

# DOKTORITÖÖ TEEMAD SISSEASTUJATELE 2025

## MAJANDUSTEADUS/ECONOMICS

Juhendaja(d) /Supervisor(s)	Teema/Topic	Teema kirjeldus/Description of the topic	Language (ESTonian, ENGLISH)
Anneli Kaasa <a href="mailto:anneli.kaasa@ut.ee">anneli.kaasa@ut.ee</a>	Cultural dimension of flexibility vs monumentalism: sources, measurement, and impact	This topic systematically investigates a cultural dimension recently introduced in literature: flexibility vs monumentalism, another dimension next to the individualism vs collectivism that is already well-known and has received a lot of attention in literature. While individualism-collectivism explains the North-South cultural differences, flexibility-monumentalism highlights a contrast between East Asia and Latin America plus Africa. Some possible research questions might be (but are not limited to): how this dimension has been shaped? What has contributed to this difference across cultures? What are the possibilities to measure it? What is the explanatory power of this dimension? How much does it add in explaining various social and economic phenomena? The applicant is free to choose methods and data with what to approach the research questions. The only limitation is that the topic is and the application has to be strictly based on 1) the concept of societal culture, defined as a pattern of values, beliefs, attitudes, norms that differentiate one group of people (country, region) from another; 2) the state of the art regarding measuring culture with the help of dimensions, specifically flexibility-monumentalism.	ENG/EST
Anneli Kaasa <a href="mailto:anneli.kaasa@ut.ee">anneli.kaasa@ut.ee</a>	The impact of global challenges on culture	This topic investigates, whether global challenges like the latest pandemic with its social and economic limitations have influence on culture. Some possible research questions might be (but are not limited to): Has the pandemic changed values, attitudes, norms and beliefs of people? Is it different in different countries? Does it depend on the type (pattern) of culture? Are the changes permanent or will they fade out after the pandemic has faded out? The applicant is expected to offer a well thought-through set of research questions and explain the methods with what he/she is planning to answer those questions. The applicant is free to choose methods and data with what to approach the research questions. International surveys that have been performed during and after the pandemic form just one option. The only limitation is that the	ENG/EST

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		topic is and the application has to be strictly based on 1) the concept of societal culture, defined as a pattern of values, beliefs, attitudes, norms that differentiate one group of people (country, region) from another; 2) the state of the art regarding measuring culture with the help of cultural dimensions.	
Priit Vahter <a href="mailto:priit.vahter@ut.ee">priit.vahter@ut.ee</a>	Determinants of productivity gap between frontier firms and the rest	This study would investigate based on firm level and employer-employee level data the drivers of productivity gap between firms at the productivity frontier and the rest. This involves investigation of factors that create competitive advantage for the top performers (superstar firms) and/or factors that support or hinder catch-up by low or medium productivity firms with the productivity frontier. The topic needs to be narrowed down by the candidate by focusing on specific factors of the productivity gap. Proposals are especially welcome that would focus on: i) the role of differences in skills and diversity of workforce (e.g., by gender, cultural background, age) in explaining the productivity gap; ii) factors that hinder knowledge spillovers to low productivity firms; iii) how complementarities in innovation process of firms (e.g. between technological innovation and other factors of productivity) affect the productivity gap. Also, focus on either the role of adoption of technologies, such as AI and automation, or eco-innovation by firms in productivity dynamics is very welcome.	ENG
Diana Eerma <a href="mailto:diana.eerma@ut.ee">diana.eerma@ut.ee</a> Mariia Chebotareva <a href="mailto:mariia.chebotareva@ut.ee">mariia.chebotareva@ut.ee</a>	Relationship between Social Accounting and Corporate Financial Performance in the Banking Sector	The aim of the topic is to reveal the relationship between social accounting (SA) coverage and financial performance in the banking industry (research to be conducted on banks in Northern Europe) and disclose new drivers for banks to adopt the latest SA practices. Conventional measures applied in corporate companies fail to capture all of the SA dimensions and indicators required in new generations of guidelines and directives. Considering different and somewhat diverse views on SA, a comprehensive review is needed to frame the concept for banks. SA seems to be defined within the scope of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the banking industry. There exists the gap to be filled with more accurate empirical analysis based on relevant measures and measurement practices specific to each industry.	ENG

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Diana Eerma <a href="mailto:diana.eerma@ut.ee">diana.eerma@ut.ee</a> Mariia Chebotareva <a href="mailto:mariia.chebotareva@ut.ee">mariia.chebotareva@ut.ee</a>	Green energy transition: the role of energy efficiency and energy poverty in the development of sustainable technologies	This study delves into the essential relationship between energy efficiency and the creation of sustainable transition systems that prioritize environmental friendliness. A candidate may examine various strategies for improving energy efficiency, which includes technological advancements, policy frameworks, and collaborative efforts among stakeholders. It is evident that a holistic approach is needed, one that considers not only technological innovations but also social, economic, and environmental factors. The topic includes the following sub-studies: 1. Policy Frameworks for Optimizing the Transition from Conventional to Green Energy: Lessons from International Best Practices; 2. Integrating Smart Technologies for Enhanced Energy Efficiency in Multi-Apartment Buildings; 3. Enhancing Energy Efficiency and Alleviate Energy Poverty through Multi-Apartment Building Renovations	ENG
Jaan Masso <a href="mailto:jaan.mass@ut.ee">jaan.mass@ut.ee</a>	Effects of reduced working time, working hours and part-time work on productivity, innovation and firm-performance	There have been discussions in the literature and policy documents about reducing the working time from the standard 40-hour 5-day workweek, e.g. to 4-day workweek. While that may have positive consequences at the employee level, like improved mental and physical health and improved work-life balance (e.g. better ability for care), the current topic is particularly concerned about the effects of such changes at the level of the affected companies in terms of productivity and innovation performance, i.e. whether it is possible to achieve the same output with a smaller number of working hours and same monthly salary so that companies' financial performance is not negatively affected. The applicants may look for ideas towards the literature in labour economics (cf. part-time and full-time wage gap) and personnel management, industrial organization, studies on the determinants of firm productivity, and innovation economics. From the methodological side, one may look towards the countries where working time reforms have been implemented but also consider generally the variation of the working hours and part-time work across the companies. One may consider for the analysis the use of matched employer-employee datasets, i.e. the information on employees and companies over time (mostly from the registry data), either from a single country (cf. Estonia) or cross-country datasets if feasible. Yet, in all cases, one should consider that there should be some information available on working hours and/or hours.	ENG

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Kadri Ukrainski <a href="mailto:kadri.ukrainski@ut.ee">kadri.ukrainski@ut.ee</a>	Business Readiness of Deep Tech Startups: Dimensions, Evaluation and Policy Implications	This study aims to examine business readiness of deep tech startups across different dimensions incorporating technology, market, team and talent, business model, funding etc aspects. There is a growing need to speed up, but also reduce the costs of the science commercialization process, therefore the number of relevant dimensions, their measurement, mutual interrelations, but also feedback loops among these dimensions need to be examined in greater detail. Empirical analysis is based on the dataset derived from Creative Destruction Lab (CDL) accelerator to explore the question. On the basis of these results, practical recommendations are provided for startup program managers, founders, and policymakers, including emphasizing targeted support for business models, team development and funding access.	ENG/EST
Lenno Uusküla <a href="mailto:lenno.uuskula@ut.ee">lenno.uuskula@ut.ee</a>	Applied macroeconomics	This theme allows the student to develop his/her own topic in the field of applied macroeconomics, including both theoretical and empirical work. The society is facing several challengers, starting from green transition, increasing defense spending, changing financial sector to aging - they all require solutions that work for the economy and planet as a whole, and in general equilibrium framework, not just from the viewpoint of individuals. The profession is still looking for ways to understand the effects of news, firm turnover, changing financial sector, international trade linkages among others to the way countries grow and economic cycles evolve around the trend. These are just a few examples of potential directions the student may take the topic.	ENG/EST
Tiiu Paas <a href="mailto:tiiu.paas@ut.ee">tiiu.paas@ut.ee</a>	Adjustment of people with labour markets' developments in the conditions of increased uncertainty	Recent changes in labour markets are caused by rapidly increased uncertainty (e.g. COVID pandemic, war, several crises), technological development and digitalisation processes. These processes are pushing people to adjust with labour market developments through using new working ways (NWW; e.g. remote work, hybrid work, co-working spaces). The focus of the thesis can be on analysing social and economic consequences of increased uncertainty in labour markets (changes in employment, income, poverty, inequality, working ways), and possible effects of implemented policy measures in different countries aiming to generalise lessons and elaborate supportive measures for people and enterprises.	ENG/EST

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Tiiu Paas <a href="mailto:tiiu.paas@ut.ee">tiiu.paas@ut.ee</a>	Growing uncertainty and people's economic and social resilience	<p>The proposed research aims to provide new knowledge and lessons on how people can adapt to the uncertainties arising from the unpredictability of political, economic and social developments. Research questions may focus on changes in people's wellbeing, growing inequalities as well as adapting to new forms of working offered by labour markets (e.g. remote work, telework, co-working, gig-work). What is the role of different components of human capital in supporting people's resilience to new challenges? What government action is needed to support economic and social resilience? These are just some of the possible research questions. In addition to a quantitative analysis, the use of qualitative research approaches is also recommended by the conducting the study.</p>	ENG
Maaja Vadi <a href="mailto:maaja.vadi@ut.ee">maaja.vadi@ut.ee</a>  Jaanika Meriküll <a href="mailto:jaanika.merikull@ut.ee">jaanika.merikull@ut.ee</a>	Gender Quotas in Corporate Leadership	<p>Many EU countries have introduced gender quotas to corporate boards and management, following the Norwegian example which introduced it first in 2006. There is evidence that this legislative change provides women access to highly paid jobs, but has limited positive spillover effects on other women (Bertrand et al., 2019; Maida &amp; Weber, 2022). There are usually no effects on firm performance (Comi et al., 2020, Eckbo et al., 2021), while affected firms tend to reduce job destruction and increase wage costs (Matsa &amp; Miller, 2013). The new EU directive sets that all the EU countries should introduce gender quotas to boards and management of large publicly traded corporations by mid-2026. Estonia has been ranked among the worst countries in the EU by the share of women in corporate leadership, e.g. 13% of board members of affected companies are women in Estonia, far behind the target of 40% (EIGE 2024). This thesis exploits the scenery of this institutional change in the context of Estonia and studies the spillover effect of gender quotas on other women in affected firms and on the firm performance of affected firms. Given that the reform is going to be strongly binding for the affected firms and more affected firms have been shown to experience stronger effects on employment and wage costs (Matsa &amp; Miller, 2013), we can expect the reform to have substantial effects in Estonia.</p>	ENG/EST

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Eve Parts <a href="mailto:eve.parts@ut.ee">eve.parts@ut.ee</a>	Economic effects of population ageing	<p>Ageing is one of the greatest social and economic challenges of the 21st Century. It is important to understand how the ageing process will affect nations, economies and individuals. Most developed economies face increasing dependency ratio which translates into the tax and contribution burden of social expenditures related to ageing, such as pensions, health and long-term care. However, demography is not everything – labor force participation is an important mediating factor between demographics and the social expenditure burden. One of the mitigating factors for the aging problem could be to keep older people longer in the labor market. Retirement ages and exit routes into retirement vary a great deal across countries. These differences are strongly related to the design of the welfare systems. Therefore, it is important to figure out which policies and changes (i) in the pension and health systems and (ii) in the mindset of employers and elderly employees would help to keep older people in the labor market longer.</p> <p>Alternative research questions for PhD thesis could include (but are not limited to) following: (a) Factors influencing elderly labor supply; (b) Possibilities and practices to influence elderly labor supply through pension system; (c) Relationship between elderly labor supply and their living standard. Empirical analysis could be based on panel data or longitudinal data from SHARE – The Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe. This is a multidisciplinary and cross-national panel database of micro data on health, socio-economic status, and social and family networks of about 140,000 individuals aged 50 or older (around 380,000 interviews). SHARE started in 2004 and covers 27 European countries and Israel. See more about SHARE here: <a href="http://www.share-project.org/home0.html">http://www.share-project.org/home0.html</a> . Doctoral candidate choosing this topic can benefit from SHARE international research community – there are more than 10.000 SHARE users since 2019.</p>	EST/ENG

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Eve Parts <a href="mailto:eve.parts@ut.ee">eve.parts@ut.ee</a>	Are we ready for degrowth society - and how to reach there?	Degrowth is a multidisciplinary movement arguing that endless growth on a planet with limited resources is unsustainable and will inevitably lead to the collapse of the entire capitalist system. Abandoning the growth mentality and switching to a more sustainable development path requires several ideological and structural alterations. Since the natural movement in this direction tends to be too slow, political interventions are needed. For policies to work (and for them to be talked about at all), people need to be ready for the corresponding changes. This readiness is related to people's personal values, and general cultural values at national levels. Degrowth values include, among others, more emphasis on leisure, family life, and voluntary work, readiness to live a simpler life and work less for money, support for the environment over economic growth, etc. To study empirically people's readiness for degrowth, one can use quantitative approach based on the data of World/European Values Survey. This can be combined with qualitative methods (interviews, survey), depending on applicant's preferences and skills. Alternative research questions might be, e.g, who are the winners and who are the losers in degrowth process? Whether and how can governments or international organizations nudge the people's behavior and values into desired direction? How can we measure the progress in degrowth?	EST/ENG
Helen Poltimäe <a href="mailto:helen.poltimae@ut.ee">helen.poltimae@ut.ee</a>  Annela Anger-Kraavi <a href="mailto:annela.anger-kraavi@ut.ee">annela.anger-kraavi@ut.ee</a>	On the meaning and impacts of green transition on Estonian enterprises	The aim of the research is to clarify what changes the Green Deal bring for Estonian enterprises, how it affects their sustainability in the short and long term, and how to ensure the competitiveness of Estonian companies in a changing environment. The study will help to understand which companies in which sectors will be winners and which will be losers, and what should be done to make the process as bearable as possible for the losers and, if possible, a win-win situation. The study will use both qualitative and quantitative research methods.	ENG/EST