair: Dr Xose Rosales**

3-Minute Thesis© (3MT) is a worldwide competition in which PGRs are asked to condense their thesis into a three-minute presentation with one simple slide! The winner of this competition, run by the Graduate School at UON, will be announced later today at 3pm. Our winner may have the opportunity to represent UON by presenting their 3MT at the [East Midlands Doctoral Network \(EMDoc\) Conference 3MT Competition](#) online later in the year. The audience will be able to vote for a people's choice award through a poll for which a link will be provided in the chat line of the collaborate room during the event.

<b>Roxanne Grzybkowski</b>	<i>Exploring occupational therapists (OTs) understanding of their professional identity in acute hospital settings: A Mixed Methods Study</i>
<b>Robert Browne</b>	<i>From Exclusion to Impact: Developing a Social Impact Framework for a Community Interest Company delivering Communities, Organisations and Work readiness Programmes</i>
<b>Venkatesh Nittala</b>	<i>New Delhi and London: A tale of two cities' air pollution, influenced by population</i>
<b>Joseph Mngqibisa</b>	<i>How Do Empowerment Policies in Emerging Economies support MSME Development? A case for South Africa's BBBEE Policy</i>

**13.30-14.30pm KEYNOTE SPEAKER 2 (ONLINE)**

Main Online ARC Conference Room A

LINK: Main Room A - UON Annual Research Conference - Thurs 25th June 2026

<https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/23d96b04c9dd4058bed9c9a024f34174>

*Introduced by Dr Triantafyllos Kanakis, Senior Lecturer in Telecommunications*

*Dr Ali al-Sherbaz, Assistant Professor in Digital Skills, University of Cambridge*

**Title: "Connectivity and Transformation: The Technologies Reshaping Our Future"**

- 45min: Talk
- 15min: Q&A

**14.30-14.45pm 3MT COMPETITION WINNER & PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD ANNOUNCEMENT (ONLINE)**

*By Prof. Matthew McCormack, Head of Graduate School*

Main Online ARC Conference Room A

LINK: Main Room A - UON Annual Research Conference - Thurs 25th June 2026

<https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/23d96b04c9dd4058bed9c9a024f34174>

**14.45-15.00pm BREAK (Online)**

**15.00-16.00pm PARALLEL SESSIONS 3 (Online)**

*If chairs are not available for any reason, presenters should chair each other's sessions. Lina El-Azhab will also be available as back-up chair, if needed. Oral Presentations are expected to be 15 minutes long plus 5 minutes for questions.*

<p><b>3a Connectivity, Entrepreneurship &amp; Wireless Communication</b></p> <p>Parallel Room A</p> <p>Main Online ARC Conference Room A</p> <p>LINK: Main Room A - UON Annual Research Conference - Thurs 25th June 2026</p> <p><a href="https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/23d96b04c9dd4058bed9c9a024f34174">https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/23d96b04c9dd4058bed9c9a024f34174</a></p> <p><i>Chair: Ken Adeyemi</i></p>	<p><b>3b Health Studies, Pedagogy &amp; Identity</b></p> <p>Parallel Room B</p> <p>Second Online ARC Conference Room B</p> <p>LINK: Conference Room B - UON Annual Research Conference - Thurs 25th June 2026</p> <p><a href="https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/c32b0220657e44ee8c448d82a8d9d915">https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/c32b0220657e44ee8c448d82a8d9d915</a></p> <p><i>Chair: Noman Jabbar</i></p>
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<p><b>3.00-3.20pm</b> <b>Frank Alparslan</b> Human-AI Collaboration in Transport Disruption Response: Connectivity, Trust and Governance Under Pressure</p> <p><b>3.20-3.40pm</b> <b>Dany Rmeily</b> Resistance to Change: An Assessment of Waste Management Organisations in the United Arab Emirates</p> <p><b>3.40-4pm</b> <b>Believe Nwamae</b> Dual-Metric QoS-Aware Relay Selection for Selective Decode-and-Forward in Cell-Free Massive MIMO</p> <p><b>Speakers Q&amp;A</b></p>	<p><b>3.00-3.20pm</b> <b>Lola Atkinson</b> Leadership for Lightworkers: A Phenomenological Exploration of Spiritually Sensitive Healthcare Professionals and the Extension of Spiritual Leadership Theory</p> <p><b>3.20-3.40pm</b> <b>Kimberley Morris</b> Student midwives' experiences of research and evidence-based Pedagogy: An ongoing PhD Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis</p> <p><b>3.40-4pm</b> <b>Vincent Adegoke</b> Connectivity, Identity, and Belonging: A Narrative Inquiry into the Holistic Experiences of BAME Staff in the UK National Health Service</p> <p><b>Speakers Q&amp;A</b></p>
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**16.00-16.15pm FINAL CONFERENCE PLENARY AND CLOSE (Online)**

[Main Online ARC Conference Room A](#)

LINK: Main Room A - UON Annual Research Conference - Thurs 25th June 2026

<https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/23d96b04c9dd4058bed9c9a024f34174>

*Prof. Matthew McCormack & Dr Xose Rosales, The Graduate School, on behalf of the Organising Committee*

# ABSTRACTS

*(Listed A-Z, by First Name)*

**KEY:**

**Author's Name(s) (in bold)**

*Title of presentation (in italics)*

Abstracts (regular)

**Ali al-Sherbaz**

*Connectivity and Transformation: The Technologies Reshaping Our Future*

“The rapid convergence of artificial intelligence, data science, cybersecurity, and advanced connectivity is transforming the way we live, learn, work, and conduct research. These technologies are no longer separate fields of innovation; they are becoming deeply interconnected forces that shape decision-making, knowledge creation, digital services, and global collaboration.

This keynote will explore how AI and data science are changing the research landscape by enabling faster discovery, deeper analysis, predictive modelling, automation, and new forms of human-machine collaboration. It will also examine how cybersecurity has become a critical foundation for trust, resilience, and responsible innovation in an increasingly connected world. As digital systems become more intelligent and interconnected, the risks associated with data privacy, cyber threats, algorithmic bias, misinformation, and digital dependency become more significant.

The talk will also consider the implications of these technologies for education. Universities and researchers are now challenged to rethink how knowledge is produced, taught, assessed, and applied. AI-enabled learning, data-driven teaching, digital research methods, and cyber-aware academic practice are reshaping the skills required by postgraduate students and future professionals. Rather than viewing these technologies simply as tools, the keynote will argue that they represent a wider transformation in how society understands intelligence, security, evidence, and innovation.

The session will encourage postgraduate students to think critically about their role in this changing landscape: not only as users of technology, but as researchers, educators, innovators, and responsible leaders. The future will not be shaped by technology alone, but by the values, questions, and decisions of those who design, govern, and apply it.”

**Alison Loddick**

*Where engagement aligns but disengagement diverges: student and lecturer perspectives in higher education*

"Academic engagement is widely recognised as important for student success, retention, and progression in higher education. While engagement has been explored extensively, disengagement is often treated as its opposite and is less frequently examined. There is also limited research that directly compares students' and lecturers' perspectives on what contributes to engagement and disengagement, particularly within post 1992 universities. This presentation draws on doctoral research to explore where student and lecturer perspectives align and where they differ, with a particular focus on the role of academic relationships.

The study uses a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 107 undergraduate students and 20 lecturers across all faculties. Reflexive thematic analysis was used to explore how participants described engagement and disengagement and what they believed influenced these experiences. The presentation will share selected findings that bring student and lecturer perspectives into direct comparison.

The findings suggest a strong level of shared understanding around academic engagement. Students and lecturers described engagement in similar ways and identified comparable factors as important, including quality of teaching, assessment design, feedback, and supportive interactions with teaching staff. Engagement was commonly described as something that could be encouraged through clear communication, consistency, and positive relationships between students and lecturers.

In contrast, differences became more visible when participants discussed academic disengagement. From the student perspective, disengagement was complex with institutional, situational and dispositional factors. A key influence for students was closely linked to teaching practices and relational experiences, such as unclear guidance or feeling unsupported. In contrast, lecturers also recognised disengagement as influenced by multiple factors, but focused more on student level factors such as motivation, organisation, preparedness, and external pressures. While lecturers highlighted the importance of building positive relationships to support engagement, they were less likely to emphasise their role when discussing disengagement. This difference demonstrates how disengagement is understood from different positions within the academic environment.

Across both student and lecturer accounts, relationships emerged as a central influence, shaping how engagement was supported and how disengagement developed. By focusing on these relational aspects, the presentation will explore how differing perspectives may affect how disengagement is recognised and responded to in practice.

This presentation will be relevant to all university staff involved in teaching, student support, and academic leadership, particularly those interested in improving engagement and addressing disengagement through more relational and reflective approaches. It aims to encourage discussion about how greater awareness of student perspectives, especially around relationships, may support more effective and inclusive teaching and learning practices."

**Andrea Piroddi & Alessandra Piroddi**

*Identification of Dominant Features in Polyamine-Related Biological Data Using Machine Learning Techniques*

"Polyamines are involved in several fundamental cellular processes, including cell growth, differentiation, and metabolic regulation. The increasing availability of high-dimensional biological datasets requires advanced analytical approaches capable of extracting meaningful patterns and reducing data complexity.

In this preliminary work, we propose a machine learning-based framework for the exploration of polyamine-related biological data. The proposed methodology combines statistical preprocessing, dimensionality reduction techniques such as Principal Component Analysis (PCA), and unsupervised clustering methods to identify dominant biological features and hidden relationships among variables.

The framework is designed to support exploratory analysis of complex datasets, including metabolomic and transcriptomic measurements associated with polyamine activity. Future developments will evaluate the integration of nonlinear representation learning techniques, including autoencoders, for latent feature extraction.

This interdisciplinary collaboration combines biological expertise with machine learning methodologies, aiming to provide an interpretable and scalable approach for biological data analysis."

### **Andrew Hewitt & Mel Jordan**

#### *Developing Kings Heath*

"Since 2023, there have been developing workshops and engagement projects in Kings Heath, Northampton, building relationships with residents and stakeholders through the Kings Heath Partnership Group. This work has shown that meaningful engagement takes time and continuity.

We have co-produced wellbeing asset maps (Mapping Kiosk), zines (Kings Heath Calling), a textile banner (The People are Stitching), and a short film (A Good Enough Place).

This work grows from four years of collaboration with residents and West Northamptonshire Council

This session will outline different methodologies which have taken place to build community relationships and showcase the value of Community Engagement

By examining the spatial limitations of Kings Heath alongside the possibilities of digital public spaces, our project seeks to uncover new challenges in community development and generate innovative proposals for the future.

This project seeks to foster a sense of belonging and build community, via art-based activities designed to encourage opinion formation, dialogue and exchange among residents. Interaction and engagement are intrinsic to my social art practice research, which aims to work with diverse publics, including residents, organisations, and stakeholders."

### **Believe Nwamae**

### *Dual-Metric QoS-Aware Relay Selection for Selective Decode-and-Forward in Cell-Free Massive MIMO*

"The increasing demand for reliable and high-capacity wireless connectivity in beyond-5G and emerging 6G networks has intensified interest in scalable user-centric cell-free massive MIMO architectures. Conventional cooperative transmission schemes, however, often suffer from unnecessary relay participation, error propagation, and inefficient use of distributed radio resources. This paper proposes a QoS-aware selective decode-and-forward (S-DF) framework for user-centric cell-free massive MIMO, in which distributed relay nodes dynamically form a Virtual Antenna Array (VAA) only when they satisfy joint Quality of Service criteria derived from bit error rate (BER) and channel capacity.

The main contribution is a dual-metric relay selection mechanism combined with neighbour ranking based on autocorrelation and linear minimum mean square error (LMMSE), enabling adaptive and distributed VAA formation around the target user. An analytical model is developed for the end-to-end transmission link under Rayleigh fading, explicitly characterising the effect of selective relay participation on the effective signal-to-noise ratio (SNR), BER, and achievable capacity. Monte Carlo simulations over large-scale deployment scenarios with relay populations of up to 256 nodes show that the proposed scheme reduces BER from approximately  $10^{-3}$  to  $10^{-5}$ , achieves 35–50% channel-capacity improvement over conventional decode-and-forward and baseline cell-free massive MIMO schemes at moderate SNR levels of 10-20 dB, and provides up to 30% improvement in energy efficiency through selective relay activation. The framework also maintains robustness under interference and phase misalignment conditions while avoiding unnecessary forwarding overhead.

These results demonstrate that QoS-driven VAA formation with selective decode-and-forward provides a scalable, energy-efficient, and high-performance cooperative transmission strategy for dense user-centric wireless networks and offers a practical foundation for next-generation 6G communication systems."

### **Believe Nwamae**

#### *Evaluating Channel Capacity of OTFS Modulation under Time-Varying and Doppler-Impaired Channels*

"The increasing demand for reliable and high-capacity wireless communication in high-mobility environments, such as vehicular and aerial networks, presents significant challenges for conventional modulation schemes. Orthogonal Frequency Division Multiplexing (OFDM), widely adopted in current wireless systems, suffers from performance degradation in time-varying channels due to Doppler spread and inter-carrier interference. Orthogonal Time Frequency Space (OTFS) modulation has emerged as a promising alternative, offering improved robustness by operating in the delay-Doppler domain. This paper presents a comprehensive analysis of channel capacity in OTFS-based communication systems, with particular emphasis on its performance under dynamic channel conditions.

The proposed framework models the OTFS transmission system by mapping information symbols onto the delay-Doppler domain, enabling the channel to be represented as a quasi-static two-

dimensional function. This representation captures both delay and Doppler effects more effectively than conventional time-frequency domain approaches. An analytical formulation of the equivalent OTFS channel is developed, allowing the derivation of the effective Signal-to-Noise Ratio (SNR) and corresponding Shannon channel capacity under Rayleigh fading conditions.

The analysis considers varying levels of Doppler spread and channel dispersion to evaluate the impact of mobility on system performance. Monte Carlo simulations are conducted to validate the analytical model and to quantify achievable capacity across a range of SNR regimes. The results demonstrate that OTFS maintains a more stable and higher effective SNR compared to conventional modulation schemes in rapidly time-varying channels, leading to improved capacity performance. In particular, OTFS exhibits resilience to Doppler-induced channel variations, enabling more reliable data transmission in scenarios where traditional OFDM systems experience significant degradation.

Furthermore, the delay-Doppler domain representation inherent in OTFS allows for more efficient exploitation of channel diversity, contributing to enhanced spectral efficiency. The capacity analysis reveals that OTFS provides consistent performance gains in high-mobility environments, with reduced sensitivity to channel dynamics and improved robustness against time-selective fading.

These findings highlight the potential of OTFS modulation as a strong candidate for next-generation wireless systems requiring reliable high-data-rate communication in challenging propagation environments. The presented analytical and simulation-based framework provides valuable insights into the capacity limits of OTFS systems and establishes a foundation for further optimisation and practical implementation in future 6G networks."

## **Catriona Lougher**

### *AI Data-Analysis of English Classic Novels*

"AI has gathered a poor reputation in the world of higher education, marketed more broadly as 'time-saving' technology, it has the enhanced functionality that the vacuum cleaner offered over sweeping with a twig broom, yet often seems to earn the academic user the reputation of a lazy house cleaner hiding dirt under the rug. This presentation seeks to defend the case for AI powered data analysis, unlocking the benefits over manual annotation, without sacrificing detailed scrutiny. Further than this, it will address the benefits of combining human endeavour with AI to optimize the available insights and discover new information about texts which have been pored over for centuries. The defence considers the work of the Brontes, but aims to establish a new methodology for AI analysis of classic English novels, interrogating emotional language for diversity, usage, frequency and insights around the speaker or emoting character in terms of gender, class, demographics or relationship. This analysis has been conducted using an AI powered qualitative data analysis tool more usually employed to analyse, assess and compare political speeches or other short texts for key themes and meaning. AI also offers quantitative insights into repetition, perhaps identifying themes that were previously dormant or obscured. This will be achieved through using data manipulation and presentation, such as tables and graphs to bring to life trends and insight from the novels. The manual human overlay is also critical – not all emotions are directly communicated using the common emotion word labels, deep textual analysis is the necessary

partner to AI. Whilst the full research will not be completed before this conference, this presentation will address some of the considerations, challenges and opportunities it could present. In addition, it will look at some of the alternative AI functionality which falls short of being useful for an English and History researcher, such as broader thematic and sentiment analysis. And finally, it will propose a route through for use of AI in academic research, one which will enable academics to embrace the opportunities it offers, avoids the pitfalls and shed once and for all, the negative connotations of procuring data via AI analysis. As AI data analysis grows in capability, the volume and depth of analysis expands, which means researchers should be looking ahead in anticipation at what new opportunities AI functionality could unlock for their fields of research. These include 'speed to market' – how quickly a researcher can analyse and present back detailed findings and scope of the research – potentially meaning more expansive projects can be undertaken. And critically to academic research, these ambitions can be achieved without risking integrity, ethics or ownership of the resultant work."

### **Charlotte Dann**

#### *Connectivity and transformation through cross-university writing communities*

"In higher education, academics and postgraduate researchers increasingly navigate cultures marked by acceleration, competition, and chronic overwork. Against this backdrop, writing communities such as 'Shut Up & Write' are emerging as meaningful spaces that prioritise connection, collective intention, and sustainable scholarly practice. This cross-university seed project, developed in collaboration with the charity 'Shut Up & Write' and researchers from the University of Cambridge, explores the role of structured writing sessions as sites of connectivity and potential transformation within academic life. The project investigates how participants engage with these communities, how they understand their sense of belonging within them, and how writing together may contribute to alternative, slower, and more relational academic cultures.

This presentation shares the conceptual grounding and early reflections from the process of undertaking the research. Rather than reporting outcomes, it focuses on the experience of designing and conducting a study that is itself situated within a community-based practice. This includes considering the methodological and ethical implications of researching a group that the investigator also facilitates, the relational dynamics that arise in co-present writing environments, and the practical challenges of capturing lived academic experience in ways that honour participants' voices.

The conference themes of Connectivity and Transformation provide a generative frame for reflecting on how writing communities might reconfigure academic relationships: between individuals and their writing, between peers and colleagues, and between researchers and the broader institutional cultures in which they work. Writing groups offer opportunities for shared presence, routine, and mutual accountability that stand in contrast to the dominant discourses of productivity and competition. The project seeks to understand these possibilities not as outcomes to be measured, but as relational processes unfolding within the life of the community.

The presentation will explore how the project's design—using qualitative interviews and reflective diaries—aims to capture these processes over time, and how the methodology itself embodies principles of slow, situated inquiry. It will also consider the transformative potential of small-scale, routine practices, and how writing communities might be intentionally positioned within universities to support well-being, collegiality, and cultural change.

By foregrounding early reflections rather than findings, this presentation invites dialogue on how connectivity can be cultivated in academic contexts, and how community-based writing practices may contribute to more humane and sustainable transformations in higher education."

### **Claire Davies**

*"Till death do us part" A descriptive phenomenological investigation into the lived experience of the transition to becoming an unpaid carer when a partner is diagnosed with dementia*

"Families impacted by dementia are often exhausted and overwhelmed, lacking the required knowledge and energy to source appropriate help, advice and education. Frequently the greatest burden falls to a partner who may also be dealing with their own health concerns.

This qualitative study explores the impact of a dementia diagnosis upon couples by examining the experience of people transitioning into an unpaid carer role for their partner.

This PhD studentship (funded by public health in North Northamptonshire Council as part of the Orchard Project) forms part of a unique community-based partnership project between a regional UK (North Northants) County Council and the University of Northampton's (UK) Dementia Research and Innovation Centre. The overall project involves people with dementia, their carers, staff, trustees and the wider community to explore the barriers to accessing and engaging with local health care and associated services for those effected by a dementia diagnosis.

A descriptive phenomenological approach (Giorgi, 2009) captures the lived experiences of carers to build a better understanding of unpaid carer needs and perspectives during this critical life event and translates these findings into practical support for new informal caregivers.

The analysis of 18 interviews identified general structures associated with the caregiver role across all spousal caregivers. Carers shared their personal experiences of loss, isolation and safety concerns as they transitioned into the caregiver role following their partner's dementia diagnosis.

Early findings reveal a shared experience of carers regardless of gender, age or culture that identifies the need for appropriate support and education for unpaid dementia carers. Evidence from this study will be used towards the creation of co-produced appropriate material as part of

a 12-month programme of events and activities being delivered by the broader Orchard Project.

By raising awareness and reducing stigma related to dementia, the insight from this study will inform future services, support and education for unpaid dementia carers and towards the maintenance of positive health, wellbeing and independent community-based living.

Within this presentation the use of digital technology will be considered in terms of its value in providing appropriate and accessible carer support and the practical challenges of supporting diverse/underserved communities with appropriate caregiver resources. Findings from the study and next steps will examine the experiences described by caregivers considering an increasingly digital world."

## **Claire Drakeley**

### *Protecting People Strengthening Places*

"On 22 May 2017, a suicide bomber carried out a terrorist attack at the Manchester Arena at the end of a concert by US singer Ariana Grande. The attacker detonated an improvised explosive device in the foyer as thousands of people, many of them children and young people, were leaving the venue. The explosion killed 22 people and injured more than 1,000, either directly from the blast or through the panic and crush that followed. It was the deadliest terrorist attack in the UK since the 7 July 2005 London bombings. Emergency services responded rapidly, with police, ambulance, and fire crews attending the scene, though subsequent inquiries highlighted gaps in preparedness and communication. The attack had a profound impact on victims' families, the city of Manchester, and the wider UK, and became the catalyst for campaigns to improve venue security, ultimately shaping the development of Martyn's Law.

This session will outline the work which has happened in developing a shared understanding of the implications and implementation of Martyn's Law through workshops and facilitated discussions and simulations, led by UON, and connecting local authority and network leaders with professional and volunteer event organisers, the supply chain and venues across the region. This project will also has a tangible benefit for the University as our venue(s) and open spaces also need to comply with Martyn's Law.

It will show the benefits and strength that can be gained through working together with external organisations. A round table discussion to explore these benefits and how these can be developed will follow the talk."

## **Claire Drakeley, Dan Jasinski, Jordan Nunan**

### *Roundtable Discussion: Cross-curricular simulation learning: IRL vs AI*

"Simulation-based learning is gaining prominence across higher education as a means of developing the tacit, judgement-based skills required in complex professional environments. In disciplines such as events, hospitality, tourism, and related operational fields, decision-making rarely follows linear models. Instead, practitioners must respond to time pressure, uncertainty, competing stakeholder priorities, and incomplete information. This presentation explores the role of cross-curricular simulation learning in developing these capabilities, comparing in-real-life (IRL) immersive simulations with emerging AI-driven simulation environments.

The paper draws on findings from doctoral research into situational judgement and decision-making in the events industry, which develops a causal model for how practitioners make effective decisions in high-pressure contexts. The research highlights the importance of tacit knowledge, recognition-primed decision-making, collaborative problem-solving, and ecological rationality. These capabilities are difficult to teach through traditional lectures or assessments, as they rely on experience, context, and feedback. Simulation pedagogy provides a structured but dynamic environment in which these skills can be practised, observed, and reflected upon.

The first case study is Operation Nexus, a live, cross-curricular simulation delivered at Silverstone, funded by the Student Success Innovation Fund. Students are assigned to operational teams across multiple live venues, including Silverstone Event Control, the Hilton Garden Inn, and the Silverstone Museum. Working across event, hospitality, and visitor-attraction contexts, they must manage evolving scenarios involving safety, logistics, communications, and stakeholder coordination. The simulation is driven by real-time injects and interdependent decision-making, exposing students to the complexity and ambiguity of professional practice. Evidence from observations and student reflections indicates improvements in situational awareness, teamwork, and confidence in decision-making under pressure.

The second case study explores an AI-driven simulation developed in partnership with MUTI Live. This environment uses decision-tree logic and adaptive scenario design to create repeatable, scalable simulations that can be embedded across modules and disciplines. Students interact with dynamic scenarios, make operational decisions, and experience the consequences of those choices in real time. The AI environment enables multiple iterations, personalised feedback, and flexible integration into teaching, making it particularly suitable for cross-curricular and blended learning contexts.

The presentation compares the pedagogical affordances of IRL and AI simulations. IRL simulations offer embodied, social, and sensory experiences that heighten realism, emotional engagement, and interpersonal skill development. AI simulations, by contrast, provide scalability, repeatability, and data-driven feedback, enabling students to practise decision-making multiple times and across different contexts. Together, they represent complementary approaches rather than competing ones.

The paper argues that cross-curricular simulation learning, combining IRL and AI approaches, offers a powerful framework for developing the tacit, situational skills required in contemporary professional environments. By integrating research-informed decision-making models with immersive and AI-enabled simulations, educators can bridge the gap between theory and practice, and better prepare students for complex, real-world challenges."

## **Clare Moss**

### *Beyond Heroic Exploration: Contemporary Women's Life-writing of the Polar Regions*

"The cultural narrative of the polar regions has long been governed by Western perspectives of nationalism, masculinity, race, and gender. However, my research examines how contemporary women writers offer a reimagining of an environment dominated by territorial claiming and

individual heroics. Through the life-writing of female hunters and travellers, Indigenous writers, and the spectral histories of the wives and mothers of polar exploration, who are connected to the Antarctic through written and material artefacts, women writers are foregrounding overlooked histories, including Indigenous presence, challenging the exclusions embedded in canonical polar literature. Through hybrid forms of life-writing they destabilize the myth of the male explorer, and reframe polar environments as lived, inhabited, and ethically charged, rather than empty and conquerable. The polar regions emerge not as stages for imperial performance but as dynamic environments that demand a rethinking of what it means to “know” and narrate extreme places. As such, my research reveals how women, too, have been an enduring part of the polar regions."

### **Clare Moss**

*Spectrality and Trace in Snow Widows: Scott's Fatal Antarctic Expedition Through the Eyes of the Women They Left Behind (2022) by Katherine MacInnes*

"How does a letter or a diary entry reveal a 'trace' of the person absent? Does the presence of the wives and mothers in the story of the men who trekked to the South Pole alter our perception of Antarctica and polar exploration?"

In responding to these questions, I refer to Jacques Derrida's theory of absence, presence, and trace (1967) to inform my reading of MacInnes's disruption of notions of absence and presence, particularly through her use of narrative form and inclusion of historical artefacts, which, I argue, reflect notions of 'spectrality' and 'trace'. Additionally, Donna Haraway's concept of speculative fabulation (2016) illuminates my analysis of MacInnes's rich, interconnected narrative tapestry. In merging the women's and men's stories of the expedition, *Snow Widows* can be read as a newly woven pattern of Antarctic narrative, as well as being an ongoing provocation in alignment with Haraway's use of the word, "trouble". By applying Haraway's theory of the creation and influence of storytelling to *Snow Widows*, it illuminates how MacInnes's inclusion of the women's stories changes the perspective of the cultural legacy of the masculine exploration narrative and "makes trouble" in its reimagining. MacInnes writes a "sym-poieses" exploration narrative, one that gathers stories, rather than excludes them. This gathering of fragments from the past reimagines a story that exists in our present and which also moves forward into the future. As such, in its inclusion of women's presence in this narrative, it emphasizes the complex (and important) nature of storytelling, particularly with regard to writing from feminist perspectives.

It is my argument that MacInnes's contemporary reimagining of Scott's expedition rewrites the notion that the women were "left behind", thus challenging patriarchal polar narratives of the past. Rather, she presents the women's narratives as a vital component in understanding the wider cultural discourse of the men's mission, revealing the tangled web between the men who ventured South, the women waiting for their return, and societal expectations of class and gender performance in Edwardian society. Reflecting the strangeness and otherness of the Antarctic, the text connotes the slipperiness of language and the problematic nature of assigning a fixed meaning to writing, thereby establishing its own characteristic understanding of trace, traces and tracing."

## **Dany Rmeily**

### *Resistance to Change: An Assessment of Waste Management Organisations in the United Arab Emirates*

"Resistance to change is a common obstacle for organisations undergoing major transformations, especially in settings with diverse cultures. This research explores what drives resistance to change in waste management organisations in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), focusing on organisational, cultural, and employee-related factors. The study looks at resistance from several angles, affective, behavioural, and cognitive, and examines the roles of formalisation, tradition, communication, leadership, employee involvement, attachment to the status quo, workload, and job security. It also considers whether employees' regional backgrounds influence how these factors relate to resistance.

The study surveyed 435 white-collar employees from seven waste management organisations in the UAE. Using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), the research analysed how organisational factors jointly affected the three resistance outcomes. Further moderated analysis explored how these relationships varied by region. To add context to the survey results, eight participants from different regional backgrounds were interviewed through semi-structured conversations.

The findings show that formalisation, communication, and tradition all have significant effects on resistance to change. More formal procedures and better communication were linked to less cognitive resistance, while a strong sense of tradition tended to increase it. The analysis also found that regional background matters: for example, the impact of formalisation and communication varied depending on employees' regions, and a preference for the status quo had a bigger behavioural effect among employees from the MENA region. The influence of leadership and employee involvement depended on the context and was more pronounced in certain types of resistance.

This research adds to our understanding by showing that resistance to change in multicultural organisations depends on both structural and cultural factors. Some organisational practices work across all groups, but others are influenced by employees' attitudes toward authority, tradition, and stability based on their regional backgrounds. For change leaders, the study highlights the need for well-structured processes, clear and well-planned communication, and sensitivity to cultural differences when leading change initiatives. Overall, the research offers practical advice for managing change in an understudied industry and region."

## **Deborah Babalola**

### *Patient–Provider Interactions and Workplace Violence in Nigeria: A Qualitative Study of Healthcare Providers' Perspectives*

"Background: Violence against healthcare providers is a growing global concern that undermines staff safety, care quality, and workforce retention. This qualitative study explores how interactions between healthcare providers and service users contribute to violent incidents and identifies

interpersonal and contextual factors that precipitate aggression in Nigerian healthcare settings from the perspective of the healthcare providers.

**Methods:** A semi-structured interview was conducted with sixteen actively practising healthcare providers, comprising eight (8) nurses, three (3) pharmacists and five (5) medical doctors in Nigeria. Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analysed using thematic analysis to identify patterns in perceptions, triggers, and escalation pathways.

**Results:** All participants reported experiencing or witnessing violence directed at healthcare providers. Key drivers emerged at individual, relational, and systemic levels. Systemic pressures—insufficient staffing and stringent time constraints—frequently precipitated tense encounters. Individual characteristics of both service users and providers, including communication style and temperament, influenced escalation, while formal education level was not a consistent predictor of behaviour. Socioeconomic stressors, such as financial hardship and perceived inequities in access to care, heightened frustration and risk of aggression. Trust in clinical competence and respectful communication fostered constructive interactions; conversely, doubts about competence, perceived dismissiveness, and conflicting or incomplete information eroded confidence and fuelled disputes. Patient satisfaction and clinical outcomes strongly shaped reactions, with adverse outcomes or unmet expectations commonly cited as immediate triggers for aggressive behaviour.

**Conclusions:** Violence in healthcare settings arises from interrelated individual, relational, and structural factors. Effective prevention requires multifaceted interventions that go beyond credentialing to strengthen communication, manage expectations, improve information exchange, address socioeconomic stressors, and bolster organisational support and de escalation training. Policy responses should combine preventive, educational, and structural measures to reduce risk and protect both staff and patients.

**Keywords:** workplace violence; healthcare system; patient-provider interactions; qualitative study; triggers; trust; communication; socioeconomic factors."

## **Declan Ryan**

### *How to Get the Most out of Community Engagement*

"Declan will talk through examples and the steps he takes behind the scenes to weave community engagement into his research projects from the planning, delivery, and dissemination stages. The aim is to equip you with tools you can use to close the loop of communication with the communities that are participating in and benefitting from your research."

## **Dimitris Dalakoglou**

### *Digital Societies and Human Transformation: Anthropological Perspectives on a Hyper-Connected Era (Keynote Speaker 1)*

“In this keynote lecture, Dimitris Dalakoglou explores how digital technologies, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity systems, and networked infrastructures are transforming contemporary societies and reshaping human experience in the twenty-first century.

Drawing on anthropology, infrastructure studies, and political economy, the lecture examines how digital systems have evolved from simple communication tools into fundamental infrastructures that organize everyday life, governance, labour, mobility, security, and social relations. From algorithmic governance and platform economies to surveillance systems and cyber vulnerabilities, hyper-connectivity increasingly defines both individual existence and collective political life.

The lecture pays particular attention to the human dimensions of cybersecurity. Rather than treating cybersecurity solely as a technical challenge, Professor Dalakoglou approaches it as a social and political issue involving trust, power, democratic legitimacy, vulnerability, and infrastructural resilience. As states, institutions, and citizens become increasingly dependent on interconnected digital systems, cyber threats reveal deeper questions about social stability, inequality, and the future of democracy itself.

Building on his long-term research on infrastructures, crisis, and the commons, Professor Dalakoglou also reflects on how societies respond to moments of disruption and uncertainty through new forms of solidarity, digital cooperation, and grassroots socio-technical innovation.

Combining ethnographic insight with contemporary debates on AI, cyber governance, and digital transformation, the lecture asks a central question: what kinds of societies — and what kinds of humans — are emerging in an era shaped by permanent connectivity and digital infrastructures?”

## **Doreen Caesar**

*Routine referrals to third sector organisations following reablement to target loneliness among older adults aged 65years and over*

"Introduction:

Loneliness needs urgent attention in the care of older adults to limit the recurrent admissions experienced by some of them.

It has been described as a new geriatric giant and a vital sign, yet it is under addressed compared to the emphasis laid on frailty. This research is investigating the impact of routinely referring older adult reablement recipients from an Intermediate Care Team (ICT) to third sector organisations to target loneliness and reduce recurrent admissions to hospitals.

Aim

To find out whether routine referrals to third sector organisations of older adults who have been discharged as independent from ICT will be effective in reducing their loneliness risk and recurrent hospital admissions.

Rational

Reablement is a short-term (up to six weeks) programme aimed at relearning skills that are lost through ill health (SCIE, 2013). ICT facilitates and prevents admissions from hospitals by providing reablement at the home of patients in the County being studied.

## Methods

An experimental mixed methods approach using both quantitative methods in the form of a feasibility study and qualitative method in the form of semi structured interviews concurrently. The feasibility study was a nonrandomised before and after study. Outcome measures included the EQ-5D-5L, De Jong Gierveld Loneliness Scale and frailty index scale. Outcome measures were used with approved permission.

## Participants

30 older adults aged 65 years and over receiving reablement at home following hospital discharges. Informed written consent given. The Nottingham 2 Research Ethics Committee gave favourable approval for the study with reference 24/EM/0159. Health Research Authority (HRA) approval also obtained.

## Procedure

The study was conducted to test two interventions of community activities and telephone calls for their effectiveness in reducing recurrent admissions post discharge of older adults from reablement. Participants were assigned to the two groups with pre and post-test. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 participants, six each from the groups.

## Results

Post interventions, there has been reduction in the De Jong Gierveld total loneliness from 6.48 to 5.48 and recurrent admissions of participants from 4 to 0.35. There was however no statistical difference between the groups due to a small sample size. Participants also reported improvement in their self-rated quality of life.

Participants reported in the interviews what was important to them in addressing loneliness was talking to someone with some reporting they preferred their solitude. There was varied expression of loneliness by participants interviewed. Those from the community activities group who reported improvement in their physical function post the interventions identified having their own means of transportation as an enabling factor.

## Implications

Loneliness risks need to be assessed of older adults receiving reablement prior to their discharge to support decision making around post discharge care.

A form of intervention for older adults may reduce loneliness risk but what was important to the older adults was human interactions. Healthcare workers in the care of older adults need to be trained on assessing loneliness risk and referring on to specialised social workers to support with appropriate interventions.

Keywords: emotional loneliness, social isolation, recurrent hospital admissions"

## **Emel Thomas & Helen Caldwell**

### *50 Families Co-producing Healthy Eating in the Digital Age: Community Engagement, Technology and Behaviour Change*

"This paper presents findings from '50 Families' and University of Northampton (UON) Knowledge Exchange funded 'Nourishing Connections' research projects. These Northamptonshire place-based projects established and explored how digital and in person engagement can be combined to drive social transformation in community healthy eating practices. Delivered in partnership with UON and three local charities the '50 Families' project addressed diet related inequality among low-income families through a series of co-produced interventions. The 'Nourishing Connections' festival element integrated academic expertise with community knowledge to advance healthy eating across the main interventions.

The project, operating for just over a year, responded to increasing recognition that digital connectivity is reshaping how knowledge is access, shared and applied, particularly within underrepresented communities. While technological advancement is often associated with large scale systems and artificial intelligence, this research highlights the role of everyday digital tools, social media platforms and online content in augmenting human interaction and extending the research of community-based initiatives. A hybrid engagement model was adopted combining face to face activities with digital dissemination which was central to families learning from cooking demonstrations and child-focused choice simulations. Together with well being activities and UON student-led digital activities, 50 families had access to accessible formats of recipes, health tips and signposting to local food related resources. This dual approach enabled the '50 Families' project to move beyond traditional engagement boundaries, fostering both immediate participation and sustained interaction.

Qualitative findings from focus group interviews with parents indicated that this hybrid model contributed to increased knowledge, confidence and behavioural change. Charity leaders reported greater reach and influence through social media platforms and local networks. Across the projects participants reported greater awareness of healthy eating practices, improved decision making in food purchasing and preparation, and enhanced willingness to involve children in lifestyle choices. Digital platforms were therefore used to support ongoing learning and reinforce key messages over time.

This paper presentation argues that meaningful social transformation is not driven by technology alone, but through the intersection of digital connectivity and human centred engagement. By embedding digital tools within a co-produced, community-led framework, the '50 Families' and 'Nourishing Connections' projects demonstrated how universities can act as anchor institutions facilitating knowledge exchange that is locally relevant and scalable. More broadly the findings contribute to debates on how digital innovation can support rather than replace, human interaction in addressing complex social challenges such as health interventions in an increasingly connected world. "

## **Emmeline Child**

### *Remanufacture for Scale*

“There is currently a lack of practical knowledge regarding the best approaches to end-of-life strategies for textile waste. Additionally, insufficient in-house expertise in design and remanufacture techniques indicates a need for collaborative projects to advance this issue.

Building on the researchers' expertise and their investigations into scalable solutions, this project utilised design to create a product range that is market-ready and suitable for resale through one of the charity's 250 stores, as well as other potential markets.

The objective of this project is to collaboratively explore whether the scaling up of these techniques is feasible with post-consumer textiles at their end of life.

Listen to how working with external Partners has supported the development of a product range, and explore the value provided by knowledge exchange.”

## **Esther Jin**

### *Achieving Collective Welfare in Multi-agent Reinforcement Learning via Suggestion Sharing*

“In human society, the conflict between self-interest and collective well-being often obstructs efforts to achieve shared welfare. Related concepts like the Tragedy of the Commons and Social Dilemmas frequently manifest in our daily lives. As artificial agents increasingly serve as autonomous proxies for humans, we propose a novel multi-agent reinforcement learning (MARL) method to address this issue - learning policies to maximise collective returns even when individual agents' interests conflict with the collective one. Unlike traditional cooperative MARL solutions that involve sharing rewards, values, and policies or designing intrinsic rewards to encourage agents to learn collectively optimal policies, we propose a novel MARL approach where agents exchange action suggestions. Our method reveals less private information compared to sharing rewards, values, or policies, while enabling effective cooperation without the need to design intrinsic rewards. Our algorithm is supported by our theoretical analysis that establishes a bound on the discrepancy between collective and individual objectives, demonstrating how sharing suggestions can align agents' behaviours with the collective objective. Experimental results demonstrate that our algorithm performs competitively with baselines that rely on value or policy sharing or intrinsic rewards.”

## **Federico Farini**

### *Human Rights as Social semantics: a Paradoxical Form of self-description for Western Modernity*

"Whilst widely debated in the fields of philosophy of law, and legal studies Grundrechte als Institution (1957) is probably the least known works of Luhmann within sociology. This can be partly explained by the fact that Grundrechte als Institution has not been translated into English, and probably some measure of aversion to systems theory which may have resulted, in a fairly striking

lack of interest in a systems-theoretical approach to human rights. Nevertheless, Luhmann delivers a rare attempt to produce a sociological theory of human rights. For Luhmann, human rights ensure that the individual access to different function systems remains open. This is a functional, rather than an ethical explanation: as a social institution, human rights protect the individual and with the individual they protect the high degree of individual mobility and communicative openness upon which modern society is built. This presentation recognises Luhmann's theory of human rights as social institution as starting point for a sociological conversation on human rights in, for and from Western modernity.

The presentation proposes a theoretical conceptual research developing a concept of human rights as social semantics constituting a form of self-description for Western modernity. A form of self-description that is far from unproblematic: the semantics of human rights, underpinned by the inclusive principle of universality for all human beings, coexists with the semantics of citizenship, which is based on the conditional access to the exercise of personal rights. This paradoxical coexistence between human rights and citizenship invites reflection on the viability of the semantics of human rights as a form of self-description for Western modernity. The presentation argues that the paradox is solved through a structural coupling of the distinction between human rights/citizenship with a secondary distinction between universal human rights and conditional personal rights. As citizenship is translated into the domain of conditional personal rights, the semantics of human rights is preserved as viable self-description for Western modernity. However, the solution of the paradoxical coexistence between human rights and citizenship not only generates social semantics, but it also generates a social process that dramatically defines the lifeworld of individuals. This further level of social complexity is introduced in the last part of the presentation, and the theoretical elaboration is illustrated with a compendial presentation of selected findings from published research with young migrants in the North of Italy."

## **Frank Alparslan**

### *Human–AI Collaboration in Transport Disruption Response: Connectivity, Trust and Governance Under Pressure*

"Transport systems are increasingly shaped by digital connectivity, artificial intelligence and real-time data. During disruption, such as severe weather, airport delays, rail incidents, traffic congestion, cyber disruption or wider supply chain interruption, organisations are expected to make fast, safe and accountable decisions under pressure. AI tools can support this process by detecting patterns, forecasting disruption, prioritising resources and improving communication. However, disruption response remains a deeply human activity. Decisions still depend on judgement, trust, situational awareness, professional experience and organisational responsibility.

This presentation explores how human–AI collaboration can support transport disruption response while also creating new governance challenges. It asks a simple but important question: how can transport organisations use AI to improve disruption response without weakening human accountability, safety judgement and public trust? The discussion brings together ideas from aviation human factors, transport resilience, logistics risk management and AI governance. It argues

that AI should not be understood as a replacement for human decision-making, but as a decision-support partner that must be carefully designed, monitored and governed.

The presentation focuses on three connected themes. First, it considers trust in automation and the risk of both over-reliance and under-use. In high-pressure environments, decision-makers may either accept AI outputs too easily or ignore them when they are poorly explained. Second, it examines situational awareness and escalation. AI may improve visibility across complex systems, but human operators still need clear information, explainable alerts and authority to intervene when something does not feel right. Third, it addresses governance and accountability. If an AI-supported recommendation leads to a poor outcome, organisations must be able to explain who made the decision, what data were used, what alternatives were considered and how responsibility was shared.

The presentation contributes to the ARC theme of connectivity and transformation by showing how digital transformation changes not only technology, but also organisational roles, safety culture and decision-making relationships. It also highlights the need for practical governance mechanisms, including audit trails, escalation rules, human-in-the-loop design, staff training, scenario testing and clear communication protocols. These mechanisms are especially important in aviation, transport and logistics, where disruption can affect passengers, workers, businesses and communities.

The presentation will conclude by proposing a simple conceptual framework for responsible human–AI collaboration in transport disruption response. The framework positions AI as a tool for enhanced connectivity, but places human judgement, ethical governance and organisational accountability at the centre of resilient decision-making."

## **Henrietta Farrugia**

### *Agricultural professionals' perspectives on the adoption of Responsible Human Centred Artificial Intelligence (RHCAI) in UK and Maltese agriculture*

"Responsible Human Centred AI (RHCAI) adoption can present challenges and opportunities within the agriculture morse in diverse geographic and regulatory landscapes. Although there is investment in agricultural technologies, RHCAI adoption across farming systems is still lagging. Hence, the comprehension of agricultural professionals' perceptions on RHCAI technologies is vital to assist in affective adoption.

This research compares the United Kingdom (UK) and Maltese agricultural professionals' perspectives of RHCAI adoption in agriculture, identifying key factors, challenges and geographic variations which affect agricultural uptake across different geographic climates.

The study conducted from July 2025 to February 2026 utilises semi-structured online interviews with a total of 18 agricultural professionals from the UK and Malta. Participants involved are in the agricultural sector or in a similar professional backgrounds.

Data was analysed using thematic analysis to explore perspectives on AI technologies, opportunities for adoption, barriers and challenges affecting adoption decisions. Preliminary findings identify three themes affecting RHCAI adoption. Firstly, digital technology integration highlights

technological use to identify readiness and suitability to adopt AI-based technology. Second, knowledge exchange, such as visual demonstration opportunities; training and education opportunities; peer learning and agricultural trade fair events are vital in increasing awareness and assurance in upcoming technologies. Third, environmental pressures such as water restrictions, climate variability and temperature extremes affect applicable AI-based tools which can effect resource utilisation and efficiency.

Comparative findings showcase how farm size, infrastructure access and resource restrictions between UK and Malta can tailor RHCAI adoption. This research contributes how new comparative insights into geographic variations influence RHCAI adoption, whilst providing evidence to advising future policy development, knowledge transfer initiatives and supplementary support strategies. This research aims to strengthen the digital transformation within UK and European farming systems.”

### **Ian Hall**

*Exploring The Disconnect Between Policy And Practice When Addressing Suspected Breaches Of Academic Integrity: An Activity Theory Approach*

"This paper presents the results from a small-scale qualitative study that explores how academic staff identify and respond to suspected academic misconduct. While previous research has focused on types of academic misconduct, student motivations and cheating methods less attention has been given to the ways that academic staff identify and respond to suspected academic misconduct. Using Engeström’s activity theory, the study seeks to contribute to understanding in this area, by examining the experience of six participants at a UK university. The findings reveal contradictions between components of the activity system highlighting a disconnect between policy and practice. Participants reported a lack of trust in institutional processes, citing examples of inconsistent outcomes resulting from policy adherence. In addition, personal beliefs and time taken to comply with policy were found to mediate policy responses. The study identified contradictions occur between multiple components in the activity system, and lead to a dual role for academics creating a misalignment between policy and practice. Understanding the contradictions within the activity system offers an opportunity to re-conceptualise policy leading to greater alignment and ensure equitable treatment of all students

KEYWORDS: Academic Misconduct, Higher Education, Plagiarism, Policy, Practice, Activity Theory "

### **Jenny Devers & Brightlin Dhas**

*Practice Readiness of Newly Qualified Occupational Therapists in the United Kingdom. A multi-stakeholder qualitative study*

“Around 3,000 occupational therapists graduate annually in the United Kingdom, but evidence shows variability in their readiness for practice This study explored multi-stakeholder perspectives on the practice readiness of newly qualified occupational therapists in the United

Kingdom. Method: A qualitative research design with an interpretive description approach was employed. Four focus groups were conducted separately with newly qualified occupational therapists (n=8), occupational therapy practitioners (n=9), practice educators (n=8), and university lecturers (n=4). Discussions were transcribed, thematically analyzed, and

integrated through constant comparative analysis and the researchers' disciplinary knowledge. Revision of findings with participants enhanced credibility.

Results: Three themes emerged: graduation marked professional rather than full practice readiness; preparedness was influenced by variability in curriculum design, placement, and workplace induction, with placements being the most influential yet inequitable factor; and individual characteristics further influenced the evolution of readiness.

Conclusion: Findings highlight the need for intentional educational design and regulation of placement quality to reduce variability and ensure equitable practice readiness across the profession. Development of a coproduced "Day-one OT" competency profile provide educational programs with clearer educational targets and offer workplaces a consistent benchmark for induction and support."

### **Joseph Mngqibisa**

*How Do Empowerment Policies in Emerging Economies support MSME Development? A case for South Africa's BBBEE Policy*

### **Kardi Somerfield & Billy Little**

*Beyond the Guest Lecture: A Case Study of Curriculum-Embedded Knowledge Exchange*

"Knowledge Exchange (KE) is frequently associated with consultancy, commercialisation, or discrete external partnerships. However, an increasingly important form of KE occurs through curriculum design, where students, academics, and industry partners collaborate around authentic organisational challenges. This presentation offers a critically reflective case study of a four-year partnership between the University of Northampton and leading organisations within the UK media and marketing sector, including Channel 4, Starbucks, and Havas Media.

The initiative moved beyond traditional guest speaker models by embedding live industry briefs into the curriculum. Students engaged with real marketing challenges, developed audience insight, produced strategic responses, and pitched recommendations directly to practitioners in professional settings. Over time, the partnership evolved into a sustained model of reciprocal exchange in which external organisations contributed current industry knowledge, feedback, and professional access, while the university provided emerging talent, fresh perspectives, and structured opportunities for innovation.

Using reflective evaluation, this presentation considers three key questions: What distinguishes meaningful KE from one-off employer engagement? How can curriculum-based partnerships

generate reciprocal value for students, staff, and external organisations? What conditions are required to sustain such collaborations over time?

The case indicates several benefits. For students, outcomes included enhanced confidence, commercial awareness, networking opportunities, and improved employability. For academic staff, the collaboration supported curriculum currency, stronger industry networks, and reputational gains. For partners, the initiative created access to student insight and early talent engagement. The project also demonstrates how regional universities can build impactful relationships with nationally recognised organisations.

Alongside these opportunities, the presentation critically reflects on challenges including resource intensity, relationship management, balancing academic and commercial expectations, and difficulties in evidencing impact using conventional university metrics.

In response to the conference theme of Connectivity and Transformation, the presentation argues that curriculum-embedded KE can transform student opportunity while connecting universities more meaningfully with professional practice. The session concludes by proposing a transferable framework for colleagues seeking to design sustainable, high-value external partnerships within teaching and learning environments."

### **Kate Ewing Poppy**

#### *Designing and Piloting Realistic Simulation Models for Midwifery Training*

"This session will show the journey in development of the simulation and explore the value of working across disciplines and with external partners

The project brings together the expertise of: a specialist midwife with a background in simulation-based learning and perineal repair education and a medical simulation designer with experience in creating realistic anatomical models.

This collaboration has facilitated a dynamic exchange of clinical and design knowledge, resulting in innovative, high-fidelity training tools that redefine how perineal repair is taught and practised. The co-creation process will be iterative and informed by feedback from midwifery educators, students, and clinical practitioners."

### **Kimberley Hill; Rachel Maunder; Sarah Mansbridge; Natasha Mansukhani and David Biggs**

#### *Roundtable Discussion: Health, Education and Behaviour Change Research Showcase*

"The Health, Education and Behaviour Change (HEBC) Special Interest Group (SIG), based within the Centre for Psychological and Sociological Sciences at the University of Northampton (UON), brings together cross disciplinary researchers focused on behaviour change within health, education and related fields. Following the success of HEBC Roundtables at previous UON Annual Research Conferences, this dedicated session will showcase some of the valuable inter-disciplinary and applied research conducted by HEBC members. Following introductions by the Roundtable Chairs,

three speakers will each provide 15 minute presentations (with 5 minutes for Q&A). Chairs will close with a Roundtable summary, while providing information on HEBC membership and upcoming activities (Proposed Roundtable total time: 1 hour & 15 minutes)

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Paper 1: Alcohol-Free Halls: Understanding UON Student Resident Experiences and Motivations

Presenter: Dr Sarah Mansbridge, Lecturer in Social Psychology, UON

Abstract: As part of UON's SOS UK accreditation for its drug and alcohol impact work, it has introduced alcohol free halls for new students. While these halls are oversubscribed and popular, little is known about why students choose them or how they shape their university experiences. As similar accommodation options expand across the sector, understanding effects on belonging, integration, wellbeing and academic engagement is increasingly important. An online questionnaire (N=20) with open ended questions was analysed using Thematic Analysis. Findings offer detailed insight into how alcohol free living influences students' studies, social integration and sense of belonging, informing UON's Drug and Alcohol Impact Project and wider HE policy and practice.

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Paper 2: How cancer survivors make sense of their journey to post-traumatic growth through the process of counselling

Presenter: Natasha Mansukhani, PhD student, UON

Abstract: This qualitative study explores how cancer survivors experience post traumatic growth and the role counselling plays in supporting this process. Using a Longitudinal Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis design, participants who have completed cancer treatment and counselling share their experiences over two interviews (four months apart), enabling an exploration of how participants make sense of their experience over time. Semi structured interviews will be conceptually informed by the Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory (Tedeschi et al., 2017). The study aims to develop an understanding of how counselling supports meaning-making and psychological transformation after cancer, informing therapeutic practice with cancer survivors.

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Paper 3: Understanding Quiet Quitting: The Role of Burnout, Turnover Intentions, and Tenure

Presenter: Dr David Biggs, Senior Lecturer in Psychology, UON

Abstract: Employee burnout, intention to quit, and the rising trend of quiet quitting have emerged as significant concerns in modern workplaces. This study examined the relationships between these variables among full-time employees (N=103) using a quantitative cross-sectional design. The results confirmed that burnout and intention to quit are positively associated with quiet quitting. This indicates that employees experiencing burnout or contemplating leaving their job are more likely to disengage and reduce their effort at work. While burnout emerged as the strongest predictor of quiet quitting, tenure showed a weaker, yet positive, relationship. This research adds to the understanding of the quiet quitting phenomenon and associated literature. Practical

implications include fostering supportive work environments to enhance employee well-being and engagement with an emphasis on addressing burnout proactively to prevent quiet quitting."

### **Kimberley Morris**

#### *Student Midwives' and Nurses Engagement with Research and Evidence-Based Practice: A Literature Review*

"This study explores how student midwives' experience of research and evidence-based practice (EBP) pedagogy influences their transition from student to midwife, aligning with the Nursing and Midwifery Council's (NMC) research- and EBP-focused proficiencies. This is a current exploration, as midwives are expected to use evidence to provide safe care for birthing people, contribute to the 'knowledge base,' and see research as a potential career option. This poster presents the findings of the literature review, which examined student midwives' and nurses' experiences of learning about research and evidence (Morris, 2025a; 2025b; 2026b).

The review found that research/EBP education is provided via a satisfactory, structured learning pathway, participation, or specific activities. This learning positively affected students' knowledge of and attitudes toward research/EBP. Nevertheless, students still valued learning about these topics less than clinical elements, with some disconnect noted between what students learnt in university and what they believed was needed in practice. Still, learning about research led students to plan to engage with research/EBP in the future, despite evidence of barriers in clinical practice that would prevent them from doing so.

While these findings were poignant, the review showed a lack of UK-based midwifery evidence; this gap justified the ongoing PhD exploration.

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### **Kimberley Morris**

#### *Student midwives' experiences of research and evidence-based Pedagogy: An ongoing PhD Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis*

"Becoming a midwife is a demanding process that requires students to study various subjects, undertake multiple assessments and placements. This is so that, at the end of their training,

students demonstrate that they meet the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) Standards. To ensure midwives are trained to this level, it is specified that NMC-approved education institutes must be aligned with these standards.

Throughout the standards, the need for midwives to use evidence and research to support practice is discussed. Yet, notably, domain five 'Promoting excellence: the midwife as a colleague, scholar and leader' makes it explicit that midwives should not only be safely using the evidence base to offer birthing people care but should also demonstrate they understand the importance of midwives contributing to the knowledge base. This is essential, since the more we know about the childbearing continuum through research, the better we understand how to manage the complications associated with childbearing.

Evidence-based practice (EBP) is essential in reducing maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality, shaping policy and guiding care. Yet, despite the need for midwives to add to the evidence base and the NMC stating that midwives should consider research as part of their career, the NMC does not specify how this type of education should be provided to student midwives.

This presentation will discuss findings from an ongoing study exploring student midwives' experiences of research and EBP pedagogy within UK universities. The study seeks to address the following question: 'What meaning do student midwives ascribe to their role in research and EBP through their experience of research and EBP pedagogy? With the overarching aim 'To explore how student midwives' experience of research and EBP pedagogy influences their transition from being a student to being a midwife who aligns with the NMC proficiencies'.

The study adopts an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis research design. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with 12 third-year students studying on an NMC midwifery-approved programme. The data analysis yielded three preliminary emergent 'Group Experiential Themes'.

These are i). Examining the significance, commitment, and future role of research and EBP, highlighting the differing values student midwives ascribe to research and evidence, their motivations to learn about these aspects, and how this reflects in their future career plans. ii). Shaping research and evidence-based understanding through pedagogical practices and educators, which explores the differing ways research and EBP are taught to student midwives in the UK, the challenges and successes they have in learning about these facets and how educators both in academia and practice influence this learning. iii). Negotiating a research- and evidence-based practice culture to support person-centred care aligns solely with their experiences in clinical practice, specifically the research and EBP culture, how they experience research and evidence integrated into practice, and, finally, how students experience supporting care outside the evidence base.

While this research is ongoing, the researcher is aiming to generate pedagogical recommendations to support educators in understanding how to assist students in transitioning to evidence-based, research-focused midwives."

**Kirstie Pope**

### *Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) and the Media*

“Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) is a post-traumatic, developmental condition predominantly categorised by the presence of two or more distinct identity states (Reinders et al., 2018). It is a multifaceted diagnosis that has evoked interdisciplinary debates (Proudfit, 2002), leading to it being deemed the most theoretically challenging and complicated of all the dissociative disorders (Gentle et al., 2013). In recent years, multiple filmmakers have opted to include a protagonist said to have the diagnosis; for example, *Split* (Shyamalan, 2016) and *Moon Knight* (Slater, 2022). However, the presentations have been fervently criticised due to their inaccuracies (Ferenz, 2005); often cited as having used the condition as a profitable plot device (Verhulst, 2017) for dramatic effect (Rose, 2017). This study explored the media portrayal of DID, and its implications, from the perspective of those who have worked alongside someone with the diagnosis. Six professionals from a variety of fields, including health, social care and education, participated in semi-structured interviews, which were then analysed using Reflective Thematic Analysis in order to determine noteworthy or recurrent topics. The prevailing themes centred around lack of awareness, misrepresentation and subsequent impact. The findings emphasised the harm caused by the media, including stigmatisation and dissemination of misinformation, as well as the lack of mainstream education or training offered to professionals in relation to DID.”

### **Lee Waters**

#### *Through the Stripes: What Ice Hockey Referees Actually Look At When the Game Explodes*

“Decision making in ice hockey officiating occurs under extreme temporal, spatial and cognitive constraints. Officials are required to interpret complex, rapidly evolving player interactions, apply the rulebook consistently and make high stakes decisions in fractions of a second, often with limited opportunities for review or correction. While considerable attention has been given to players’ perceptual cognitive skills, far less is known about how officials visually perceive the game and how this visual behaviour supports decision making. This presentation addresses that gap by exploring the use of mobile eye tracking technology to examine where ice hockey officials look, when they look there and how this information can inform training and development practices.

Drawing on empirical data collected during elite international competitions, this talk presents a series of applied eye tracking case studies examining officials’ visual search behaviour during live match play. Officials wore head mounted eye-tracking systems during games, allowing visual attention to be captured in situ without disrupting performance. Gaze behaviour was analysed during key officiating moments, including penalty situations, off puck incidents and rapid transitions of play. These visual patterns were then considered alongside the contextual demands of the game to better understand how officials manage perceptual load and prioritise information under pressure.

The findings reveal that effective officiating is not simply a matter of “watching the puck”, for from it in fact. Instead, experienced officials demonstrate structured and anticipatory gaze strategies, frequently allocating visual attention away from the puck to monitor player interactions, spatial relationships and emerging infractions. Differences in gaze behaviour were also observed across

game situations and levels of competition, highlighting how visual demands shift as speed, physicality and tactical complexity increase. Importantly, the research illustrates how moments of visual overload and attentional bottlenecks can emerge, offering insight into why certain decisions are more error prone than others.

Beyond describing what officials look at, this presentation focuses on why these findings matter. By linking visual behaviour to decision making demands, the research provides a foundation for evidence informed officiating development. The talk will outline how eye tracking data can be used to support referee education, including the design of targeted training interventions, the use of video-based feedback grounded in visual evidence, and the potential to accelerate learning for developing officials. Particular attention is given to future opportunities, including expanding research across officiating levels and genders to ensure training approaches reflect the full diversity of the officiating pathway.

In short, this presentation invites the audience to step inside the official's visual world. By quite literally seeing the game through the stripes, it demonstrates how eye tracking can move officiating research beyond opinion and tradition, toward a scientifically grounded understanding of how officials perceive, decide and perform when the game explodes."

### **Lorraine (Lola) Atkinson**

*Leadership for Lightworkers: A Phenomenological Exploration of Spiritually Sensitive Healthcare Professionals and the Extension of Spiritual Leadership Theory*

"This study examines the relationship between leadership, wellbeing, and meaning at work among NHS healthcare professionals. Drawing on Spiritual Leadership Theory and lived experience, it explores how compassionate and values-based leadership can support emotionally and spiritually sensitive clinicians in demanding healthcare settings."

### **Louisa Ejenavbo**

*Sustainable Finance Under Pressure: Building Organisational Resilience in the UK Financial Services Sector*

"Sustainable finance has gained increasing prominence within the UK financial services sector, driven by regulatory pressure, investor expectations, and broader climate policy objectives. However, limited empirical attention has been paid to how these strategies are implemented in practice and whether they genuinely enhance organisational resilience, particularly under conditions of economic uncertainty. This study proposes to examine how sustainable financing strategies are designed, adopted, and operationalised within UK financial institutions, with a specific focus on their impact on financial performance, risk exposure, and long-term organisational sustainability.

Drawing on a qualitative research design, the study will utilise semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including senior decision-makers, sustainability professionals, and finance

practitioners. The research is guided by leadership perspectives such as adaptive leadership, responsible leadership, and change leadership, alongside stakeholder theory, to explore how competing priorities and power dynamics shape sustainability outcomes.

The study aims to contribute to both theory and practice by critically assessing the extent to which sustainable finance supports organisational resilience, while identifying ethical and strategic tensions arising from policy-driven adoption. Findings are expected to inform more context-sensitive and ethically grounded approaches to sustainable finance within the sector."

### **Louise Kirby**

#### *Workshop: Towards best practice in researching with autistic people*

"There are a growing number of useful articles on researching and coproducing with autistic people (Cascio, et al., 2020; Stark, et al., 2021; Albert, et al., 2023; Aidonopoulou-Read, 2025). This workshop uses actual examples from my research thesis "Why is the hidden disability of autism so visible in mental health inpatient services? The autistic view from personal stories." to reflect on interacting with autistic people in a neuroaffirming way when conducting research. It is primarily intended for researchers and people who want to do any sort of coproduction work with autistic individuals. It is structured to guide you, step by step, through the process of researching with this group. 'Think pieces' using extracts from participant interviews along the way give an opportunity for true reflection on your own practice and values. It invites researchers to join in a reflexive journey through the study to examine their own purpose and principles. The aim being that you are encouraged to think about how to move towards better practice in your work."

### **Matthew McCormack**

#### *Transforming young bodies? Children's footwear in Georgian Britain*

"The design of footwear came in for a lot of criticism in eighteenth-century Britain. Commentators objected on medical and moral grounds to the shape and style of footwear, which they blamed for various podiatric complaints and wider health issues. This criticism was at its sharpest where children's footwear was concerned. Educationalists like John Locke and physicians like Nicolas Andry argued that children's bodies should be allowed to grow naturally, unimpeded by tight clothing. They believed that this developmental stage was vital for later life, so placed great importance upon it. Such writings contained prescriptions about appropriate footwear (or going barefoot) and condemned the wearing of rigid boots or straight-lasted shoes. This paper will explore the extent to which these prescriptions were put into practice, by examining surviving examples of children's shoes in museum collections. By considering shoes as examples of embodied material culture, it will shed light on the new models of child health that were being promoted in the eighteenth century. It will also think about an important aspect of a Georgian child's bodily experience, which is difficult to reconstruct from other source types."

## **Michael Maher**

*"Art of Complaining": Using photography to capture the experience of Care Experienced Youth*

"The Art of Complaining: Participatory Photography and Rural Youth Voice.

Young people in rural areas face a range of interconnected stressors, including environmental challenges, limited employment opportunities, limited access to mental health services, and a reliance on personal networks for support. At the same time, stigma around state and charitable assistance can discourage them from seeking support (Mental Health Matters, 2024). These overlapping pressures make it harder for young people to advocate for change, as community dynamics often encourage conformity (Holland et al., 1998). In partnership with Hundred Heroines, this research explores participatory photography as a method for creating space in which young people can share their lived experiences and advocate for change, drawing on the Guerrilla Girls Art of Complaining as a framework for critical expression and advocacy.

Drawing on Laura Lundy's (2007) framework, the research Evaluates the project's outcomes through the creation of space, for youth-led conversations; voice, enabling young people to express themselves freely, and audience, ensuring perspectives are heard and respected. The process began by inviting participants to share complaints about challenges they faced in their daily lives, as well as issues affecting young people globally. These concerns were then reframed as 'wishes, which participants explored through creative photography to produce images calling for change, including calls to action, personal reflections, and protest symbolism.

Creating these images provided a safe environment for young people to discuss shared experience, such as misogyny, social expectations, and the influence of film and mass media, for example the supportive relationship between the central characters in *Wicked*. The projects also enabled young people to access technology and creative experiences that are often limited by financial barriers, whilst introducing them to creative pathways they may not have previously considered. There are, however, challenges. Working with young people with mental health challenges required resilience by project leaders, with strong safeguarding processes, leading to questions around the tensions of facilitating safe expression, reducing harm, whilst promoting young people's voice.

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## **Ola Challabi**

*Exploring Student Engagement through Virtual Reality and AI: A Data-Driven Approach to Educational Transformation.*

“Virtual Reality (VR) is gaining a central role in education, not only for its capacity to deliver immersive learning experiences, but also for its ability to capture rich behavioural data as students learn. In parallel, advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) are providing powerful methods for analysing such data to better understand how learners engage with instructional tasks. This study examines how VR and AI can be integrated within a data-driven educational framework to investigate student engagement in immersive learning environments.

The core premise of this work is that VR should be conceptualised not merely as a medium for presenting content, but as a data-rich environment in which meaningful learner information can be collected in real time. As learners interact with virtual settings, diverse behavioural traces such as gaze patterns, movement trajectories, interaction sequences, and task responses are continuously generated. These traces can be processed using AI-based techniques to uncover patterns associated with attention, participation, and engagement.

By foregrounding this perspective, the study underscores the growing importance of combining immersive technologies with intelligent data analytics in education. More broadly, it points to an emerging shift towards learning practices that are both innovative and empirically grounded. In doing so, it contributes to ongoing discussions on educational transformation in a hyper-connected world, and illustrates how emerging technologies can support more adaptive, responsive, and informed approaches to understanding student engagement.”

### **Pauline Bain**

#### *Introduction to KE*

“This Knowledge Exchange strand is showcasing what can be achieved through working collaboratively with external parties. Academics will showcase their fabulous projects and highlight the real benefits of sharing and developing expertise, both for their own careers, and also supporting the local economy in its growth Pauline’s own session will introduce a film which will show examples of Knowledge Exchange within the University of Northampton”

### **Rachel Evenden & Members of the Exceptional Experiences and Consciousness Studies (EECS) Research Group**

#### *Roundtable Discussion: Exceptional Human Experiences*

“Despite over a century of investigation, parapsychological and transpersonal phenomena (such as ESP, PK, and other exceptional capacities) remain a challenge to our understanding of the human psyche. EECS mission is to seek a scientific understanding of these phenomena and to gauge the impact of such beliefs and experiences on personal wellbeing. Education and training is an important part of our mission and EECS provides a supportive yet academically rigorous environment for undergraduate and postgraduate students, and is committed to providing balanced information for the general public.”

## **Richard Whitehead**

*Urban Futures & Cultural Pasts in transition: Photographic Documentary Practice and Industrial Heritage of shoe factories in Northampton, England, UK*

"This paper and presentation examine how photographic documentary art practice mediates between cultural pasts and urban futures within the 21st Century context of industrial and working-class decline. Contemporary photographic imagery of the town of Northampton, UK, with an emphasis on the industrial heritage of shoe-making factories, is constructed and presented. In the 19th century Northampton was the predominant centre of England's shoe and leatherworking industries. By the early 20th century, it had developed an industrial landscape in which a distinct compact architectural working-class environment had developed. Late 20th century economics globally led to a decline of the footwear and leather industries, abandoning the factories and supporting amenities.

The project focuses on both disused and still-operational shoe factories in the present day. The objective is to document the persistence and transformation of working-class space. By recording the conversion of the architecture into housing, restaurants, and hybrid commercial uses imagery reflects the pressures of regeneration, migration, and local governance through architectural visual exposure.

The research employs a methodological, systematic, site-based photographic strategy emphasising repetition, seriality, and typological comparison. It draws on practitioners Bernd and Hilla Becher, theorist /practitioner Allan Sekula and heritage writing from Dr Colin Sterling. The resulting composite image panels function as both evidential records and critical interventions.

Positioned within critical discourse, the paper ultimately argues that post-industrial sites operate as contested terrains where visual art representation, planning frameworks, and cultural memory actively construct the relationship between urban futures and cultural pasts."

## **Robert James Browne**

*From Exclusion to Impact: Developing a Social Impact Framework for a Community Interest Company delivering Communities, Organisations and Work readiness Programmes.*

"The research develops a contextually grounded and adaptive Social Impact Framework (SIF) for Goodwill Solutions CIC to evaluate and enhance long-term outcomes for vulnerable individuals across community, workforce, and organisational programmes . Existing social impact approaches often prioritise short-term outputs and fragmented programme-level evaluation, limiting their ability to capture intersectional vulnerabilities, structural inequality, and sustained systemic change .

In response, this research conceptualises social impact as demonstrable, meaningful, and sustained change across individuals, organisations, and communities, including intended and unintended consequences shaped by intersecting disadvantage . Grounded in critical realism and informed by grounded theory and mixed methods, the study integrates measurable indicators with lived experience to examine not only what changes, but how, why, and whether change endures .

The resulting framework measures impact at three interconnected levels: individual progression and stability; organisational inclusion, resilience, and retention; and wider systemic collaboration and social value creation. By moving beyond short-term performance reporting, the SIF supports inclusive practice, strengthens early intervention, and advances collective, long-term social transformation."

### **Roxanne Grzybkowski**

*Exploring occupational therapists (OTs) understanding of their professional identity in acute hospital settings: A Mixed Methods Study*

"The 3MT will discuss my study exploring occupational therapists' (OTs) understanding of their professional identity within acute hospital settings in the UK. The topic emerged from my clinical experience of a disconnect between occupational therapy theory and acute hospital practice. Professional identity is a complex construct shaped by professional philosophy, capability, and motivation, yet evidence suggests it is challenged in acute environments. Contributing factors include role and scope confusion, professional status, role blurring, limited opportunities for person centred practice, discharge pressures, and the dominance of the medical model. These can lead OTs to work generically, struggle to articulate their role, feel undervalued, and become distanced from their occupational focus. Consequences include unmet patient needs, diminished self efficacy, burnout, and attrition from acute services or the profession. Despite international research, no UK based studies have examined this issue. This study aims to address this gap by exploring OTs' perceptions of their professional identity and identifying factors that enhance or undermine it. Data will be collected through 8–10 semi structured interviews and an anonymous online survey of at least 67 OTs across 140 acute hospital sites. Findings will inform strategies to strengthen professional identity, support workforce retention, and enhance patient care within the NHS."

### **Sian Davies-Vollum & Debadayita Raha**

*Integrating Environmental Sustainability into Entrepreneurship: A Ghanaian case study*

"Integrating entrepreneurship with environmental sustainability is critical for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It fosters innovative business models that address ecological and climate-related challenges, while promoting long term socio economic wellbeing. Although referred to through various concepts, including environmental entrepreneurship and ecopreneurship, this entrepreneurial domain emphasises the creation of environmentally responsible, resource efficient, and socially inclusive solutions. The environmental sustainability of Ghana is critical to the country's future. The pressing issues of climate change and unregulated rapid urban growth present key challenges. The conventional route to addressing such challenges to environmental sustainability would arguably be through policy and regulation. A newer and more innovative approach is to leverage entrepreneurship for environmental benefit, sometimes known as environmental entrepreneurship or ecopreneurship. This study employed various qualitative research methods to examine the personal motivations, barriers, and institutional constraints experienced by entrepreneurs in Ghana as they established environmentally focused ventures. We

found that environmental entrepreneurs in Ghana are motivated by altruistic, sustainability-oriented motives in contradiction to neoliberal individualistic, profit-driven models. They consistently demonstrated a commitment to integrating environmental sustainability into their entrepreneurial journeys. Findings indicate that support structures such as incubator organisations, national policy initiatives, and targeted skills development interventions constitute the primary enabling mechanisms for young entrepreneurs seeking to develop sustainable and economically viable ventures. These support systems play a pivotal role in strengthening responsible economic growth while contributing to environmental protection. Critical to entrepreneurial success is access to training and finance, networking building and development of support ecosystems. These opportunities may be facilitated by various actors including universities, NGOs, national government, international organisations, and dedicated business accelerator and incubators. The main barriers to achieving success for environmental entrepreneurs in Ghana are access to finance and the lack of enactment of government policy that supports entrepreneurial activity. These barriers act to reduce the competitiveness of Ghanaian entrepreneurs in African markets. “

### **Simon Sneddon**

#### *Hyperconnected and Climate Conscious: Connectivity, Evidence and Interdisciplinary Transformation in the Digital University*

"Universities are increasingly shaped by digital connectivity. Research, governance, teaching and public engagement are mediated through data platforms, global networks and algorithmic infrastructures. At the same time, climate change and environmental injustice demand forms of transformation that cut across science, law, economics and social policy. This paper explores how digitally embedded universities might align technological connectivity with climate-conscious institutional transformation.

Climate change is not solely a scientific phenomenon; it is simultaneously a regulatory challenge, a market transition, and a justice issue. Digital connectivity has reshaped how evidence is generated, circulated and contested across all of these domains. Environmental data is produced at unprecedented scale; corporate sustainability claims are scrutinised online; climate litigation is tracked globally; social movements mobilise through digital platforms. Connectivity enables new forms of interdisciplinary exchange, but it also raises critical questions about what counts as credible evidence, whose knowledge is amplified, and how institutions respond.

Drawing on a background in environmental law and environmental justice, this paper argues that the digitally embedded university occupies a pivotal position within these evolving knowledge ecosystems. If digital transformation is treated primarily as technological enhancement, opportunities for deeper institutional change may be missed. However, if digital infrastructures are understood as sites where scientific, legal, economic and social forms of evidence intersect, they offer powerful opportunities for interdisciplinary climate-conscious innovation.

The paper introduces the concept of a climate conscious curriculum not as a narrow pedagogical initiative, but as an institutional framework that connects research, teaching and civic engagement. Such an approach recognises that climate responsibility must be embedded across business, social

sciences, law and STEM disciplines, linking environmental data to governance structures, corporate accountability, community impact and ethical reasoning. It reframes connectivity as ecological and social interdependence, rather than merely technological integration.

Framed through the conference theme of connectivity and transformation, the presentation suggests that universities can leverage digital infrastructures to foster interdisciplinary collaboration around climate risk, justice and transition. It outlines strategic pathways forward: integrating climate questions across disciplinary research clusters; connecting global datasets to local communities and policy debates; strengthening critical digital literacy around environmental evidence; and aligning institutional innovation agendas with sustainability commitments.

In a digitally embedded world, transformation is not simply a matter of adopting new technologies. It is a question of how institutions connect knowledge systems, disciplines and communities in response to planetary crisis. A climate conscious university positions connectivity not as an end in itself, but as a means of advancing scientific integrity, social justice and sustainable transition."

### **Tanya Richardson**

#### *Childrens Speech and Language development*

"Dr Richardson's PhD explored the role of environments in young children's speech and language development. If children are behind with their speech and language when they start school, this can impact their future education and other life chances. The audit tool that was subsequently developed by Dr Richardson specifies a total of 27 crucial elements nurseries should provide to get the most out of early years care and education environments. These include whether there is a quiet space for children to process their thoughts, the ability for children to move around the setting freely, what resources the nursery provides, the use of natural resources and provocations, and if there is an appropriate number of books. The research will include children using GoPro cameras for researchers to record what they are saying and see if there is a correlation between the quality of those utterances and the quality of the nursery environment, following using the audit tool."

### **Tanya Richardson**

#### *Joining Academia with Practice: Knowledge Transfer Partnership in Action.*

"This presentation showcases a live Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) between the University of Northampton and Childbase Partnership Ltd, illustrating how collaborative innovation can transform both academic practice and industry impact. The project was initiated with a shared vision: to expand research beyond the scope of individual academic endeavour, create meaningful social impact within the early childhood sector, and support the development of an evidence-informed, sector-relevant audit toolkit aimed at driving commercial growth and social value.

Through the KTP model, Childbase has gained direct access to the latest academic expertise, enabling the organisation to engage in rigorous research and develop innovative products and

services aligned with sector needs. The collaboration has strengthened organisational processes, improved productivity, and generated new insights into how research can address real-world challenges. Simultaneously, the University of Northampton has benefited from strengthened industry engagement, opportunities for future funded research, enhanced career progression for academic staff, and deeper understanding of sector priorities.

Central to this partnership is the development of the KTP Associate, whose role bridges both contexts. Through expert coaching, professional qualification opportunities, and responsibility for project management, the Associate has gained vital skills while applying academic knowledge to practical challenges. Funded in part by Innovate UK, this KTP demonstrates how academic-industry collaboration can foster innovation, empower workforce development, and create sustainable, mutually beneficial outcomes. The session will reflect on the journey, impacts, and lessons learned, offering a model for future partnerships seeking to unite research excellence with industry innovation."

### **Tracey Redwood**

#### *StoryTelling Connects*

"Storytelling Connects® (<https://storytellingconnects.co.uk/>) is a creative card game designed for people who want to stay mentally flexible and enjoy the company of others. This includes, but is not limited to, people living with dementia or other degenerative cognitive disorder, those with cognitive impairment, those in later life who may be experiencing loneliness and social prescribers. The game consists of pictures and prompts to stimulate the parts of the brain involved in learning and memory through cognitive sequencing. It supports social connections and wellbeing.

This session will explore the developments which have been supported in supporting further coproduction and ensuring that this card game can be ready for market. Listen to the value of the knowledge exchange work in this development be part of a live session to see the value of the card game."

### **Venkatesh Nittala**

#### *New Delhi and London: A tale of two cities' air pollution, influenced by population*

"Consider starting your day in a city where every breath you take is killing you little by little. Now consider two such cities, one located in the Global North and the other in the Global South, battling the same silent killer and yet painting entirely different pictures of it.

My PhD research seeks to compare the approaches taken by New Delhi and London towards their respective air pollution issues based on the underlying demographic and socio-political contexts.

While winters in Delhi see a rise in emergency policies in response to dangerous levels of air pollution, London takes a more subtle and prolonged approach by introducing changes through policy. London frames pollution as a public health challenge requiring gradual behavioural change. Delhi frames it as a recurring population-driven emergency demanding immediate action.

What explains the stark differences between the responses of these two cities?

Using secondary data, I examine government documents, media discourses, court decisions and policy discourses of the concerned cities. Using thematic and discourse analyses, I explore how each city has constructed its discourse on the issue of air pollution.

The results of my analysis reveal that cities can construct their own discourse on air pollution governance that is based less on scientific facts and more on self-representation."

### **Vincent Adegoke**

*Connectivity, Identity, and Belonging: A Narrative Inquiry into the Holistic Experiences of BAME Staff in the UK National Health Service*

"The United Kingdom National Health Service (NHS) is one of the most diverse healthcare systems in the world, with staff from a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds contributing to health service delivery. Despite this diversity, staff from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds continue to report disparities in career progression, workplace inclusion, discrimination, and organisational support. In a hyper-connected healthcare environment characterised by interdisciplinary collaboration, digital communication, and complex organisational networks, understanding how staff experience connectivity, identity, and belonging is increasingly important. Examining the lived experiences of BAME NHS staff offers valuable insights into how organisational structures and workplace relationships influence inclusion, wellbeing, and professional development.

This study aims to explore the holistic experiences of BAME staff of African and Asian descent working in the NHS, with particular attention to how organisational connectivity and workplace interactions shape their sense of identity, belonging, and professional engagement.

The study adopts a qualitative narrative inquiry approach to capture the lived experiences of participants. Narrative interviews were conducted with NHS staff of African and Asian descent across different professional roles. The narratives were analysed using thematic narrative analysis, allowing patterns, meanings, and experiences embedded within participants' stories to emerge while preserving the richness of individual accounts.

Findings highlight interconnected themes relating to identity, professional recognition, workplace relationships, and organisational culture among others. Participants' narratives reveal both enabling and constraining experiences within professional networks, including mentorship, collaboration, perceived marginalisation, and resilience. The results illustrate how connectivity within teams and organisational structures influences staff experiences, shaping both opportunities for advancement and perceptions of inclusion.

The study highlights that workplace connectivity significantly shapes the professional experiences of BAME staff in the NHS. The findings indicate that interactions within teams, access to supportive networks, and engagement with leadership influence how staff perceive recognition, inclusion, and opportunities for professional development. Strengthening inclusive networks, responsive leadership practices, and supportive workplace cultures can therefore contribute to meaningful

workforce transformation. Such efforts are important for fostering a more equitable and collaborative healthcare environment, where diverse staff are able to contribute effectively and realise their professional potential.

Keywords: Narrative inquiry, BAME staff, NHS workforce, workplace inclusion, organisational connectivity, identity and belonging, healthcare diversity, lived experiences, organisational culture, workforce transformation."