

# The Resilience of the Leisure and Care Economy: Human-Centred Niches in an AI-Driven Labour Market

## TOWARDS HUMAN-AI SYNERGY IN CARE AND LEISURE

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# About the Speaker

- ▶ Psychologist & PhD Candidate in Applied AI (Alma Mater Europaea)
- ▶ 20+ years in EU work, mainly social policy and applied psychology
- ▶ University lecturing on the European Union at Johannes Kepler University Linz
- ▶ Research focus: human–AI synergy, motivation (SDT), labour & skills
- ▶ Author of the Human-Centric Resilience Model (EI + dexterity + adaptability)

# Current Research & Interests

- ▶ Building on 20 years of EU social policy and psychology practice
- ▶ Now focused on human–AI complementarity in the labour market
- ▶ Doctoral research: Human-Centric Resilience Model (EI + dexterity + adaptability)
- ▶ Exploring how embodied and motivational skills create synergies with AI
- ▶ Open to collaboration across AI, psychology, and policy

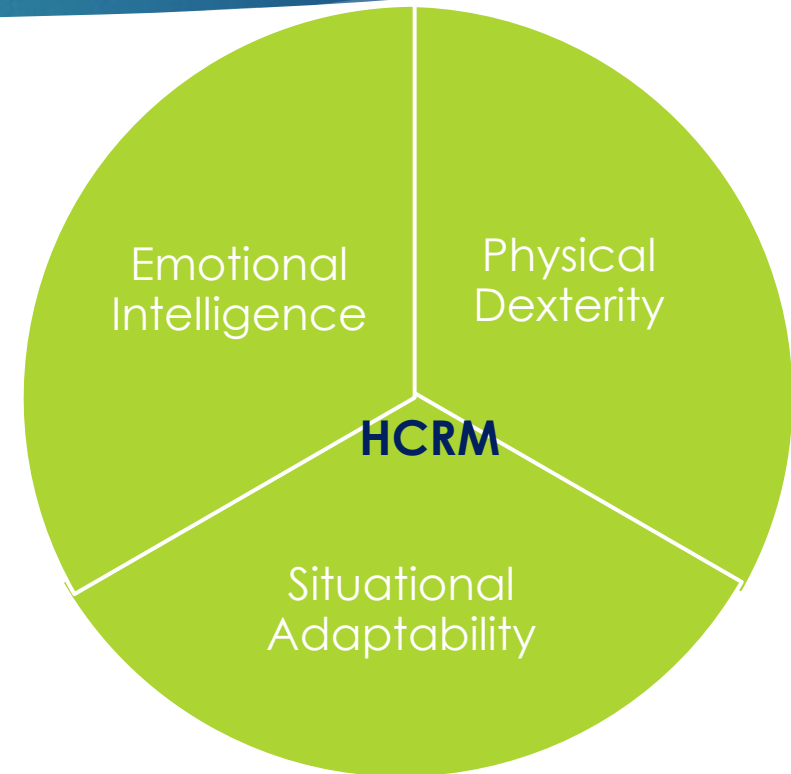
# Why This Matters Now

- ▶ By 2030, up to 30% of tasks could be automated
- ▶ Public debate often frames automation as a threat mainly to *low-skill/routine* work, while implying *tertiary education makes white-collar roles safe*; both assumptions are simplifications of complex realities (e.g., Amodei, CEO of Anthropic, warns that up to 50% of entry-level white-collar jobs could disappear within the next five years (AI Magazine 2025))
- ▶ Vocational roles (care, leisure, crafts), often overlooked, already show resilience: wellness instructors, animal care specialists, personal service providers, and skilled tradespeople are classified as “Bright Outlook” by O\*NET, with projected high demand and rapid growth.
- ▶ Hypothesis: **these roles may gain value through synergy with AI**

**Not a panacea for all labour-market disruptions — but a spotlight on an overlooked, resilient segment**

# Human-Centric Resilience Model (HCRM)

- ▶ **Emotional intelligence** → trust, empathy, authentic presence
- ▶ **Dexterity** → embodied mastery, precision, touch
- ▶ **Adaptability** → improvisation in unpredictable contexts
- ▶ **Resilience comes from their combination, not one skill alone**



**Even if these roles become technically automatable, they may still thrive because people value human connection**

# Theoretical Foundations

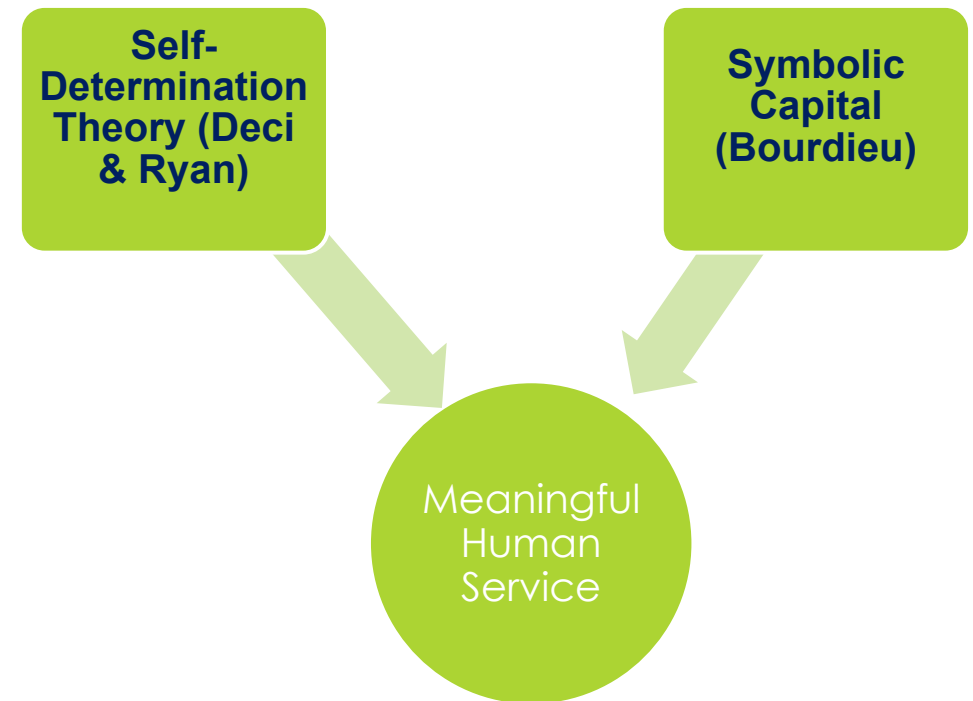
- ▶ **Self-Determination Theory** (Deci & Ryan):

Autonomy, competence, relatedness → supported when  
AI takes over routine tasks

- ▶ **Symbolic Capital** (Bourdieu):

Authentic human contact gains value as it becomes  
rarer in an AI-driven world

- ▶ **AI does not replace — it can enable more  
meaningful human service**



# Operationalisation & Data Sources

- ▶ O\*NET (US): detailed occupational attributes, including outlooks for care, leisure, and craft/personal service roles
- ▶ ESCO (EU): multilingual classification of skills, competences, and occupations
- ▶ OVATE (EU): labour market trends and skills demand from job vacancy data
- ▶ Gap: embodied skills under-specified or bundled in broad job families (dexterity, improvisation, working in unpredictable settings)
- ▶ Next step: enrich data with national vocational standards and embodied skill frameworks
- ▶ Doctoral path: statistical validation of the Human-Centric Resilience Model across sectors

**Existing frameworks capture many skills well, but embodied and situational competences deserve clearer recognition — they are central to resilience in human–AI synergy**

# What AI Handles vs. What Humans Elevate

## ► AI handles:

- Marketing & client acquisition (ads, reviews, ...)
- Booking & scheduling (appointments, reminders, ...)
- Pricing & demand insights (offers, bundles, ...)
- Documentation & admin (notes, invoices, ...)

## ► Humans elevate:

- Trust & empathy
- Hands-on craft & taste
- Improvisation in unpredictable settings
- Motivation, reassurance & dignity

- Even as multimodal LLMs advance in empathy simulation (e.g. Claude 3.5, 2025), nuanced social understanding in lived, unstructured contexts remains a challenge.

*AI supports and automates — humans connect and elevate*

# Adaptability Connects Humans and AI

- ▶ **Humans adapt:**

- ▶ Social attunement & empathy
- ▶ Improvisation in messy, real-world settings

- ▶ **AI adapts:**

- ▶ Continuous learning from data
- ▶ Personalisation & explainability

Synergy: Strongest outcomes when human flexibility and AI learning work together

**Resilience comes from shared adaptation: humans adjust to context, AI adjusts to data**

# Shaping Demand and Trust

- ▶ Rising demand for authentic interpersonal experience
- ▶ As automation spreads, human contact often becomes more valued, not less
- ▶ Even when technological alternatives emerge, many people still prefer the human option, for trust, empathy, and connection
- ▶ In leisure and care, robotic or app-based alternatives are still limited, though parallels can be seen in adjacent sectors, for example, psychology apps versus human psychologists
- ▶ Variation across cultures and sectors: synergy may take different forms

**Human connection remains a valued choice, even when AI offers cheaper or faster alternatives**

# Supporting Human–AI Synergy

- ▶ Digital & AI skills should be a standard part of vocational training
- ▶ Flexible training cycles and qualification recognition → enable faster adaptation and retraining as careers evolve
- ▶ Public initiatives can reframe leisure & care as valid choices, not fallback options → supporting shifts in labour segmentation
- ▶ Entrepreneurship & mindset: move from “career for life” to lifelong adaptability and continuous retraining
- ▶ Labour market dynamics: while often marginal or feminised, these professions may gain recognition and value in an AI-driven society

**Flexibility, revaluation, and digital–human skills may help these roles evolve into sustainable, fulfilling careers**

# What This Work Adds

- ▶ Shifts the debate from resisting automation to **exploring synergies with AI**
- ▶ Extends resilience discussion to vocational roles (care, leisure, crafts) often dismissed as low-skill or marginal
- ▶ Introduces the **Human-Centric Resilience Model**: emotional intelligence, dexterity, adaptability → symbolic capital in an AI economy
- ▶ Connects with labour market segmentation theory, but adds a symbolic dimension beyond traditional economic dichotomies
- ▶ Highlights how authenticity, touch, and improvisation could become premium value as scarcity grows

**This model spotlights a segment of often-dismissed vocational roles as resilient and strategically valuable in an AI-driven labour market**

# Limitations and Next Steps

- ▶ Scope: the Human-Centric Resilience Model highlights specific vocational segments; it is not a universal solution for all labour-market disruptions
- ▶ Data limits: current frameworks (O\*NET, ESCO, OVATE) describe many skills broadly, with embodied competences still under-specified
- ▶ Cultural variation: the value of authenticity, touch, and improvisation may differ across cultures, levels of economic development, demographic trends and labour market structures
- ▶ Future work:
  - Enrich databases with vocational standards
  - Empirical validation of the model in care, leisure, and craft sectors
  - Explore links with labour market segmentation theory in practice

This is an early step: a conceptual model to be tested, refined, and contextualised across sectors and cultures

# Conclusion

- ▶ AI is not only about substitution — it can create synergies with human work.
- ▶ The Human-Centric Resilience Model highlights how emotional intelligence, dexterity, and adaptability may gain value.
- ▶ Vocational roles in care, leisure, and crafts, often overlooked, deserve strategic attention.
- ▶ Policy and training should emphasise flexibility, digital–human skills, and revaluation

*Even if automation advances, human services may coexist, like fast food and restaurants, chosen for authenticity, trust, and connection*



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