

ULSM research vignette 5: With technology encroaching on every aspect of our life, it is imperative that it is designed appropriately and ethically. User-centred design is often deemed the panacea for poor design and guarantor of intuitive and usable technology. In reality, organisational tensions and the misinterpretation of needs can cause a misrepresentation of the user, leading to technology that frustrates and fails to have the intended impact. **Will Green** is collaborating with a Leicester based creative-agency to support the adoption of a user-centred design strategy, via a two-year Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) project to develop a system that can capture in situ experiences of product and service consumption by taking advantage of the ubiquity of technology, especially smart phones.

Further, we actively seek out and work with non-western and non-capitalist ideas on and examples of how humanity can organize and manage itself; from sub-Saharan Africa, from the Gulf, from East Asia, from the Indian sub-continent and from pre- and post-colonial positions in particular, taking seriously alternative organizations such as co-operatives, communes, credit unions, micro-finance providers, Local Exchange and Trading Schemes, the Fair Trade movement and so on. What might these ideas and these alternatives offer us that more conventional and familiar arrangements do not?



ULSM research vignette 6: **Robert Cluley** researches the production of creativity in the cultural industries. Drawing on sociological theory, his work explores how creative products from pop records to blockbuster films emerge not from individual geniuses but from particular formal and informal organizations. Using this perspective he has, in a recent publication, critically reviewed government policy documents concerning the UK music industries. He has shown that they are based on an image of the music industry that was true in the sixties but is increasingly counterproductive in the twenty first century. It is, he concludes, the very success of British bands from the sixties that works against new bands now.

To illustrate some of our research and consultancy activities, consider the series of vignettes detailing recent and current projects that punctuate this brochure. We hope they whet your appetite for the research and consultancy work that we do here in the School, not least because all of these activities feed through into and actively inform our teaching and dissertation/ thesis supervision at undergraduate, Master's and doctoral level. If you want to know more, please visit our website at www.le.ac.uk/departments/management/research We look forward to hearing from you!

ULSM research vignette 7: **Stephen Wood's** analysis of the Workplace Employee Relations Survey, with colleagues from Tilburg and City universities, suggests that, whilst high quality job design has positive effects on organizational performance, the higher employee involvement associated with such practices can also decrease job satisfaction and increase workers' anxiety. So although so called 'high-quality' jobs allow employees an element of discretion and flexibility over how they execute and manage their primary tasks and can deliver greater proactivity, flexibility, and collaboration on the part of the workforce, they may do so at the expense of increasing anxiety and stress.

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School of Management

Management is too important not to debate



What do stock returns during Ramadan, redistribution of excess goods by charities, smoking at work, 'Britishness', smart phone led market research, government policy for the music industry and high involvement working practices have in common?

They are all examples of the sort of research that informs the rigorous and vigorous debate on management and organization taking place at the University of Leicester School of Management.

ULSM research vignette 1: Research by **Tomasz Wisniewski** and colleagues in 14 Muslim countries over the nineteen year period from 1989-2007 suggests that, during Ramadan, stock returns in these countries are significantly higher and less volatile than in the rest of the year. This suggests that Ramadan has positive effects on the psychology of investors. Some potential reasons for this include the fact that during Ramadan Muslims are encouraged to engage in halal activities, to help others and in particular to take care of underprivileged members of society. People spend more time amongst family and friends. The improved quality of the social infrastructure is bound to have a positive influence on the mood of these individuals, which may well increase their propensity to invest. Second, fasting during Ramadan can have a range of physical effects. When fasting, the reserves of glucose stored in our bodies are progressively used up and our brains start to run on ketone bodies produced by the liver. One of the ketone bodies is an isomer of an antidepressant called GHB (Gamma-hydroxybutyrate). As a consequence, some people may experience mild euphoric states during the fast.

Organizations have an enormous impact *on all of us* as employees, as customers and more generally as citizens. We are born in, educated in, work in, play in, are governed by, obtain goods and services from, receive medical treatment in and die in organizations. And these organizations are all managed to a greater or lesser degree.

We therefore need to *debate* management and organizations: they are too important in our everyday lives to be left unexamined. So whose objectives do they serve, why and how? Who benefits from what these organizations do or do not provide? Who does not?

ULSM research vignette 2: So much resource is invested in launching and supplying new products that it can be politically astute for managers to ignore any stock that doesn't reach its intended target market. But what happens to all of this perfectly good 'stuff' when it has failed to realize the ambitions of its makers, agents, re-sellers or retailers? Landfill has increasingly become a financially unviable and socially unacceptable outlet for these goods and so managers are seeking alternative avenues to dispose of their unwanted stock. In an innovative study funded by the European Regional Development Fund, **Ai-Ling Lai, Nick Ellis** and **Matthew Higgins** are working with a local charity to examine its role in offering options for firms that wish to dispose of their goods in a more socially acceptable manner. Using the analogy of a dating agency, Ai-Ling, Nick and Matthew explore the dynamics within the charity as it carefully navigates the domains of the profit and not for profit sectors in a match-making role. The research brings into focus the questions of purpose, performance and sustainability that the charity is grappling with in an increasingly challenging funding environment.

Management and organizations have created many of the achievements of modern civilization, but are also

profoundly implicated in the pressing global problems facing us today: the persistence of war, violence, the degradation of the natural environment, racism, sexism, ageism, ableism/disablism, homophobia, unhealthy and unsafe work environments, work-life imbalance and the unequal global distribution of wealth, to name but a few.

Very little existing management research or indeed consultancy deals directly with issues such as these. In contrast, they are central to the research and consultancy being done at the School of Management. Our academics and research students draw on a range of social science and humanities disciplines to provide as many different perspectives on them as possible, because for us there are no easy solutions to be had.

ULSM research vignette 3: **Jo Brewis**, writing with Chris Grey of the University of Warwick, argues in a recent publication in *Human Relations* that the growing regulation of smoking in public places in the west, including work organizations, has a long and complex history in which smoking has been both deplored *and* encouraged; and this before any evidence emerged as to its negative health effects. Jo and Chris also argue smoking as an activity is now so bound up with broader concerns relating to health and longevity that the medical claim of 'smoking is bad for you' has begun to slip into the moral argument that 'smoking is bad' – and, by implication, so are smokers.



As a result, our research and consultancy attempt not only to understand and to explain the world from a variety of different vantage points but also, beyond that, to contribute to informed choices about how the world could be changed for the better. We want to challenge common assumptions about the techniques and goals of organizing, managing, accounting, finance and marketing in a globalizing world. We agree with renowned sociologist Howard Becker that good social science refuses to accept taken-for-granted, established ways of doing things. We agree that it *must* question the status quo and is therefore often *radical* in its conclusions.

ULSM research vignette 4: **Steve Brown** is part of an interdisciplinary team based across several departments in the university (including Management, History, Archaeology, Genetics and English) which has been awarded £1.23 million by the Leverhulme Trust to look at how migration has been central to the making of Britain. Over five years the team will explore how different sorts of information – from place names to population genetics to local community memories – can be combined to understand the complex and diverse roots of 'Britishness'. Steve's contribution builds on his work on 'social remembering' – how our memories and sense of who we are is shaped by the groups, communities and organizations to which we belong.

Relatedly, we do not believe that good social science is always detached, objective and quantitative in its approach. Nor do we think it should routinely borrow from the natural sciences in its investigations. Instead we favour the use of a wide range of methods in attempting to understand and unpick management and organizations, which is why the School of Management at the University of Leicester houses the largest body of heterodox researchers across the core disciplines of accounting and finance, marketing and organization studies in Europe and in all probability the world.