

Faculty of Culture and Society Research Showcase

AUT Research Week 2026

Theme: “Applying research and technology for good”

Monday 31 st August, 9am–3.15pm, WZ100C, Ground floor WZ Building	
09.00 – 09.15	Mihi Whakatau: Manukura Tautoko Tuarua a Rangahau / Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research Professor Mark Orams
09.15 – 09.45	From score to outcome: A decade of research on predictive risk modelling in child welfare Larissa Lorimer, Manager Contracts and Operations, AUT Centre for Social Data Analytics (CSDA)
9.45 – 10.15	Growing urban wellbeing: Participant perspectives on community garden spaces in Tāmaki Makaurau-Auckland Pauline Marie, PhD Candidate, AUT Centre for Critical Food Studies
10.15 – 10.30	Paramanawa Morning tea
10.30 – 11.00	Moanaroa Pacific research data sovereignty Professor Fa’alogo Aganoa Jacoba Matapo, Chair of the Moanaroa Pacific Research Network and Loata Sakaio, Moanaroa Pacific Research Network Manager
11.00 – 11.30	Regenerative tourism in Aotearoa New Zealand: Entrepreneurs’ perspectives Associate Professor Claire Liu, School of Hospitality and Tourism
11.30 – 12.00	Planting ancestral seeds with AI: An interdisciplinary journey reimagining Indigenous Canarian histories for education and community Dr Elba Ramirez, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, and Master of Creative Technologies student Dylan Verdonkschot, School of Future Environments
12.00 – 12.45	Kai o te rānui Lunch
12.45 – 13.15	Beyond theories of good and evil in the future of technology and research: Essential insights from the philosophy of technology Professor Andrew Gibbons, School of Education
13.15 – 13.45	From small acorns: Building a research programme for good in hospitality and tourism employment Associate Professor David Williamson, Professor Candice Harris, and Dr Dan Zhu School of Hospitality and Tourism, and Faculty of Business, Economics and Law
13.45 – 14.15	Communicating with migrant and refugee-background patients: Professional interpreters or AI? Professor Ineke Crezee, School of Social Sciences and Humanities
14.15 – 14.30	Paramanawa Afternoon tea
14.30 – 15.00	Constructing digital transformation through policy in US-China higher education Nargis Tuli, PhD Candidate, School of Education
15.00 – 15.15	Closing: Associate Dean Research Shelagh Mooney

Abstracts

From score to outcome: A decade of research on predictive risk modelling in child welfare

Larissa Lorimer, Manager Contracts and Operations, [AUT Centre for Social Data Analytics \(CSDA\)](#)

Over the past decade, Professor Rhema Vaithianathan and Professor Emily Putnam-Hornstein (UNC-Chapel Hill) have led the development, deployment, and evaluation of predictive risk models (PRMs) in child welfare, from designing the Allegheny Family Screening Tool to building and studying pilots in a variety of settings across the US. This talk surveys that program of work, drawing on randomized controlled trials, quasi-experimental evaluations, and external validation studies to present converging evidence that PRMs can improve targeting of high-risk cases, reduce maltreatment-related hospitalizations, and narrow rather than widen racial disparities. We close with open questions on human-algorithm interaction and the conditions for responsible scaling.

Growing urban wellbeing: Participant perspectives on community garden spaces in Tāmaki Makaurau-Auckland

Pauline Marie, PhD Candidate, [AUT Centre for Critical Food Studies](#)

Community focused urban agriculture is increasingly recognised as a multifunctional urban intervention that can strengthen social cohesion; improve equity and local health outcomes; generate inclusive, circular, economic development; and deliver crucial ecosystem services in densely built environment. Yet, for all its known benefits, the community garden space in Aotearoa New Zealand continues to struggle.

This research project aimed to examine the barriers faced by community focused agriculture projects in Tāmaki Makaurau-Auckland. In doing so, this project aimed to inform future policy direction and promote greater community access to, and control over local food environments.

Moanaroa Pacific research data sovereignty

Professor Fa’alogo Aganoa Jacoba Matapo, Chair of the [Moanaroa Pacific Research Network](#) and Loata Sakaio, Moanaroa Pacific Research Network Manager

This presentation shares the Moanaroa Data Sovereignty resource as a Pacific-grounded guide for ethical research, data governance, and policy practice. It presents Pacific data as living knowledge connected to people, lands, oceans, languages, histories, and collective futures. The presentation affirms Pacific Peoples’ inherent rights to govern how data is generated, collected, owned, interpreted, stored, shared, and used. It explores key responsibilities across data for, by, with, and about Pacific communities, including consent, access, cultural protocols, collective benefit, and accountability. The resource invites researchers, institutions, and policy makers to uphold mana, protect knowledge, strengthen trust, and advance self-determination.

Regenerative tourism in Aotearoa New Zealand: Entrepreneurs’ perspectives

Associate Professor Claire Liu, School of Hospitality and Tourism

This research project examines how tourism entrepreneurs in New Zealand understand and apply regenerative tourism in practice. Using qualitative research and drawing on interview data from 16 participants, it moves beyond conceptual debate to show how regenerative ideas are translated into business decisions, visitor experiences, partnerships, and community-facing actions.

The findings show that regenerative tourism is understood as a values-based, relational, and place-grounded approach to tourism. By combining a literature-informed framework with interview-based thematic analysis, the study provides a grounded understanding of how regenerative tourism is interpreted, operationalised, and experienced by tourism entrepreneurs in the Aotearoa New Zealand context.

Planting ancestral seeds with AI: An interdisciplinary journey reimagining Indigenous Canarian histories for education and community

Dr Elba Ramirez, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, and Master of Creative Technologies student Dylan Verdonkschot, School of Future Environments

This presentation shares an interdisciplinary research journey exploring how archival inquiry and generative AI can be used to generate digitally enabled knowledge that upholds Indigenous values and data sovereignty. Conducted in respectful dialogue with Indigenous contexts in the Canary Islands, and further in Aotearoa New Zealand, the project shows how digital innovation can support education, cultural revitalisation, and community-centred benefit for people and communities across locales, relationships, and generations.

Beyond theories of good and evil in the future of technology and research: Essential insights from the philosophy of technology

Professor Andrew Gibbons, School of Education

In the future, a sentient AI discovers time travel, slides into the 1700s and seeds an idea for government by bureaucracy in order to produce the conditions necessary for sentient AI life. An elected New Zealand Government coalition unwittingly expedites these conditions in May 2026 when it restructures the public sector, replacing ‘nearly’ 9000 public servants with Generative AI. In this presentation, the practical implications of this technological achievement are explored through a philosophical study of technology, conceptualisations of good and evil, and a series of ‘virtuous’ tasks.

From small acorns: Building a research programme for good in hospitality and tourism employment

Associate Professor David Williamson, Professor Candice Harris, and Dr Dan Zhu
School of Hospitality and Tourism, and Faculty of Business, Economics and Law

Starting in 2022, a team of researchers including Professor Candice Harris, Associate Professor David Williamson and Dr Dan Zhu have taken a small survey of 400 hospitality and tourism employees and built it into a longitudinal series of large surveys, funded by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. Four reports have been delivered to MBIE and the Minister for Hospitality and Tourism from 2022 to 2026, reporting on the employment conditions of three and a half thousand employees. This research has informed Government policy, including the Better Work Action Plan in 2023.

Communicating with migrant and refugee-background patients: Professional interpreters or AI?

Professor Ineke Crezee, School of Social Sciences and Humanities

Over the past decades, the Netherlands has received significant numbers of migrants and asylum seekers, as is the case in Aotearoa New Zealand. As a result, GP practices care for a very culturally and linguistically diverse patient population. This presentation will discuss the findings of a 2024 survey conducted among 418 General Practice Support Professionals (GPSPs), mainly advanced

nurse practitioners and practice nurses, which asked them about their communication with patients from migrant and refugee/asylum seeker backgrounds. These findings gave valuable guidance for practitioners and have informed the design of the Aotearoa NZ study, which is currently in progress.

Constructing digital transformation through policy in US-China higher education

Nargis Tuli, PhD Candidate, School of Education

Digital transformation is often championed as a universal good, but what happens when universities collaborate across borders? Emerging from my experience of teaching within Sino–US higher education partnership, this proposed study examines how digital transformation is constructed and governed through policy within contexts of collaboration. At this early stage, I am mapping agreements, institutional policies, and policy texts that shape collaboration. I am beginning to see the difficulty of pinning down what digital transformation means, and to ask what does this struggle for a clear definition reveal about how universities are governed, and whose priorities are truly shaping their decisions.