**Speaker: Prof. Tao CHEN**, School of Public Administration, Huazhong University of Science and Technolgy, Wuhan, China

Title: "AI-Driven Digital Transformation in Chinese Government Services: a Case Study of DeepSeek, Opportunities, Challenges, and Enablers"

This presentation first portrays DeepSeek, China's pioneering open-source AI model's transformative impact on public sector innovation, such as improving bureaucratic efficiency, citizen engagement, and data-driven governance. We then analyze several critical challenges associated with AI integration in the Chinese government, including data privacy concerns, algorithmic accountability in decision-making, workforce adaptation to AI-augmented workflows, and interoperability across legacy systems. Concluding with strategic recommendations, the presentation proposes a balanced roadmap for ethical AI adoption, emphasizing human-AI collaboration mechanisms, implementing dynamic regulatory sandboxes, and adhering to citizen-centric design principles.

**Speaker: Nanyan CAO,** Ph.D. Candidate, School of Public Administration, Huazhong University of Science and Technolgy, Wuhan, China

Title: "The impact of intelligent chatbot application on total factor productivity of enterprises: an empirical investigation based on the staggered differences-in-differences"

Based on data from A-share listed companies in China from 2016 to 2020, this study explores the impact of government portal websites in China adopting an intelligent chatbot on enterprise total factor productivity (TFP) by using the staggered differences-in-differences (DID) method. At the same time, taking the administrative burden of enterprises as an intermediary variable, that is, using intelligent chatbot will reduce the learning costs, compliance costs, and psychological costs of enterprises, thereby improving the total factor productivity of enterprises. In heterogeneity analysis, we conduct research based on dimensions such as location and the development scale of enterprises. The research results can reveal that artificial intelligence technology can improve the total factor productivity of enterprises by reducing their administrative burden, and also provide an important basis for the government to optimize the deployment of intelligent governance tools.

**Speaker:Angie Nga Le**, Ph.D., Postdoctoral Associate, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, USA

**Boyuan Zhao**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, University of Macau, Macau SAR, China

Shaoming Cheng, Ph.D., Professor, Florida International University, Miami, FL, USA

Sukumar Ganapati, Ph.D., Professor, Florida International University, Miami, FL, USA

**Title:** «Can Cash Incentives Reduce Syringe Litter? Evidence from Boston’s E-government Platform»

Improperly discarded needles in public places have been a widespread concern in many large cities amid the ongoing opioid crisis (Calder, 2023; Nordquist, 2019). Syringe litter poses the public health hazard of community-acquired needlestick injuries, which can cause considerable public safety issue for neighborhood residents. Our study examines the effectiveness of a cash buyback program aiming at reducing syringe littering in the neighborhood. In December 2020, the City of Boston launched the Community Syringe Redemption Program (CSRP), which offers a nominal cash “buyback” incentive for used syringes at designated centers. People can get cash stipend in exchange of used syringes in these centers. This study examines the impact of Boston’s CSRP on reducing syringe litter.

Empirically, we draw on administrative data from Boston 311. The 311 is an e-government platform for many U.S. local governments to field non-emergency services. Boston is one among the nearly 300 cities that established 311 centers as one-stop shops for fulfilling public non-emergency requests, which can be made over the phone, text, mobile app, website, or social media. A service provided by Boston 311 is to identify syringe disposal and to request syringe pickup around city neighborhoods. Citizens report to 311 system when they discover syringes, and professional public health personnel is dispatched to collect disposed syringes safely. This service aims at reducing potential risk to the community caused by syringe littering. It also provides useful data on the spatiotemporal patterns of unsafe syringe littering.

Methodologically, the study relies on a distance band based, near-far identification strategy and uses the difference-in-differences (DID) approach, before and after the implementation of the cash buyback center, to examine its impact on the 311 requests related to syringe litter. Multiple distance bands are used, where geographic areas within a given distance band (near to the center) are regarded as the treatment region, and geographic areas outside the distance band (far from the center) are assumed to be the control region. This near-far research design is consistent with the theory and research of distance-decayed spatial accessibility, which highlights that reach and use of a particular location or service declines as distance increases (García-Palomares, Gutiérrez, and Cardozo, 2013; Wang, Wang, and Liu, 2021).

Our research findings reveal that the cash buyback center reduced the number of 311 requests for needle pickup and the actual number of needles picked up within a short distance of the center. Specifically, cash buyback is most effective in reducing the 311 requests for needle pickup within a 0.5-mile radius of the cash buyback center, which is equivalent to a 10-minute walk. The impact of the cash buyback center diminishes rapidly and considerably over distance. The effects in the 0.5-1-mile or the 1-1.5-mile donut rings around the center are marginal. The robustness and placebo tests reinforce the findings from DID analysis.

The research enriches the theoretical discourse on policy evaluation within the frameworks of cash incentives in behavioral decisions and the spatially nuanced impacts of public policy, specifically inverse distance effects. Our research has also contributed methodologically by being among the first to use e-government platform data in policy evaluation (Kontokosta & Hong, 2021; White & Trump, 2018). E-government platform records capture citizen-reported issues, reflecting residents’ actual concerns and service needs. Moreover, with time and geographical information, this administrative data can be readily linked to sociodemographic information, enabling researchers to uncover spatial and temporal patterns in public behavior and service.

**Speaker:** **Mr Krish Chetty**, Human Sciences Research Council

**Title:** «Harnessing AI for Digital Governance: Strengthening Transparency and Public Trust in the Era of Smart Administration»

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming digital governance by enabling enhanced transparency, fraud detection, and accountability across public administration systems worldwide. This paper examines AI’s multifaceted role in advancing good governance on a global scale, with a particular focus on its application in South Africa’s ongoing fight against corruption. By integrating AI-driven audit tools, predictive analytics, and digital monitoring platforms, governments can detect procurement fraud, financial mismanagement, and cyber-enabled corruption more efficiently than traditional methods.

Drawing on a diverse range of global case studies, the research highlights how AI adoption not only streamlines administrative processes but also reinforces public trust and institutional resilience. The paper details how AI systems, when combined with big data and blockchain technologies, offer robust solutions for real-time monitoring and early-warning systems that identify corrupt practices before they escalate. It also explores how such technologies facilitate smarter resource allocation and enable proactive policy responses, thereby mitigating risks inherent in complex public financial management.

In addition to showcasing successful implementations, the study critically examines the ethical and operational challenges associated with integrating AI into public governance. It discusses issues such as data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the digital divide that may arise as AI systems become more prevalent. The paper emphasizes the need for comprehensive regulatory frameworks and continuous capacity-building initiatives to enhance AI literacy among public officials and stakeholders. These measures are essential for ensuring that the adoption of AI technologies does not compromise citizens’ rights or exacerbate existing inequalities.

Ultimately, the findings underscore AI’s potential to redefine administrative efficiency, support transparent decision-making, and catalyse a cultural shift towards more accountable governance. By providing a roadmap for future interdisciplinary research, the paper advocates for the strategic integration of AI in public administration, paving the way for more resilient, adaptive, and ethically sound governance frameworks in the digital era.

**Speaker:** **Ирина Дворецкая**, PhD, Институт образования, НИУ ВШЭ

**Title:** «Цифровая трансформация образования как общественный процесс: инфраструктура, доступ и прозрачность источников данных в образовательной сфере» / «Digital Transformation as a Public Process: Infrastructure, Access, and Transparency of Access to Data in Education»

В докладе цифровая трансформация образовательной сферы рассматривается не только как управленческая и технологическая модернизация, но и как общественный процесс, отражающий социальное неравенство, аспекты цифрового гражданства и институциональные модели открытости.

Одновременно с этим, данные в образовании остаются недооцененным ресурсом в силу ряда причин, среди которых: разрозненность и недоступность источников данных, принципиальная агрегированность ряда показателей, отсутствие процессных показателей (Дворецкая, Уваров, 2025). Так нарастает одна из ключевых проблем управления цифровой трансформацией: отсутствие достоверной и регулярной информации о том, как цифровая трансформация реализуется "на местах": в школах, колледжах, регионах (Begicevic Redjep et.al., 2021).

Мониторинговые обследования, которые могли бы дать такую информацию, остаются дорогостоящими и трудоемкими инструментами. Их сложно масштабировать, а результаты часто запаздывают и плохо интегрируются в текущие процессы принятия решений.

Альтернативным решением может стать анализ и интерпретация открытых данных – таких как показатели интернет-доступа, закупок оборудования, активности образовательных организаций в цифровых средах. В докладе обсуждаются возможности для оценки прогресса, устойчивости и прозрачности преобразований в ходе цифровой трансформации (Williamson, 2017). Доклад также поднимает вопрос о роли исследователей, родителей и местных сообществ в интерпретации и использовании этих данных (Vargas et al., 2023).

**Speaker: Prof. Manuel Bonduki** PhD, Senior Policy Specialist at Ministry of Education and lecturer at Insper, Sao-Paulo, Brazil

**Title:** "Digital Public Infrastructures as Mechanisms of Policy Coordination in Federations"

Digital Public Infrastructures as Mechanisms of Policy Coordination in Federations" explores how federal governments can coordinate with subnational entities to implement public policies—specifically, digital transformation initiatives. Part of a broader research agenda on federalism and policy implementation, the study analyzes how Brazil’s federal government engaged four state governments to promote digital transformation, using a comparative case study approach.

Drawing on the literature on coordination instruments and mechanisms—such as hierarchy, market, and network—the research identifies a new emerging logic: platform coordination. This mechanism, part of what we term soft coordination, contrasts with coercive, hierarchical approaches. Findings suggest that, despite skepticism in the literature, soft coordination can be effective—but its success is shaped by political alignment and state-level capacities.

**Speaker: Aleksandra A. Sidorova**, PhD, Associate Professor, School of Public Administration, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation.

**Title:** «Organizational Ambidexterity: An Enabler of Efficient Digital Transformation in Public Administration»

The present time is characterized by high uncertainty in all spheres of society. There are different approaches to the description of modern conditions: a number of scientists tend to use the acronym VUCA, first used in 1985, characterizing the modern world by Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity. Other researchers write about the BANI world – Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear and Incomprehensible. In recent years, the acronym SHIVA (Split, Horrible, Inconceivable, Vicious, Arising) has become popular in scientific and journalistic circles.

In modern conditions, turbulence has ceased to be a dysfunction, the task of overcoming which was previously set as urgent, but has become a condition exerting constant influence on the functioning and development of public administration institutions, an inevitable fact. In the economic sphere, the root causes of increasing instability are the coincident processes of changing the technological way of life and world economic structures (according to the typology of academician S.Glazyev). On the one hand, such periods are fraught with galloping development of crisis phenomena, the destruction of established trade and economic ties and a radical restructuring of the economic system. On the other hand, at such times, additional opportunities appear for making a breakthrough in economic development, the most important condition for which is the development of the basic technologies of the new technological way of life.

In this regard, one of the priority tasks of public administration is to create and ensure conditions for such a breakthrough in economic development. And an important role in this process is played by the robust governance – a governance that allows maintaining the functions and goals of state policy for a long time, despite possible unforeseen changes in circumstances. In other words, robust governance has a certain margin of stability, allowing it to remain stable in the long term. Organizational ambidexterity can serve as one of the ways to develop robust governance and strengthen its ability to adaptive innovations.

Organizational ambidexterity is a relatively new approach to analyzing and managing organizational innovation activities. Organizational ambidexterity represents the ability of an organization to simultaneously carry out exploration (development of radical innovations) and exploitation (development of incremental innovations). The main difference between these types of activities lies in the fact that exploration involves creating new knowledge, while exploitation involves using existing knowledge in innovation activities. Both types of activities are key elements in managing environmental uncertainty, as they allow the organization to adjust its strategy and adapt to external changes.

The concept of organizational ambidexterity was initially created and applied exclusively for commercial organizations. However, in recent years, it has also been applied to other areas, particularly education and public administration.

It appears that organizational ambidexterity has great potential for increasing the efficiency of developing and implementing innovations in public sector and can contribute to increasing the stability of public agencies in a rapidly changing external environment. Let’s consider this in more detail using the example of digital transformation of public administration.

Digital transformation is one of Russia’s national development goals. The main features of digital transformation in public administration are: partnership between the state and external actors in the innovation creation process, proactivity, convergence and integration of various digital technologies to achieve maximum results, close integration of state digital solutions. The main obstacles to public administration digitalization are task and tool duplication among various departments, development of government information systems using the cascade method, and the specifics of government bodies themselves.

One of the modern mechanisms of public-private partnership, allowing to enhance network effects of interaction between suppliers and consumers of public services, is the state digital platform. The state digital platform can also be considered as one of the mechanisms for implementing organizational ambidexterity in public administration – as it will contribute to the development of two types of innovations – incremental (exploitation) and radical (exploration). An example is the development of the “GosTech” platform, designed to promote the implementation of a client-centric approach in creating government information systems, moving away from the isolated nature of government agencies’ information systems, creating effective mechanisms for reusing digital products, unifying processes of designing, creating, developing, and operating government information systems.

State digital platforms, therefore, can be seen as a mechanism for developing organizational ambidexterity. On the one hand, they will contribute to the development of incremental innovations, satisfying basic requirements common to all public agencies, preventing duplication of efforts. On the other hand, they support radical innovations through new cloud solutions that public agencies can adapt to their specific needs.

The application of organizational ambidexterity thus increases the efficiency of digital transformation, facilitating the processes of creating and implementing innovations, which in turn contributes to strengthening the margin of safety and ensuring the stability of public administration in the long term under conditions of turbulence.

**Speaker: Ni Yifeng**, Ph.D. Student, Department of Public and International Affairs, City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China

**Title:** «Bridging the theory-practice divide in public administration: A virtuous pragmatic approach of Wang Yangming and William James»

Public administration (PA) is a practical discipline that faces persistent challenges in establishing effective connections between researchers and practitioners. This divide between theory and practice hinders practitioners’ use of research findings and the integration of practical experiences into scholarly work. Bridging this divide holds practical significance and leads to a deeper understanding of PA’s disciplinary identity as more than just a form of science. This paper brings together the philosophies of Western thinker William James and ancient Eastern philosopher Wang Yangming, promoting a virtuous pragmatic approach to bridge the theory–practice divide in PA. This approach offers a teleological and embodied perspective on knowledge, providing a nuanced framework for understanding the theory–practice divide. By drawing on Wang’s coherent virtue–ethical framework and James’ embodiment and pragmatic philosophy, this paper argues that unifying theory and practice requires establishing a common purpose that is perceptually familiar to both parties. Moreover, shaping and acting on this purpose inherently involves cultivating the virtues of Cheng (Sincerity, 诚) and Ren (Benevolence, 仁). Grounded in the virtuous pragmatic approach, we introduce a three–stage research praxis framework to guide the research process and encourage practitioner engagement in existing research endeavors. This study serves as a valuable contribution to bridging the theory–practice divide in PA and advancing pragmatic PA studies in both Eastern and Western cultural contexts.

**Speaker: Jixiang LI**, University of Macau,

Bo Wen, University of Macau

**Title:** «How Early HITECH Investments in Electronic Health Records Enhance Long-term Public Health Governance Resilience: Evidence from U.S. States»

As digital transformation becomes a central component of governance, understanding its long-term effects on institutional resilience is increasingly important. This study investigates whether early federal investments in health information technology, specifically those under the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act, enhanced the long-term governance resilience of U.S. public health systems.

Leveraging a difference-in-differences (DID) research design, supplemented by mediation analyses and event-study methodologies, the research examines the effect of early-stage programs such as the Beacon Community Program and Regional Extension Centers (RECs) on a range of state-level public health indicators from 2008 to 2022, including life expectancy, mortality rates, chronic disease outcomes, and healthcare accessibility.

Results indicate that states receiving higher per-capita HITECH funding achieved significantly stronger public health performance over the long term, particularly under the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mechanism analyses reveal that these outcomes were partly mediated by increased adoption of electronic health records (EHRs) and improved service efficiency, underscoring the role of digital infrastructure in buffering governance systems against shocks.

Further heterogeneity analyses demonstrate that the policy’s effectiveness varied across states, shaped by differences in political alignment, socioeconomic capacity, and baseline vulnerability. These findings highlight the complexity of digital governance in diverse institutional environments.

This research contributes to public administration and digital governance scholarship by proposing a multidimensional resilience framework—comprising maintenance, recovery, and adaptability—and offering empirical insights into how digital investments can foster long-term resilience in public sector institutions.

**Speaker:** **Agnessa Bich**, Research Assistant of International Laboratory for Digital Transformation in Public Administration

**Title:** «Informing the public and organizing feedback by district administrations of Saint Petersburg via social media: analysis of mechanisms and results**»**

The study focuses on examining public sentiment in social media, using Saint Petersburg as a case study, with an emphasis on social networks as a tool for interaction between authorities and the population. The report assesses the role of public opinion in modern society and explores sentiment analysis methods to identify the emotional tone of posts and comments in district-level communities on the VKontakte social network. It reviews the theoretical foundations of public sentiment analysis, discusses the impact of social networks on power structures, and examines public opinion’s function as a tool for shaping and altering political narratives.

The report presents findings from an empirical study analyzing public pages of Saint Petersburg districts on VKontakte. The research identifies key themes, patterns, and trends in discussions, constructs an index-based assessment of public sentiment, and maps the emotional tone of posts and comments. This comprehensive approach highlights how social media both reflects and influences civic engagement and governance dynamics in urban contexts.

The research methodology involved collecting data from 36 public communities representing districts of St. Petersburg on the social network VKontakte in 2024, using the Popsters service. Sentiment analysis of the texts was conducted using the Dostoevsky library in Python, enabling classification of content by emotional tone (positive, negative, neutral). Building on user engagement metrics (likes, reposts, views) and post sentiment, and informed by the work of Shchekotin, Myagkov, Goyko, Kashpur, and Kovarzha, a custom index assessment was developed to reflect the level of public sentiment. Results were visualized through word clouds and an interactive emotional tone map (Yandex Maps).

The study identified three groups of St. Petersburg districts based on predominant sentiment. Districts with positive sentiment included Central, Admiralteysky, Petrogradsky, Moskovsky, Petrodvortsovy, and Frunzensky. Neutral sentiment characterized Krasnoselsky, Vyborgsky, Nevsky, Krasnogvardeysky, Primorsky, and Pushkinsky districts. The most negative sentiment was observed in Kurortny, Kronstadtsky, Kalininsky, Vasileostrovsky, Kolpinsky, and Kirovsky districts. Analysis revealed that posts frequently addressed topics like culture, education, and social initiatives, while comments focused on safety, law enforcement, and infrastructure issues.

The practical significance of the study lies in its potential application by district administrations to identify problem areas, adapt content strategies, and enhance citizen feedback. A promising future direction is the implementation of regular public sentiment monitoring and specialized social media teams. Such measures would not only enable prompt responses to public concerns but also strengthen trust between authorities and society.