

RESEARCH, CAREERS, AND GREED: AN IS PERSPECTIVE ON A HUMAN FAILING AND HOW IT THREATENS THE FUTURE OF THE DISCIPLINE

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Abstract

The demand for greater societal impact and participation of science in public discourse is at odds with the current “publish or perish” culture. A major factor why such a culture could be established in the first place is the excessive desire for complaisance, recognition, and status, which at some point turns into greed. There are two forms of greed that we will explore. Personal greed refers to short-term self-maximization behaviours that researchers engage in to secure academic positions and maintain a certain status within their community. Vicarious greed is rooted in the desire to please corporations by conducting research that helps extend surveillance capitalism, over-consumerism, and other harmful practices to civil society. The objective of this article is to catalyse a discourse on strategies to mitigate the influence of greed on IS research and careers. This discourse is crucial for the IS discipline to uphold its positive influence on society.

Keywords: Academic careers, future of IS, greed, research impact.

1 Introduction

Our labour preserves us from three great evils: weariness, vice, and want (originally: “Le travail éloigne de nous trois grands maux : l’ennui, le vice et le besoin.”), Voltaire

Avarice, intemperance, selfishness, vice, overreaching ambition or want: greed manifests itself in different ways and has different names (Tickle, 2004). The quote taken from Voltaire’s *Candide* (1759) that begins this article, suggests that keeping oneself occupied is the best way to resist human failings like greed. Yet, in academia we seem to experience the opposite. The more we concentrate and dedicate ourselves to academia, the bigger the temptations to indulge in certain desires and, in doing so, we¹ start throwing certain moral principles overboard, stop critically questioning underlying assumptions, structures, and realities of our discipline, let alone doing something to counter circumstances we deem unsatisfying, unfair, or destructive even.

But let us not jump to conclusions but take a step back and circumscribe what we mean by greed. Of the many definitions that exist in the scientific literature, Balot (2001, p. 1) comes closest to our understanding, defining it as “*acquisitiveness or an excessive desire to get more...to satisfy bodily urges through the acquisition of money, material goods, and power.*” While this definition refers to greed as a primarily materialistic type of desire, we would equally extend it to non-materialistic desires, such as the excessive desire for honour, status, or privilege (Lambie and Stickl Haugen, 2019) as these seem to

¹ With “we” the author does not exclude himself as he comprehends himself as fallible human who is not exempt from the temptations mentioned in this article.

motivate most researchers more than wealth (Labaree, 2018) – especially in disciplines, like Information Systems (IS), where an industry job often promises a higher income.

Depending on who one asks, greed is perceived to be a positive or negative personal trait. That is why the scholarly debate between greed as a central motivation and behavioural guide for self-interested individuals or destructive force inhibiting morally acceptable collective behaviour is still relevant (Wang and Murnighan, 2011; Oka and Kuijt, 2014). While some argue that greed has contributed evolutionarily to the survival of humanity, it has become clear with the climate crisis that unbounded greed is a significant driver that is destroying the planet we all live on. Rather than praising the motivational effects of greed, we prefer to focus on its negative consequences here. Specifically, we investigate the ways in which greed, whether manifested consciously or unconsciously, exacerbates societal issues such as poverty, climate change, social inequality, and discrimination within the global community. In addition, we posit that the pursuit of personal recognition and fame, along with efforts to uphold the status quo, detrimentally impact the research community, especially the possibility for young researchers to make a “real impact”, as such greedy behaviour harms the positioning and image of the IS discipline in the global race for impactful research in the long run.

Considering that most IS researchers work in business school settings, where utilitarian thinking and self-interest are valued as core tenets of the *homo oeconomicus* doctrine, we assert that greed is a pervasive phenomenon and may even be perceived as unproblematic. Put differently, while many researchers may view adherence to the principles of neoclassical economic theory as a favourable or inevitable course of action (Miller, 2015), we aim to present a counterargument suggesting that these beliefs are frequently self-imposed and highly detrimental to the discipline as a whole. Hence, and in line with the tradition of critical IS research (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al., 2008; Howcroft and Trauth, 2004; Mumford and Sackman, 1975; Myers and Klein, 2011), this article seeks to undertake a profound introspection concerning the impact of “greedy behaviour” on IS research and careers.

In doing so, we tap into what Sullivan et al. (2023) refer to as “dark matters”, that is a phenomenon, process, or perspective often overlooked, whether intentionally or inadvertently, due to prevailing research norms or pragmatic considerations (Monteiro et al., 2022), or ignored because it engenders discomfort or creates conflicting visions. Indeed, our critical analysis delves into the negative implications for the long-term trajectory –or “future”– of the IS discipline. Our objective is to incite a substantive discourse, delving into proposed remedies, to address this issue at its core. The remainder of the article is structured as follows. In Section 2, we describe the concept of “vicarious greed” and how our research may help to promote the greed of others. In Section 3, we explain the concept of “personal greed” and why our desire for honour and status influences may be harmful for the long-term prospect of the discipline. Section 4 of this article delineates the prospective consequences for the IS discipline should the current state be perpetuated. Subsequently, Section 5 provides a description of potential measures, capable of altering the projected trajectory. In Section 6, we conclude with a brief summary of our primary arguments. Additionally, we issue a compelling call to action, urging the community to initiate contemplation and action in response to the presented issues in order to lead IS on the path of meaningful and impactful research.

2 Vicarious Greed, Or How Our Research Helps To Promote The Greed Of Others

It is probably not the most obvious form to think about greed, but our attitudes, preferences, and actions (or inaction) may fuel greed without being greedy ourselves. We do not want to impute sinister motives, bad intentions, or “greedy behaviour” to anyone, but we observe with concern that a lot of IS research is geared towards extending surveillance capitalism, over-consumerism, and other evils of the Information Civilization (Zuboff, 2015) by, to mention just a few examples, helping corporations to analyse people’s behaviour for the purpose of maximising revenues, extending the sharing of personal and sensitive information, or obtaining the users consent –willingly or by means of deception or pressure –for data repurposing. In this sense, concepts such as nudging, gamification or information priming are in today’s standard repertoire of IS researchers’ intervention toolkit.

The point we want to make here is not to initiate an ethical debate surrounding approaches that rely on manipulation—or as others prefer to say “persuasion” (Fogg, 2003); this discourse is already in due course (Lembcke et al., 2019). Instead, our criticism is on the tendency of IS researchers, due to their familiarisation and/or affiliation with a business school environment, to perceive practitioners with whom they engage or whose requirements they seek to fulfil as primarily managerial (King and Learmonth, 2015). For instance, in the area of e-commerce, research is often geared toward assessing whether concealed manipulations lead to increased conversion rates, app adoption, or prolonged online engagement. This is done so as to, supposedly, enhance users’ decision-making processes (Hummel et al., 2017) or user experience (Xiao et al., 2022), which, in our perspective, appears to be a strawman argument. Rather, the driving force for nudging people is to maximise organizational profits by enhancing work outcomes or improve adherence to organizational guidelines (Feng et al. 2019) within the scope of legal possibilities and users’ tolerance. Dignity and volitional autonomy of the user, and ordinary people more generally, is a secondary matter and often not even part of a broader consideration of a research study. If at all, the concerns of and real-world consequences for those affected by the implementation of the research findings are treated at the margins (Mettler and Stepanovic, 2023).

We would like to believe that research conducted in such a way is not primarily driven by the belief that the needs of certain individuals should be considered less (i.e., the ordinary workers) or more (i.e., the managers). Instead, it is largely influenced by a longstanding worldview, established outside the IS discipline (e.g., economics, management science) that regards organizations as inherently value-neutral or as harmonious assemblages of people towards a common goal. Consequently, they overlook (or deliberately ignore) the fundamental conflict of interests that exists between those who provide labour and those who possess capital. Unfortunately, little is left of the spirit of the Scandinavian “trade-union approach” to systems design, which precisely aimed at addressing such inequalities in power structures and interests when designing new information and work systems (Hedberg, 1980; Sandberg, 1985; Bødker et al., 1987). Despite occasional beacons, such as the research by Leidner and Tona (2021) on dignity amid personal data digitalization or the study by Zheng and Walsham (2021) on the digital inequality under Covid19, critical studies that treat power imbalances are still rare, or, as Davison (2023) noted, our top journals still do not readily encompass the perspectives, interests, and concerns of non-corporate stakeholders, such as ordinary people, the civic society, the world community, or the environment at large. Not only does the selection of the research questions which many IS researchers regard as research-worthy seem to be closely aligned to the corporate agenda (as opposed to the societal agenda) but, as a consequence of that, these research questions are predominantly driven by economic considerations (as opposed to ecological, ethical, or social ones) and a quid pro quo mentality.

This results in profound implications for our knowledge base as economic theories lack a clear demarcation when healthy “self-interest” ends and notorious “greed” starts (Wang and Murnighan, 2011). Self-interest, like greed, is without doubt an important foundation of human behaviour. Prominent examples in IS, such as the technology acceptance model (Davis, 1989) or privacy calculus (Dinev and Hart, 2006), are based (explicitly or implicitly) on social exchange theory and the idea that two parties implement a cost-benefit rationale when interacting with each other. Specific behaviours are understood as the result of self-interest maximisation aiming at either increasing personal benefits or mitigating personal risks. However, such a worldview leaves little room for alternative explanations and motives of human behaviour, such as altruism, unconditional kindness, or compassion. It also supposes that self-interest maximisation is coherent with “doing the right thing,” so much so that it might seem unreasonable not to optimise behaviours and choices (Wang and Murnighan, 2011). In the IS literature, the negative societal consequences of excessive self-interest maximisation or “greedy behaviour” of corporations and individuals, such as the fact that they lead to a more uneven distribution of resources, the deferral of costs, increased inequality, and marginalisation of people, or inevitably creates tensions between self-interest optimisers (e.g. managers) and other’s well-being (e.g. ordinary workers), are rarely considered. In essence, that is a logical consequence because from a managerial view the negative externalities caused by greed are irrelevant as long as there is no regulation, retribution, or other harm to suffer from.

Our point here is not that research that takes an economic perspective for studying IS is morally reprehensible and research that does otherwise is pristine. Rather, we want to draw attention to the fact that it is crucial to ask ourselves, once in a while, the fundamental questions of what we think are worthy research problems (optimising profits for corporations vs. solving pressing societal problems), for whom we are doing research (corporate stakeholders vs. non-corporate stakeholders), and in what ways our research findings will potentially promote the greed of others. Especially for those of us whose salaries are paid from the public purse, the question is whether “good research” or “research impact” really should equate to research that is likely to be valued by corporations or rather to research that contributes, even if only marginally, to solving the societal grand challenges of our time (Winter and Butler, 2011).

3 Personal Greed, Or How Our Desire For Honour And Status Influences What And How We Research

We want to believe that why someone takes the difficult path to become an academic (and turns down a better-paying industry job) primarily lies in the deep passion and interest for the field. However, as research on social dilemmas has shown (Dawes, 1980), the more one benefits from a system, the more greed creeps in. As we all know, the current academic system is driven by a publish-or-perish culture, where the fate of remaining in academia and the prospect of mounting the career ladder is exclusively dependent on how much and where one publishes his or her research (to the detriment of other factors that are more difficult to quantify, such as the research impact on society). Business schools in particular, which not only teach performance-based management but also want to live it, have fallen victim to journal rankings, such as the “AIS basket,” FT50, UTD, ABS, and others. Score-keeping, as Clarke (2007) calls it, has not only become a way to determine institutional prestige (Lowry et al., 2007), but also a means for reaching decisions on PhD theses, tenure promotions, membership on editorial boards, or positions in academic societies, to mention just a few. With varying emphasis and discriminatory power, “productivity” (approximated by the number of papers one publishes) (Chua et al., 2002; Huang and Hsu, 2005), “quality” (approximated by the outlet where one publishes) (Lewis et al., 2007; Lowry et al., 2013), and “impact” (approximated by the number of citations one gets) (Mettler and Sunyaev, 2023) shift back and forth without paying attention to what really matters: what have we actually achieved with our research and for whom? –the essential questions we raised before.

A possible explanation as to why the status quo is not challenged is fear, or as Labaree (2018) puts it “*Fear of falling compounded by fear of total failure works wonders in motivating novice scholars to become flywheels of productivity.*” Rather than dwelling in self-reflection and asking questions, it is this evolutionary survival instinct which we mentioned before that kicks in to abide by the “rules of the game” and that legitimises everything that follows. Junior scholars are told early in their careers that they need to assiduously accumulate papers, prizes, and other merit badges with the potential promise that these will help to secure their future in academia (luck or other factors besides hard work play no role in this formula). Accordingly, every effort is made to increase the number of papers published, also by means of doubtful strategies as we discuss later.

But stronger even than fear, studies have shown that people’s behaviour is influenced by desires for personal glory and other benefits (Wang and Murnighan, 2011). As mentioned, it is not materialistic wealth but status that fuels greed in academia. The current incentive system is designed to exploit the excessive desire for recognition, honour, and status: an ever-larger number of awards of all kinds (e.g. for journal or conference publications, teaching, service) and career levels (e.g. early career/lifetime-career achievement) are being distributed to researchers so as to give the impression that virtually everyone can get a piece of the “glory pie.” Awards permit the acquisition of honour and status as they enable the award winner to stand out from the crowd. They also help those who sit on top of the current academic system – where “seniority” is often, but fortunately not exclusively, defined by the length of one’s publication track record – to retain their spot in the disciplinary hierarchy by deciding the fate of potential awardees. However, awards are but one instrument to ignite or intensify personal greed. It served us to show that personal greed encapsulates both acquisition and retention motivations (Lambie and Stickl Haugen, 2019).

Especially when one has yet to acquire honour and status, behaviour is often strongly influenced by return on effort (ROE) thinking from which two basic greed strategies can be deduced. The first is aimed at reducing efforts. This manifests itself in a variety of ways, such as by minimising the scope of data collection (e.g. using proxies for real decision-makers, avoiding longitudinal research designs) or by over-emphasising the re-purposing of existing but not always revelatory datasets (e.g. social media feeds) as opposed to engaging with practice and acquiring the necessary evidence to properly answer a research question. The second is geared toward improving returns, which in the publication-driven rationale is equivalent to increasing the number of published articles. The urge to always have a full “paper pipeline” (note the analogy to mass production and the industrialisation of science) not only leads to “salami slicing” tactics and the accumulation of trivial research findings (Pfleegor et al., 2019), careless hand-me-downs, double submissions, or other ethically questionable actions (Schneider et al., 2020), but also to a relative “sameness” (Zmud, 1996) of certain topics, theories, methods, and research designs to be heavily overrepresented. It is often a safer bet to work on uncontested or dominant terrains (promising far less resistance from reviewers) rather than experimenting with new research genres and scholarly contributions that seem unconventional, novel, or challenging accepted theories and worldviews (Rowe, 2012). Although our top journals are increasingly aware of their obligations in promoting diversity and responsible IS research (e.g. by mentoring young scholars, organizing special issues for underrepresented topics, or augmenting diversity in their editorial boards), this seems to be merely a drop in the bucket especially when we continue to reward and legitimate short-term self-maximising behaviour as a necessary evil of the academic careers of today.

4 Long-term Effects Of Greed On Research, Careers, And The IS Discipline

4.1 Me, myself, and I

As described in the preceding sections, greed engenders several fundamental behavioural patterns. Primarily, an excessive yearning for approval, recognition, prestige, and status fosters an egocentric orientation in daily work and research pursuits. This self-centred focus revolves around the incessant promotion of personal experiences and accomplishments, often leading to the daily dissemination of mundane details on social media and other platforms (a phenomenon that can be construed as a form of “data pollution”) in order to fight against oblivion and to increase one’s own “brand value.” This egocentricity frequently perpetuates the archetype of the “lone wolf professor” who fights his way out of the thicket of research under his own steam, often obscuring the reality that one did not undertake all the work independently but –consciously or inadvertently– “made good use” of individuals in dependent relationships to accomplish tasks and achieve objectives (see section 4.2).

In media trainings scholars are often told to cultivate their presence on professional networking platforms like LinkedIn, ResearchGate, or Academia.edu as well as establish their own websites to enhance their “personal brand.” This emphasis on digital presence is intertwined with the significance attributed to networking, a practice deemed crucial for career advancement in academia. However, the nature of academic networking, while ostensibly conducted ethically, often manifests as a utilitarian approach to relationship-building. In this context, relationships forged through academic networking are frequently perceived as instrumental, prioritizing the potential value, utility, and career prospects that can be derived from associating with individuals in one’s network over the intrinsic value of the relationships themselves.

With such a mindset, the concept of team-based research or fostering a genuine “collegiality” or “community” ethos finds it arduous to flourish. This challenge is particularly pertinent for aspiring researchers, discouraging them from pursuing an academic career and prompting a preference for industry roles where collaborative endeavours are more readily embraced.

4.2 Publishing and citations above all

The IS research landscape is unequivocally centred on publications and citations (even if some researchers highlight the importance of artifacts, it is still about publications). A consequence of this fixation is the tendency to eschew research endeavours that are not readily publishable or pose challenges in terms of publication. This trend is pervasive to the extent that it permeates academic pursuits up to the doctoral level, resulting in a dearth of unconventional research (or, conversely, a plethora of studies that are always set up in the same way), critically questioning, or comprehensive investigations into enduring phenomena. Instead, IS research has become increasingly oriented towards cumulative knowledge generation, focusing on narrowly defined problems, thereby hindering the emergence of ground-breaking ideas and relegating IS to a niche discipline.

This fixation on publications has given rise to a host of challenges. Notably, the phenomenon of free riding has become prevalent, wherein individuals are included as authors based on their existing status rather than substantial contributions. In this regard, particularly problematic is the relationship between doctoral students and their supervisors, given the inherent power imbalance. More often than not, individuals in positions of higher authority exploit this power dynamic to rapidly amass an extraordinarily high volume of publications with seemingly minimal effort; the laws of time and space sometimes do not seem to apply to such people, or how else is it possible to write more than 50 articles in a year, or roughly one paper per week? Also, if adhering to the homo oeconomicus doctrine is not deemed problematic, why should they refrain from exploiting their power?

However, it is also fair to say that sometimes there is equally moral dubiousness when doctoral students and lesser-known researchers seek to garner more favourable reviews by affiliating themselves with prominent scholars as co-authors. This strategic manoeuvring appears to influence the review process, albeit the extent of its impact—whether positive or negative—depends on the reputations of the individuals involved, particularly as the review process is seldom completely blind. Proponents of this approach anticipate that editors will exhibit greater leniency or thoughtfulness in selecting reviewers when established scholars are involved, as opposed to when they submit an article by themselves.

Efforts to address the issue of authorship contribution have been made by numerous journals, conferences, and publishers, such as through the implementation of initiatives like the *CRedit author statement*, which aims to delineate individual contributions within published articles. However, these measures fail to rectify the fundamental issue of power imbalances; doctoral students reliant on their supervisors' goodwill may hesitate to accurately report their contributions, while those engaging in authorship inflation may obscure the true intent behind lengthy author lists.

Furthermore, the persistence of salami-slicing tactics and self-referential publishing networks is sustained by the prevailing emphasis within academia on quantitative metrics such as publication counts in specific outlets, rather than on assessing the genuine impact, expertise, or creativity of researchers. Even if author contributions were made transparent in the future, hardly anyone will take the trouble to accurately measure the real contribution of certain people on an article-by-article basis.

Beyond author list inflation, another well-known strategy for getting published and for boosting one's personal profile is to focus on "hype topics". Given that hype-based research generates citations, downloads, and other metrics beneficial to authors and journals alike, the push for publications on popular topics is anticipated to fuel an even greater surge in future publication activity, perpetuating the cycle of inflationary output.

A cursory examination of the trajectory of published research articles (excluding editorials, conference reports, and curriculum notes, among others) depicted in Figure 1 shows a diminishing significance of individual articles. This trend can be attributed to two primary factors: Firstly, the expansion of the discipline, characterized by a ever growing number of IS scholars. Secondly, the acceleration of "content production," wherein a plethora of topics are advanced rapidly, often driven by opportunistic pursuits.

What we tend to forget is that the intense focus on these short-term trends, fuelled by both academic and industrial attention, inadvertently contributes to the inflation of these hypes. In this rush towards immediate, attention-grabbing topics, the more profound and enduring societal problems, such as

addressing the “grand challenges” of our time, are regrettably relegated to the background. The consequence of this myopic emphasis is that intellectual and financial resources are diverted away from addressing substantial, complex issues with far-reaching societal implications. Grand challenges, encompassing multifaceted problems ranging from climate change to global health, necessitate sustained, collaborative, global efforts over an extended period.

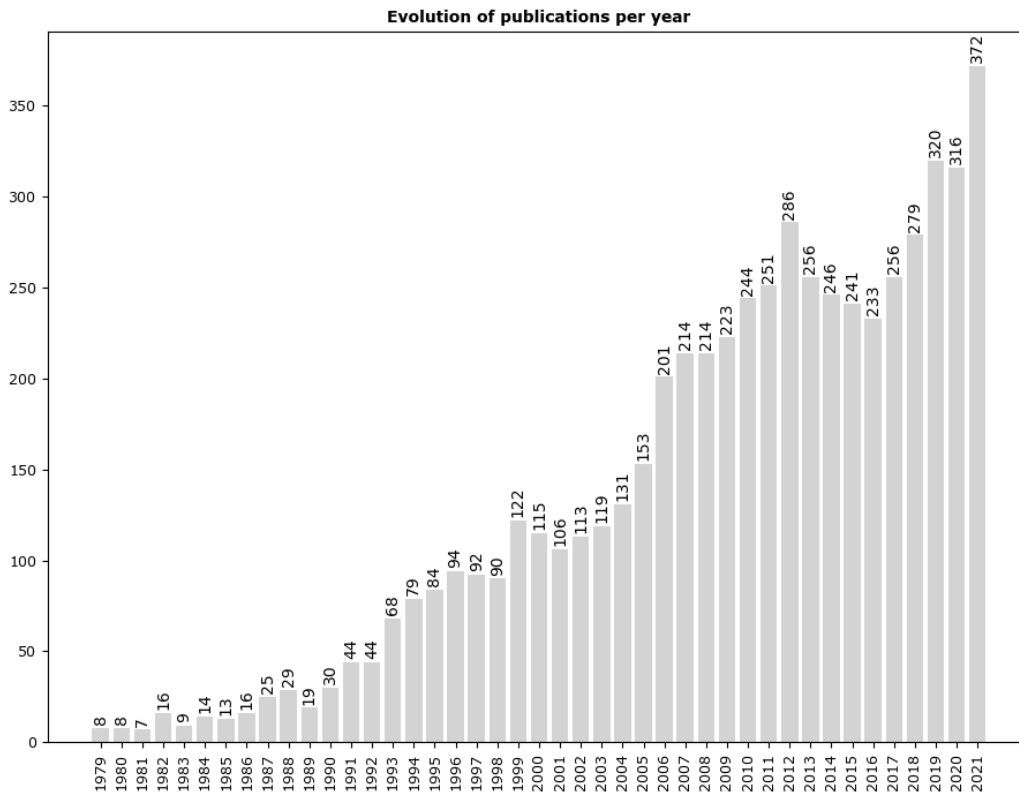


Figure 1. Evolution of published research articles (excluding editorials, conference reports, and curriculum notes) in the “AIS basket” between 1979–2021.

4.3 Hail the corporate agenda

The inclination of IS to constantly emphasise the corporate agenda was, as mentioned before, uncritically adopted from neighbouring disciplines. By adhering to this mindset, IS not only misses the opportunity to positively distinguish itself but also inadvertently legitimises unethical corporate practices driven solely by profit maximisation. It is essential to recognise that profit sometimes comes at the expense of various stakeholders, including employees, clients, society, and the environment at large. This practice of prioritising managerial implications over ethical considerations risks endorsing actions that might be morally questionable or socially detrimental.

A potential solution to this dilemma lies in redirecting the focus of IS research towards broader policy and legal questions and debates, a perspective that has traditionally been the exception rather than the norm (yet there are many years of research experience in IS for society that one can benefit from). By critically examining the ethical and societal implications of digitalisation, IS researchers can contribute significantly to the discourse on effective governance of technology, respectful handling of data subjects, and social and ethical responsibility of both technology providers and consumers. Engaging in these discussions allows the discipline to transcend the narrow confines of the corporate agenda and embrace a broader social agenda, aligning research priorities with the greater good rather than mere

profit motives. Moreover, the emergent negative social and political consequences stemming from unregulated digitalisation underscore the urgency of this shift in perspective. As society grapples with issues like surveillance capitalism, algorithmic biases, and the erosion of social trust due to fake news, among others, the reorientation toward a socially conscious agenda not only safeguards the ethical integrity of IS research but also ensures its relevance and legitimacy in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. By aligning research efforts with the broader social good and actively participating in policy debates (not only analysing the detrimental effects that corporations have generated), the IS community can contribute meaningfully to mitigating the negative consequences of digitalisation and promoting a more equitable and responsible technological future. If the IS discipline continues as before, the potential ethical transgressions stemming from research, such as nudging, gamification or information priming (see section 2), could provoke scrutiny from various stakeholders, including regulatory bodies, ethicists, and the general public, potentially resulting in diminished research budgets and reputational damage for the IS community.

4.4 Play the game

Lastly, the current incentive system is designed to exploit the excessive desire for recognition, honour, and status. It also gives a certain stability to plan a career and align activities. Hence, one could argue that the rules of the game are well known. Anyone can play (though the fact is hidden that the chances of winning are not equal for everyone). For those succeeding in the game, the hunting of accolades, such as best paper awards, fellowships, and so on, often lead to an overshadowing of the genuine motivation for academic research, which should primarily be the pursuit of knowledge and addressing significant challenges. Particularly, the emphasis on publication metrics and citation counts frequently drives scholars to prioritise personal accolades and reputation over the advancement of knowledge and societal betterment. Pedagogy as well as broader political and social engagement, frequently assume a secondary or deferred position.

The relentless pursuit of awards of any kind can also result in intentional or unintentional marginalisation of scholars who one deems “useless” (i.e., lack the capacity to write top journal publications) or “exotic” (i.e., engage in research that falls outside the dominant paradigms or popular research themes). This exclusionary bias can affect researchers from diverse backgrounds, underrepresented groups, or those who advocate for unconventional ideas. It also conveys an especially disheartening and bleak message to the young cohort of researchers who harbour the belief that the fundamental purpose of research lies in effecting positive and transformative change in the world. Again, this can discourage many young people from getting involved in IS research and choose an industry career instead.

5 What Can We Do To Change The Projected Trajectory?

It is challenging (even impossible) to eliminate greed from a human system, particularly considering its increasing prevalence in recent decades and its significant influence on present-day work and the future prospects of young IS researchers. However, it seems important to us to dare to try and fundamentally rethink the current system, which is focused on conducting research set by a corporate agenda and aimed at increasing personal status, especially since this does not advance IS as a discipline.

First, and to effectively counter greed, it is crucial to enhance awareness and understanding of its implications. However, informing scholars about its negative implications is not enough as the main obstacle often lies in the unwillingness to change rather than a lack of knowledge.

Second, it therefore becomes necessary to implement suitable countermeasures. Table 1 below presents a range of potential countermeasures we think could be beneficial to overcome greed. While this list is not exhaustive and also not necessarily ground-breaking, it should be seen as a starting point for a broader discourse that is very much needed in the IS community so that greed and its detrimental effects to research careers are mitigated and the recognition as a forward-looking scientific discipline remains in tact.

Current state	Countermeasure
Greed is regarded as an inherent aspect or “necessary evil” within the academic incentive system which prioritises publications and maintains exclusivity from the general public.	Raise awareness about the influence of greed in the scientific community and society at large, promoting active public engagement in conversations and decision-making procedures.
The academic incentive system is structured to capitalise on individuals’ aspirations for recognition, honour, and status by rewarding individual achievements and fostering a culture centred around specific personalities.	Acknowledge and honour the efforts of research teams showcasing ethical behaviour, fostering a shift towards altruistic values and problem-solving for societal benefit, rather than conducting research solely catering to corporate interests or being published in top journals.
Academic careers in IS are frequently built on short-term self-maximisation, as researchers tend to choose topics that are easily publishable, inflate hypes, or avoid controversy.	Promote a move away from short-term gains by revising promotion and tenure procedures to prioritise long-term real-world impact (or contributions towards addressing “grand challenges”). This can be achieved by emphasising more strongly responsible, real-world grounded research in academic evaluations, engaging in policy development and implementation, or mediating between the often conflicting viewpoints and needs of different stakeholders.
Academic careers in IS have long been rooted in the ethos of competition, where researchers are driven by the pursuit of being the first to publish on a certain topic and aiming to be consistently more productive than their peers.	Foster a collaborative culture within the IS discipline instead of promoting cutthroat competition, rankings, and individual accolades. By collective advancement over individual achievements, the temptation for researchers to engage in selfish and unethical behaviour for personal gain can be significantly reduced.
Due to the previous issue, academic training in IS primarily emphasises methods, theories, and the art of scholarly writing.	Integrate ethics and values-centred learning into academic institutions (specifically into PhD programmes) and professional development initiatives to foster a robust ethical groundwork among individuals. Senior academics should serve as mentors and role models, emphasising the importance of integrity, ethics, and responsible conduct in academic pursuits. Encouraging ethical behaviour from the early stages of academic careers can help establish a positive and conscientious culture.
A way how to gain a “competitive edge” over others is to possess superior resources, such as ample funding, extensive data, and advanced infrastructure. The choice of research questions, deemed worthy by numerous IS researchers, therefore appears to be strongly influenced by corporate interests, often aligning with or even being directly set and sponsored by corporations.	Establish and enforce stringent codes of conduct, regulations, and governance structures to identify and prevent unethical behaviour. This requires implementing mechanisms to enhance transparency in conflicts of interest, moving beyond mere footnotes at the end of articles, and being clear about the genuine motivations underlying the research. Moreover, it is advisable that independent committees scrutinise studies for any financial biases or undue influence that may compromise the integrity of research findings.

Table 1. *How greed manifests itself and what to do about it.*

6 Conclusion

The tenet of this article is that greed and short-term self-maximisation should be received with scepticism, and not be embraced, spread further, or be used as an excuse of human failing. What appears to be a convenient personal strategy for advancing one's career, is not necessarily beneficial for the discipline as whole. Critics of this paper's argumentation may contend that while contemplating ethics and ideals is commendable, practical reality often compels us to engage in strategic maneuvering within a "publish or perish" world. Some may even argue that it is not justifiable to maintain moral purity when faced with such imperatives; indeed, it may even be considered a moral obligation (as homo oeconomicus) to exploit systemic loopholes.

Indeed, the author, being human, acknowledges that he is also subject to fallibility and susceptible to various influences but willing to recognize that self-centered actions have consequences which he likely won't have to bear (but most certainly those who will follow). If the COVID-19 crisis has taught us anything, it is that IS research, despite its excellent position to understand and navigate the complexities of socio-technical systems, has not played a role in the political discourse and solution to the pandemic; instead, we have sought to concentrate on analyzing the failures of technological interventions, such as contact tracing, as opposed to actively support the planning and conduct of such interventions.

The point we want to make here is that, similarly as IS was faced with the challenge of asserting itself as a distinct discipline from its neighbouring disciplines (Baskerville and Myers, 2002; Teo and Srivastava, 2007), we believe that continuing with the unswerving pursuit of short-term publication goals and the pleasing of corporations, rather than participating in solving socially relevant problems, could lead to another crisis of legitimacy as IS is gradually being outpaced by other disciplines that have understood how to direct their research towards the needs of society. We tend to forget it but IS does not have the monopoly or sovereignty of interpretation (Deutungshoheit) over socio-technical phenomena. Not only our neighbouring disciplines (e.g. digital marketing, digital finance), but also seemingly distant fields of research (e.g. digital anthropology, digital public health, digital politics) have taken up the topic. Instead of taking advantage of our favourable starting position in shaping the societal discourse on the digital transformation, the crises of the last years have only made more apparent what Zmud (1998) noticed years ago: IS is not necessarily eager to deal with the future and the proposition of solutions for contemporary problems but rather content to analysing the past (that in return in an impressively profound way).

With the disciplinary boundaries becoming more porous and philanthropists and science funders moving away from simple bibliometrics towards evaluation methods that try to capture the societal impact of research (Davison and Bjørn-Andersen, 2019), following a "greed strategy," as mentioned throughout this paper, is becoming a dangerous path for career prospects. While being in a self-referential, self-contained system that promotes greedy behaviour may not cause existential problems for established researchers, junior scholars risk being side-lined with regard to obtaining public funding, endowment, and media attention –which, at least from a European perspective, is increasingly being considered as tenure criteria– if they continue to do well-executed, conventional, yet socially detached research.

As we tried to highlight, we need a redefinition of how we understand "good research" or "research impact" to counteract vicarious greed. Impact should not be based solely on considerations where research is published or if our research is likely to be mentioned in a corporate board meeting. We should be more self-critical and ask ourselves in what ways our research is likely to contribute to pressing societal problems – for the good or the worse (that is, also anticipating unintended or negative effects of our work). The efforts of the Association for Information Systems (2023) in raising community awareness regarding the importance of more engaged and "impactful" forms of research is certainly a commendable first step. However, the impression remains that "societal impact" still seems difficult to measure and not a universally desirable research outcome, which is why other forms of impact, that is, "academic impact" or "business impact" (e.g. venture capital attracted, sales revenue, business benefits) are put on par.

If personal greed is a basic trait of human nature, then we should increasingly ask ourselves how we can use it to the benefit of society and the research discipline rather than the individual. A first logical thing

would be to stop putting individual “productivity” in the foreground, but rather reward long-term collective efforts that align with the societal agenda. Let’s be “greedy” together and for a good cause, at least. It is important to convey the message that scientists, institutions, citizens, and users, all have a significant role in making research meaningful and impactful.

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