



TITOLO E ABSTRACT RICERCA DOTTORANDI DISEA

Ali Shahzaib

Project Title: AI-Driven Transformation in Cheese Production SMEs: Addressing Operational Inefficiencies and Shaping Future Strategies

Abstract: Although the technologies used in the production of cheese have improved, the global cheese industry (which was estimated to be worth USD 93 billion in 2024 and will gain USD 153 billion by 2033) continues to experience operational inefficiency challenges. Such inefficiency occurs in production planning, workforce management, and demand forecasting which negates profitability and sustainable growth, especially in the case of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This study demonstrates the transformational capacity of the new trend in Artificial Intelligence (AI) to overcome the following challenges and optimize operational activities in any field of the cheese production process. This study examines the existing situation of digitalization and AI application in the cheese industry through a critical evaluation of the primary literature and expert opinions in the respective field based on a systematic literature review with the complementary element of semi-structured expert interviewing. The research establishes the technological gaps, feasibility limitations of the current automation tools, and the subtle approaches AI can be used to enhance decision-making, eliminate wastage and enhance productivity. Based on these insights, the study suggests a customized, AI-proposed framework that would help enable cost-effective and scalable SMEs towards a digital transformation, as it would balance economic, environmental, organizational, and technological problems. The methodology of the research will combine the qualitative approach using the Gioia method and rigid use of NVivo software to manage the data to guarantee depth and transparency. The applicability of the framework will also be examined by using focus group discussions with cross-functional stakeholders of the cheese manufacturing firms aiming to create iterative refinements that may be based on the practicality of the operations.

The proposed study adds value academically and in the industry by addressing the gap between the capabilities of AI and strategic uses of the AI in the artisanal and mechanized cheese producing SMEs. The productivity is expected to become more efficient in planning their production, meet their demands accurately, reduce wastage, and be in line with long-term competitiveness. Future perspectives involve the further application of the model to a wide range of cheese types and opportunities to establish synergies between the model and promising emerging technologies like blockchain to increase the level of chain transparency.



Supervisors: Prof. Roberta Pinna, Prof. Michela Floris

Angei Fabio

Project Title: Essays on Applied Labor and Health Economics

Abstract: My research investigates topics at the intersection of labor and health economics, focusing on workplace safety, worker motivation, and the role of subjective beliefs and perceptions in the labor market. I combine quasi-experimental designs to achieve causal identification, administrative data analysis, and original survey-based methods to explore how informational shocks, institutional contexts, and individual beliefs shape workers' behaviour and their psychological and physical well-being. Specifically, one major strand examines workplace safety and the issue of under-reporting of workplace accidents in Italy. A second strand investigates workers' perceptions of meaningful jobs, particularly the perceived risks and benefits associated with job meaning. Overall, my research provides practical insights to inform policies aimed at improving safety compliance, overall job quality, and workers' well-being in the modern labor market.

Supervisors: Prof. Silvia Balia, Prof. Giovanni Sulis

Apuzzo Luigi

Project Title: Circular Economy: A Theoretical and Empirical Account

Abstract: In response to the major economic, environmental, and social challenges of recent decades, the circular economy (CE) has emerged as a promising alternative to the traditional linear economic model. By promoting closed-loop production systems based on resource efficiency, waste reduction, and product longevity, the CE aims to foster sustainable economic growth while minimizing environmental impacts. Despite growing interest, research addressing the CE from an economic perspective remains scarce and fragmented, with particular gaps in understanding its theoretical foundations, innovation dynamics, and territorial dimensions. This research project aims to deepen the understanding of the CE by investigating its integration into mainstream economic thought, the role of innovation in its diffusion, and the regional determinants that shape circular innovation across Europe. The project is structured into three interconnected papers.

The first paper offers a thematic literature review that systematically analyzes how the CE interacts with key economic mechanisms and principles. Using a systematic snowballing approach starting from the RePEc Ideas database, the study critically maps the literature across



four thematic dimensions: production systems, consumption behaviors, public policy frameworks, and market/macroeconomic dynamics.

The second paper investigates the territorial dynamics of circular innovation at the European NUTS2 regional level. Innovation output is measured through circular patents identified via an automatic landscaping methodology, combining CPC codes, keyword selection, and machine learning pruning techniques. The subsequent econometric analysis, based on the Knowledge Production Function (KPF) framework, explores the role of technological complexity and knowledge flows in shaping regional circular innovation patterns, comparing them to those observed in green and digital transitions.

The third paper investigates the determinants of co-inventorship in circular patents across Europe, aiming to identify which forms of proximity (geographical, cognitive, cultural, organizational) most significantly facilitate collaboration among inventors in the CE domain. Together, these studies aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the economic underpinnings of the circular economy, the innovation processes enabling its transition, and the territorial factors influencing its development. The findings are expected to contribute to academic debates in economic geography, innovation studies, and environmental economics, while offering policy-relevant insights for fostering inclusive and sustainable circular transitions across European regions.

Supervisors: Prof. Stefano Usai, Prof. Raffaele Paci

Aresu Federico

Project Title: Public investments and regional economic performance

Abstract: This research investigates the role of public investment in fostering regional economic development and promoting territorial cohesion within the European Union. Despite the extraordinary volume of resources mobilized through national and European initiatives—particularly the European Structural and Investment Funds—significant regional disparities persist across the EU. This raises fundamental questions about the actual effectiveness of such investments in supporting long-term and inclusive growth. The analysis considers a variety of factors that may influence investment outcomes, including territorial characteristics and institutional conditions, with the aim of providing a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which public resources contribute to regional development. The research contributes to ongoing debates on the design and implementation of more effective place-based policies in Europe.

Supervisors: Prof. Emanuela Marrocu, Prof. Raffaele Paci



Atzori Francesca

Project Title: Modeling Tourist Mobility in Sardinia: An Agent-Based and Data-Driven Approach

Abstract: Tourist behavior and mobility patterns in Sardinia are explored through an Agent-Based Model (ABM) that simulates individual destination choices and inter-municipal movements across the island. The model is grounded in two primary data sources: survey responses collected at the tourist information center in Oristano, capturing traveler profiles and itineraries; and a complementary dataset of 40 indicators describing destination specific characteristics. Network analysis and Markov chains are employed alongside the ABM to support the interpretation of tourist flows and enhance model validation. By illustrating how travel patterns emerge from decentralized decision-making and local interactions, the research offers insights into spatial tourism dynamics and provides actionable implications for destination management and policy design.

Supervisor: Prof. Giulia Contu

Beraziuk Marharyta

Project Title: Impact of Personalization on Business and Its Stakeholders

Abstract: This thesis investigates the multifaceted impact of personalization technologies on business ecosystems and their stakeholders. Bridging insights from healthcare and digital platforms, it explores how algorithmic personalization, while improving efficiency and user experience, can also introduce inequalities, distort visibility, and reshape value distribution among consumers, providers, and intermediaries. Through two case studies - personal health interfaces and online recommender systems - the research combines empirical benchmarking, stakeholder analysis, and regulatory review to reveal personalized systems' benefits and unintended consequences. The work proposes a stakeholder-centric, fairness-aware framework for evaluating and governing personalization, offering policy and design recommendations aligned with emerging digital regulations and responsible innovation.

Supervisors: Prof. Ludovico Boratto, Dott. Marco Ortu

Chalie Desalegn Nega

Project Title: Return Migration and Labor Market Outcomes



Abstract: In interconnected and mobile world, migration has become a global concern. Particularly, the phenomenon of return migration has emerged as a crucial issue in countries like Ethiopia, which has seen a surge in returnee migrants from Middle East, some African countries and Europe. Despite different reintegration efforts, empirical studies on remigration intentions remain limited. Accordingly, this study examines how government supportive reintegration programmes influence the remigration intentions of returnee migrants in Ethiopia. It is expected that government supportive reintegration policies such as skills training, capacity building, support for establishing production facilities, initial business financing and market linkages reduce the remigration intention of returnee migrants.

Supervisors: Prof. Giovanni Sulis, Dott. Ludovica Giua

Corona Fabio

Project Title: Community dynamics through DART model: Analyzing value co-creation practices in Villanova Monteleone DMO constitution

Abstract: My research, that is part of a broader PNRR project "Progetto Albergo – Ospitalità Diffusa a Villanova Monteleone," investigates the role of value co-creation practices and their associations with the sense of community during the establishment of a Destination Management Organization (DMO) in a rural town of Sardinia.

The study has three main objectives: to identify relevant value co-creation practices, to explore their link to residents' and local operators' sense of community, and to assess their impact on the success and sustainability of the DMO. A mixed-methods approach is adopted and divided in three phases: a theoretical framework development based on a literature review of value co-creation and sense of community; qualitative interviews to analyze perceptions and collaboration dynamics; and a quantitative survey to measure associations between co-creation, sense of community, and project outcomes.

The research contributes to expanding the DART model of value co-creation linking it to sense of community and offers practical insights for fostering participatory and sustainable tourism development in small destinations.

Supervisor: Prof. Giuseppe Melis

Dessaegn Tazeb Bisset

Project Title: Essay on Marriage and Fertility Behaviors in Ethiopia



Abstract: In Ethiopia, where the age at first marriage and fertility are increasing at a snail's pace, where a patriarchal and collectivist lifestyle remains predominant, and in a country going through recent active infrastructural developments, this research project aims to examine the role of social norms, family dynamics, and access to infrastructure in shaping the timing and magnitude of this key demographic milestones. By extending the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and using data from the Gender and Adolescents Global Evidence (GAGE) survey (2017–2018), the first paper plans to investigate how social norms and family dynamics influence marriage and fertility intentions. While a penalized logit model will be applied to estimate these effects on marriage intentions, to address potential endogeneity in the relationship between marriage timing and fertility intentions, an instrumental variable (IV) approach will be used to assess the role of social norms and intergenerational features on fertility intentions, with the female caregiver's age at first marriage serving as the instrument. It is expected that adolescents who perceive and are expected to adhere to norms favoring early marriage, those living in households where the female caregiver was a victim of early marriage, and those with married siblings or a large number of siblings are likely to have early marriage and childbearing intentions. Building on these findings, the second paper will use a natural experiment strategy (either difference-in-differences or IV) and panel data from the Ethiopian Socioeconomic Survey (2011–2022) to evaluate the impact of infrastructural provision, particularly access to roads and electricity, on household fertility behavior. The study is also set to examine the heterogeneous effects of these services on the number of children per household across regions and between rural and urban areas. Finally, using the same data, the study also plans to investigate the channels through which access to such infrastructure affects the number of children per household in Ethiopia. In this respect, by enhancing households' non-farm businesses, savings, and labor force participation, access to such infrastructural services is expected to decrease household fertility.

Supervisors: Prof. Vittorio Pelligra, Prof. Emanuela Marrocu

Dessi Diego

Project Title: Critical Raw Materials in the EU Regions. Open Strategic Autonomy and Technological Transitions

Abstract: Under the ongoing technological paradigm shifts, critical natural resources and materials have become essential for emerging industries and innovation frontiers. Recent disruptions in global supply chains – due to geopolitical conflicts, trade wars, political instability of the (highly) concentrated deposits worldwide, etc. – have affected the availability of critical raw materials (CRMs), raising concerns about the stability of the supply, and bringing to the fore the alternative of domestic production. Recent EU initiatives, such as the



Open Strategic Autonomy (OSA) and the Critical Raw Materials Act (2023), are intended to make the Union more competitive and autonomous by promoting innovation along the entire value chain. However, the regional distribution of the natural endowment of such vital resources, its relationship with the geography of green technology and product developments, and the potential for intra-EU CRM networks, value chains and development policies, are still understudied. Moreover, since the 1970s, European countries have gradually abandoned mining activities due to a complex interplay of resource depletion, economic shifts, and environmental concerns. This has contributed to the decline of once-thriving European mining industry, and as result, the real capabilities of European regions to extract and process critical materials are not very clear today. Relying on diverse strands of interdisciplinary literature we built an analytical framework with the aim to assess the extent to which the principles introduced by the OSA and the CRMs Act can be achieved and investigate the relationship between CRM resources and green transition in the EU mining industry. Preliminary results show that, resources, firms, and technologies have a very complex geographical distribution influenced by specific and heterogeneous characteristics of the European regions. This can pose serious challenges to the application of top-down policies and industry regulations such those suggested by the CRMs Act.

Supervisors: Prof. Simona Iammarino, Prof. Stefano Usai

Garau Alessio

Project Title: Essays in Labour Economics

Abstract: During my PhD, I looked at two different topics, both related to the broad field of Labour Economics. In the first work I try to answer a long-standing question in economics: Does a new technology affect productivity differently even within a seemingly homogeneous group of high-skill workers? To answer this question, I focus our attention on a particular type of high-skill workers: researchers. I built from scratch a new longitudinal dataset that tracks the entire economics field over time. Using a difference-in-differences strategy, I estimate effects both at the field and at the individual level. Fields more exposed to technology generate a higher volume of papers, yet the average quality of those papers does not rise relative to control fields, implying a relative decline. At the individual level, highly exposed authors lose ground on standard productivity metrics, while their less-exposed peers gain traction. A textual econometric analysis of abstracts suggests a mechanism: the new technology erodes incumbents' positional rents by attracting fresh entrants who successfully reinvent themselves in the topic, whereas established authors often fail to reposition.

My second work, built on Italy's administrative data, "comunicazioni obbligatorie", assess how the differential sector shutdowns that occurred during the pandemic reshaped worker



flows. A difference-in-differences design shows that the pandemic increased employment-to-unemployment (EU) transitions while leaving employer-to-employer (EE) and unemployment-to-employment (UE) flows essentially unchanged. Focusing on occupational characteristics, workers in physically demanding occupations suffered larger EU spikes and slower re-employment, whereas those in WFH-friendly jobs were less likely to enter voluntary unemployment. Vulnerable groups—new labor-market entrants and the less educated—experienced the highest EU rates and the longest unemployment spells.

Supervisors: Prof. Alessio Moro, Prof. Giovanni Sulis

Gravellu Carla

Project Title: How does Minority Shareholders' Representation on Boards affect the Integration of Sustainability Criteria into Executive Remuneration Contracts? Evidence from Italian non-financial listed firms

Abstract: This study examined whether and how directors appointed by minority shareholders influence the board's decision of integrating sustainability criteria into the executive remuneration design. Drawing upon a stakeholder-agency conceptual lens, it conducted an empirical analysis using a novel hand-collected dataset of 474 firm-year observations from 168 Italian non-financial listed firms headquartered during the period from 2021 to 2023. It sheds light on how this global remuneration practice is considered in an institutional setting characterised by a principal-principal agency problem. In such a setting, the integration of sustainability criteria into the executive remuneration design could either reflect the blockholder's interests at the expense of minority shareholders or represent an incentive that aligns executives with stakeholders' interests (including those of minority shareholders). This study reveals that directors appointed by minority shareholders play a critical role in fostering this form of remuneration when their presence does not merely reflect regulatory compliance. Firms where minority shareholders are represented on the board of directors beyond the legal requirements are more likely to substantively integrate sustainability criteria into the executive remuneration design, as this remuneration practice is expected to align executives' incentives with other stakeholder interests as a result of an inclusive board decision-making. This finding suggests that strengthening minority shareholders' representatives on boards of directors beyond regulatory requirements could enhance sustainable corporate governance practices. This study has important implications for those policymakers, investors, and other stakeholders seeking to identify board compositions that foster the alignment of executives' incentives with a broad base of corporate stakeholders.

Supervisor: Prof. Andrea Melis



Marji Aphrodite

Project Title: Technological changes in the era of innovation ecosystem

Abstract: This dissertation research examines topics at the intersection of innovation ecosystems, artificial intelligence, and pharmaceutical R&D, with a particular focus on how supervised machine learning and related AI tools can enhance the drug discovery process. I integrate systematic literature reviews, bibliometric analyses, and applied conceptual frameworks to investigate how innovation networks, technological capabilities, and knowledge flows interact to shape R&D outcomes in the pharmaceutical sector. Specifically, one strand of this work synthesizes and maps the existing literature on innovation ecosystems and technological change in drug development. A second strand applies co-citation analysis to explore the intellectual landscape surrounding patents, AI technologies, and pharmaceutical innovation. Finally, I investigate the opportunities and challenges associated with integrating AI into early-stage drug discovery, including its potential to reduce candidate failure rates and improve the efficiency of resource allocation using a quantitative approach. Overall, my research aims to provide practical and theoretical insights to support more effective, AI-enabled innovation strategies within the pharmaceutical industry.

Supervisor: Prof. Maria Chiara Di Guardo

Medda Francesco

Project Title: An Integrated Model for the Study of Asset Price Dynamics: Macroeconomic Risks, Consumer Confidence, and Habit Formation

Abstract: This project develops a unified macro-finance framework that reconciles the equity-premium and risk-free-rate puzzles by merging two previously separate research strands. From the macroeconomic side, it draws on the tail-risk tradition that models low-probability, high-impact disasters (represented here by the rare-event mechanism formalised in Barro and Jin 2021). From the behavioural side, it adopts the confidence-habit specification of Merella and Satchell 2022, in which fluctuations in consumer confidence and habit formation tie current utility to past consumption.

The representative agent's stochastic discount factor is augmented with the Barro–Jin disaster term while preserving the original confidence-habit structure. A multivariate VAR jointly estimates expected consumption growth, innovations in consumer-confidence indices, and their volatilities; these estimates feed into closed-form pricing equations that link state-contingent marginal utility to equilibrium returns. By nesting disaster intensity, sentiment



shocks, and habit persistence within a single parsimonious model, the framework attributes time-varying risk premia to their combined influence without resorting to implausibly high-risk aversion.

Empirical validation will rely on U.S. macro-financial series available at quarterly frequency from 1947 onward, testing whether the model matches both the mean and the volatility of equity and Treasury-bill returns as accurately as (or better than) benchmark rare-disaster and long-run-risk models. Because it explicitly connects psychological factors with macro tail risks, the framework also offers a tractable platform for stress-testing scenarios in which confidence shocks amplify or dampen the market impact of extreme events. In doing so, the project advances the theoretical foundations of asset pricing and provides regulators and investors with deeper insight into how catastrophic shocks and persistent shifts in consumer attitudes jointly shape asset-price dynamics.

Supervisor: Prof. Fabio Cerina

Melis Elisa

Project Title: Gender, non-cognitive skills and future academic outcomes: evidence from a cohort of Italian students

Abstract: This research aims to examine how non-cognitive skills relate to students' achievement in literacy and numeracy. The existing literature suggests that non-cognitive skills are strongly linked to academic performance. We use INVALSI data, which includes test scores in the two subjects together with a rich set of characteristics at the student, class, and school levels. These data enable us to track the same cohort of students from Grade 5 to Grade 13. Preliminary descriptive analysis reveals significant gender differences: girls report substantially higher self-efficacy in literacy, whereas boys exhibit greater confidence in numeracy. The empirical setting uses an econometric model with standardized test scores as the dependent variable, along with non-cognitive skills, a rich set of student-level characteristics, and class fixed effects as controls. All control variables are measured in Grade 5, while student performance is measured in the following grades. Preliminary evidence reveals that non-cognitive skills matter in both subjects and across all grades and shows the presence of gender heterogeneity

Supervisor: Prof. Adriana Di Liberto



Mottola Andrea

Project Title: Does Risk Shape Economies? Income Volatility and Structural Change

Abstract: We investigate the role of risk in shaping the pattern of structural transformation of an economy. We first show a novel theoretical result: in a simple two-sector model, for any given level of GDP, higher microeconomic risk (e.g. volatility of TFP shocks) of the economy implies a smaller share of services in consumption. This occurs because higher income risk induces the representative household to increase precautionary savings, thus reducing consumption expenditure, whose level determines the structure of consumption due to non-homotheticity. The value added share of services also declines, due to the increase in goods intensive investment relative to services intensive consumption. U.S. data confirm a robust negative and statistically significant relationship between different measures of risk of the economy and the share of services, in both value added and consumption data. This relationship also holds in South-American and Asian countries experiencing premature deindustrialization. As these countries faced lower risk with respect to the U.S. along their development process, the proposed mechanism can account for part or their premature deindustrialization. Our results suggest that policies aimed at reducing households income risk and firm-level exposure to shocks can accelerate structural transformation.

Supervisor: Prof. Alessio Moro

Palmas Giulio

Project Title: Exploring the Dynamics of Migrant Women's Entrepreneurship: Intersectional Perspectives and Gendered Comparisons

Abstract: This doctoral research project aims to explore the dynamics of migrant women's entrepreneurship through an intersectional perspective, considering how multiple identity dimensions (gender, ethnicity, migration status, age, education) influence entrepreneurial experiences.

The research aligns with the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, specifically: Goal 5 (gender equality), Goal 8 (inclusive economic growth), and Goal 10 (reducing inequalities), promoting the economic empowerment of migrant women.

The current context, characterised by significant geopolitical changes (conflicts in Ukraine and Palestine, Covid-19 pandemic), has altered migration flows creating new scenarios for migrant women entrepreneurs.



General research question: How do intersectional factors shape the entrepreneurial experiences and integration of migrant women in host countries?

The thesis is organised into three chapters:

1. **Support mechanisms and entrepreneurial ecosystems** - Systematic literature review analysing the impact of training and incubation programmes on economic and social integration.
2. **Family businesses** - Intersectional study examining how migrant women manage contextual, familial, and individual dynamics within family enterprises.
3. **Comparative analysis of incubators** - Comparison between practical and relational incubation approaches in supporting growth and sustainability of migrant women-led businesses.

Supervisor: Prof. Michela Floris

Priola Maria Paola

Project Title: Statistical and IA Methods for Public Health: Reliable, Sustainable, and Multimodal Knowledge Systems

Abstract: This research project explores the application of statistical and artificial intelligence (AI) methods to public health through three interconnected dimensions: data integration, knowledge reliability, and environmental sustainability. Built on a solid foundation in statistics, the work emphasizes the use of quantitative approaches to design, evaluate, and validate AI-driven tools for analyzing complex health data.

The first component introduces **MEDITA** (Multimodal hEalth Datawarehouse for ITAly), a multimodal health data warehouse tailored to Italian public health datasets. It integrates structured and unstructured sources via an ETLMD (Extract–Transform–Load–Model–Deploy) pipeline, offering interactive dashboards, statistical modeling for time series, and a Retrieval-Augmented Generation (**RAG**) chatbot for natural language queries in Italian.

The second part focuses on improving the factual reliability of Large Language Models (LLMs). It proposes the **Negative Missing Information Scoring System (NMISS)** to distinguish between hallucinated outputs and valid inferences, using structured health knowledge bases. This evaluation framework is grounded in statistical rigor and tested on real-world Italian health news.

The third component addresses sustainable AI, assessing the **trade-offs between model performance and carbon efficiency in multi-class text classification**. By introducing an



emissions-per-accuracy metric, the study identifies classifier-strategy pairs—such as Naïve Bayes with One-vs-One—that balance predictive accuracy with environmental responsibility. Together, these contributions form a comprehensive, statistically informed approach to building AI systems for public health that are not only effective and interactive, but also trustworthy and ecologically sustainable.

Supervisor: Prof. Claudio Conversano

Ramohito Valdi

Project Title: How European firms reacted to IFRS 16 Leases

Abstract: The project investigates the impact of the introduction of International Financial Reporting Standard (IFRS) 16 on the lease liabilities of European public firms. Introduced to enhance transparency and comparability in financial reporting, IFRS 16 requires most leases to be capitalised in order to reduce the discretionary use of off-balance sheet financing. Using a difference-in-differences approach, we analyse pre- and post-implementation data to show that IFRS 16 effectively increased lease liabilities. This result is statistically and economically significant at customary levels and withstand a battery of robustness tests. However, our additional analysis shows that IFRS 16 also brought unintended consequences, as firms opportunistically shifted towards short-term lease commitments to limit the expansion of lease liabilities. Our cross-sectional tests also show that less profitable firms are less likely to capitalize their lease contracts. Taken together these results suggest that the standard effectiveness in expanding the use of on balance sheet financing was not able to deter opportunistic leasing behaviour.

Supervisor: Prof. Alessandro Mura

Sabah Hamza

Project Title: ESG Performance and Corporate Green Innovation

Abstract: Sustained economic growth intensifies environmental challenges and increases demand for sustainable solutions. ESG performance improves market signals, reduces information asymmetry, and fosters stakeholder collaboration—thereby driving firms’ green innovation, defined as technologies for energy conservation and pollution prevention. However, the relationship between ESG engagement and green innovation adoption remains underexplored among European listed companies. This research examines how ESG



engagement spurs green innovation and reveals the mechanisms through which ESG commitments yield environmentally beneficial technologies, advancing actionable insights for both scholars and practitioners.

Supervisor: Prof. Maria Chiara Di Guardo

Scanu Giulia

Project Title: The Transformative Power of Entrepreneurship: How to exploit this power in Entrepreneurship Education and Training

Abstract: This research project investigates the transformative power of Entrepreneurship Education/Training (EE/T) and how EE/T fosters transformative capacity, then emancipation, agency, and people's empowerment. Research has highlighted the benefits of the transformative power of entrepreneurship and its teaching in supporting individuals' emancipation. Assuming the effectiveness of transformative power and the opportunity to create new life opportunities through EE/T, the question is whether EE/T can also effectively support those facing economic and social marginalisation. Furthermore, how structuring EE/T programmes as transformative tools capable of challenging the status quo and raising people is still a debated topic that needs greater clarity. In other words, this research project aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how to structure EE/T programmes to harness transformative capacity and thus support disadvantaged and marginalised groups. Giving support to marginalised or disadvantaged groups of people also has significant social implications and arouses the interests of various agents, including institutions and practitioners that aim to support them. Among these groups, women stand out prominently, who are the object of this research project, most discriminated against and unjustly victims of gender inequality.

Methodology: This research project employs a longitudinal Action Research approach, involving three observation phases: before, during, and after using an EE/T programme. Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews and continuous participant observation, focusing on a sample of disadvantaged women.

Findings: This study aims to assess the effectiveness of EE/T in activating and stimulating transformative capacity in marginalised and disadvantaged groups such as underprivileged women. Additionally, it will be possible to identify key elements that can promote the transformative power of EE/T.

Originality/value: This research expects to contribute to the literature by providing insights into the structure of EE/T programmes that can effectively stimulate and support transformative capacity. It will highlight the predicted importance of EE/T application in marginalised and disadvantaged groups' emancipation, such as disadvantaged women. It will



offer new opportunities for social development and practical implications for educators and policymakers. Future research could further explore the specific components of EE/T that are most effective in fostering the transformative power of EE/T.

Supervisor: Prof. Michela Loi

Serri Francesca Chiara

Project Title: Toward Nomadic Organizations through Prospective Theorizing

Abstract: This research project explores how digital nomadism can inspire the development of alternative and fluid organizational forms. Rather than treating digital nomadism merely as an individualistic lifestyle and work style enabled by advancements in information and communication technologies, new and mobile work practices, and increased freedom in travel, it is reconceptualized here as a transformative force capable of challenging foundational assumptions in organization theory. Drawing on concepts such as movement, becoming, and liminality, the research rethinks organizing under conditions of uncertainty and change. The research adopts a theoretical research design based on prospective theorizing to create speculative, future-oriented understandings of organizing. It integrates insights from nomadology and emerging studies on digital and organizational nomadism to develop an imaginative yet grounded theoretical framework. This framework considers how organizing might evolve beyond fixed structures, rigid hierarchies, and sedentary mindsets, positioning mobility and fluidity as constructive rather than destabilizing elements. This research provides three main contributions. First, it significantly advances the literature on digital nomadism by moving beyond its predominantly individualistic and lifestyle-centered perspective. Second, it broadens the inquiry on organizational nomadism and, more generally, on organization theory by introducing the concept of nomadic organizing. Third, it extends the literature and scope of prospective theorizing by proposing an expansion of the framework for theorizing future organizational possibilities.

Supervisor: Prof. Manuel Castriotta

Vincis Andrea

Project Title: Exploring the Dynamics of knowledge and Innovation in Tourism SMEs

Abstract: This Research Project is built on the Spoke 02 of the e.INS project (Ecosystem of Innovation for Next Generation Sardinia), which addresses innovation and sustainability



issues within Sardinia's small and medium-sized tourism enterprises (SMEs). From this context, the identification of the pillars supporting the three-year PhD research arose. Innovation, first and foremost, is a concept that has interested scholars in an interdisciplinary manner since its earliest definitions and applications and has undergone modifications and specifications through subsequent studies. The tourism sector's peculiar characteristics have developed its relevance as a productive sector, especially in the last 40 years. SMEs represent the third pillar; unlike large companies, SMEs can operate leanly but face the perennial challenge of staying in the market with capital, R&D, and human resources limitations. What shapes and gives relevance to the research project is the intersection between innovation, tourism, and SMEs and the role of knowledge. Amidst the increasing emphasis on tourism, exploring knowledge within organisations has become essential for driving innovation and securing long-term competitiveness. Investigating knowledge has become vital for nurturing tourism innovation and guaranteeing sustained competitive advantage. In particular, with External Knowledge (EK) as a focal point, this research aims to explore the related concepts of Absorptive Capacity (AC) and Organizational Learning (OL). Although these concepts have been traditionally explored within the context of large firms, their significance has recently extended to encompass tourism SMEs.

Supervisor: Prof. Cinzia Dessì

Wasli Nouha

Project Title: Climate Decommittment: Evidence from the Science Based Target Initiative

Abstract: Companies face increasing pressure from stakeholders to signal their commitment to net-zero targets. This pressure may drive companies to make pledges that are difficult to fulfill, potentially leading to climate decommitment—the inaction that results in the removal of previously made environmental pledges. This study examines the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) and explores the firm- and country-level factors that contribute to climate decommitment under this initiative. Using data from companies participating in SBTi's Business Ambition for 1.5°C Campaign that was conducted between June 2019 and October 2021, we find that companies are less likely to experience climate decommitment, which became prominent in March 2024 following a policy change by SBTi, when CSR contracting is in place, when board independence is greater, and when the firm is incorporated in a country with a positive environmental trajectory. These insights contribute to understanding the role of ESG-related factors in ensuring adherence to net-zero science-based targets.

Supervisor: Prof. Andrea Melis