

# RESEARCH REPORTER

Faculty of Business Research Newsletter | Issue 1 November 2014

## *Familiar surroundings*

Exploring the sense of belonging  
and place attachment

**MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO BUSINESS**

# Hello and welcome...

...to the first edition of Research Reporter. This publication showcases the research activities taking place in the Faculty of Business at Oxford Brookes University.



In this edition we update you on the exciting projects that are happening within the faculty and introduce you to our Research Lead in Accounting, Finance and Economics. We report on our recent International Research Collaborations Conference and highlight the ongoing importance of research impact for researchers.

Following our highly successful recruitment round, I would like to welcome all of our new Doctor of Coaching and Mentoring (DCM) and PhD students. We are looking forward to working with such a diverse cohort of students who have joined us from all over the world, including India, Russia, China, Poland, Thailand, Nigeria and the UK. Their wealth of knowledge and experience will significantly contribute to the rich research culture that we foster in the Faculty of Business at Oxford Brookes University. To find out more about each student please visit: [business.brookes.ac.uk/doctoral-students](http://business.brookes.ac.uk/doctoral-students)

With the Research Excellence Framework (REF) submission now well behind us, we have our fingers crossed for the results, which will be announced in December.

**Louise Grisoni,**  
Associate Dean  
Research and Knowledge Exchange

**“I chose to study at Oxford Brookes University Business School because of the progressive and outstanding reputation in my area of research. I’m very excited about where my own ideology and experience may sit against the realities of what I find.”**

*Barbara Brown, PhD Student,  
Centre for Diversity Policy Research and Practice*



Keynote speaker Prof Barbara Harriss-White

## International Research Collaborations Conference

This year the Faculty of Business research conference focused on the theme of International Collaboration. This reflects the increasing emphasis by research funding bodies on collaborative research at national and international levels.

More than 50 papers were presented across 12 strands covering all the faculty's research clusters (please see page 11). The papers represented the work of academics from France, Brazil, Turkey, Australia, USA, Netherlands, India, Italy, Spain, Ukraine and the UK.

The keynote presentation was given by **Prof Barbara Harriss-White**, Emeritus Professor of Development Studies at the University of Oxford. Her paper 'Toward a lower carbon transition in India: international, multidisciplinary and cross-generational collaborations' outlined her research into the issue of rice production in India and offered a wealth of insight into collaborative relationships which cross international boundaries and are inter-generational.

The Faculty of Business was well represented with 53 colleagues presenting or contributing to papers. The contributors and audience for the papers represented the faculty's established links with Burgundy School of Business and Hong Kong University, and built on the existing international networks of faculty colleagues.

Academic proceedings were framed by opportunities to network at Brookes Restaurant and the Ashmolean Museum Rooftop Terrace. Dr Louise Grisoni, Associate Dean for Research and Knowledge Exchange, closed the conference by celebrating the depth of academic discussion that was provoked by the event and looked forward to future collaborative enterprises between those present and further afield.

An annual small grant scheme was launched and faculty staff were invited to submit bids that were match funded with colleagues from other institutes. Successful projects this year include:

### **Sustainism: Sustainable Experiences as Faith?**

Principal Investigator:  
**Dr Juliette Koning**, Reader, Business and Management

Co-Investigator:  
**Dr Can Seng Ooi**, Professor, Department of International Economics and Management, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark.

### **Managerial Perspectives on International Brand Strategy and Value Co-Creation in a Multi-Stakeholder Approach**

Principal Investigator:  
**Dr Nicoletta Occhiocupo**, Senior Lecturer in Marketing

Co-Investigator:  
**Dr Rebecca Pera**, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics and Business, University of Piemonte Orientale, Italy.

# Exploring the sense of belonging and place attachment

*The Gower Peninsula, South Wales*

**Dr David Bowen, Reader in the Oxford School of Hospitality Management and Head of Doctoral Programmes, and Dr Jackie Clarke, Research Lead and Reader in the Department of Marketing, discuss their recent fieldwork for their British Academy/Leverhulme funded research, which explores the reasons why tourists maintain or develop a strong connection with a familiar place.**

The Gower Peninsula and the Mawddach Estuary are stunningly beautiful areas of Wales. Gower in South Wales was designated as the UK's first 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' and the Mawddach Estuary in mid-Wales is a lesser known part of the Snowdonia National Park.

Both are rich in cultural heritage and landscape, yet arguably share a common problem of a peripheral location and inaccessibility for much of the UK population. However, Gower and Mawddach inspire much passion and loyalty amongst visitors from their traditional catchment areas. These 'familiar' visitors return year after year, some for generations, passing their

love for the area through the family like an heirloom.

The interesting thing about visitors who go back to the same place many times is that such habits are just not fashionable. As a society we seem to value tourists who seek out the new, exotic and far flung places of the globe. As explained by one of our focus group members: "I don't really go anywhere interesting on holiday according to everybody else, I just go to the same place".

As an academic community we are guilty in our echo of society. The focus of research is too often on the behaviour of the long-haul tourist, the explorer and the independent

backpacker. The familiar visitor and the implications of their behaviour for the destination concerned have largely passed unobserved. Yet this type of visitor provides the stability and backbone of business for many destinations.

Our interest in this topic stems from a long-standing research interest in the experiences and consumption behaviours of tourists. A discussion with **Philip Pearce**, Foundation Professor of Tourism at James Cook University, Australia, about a recent paper on the experience of visiting home and familiar places uncovered a subject rich with questions.

After a successful proposal

submission, we were awarded funding from the British Academy/Leverhulme Small Research Grant Scheme to carry out a two-year study programme on the behaviour of familiar visitors in peripheral areas and how this knowledge might best be used for the benefit of the communities involved.

Both of us are representative of two different types of familiar visitor. David grew up in and around Gower, whilst Jackie has holiday roots in Mawddach inherited through generations of her family.

We undertook a series of field trips to both Gower and Mawddach interviewing different accommodation providers, attractions and activity businesses, tourism organisations and other businesses for their cumulative experience and anecdotal stories of familiar visitors.

But, we also needed the perspectives of the central voices: the familiar visitors. Therefore, we interviewed visitors who come back because they once lived in the area, visitors who discovered the area for themselves

and visitors who inherited the area as a holiday destination. Almost without exception they have been generous with their time, sharing their experiences.

During the interview they would often tell us something of their motivations, their memories, what the place means for their family and self-identity. More practically, they talked about what routines and rituals they have developed over the years during their holidays or trips.

Alongside visitor interviews in Gower and Mawddach, a self-completion survey has also been set up for both areas. This survey is kindly administered on behalf of the study by tourism providers located in different places within both areas.

The longevity of visits stated by the interview and survey respondents is initially surprising: 30, 40 or 50 years is not uncommon. With nearly 100 completed questionnaires, 50+ tourist interviews and 30+ provider interviews, we already have plenty of data to analyse.

If you are interested in further information about the study or how you might get involved with its onward development, please contact either:

**Dr David Bowen**  
**dbowen@**  
**brookes.ac.uk**

**or Dr Jackie Clarke**  
**jrclarke@**  
**brookes.ac.uk**



## Knowledge transfer partnership with Brethertons law firm

The British legal profession is facing challenges on many fronts including competition from supermarkets, incursions from abroad and ever more extensive regulation. So how does an established law firm, set up to deliver professional services, make the transition to an agile, customer-focused business that can stay ahead in a changing world?

In the case of Brethertons LLP, a large regional law firm that provides advice to businesses and individuals, a contact suggested a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) with Oxford Brookes University. A quick call for information led to a series of meetings at which a radical plan was mapped out, literally, on a very large whiteboard that would take the firm forward in a coordinated two-year programme.

**Dr Paul Jackson**, Senior Lecturer in Information Management and

**Dr Diana Limburg**, Senior Lecturer in Accounting, Finance and Economics at Oxford Brookes University Business School, came up with the novel idea of a Value Integration Office, which would form the heart of the change project in this organisation of almost 300 people working across four sites. Together with the senior Partners at Brethertons, they applied for KTP funding and were awarded a government contribution of over £90k.

The partnership then recruited a Business Change Analyst to manage the project in-house at Brethertons. Yu-Chun Pan, who has recently completed his PhD in Business Informatics at Henley Business School, is working with Brethertons under Paul and Diana's supervision, pulling together data from across the organisation, engaging staff and creating the foundations for systematic change.

Partner and Chief Executive, Michael Dibben, is confident that Brethertons has taken the right course. Michael says: "As legal professionals we needed someone who could take an independent view of our organisation, and bring experience from other sectors in developing customer relationships, improving our processes, and promoting internal collaboration. But at the same time we don't want an off-the-shelf solution; it has to develop around our special culture and support the huge growth we are experiencing. It's an exciting time."

For more information on KTPs with Oxford Brookes University Business School, please contact: Ian Holgate, Research Grants Officer, [iholgate@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:iholgate@brookes.ac.uk) or call **01865 482964**.

# Major project on human trafficking in hospitality and tourism

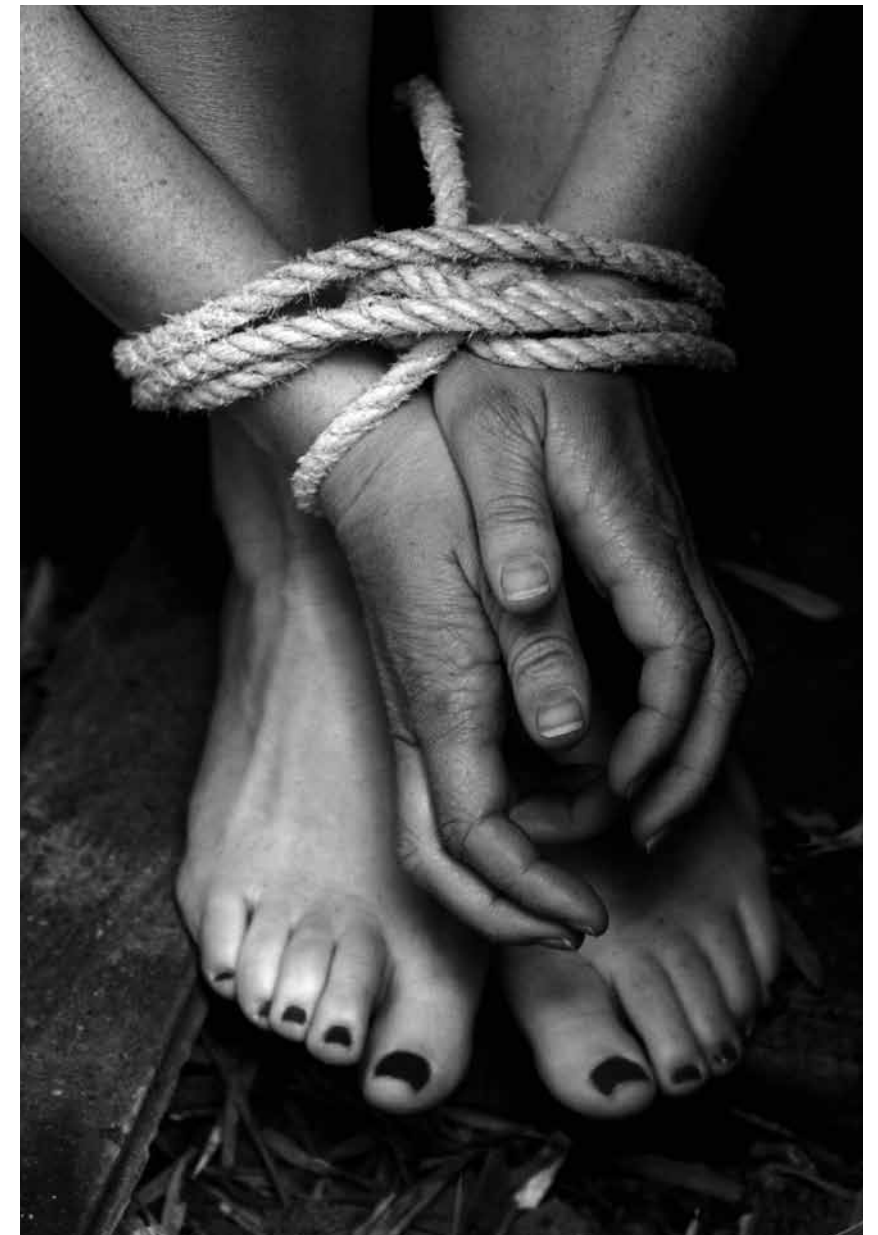
In association with three partners, the Oxford School of Hospitality Management within the Faculty of Business, has secured £250,000 from the European Commission to undertake a project focused on combatting human trafficking in the tourism industry.

The project will produce a comprehensive toolkit that will help tourism businesses combat human trafficking through changes in business practice at strategic, management and operational levels.

It will enable the identification, deterrence and prevention of trafficking, encourage stakeholder partnerships to raise awareness of the problem and establish policies and communications structures that allow safer reporting and response to trafficking incidents.

The finalised toolkit will be presented to industry and the press, and a public lecture will be held in Oxford as a means of reaching human rights groups and a wider public audience.

The project will be led by **Prof Simonetta Manfredi**, Director of the Centre for Diversity Policy Research and Practice, and involve **Dr Maureen Brookes**, Reader in Marketing and Teaching Fellow at the Oxford School of Hospitality Management, and **Dr Sonia Morano-Foadi**, Reader in the School of Law. They will work alongside **Prof Alex Paraskevas** and **Prof Angela Roper** from the University of West London as well as colleagues from Lapland University of Applied Sciences and the Ratiu Centre for Democracy in Romania.



# The Slinky-ness of *research impact*

**Dr Jackie Clarke, Reseach Lead and Reader in the Department of Marketing, highlights the ambiguity of research impact and the weight it carries in academic research today.**

I remember the Slinky toy as a child, rippling its way down the stairs. Recently, I stole a Slinky from a small boy; "I need it for a seminar", I said.

The research environment is increasingly competitive and it's making the drive for research increasingly co-operative. Universities and most research funding bodies are focusing on research impact or research that 'makes a difference'.

The recent Research Excellence Framework (REF\*) intensifies this effort with a new requirement for returned units to demonstrate that submitted research effected, changed or benefitted the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life beyond academia.

As you can see, the scope is wide and open to creative thought and action and natural repercussions. On the surface, the Duckworth-Lewis Method, a mathematical formulation co-researched by Dr Tony Lewis whilst at Oxford Brookes University, is all about its application to the rules of cricket. Yet over time it has evolved to become part of our lexicon and public enjoyment of life, complete with a pop band, D/L mugs, and chuckles on Radio 4's Today programme. And that's like the ripples of the Slinky, moving through time and perhaps in ways that weren't initially expected.

The Research Councils UK (RCUK) now look for the 'demonstrable contribution' that research makes to society and the economy, and the many ways that research might benefit individuals, organisations and nations. The thinking and language has moved on from the arguably more passive tones of 'dissemination' and 'knowledge transfer'.

Bids for funding to the RCUK bodies need to plan and cost 'pathways to impact' or activities specifically designed to facilitate the emergence of impact. For researchers cannot guarantee impact from their work but only try to set favourable conditions. Timescales are hard to judge. And 'demonstrable' implies that an impact is only an impact if you have evidence for it, so part of the planning involves thinking through what this evidence might be and how to collect it.

I've seen diagrams at research impact planning presentations that have a traditional linear flavour, with each stage mapped out and impact popping out at the end of the flow diagram. But my personal view is that the Slinky represents it better with its sense of movement; an understanding of, and attention to, research impact is embedded all along the research 'coil'. Research impact is also about co-operation; in its most obvious form, co-operation between the researchers and

the likely beneficiaries of the research from inception of the work through to its conclusion or onward development. This active involvement of stakeholders in research isn't new. Business research has long been engaged with applied research, community-based research and programmes such as the Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs). But the Research Impact agenda does give fresh impetus to an early and comprehensive mapping of who the beneficiaries might be and how they might be integrated into the study.

Launched in the 1940s, the Slinky isn't new and research impact isn't new either. It's more of an evolution from its precursors of knowledge transfer and knowledge exchange. And it's not without its criticisms and critics, particularly in respect of blue sky research. I've been recommending a useful little book by **Pam Denicolo**, 'Achieving impact in research'. The chapters are short, practical and to-the-point, yet they cover useful ground in respect of bid writing and project planning. I must return my copy to the library, which in turn reminds me that I must return the Slinky to the small boy I stole it from. And thank him for the loan.

\*The Research Excellence Framework, or REF, is the government process by which research excellence in UK universities is judged.

# Research in the Faculty of Business

Within the Faculty of Business at Oxford Brookes University we have been building a research culture and expanding our research community with wide-ranging interests in many specialist areas. We have three research centres, which bring distinctiveness to the work of the faculty, and four departments with identified research clusters that bring focus to the subject areas.

## RESEARCH CENTRES

### ASKe Pedagogy Research Centre

Director: **Prof Margaret Price**

The impact of this centre is widespread and influences learning and teaching practices around the world.

### The Centre for Diversity Policy Research and Practice

Director: **Prof Simonetta Manfredi**

This centre takes a multidisciplinary approach linking legal and human resource management perspectives.

### The International Centre for Coaching and Mentoring Studies

Director: **Dr Tatiana Bachirova** and **Dr Elaine Cox**

This centre specialises in coaching and mentoring, education and supervision for coaches and mentors at master's and doctoral levels.

## DEPARTMENTS

### Accounting, Finance and Economics

Research Lead: **Dr Samantha Miles**

Clusters: **Accountability and Responsibility; Environmental and Developmental Economics; Corporate Social Responsibility.**

### Business and Management

Research Lead: **Dr Juliette Koning**

Clusters: **International Strategy; Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Operations; Critical Management Studies.**

### Marketing

Research Lead: **Dr Jackie Clarke**

Clusters: **Brand Strategy; Customer Relationship Management; Digital Marketing.**

### Oxford School of Hospitality Management

Research Lead: **Prof Levent Altinay**

Clusters: **International Business Development; Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility.**

If you are thinking about joining us as a doctoral student, commissioning a market research survey or considering executive education, you will experience a quality research culture in a lively and supportive research environment.



## Spotlight on:

### Dr Samantha Miles, Research Lead and Reader in Accounting, Finance and Economics

When Samantha Miles facilitates a lecture, leads a seminar or supervises her PhD students, she applies the industry experience and extensive research that she has acquired in the field of Accounting and Finance.

Sam runs two modules: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Corporate Governance and Social Responsibility. The core text in CSR is her own book called 'Stakeholder Theory in Practise'. She also gives her students practical case studies every week where they may be faced with ethical decisions or a problem that they've got to sort out.

Sam says: "Some of the students I teach can think in a rigid economic way and I do think I convert some of them. The idea is to get students to think and provide them with knowledge that they can carry with them throughout their career."

Sam's most recent achievements include her paper 'Stakeholder Theory Definitions' being chosen to be the opening article for an innovative journal called Stakeholder Theory and Practice. After reviewing nearly 3,000 academic articles, Sam has found 885 definitions of stakeholder theory. She has also published a paper on this in the Journal of Business Ethics.

**Prof R. Edward Freeman** from the University of Virginia, who is the founder of stakeholder theory and has received over 33,500 citations said: "I am awed by the work that Sam Miles does in this paper. She has done us all a favour by documenting the fragmentation that has occurred. Sam has made a real contribution, and will continue to."

Sam has supervised three PhDs. If you are interested in doing a PhD related to Corporate Social Responsibility or Corporate Governance and Social Responsibility, please contact her for an informal discussion by email: [svmiles@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:svmiles@brookes.ac.uk)





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For more information about research opportunities  
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