



OXFORD  
BROOKES  
UNIVERSITY

# RESEARCH REPORTER

2018 – 2019

## OXFORD BROOKES BUSINESS SCHOOL:

Researching current and future challenges

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*Photographs on cover and page 22 are courtesy of Blenheim Palace*

# HELLO AND WELCOME...

...to this edition of Research Reporter which showcases some of the research being undertaken at Oxford Brookes Business School in response to a fast-changing world.



We've been undergoing our own changes – we've moved location, to a state-of-the-art new site at Headington, the main University campus. This means greater interaction with other Faculties and city-centre partners, and enables us to share research with wider audiences. Improving connections, both literally and metaphorically, sits behind much of our research. We're building dialogue between disciplines, and with companies and policy makers, to improve business performance and people's quality of life.

The global scope of our research is expanding too. Many of our projects are international collaborations which address challenges faced around the world – from the integration of refugees into the labour market, to informing the development of digital technologies. New Research Fellows have joined us, and we are supporting early career academics in new posts. Our PhD research students bring a breadth of international knowledge too – you can read here about some of their contributions.

Our research helps business and individuals navigate change, providing insight into the competing interests of Globalisation, the problems of Sustainability and the

Human Challenges of 21st Century life. We provide micro analysis and macro route-maps, helping to develop Strategic Thinking.

Our research responds to the UK Government's ambitious Industrial Strategy, which aims to make the UK the most innovative economy in the world by 2030. We analyse female representation in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and how gender-diverse teams can improve research performance, and affect the development of university 'spinout' companies.

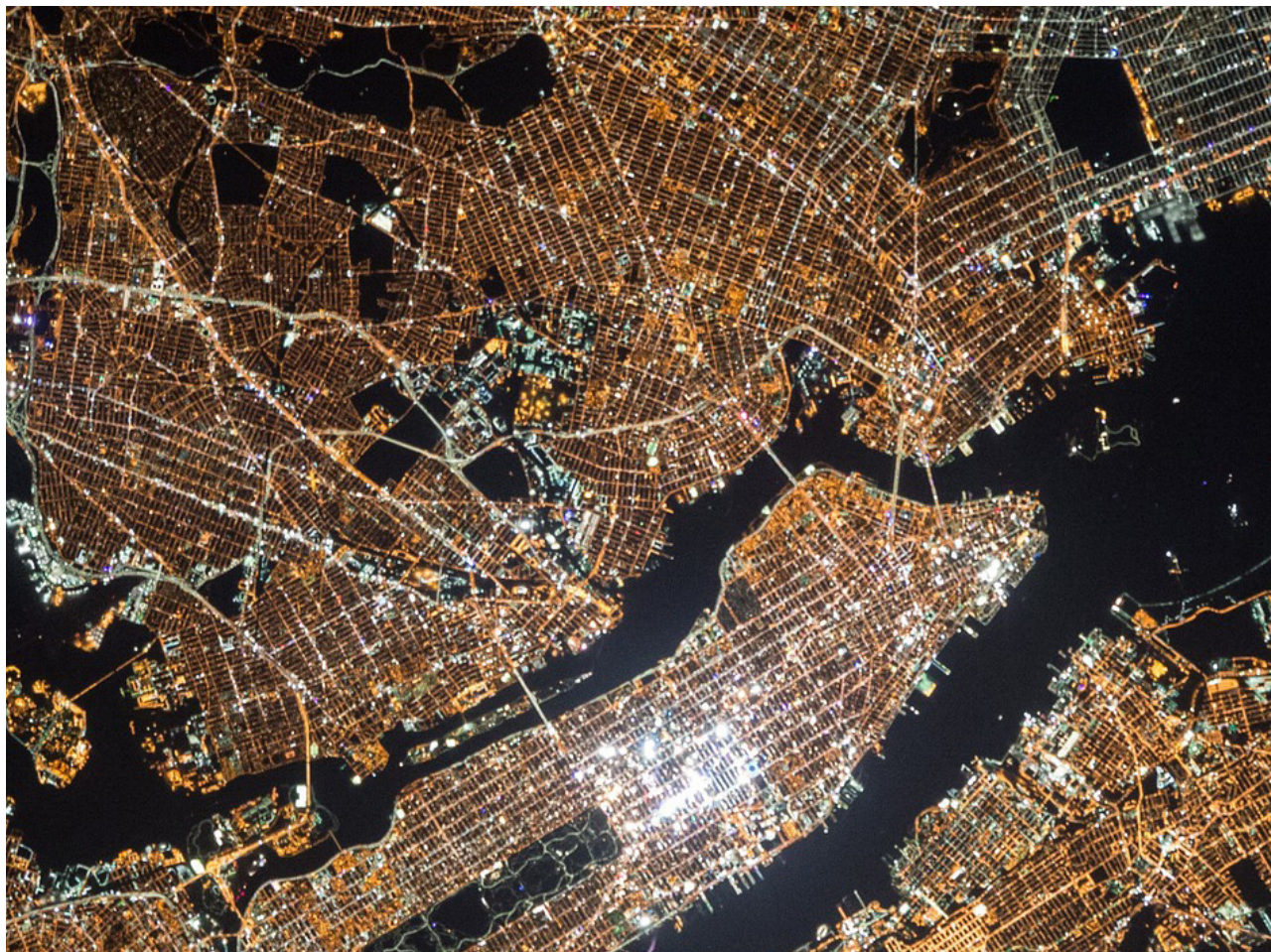
Healthy ageing is identified as a Government priority. Our academics examine how loneliness and isolation for those over 60 can be reduced through the use of social media. We also consider the skills and support networks needed to improve personal development and organisational sustainability through mentoring. Innovative research methods, including analysis of digital data, allow researchers to develop solutions to the problems of congestion and contribute to the Government's priority of improving mobility.

Local and national heritage sites, including Blenheim Palace Estate, benefit from our assistance with Strategic Thinking, enabling them to plan effectively for the future.

Researchers at Oxford Brookes are studying the integration of vast global population shifts, brought about through war and conflict, as well as the legal and ethical roles of business in protecting and promoting human rights.

This Research Reporter shows how the Business School covers local, national and global issues, and contributes to debate and decision-making. I hope you enjoy reading about some of our projects. Please get in touch if you would like to know more.

**PROFESSOR SIMONETTA MANFREDI**  
Associate Dean for Research and  
Knowledge Exchange



# GLOBALISATION

Nation states no longer decide the future – as industries, technologies and communities share new connections and dependencies, people and ideas are shifting. Our researchers examine the challenges and opportunities of Globalisation. How can Multinational Corporations ensure shared values and practices across linguistic divides? What can seemingly opposed ideologies learn from one another when tackling issues like healthcare? And how can technologies be used to map movements, reduce congestion and improve quality of life?





## MAPPING CONGESTION



**Dr Kate Ji is an academic well-placed for her research – literally. Her office is on the Headington site**

**of the University and overlooks the city of Oxford.**

‘Oxford has an international reputation as a beautiful city of dreaming spires, with historical architecture, world class Universities, museums and a vibrant cultural life. The city’s history and location is part of its appeal – and part of its problem. Oxford attracts some 7 million domestic and international tourists each year. It’s the seventh most visited city in the UK. The growing numbers of tourists contribute significantly to the economy - but they also bring problems. My research

tries to unpick the challenge of tourist congestion.’

The need to address the problem of mobility has been identified by the Government as one of the Grand Challenges for its Industrial Strategy. Kate’s research provides deep insight, with input from key city stakeholders, including the City Council, The Oxford Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLep) and major tourist attractions. By collecting views from local businesses and tour agencies, she aims to develop an integrated framework to tackle the issue.

Having gained local stakeholders’ perspectives, she is now shifting her focus on to tourists. By using mobile data, Kate will decipher the sequences of attractions that tourists visit, the length of their stay at each attraction, and their movements between. This data will help to highlight the over-visited and under-visited areas. Marketing strategies and technological

communication can then propose ways to improve the flow of tourists around and through the city.

Kate says, ‘The exciting thing about this sort of research is that it could genuinely improve congestion for businesses, local residents, and tourists. It’s nice to be using new technologies in this way too, to understand how tourists move through Oxford. And, hopefully, I’ll be able to see some of the positive results from the Business School’s geographical vantage point!’

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## LANGUAGE MATTERS



**What's lost in translation in business? Multinational Corporations (MNCs) often address the**

**issue by introducing English as a common corporate language. Job done, right? Not quite. More often than not, the picture is much more complicated. Among the employees of MNCs, significant variations in fluency in the corporate language tend to occur, both across functions and at different levels of organisational hierarchy.**

In the academic literature which surrounds the subject, these differences tend to be labelled as language 'boundaries', 'barriers', or 'asymmetries' which are typically considered to result in negative consequences for individuals, teams and organisations. For example, they might trigger a range of emotions in employees including fear, anxiety and stress. These can be coupled with resentment towards employees for whom the corporate language is their native tongue. Suddenly a team supposedly united by common language can seem more divided.

Dr Sylwia Ciuk and Professor Martyna Sliwa, from the University of Essex, are working on language asymmetries. They challenge the orthodox views

- by studying the neglected positive consequences. In their extensive international study of ten MNCs, they are examining how language asymmetries can give rise to surprising positive emotions and behaviours – such as empathy, joy and helpfulness. They argue that both individuals, and teams, may benefit. Rather than seeing language asymmetries as barriers that separate team members from managers, each other and members of other teams, Sylwia and Martyna's research suggests they can present a challenge to be overcome, a boundary to be leapt over, and result in surprising benefits.

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## IDEOLOGY AND MEDICINE – LESSONS FROM CHINA



More people, longer lives, greater medical needs – nations around the world wrestle with the

issues of healthcare, and how its provision fits into, and bolsters, their political systems and varieties of capitalism. In the United States, the Obama administration faced strong resistance to its healthcare reform; President Trump now seeks to cancel the Obamacare scheme, not for scientific (economic and medical) reasons, but on an ideological basis. In the UK, during the Brexit referendum, Vote Leave used the NHS as a poster child in its campaign to persuade the electorate of the economic benefits of quitting the EU. The American case pitches collective regulation of healthcare as a menace to individual freedom; the British case appropriates healthcare to shore up claims about sovereignty. In both cases, expertise, scientific knowledge and facts are defeated by populism.

It's not just a feature of the West: in China, healthcare reform and political ideology have been bedfellows since Mao argued for Traditional Chinese Medicine in the late 1940s and rallied his army of barefoot doctors in the 1960s. Mao's decisions on healthcare were motivated by distinctly political, rather than scientific reasoning. The relationship between political ideology and practical medical provisions is one that fascinates Dr Andrea Bernardi.

He says, 'Healthcare can be used to underpin political systems in a real, tangible way. We can look at the issue historically in authoritarian regimes, such as Mao's China, where doctors were sent out into rural areas to provide primary healthcare. They were also a significant part of the Cultural Revolution, part of a movement which prioritised the rural over the urban, and embedded the doctors in communes in the attempt to develop a non-western capitalist and bourgeois medicine. The Barefoot doctor system was abandoned in the 1980s with the fall of collectivisation and the arrival of a new economic policy. But my research looks at how the politicisation of healthcare continues as an issue in contemporary China too. I am studying the political character of the New Rural Co-operative Medical Scheme, the Chinese health insurance that covers the rural population – that's about a tenth of the world's population'.

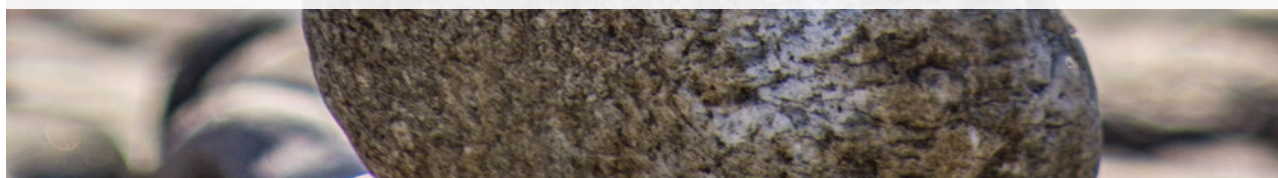
'China has experienced a revival of neo-Maoism, periodic resurgences of nationalism and tendencies towards cultural isolation. These might be heightened through the experience of healthcare – from the use of Traditional Chinese Medicine to a subtle ideological notion of healthcare that has to adhere to Chinese Marxism. Nevertheless, their public healthcare system has been very successful and is now innovating on a massive scale – from digitalising its GP network to providing online healthcare platforms through its booming, indigenous internet giants.'

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# SUSTAINABILITY

‘Sustainability’ is about more than the environment – it explores the interconnectedness of the present and the future, across the natural world and man-made systems. How can organisations and governments plan to ensure replenishment, and the possibility of growth? Our researchers examine the sustainability of values, behaviours and business – from farming to tourism to mentoring, and beyond, and ask what steps can be taken to ensure continuity and security.





## THE 'FRUITS' OF QUALITY WATER



**The fertile Nile Delta and Valley in Egypt have been farmed for millennia, and supported rich civilisations and**

**cultures. But global warming and rising sea levels threaten the future of agriculture in the region. Some experts believe the threats could trigger massive food shortages, creating millions of climate refugees. Monitoring the environmental factors is key to finding solutions to the potential problems, which is where Dr Rehab Osman's research comes in.**

'Soil and water salinity can have a brutal limiting effect on agricultural productivity in semi-arid areas', she explains. 'The Nile Delta and Valley with some of the world's most nutrient-rich soils, have been making a living for nearly 100 million people, but the sharp deterioration in quality threatens the sustainability of life there.'

Rehab's research aims to inform agricultural strategies for environmental sustainability in Egypt, and beyond. She's using innovative research methods to approach these questions.

'I have developed the first social accounting matrix (SAM) for Egypt that introduces irrigation water as a separate production factor. It details agricultural activities and factors across different irrigation seasons and that allows accurate assessment of a wide range of agricultural and irrigation policies. We can model the impacts of changes in water and soil quality on crop yields using a set of satellite data.'

The findings show that potential investment in water quality improvements is 'fruitful' even with very low crop yields. Without increasing water requirements, Egypt can achieve outstanding expansions in high value crops of fruit and vegetables.

Rehab says, 'The research highlights the importance of investing in improving irrigation water quality for local communities, the overall economy and, by extension, the planet.'

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## SATISFYING, SUSTAINABLE TOURISM



**Cape Town is a popular destination for British holidaymakers and features on many travel**

**'bucket lists'. The organisation responsible for inspiring travellers and promoting the city as a 'must-see' place is Cape Town Tourism. One of their aims is to make visitors fall in love with the city and share their enthusiasm with others.**

However, the fragmented nature of the tourism industry makes it challenging to monitor the visitor experience, or predict where it is heading. To address this, Cape Town Tourism set up a project with Dr Robert van der Veen

to develop a Visitor Satisfaction Index to evaluate and benchmark visitor experiences.

Findings from the first three years show visitors rate overall satisfaction levels as very high – over 80%. Factors like the friendliness of locals and the quality of attractions scored most highly. But even issues like personal safety and public transportation received high scores. The results should be reassuring for all stakeholders, but Robert suggests most importantly the index provides improved guidance for future development.

Visitors derive immense satisfaction from knowing their visits have positive impacts and are environmentally and socially responsible. They want high-quality experiences which are sustainable and where economic benefits are shared. If Cape Town delivers high-quality experiences, tourists themselves will become ambassadors for the city. That's

marketing you can't buy.

Cape Town Tourism has developed advice and resources to support the way businesses understand and promote their socially responsible activities ([www.responsiblecapetown.co.za](http://www.responsiblecapetown.co.za)).

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## SUPPORTING THE 'UNSUNG HEROES' OF MENTORING



**Mentoring has been used throughout history, and is now widely employed across**

**organisations and society as a developmental tool. As it has been taken up in different fields as a more formal process, academic research shows the benefits. It helps people realise workplace goals and develop interpersonal skills; it can ensure positive social action, tackle healthcare and rehabilitation issues; and it offers support during life's key transitions.**

Mentoring now takes many forms including e-mentoring, reverse mentoring, and group mentoring. Whilst the mentoring map has become more complex, little is known about those who coordinate schemes, and the skills and knowledge they require. This is where Dr Judie Gannon's research is focused.

'It can be difficult choreographing mentoring schemes across organisations and over time. I've coordinated schemes myself and know there are plenty of dilemmas in managing mentoring relationships. Coordinators often face high levels of burnout and loneliness, despite the satisfaction they get from their work which, ironically enough, supports others at crucial times in lives and careers.'

'My research looks at what support coordinators – who are the unsung heroes of mentoring – need to work effectively and get the best results for everyone.'

With funding from the Economic Social Research Council (ESRC) Impact Accelerator Award scheme, Judie has drawn on the expertise from three local Universities (Oxford Brookes, Oxford and Reading) to support scheme coordinators. Advice on schemes, relevant IT systems, recruitment strategies and other resource materials are available through the STAMINA Mentoring Network.

**Further details are available via the website (<https://www.brookes.ac.uk/iccams/networking-and-collaboration/stamina-mentoring-network/>)**



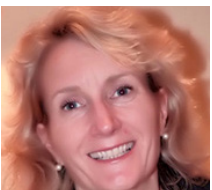
# HUMAN CHALLENGES

Whilst developments in commerce and communication offer increasing connectedness, the human challenges of fractured communities, isolation and individualism appear to grow. The elderly suffer loneliness, millennials face work insecurity and migrant communities suffer hostility. Our researchers are examining solutions – from how different generations use social media, to ways in which refugees can improve their work and life chances.





## OLDER PEOPLE AND SOCIAL MEDIA



**Sharing photographs online and through social media isn't restricted to those born**

**since the advent of the internet. Dr Sarah Quinton and colleagues from The Open University are researching how the phenomenon might help people over 60 years old feel less socially isolated and enhance wellbeing. The project addresses issues of wellbeing, loneliness and social isolation in later life.**

There is some existing research evidence to suggest that communicating with others through digital technologies and social media lessens feelings of loneliness. Photographs, whether shared by

email or via social media platforms (e.g. Instagram, Facebook, Whatsapp) can act as vehicles for sharing life experiences and interests.

Sarah says, 'We intend the results from this study to provide actionable recommendations for organisations which support older people, for instance charities like Age UK, Mind, and the Alzheimer's Society. So often research in this area concentrates on digital's impact on younger people – and quite frequently on the negative implications. It's refreshing to be working with a different demographic, and to be doing research which could have real, positive results.'

Given the expansion of connectivity via social media, and the ageing populations across many countries, research in this area is much needed. Sarah suggests that 'negative' media coverage over personal information and security is a concern amongst some research participants, but that many older people feel the dangers are over-emphasised and are keen to embrace new technical and social horizons.

'Sharing photographs enables older people to connect – not only with those they know – but also to join new communities and form new relationships. For many it's a creative outlet and a focused way to learn new digital skills.'

The research is a collaboration with Professor Shailey Minocha of The Open University and Dr Caroline Holland, a gerontologist at The Open University, funded by the Sir Halley Stewart Trust. Supporting organisations include Age UK Milton Keynes, Campaign to End Loneliness, Silver Robin and Ransackers Association. Sarah and her colleagues hope to secure further funding to expand the project over the next eighteen months.

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**Sir Halley  
Stewart Trust**



## HELPING REFUGEES WORK



**War, violence and persecution are producing unprecedented waves of global migration, with more people**

**uprooted from their homes than at any other time over the last seven decades. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, on average one person is forced from their home every three seconds. Many flee from areas affected by ethnic, political or religious turmoil and war.**

Displaced people face multiple forms of exclusion when they encounter new 'host' communities. This has brought their social integration to the forefront of policymakers' attention. Accessing work enables new migrants to develop transferable skills and establish networks that help their settlement.

Since 2016, Dr Peter Lugosi from the Oxford School of Hospitality Management, Dr Sonia Morano-Foadi and Dr Clara Della Croce from the School of Law have been researching how refugees transition into work, the challenges they encounter, and the various factors shaping their experiences.

Peter explains, 'We've looked at how charities, state institutions, employment agencies and community groups influence refugees' entry into the labour market and how they develop employability. Interviews with refugees and state and third sector representatives, revealed that support was provided by a wide range of stakeholders - with vastly differing resources and objectives. That means refugees have very mixed experiences. Some good, some bad.'

The work has now been extended through a British Academy Newton funded project, involving colleagues from Brazil and the UK, identifying good practices to remove barriers.

Local government and regional actors, especially social enterprises, play an important part. If employers develop inclusive recruitment practices, and key community insiders provide strong input, refugees can be significantly helped. Peter is keen to emphasise the international nature of the collaboration.

'The research provides lots of points of contact between Sao Paulo and Oxford which are of benefit to many groups and institutions, but crucially, we believe it will help wider audiences understand the unique needs of refugees, as well as their potential. By identifying employment pathways we can reduce their dependence, benefit their employers and enhance their respective communities.'

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## ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INTEGRATION



The Syrian Refugee Crisis is one of the worst examples of the problem of people displaced through war and conflict. It is not only the refugees themselves who face challenges as a result, but also recipient communities and countries.

Both the UK and Turkey, as host countries, have been exploring how to help Syrian refugees integrate, gain independence, and contribute economically and socially. Developing 'entrepreneurship capacity' has been a source of academic research in the past, but Professor Levent Altinay is focusing on how it helps with social and economic integration of refugees.

'We're using both interviews and surveys to collect data from Syrian refugees in Turkey and the UK. In addition to examining the role of entrepreneurship, we're also interested in how this affects their social well-being.'

The study will offer important managerial and policy implications. Firstly, a training programme will be designed for refugee entrepreneurs: to address challenges they could face and how they could cope with these. The programme will include legislation, incentives offered by the government, feasibility studies, financial analysis, intercultural communication and human resource management.

The study, funded by the British Academy's Newton Advanced Fellowship, will also offer policy recommendations to government representatives, private sector representatives and NGOs on how best to support and facilitate refugee entrepreneurship. Levent cites the example of service industries addressing legal and societal discrimination as an example of how to think creatively to improve refugees' quality of life.

'Many of these refugees have suffered extraordinarily – our research is about enabling them, and those who help them, to move forward.'

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## WHAT DOES 'EMPLOYABILITY' MEAN?



With the world of work increasingly complex to navigate, final-year students, who have limited career capital, need to demonstrate their potential to prospective employers. But how can they best show their 'employability'?

Research by Dr Karen Handley and Birgit den Outer examines the ambiguities of 'potential' and 'merit' in recruitment, and explores students' understanding of employability. In particular, the project explores how students look at graduate-scheme recruitment websites, how they interpret the explicit and implicit messages, and how this affects their career decisions.

'The students we've talked to are concerned about fitting in, and about being seen by recruiters as a potential fit within the organisational culture. Students read the websites looking for signs of what employers want, and comparing themselves to an idealised graduate. Some students are put off applying. Others have a more cynical perspective. They see recruitment websites as part of an elaborate game of impression management where organisations project a positive employer brand, and students learn how to project what employers want to see.'

This project funded by The British Academy builds on earlier work by Karen and Birgit on the employment trajectories of older workers, and the politics of terminology such as 'employability'.

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# STRATEGIC THINKING

Building connections between ideas is crucial to strategic planning for business. Our research encourages dialogue between stakeholders. It looks to the past, present and future to help organisations perform better. It enables established, historical institutions to understand and reframe their significance in communities, and to plan long-term. As new businesses evolve from University research, Oxford Brookes is designing new interventions to ensure improved female representation. Using cutting-edge technology and data collection, we examine team work, power structures and communication.



## GENDER DIVERSITY AND TEAM PERFORMANCE



**People are not always truthful about themselves: so what if technology could reveal**

**the reality of their behaviours? And what if analysis of those behaviours helped us understand power dynamics in teams and their performance?**

Dr Anne Laure Humbert, Director of the Centre for Diversity Policy Research and Practice, and her colleagues are at the forefront of new ways of analysing how teams work, and what difference gender composition plays. The research uses wearable technologies such as sensors worn around the neck, which can record data using

microphones infrared and Bluetooth. This can be used to map face-to-face interactions, proximity and patterns of communication.

‘Rather than relying on what individuals think happens within a group, we can record what really happens – including, for instance, how much face-to-face time individuals share, and how long people speak for. It gives us a much more objective tool to interpret power and gender within teams.’

This research looks at how team performance is affected by their gender make-up. Anne and her colleagues across Europe have developed a Gender Diversity Index that provides a more sophisticated measure of gender diversity within teams than simply the proportion of women. It takes into account, amongst other things, marital status, care responsibilities, seniority and type of contract.

It has been used to examine the relationship between gender diversity and productivity of teams in the field of STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics).

Anne says, ‘Previously, research suggested teams dominated by women published less. This has been attributed to teaching loads and women playing more pastoral, service roles, but our Index shows that in teams where both women and men are equally included, in all their diversity, there is a positive effect on research productivity.’

The research was funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 project which aims to promote economic growth and create jobs. The research was conducted in partnership with Universities in Spain, Germany, Sweden, and VDE, one of Europe’s largest technical-scientific associations. Results were launched in summer 2018.

**For an overview of the project go to: [www.gedii.eu](http://www.gedii.eu).**

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**GEDII**

Horizon 2020  
European Union Funding  
for Research & Innovation

This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 665851.



## BOOSTING UNIVERSITY SPINOUT COMPANIES



**University research creates business. In fact, since the turn of the millennium over 1700 so-**

**called 'spinout' companies have been created based on academic research in Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects. The scope of the companies is huge – including developing vaccines and cancer drugs, producing better ultrasound equipment and medical diagnostic tools, producing Mobile Apps to track skills, and developing technologies for driverless cars.**

Whilst this entrepreneurial expansion is exciting, the Business School

has identified risks. Only one in ten founders of spinouts is female. This gender imbalance presents concerns about power, influence and the benefits of product and service development. Innovate UK has estimated that boosting female entrepreneurship could deliver approximately £180 billion to the UK economy.

Professor Simonetta Manfredi is leading a team within the Centre for Diversity Policy Research and Practice to improve women's participation in spinout leadership. This project is funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and the Oxford Brookes team is working in collaboration with the University of Oxford, Vitae, the global leader in supporting the professional development of researchers and the International Labour Organisation Gender Equality Training Centre.

She says, 'We want to understand why women are under-represented in spinouts, and work with industry to create interventions which will improve the situation – whether that's

by identifying role models, increasing the participation of women on STEM company boards or helping companies determine policies and actions. We know gender diversity improves the quality of research and we want to help industry and academia work better together to achieve this.'

The Business School is well-placed for this research: the Oxford region ranks number one for spinouts. But Simonetta explains, it needs to set an example in gender diversity.

'The commercialisation of academic research provides extraordinary innovation and solutions to real world problems, as well as jobs. But we need to ensure that the benefits are fairly shared out, and women's input properly valued.'

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# SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL AND EMERGING RESEARCHERS

The Business School has a commitment to supporting early research academics. Our cohort of PhD students come from all over the world, study rich and diverse subjects, and provide new perspectives and international connections. We support researchers as they transition into their careers, nurturing their interests, and providing opportunities for individuals to collaborate with external agencies.

## VICE CHANCELLOR'S FELLOWSHIPS

Oxford Brookes University is supporting early career academics with new Vice Chancellor Fellowships. Two of the Business School's inaugural VC Fellows are featured below. Dr Samentha Goethals, is an expert in Human Rights, with a background in advocacy; Dr Stefanos Dimitrakopoulos' research interests deal with advanced statistical methods.

### HUMAN RIGHTS IN BUSINESS



With multinational corporations spanning the globe, the role of business in protecting human rights has never been more important. But responsibilities both in terms of workers, production, service provision and customers, are increasingly difficult to decipher. States are the main custodians of human rights under International Human Rights Law. However, since 2011, businesses have been formally required not to negatively impact on the human rights of individuals and groups.

International policy developments, national legislation changes and mounting pressures from civil society, shareholders and customers, have placed human rights firmly on the agenda. Large companies are increasingly developing relevant policies and processes of due diligence to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for any adverse human rights impacts.

Dr Samentha Goethals' research steps into this complex field, and explores what policies and processes mean inside business.

'There are surprisingly under-researched questions about how human rights are interpreted in everyday business contexts. I have conducted interviews with work-floor employees, operation managers and Corporate Social Responsibility directors across nine international hotel groups and reviewed their related policies. The interesting thing is how understandings vary at different levels.

'Employees tend to be concerned by basic issues of

inequality and indignity in their everyday jobs. Managers are caught in expectations to meet targets and often overlook ethical issues. Directors are concerned by severe risks for their sectors, such as human trafficking. The different interpretations suggest a lack of engagement between decision-makers and beneficiaries of human rights in business.'

Providing strategic advice is now the focus of Samentha's work. She is working on a programme to develop policies and training for all strata of business.

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### MODELLING ECONOMIC CRISES



News headlines over the last decade have been dominated by financial crises: the banking collapse of 2008; Eurozone debt problems; and Brexit.

Businesses, investors and governments require robust economic models to understand the issues involved, and allow for planning.

Dr Stefanos Dimitrakopoulos provides flexible, sophisticated economic models, with the aim of explaining macroeconomic problems.

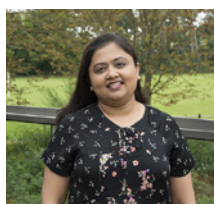
'I use econometric tools – basically statistical models and techniques – to map different macro-financial topics. My research has evolved through three problematic areas. The first is sovereign credit ratings – the perceived stability of economic systems, like the Eurozone. Secondly I've been modelling inflation dynamics and Federal Funds rates – how the US Central bank keeps prices relatively steady. Currently, I am focusing on stock markets, trying to understand better how we can improve volatility forecasting – that will allow international investors to make lower risk decisions.'

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# PHD STUDENTS

The Business School Doctoral Programme, led by Dr David Bowen, has been growing over the years and currently has more than a hundred active doctoral students. Here we highlight four: one from each academic corner of the Business School. They are at various stages of their research, but are all distinguished by their passion for their subject, diligence and communication skills. We hope these brief summaries will encourage you to make contact with the School to find out more about our PhD researchers.

## SHWETHA KUMAR SHRAYAMSA

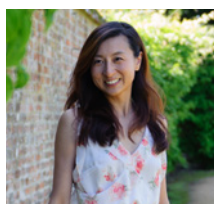


The mobile gaming industry is worth 50 billion dollars. Nearly a third of the world's population are regular mobile gamers. 63% of gamers are female. These are just some of the surprising facts which sit behind Shwetha Kumar Shrayamsa's research.

She is studying the effectiveness of product placement through the eyes of female Indian consumers.

'India will soon be the most populous country in the world, and female gamers are increasing in number, particularly as smartphones become even more prevalent. But men and women respond differently to product placement on different media, not least because of their environments and activities. I'm conducting gender-specific research, using an animated mobile game to study Indian women's reactions in a naturalistic environment. The potential application for marketers is huge.'

## KUO FENG



As the world's population ages, the associated problems of isolation and loneliness can have adverse effects on health and economies. Kuo Feng studies China, a country where the population is growing older at a quicker rate than nearly any other country.

She is examining whether senior living facilities, which offer hospitality services and social space, can help older adults connect socially.

Using questionnaires and focus groups in three major cities – Beijing, Shanghai and Shenyang – the research will build on the well-being literature in sociology, psychology and healthcare. The holistic approach should guide business practitioners and enhance older people's well-being.

## STEVE WORKMAN



The reputation of business is at a very low ebb – only 43% of the general UK population, and 38% of youth, say they trust business (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2018). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Reporting, which measures the impact of organisations

beyond the financial, including environmental and ethical effects, can improve transparency. The majority of FTSE 250 businesses have adopted CSR reporting, but, unlike financial reporting, CSR reporting is primarily voluntary and lacks universally applied frameworks, standards and metrics. It is vulnerable to accusations of 'greenwashing', or being used as a 'reputation management' tool.

Steve Workman's research aims to evaluate CSR reporting in corporate decision-making.

'I'm particularly interested in digitally-enabled Millennial business leaders - those born between 1980 and 2000 – the so-called "digital natives". It's a more technologically proficient generation, which wants information 'right here, right now'. I'm using their input to develop a framework of CSR Reporting tools – it will improve decision-making around environmental, ethical, social and governance issues.'

## RICHARD LONGMAN



The 'rules of the game', as taught to managers in business schools across the world, suggest that there is a tried and tested way of organising – that people can (and should) be controlled. Richard Longman's research challenges this idea:

'Old, hierarchical ways of organising, grounded in ideas about command-and-control, rationality, and linearity, don't necessarily apply to new ways of doing business together. My research looks at new ways of organising, perhaps driven by purpose rather than profit, and fuelled by the explosion of technologically-mediated communications. People can be 'organised' without being controlled.'

# WORKING WITH BUSINESSES



As organisations face new challenges to how they operate, the Business School is redefining the ways we exchange our expertise with local, national and international clients and partners. We continue to offer our bespoke specialist consultancy and training programmes, but are adopting new ways of bringing leading-edge research themes, teaching specialisms and academic expertise together. Increasingly, a number of projects stem from joint work done with other university teams with specialist industry knowledge (health, architecture, technology, engineering etc) combined with Business School expertise. This holistic combination of skills provides insightful analysis and practical solutions for our clients across a range of industries.

New initiatives include:

- A suite of short (1-day) 'masterclasses', aimed at local organisations needing assistance in their post-startup growth phase
- A programme of roundtables and presentations to build connections with external partners who might benefit from the School's wide-ranging specialisms
- Networking opportunities to ensure closer alignment between research and business needs
- Support for developing Degree and MBA Apprenticeship schemes

If you want to explore how we can support your organisation, please contact Commercial Services to arrange discussions with relevant experts.

## Masterclasses

The Business School is launching a new open access short course 'Masterclass' programme covering shifting trends in economics, management, accountancy, marketing and human interactions.

Participants can elect to attend just one event, or the whole programme – which will be available in its entirety at least twice in a calendar year. The courses are aimed at leaders and managers from all sections of industry and the public sector. The Masterclass programme is interactive and designed to expose participants to leading-edge thinking and practical approaches to managing a variety of business challenges. Drawing from content available in our longer (professional development and degree) programmes in combination with real world experiences, the Masterclasses will provide participants with tools and methodologies to improve their organisations' performance.

## Degree Apprenticeships

The national Apprenticeship Scheme has a target of 3 million new apprenticeships by 2020, supported by an Employer's Levy. OBBS Commercial Services is developing ways to help local organisations use their Levy funds to maximum benefit. The sums involved can be considerable: in Oxfordshire, the two biggest levy-payers pay a combined total of £5m annually. A Business School survey of some of the 1800 levy-paying companies in Oxfordshire showed that none of them are in a position to spend all of their available funding this year. This is a significant amount of unspent money that could benefit businesses.

Traditionally, young people are the beneficiaries of apprenticeships, but over a third of surveyed companies were interested in the potential for developing existing staff which can include undergraduate and postgraduate candidates for the first time. We have already developed a Chartered Management Degree Apprenticeship (CMDA) programme with long-established partner colleges. A Masters / MBA route for aspiring managers, and existing, experienced managers will be available from January 2019.

**For more information on how we can support you through applied research, short, bespoke courses or with apprenticeships, please email: [commercialservices@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:commercialservices@brookes.ac.uk)**



## THE IMPACT OF HERITAGE



**Blenheim is not just a stunning historical site; it is a hugely diverse business with a duty to preserve**

**their legacy, a responsibility to continually evolve, and a need to sustain the strong connection with the community.**

In addition to being a visitor attraction, Blenheim is also a venue for weddings and private or corporate events, a filming location, an estate rich in forestry and farming practices, a producer and supplier of Natural Mineral Water, a landowner with a portfolio of properties, a building and contracting business, and a charitable foundation.

Dominic Hare, Blenheim CEO, sums up this mix of activities by saying "We are fortunate to be such a multi-faceted business and, with our neighbours, part of a uniquely vibrant community; one where we can all live, thrive and prosper together for many years to come. We believe that there is no possible vision for a successful and flourishing Blenheim which does not depend on the flourishing and success

of the communities around it - and the same is true in reverse."

As part of this vision, the Estate has a commitment to sustainably triple its contribution to the local economy within the next ten years. To help them to understand how to do that, they worked with Dr Sara le Roux.

"When most people think of Blenheim, they think of the impressive architecture and beautiful gardens. But it so much more than just a tourist attraction: it hosts a potpourri of cultural events, manages diverse resources and contributes to the national and local economy. The Estate needs to understand its economic impact on all these levels to plan for the future: that's far more complicated than it might first appear. I led a team to measure the economic impact of the Palace and its Estate – our assessment shows both direct and Value Added benefits."

The report shows the Palace and Estate contributes tens of millions of pounds to the UK economy and supports thousands of jobs in the local area. The report used well-established economic models to assess direct spending and employment and estimate the indirect impact of this activity (e.g. additional effects in the supply chain) to establish the Gross Value Added (GVA) of the estate.

The report assesses diverse economic relationships – from interactions with other business partners (for example, Searcys which runs the catering at Blenheim), to showcase events (such as Countryfile Live). By providing detailed economic data, the report gives the Estate a tool to inform its strategic priorities, including, for instance, the goal of doubling charitable contributions to the local community.

The research is ongoing, with events planned to chart developments and opportunities. The project has strategic implications for other Heritage and tourist sites.

"It's fascinating to be able to measure the value of a place like Blenheim. Of course it has significant historical importance, but it is now able to demonstrate how it is positively contributing to the lives of lots of people now, and is planning to sustain itself and its role in the future. I know that other businesses would benefit from similar study."

**Further information is available on the Blenheim Palace website where a full version of the study is available to download or contact: [sle-roux@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:sle-roux@brookes.ac.uk)**

# HOW CAN THE OXFORD BROOKES BUSINESS SCHOOL HELP YOU WITH YOUR CHALLENGES?

**Oxford Brookes Business School helps organisations develop and grow through research and practical support programmes, including:**

- Research partnerships and knowledge transfer partnerships
- Collaborative funding applications to Research Councils, Trusts and Foundations and Government-sponsored Knowledge Exchange Programmes
- Consultancy, where we act as independent partners providing insight and advice, based on our broad research experience and knowledge
- Bespoke training programmes, with Brookes Certification, drawing on our strengths across all business and management disciplines
- Development and support of workshops and symposia around key business development issues

If you wish to receive information about our free programme of talks, open lectures, seminars and networking please contact **[business-research-office@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:business-research-office@brookes.ac.uk)**

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