

## **The Social Dynamics of Economic Inequalities: A Longitudinal Study on the Effects of Relative Wages on Subjective Well-Being Using Linked Survey and Register Data**

4:00 p.m. – 5:00p.m. | September 24, 2024 (Tuesday)

Rm 813, 8/F, The Jockey Club Tower | Centennial Campus | The University of Hong Kong



### **Professor Dr. Tobias Wolbring**

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#### **Abstract**

The implications of wage inequalities within firms have garnered increasing attention in recent research, particularly concerning their impact on employees' subjective well-being. The existing literature, however, presents mixed findings, which may be attributed to the interplay of two opposing forces: social status comparison and the tunnel effect. In this paper, we aim to address this issue by examining the mechanisms underlying these forces. To accomplish this, we leverage a combination of rich panel data and comprehensive register data on wage distributions within firms. Our primary hypotheses posit that higher average establishment wages contribute to improved subjective well-being (tunnel effect), whereas decreases in individual ranks lead to reduced well-being (social status comparison). Using fixed effects regressions, we explore these effects and their implications on both job and life satisfaction. Our results highlight the complex dynamics surrounding wage distributions, indicating that they serve as markers of current social status and future prospects within the specific organizational context. These findings shed light on the intricate relationship between wage distributions and subjective well-being, providing valuable insights for understanding the implications of wage disparities within firms and beyond.

#### **About the Speaker**

Tobias Wolbring holds the Chair of Empirical Economic Sociology at FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg, where he leads research at the crossroads of sociology, economics, and psychology. Prior to this role, he was an assistant professor of sociology, with a specialization in longitudinal data analysis at the University of Mannheim, a postdoc at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) Zurich and a research assistant at the University of Munich, where he earned his PhD in 2013. Using both experimental and longitudinal methods, Wolbring's recent work delves into social inequalities, labor markets, and subjective well-being, earning him recognition in top-tier journals like *Social Forces*, the *European Sociological Review*, and *Sociological Methods & Research*. His accolades include the Best Dissertation Award from the German Sociological Association and the Robert K. Merton Prize from the International Network of Analytical Sociology.

#### **Zoom Meeting (For participants who couldn't attend the Seminar in person)**

<https://hku.zoom.us/j/6985555998?pwd=V05yTGJWNTIzazd2OFZ0Q3FReHVkdz09>

Meeting ID: 698 555 5998 | Password: Psyc

~All are Welcome~

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