

Workshop on Interdisciplinary Advances in Cooperation Research

University of Nottingham, United Kingdom

Conference venue: Orchard Hotel, University Park

11th and 12th September 2025

Funded by the European Research Council Project [ERC-AdG 101020453 PRINCIPLES](#)

Programme

Thursday, 11/09/2025

9:00 **Simon Gächter, University of Nottingham: *Welcome and introduction***

ABSTRACT: In this introductory talk I present a perspective of potential future directions on interdisciplinary cooperation research. I will draw on the research done in PRINCIPLES, most importantly on [why people follow rules](#) and provide some ideas for future directions in interdisciplinary cooperation research.

9:30 **Ingela Alger, Institute for Advanced Study in Toulouse: *Norms and norm change — driven by social-Kantian preferences***

ABSTRACT: Norms indicate which behaviors are common and/or considered morally right. They may differ across space and time. I show that social-Kantian preferences can explain this. These preferences incorporate two hitherto neglected factors: Kantian moral concerns – which drive personal moral norms and motivate unconditional following thereof – and attitudes towards making a different material sacrifice than others – which motivate conditioning own on others' behavior. Conditions on preference and belief distributions promoting/hampering spontaneous changes in the behavioral norm (the modal behavior) are identified. Implications for policy interventions aimed at changing norms, and key differences with commonly used models are discussed.

10:30 **Coffee Break**

11:00 **Christian Thöni, University of Lausanne: [Interplay of cooperation and coordination in indefinitely repeated games](#)**

ABSTRACT: We study cooperation in the presence of coordination needs in indefinitely repeated games. In a laboratory experiment, subjects play a Prisoner's Dilemma and a Stag Hunt in each round, either with different partners (single-game contact) or with the same partner (multigame contact), creating strategic interplay across games in the latter case. In theory, multigame contact can strengthen cooperation without undermining coordination as players can link the strategy in one game to their partner's actions in the other game. In contrast, we observe that multigame contact can reduce both cooperation and coordination rates, and it lowers payoffs. While a significant share of subjects link strategies across games, a large share instead restricts punishment to the game in which the deviation occurred. Such limited deterrence fails to prevent deviations, with occasional cross-game punishment destabilizing both cooperation and coordination and leading to more frequent low-payoff outcomes.

12:00 **Jörg Gross, University of Zurich: *Unequal opportunities to cooperate create unequal burdens to sustain cooperation between groups***

ABSTRACT: To address the global challenges that humanity increasingly faces, cooperation across group boundaries is needed. However, establishing intergroup cooperation requires groups to forgo opportunities to exclusively benefit fellow group members. Instead, resources must be directed toward the creation of group-transcending public goods that benefit everyone. This can be particularly challenging when groups differ in their capacity to cooperate. Some groups may have access to strong 'club goods', such that group cooperation creates

large benefits for group members, raising the opportunity costs of cooperating across group lines. For groups in more disadvantaged positions, group cooperation may yield very little return, instead. Here, we experimentally investigate how such structural inequality between groups creates systematic obstacles for the emergence of intergroup cooperation and how to overcome these obstacles. Specifically, while structural inequality tends to undermine intergroup cooperation, we find that some members of advantaged groups are motivated by intergroup fairness concerns, which initially increase their willingness to engage in intergroup cooperation. These fairness motives can be systematically leveraged through peer enforcement. We show that peer punishment is used not only to sanction free-riding but to establish a norm of intergroup cooperation, discouraging exclusive within-group cooperation. Our findings challenge the notion that human cooperation is inherently parochial and biased towards the in-group. Instead, we provide evidence for an aversion to intergroup inequality that, under the right conditions, can be amplified to sustain intergroup cooperation, even in the face of structural inequality.

13:00

LUNCH at The Orchard

14:00 **Catherine Molho, Institute for Advanced Study in Toulouse:** [*Guilt drives prosociality across 20 countries*](#)

ABSTRACT: Prior research has documented cross-societal variation in prosociality using tasks such as dictator games, where individuals allocate money between themselves and others. In such tasks, individuals typically receive full information about how decisions impact others and make decisions privately. Here, we tested the idea that different societies rely on distinct mechanisms—guilt and internalized norms versus shame and external reputation—to support prosociality. We conducted a pre-registered experiment with 7,978 participants in 20 culturally diverse countries across five continents. We administered dictator games and experimentally manipulated guilt, by varying information about the consequences of participants' decisions (full versus hidden), and shame, by varying observability (public versus private). We found robust evidence for guilt-driven prosociality around the world, such that prosociality increased substantially when individuals received information by default compared to when they could avoid it. In contrast, making decisions observable by third parties had only small effects on prosocial choices. Our study provides a first comprehensive investigation of how guilt and shame influence prosocial decision-making, and uncovers both similarities and differences in mechanisms to promote prosociality across countries.

15:00 **Zvonimir Bašić, University of Glasgow:** *Punishment outperforms reciprocity in promoting cooperation across the whole life span*

ABSTRACT: Understanding what fosters cooperation is essential for the management of public goods and social welfare. While theoretical and empirical studies have underscored the role of punishment and reciprocity in promoting cooperation, the relative effectiveness of these factors across development remains largely unexplored. In Study 1, we examine cooperation among 929 children, aged three to six, in a prisoner's dilemma game ($n = 4,062$ decisions) adapted for young children. Leveraging a novel controlled experimental framework, we examine three foundational factors of human cooperation—direct reciprocity, indirect reciprocity, and peer punishment—to identify which most effectively promotes cooperative behavior among young children. Our findings reveal that peer punishment significantly boosts cooperation, standing out as a key factor even at an early age. Punishment more than doubles cooperation rates, it promotes cooperation from the first interaction, and increases its effectiveness with age. In Study 2, we conducted a meta-analytic review including studies with older children and adults. We show that, while reciprocity-based factors begin to promote cooperation more effectively as individuals age, peer punishment constantly remains a more potent factor of cooperative behavior. These findings suggest that peer punishment is a stronger driver of cooperation since early childhood, with implications for designing educational and social policies that foster cooperation and social cohesion, thereby contributing to sustainable public goods management and broader social welfare.

16:00

Coffee Break

16:30 **Enrique Fatas, European University Valencia:** *Conditional cooperation in the field: When (Conditional) Cooperators (Conditionally) Discriminate and Free Riders react to Inclusive (Incentive-based) Policies*

ABSTRACT: We present the results of a policy intervention targeting civil servants in Ecuador. The preregistered intervention (AEARCTR-0014077, IRB approval 2024/751) consists of an online training offered to civil servants and designed from scratch to behaviorally mitigate discrimination towards Venezuelan migrants. We elicit the cooperative types of a large sample of civil servants in the departments of Health, Education and Labor, following the seminal work of Urs Fischbacher, Simon Gächter and Ernst Fehr. Using a vignette experiment, we classify 84% of all participants in four types: Free Riders (FR), Hump Shaped (HS), Conditional Cooperators (CC), and (unconditional) Kantian Cooperators (KC). Our results are based on a small pilot with 4,000 civil servants (70% of them women, 43 years old on average, 85% of them with at least some

college education), run before scaling it up to all civil servants in Ecuador (300,000), in collaboration with the World Bank. Our diagnosis shows that civil servants exhibit significant and robust discrimination only towards male migrants (but not towards female migrants, discarding intersectional discrimination). Discrimination is consistent with deep mistrust in Venezuelans, a strong preference for prioritizing locals, and widespread systemic discrimination (with limited room for beliefs-based discrimination, or civil servants' lack of empathy). The intervention is successful in reducing discrimination, mitigating priority for locals, diminishing mistrust, and moderating discriminatory beliefs, but it fails to significantly improve intention to act in case of conflict (e.g., reporting unfair discriminatory actions by other civil servants). Our analysis of conditional cooperation types reveals an interesting pattern. Strikingly, discrimination towards male migrants is significant and stronger among CC civil servants. Our differences in differences analysis reveals that prejudices are reduced by the intervention across all cooperation types, but mistrust is reduced only for HS, CC, and KC (especially for the latter). The priority for locals is reduced strongly among CC. The intervention is only successful with FR types in making them more open to the introduction of inclusive policies (changes in compensation schemes rewarding a more inclusive service).

17:30 Andis Sofianos, University of Durham: *Fair cooperation*

How fair is inequality, and when does it help or hinder cooperation? Prior work shows that fairness perceptions depend on the source of inequality, while pro-sociality and cooperativeness differ across societies. We build on these insights with an online experiment that varies redistributive regimes and task difficulty to study how inequality and fairness perceptions shape cooperative behaviour. We show that taxation levels impact perceived fairness, and these perceptions in turn drive cooperation. Strikingly, regimes with stronger ability requirements and lower redistribution foster higher cooperation. Overall, inequality aversion is the dominant force behind behaviour, giving way to reciprocity only when both redistribution and ability requirements are low.

19:30 Workshop Dinner @ Memsaab, Nottingham City Centre

Friday, 12/09/2025

09:00 Simon Columbus, University of St. Andrews: *The Social Dilemma of Climate Policy*

ABSTRACT: The most effective climate policies yield global benefits but impose local costs, creating a social dilemma in policies. Citizens and policymakers may oppose such policies not because they doubt their effectiveness, but out of fear that other countries won't enact similar policies. We propose a theoretical model in which voters support locally costly policies if they believe that these policies will increase compliance with mitigating efforts. To test this model, we introduce a new climate policy dilemma game in which members of two groups (i) decide between a locally efficient (but globally inefficient) policy and a globally efficient (but locally costly) policy, (ii) receive either the democratically-chosen or a randomly assigned policy, and (iii) can contribute towards preventing a stochastic but potentially devastating threat to their individual payoffs. In a large-scale incentivised experiment ($N = 1,730$), a substantial minority supports the globally efficient policy. This support is driven by the belief that the policy will increase collective contributions. Opponents, in contrast, expect no such effect. We further examine compliance under exogenous versus endogenous policies. The globally efficient policy slightly reduces contributions when imposed but increases them when chosen democratically. This demonstrates a causal effect of democracy on compliance—a "dividend of democracy." This effect is partly explained by increased legitimacy: democratic processes make even unpopular policies more acceptable to initial opponents. Our study identifies the mechanisms underlying support for ambitious climate policies and highlights how democratic processes can enhance both legitimacy and compliance with costly mitigation efforts.

10:00 Simone Quercia, University of Verona: *Pluralistic Ignorance and Sustainable Mobility*

ABSTRACT: This study aims to examine the impact of goal setting and pluralistic ignorance on sustainable mobility choices through an experiment involving 175 students at the University of Verona. The objective is threefold: (1) investigate the influence of personal goal-setting on sustainable mobility; (2) determine whether informing participants about the percentage of people interested in improving their sustainable mobility habits increases such behaviour; and (3) explore the potential impact that increased use of sustainable mobility may have on psycho-physical measures of well-being.

11:00 Coffee break

11:30 Oliver Hauser, University of Exeter: *Giving More Together*

ABSTRACT: Achieving socially desirable goals, such as charitable giving, often require groups of individuals to coordinate their altruistic or cooperative behaviour at scale. Past research has shown that many people would be willing to help if they were assured that they are not the only ones acting altruistically. In this project, we design a robust institution that leverages these conditional cooperative preferences to raise charitable donations. The “Giving More Together” treatment allows pro-socially motivated individuals to commit more donations if others commit the same or more. Here, we present initial evidence from online experiments that the treatment increases donations by up to 40%. In ongoing work, we are developing a Giving More Together website to measure and create real-world social change at scale.

12:30 LUNCH at The Orchard

13:30 Alexander Vostroknutov, University of Maastricht: *Measuring Norm Multiplicity*

ABSTRACT: This study introduces the Norm-Drawing Task, a novel approach to measure pluralism, or the coexistence of multiple normative beliefs in a given context. By combining established methods, we identify heterogeneous normative beliefs in well-known economic games, challenging the typical assumption of a single prevailing norm. Moreover, we are able to link norm multiplicity to actual behavior. We observe that participants who perceive multiple norms are more tolerant and punish norm violations less frequently and less severely than those who perceive a singular norm. In a second experiment, we show that this effect is causal. Comparing two elicitation protocols that allow participants to report multiple norms versus requiring them to report a single norm, we find that punishment is lower in the former than in the latter: pluralism breeds tolerance. The implications of our study are broad, indicating that societal structures and policy decisions could be influenced by the underlying multiplicity of norms. Moreover, the Norm-Drawing Task, for which we provide a ready-made software implementation, offers a new avenue for exploring important societal issues like the perception of minority groups and the dynamics of polarization.

<https://www.vostroknutov.com/pdfs/ssrn-4649792.pdf>

<https://www.vostroknutov.com/pdfs/PDKV2024.pdf>

14:30 Giulia Andrighetto, Institute of Cognitive Sciences and Technologies, Rome, and Institute for Futures Studies, Stockholm: *Dynamics of social norms and cooperation under collective risk*

ABSTRACT: Global challenges like climate change demand large-scale collective action. A large literature has suggested social norms—the unwritten rules that regulate behavior in everyday contexts—to be crucial in solving these challenges. In this talk, I will first discuss the results of a long-term experiment aimed to investigate the effect of social norms in promoting cooperation in a collective-risk social dilemma experiment. Our results show that high risk of collective loss makes social norms of cooperation stronger and increases cooperation. I will then present the results of an agent-based model that builds on this experimental data, that revealed how individual differences in norm sensitivity and risk perception, combined with group composition, determine collective action outcomes. Our findings show that successful collective action depends critically on the interplay between risk-sensitive and norm-following individuals. These results suggest a targeted approach to behavioral interventions in climate action, sustainability, and public health: focusing on key population segments may yield better results than broad, uniform strategies.

15:30 END of Workshop