The last issue of the CBiS Newsletter was a Covid Special, highlighting how CBiS, its staff, projects, research students and operations were navigating the start of the pandemic and the first UK lockdown. This edition builds to explain how CBiS is, despite the ongoing pandemic, getting on with it!

The first section provides insights from our research cluster leaders, updates from our PhD and DBA programmes, and shares the experiences of some of our PhD and DBA candidates. The section also describes how we have adjusted our data collection activities, and how we are training our research staff to better cope with the restrictions posed by the pandemic and to seize the opportunities which emerge. We share also the pandemic-led views and experiences of newly recruited research staff in CBiS.

The second section reproduces opinion pieces which recently appeared in the influential The Conversation, an independent source of news and views, sourced from the academic and research community and delivered direct to the public, as well as offering a set of some of our Covid-response blogs. We conclude by showcasing forthcoming journal special issues edited from CBiS and promote some of our more major conferences. CBiS is getting on with it!

“Through understanding the impact of organisations’ activities, behaviours and policies, CBiS’s research seeks to promote responsibility, to change behaviours, and to achieve better outcomes for economies, societies and the individual.”
Welcome Editorial – Getting On With It!

The theme of this edition of the CBiS Newsletter very much is getting on with it! As the nation’s second Covid-19 enforced lockdown is in operation, we focus here on how our researchers are navigating the challenges of the ‘new normal’ – or normals – in order to fulfil our commitments to funders, deliver to our KPIs and maintain the momentum we have built up over the past few years.

That momentum has led to our researchers delivering all of our REF2021 promises. Everyone is returnable in the REF at a GPA of 3.2, which is a step-change improvement from REF2014. Almost 100 PGDs have completed their PhDs since REF2014. CBiS has delivered the full set of the Faculty’s Impact Cases and they are hugely impressive. For the first time in CBiS’s five years, we ended the recent financial year by beating our budget. These are impressive headlines.

Arguably, as attention-getting is the manner in which our researchers have refused to be derailed by the pandemic. How this has been achieved – getting on with it! – is the focus of this edition of our Newsletter. It has not all been plain sailing: there have been ‘downs’ as well as ‘ups’. We share these experiences and fascinating insights with you in these pages and features.

Building Strategic Partnerships

In today’s environment, partnerships and collaborations are of pivotal importance. Across our four clusters or research teams, there have been some worthy developments in recent months. These include:

- Founding membership of the Emergent Alliance. During the early stages of the pandemic, industrial players combined to create the Emergent Alliance, harnessing the expertise of Rolls-Royce, Google, IBM, Microsoft and many others. A handful of university collaborators have been invited to join, including, through CBiS, Coventry University. The Alliance is now formulating a research strategy around a set of key challenges designed – by harnessing green growth – to underpin economic recovery. The Data, Organisations and Society cluster is playing a key role in these plans (Professor Alexis Garcia-Perez).

- During lockdown, the International Critical Social Marketing Network has been set up with Queensland University of Technology in Australia and the University of Bristol, with members from all over the world participating in a series of online plenaries. A key focus is on digital and its capacity to support behaviour changes that improve wellbeing, linked to financial wellbeing, sustainability and health outcomes, but also to mitigate the potential negative consequences for individuals of using digital in this way, such as with people’s privacy, digital security and the human rights issues (Professor Sally Dibb).

- We are forging a strong relationship with PolicyConnect, a leading Westminster think-tank. Professor Sally Dibb will join the steering group for their newly established Smart Homes and Independent Living Commission, which is linked to the APPG for Assistive Technology. PolicyConnect is also partnering us in research bidding. The think tank is currently also organising an APPG on Data Analytics event, focusing on financial services and AI, which we hope will showcase our Ipsos MORI survey data from the current financial conversations project (Professors Sally Dibb and Lyndon Simkin).

- Under the banner of the UK-Indonesia Consortium for Interdisciplinary Sciences (UKICIS), a new strategic relationship is being developed between the UK and Indonesian Governments to address the issues of climate change, sustainability and resilience (involving FCO, BEIS and the British Council). The consortium was launched at the Indonesian Embassy in August. Founding partners include the UK universities of Nottingham, Warwick and Coventry, with the Institut Teknologi Bandung, IPB University and Gadjah Mada University in Indonesia. These founding members are supported by the Indonesian Embassy in London, the British Embassy in Indonesia, and the Indonesian Ministry of Research and Technology/National Agency for Research and Innovation (Professor Benny Tjahjono).

- Working through members of the University’s Leadership Team, we are now fronting CU’s relationship with the Midlands Engine and the seven combined authorities as they strategise and plan for economic green and inclusive renewal post-Covid (Dr Paul Sissons and Dr David Jarvis).

- CBiS is now co-developer of Britain’s Most Admired Companies, hosted by Management Today and Echo Research, now in its 30th year. The latest report will be completed in January, with data now being analysed in conjunction with our Data, Organisations and Society cluster leaders. As well as helping to turn around this year’s survey of reputation – containing fascinating insights into corporates’ Covid-led issues – the team is exploring changing trends in the Board room over the thirty years’ life of this study, such as gender, CSR, sustainability and resilience.

Life Hasn’t Stopped!

- Working with pollsters Ipsos MORI, CBiS has been able to rapidly re-orientate work to factor in Covid-19’s implications for the Centre’s ongoing research in areas such as personal debt, food waste and food banks, supply chain security, sustainable food production, changes in the catering sector, cyber resilience, and perceptions of workplace quality during this turmoil. A piece in this edition provides more details.

- Three papers authored from CBiS won best paper awards at this autumn’s prestigious British Academy of Management Conference, in the Knowledge and Learning (Will King/Helen Roby/Sally Dibb), eBusiness and eGovernment (Carlos Ferreira/Brenda Hollyoak/Maureen Meadows/Alessandro Merendino), and Innovation tracks (Xinwen Zhang/Xue Zhou/Esin Yoruk).
• Dr Paul Sissons has been appointed as an editor to Work, Employment and Society, a top-rated 4* journal.

• CBiS research assistant Jordon Lazell successfully defended his PhD thesis in a July viva, meaning that all staff in or associated with CBiS now hold doctorates.

• In October, Alexeis Garcia-Perez secured a well-deserved promotion to Professor.

• Despite the pandemic’s challenges, CBiS has welcomed new staff, with further details later in this edition:
  - Dr Claire Brewis secured one of the new CU post-doc staff posts and started in September.
  - Dr Shantanu Mullick joined as a food waste and big data expert in October.
  - Dr Macarena Beltran joined in October to support the SIMBIO sustainability project.

• Currently in production are many CBiS-edited special issues of leading journals: Technological Forecasting and Social Change (Professor Maureen Meadows), Journal of Sustainable Tourism (Professor Alexeis Garcia-Perez), Journal of Marketing Management (Professor Sally Dibb), International Journal of Lean Six Sigma (Professor Benny Tjahjono), Sustainability (Dr David Bek and Professor Benny Tjahjono), European Urban and Regional Studies (Dr David Jarvis/Dr Paul Sissons/Dr Jennifer Ferreira).

• In December, CBiS hosts several internationally recognised conferences: Urban Europe, Precarious Futures (Dr David Jarvis, Dr Paul Sissons and Dr Jennifer Ferreira); The European Conference on Knowledge Management (Professor Alexeis Garcia-Perez); and the Chinese Economic Association European Conference (Dr Senmao Xia).

• As part of Coventry University’s goal to inform, inspire and enrich its students’ learning by incorporating our latest research within their modules, senior CBiS staff are acting as research buddies for module leaders on key degree programmes; CBiS has launched a research internship programme for undergraduates; and all research staff have produced teaching cases and seminar activities based on their highly topical and real-world research, now being launched as the CBiS Library of Teaching Cases.

Training and Adapting

• CBiS has created a ground-breaking new training programme to address how to undertake research under pandemic circumstances. This is forward looking and supports ECRs and ACRs equally! The programme also unites CBiS’s researchers during a period of fragmented remote working.

• New social media training is also now in place, for using platforms such as LinkedIn for data collection.

• CBiS has interrogated any failed bids and their feedback from funding bodies, resulting in new protocols and mentoring approaches for bid creation, as well as an uprated quality assurance process.

• PGR training for our PhDs has been completely re-thought and re-launched, linking better with the support and training provided by the Doctoral College and the other research centre in the Faculty, the Centre for Financial and Corporate Integrity. This very much reflects the challenges of undertaking a PhD and living away from home during a pandemic.

• Our DBA delivery has been re-thought, bringing together separate DBA cohorts for milestone events, to build critical mass and create a larger professional doctorate community.

Details of all of these developments feature in the subsequent pages of this Newsletter.

PG Researchers’ Successes

• CBiS had 15 new-starter PhDs in September and 18 new-starter DBAs, which more than back-fills completions amongst our PGR community.

• During lockdown 7 CBiS PhDs were awarded, 12 more PhDs have been successfully examined.

• The new co-tutelle PhD programme is now up and running in Spain and recruited to. The Deakin co-tutelle in Australia is now being relaunched.

You will find many more details about our PhD and DBA programmes and our inspiring PG researchers in this edition.

There are many examples in this edition of how our researchers are getting on with it, as well as frank and directional accounts of the challenges being faced. We hope you find these experiences and approaches to be interesting and perhaps even helpful. Let’s hope that our next edition is not also created whilst in lockdown!

And despite everything that is conspiring to make our lives difficult, we hope you all enjoy the December festivities and stay safe with your loved ones.

Professor Lyndon Simkin
CBiS Executive Director
The Tragic Death of Former CBiS Fellow Professor Jill Le Clair

Former CBiS Fellow Jill Le Clair has been killed in a dreadful accident near her home in Toronto. According to the Toronto Star newspaper Jill, “died after a driver jumped the curb and slammed his minivan into a coffee shop at Christie and Dupont Streets, where she had gone to meet a friend. Police say she was sitting on her walker on the sidewalk when she was hit. She was 73”. The accident happened on October 24th and was reported on October 30th.

Jill was a big part of the CBiS community. Jill was always collegiate, supportive, happy to engage across our team, and to support CBiS’s evolution. She did so with such calmness, positivity and grace.

Owing to the aftermath of a car crash in the mid-1990s, Jill had many challenges to overcome as she went about her work, which often took her into disadvantaged and risky inner-city suburbs in her fieldwork. We had a chaperone accompany her to some very dodgy parts of London, from where she would check in by phone to let us know all was well. Always with a cheery and reassuring tone.

Jill was previously a Professor in the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Humber College Institute in Toronto, before taking up a prestigious Marie Curie International Incoming Fellowship within CBiS, under the mentorship of Dr Ian Brittain. This Fellowship carried out research between 2014 and 2016 entitled, “An investigation of the impact of multi-platform media coverage of the 2012 London Paralympic Games and the 2015 Toronto Parapan American Games upon perceptions of disability”.

Jill and Ian had been friends for several years prior to this, having met at a variety of conferences and events connected to Paralympic and disability sport. Ian says, “Jill was a genuinely warm and caring person who used her life experiences of acquiring a disability in a car accident to help others understand, through her academic work and her deeds, what life is really like for disabled people. However, she never let her own situation get her down and made a smile and a kind word her trademark. I was genuinely shocked to hear of her passing and even more so by the manner. She will be greatly missed by all those who knew her”.

Jill’s research made a difference… she was passionate about righting wrongs, creating a fairer society, and supporting those in our society with disadvantages.

Jill was a lovely person. And a highly accomplished academic. Her impact on society was noteworthy. Sadly, events can be very cruel. Jill’s life should not yet be over.

Lyndon Simkin, Executive Director of CBiS
November 1st, 2020
Sustainable Production and Consumption Cluster Update

Whilst COVID-19 and public health policy have dominated the headlines for much of 2020, there have been concerns that longer-term sustainability challenges have been blown off the agenda by the ferocity of the pandemic and its impacts. The reality is very mixed; on the one hand, we have seen a sharp rise in unsustainable practices such as the disposal of vast volumes of PPE in landfill, let alone casual littering of face masks across townscapes and the countryside. On the other hand, for a short while at least, we were reminded of the pleasures of a world with massively reduced air pollution and our appreciation for nature grew. For researchers of supply chains these have been fascinating times. Our work made it into news stories, which described failing and ‘pivoting’ supply chains in March and April, as retailers battled to source toilet paper and imported products became stuck in lengthy queues at ports around the world. Supply chain management has been at the heart of work to connect needy people with PPE, food, medicines and other necessities across the globe. These times have been challenging, personally and professionally, but it has been heartening to see how our research team has responded, adapted and been creative, in order to reinforce the relevance of our work in these unsettling and fast changing times.

During the summer of 2020, a number of funding bids were submitted through the cluster, some of which happily have come to fruition. Dr David Bek and Dr Jill Timms are part of a team investigating resilience in cut-flower supply chains, in a project funded by the Department for International Development. The project is led by the Fairtrade Foundation and involves several of the UK’s leading retailers. David, Jill and Dr Jenny Ferreira are also working on a project with the Dutch Flower industry, investigating sustainability within the global wildflower harvesting industry. So, how do such international research projects operate in a time of lockdowns and limited movement? Obviously, activities for now are online, with travel-related work being pushed back within the project timelines in the hope that things will open up in 2021. Both projects are operating effectively thanks to Zoom and Teams. Strong networking and relationship building in the past is paying off, as this creates the bedrock of trust required to deliver in these ‘virtual’ times. And these projects play an important role in keeping our team connected, with regular online meetings between the lead investigators and others in CBiS and FBL who are contributing to the delivery of the projects.

The SIMBIO (Social Innovation Management for BIOPlastics) research project continues to progress well, despite the challenges of managing a project involving partners across the globe. The Canadian partners have facilitated the first online workshop, which...
communicated the findings of the key stakeholder interviews to discuss the role of bio-plastics in a circular economy, how they are envisaged as a replacement to plastics, their cost biodegradability, standardisation, environmental impact and the active regulatory framework. The online workshop utilised the Zoom software’s breakout feature, allocating groups of stakeholders to focused dialogue sessions. The research team at CBiS (Professor Benny Tjahjono, Dr David Bek, Dr Macarena Beltran and Dr Jordon Lazell) are currently developing the interview materials as well as the format of the social innovation process that will form the content of three workshop sessions carried out remotely over the coming months. The outcome of this will be meaningful engagement with a cross-section of stakeholders, to facilitate technological development in this area. The team staged an online seminar, linked to SiMBIO, on the 12th November which featured Niall Dunne, CEO of Polymateria. The seminar focused on the future of bioplastics and included a panel discussion led by the SiMBIO team.

Humanitarian organisations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), have a massive role to play in the struggle to manage the human impacts of COVID-19. Managing their environmental impacts is one of the problems that rapid response organisations face. Our Associate, Hossein Zarei, has teamed up with the logistics department of ICRC in Geneva, Switzerland for a pilot project to help deal with the deeply concerning challenge of waste oil, which creates many severe environmental problems at the sites of the ICRC operations. Through Hossein’s engagement and the initiative of ICRC field logistics managers. This project helps to highlight the critical importance of maintaining our focus on sustainability issues during the battle against COVID-19.

Our project investigating sustainability risks within Indonesia-UK coffee supply chains has been disrupted by the pandemic, as we have not been able to stage the face-to-face stakeholder workshops which had been planned. Led by our Associate, Dr Mahdi Bashiri, the team (Dr Jennifer Ferreira, Dr Jordon Lazell and Professor Benny Tjahjono) switched to a computer-based tool to model the coffee supply chain, and to represent how the stakeholders might respond to sustainability risks. The System Dynamics model is providing an excellent basis for exploring scenarios that can mitigate those risks. Our approach demonstrates the real value offered by computer models in supporting social science research in the midst of the pandemic.

Other cluster highlights include:

A review into the future of horticulture growing media in the UK, with reference to the phasing out of the usage of peat in compost products, was published at the end of October. The review, commissioned by the Horticultural Trades Association and the Growing Media Association, was led by Dr David Bek in collaboration with colleagues in the Research Centre for Agroecology Water and Resilience. The report makes a series of recommendations for assisting the growing media industry in achieving a successful transition towards increased usage of sustainable contents in their products. Such a transition is of critical importance as peatlands are amongst the most efficient carbon sinks on the planet and are a frontline in the battle against climate change. Therefore, it is vital that peat is replaced with alternatives that have minimal carbon footprints.

Our postgraduate researcher Marsha Smith has been actively engaging in supporting communities in need through her food waste research since the first national lockdown came into effect. Marsha has been supporting her research network by setting up and moderating two WhatsApp groups about social eating, surplus food redistribution and emergency food provision. Through these groups 56,000 meals and 13,500 food parcels were delivered during the summer and the groups have acted as conduits for processing new requests for help and developing new partnerships. Marsha has subsequently been co-opted onto Nottingham City Council’s holiday meal provision and Carbon Neutrality 2028 steering groups and is helping to write social eating into local food security policies. Marsha has been quick to share her experiences through blogs published on CURB, The Future Food Beacon of Excellence and in The Sociological Review. Marsha and David Bek also published an article in The Conversation discussing how social eating might form part of the social infrastructure in a post-COVID19 UK foodscape.

Marsha has also delivered two webinar presentations with The National Food Service and with Eden Project Communities. The digital environment has been pivotal.

Marsha Smith and Dr Jordon Lazell have also been busy planning for the delivery of the Future of Food 2 Symposium to be hosted by CBiS in June 2021. As the public debates about free-school meals are illustrating, the pandemic is having profound impacts upon people’s ability to access food. Brexit will also disrupt our food provisioning systems. Therefore, our event will be vital for ‘bringing together’ (in person and/or virtually) key stakeholders for debate and to propose a policy agenda for action in the food space.

Dr Jenny Ferreira has been actively engaging with debates about the impacts of the pandemic upon high coffee shops and the high street, with an article being published in The Conversation and being interviewed for The Coffee Podcast for an upcoming series on research. The cluster has been delighted to welcome new PGR Hillary Chindodo, whose research focuses upon increasing the economic value received by smallholder coffee producers. Hillary is being supervised by Dr David Bek and Dr Jenny Ferreira.

And we are delighted to be able to announce that the cluster has been strengthened through the addition of new recruits in recent weeks, namely, Dr Pattanapong Tiwasing, Dr Macarena Beltran and Dr Shantanu Mallick. This is certainly not an easy time for people to start new jobs in new places, but all three are to be commended for the way that have they adapted and got stuck into their new roles. We look forward very much to working with them in the coming months…and even meeting them face-to-face at some point!

Despite all the challenges imposed directly and indirectly by the pandemic, the cluster is being extremely successful at establishing new ways of working and ensuring that our work collectively contributes to promoting sustainable behaviours at all levels of policy and practice.
Economic Development and Inclusive Economies Cluster Update

The Economic Development and Inclusive Economies (EDIE) research cluster is focused on generating new insights to the study of economic development, and economic and social inclusion. Alongside long-running concerns about ‘who gains from growth’, there is a widespread acknowledgement that future development needs to be more socially and environmentally sustainable, ambitions that have been brought into sharper focus by the impacts of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

The Covid-19 induced turmoil of the period since March 2020 has underscored again the huge policy relevance and impact of work undertaken by EDIE research cluster. The period of the crisis has witnessed fleetfooted adoption of new remote and virtual ways of working by colleagues, and has also seen them react at very short notice to support policy partners and explore new research themes and modes of collaboration with key stakeholders. The pandemic has shifted the focus and immediate priorities of many of EDIE’s external collaborators, as they grapple with the ongoing social, economic and environmental impacts of the Covid crisis. In helping to meet these challenges, EDIE researchers have adapted ongoing projects in response to the evolving situation and taken on new short-notice research commissions focused on key Covid impacts.

One project that has witnessed considerable adaptation in response to Covid involves research into creative freelancers for the NESTA Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC). This work is being led by Professor Nick Henry, Dr Paul Sissons, Dr Victoria Barker and Dr Kevin Broughton and has needed to respond and ‘flex’ on two fronts. Planned interviews with creative freelancers were delayed, given ‘shocks’ to freelancer incomes during the crisis and consequent employment churn in the sector. Sensitivity to this issue impacted on project timings and has seen the team putting in additional work over the autumn to complete interviews. Second, the team have expanded the coverage of interviews to address the (international desire to understand the transport user behaviours witnessed during the Covid lockdown.

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Finally, cluster colleagues have also been quick to transform activities which engage with their other key audience, the wider international academic community. The cluster’s plans for an international conference on Urban Precarity during the summer of 2020 were unavoidably impacted by the circumstances of the pandemic. However, rather than shelving plans for the conference, to be staged in partnership with the highly ranked Journal European Urban and Regional Studies (EURS), the conference organising team of Dr Paul Sissons, Dr David Jarvis and Dr Jennifer Ferreira worked with external and internal partners to move the event into the virtual world, and will now stage it online during the first week of December 2020. The response to the change has been exceptional, with papers submitted by potential speakers from across Europe, North America and Australia. The team is hugely excited by the prospect of a very powerful conference, and by harnessing the energy and insight of the day itself to edit a special issue of EURS in 2021.
Launch of our Esports Talks webinar series ‘Road to the Olympics’, in conjunction with the Asian Electronic Sports Federation (AESF), with the first webinar taking place in October and five more scheduled over 2020-21. Additionally, Dr Lindsey Appleyard (with Professor Sally Dibb) is leading the Financial Capability Team’s development of the free MoneySkills App, which helps users to manage their money. We also had two more PhD completions by PGRs supervised by SEFS cluster members since the last CBiS Newsletter, which further attests to the smooth working of online (remote) supervision. In some cases, such profitable PGR-supervisor conversations led to agreed decisions to modify PGRs’ data collection plans as a result of the barriers posed by the pandemic, to allow for useful information and evidence to be feasibly and purposefully obtained. Under the ASPIRE mentorship from Dr Ian Brittain, Dr Simon Gerard was also recently awarded a CU Trailblazer PhD studentship, to start in September 2021, entitled ‘Austerity, COVID-19 pandemic and the risk of mission drift among grassroots sport clubs in the UK’.

As part of an ongoing CBiS strategy to raise profile, but now with a pandemic forcing us to think about new routes for data collection, networking and dissemination, following Dr Lindsey Appleyard’s CBiS Briefing Paper, SEFS’s leadership has encouraged cluster members to join relevant LinkedIn interest groups, with several members now actively part of many such groups (including SERVSIG - Your service research community; Marketing I Social Media I Business I Digital Media: the Harvard Business Review Discussion Group; Credit Union Network; Responsible Finance; Women in FinTech; and Opportunity Finance Network). SEFS cluster members also remain focused on establishing new connections and relationships with relevant external organisations, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. For example, over the past few months, Dr Benoit Senaux has forged new partnerships with the Asian Esports Federation (AESF), the Sport Integrity Global Alliance (SIGA, https://siga-sport.com/), the SIGA University Network, and Women in Football (https://www.womeninfootball.co.uk/).

Renewed emphasis by SEFS cluster members is also currently being placed on supporting the research enriched learning agenda at Coventry. Led by CBiS’s Executive Director, all our Grade 8, 9 and 10 staff are producing research-based contemporary Case Studies to be used by the Schools as part of our contribution to Coventry University’s Research Enriched Learning agenda, alongside the production of bespoke teaching materials (seminar exercises) and guest lectures, that are integral to the research-inspired CBiS buddying system.

Dr Harjit Sekhon, as Strategic Director of the DBA, alongside Dr Carlos Ferreira, ensured the smooth start of cohorts four and five of the DBA, made possible by adjustments to allow online delivery also by virtue of a flexible utilisation of Coventry University’s IT infrastructure. DBA candidates’ feedback to date has been very positive and the next workshops are scheduled for November/December 2020. As part of EventRights, Dr Ian Brittain is leading an online debate for Master’s students from partner universities (on the 8th and 9th of December), where the students will be mixed up from various partners and then will have time to prepare an argument for or against various topics related to the EventRights project’s theme. Staff from partner institutions will then judge the debates and decide upon a winner. We are also planning the organisation of international conferences, such as “Tourism Crisis and Disasters: Responses, Recovery and Resilience” (Dr Vijay Reddy) scheduled for March 2021, and later in 2021 the regular disability sport conference at Coventry (Dr Ian Brittain) ‘Disability Sport: Promoting Human Rights, Diversity and Inclusion’.

As per the University’s guidelines, we do not plan for international travel at least until the end of this calendar year, and remain flexible to exploiting opportunities to present at or organise conferences and events in ‘real life’, or ‘virtual’ formats, as the case may be throughout the rest of this academic year.

Sector, Economic and Financial Studies Cluster Update

Despite the prolonged disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic and further social distancing measures following the lockdown, members of the SEFS cluster have continued to adjust very well to new ways of working, tirelessly supporting each other and their PGRs, and keeping very busy seeking to exploit emerging opportunities for new research, bidding, alternative modalities for dissemination and collaborations, also leveraging on the challenges and opportunities brought about by Covid-19 and related counter measures.

We have been extremely prolific in the first nine months of this year. Since January 2020, SEFS cluster members had 17 articles published or accepted, most of which are in 3 and 4 ABS star-rated journals, with an impressive pipeline of an additional 21 manuscripts under review or in preparation for submission over this academic year, signalling a strong kick start for top quality outputs likely to be entered for REF2026.

In line with CBiS’s renewed strategic emphasis on grant income, we have currently two grant applications under review with the Nuffield Foundation: Dr Harjit Sekhon’s bid under their Welfare theme, in collaboration with an external partner specialising in policy related matters; and Dr Andrew Jones’s ‘Commuting and the pandemic: Promoting the health and safety of at-risk workers’, with Dr Jason Begley as PI, other CBiS staff and Transport for the West Midlands and Coventry City Council as Partners. We also have one more bid in preparation (on ‘How the 2020 pandemic impacted the transport sector from a consumer behaviour and policy-making perspective’ targeting the ESRC, from Dr Andrew Jones, et al.) and five more grant submissions planned for the rest of the academic year by Dr Vijay Reddy, Dr Husni Kharouf, Dr Benoit Senaux, Dr Ian Brittain, and Professor Glauco De Vita.

By eliminating travelling and commuting times, the prolonged lockdown and further social distancing measures also provided additional opportunities for SEFS researchers to intensify the production of White Papers and Blogs (the latest ones, over the last month, by Dr Andrew Jones on the chance of a green recovery at times marked by the pandemic, and Dr Vijay Reddy on COVID-19, aviation future and commercial space sector growth), reports for local authorities (e.g. ‘COVID-19 and Future Transport’ report for Coventry City Council, from Dr Andrew Jones), virtual workshops (among others, Professor Glauco De Vita’s session for the ASPIRE second cohort, and Dr Andrew Jones’s QR Project dissemination with Scarborough Borough Council for a project assessing devolved taxation) and webinars. For example, Dr Benoit Senaux led the

launch of our Esports Talks webinar series ‘Road to the Olympics’, in conjunction with the Asian Electronic Sports Federation (AESF), with the first webinar taking place in October and five more scheduled over 2020-21. Additionally, Dr Lindsey Appleyard (with Professor Sally Dibb) is leading the Financial Capability Team’s development of the free MoneySkills App, which helps users to manage their money. We also had two more PhD completions by PGRs supervised by SEFS cluster members since the last CBiS Newsletter, which further attests to the smooth working of online (remote) supervision. In some cases, such profitable PGR-supervisor conversations led to agreed decisions to modify PGRs’ data collection plans as a result of the barriers posed by the pandemic, to allow for useful information and evidence to be feasibly and purposefully obtained. Under the ASPIRE mentorship from Dr Ian Brittain, Dr Simon Gerard was also recently awarded a CU Trailblazer PhD studentship, to start in September 2021, entitled ‘Austerity, COVID-19 pandemic and the risk of mission drift among grassroots sport clubs in the UK’.

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Data, Organisations and Society Cluster Update

The Data Organisations and Society (DOS) cluster undertakes research that examines how we can maximise the potential from digital transformation, while protecting the interests of all in society. At a time when every aspect of society – from the workplace to the marketplace – is being transformed by data advances, there is considerable potential for the cluster’s research to make a difference, both during and beyond the Covid-19 pandemic. Since before the first lockdown, cluster members have worked hard to align their bidding, impact and publication activity to ensure our work adds to the knowledge base that will help mitigate pandemic outcomes.

As elsewhere in CBiS, the virus has heavily affected our working practices, with many cluster members having to quickly adapt their research and data gathering methods to maintain momentum. In some cases, this led to interesting new opportunities. For example, QR funding allowed Professor Alexeis Garcia-Perez to work with Ipsos MORI to collect high-value data from critical infrastructure sectors across the UK, in order to understand how their perception of digital resilience has changed as a result of the pandemic. Meanwhile, as part of a financial wellbeing project, Professor Sally Dibb, working with Dr Hussan Aslam, Dr Alessandro Merendino, Dr Lindsey Appleyard and our visiting scholar Dr Sara Degli Esposti, had to quickly transfer budget from face-to-face community workshops using Lego, to commission a more Covid-19 friendly Ipsos MORI online panel survey.

With opportunities to travel curtailed and many events cancelled, we have been adopting new ways to retain and grow our academic networks, and to stay in touch with other stakeholders who we work with to create impact. Many members took part in the British Academy of Management “Conference-in-the-Cloud” in September, with Professor Maureen Meadows once again heavily involved in the conference organisation as Co-Vice Chair for Special Interest Groups at BAM. Although we missed the opportunity to meet old friends face-to-face, we took away many positives, including two best paper prizes: PhD student Will King, alongside his supervisors Dr Helen Roby and Professor Sally Dibb, won the Best Developmental Paper Award in the Knowledge Management track for his article on knowledge sharing in community energy. Dr Alessandro Merendino, Dr Carlos Ferreira, Dr Brenda Hollyoak (SSL) and Professor Maureen Meadows won the Best Developmental Paper Award in the E-business and E-government track for their paper on the legitimacy of Facebook in the aftermath of the Cambridge Analytica scandal. Our relationships with impact partners, such as supporting Echo Research’s Britain’s Most Admired Companies award, remain as important as ever. Professor Sally Dibb and Professor Lyndon Simkin also continue to develop links with think tank Policy Connect, with several opportunities emerging to contribute to their activities around the APPG on Data Analytics.

We are eagerly anticipating the 21st European Knowledge Management Conference, which is scheduled for the 3rd - 4th December 2020. The conference, chaired by Professor Alexeis Garcia-Perez, will bring together over 200 academics, practitioners and postgraduate researchers to discuss how data, information and knowledge management drive sustainable socio-economic development. The FBL research and PGR community will play a key role in the delivery of this important event.

In August, Professor Sally Dibb worked with our visiting professor Ross Gordon from Australia and Fiona Spotswood from the University of Bristol to run a second online international event for the recently created Critical Social Marketing Network. The event was attended by social marketers from across the globe, all of whom use ideas and concepts from commercial marketing to tackle some of the bigger problems facing society. With a special issue of the Journal of Marketing Management now the focus, which Sally will co-edit, the network is busy applying its research in ways which will support the Covid-19 response.
Collaborations with the private, public and voluntary sectors have been key to our efforts to inform the UK response to the Covid-19 crisis and aid societal recovery. In an initiative led by Professor Alexis Garcia-Perez, Coventry University joined the Emergent Alliance in August. The Alliance is a not-for-profit collaboration of global organisations, founded by Rolls Royce, to help inform decision-making on industry, regional and global economic challenges resulting from the Covid-19 crisis.

The cluster’s PhD and DBA students continue to make us very proud. In July, Claire Brewis successfully defended her thesis on big data decision-making. It has been a very successful period for Claire; she was recently shortlisted for the Consulting Research Award of the Centre for Management Consulting Excellence, and was also successful in her application for one of the University’s new post-doctoral Fellowships, joining us as a member of staff at the start of September. We are delighted that Claire is already making her mark on the work of the cluster, taking the lead on an initiative to co-ordinate our response to the UK National Data Strategy Consultation. In February, Dr Marcos Kaufman successfully defended his thesis on Industry 4.0 and new business models in manufacturing; he has joined Coventry University as Director of the Institute of Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering. Several PhD students have joined the CBiS community to study subjects such as digital resilience in the energy sector, the growing gap in cybersecurity skills, and social divisions and the use of AI. Dr Rebwar Gharib (SSL), one of our FBL Associates, having decided that one doctorate is not enough, has joined the new intake of the DBA, to apply new thinking to our international relationships. We are very proud of all of our doctoral students, who continue to collect and analyse data (for example from online interviews) at this challenging time – we know that their patience and resilience will be rewarded in due course!

Our collaborations with other universities in postgraduate research have seen the start of a new PhD co-tutelle, driven by previous collaborations between the cluster and the Technical University of Cartagena in Spain. The project started in September, with two postgraduate researchers studying how data, information and knowledge management can support the sustainability agenda. Although this co-tutelle started in the context of the pandemic, the postgraduate researchers and their supervisory teams have found effective ways to take their collaboration forward.

This has been a frenetic period for bidding, with two Horizon 2020 applications in recent months (involving Professor Sally Dibb, Professor Alexis Garcia-Perez and Dr Alessandro Merendino) being prepared in response to calls that highlight disaster management. A further H2020 application is currently underway in response to the Green Deal call. The Industrial Challenge Strategy digital health technologies bid submitted in June and led by Professor Louise Moody in Health, with Professor Sally Dibb, Dr Kevin Broughton and Dr Hussan Aslam from CBiS providing business input, cleared its first stage, with the second-stage bid now submitted. Other bids currently in the pipeline are being prepared for the AHRC, Barrow Cadbury, Innovate UK, Nuffield, ICAS, and SAMs/BAM.

The publication of papers for the cluster’s special issue of the journal Technological Forecasting and Social Change on “Tensions in the Data Environment: Can Organisations Meet the Challenge?” is now complete, with the formal launch due shortly of the editorial, led by Professor Maureen Meadows and assisted by other cluster members. In collaboration with external sustainability experts, Professor Alexis Garcia-Perez is guest-editing the special issue ‘Sustainability Knowledge Management and Organisational Learning’ in the Journal of Sustainable Tourism, which will be published in early 2021. Together with our visiting professor Denise Bedford from Georgetown University, Alexis is also co-editing the Emerald book series ‘Working Methods for Knowledge Management’, which has recently published its first set of 6 titles. Professor Maureen Meadows is co-author of 'Strategy: Theory, Practice, Implementation' which was published by Oxford University Press in June 2020. The cluster has also continued its intense journal publishing schedule. We are particularly proud that despite facing huge pressures to adapt their teaching to fit Covid-19 social distancing rules, CBiS Associates such as Dr Mujahid Babu (SMM), Dr Rebwar Gharib (SSL), Dr Anitha Chinnaswamy (SSL), Dr Dongmei Cao (SSL) and Dr Vahid Jafari-Sadeghi (SSL) have all enjoyed recent publishing successes.

In other ‘people’ news, we are delighted that our colleague Alexis Garcia-Perez has now become ‘Professor Alexeis’, after his promotion case was successful. Well done Alexeis! Dr Zilia Iskoujina (SSL) has joined the West Midlands Police & Crime Commissioner’s first Academic Advisory Board. Some of our Associates have also been promoted to new roles, with Dr Anitha Chinnaswamy taking on the role of Research Development Lead in SSL and Dr Rebwar Gharib becoming Associate Head of School (SSL) for Marketing & Recruitment. Dr Evronia Azer has taken over the lead ethics role, supporting the work of staff across the Faculty as well as in CBiS, at a time when navigating the challenges posed by the pandemic is fast-changing research practices and ways for reaching respondents.

Members of the cluster have been enthusiastic bloggers in recent years, with regular contributions to CURB, The Conversation and other online outlets. In September, Professor Maureen Meadows published a new blog in The Conversation, in which she warned about the risks associated with government plans to revisit the idea of a UK identity card. Perhaps it is no surprise that another recent contribution focused on Covid-19 related issues, when Professor Sally Dibb turned her frustration about confusing public health messaging into a blog highlighting the lessons Government could learn from how marketing campaigns are run. Dr Anitha Chinnaswamy contributed a piece to The Conversation to highlight that fast-food drive-throughs are busier than ever during the pandemic, which has significant consequences for local air pollution.

Cluster members have been heavily involved in supporting the University’s research enriched learning initiative, using many opportunities to apply their project findings in support of teaching development. All of our CBiS cluster members have now produced teaching cases. These include a remanufacturing case by Dr Helen Roby, based on insights gained from a recently completed European project funded as part of the EU raw materials KIC, and another by Dr Evronia Azer which featured a project focused on ICT, entrepreneurship and collective action. Several of the cluster’s team have acted as research buddies for module leads in some of the schools, with others recording online lectures that help expose undergraduate and postgraduate students to research, in a way that directly demonstrates how high-quality research can contribute directly to teaching quality and the student experience. For example, Professor Sally Dibb prepared a lecture for marketing undergraduates, that used a recent European research project on the acceptability of digital security technologies, to show how participatory methods such as citizen summits, can be used to engage the public with controversial issues. Professor Alexis Garcia-Perez has prepared a guest lecture outlining the multidimensional nature of the concept of digital resilience and its relevance for organisations and society in the current context. Professor Maureen Meadows prepared a guest lecture on the project ‘Monetize Me?’, to discuss both innovative research methods and new business models around wearable technologies.
Transitioning Data Collection in the Pandemic

As the pandemic caused lockdowns and social distancing and travel restrictions limited our access to respondents for data collection, many of CBiS’s projects faced potentially fatal delays. Several of our project leaders rapidly modified their data capture plans and switched to different methods. Here, several PIs describe their partnering with pollsters and data gathering experts Ipsos MORI, and how they had to adapt, including in one instance sanitising lots of LEGO bricks!

Should We Sanitise our LEGO? And Other Covid-19 Related Research Questions...

Just before the March 2020 lockdown, the CBiS financial capability research team (Professor Sally Dibb, Dr Lindsey Appleyard, Dr Hussan Aslam, Dr Helen Roby, Dr Sara Degli Esposti, Dr Alessandro Merendino, Dr Carlos Ferreira and Dr Jordon Lazell), was halfway through a series of community workshops exploring the conversations people have about their money. The UK public is notoriously reticent to talk about their financial situation, with many individuals becoming financially vulnerable because they fail to seek help quickly when they hit problems. Following on from earlier projects funded by the Money Advice Service, the AHRC, Carnegie UK Trust and Barrow Cadbury, the team was keen to learn more about how ‘safe spaces’ for conversations can be created. Reflecting CBiS interests in creative research methods, the workshops used LEGO Serious Play methodology. Researcher Dr Hussan Aslam, a genuine enthusiast of all things LEGO, had attended the relevant training and soon CBiS was the proud owner of an extensive (you have to see it to believe it!) LEGO kit.

As the seriousness of the pandemic became apparent, the team had to decide quickly how to proceed. The LEGO workshops were progressing very smoothly. Many participants had played with LEGO as children and were enjoying this nostalgic trip down memory lane. The method also seemed to make it easier for people to open up about this difficult topic – money, spending and debt. Although the team was desperate to continue with the data gathering, they were also mindful of their ethical responsibility to participants. We asked ourselves, is it okay to continue? The venues were booked, the team primed, and the LEGO sorted... We even asked each other whether we could sanitise the LEGO to make it safer for participants to use! But of course, we quickly realised that we would have to postpone the remaining events.

This left the team with the problem of unspent budget that had to be used within three weeks. Anyone who has worked with this research team will know that we fiercely resist leaving funding unspent. So, what to do next? Against a punishing deadline, the team redirected the remaining money into a quantitative online survey. As they already had four LEGO workshops and 16 expert interviews in the bag, they realised how powerful it could be to leverage the insights from this rich qualitative data set into a questionnaire, which could reach the wider UK public.

Developing a questionnaire is usually time-consuming and intense. But with just three weeks available, the team had to move at record speed to get it ready in time. To ensure quality data and to lay the foundations for excellent outputs, the questions had to use accepted ways of measuring the key financial concepts and needed to draw on robust and established scales. But the team also wanted to innovate by creating a new way of measuring good financial conversations. It was an intense and stressful period! Polling organisation Ipsos MORI, which has an established online research panel, was commissioned to conduct the research. Luckily, all went to plan. The financial capability research team soon took delivery of a robust data set of 3,300 individuals, who had been selected to represent the UK’s socio-demographic profile.

With the help of CBiS numbers whizz, Dr Patt Tiwasing (see below), the data set is now yielding its secrets. The early results are telling us more about how the UK public’s financial resilience is being affected by Covid-19, how and through which channels they are seeking help with their money, and how they feel about the future. The questions about financial conversations are shedding new light on people’s preferences for talking about their money, and the factors which drive them. The data are also revealing more about who the public trusts, how they are navigating their finances in these difficult times, and how this varies according to their working situation, socio-demographics and urban or rural location.

But as the team gets deeper into the analysis, we are refusing to give up on the LEGO workshops, and we are hatching a plan to post LEGO kits to participants’ homes, so that the team can run these workshops remotely. Watch this space!

Professor Sally Dibb
The UK has had a persistent problem with low-pay in some economic sectors. Recently, however, ‘Good work’ has moved up the political agenda. In light of this, there has been an increasing interest in the extent to which the Foundational Economy (FE) might be developed to support better employment outcomes. The Foundational Economy consists of essential goods and services. This includes physical infrastructure such as utilities, operating infrastructure such as banking, food supply chains and services such as health, education and public welfare.

When this project commenced, the focus was on understanding work in the Foundational Economy in the context of a period of growth and high employment. A face-to-face survey had been developed to better understand experiences of job quality in different parts of the FE. The survey was due to enter the field in March this year. Of course, that all changed! The public health crisis of Covid-19 transformed the workings of the UK labour market almost overnight. Patterns of work and location changed, job losses accelerated and a large package of Government support was established. While for many white-collar workers, job content and access to technology meant a shift to home-working, many essential goods and services continued to be delivered in person. In this sense, the Covid-19 crisis provided a unique window into the social infrastructure which underpins much of daily life. Such provision clearly included health and medical services (nurses, doctors and social care staff), but also encompassed workers engaged in the provision and supply of food, water, energy and communications. Many of these activities comprise part of the Foundational Economy (FE).

The mode of our data collection clearly had to change, but so too did the focus of the research. The context had fundamentally altered from being economically benign to one of momentous economic and social challenges. Many in the FE were on the front line of these shifts. To understand the implications of this the (now telephone) survey was significantly reworked, in partnership with Ipsos MORI. Job quality was becoming a much more complex construct.

Data analysis is ongoing, but early findings point towards heterogeneous experiences of workers within different parts of the FE during the pandemic; but also to specific parts within the FE, particularly the providential sectors (including health and care), as experiencing comparative job stability as well as potentially feeling more valued by the community. However, this is balanced against important concerns about health and pay. The study’s findings suggest a complex and variegated relationship across the FE to job quality, in the context of the significant changes to employment and society which have resulted from Covid-19.

Altering our approach to data collection was rapid, timely and well planned. The essential qualities of our data requirements and sampling remained intact. Failure to adjust our plans would have risked this project delivering its promised outcomes.

Dr Paul Sissons, Dr Pattanaapong Tiwasing and Dr Jennifer Ferreira
As developments in information and communication technologies shape the next generation of networked businesses and societies, cybersecurity has gained a significant place in the priorities of any organisation. The impact of a cyberattack on a business and its stakeholders often overshadows the increased productivity, cost-reduction and flexibility that comes with the adoption of digital technology and internet connectivity.

Our collaborations with organisations from critical infrastructure sectors over the last decade have revealed: (1) the need for a more comprehensive view of digital resilience, going beyond the traditional, technical perspective of cybersecurity; (2) the limited attention this subject still receives at Board level; and (3) the significance of this subject for critical infrastructure sectors, given the interdependence between their physical and digital domains and therefore the potential socio-economic impact of a cyberattack. We have also learned that since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the cybercriminal activity targeting critical infrastructures has increased significantly.

These facts suggest that there is a need for additional efforts to inform decision-makers at all levels of the need for action in the field of digital resilience. With this in mind, a project was designed to understand how decision-makers in critical infrastructure sectors understand digital resilience and how their cyber situational awareness has changed as a result of the current pandemic. This understanding will help us inform decision-makers regarding their role in developing cyber resilience at the organisational level, covering all stages of cyber readiness (planning, detecting and recovery) and all dimensions of the cyber security problem (technical, legal, strategic, knowledge).

A questionnaire to measure the cyber readiness of organisations was designed, and responses were obtained from 400 C-suite level executives from organisations within critical infrastructure sectors across the UK, harnessing the data gathering personnel within Ipsos MORI. Early analysis of the data collected suggests that their currency and uniqueness will allow for a series of outputs that address a significant gap in the business and management information systems literature: including the lack of an established metric to measure digital resilience. Furthermore, the data provide key insights into areas that require attention, as UK businesses and society go through a process of digital transformation as one of their most major challenges in decades, in a context shaped by a number of major crises: health, sustainability, economic, etc. By mobilising quickly and recognising the data gathering challenges posed by the pandemic, we have been able to collect important insights and shape the policy-making of many organisations, helping them to mitigate their challenges and threats.

Professor Alexeis Garcia-Perez
Since starting my new role as a data analyst at CBiS in May, I have been given an exciting opportunity to work with different people across many different and interesting projects within CBiS. I have been working on the data analysis for the above projects, including financial wellbeing, data resilience and cyber security, and job quality in the Foundational Economy. With added topical interest, these projects also cover the impact of the Covid-19 crisis. These are new to me and are extending my research interests, which primarily are rural studies and food security. As an applied economist, working on data analysis and econometric modelling are a natural fit for me. Since starting to work on these projects, I have learned a lot from the teams; not only on new research areas, but also regarding team and time management skills. I am very pleased that my expertise can make a positive contribution to the projects and the Centre. Working remotely, of course, has its challenges, especially as I have not met my collaborators in person yet, but I feel that I can certainly achieve my aims every month!

To begin the data analysis, I have to explore all of the datasets by looking at the descriptive statistics of the key variables and then apply suitable econometric models to produce the robust analysis for each project. For the job quality in the Foundational Economy (FE) project, with Dr Paul Sissons and Dr Jennifer Ferreira, we have explored the differences in job quality between essential work in the FE sectors: the material (utilities, networks, banking and food); providential (education, health, care and public welfare); and overlooked areas (local services such as hairdressing, specialised retail and recreation activities), during the Covid-19 pandemic. With data from 1,917 UK employees, I have used Treatment Effects called Inverse Probability Weighting, to control for selection bias and variations in employees’ characteristics, before comparing job quality between the FE sub-sectors. Working with Professor Alexis Garcia-Perez on the data resilience and cyber security project, I have analysed board governance and the responses to Covid-19 on cyber security investment, using data from 400 C-suite executives. I have applied Partial Least Squared Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), to investigate the association between board governance and cyber security investment. Working on the financial wellbeing project with Professor Sally Dibb, I have analysed people’s preferences on credit application processes (Man VS Machine), using a Multinomial Logistic Model. Based on the data of 3,344 individuals across the UK. The outcomes will be reported in the next edition of this Newsletter.
Training our Researchers to Navigate the Pandemic

In addition to our routine development training activities around journal submission, bid writing and REF impact, the pandemic has led us to re-think how best we can support our researchers faced with remote working, social distancing, travel restrictions and limited access to respondents. First, we overview our social media training and then we overview our The Future of Business Research in a Post-Pandemic World development programme.

Coventry University’s Research Marketing team has expanded its social media team and has contracted a leading digital agency to provide training in all forms of social media activity. Separate to this training, CBiS is currently exploring how better to harness LinkedIn. Social media is important for sharing our views and research outcomes, but increasingly it enables data collection and the capture of insights. As the pandemic continues, many traditional routes to data collection are out of reach for our researchers. The pandemic has forced us to rethink how we do research and how we engage key stakeholders for research impact.

LinkedIn has grown in importance to researchers and thereby to CBiS. Due to its functionality, B2B coverage, policy usage and the special interest groups on LinkedIn. The benefits of LinkedIn groups are promotion of our research and, more importantly, engaging with pertinent communities of practice. The challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and remote working have highlighted the need for greater online engagement.

As a result, we are encouraging colleagues to harness LinkedIn, both individually and through the research Clusters. Social media, specifically LinkedIn and Twitter, provide an opportunity for CBiS researchers to have greater impact by showcasing their research internationally and through joining or creating specific niche special interest groups on LinkedIn, in order to capture the views of others or share our opinions and research conclusions.

Each research team has identified the online SIGs of most relevance and influence, with CBiS researchers engaging, contributing viewpoints, sharing findings and co-creating agendas. We are providing tailored training to support CBiSers to take these opportunities forward.

Dr Lindsey Appleyard

How Social Media Provides New Opportunities for Data Collection, Networking and Dissemination of Findings
The Future of Business Research in a Post-Pandemic World: A CBiS Researcher Development Programme

Each year CBiS runs a programme of researcher development activities focusing on different parts of the research process – for example proposal writing, research methods, and publication. This year is more than a bit different. Covid-19 has had wide-ranging implications for how we do business and management research. It has also radically altered where we work and how. These implications are not currently well-understood, and come on top of other significant changes presenting their own challenges, such as Brexit plus wider international and political trends.

In this context, we have developed a Future of Business Research Forum for wider reflection and to look forward to consider how we will undertake and seek impact from our research in the changing environment. Building on this initial stage, a series of activities is now being rolled-out to work through the adjustments to a very different economic and social context. This development programme has been created by Dr Paul Sissons, with Professors Lee Quinn and Sally Dibb.

These activities include sessions led by a range of internal and external contributors, focused on core elements of research in the context of the pandemic. These include sessions on research design and methods; future research priorities; ethical considerations; the nature and practicalities of collaboration; and, writing for different audiences. We will also, as we proceed, develop a repository of resources, bringing together the developing base of commentary pieces, methods papers and evaluations of working practices that are beginning to be published. A number of sessions will also be written-up into short thought-pieces and blogs on post-Covid research futures.

The first wave of workshops very effectively allowed CBiS staff to share the frustrations, anxieties and concerns related to researching in the pandemic, while navigating the often confusing and fast-changing rules and regulations impacting on society as a whole. It became quickly apparent that many of the team have adjusted their working practices and adopted many new ‘tricks’ and approaches which enable life as a frontline researcher to continue. Not all of these new approaches have worked, but many have. The sharing of these successes – and failures – has provided invaluable guidance to those involved in these sessions, as well as helping to offer peace of mind in what are hugely stressful times.

This researcher development programme is ongoing. The resulting blogs will appear on our web pages. Many of the insights and new approaches to conducting impactful research are described within the featured pieces in this edition of our Newsletter.

Dr Paul Sissons
Starting as a New Researcher During the Pandemic

Here we find out about the experience of our new colleagues who joined CBiS during lockdown in the early summer. Their reflections will resonate with most researchers reading this Newsletter. They provide an all-new set of challenges to leaders and mentors, as discussed by CBiS’s Executive Director at the conclusion of this feature.

First former CBiS PhD student Victoria Barker shares her thoughts. Victoria re-joined CBiS in May as a Research Assistant to support a suite of research projects headed by Professor Nick Henry. Here Victoria shares her thoughts about starting a new job during a pandemic lockdown. Her experiences are no doubt similar to many other researchers: we are keeping projects on track and adapting our research techniques, but missing out on the social interaction and opportunity to follow-up as would happen when physically together. Victoria’s observations sum up our ongoing hurdles, underpin the training we are now delivering and reveal the changes to our practices required so that we overcome the challenges described here...

Starting a new role at any time has its challenges, but the usual advice and tips are difficult to apply during a pandemic and national lockdown. In May 2020 I started working as a research assistant in CBiS, and became one of the guinea pigs for virtual inductions to the Centre and the Coventry University Group. First day tips – like check the dress code, plan your commute to be sure you get there early, chat to colleagues over the lunch break – all went out of the window and seem hopelessly outdated in the days of virtual meetings and webinars. Instead, my first week or so was spent getting to grips with issues around logging on, finding project files, setting objectives and working my way through the disconcerting list of online training modules – all with the support of research and operations colleagues.

I completed my PhD in the Centre in 2018, so I could picture the office and knew several of the team, but the support of the CBiS Operations Manager was absolutely vital for getting me up and running on all the online systems. Thanks to these online systems and opportunities, I’ve also been able to join in with more of the CBiS cluster meetings and staff gatherings than I might if I were commuting in to the office. However, I’ve been very aware that I am only engaging regularly with my project groups, not the wider CBiS team. Without the office environment there are fewer opportunities to chat in the queue for coffee, or have a quick chat on the way to the photocopier. At the moment I am finding this a particular challenge in relation to developing new project proposals, which is always something I’ve found quicker to progress through conversation than musing alone and writing a pitch.

I have been working on two distinct projects related to the creative economy, which were set up before the pandemic and its impacts were felt – and this has been particularly significant for the creative and cultural industries. This has translated into changes to the work, both to manage the sensitivities and challenges of recruiting research participants, and to the ways in which we are carrying out that research. The fieldwork stage of this was postponed to allow us to think through the sensitivities of our approach as well as the methods we wanted to use. Face-to-face interviews have been carried out online, which means you miss out on body language and other cues, but are much easier to record and share across the team. It’s safe to say that this process would have taken a lot longer without the benefits of the internet and virtual meetings, so we’re fortunate to have been able to keep this going.

The significant impacts of the pandemic on this particular group also mean that there is more policy and stakeholder interest in the work, so I’ve been working with colleagues on additional outputs to take advantage of that. I’ve also been working on writing up my own papers and funding bids, but writing in isolation is harder work sometimes, and I have been missing the accountability of the shared physical environment. That said, professional bodies and groups have been able to set up a range of online support options – I’m writing the final version of this newsletter in a Regional Studies Association virtual writing group session – so things progress all the time.

It has also been much easier to ‘attend’ professional development events online, but there haven’t been any formal or informal networking opportunities alongside this as there might have been in face-to-face versions. The general bandwidth-saving advice to ‘stay mute’ during meetings is definitely efficient for managing the technology, but does limit the opportunity to ask for clarification until you get bold enough to join the chat. Presenting, even informally, is still a strange experience too – with no feedback at all it feels like talking into the ether. I’ve managed to get myself on local radio and present by pre-recorded video during the last three months, so am developing new communication skills all the time (my editing skills still leave a lot to be desired).

On a personal level, I’m considering myself fortunate to have no real distractions at home, and to be in good health – that said, there have still been challenges in adjusting in some ways. One downside of being based at home the whole time is that it’s difficult to switch off and leave work alone at the end of the day. I have worked remotely for a long time, but finding the ‘right’ daily structure and motivation took a while, particularly during the formal lockdown period with all its background anxiety and uncertainty. I’ve chosen to deliberately tune in to conversations, on social media and elsewhere, that focus on wellbeing, or that otherwise represent a positive distraction.

Dr Victoria Barker, CBiS Research Assistant
Patt joined CBiS in May as a data scientist/analyst. Unable to relocate from Newcastle but desiring to form relationships in CBiS, Patt has faced many challenges. These are well described here, along with his experiences, solutions and outcomes in CBiS to date...

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a massive change to our working lives. Working from home has applied to all people, except key workers, as part of the lockdown restriction on March 23rd 2020. Since then the UK government has encouraged people to work from home if possible. Consequently, I have started my new role as a Research Fellow at Northumbria University in June, from my living room, where in some senses it seems like I have been trapped here in Newcastle. It is such a peculiar time to begin this new chapter in my professional career, virtually, through a screen and online activities. As I prefer a face-to-face interaction to an online one, this made me question how I will get on with work and how to get to know my new colleagues during the COVID-19 crisis.

With remote onboarding, I joined the Data, Organisation and Society (DOS) cluster with a warm virtual welcome from the cluster team. I have also attended the meetings from other clusters in CBiS to get to know other CBiS members and to see how each cluster runs the research activities. During the first four months, I have been involved in several research projects across CBiS to help contribute to data analysis, including statistical analysis and econometric modelling. As a quantitative researcher, my working style is pretty much the same as before the COVID crisis, since I mainly use secondary data and statistical software packages to generate my work. However, the interactions with people are completely different now, which can at times lead to feelings of isolation which could potentially lead to productivity loss. These are interesting challenges...

How can I be productive from working from home? As I’m living in a one-bedroom flat where the physical boundaries between work and home can easily blur, with support from the University, I have created a working space next to my window by setting up a computer station (a PC computer and laptop) with some greenery/plants. I try to keep my routine the same as when I am working in the office as much as possible. I find that this helps to separate boundaries between work and home life and make my working from home more effective. Additionally, I find that working from home can also be beneficial to my academic activities since it has been very easy to attend several free virtual seminars, lecture classes, and networking activities during the last four months. This has allowed me to gain more knowledge and identify some potential future collaborations.

How can I stay motivated when I am working from home? Apart from setting up my workstation, I have also created monthly aims via Core Review, as I would like to see how I progress on the data analysis for all projects each month even though some projects have quite long frames. I think it is important to have clear objectives and schedule. I also try to establish a time to begin and end work each day and try to stick to this as much as I can. More importantly, I always provide myself with a little reward as soon as I finish my daily task, such as taking a walk along the river, having a cup of my favourite drinks, and having some delicious cakes! I think a little incentive can often motivate me to get work done efficiently, and it will help us see what we are capable of accomplishing.

Within the last four months, I have accomplished my aims through many tasks. For example, I have completed a final report for my project with Northumbria University and Newcastle University funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on “Counter-urbanisation and entrepreneurial emergence in rural areas” that I have brought it to CBiS. I have also completed the preliminary analysis for CBiS’s three Ipsos/QR projects. I have done the analysis on “people’s preference on a credit application process (man versus machine)” with Sally Dibb. Working with Paul Sissons and Jennifer Ferreira, I have finished the analysis on “differences in job quality between four foundation economy sectors during the COVID-19 pandemic”. I have also done the analysis on “the relationship between organisational awareness, board governance, and cyber security during the COVID crisis” with Alexis Garcia-Perez. Also, I have managed to submit a grant proposal for Newton Fund Institutional Links with David Bek to create “a roadmap for Thai edible insect exporters”… yes this is a thing!

In addition, I have completed a paper on “Informational market failure and collaborative innovation: Evidence from UK manufacturing SMEs” with the researchers from the Enterprise Research Centre at the University of Warwick. Also, I still have two papers under review: one is “spatial disparities in SME productivity: Evidence from business service sectors in England” and the other is “Does a social media business network enhance SME performance?: A rural-urban analysis”. Next, I plan to explore differences in financial well-being between people living in rural and urban areas, as well as exploring other geographical levels using the data from the Ipsos/QR project.

Although I do find that there are advantages of working from home, such as having no commuting time or costs and being able to create the right working space wherever I want, I like to consider myself a people person and therefore really do miss face-to-face interactions with my colleagues, particularly when I am new to the team and university. Hopefully the situation improves in the next few months and I can look forward to meeting everybody in person soon!

Dr Patt Tiwasing, CBIS Analyst
The views above are revealing. They reflect my own. Teams, Zoom or whatever platform is used enable us to keep in touch, host networking sessions, discuss existing projects, share analyses and debate findings. To some extent, online events are also adequate – in conjunction with other dissemination activities – for sharing research outcomes and involving networks in resulting policy discussions. But there is certainly no substitute for those person-to-person interactions, whether formal or informal, that Victoria and Patt refer to as missing when working from home. It is difficult to be spontaneously creative when a Teams invitation has specified an agenda or pre-determined the attendees. As described elsewhere in this Newsletter, CBiS is now undertaking an extensive programme of Covid-inspired research training and mentoring in order to mitigate these issues and to find alternative working practices which will maintain our momentum.

A key challenge for all of us is also evident in the reflections above. The importance of finding stimulation away from the laptop screen’s data analysis or Teams discussion, the desire for social flippantry that is divorced from work matters, the essential ‘time-outs’ that when on campus we enjoy when moving between buildings/meetings or while sharing a sandwich or coffee with a colleague, the need to re-charge our batteries away from that screen; these are part of our normal working behaviours. Or at least they were!

Perhaps the most frequent angst I hear is around the blurring of work and home/family life, as articulated by Victoria and Patt. The working days are definitely longer and the breaks between Teams meetings hardly perceptible. This is not beneficial in terms of productivity or for harmonious family life. We are trying hard to mitigate, counsel and guide colleagues, but we all are going to have to make further changes to our working practices, or risk our health and peace of mind. This is something very much front-of-mind as we now set objectives and agree altered work loads, undertake our mentoring and reach out to colleagues.

Victoria and Patt were recruited before lockdown. Their sentiments above reveal the challenges we face in running a research centre which achieves so much through its collaborations, co-creation of innovative research designs, sharing of responsibilities and mentoring. Onboarding new staff during remote working is not without its challenges!

Since Victoria and Patt were recruited, CBiS has interviewed for three further posts. Normally we would meet potential recruits, show them round, let them engage with a broader set of colleagues other than those on an interview panel, and spend time with us socially. Two of the three most recent recruits set foot in Coventry for the first time only when they commenced working with us. One had to quarantine for two weeks before being able to search for a home or open a UK bank account. The well-being of our new colleagues has become as important, if not more so, than how well their capabilities and working practices blend in with our team. Online recruitment has presented challenges, for both candidates and the appointment panels. Nevertheless, with our new colleagues now in situ, we feel confident we are navigating these challenges.

Life is never dull in these ever-changing times.

Lyndon Simkin, CBiS’s Executive Director
Dr Macarena Beltran joins CBiS as a Research Assistant to support CBiS’s SIMBIO sustainability project, with interests in technical research, bio-plastics, energy demand studies, operations and supply chain management, and sustainability.

Dr Claire Brewis joins CBiS as a Research Associate, with interests in marketing in the digital era, digital research methods, and big data decision-making.

Dr Shantanu Mullick joins CBiS as Assistant Professor (Research), with interests in digitalisation, big data, statistics, machine learning, sustainability, food and food waste.
CBiS’s PhD Programme During the Pandemic

By Dr Jason Begley and Professor Glauco De Vita,
Centre for Business in Society

In September of this year the new Director of the Doctoral College, Carolyn Wynne, announced a record-breaking number of new doctoral candidates enrolling into Coventry University for the start of the new academic year. 94 candidates had enrolled onto the PhD programme, with another 30 expected. The Centre for Business in Society played no small part in this success, accounting for 19 of those enrolled, of which 15 were full-time. Of these new starters the vast majority are from outside the UK, demonstrating the breadth of appeal the University and CBiS have internationally. This reflects Coventry’s commitment to becoming an institution with a truly global reach, with doctoral candidates arriving from countries such as Indonesia, China and Nigeria, to name but a few locations. Coventry University is also positioning itself as a major presence in overseas markets by establishing a range of different programmes with partner institutions abroad, to promote awareness of the institution’s burgeoning PhD programmes.

Recent examples of the initiatives undertaken by Coventry University Group to build its portfolio of doctoral activities includes the establishment of a Transnational Research Degree Programme with Emirates Aviation University, supporting the remote delivery of PGR supervision and training to the Dubai-based institution. The programme is delivered through distance learning, with the Director of Studies based at Coventry University and a supporting supervisor from the Doctoral College and a locally-based supervisor. Other innovative actions include the recent successful development of a number of PhD co-tutelles with leading education institutions. A co-tutelle is a joint partnership between two third level organisations that allows the qualifying candidate to spend an equal amount of time in both universities, ably supported by academic and administrative staff. CBiS has helped pioneer these programmes at Coventry University, with Dr David Bek overseeing our co-tutelle with Deakin University in Australia. Our latest success in this area includes the successful initiation of a second co-tutelle contract with the Technical University of Cartagena (Spain), led by Professor Alexeis Garcia-Perez.

▲ Origin Locations for CBiS’s PhD Students
Alongside these successful initiatives and collaborations to broaden access to the University’s PhD programmes and facilitate the difficult pathway for international candidates into UK universities, there have been new innovations in how a PhD can be undertaken at Coventry. CBiS as a Research Centre has been at the heart of such exciting new ventures. Elsewhere in this Newsletter you will doubtless read of the successful revamping of the CBiS Professional Doctorate Programme under the leadership of Dr Harjit Sekhon and Dr Carlos Ferreira. Suffice to say here that such has been the success of their efforts that they can boast of two new DBA cohorts starting in September 2020, double the previously anticipated number. But it is also worth mentioning the efforts of Professor Benny Tjahjono who, through CBiS, has pioneered the PhD by Publication route on behalf of the University. This will offer new candidates the opportunity to achieve an agreed number of publication milestones as part of their PhD journey, combining these outputs into a single PhD thesis. The value here will be in making these successful doctoral researchers even more competitive in the job market once they complete their studies at Coventry University. The first PhD by Publication cohort, internationally recruited, is expected to commence early in 2021.

Supporting PhD candidates in their early careers through publications is becoming a more important component of PGR research activities and this initiative is both exciting and timely. A new emphasis is now being placed on early publication from ongoing thesis research, with recent CBiS successes in journal submission and publication including Liliani, supervised by Professor Benny Tjahjono, and Paul Noon and Runda Gao supervised by Professor Giacco De Vita.

What has underpinned the successful development of the PhD programmes at Coventry University has been an enormous deployment of resources to the promotion and support of doctoral activities across the University. Nowhere has this been more evident than in CBiS. Five years ago, when the Centre committed to developing a significant presence in doctoral research, it was supported by two people and oversaw 16 postgraduate researchers (PGRs). Today, CBiS is the crown jewel in the Business School’s programme, with over 10 dedicated staff members supporting approximately 100 PGRs and their supervisory teams. We continue to innovate in the development of the programme. With the support of Operations Manager Nicola Boyle we are revamping our research teaching, combining forces with the Centre for Financial and Corporate Integrity (CFCI) and the University’s Doctoral College, to offer a Faculty-wide bespoke research skills programme that avoids duplication and streamlines research training. The Doctoral College will now oversee more fundamental training, while CFCI and CBiS will offer more in-depth classes on specific elements of research training.

With the latest influx of new starters, CBiS has passed the important milestone of over one hundred PGRs, a major achievement for the Centre. It should be emphasised that such growth has not been achieved at the cost of quality of research output and supervision. On the contrary, the PhD programme has become the gold standard in terms of research excellence. The Business School exceeded 80 PhD completions for REF 2021, almost a fourfold increase vis-à-vis the 22 completions in REF2014, and since the last REF the Faculty has enjoyed over 100 completions. The University has recognised CBiS’s role in this achievement, approving four QR 50-50 studentships to start in 2021. These 50-50 studentships encourage industry and external organisations to partner with the University in the delivery of targeted research output. Interested observers should contact CBiS to find out more about these wonderful opportunities.

What has truly set CBiS and Coventry University apart over the last few months, however, has been the incredible efforts by staff and PGRs alike to continue to meet and even exceed objectives through very difficult and trying times. The last CBiS Special Issue Newsletter spoke of the challenges associated with the ongoing pandemic created by COVID-19. It is testament to the dedication and hard work of so many supervisors in CBiS, and across the Faculty through the efforts of our Associates and Aspire Fellows, that the PhD programme has not just continued to operate but has in fact thrived. Since March, there have been seven CBiS awards of PhDs and ten Faculty Viva Voce, five of which were by CBiS’s PGRs. In one inspiring example, our Pro-Vice Chancellor Paul Noon successfully defended his thesis - submitted one year and a half ahead of schedule – by Viva Voce, with minor amendments. All that can be said here is a big thank you to staff, supervisors and doctoral researchers alike; they have been incredible in hugely testing times.

May we also take this opportunity to remind supervisors and PGRs that for the fourth consecutive year, the Doctoral College will be awarding one Coventry University postgraduate researcher the title of ‘Postgraduate Researcher of the Year’. The PGR will be selected through a university competition taking place during The Coventry University Research Hootenanny, between Monday 18 – Friday 22 January, 2021. For the Faculty of Business and Law, CBiS food waste expert Marsha Smith has been selected to go forward to these finals.
The CBiS DBA Programme During the Pandemic

The DBA is CBiS’s professional doctorate, aimed at senior managers, executives and CEOs. A series of related research projects are combined in a doctoral thesis. The focus is on impactful recommendations which will make a difference to the candidate’s organisation.

DBA Developments
September 2020 has resulted in a record number of new candidates entering the Coventry DBA. In fact, this success has necessitated the creation of two new cohorts, running in parallel. In total, 17 new candidates – based in the UK, United Arab Emirates and Oman – have started their doctoral journey with CBiS.

Given the DBA’s nature, the new candidates are all experienced managers, with the networks and ability to use the DBA experience to make a difference in their organisations. Most of the candidates are external, and a number of them are the CEOs of their organisations. A small, but important, proportion of the new candidates are colleagues from Coventry University, sponsored by the University’s Doctoral College. The support from the Doctoral College provides an outstanding career development opportunity for colleagues across the Coventry University Group.

The New DBAs
The DBA is a truly global executive development programme and this is reflected in the experiences of those who have joined the most recent cohort. From the UK, we have the CEO of a company at the forefront of artificial intelligence and how AI can be integrated with other business indicators. The latest intake of DBAs includes four candidates from Oman, adding to the Omani DBAs that joined cohorts three and four. Three of the DBAs from Oman are all leading corporations that have the remit of increasing Oman’s business activity, including renewable green energy; while the fourth Omani DBA is a medical doctor dealing with a Covid ward. For the first time we have a group of DBAs from UAE. This group of DBAs includes those working for one of the world’s largest global businesses, where as a head of department they are developing a project looking at employee satisfaction.

With the support of the Doctoral College and the University, we have a group of four Coventry University supported DBAs; one of the DBAs that joined already has a PhD! They are keen to add to the skills they gained as part of their PhD, by undertaking business orientated projects which inform strategy going forward.

Working in mixed cohort groups, we have been able to create a unique cohort of DBAs with a global presence. Being global means the DBAs have a rich learning interactive experience, which they can use for the benefit of their workplace.

Excellence in Times of Disruption
Despite the ongoing challenges posed by the Covid-19 restrictions, the Coventry DBA team continues to be committed to delivering an excellent teaching and learning experience for all of our candidates. At this stage, this commitment has translated into the development of bespoke community tools which allow our candidates to benefit from the benefits of blended learning, at their own pace, but always with the support and guidance of their supervisors.

In addition, we are now explicitly advising candidates across the various cohorts to come together to exchange views and experiences, network, and learn from each other. We have found that one of the great strengths of the DBA programme is the opportunity for serendipitous moments, in which engaged and motivated people come together to solve problems and progress. Our experienced cohorts are a source of knowledge, inspiration and motivation for new-starters, and we want to encourage and facilitate those exchanges.

Future Growth Plan
As the DBA grows, there are ongoing discussions about off-shoring delivery with some of the University’s key strategic partners in North Africa and South East Asia. This also showcases how flexible Coventry’s DBA is when it comes to meeting the needs of those in local markets. Even in these challenging times, the discussions may result in such DBA candidates coming on stream during the current academic year. As well as these exciting strategic developments, word is getting out about our DBA and so candidates from the globe are applying directly to us. The plan is to have cohort six start in January 2021.

We also anticipate having our first successful DBA viva in 2021.

Dr Harjit Sekhon and Dr Carlos Ferreira
Reflections of CBiS’s PhD and DBA Doctoral Researchers During the Pandemic

These are not easy times to be undertaking a doctorate. Here, the fortitude and resilience of CBiS’s doctoral students, their fears and challenges, along with suggested solutions and remedies, are discussed. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought many changes into our PGRs’ lives, including how to undertake research and how to balance work, home and study. Perhaps surprisingly, it would seem that new ways of working and personal opportunities have also presented themselves.

Niken Kusumowardani
PhD Candidate

The Covid-19 pandemic forced us to adapt to a lot of new ways. I usually come to campus where I can immerse myself in a learning atmosphere and socialise with other PGRs. But since social distancing restrictions, continuing the journey of my research has felt quite lonely. It was challenging to change the routine and to do everything online. However, I am grateful to have been supported by my family, friends, plus a supportive supervisory team, which is not just checking my research progress but also my condition. There are events from the University that I can still access online, such as from RECAP, to enrich my skills and some of the webinars about the topic I researched. The University also has provided bookable space, so I still can come to campus.

I do not know when this pandemic will end, therefore it is important to stay updated with the regular information from the University, aware of the support that I can access both online and in person. I keep in contact and socialise with other PGRs through online meetings or meeting up at the park, adhering to health and safety measures; eating healthy food and exercising; also doing some fun activity at the weekend to make my life balanced. The most important thing is to have a positive mind and appreciate what truly matters. We are not alone. This disruption may change the way we behave and adapt to the ‘new normal’, but I believe it makes us even stronger and resilient.

Roza Mohammed
PhD Candidate

The pandemic has impacted all areas in our lives, and research has been one of them. It wasn’t easy at all, especially in the early stages, because I didn’t know what to expect. The pandemic has brought a lot of uncertainty, and my research was influenced as well. On a personal level, the way I used to communicate and connect changed, as well as access to resources and facilities. The critical situation that was brought about by Covid-19 has directly impacted the data I received from the organisations I am conducting my research with, and the figure I was expecting has changed dramatically. If it was not the current situation I would have dealt with a totally different set of data, because many organisations used the pandemic to their benefit. So, this has created a new challenge of dealing with new themes that were not relevant. Triangulating the data and finding and using current/cotemporary (specific to Covid-19) literature to connect the dots to formulate a new perspective in my research area is my new challenge.

The pandemic has led many researchers to work in areas that were not necessarily as popular before. A lot of research in areas of adaptation to a ‘new normal’, or working during Covid-19 on all levels gained popularity. Regardless, all the negatives that the pandemic has brought into our personal and professional lives, it has also created opportunities to take part in research directly and indirectly. I have participated in my colleagues’ research projects on the impacts of the pandemic on how to deliver quality online teaching and the challenges. The situation has also opened doors for me to work with a few colleagues more closely, and to work on few personal projects, like preparing to write a chapter in a book and a conference paper.

The one crucial lesson I have learned from this situation is definitely trying to be adaptable and resilient. This is the core for surviving the situation, learning new technologies to make the whole experience feasible. It has taught me that the more flexible I am with the idea of change/uncertainty, the better I can manage this new work style.
The challenges I have faced over the last six months have shaped me forever. From peculiar data collection challenges that threatened my PhD progression, my DoS leaving for another university, to having to form another supervisory team. This was the most challenging moment of my PhD journey, as these issues arose at the start of the lockdown (March), just a few months to my second year PRP (June).

I have always been an optimistic and independent person, but I realised that it was time to take a different approach by being more proactive and speaking out. With face-to-face restrictions in place, it was more difficult to convince my then-prospective team members that I had the fortitude to complete my PhD. Nevertheless, I continued exchanging emails with them, having virtual meetings, and painstakingly pressing on with my data collection. I spoke a lot to a member of my old team who advised me to relish the challenges with enthusiasm, as this period would define my personal and academic life.

Unexpected research opportunities arose for me during this pandemic in two main ways. When I changed my data collection technique, I realised that although the lockdown posed niche challenges to my study’s potential participants, as they worked from home, unexpectedly some became more inclined and available to be interviewed over Skype or Zoom. I think that being at home in an unstructured work pattern made this possible. In the end, I exceeded my target number of respondents.

A few fellow PGRs and I formed a group on MS Teams, where we meet to see each other, exchange ideas, and work in silence (at least, we try to!), just to keep each other motivated. The PhD journey is quite daunting in itself, but it is less burdensome when you do not go through it alone.

I have learnt that having a great team around you is most important at this unprecedented time. Surround yourself with positive-minded people. Not only with your fellow PGRs, but also with your supervisory team members. Be open with your supervisors about the challenges you are facing, as although the pandemic has hit us differently, it might surprise you that they are facing similar challenges as well. This makes it easier for them to understand your situation and offer you suitable advice.

Being open with my team, close colleagues, and speaking out when I needed help with booking office space at the Jaguar building or library has been very helpful to me.

The CBiS support team are helpful. Email or call them if you need help with your supervisory team or other matters. If they cannot directly assist you, they will surely point you towards someone who can.

Finally, using Boris Johnson’s messaging-style slogan, I would say, “Speak Out. Press On. Stay Alert.” or shall I say, “Speak out to get help”?

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Finally, using Boris Johnson’s messaging-style slogan, I would say, “Speak Out. Press On. Stay Alert.” or shall I say, “Speak out to get help”?
From a doctoral research student perspective, the move to remote support was handled with the greatest care by Coventry University. The continuation of a supportive and productive supervisory meeting switched over to Teams and was fairly seamless. Even the more complex processes of PRP assessment followed the usual professional pattern.

Until fairly recently the research that I had undertaken was mainly people-centred, conducted via focus groups and considered low risk. Thankfully, this face-to-face approach phase had finished and my next step was a new technology-driven approach. Online learning was complemented by the move towards a new phase in my research, netnography; an engagement with social media that brings its unique set of challenges, but can be performed from the comfort of the back bedroom!

I wish I could claim to be one of those forward-thinking researchers who was prepared for anything, including a pandemic in the middle of their doctorate, but I cannot. This new ever-challenging reality we find ourselves in can create despair and isolation; however, it can be a new pool for ideas to circulate and emerge. New platforms, increased dependence on digital connectivity and future educational opportunities, present a richness of new data being generated. Billions of new interactions that, if treated with respect, could accelerate the future possibilities for the next cohort of researchers willing to embrace this new direction.

My workload has increased since the start of the pandemic, as my day-to-day has needed a lot of changes. One of the biggest challenges has been time management between work, home and studies.

Family life has changed, with the children no longer at school but schooling take place on line – at the start this gave me some time to work on my DBA.

One of the major opportunities has been the chance to schedule more frequent meetings with my supervisor. The meetings work well and are at convenient times. The University has made sure we have access to the facilities that we need, remotely.

During the pandemic I have learnt many lessons, with the biggest being the ability to manage time and trying our best to balance between family and work. I hope that all those captured learnings will enrich our lives and make us better people in the future.

These are rather uplifting sentiments. Let us hope that in six months’ time, our PGRs feel as positive and reassured. These certainly are challenging and unsettling times. As the previous piece reveals, CBiS and the University are striving hard to support our PGRs and maintain their progression. The attitude, illustrated above, of our doctoral candidates helps hugely. We are all in this ‘fight’ together.
Social Eating – Inside the Supermarket Surplus Initiatives that Could Change the Way We Eat

By PhD candidate Marsh Smith and Dr David Bek

Eating together is an important way of fostering social connections. In recent years, we have been researching, and working with, the social eating movement: community-based food projects that use surplus food from supermarkets to create affordable meal services and provide spaces in which to eat them.

In locations like Nottingham and Sheffield, social eating initiatives have emerged to counter isolation and food insecurity and are used by a variety of customers from students to families and elders who pay between £2 and £3.50 for a two or three-course meal.

However, the coronavirus lockdown has had a significant impact, restricting people's ability to meet in groups. Individuals have reported that their experiences of loneliness and social isolation have been exacerbated by the lockdown.

Social eating groups have had to develop new ways to ensure people could access meals as well as maintain social contact. They are now showing how social eating can work in a post-lockdown future, where customers are seeking affordable meals in safe, sociable spaces.

More than Food
Social eating initiatives address food insecurity in its broadest sense – by linking the need to eat with the need to socialise over food.

For the most part, these projects are based in neighbourhood venues such as children’s centres, community centres and churches. A meal is usually offered once a week. These services extend food choice, accessibility and availability and operate as spaces where the links between people, communities, projects and services are strengthened through food sharing.

This social eating also has a greater historical lineage than most people imagine. During the first world war, “national kitchens” were introduced in the UK to support the welfare of the general population. As well as providing sustenance, the kitchens also had a social function – improving morale and social cohesion.

Community Responses
In response to the coronavirus lockdown, community food groups partnered with local authorities to respond to emergency food aid requests. Groups like the Nottingham Social Eating Network and Sheffield’s FoodHall Project showcased their model of meal provision to a new range of customers.

Instead of shutting down during the early stages of lockdown, these networks redesigned their services to produce and distribute thousands of meals. Volunteers packaged meals for collection and delivery. The usual food hygiene rules were strengthened to mitigate the risks of the pandemic. Meals may not have been eaten at the same table, but food resources were shared out and the “eating together” ethos of social eating sustained these services.

Re-Imagining Eating
Social eating networks are now trialling staggered mealtimes, pop-up mealtimes in larger venues, multiple sittings per week and social bubble dining to counter the risks of eating out.

Social enterprise Pulp Friction, based in Nottingham, teamed up with a local pub to deliver a hot meal service during lockdown. Now we have learnt that the enterprise intends to trial a new “heat and eat” social eating service where meals are made offsite, heated and sold in larger venues which may not have adequate

CBiS’s Recent Features in The Conversation

Delivering topical commentaries and responding to events in the news and developments in society, in recent months, CBiS’s researchers have been demonstrating their academic rigour and journalistic flair, reaching out to a wider audience through a series of pieces featured in The Conversation. This is an independent source of news and views from the academic and research community and delivered direct to the public. Often journalists and media outlets pick up on these, interview the authors and more widely share their views. The Conversation aims to allow for better understanding of current affairs and complex issues, as well as to kickstart quality public discourse and conversation. The recent series of pieces from CBiS discusses issues from food consumption, coffee shop culture, digital identity, Government responses to the coronavirus pandemic, to air pollution around fast-food drive-throughs. These newsworthy thought pieces have been read and shared tens of thousands of times.
storage or kitchen facilities to run a conventional meal service, but where there is adequate space to serve crowds safely.

The social eating model has the potential to help us create a new kind of food infrastructure. Imagine a national network of community eateries, or social eating spaces, where you could go for a once-a-week social meal.

These meals would be priced at a couple of pounds for two or three courses, with limited choice but all freshly cooked with supermarket surpluses and locally grown produce. The result would be savings on fuel and water, as well as being a more sustainable use of food resources. Crucially, these meals would be eaten with others in welcoming local spaces.

This model doesn’t stop people from going out to eat or from choosing specialist cuisines. Instead, it provides access to a fresh, affordable, nutritious and social meal. It could be the first step taken to guarantee the right to food in the UK.

Social eating networks could proliferate through Government and corporate subsidies, whilst remaining steered by, and anchored in, communities. By tapping into our deepest needs to connect to one another over food, social eating networks offer us a model for a sustainable, connected and inclusive future.

Originally appeared in The Conversation on 7th September
Before coronavirus hit, the UK had a thriving coffee shop culture, with around 26,000 coffee shops across the country. But by the end of March 2020 many coffee shops were closed, or only open for takeaway. Up to 92% of coffee shops are estimated to have closed at some point during the lockdown, as it was not viable or possible to continue on a purely takeaway basis.

By September 2020, many have reopened, although it is thought that around one third of coffee shops remain closed and some may never reopen. The Eat Out To Help Out scheme, which gave diners big discounts, boosted sales in August. But the amount spent in coffee shops remains significantly reduced, with spending on takeaway hot drinks still at 50% of 2019 levels.

Coffee shops had become important places in many people’s lives, for some as a place to get a caffeine fix on the way to work, for others as a place to gather and meet friends, or as a place to work. In a previous research project I explored how coffee shops were important community spaces in the urban landscape. But this landscape has been completely transformed by COVID-19. The pandemic forced coffee shops to close or shift their business to a greater focus on takeaway and online sales. And coffee consumers, suddenly with much more time at home, shifted their consumption patterns too.

Coffee Drinking During the Lockdown
I’m carrying out some ongoing research with coffee drinkers to find out how their consumption patterns have changed over the course of lockdown. So far, a survey I have conducted of 1,000 people who regularly visited coffee shops before the pandemic, offers some insights into what the future holds for the coffee industry.

Unsurprisingly, people bought more coffee to drink at home, as well as coffee making equipment, during lockdown. Numerous reports detail how sales of coffee soared in supermarkets, as well as direct from coffee roasters. My research indicates that the most popular pieces of equipment to purchase included a coffee grinder, espresso machine, coffee pod machine, and filter equipment like the V60 and the Aeropress.

In terms of where coffee was purchased, around half of respondents said they had bought more coffee than usual in the supermarket, but over 30% also bought more online from coffee roasters directly. One in ten respondents recognised they needed a steady stream of coffee and started a coffee subscription, believing that the return to normal wasn’t likely to happen any time soon.
For consumers who bought equipment there was usually also an interest in learning about how to better prepare coffee, with YouTube being a popular source of information. With their newfound coffee knowledge and equipment, there was indication from some that they would be less likely to buy as much coffee in shops going forward; in part because they had invested money on preparing it at home.

A Return to the Coffee Shop?
While there is encouragement from the Government to get back to the office, a large proportion of people in the UK are still working from home. This has significant implications for the coffee shops, whose customer base is commuters and office workers. It is not surprising that even the large coffee shop chains are having to consider their future. Costa Coffee has said that up to 1,650 jobs are at risk; Pret a Manger is closing 30 outlets, along with cutting nearly 2,900 staff.

For many coffee shop chains, there is the option to reorganise, restructure and scale back activities while uncertainties remain. But for the smaller independents these options are not necessarily available.

Research from coffee industry analysts Allegra revealed that after lockdown restrictions eased 55% of their respondents had visited a coffee shop; this came second only to visiting friends or family. As coffee shops began to reopen, there were scenes of long queues at shops and drive-throughs.

But this does not necessarily paint an accurate picture of what the future holds. While people are visiting coffee shops again, they are not doing so as frequently as before. And this is unlikely to change while working from home remains prevalent and while the risk of COVID-19 remains present. Our research found that around half of respondents intended to visit coffee shops the same amount as before, but only when back in a ‘normal’ working pattern. Around 20% indicated they would visit less, primarily because of concerns around getting Covid-19.

However, this did leave around a third of respondents saying they intend to visit coffee shops more. They explained this was because they wanted to support local businesses and also because they felt more connected to their local communities since lockdown. This raises a question about whether the future of the coffee shop industry is less tied to the areas around offices and commuter hubs, but more to the residential areas where people are now spending more time.

For coffee shops to remain a thriving part of where we live and work, they need a regular customer base. Without this, the industry will have to change to reflect the new consumption habits of the Covid-19 era.
Is the UK Government planning to revive identity cards for the internet age? The decision to scrap its national ID cards and database in 2010 means the UK is one of the few developed countries not to have such an identity scheme. While this was seen as a victory for civil liberties campaigners, some now argue that the lack of a simple way to prove who you are, especially online, is holding back the digital economy and improvements to public services.

With this in mind, the Government recently announced plans to pave the way for a new digital identity scheme, which some media outlets have called digital ID cards. In reality, there’s no single agreed definition of what a digital ID is or looks like, so saying the new system will be similar to the unpopular card scheme is misleading. However, the UK Government is a long way from demonstrating that it could operate an ID system that follows the principles of privacy, transparency and good governance it claims to support and that are needed to protect people’s rights.

The Government’s main argument for a digital ID is the supposedly growing need to prove who you are. For example, anyone buying or selling a home in the UK has to prove their identity multiple times with multiple pieces of evidence. This is time consuming, repetitive and expensive, often requiring face-to-face verification or sending sensitive documents in the post.

A digital identity should help to simplify the process, reducing the friction and costs associated with a stressful series of transactions. It could make it easier to register with a GP, or prove your age if you don’t have a driving licence or passport. And, the Government argues, a digital ID could play an important role in preventing identity fraud – a serious and growing problem.

Other countries appear to have had success with digital identity programmes. Estonia has a mandatory scheme that includes an ID card but can also be used as definitive proof of identity online. It’s used for travelling, national insurance, checking medical records, submitting tax claims, accessing bank accounts, ordering prescriptions and even online voting.

And the scheme appears to have benefited the country, as part of its general mass digitalisation. In fact, Estonia has been called the most advanced digital society in the world. It has one of the world’s best rates of tax collection, supported by e-typation. Participation in elections has increased, alongside the introduction of online voting. Around 99% of public services are now online, available 24/7. Its healthcare system is highly cost effective, supported by significant investment in digital records.

Digital Identity: New UK Scheme Risks Running a Repeat of ID Card Controversy

By Professor Maureen Meadows, Centre for Business in Society
Plans for a digital identity would most likely be part of the Government’s wider attempt to improve data collection and used to inform policymaking and implementation. A digital identity scheme, with a unique identifier for each citizen, could help create Government to join up a variety of personal information currently held in separate department databases. This could lead to new insights on citizen behaviour and improved Government decision-making.

So what could possibly be the problem with such a supposedly advantageous system? One of the risks is that a poorly implemented digital ID scheme could make it harder for some people to access services, particularly those with limited access to the internet or skills in using it. Some charities have already noted in a Government consultation that a significant amount of their time is dedicated to supporting vulnerable users to navigate Government online services.

Another risk is that people may feel that a ‘joining up’ of data across Government will damage their privacy. Even if we have (willingly or unwillingly) shared our data with Government already, we may be relying on the notion that most officials couldn’t that easily pull up (and potentially abuse) all our information in one place. The loss of such protection could further undermine trust in those who have access to our data, from the Government itself to our local GPs.

But if Estonia can make it work, why can’t the UK? One of the reasons for Estonia’s successful digitalisation is that it was in many ways starting from scratch, and able to design its digital ID as part of a new wider system. The UK, on the other hand, has numerous separate existing digital systems that would need to be integrated.

Creating More Problems
This problem also has implications for the UK Government’s plans for more data-focused policymaking. As the Institute for Government put it, “A No10 data science unit could create more problems than it solves.” The thinktank noted that much of the data collected, stored and processed by Government departments is of poor quality and subject to significant gaps, difficult to find and share, and locked away in legacy IT systems.

Building a well-rounded picture of Government and society, and empowering the rest of Whitehall to use data science, will require an overhaul of data use that goes way beyond the abilities of small team in Downing Street. The UK needs a long-term plan backed up with practical steps, a much greater willingness to invest in skills and systems, and clear high-level leadership.

Put simply, the Government needs to learn to walk before it tries to run with a complex and highly sensitive digital identity scheme. It has highlighted six principles that it wants to guide the project (privacy, transparency, inclusivity, interoperability, proportionality and good governance). But these are very broad and there’s no indication yet of how they will be followed.

A UK digital identity will only work if it allows people to stay in control of their data, who it is shared with and what they are allowed (and not allowed) to do with it. Without this, we can expect to see a revival of the campaign that helped kill ID cards the first time around.

Originally appeared in The Conversation on 10th September
The UK is at a “perilous turning point” in the pandemic, with case numbers returning to levels seen in the spring and the threat of a second nationwide lockdown on the horizon. Public health measures will be crucial to controlling this second wave, but these “will only work if people comply,” prime minister Boris Johnson has stressed. “It falls to each of us and every one of us to remember the basics,” he said. “Wash our hands, cover our faces, observe social distancing – and follow the rules.”

But widespread confusion over the Government’s advice is threatening public compliance. The use of complex, confusing and ever-changing coronavirus messaging is partly to blame. To cut through this confusion, clearer and more consistent messaging is needed. The Government therefore should apply the principles that commercial organisations use when communicating about their brands to create more effective messaging.

Where the UK Government is Going Wrong in its Coronavirus Messaging, According to a Marketing Expert

By Professor Sally Dibb, Centre for Business in Society

The UK is at a “perilous turning point” in the pandemic, with case numbers returning to levels seen in the spring and the threat of a second nationwide lockdown on the horizon. Public health measures will be crucial to controlling this second wave, but these “will only work if people comply,” prime minister Boris Johnson has stressed. “It falls to each of us and every one of us to remember the basics,” he said. “Wash our hands, cover our faces, observe social distancing – and follow the rules.”

But widespread confusion over the Government’s advice is threatening public compliance. The use of complex, confusing and ever-changing coronavirus messaging is partly to blame. To cut through this confusion, clearer and more consistent messaging is needed. The Government therefore should apply the principles that commercial organisations use when communicating about their brands to create more effective messaging.

1. Keep it Simple

The best messages are clear, succinct and easy to remember. People like slogans that are meaningful – offering an exposition of how whatever is being advertised will benefit them – and that have a clear message, while short slogans that roll off the tongue can be easier to recall. Well-known examples such as “The Ultimate Driving Machine” (BMW), “Think Differently” (Apple) and “I’m lovin’ it” (McDonald’s) all follow these rules.

Government coronavirus advice has failed to follow this simplicity rule. The most recent advice promotes the “three simple actions we must all do to keep on protecting each other”, which are to “wash hands, cover face, make space”. So far, not too bad.

But less good is the instruction to “not meet in groups larger than six”, especially as it is followed with an obscure caveat: “with some limited exceptions”. These are just the latest of many, many such messages, the clarity of which are further obscured by numerous local, regional and national variations.
2. Be Consistent

Strong brands use repeated and uniform messaging. They offer a single version of the truth and are based on a central theme, which is the foundation on which subsequent brand messages build. The audience is able to easily understand how all of these messages are connected.

Such messaging is unremitting and can be surprisingly hard to shift, even when the world (or brand) has moved on. Who of a certain generation could forget that Heineken “refreshes the parts other beers cannot reach” or that Midland was “the listening bank”?

Government coronavirus messaging has not followed this principle. It lacks a central foundational theme and has been consistent only in its inconsistency.

In England, the focus has shifted from personal hygiene, to safeguarding the NHS (“stay home, protect the NHS, save lives”), to remaining alert (“stay alert, control the virus, save lives”), to the size of social groups (“the rule of six”). It’s now returned to a new version of the NHS theme – “save lives, protect the NHS and shelter the economy”. And again, the confusion is compounded by different messaging variations in each of the four nations.

Of course, as the situation changes, the Government’s messaging needs to evolve. But underneath this, there needs to be a common thread that ties everything together.

3. Make it Well-Targeted

Repeatedly exposing the target audience to the messaging is vital. But not all groups can access messages in the same way. Branding experts deal with these differences by choosing different channels to fit the needs of specific audiences. For example, the BBC News brand targets a broad audience and so is offered through television broadcasting and also online and via its app.

In any national public health emergency or crisis, accessing the population is key, and reaching the vulnerable, the marginalised and the digitally excluded can be challenging. While the vulnerability of the elderly, those with disabilities, people with certain health conditions, and BAME communities has been widely reported during the pandemic, on-the-ground evidence of specific channels being used to target these groups is more limited. The Government has been quite slow to put out messaging on non-English channels, for example.

4. Deliver on Promises Made

To become strong, a brand must meet an expected quality standard and consistently deliver what customers expect. Quick action is needed if things go wrong, to maintain customer loyalty and protect the brand from damage.

The public expects a similar quid pro quo from the Government in exchange for following the coronavirus rules. Restricting people’s liberty during lockdown was justified on the basis it would keep them safe from the virus. Yet high numbers of cases and deaths have led to questions about whether the Government’s approach has delivered.

Dominic Cummings’s trip from London to Durham undermined public confidence in the Government’s ability to handle the pandemic. EPA-EFE

Public trust has also been eroded by politicians’ inability or unwillingness to swiftly rectify mistakes, as the Dominic Cummings debacle has shown. This matters, because trust in those who set policy is known to influence public compliance, which is critical at this juncture.

A More Complex Task?

Of course, the constantly changing situation means the task the Government faces is highly complex. Developing effective messaging for a brand is arguably more straightforward. Yet even well-known brands face turbulence and must evolve over time to survive. But while a good brand has a strong central theme on which to build, these foundations have largely been absent from the Government’s coronavirus messaging.

How much better to have put in place a core theme – such as “we’re in this together” – to which further layers of messaging could be added. As in: “we’re in this together… so stay home, protect the NHS, save lives”, or “we’re in this together… so follow the rule of six”.

At this perilous turning point in the pandemic, the Government should consider this sort of strategy. It needs to assemble a compelling campaign from its existing messaging, to drive the public compliance needed to beat the virus.

Originally appeared in The Conversation on 29th September

Over 90% of EU citizens each year are exposed to levels of outdoor air pollution that are above the World Health Organization’s air quality guidelines. In Birmingham, the UK’s second largest city, air quality in 2018 breached both national air quality limits for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and the WHO guideline for particulate matter. Children who live in Birmingham could have their lives cut short by an average of up to seven months because of poor air quality alone.

Air pollution is a public health crisis, but it’s currently overshadowed by coronavirus. As the virus has restricted our access to cafes and restaurants, drive-through services have swollen. They might allow a semblance of normal life to continue, but what might it mean for the air we breathe?

In research conducted at the outset of the pandemic, my colleagues and I discovered that many drive-throughs in the UK are air pollution hotspots. Without measures to limit exposure, these sites could contribute to chronic health problems among drive-through workers and the people they serve.

Convenience at a Cost
In February 2020, mere weeks before lockdown began in the UK, we published a study on air pollution around the drive-through windows of fast food outlets in 10 major cities throughout the UK. To find out how it might be affecting customers and employees, we used monitors to measure levels of pollution every 15 minutes for two weeks.

At a drive-through in Erith, south-east London, 61% of NO₂ measurements exceeded the UK’s safe limit. In Hull, 27% of measurements revealed unsafe levels of NO₂ and in Birmingham, 19% exceeded the limit. NO₂ levels seemed to peak during lunch and in the evening, while concentrations of particulate matter were highest in the morning during the breakfast rush.

In all of these places, drive-through employees were regularly exposed to toxic fumes that can have long-term health effects. Customers in their cars weren’t much safer either. Rather than being protected from emissions inside a vehicle, studies show that pollutants can accumulate within your car while you’re sat inside, often to higher levels in the confined space than outside it.

Clearing the Air
Ours was the first study to investigate pollution levels at drive-throughs. Since then, drive-through coronavirus testing sites have sprung up across the UK and in the US, a “building boom” for...
restaurant drive-throughs is underway.

Traffic pollution contains a number of harmful substances. Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) is a noxious gas found in exhaust fumes that has been linked to asthma and birth complications. Particulate matter is another form of air pollution that’s like a fine dust, shed during combustion in the engine or from the wear and tear of brakes.

These tiny fragments often measure less than 2.5 thousandths of a millimetre, or one-thirtieth the width of a human hair. But when inhaled, they can infiltrate the bloodstream and weaken the lungs or contribute to heart disease.

Although there are permissible standards for these substances that are set by the Government, no studies can claim that a harmless level of air pollution exists. People with underlying health problems can be affected even at very low levels of exposure.

Employers have a duty to protect drive-through workers from air pollution. Proper precautionary measures to minimise their exposure could also benefit the public. Using a reverse-flow fan system to prevent exhaust from entering the drive-through windows, encouraging stationary drivers to turn off their engines while waiting and preventing pregnant staff from working on the drive-through are just a few small steps that could make a big difference.

Scientists have found that hospital admissions for Covid-19 tend to flare up where air pollution is most severe, as chronic exposure to airborne pollutants can make people more vulnerable. Using drive-through services instead of eating inside cafes and restaurants might limit your contact with coronavirus, but the hidden health consequences of air pollution should not be ignored.
Shops Are Reopening. Maybe!

By Professor Lyndon Simkin, Centre for Business in Society

UK high streets were in deep trouble before the pandemic struck, but now they face even more challenges. Is Covid-19 their death knell? Should we not simply accept that they are redundant?

The Perfect Storm
There is something of a ‘perfect storm’ for our town centres… Fewer shops trading than a few months ago, big brands announcing further closures, plans already on the table for repurposing retail space no longer viable, travel restrictions making it harder for people to reach town centres, now fewer people working in city centres, and consumers have far more on their minds than popping into town for some retail therapy!

What’s Left On The High Street?
Oasis and Warehouse, BrightHouse and Beales department stores pulled the plug as Covid-19 struck, while New Look, Cath Kidston and Laura Ashley have restructured and are teetering. Now even the likes of John Lewis and M&S have stated that not all of their stores will reopen after the lockdown measures cease. There are a number of household names on the brink and it is likely that many more ‘closed for Covid-19’ signs will be made permanent. The pandemic has forced the closure of cafés, bars and restaurants, with many independents going under and several large chains – Carluccio’s, Byron, Café Rouge, Bella Italia, Franky & Benny’s and Chiquito – announcing closures of branches and fighting for survival. Many were already struggling in the face of new competitors, but the Covid-19 crisis has escalated their problems.

Plans For Alternative Usage Are In Tatters
For town centres, however, the most significant implication from this crisis might be the termination of many existing schemes for the alternative use for shop units and former department stores on our high streets, intended to bring footfall. My local Debenhams will not re-open after the lockdown, with the company failing to negotiate rents down. It is destined to become a hotel, removing prime pitch retail space. My local House of Fraser store, once an anchor, is to be turned into offices. The original closure plan had been for a fitness centre in the basement, retail on the ground floor, a multiplex cinema at the rear and commercial offices above. Covid-19 has put paid to the plans for both the gym and cinema operators. To make matters worse, the trend over the past few years for empty shops to be adapted for everything from soft play, crazy golf, trampolining, fitness centres, craft making and cafés, has been halted by the pandemic and the associated health protocols.

Harder To Get To
Councils have announced changes to roads within the shopping zone to make it safer for pedestrians and cyclists to socially distance, with traffic banned on some streets and others made one-way, hindering the car-borne shopper’s access. Combined with cuts to rail and bus timetables, the public’s unease at travelling in ‘virus-filled’ public transport compartments, and now moves to impose social distancing on public transport, and the numbers of shoppers coming into city centres inevitably will be further reduced.
Fewer People Working In Cities Means Fewer Customers
There are now far fewer shop and restaurant workers, who themselves are not spending while in our city centres. But the biggest change is with the move to remote working. While some of us, post-pandemic, will return to our offices and previous working patterns, many companies have announced that they will continue to endorse at-home and remote working. The occupants of central office blocks daily are also customers in the shops and cafés beneath. Even if only 10% of office workers no longer routinely come to their offices, the impact on the retailers and restaurants in city centres will be severe. And it might be more than 10%!

Consumer Priorities Do Not Include The High Street
Add to this maelstrom our own fears and concerns as consumers, and the perfect storm for retailing is complete. High streets exist to showcase products and town centres are hubs, either for social shopping trips or visiting a club, bar or restaurant. For many consumers, the focus now is survival, rather than pampering or socialising. When our high streets re-open, just how much of our time we will want to spend on them will undoubtedly be different from back in March, with potentially dire consequences for the brands trading in those stores and cafés.

Recession
And then there’s recession. As if life were not gloomy enough, the experts tell us that the upcoming Covid-19 generated recession will make 2008’s financial crash pale into insignificance. Whenever there is recession, retail spending plummets, eating out and visiting entertainment venues decline and all non-essential discretionary spending is pared right back... exactly the commercial activities which are on our high streets and within town centres!

A Total Re-Think
Perhaps there will be an awakening? Rather than retro-fitting ad hoc ‘sticking plaster’ fixes to our high streets and town centres, maybe the perfect storm now forces a radical re-think... Rather than attempting to perpetuate the retailing dominance of the town centre, should we not now embrace change? By letting the land currently protected by the planners for commercial use instead be allocated to housing, parks and open spaces, recreational and social use, rather than retailing? Enabled by clearing away many shopping streets and repurposing commercial land for new-look central residential use. Maybe this scenario is still a step too far for some.

Nevertheless, there is no denying the perfect storm now sweeping through our retail streets, in which there will be many more big brand casualties and retail closures in the coming months. This retail blight will demand new land uses and fresh thinking by businesses, developers, investors, and planning authorities. Challenging and threatening times? Or an era of new opportunities? Either way, the traditional high street cannot cling to life as it had struggled vainly to do before the pandemic struck.
Rising levels of income inequality within countries has been a growing concern during the last three decades across most regions of the world and has received increasing attention in the media and policy circles (see example: ‘Is income inequality rising around the world?’, World Economic Forum, 23 November 2018).

Previous academic studies have investigated various factors likely to contribute to income inequality such as technical change, fiscal and macroprudential policy and the role of institutions to name but a few. However, research on the impact of financialisation as a driver of income inequality, remains scant and inconclusive. The relatively few studies focus on a single or a small number of countries and provide conflicting evidence. In addition, these studies only consider the impact of a uni-dimensional measure of financialisation such as the financialisation of the nonfinancial sector (for example, Alvarez, 2015). The notable exception is Godechot (2016), who explores the impact of various dimensions of financialisation. However, this study is based on only 18 OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries, uses basic OLS (ordinary least squares) regressions and its results, being susceptible to endogeneity bias and cross-sectional dependence, cannot be taken as definitive ones. Moreover, Godechot (2016) treated household financialisation using aggregate proxies, thus failing to investigate the significance of its main components, namely ‘mortgage debt’, ‘consumer debt’, and ‘other purposes debt’.

In a recent article – see De Vita and Luo, ‘Financialisation, household debt and income inequality: Empirical evidence’, in press – we treat the concept of financialisation – defined as “a pattern of accumulation in which profit making occurs increasingly through financial channels rather than through trade and commodity production” (Krippner, 2005, p. 174) – as a multi-dimensional construct. We advance on the state-of-the-art by investigating empirically the disaggregated impact of the financialisation of the financial, nonfinancial and household sectors on income inequality through a large data panel of 33 countries over the period 1996-2015 and, following a decomposition analysis of household debt into its three main components (mortgage, consumer, and other purposes debt) by testing the distinct effect of each component.

Our comprehensive model specification accounts for many market conditions and institutional factors as well as time-specific, and time-invariant country-specific effects. We use four measures to capture the three financialisation dimensions discussed above and three alternative income inequality indicators including, in addition to Gini-based indices, the Palma ratio, a measure based on the
ratio of the income share of the top (richest) 10% to that of the bottom 40%.

Two main findings are obtained from our results. First, of the three financialisation dimensions examined, it is only household financialisation that is found to exert a positive and statistically significant effect on income inequality. This means that the link between financialisation and income inequality is driven by household indebtedness. Hence, despite the multi-faceted manifestations and pervasiveness of financialisation, it is ordinary people, particularly households on low-income that end up bearing the brunt of the costs of financialisation, through a self-reinforcing spiral of increasing inequality causing further debt, which, in turn, augments the disparity between the ‘Haves’ and ‘Have-nots’. Second, following a decomposition analysis of household debt into its three main components, we uncover that it is increasing levels of household debt with respect to credit granted for ‘other debt’ (i.e., additional debt to fund consumption of goods and services rather than investment), including health, credit card debt and payday loans, that is accountable for the rise of income inequality, whilst mortgage debt reduces income inequality. We explain the latter effect via the lower cost of mortgage debt versus general loans or, possibly, through the channel of greater subsequent access to the loan market with an associated income effect. These findings have important, wider socio-economic implications given that poorly conceived policies on inequality “can exacerbate the combination of less sustainable economic growth, weakened social cohesion, and citizens feeling disenfranchised from democratic processes” (World Economic Forum, 2016, p. 41).

In the article, we argue that the policy response should at least concentrate on better regulating personal credit, borrowing and household savings. Particularly in areas linked to unmanageable debt, key stakeholders such as government, regulators and the financial services industry can certainly play a key role. Recommendations include ensuring that welfare reform does not leave the poorest and most debt vulnerable households behind, incentivising savings by low-income/low-asset households through government-matched accounts, ensuring – in co-ordination with regulators – that financially excluded consumers have better access to affordable credit, and working with debt charities to ensure more debt advice and support is offered to households with problem debt.

**References**


HEALTHY DRINKS – SLIM AND CIRCULAR BUSINESS

By Professor Benny Tjahjono and Iago Radio Rodríguez

Bilurico is a small company located in Cambados, Galicia, north-west of Spain, producing organic and environmentally friendly beverages made of tea and fruit infusions. The company name is in honour of a small Galician coastal sandpiper bird (Actitis hypoleucos).

Although the organic food and beverage market in Spain is considerably small compared to that of other European countries, the Spanish market is proliferating. Bilurico saw the upwards trends in the market, particularly post the 2008 recession, along with the growth of Spanish upper middle class who are willing to pay more for organic food and beverage products.

Bilurico Ready to Drink Tea is available in three different options: 1) fruit blend, exotic fruits, lemon and agave; 2) green tea, ginger, lemon and agave; and 3) black tea, flower mix and agave.

Beverage Production At Bilurico
Bilurico is an innovative company, operating a vertically integrated supply chain with its upstream suppliers and the downstream customers.

Raw Materials
Bilurico only uses organic raw materials, free from chemical fertilisers, pesticides and genetically modified organisms (GMOs), that come with organic certification from an external body. The raw materials are mainly sourced from Spain and other EU to reduce the carbon footprint from transportation.

The certificates also ensure the livelihood of the local farmers, good and fair labour condition, etc.

Production Process
Beverage production is resource-intensive in terms of water, gas and electricity. Bilurico saw an innovative way of cost-saving and resource conservation at the same time, by “buying some excess production capacity” from another beverage company. This sharing economy model reduces the inefficiency from under-utilised assets and depreciation, in addition to optimising the use of water and energy. The effluent and residual waste rich in organic nutrients are turned into organic fertiliser, a reflection of the close-loop principle: “waste from one process becomes food for other processes”.

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Packaging
To reduce waste and pollution from packaging, Bilurico uses glass bottles with recyclable caps and plastic labelling. Recycled glass is inherently cheaper than the brand-new ones due to the lower cost of raw materials. As the melting point of the recycled glass is lower than that of the virgin glass materials, processing recycled glass is also cheaper. Also, unlike plastics, the bottles from food and beverage can be directly reused for the same purpose.

Logistics, Distribution and Warehousing
Bilurico shares its logistic and distribution operations with other companies. Product storage is looked after by a partner who has extra capacity warehousing. Bilurico uses the third-party logistic (3PL) providers so it does not have to worry about optimising truck load and filling up the excess transport capacities.

Product Development and Marketing
Bilurico is small but innovative company emphasising on product development and marketing as the core competitiveness. Bilurico’s marketing effort is entirely online, making use of social media marketing that promotes sustainable competition. Sales outlets include retail, hospitality, vending and gyms.

Towards the Circular Economy
The Circular Economy (CE) upholds three main tenets: resource efficiency (minimise the consumption of finite resources and/or raw materials in the manufacture of products), maximisation of recirculation (aimed at keeping products at their highest utility and value) and waste prevention (minimising the contents that could end up in landfill or incineration).

Bilurico saw both economic and environmental benefits when choosing the CE business model, especially in sharing production, logistics and distributions operations with the partners.

The macro-economic benefits from CE are in the form of protecting businesses against scarcity of resources and volatile prices and creating new markets or business opportunities. In contrast, the micro-economic benefits include the reduction of costs increased production and improved energy conservation.

Bilurico lies on both macro and micro sides of the equations. The company saw these as a means of continuously being slim (lean) and competitive, and at the same time designed out any waste and pollution in all steps of their product’s life cycle.

Partnership for Circularity
Bilurico is an exemplar of such a circular company. Its investment is not just for the planet; it also pays back in terms of macro and micro-economies due to the financial savings and the productivity increase, but most of all, new markets.

Bilurico’s business model depicts CE principles. The products are organic, against any use of chemicals that jeopardise the health and the environment. The supply chain, at the macro level, adopts the sharing economy model, by utilising each other’s excess capacity, hence upholding the principles of resource efficiency. The production processes promote efficiencies and waste prevention principles. The company makes the full use of residue from tea and fruits as organic fertiliser (waste to food).

Bilurico understands that working with the right partners, i.e. those who share the shared values and vision, is key to success. Though the partners also have similar production processes, they are in entirely different markets and different sales channels, so are not in direct competitions. Bilurico has proven that strong partnerships beyond commercial endeavours are where the future direction should lay.

Bilurico’s journey on an adventure towards the CE is not alone. Together with the Sustainable Production and Consumption (SPC) cluster at CBiS, Bilurico leverages on CE woven into the customer value propositions. Both Bilurico and the SPC cluster are currently embarking on several new initiatives that leverage their strengths in research and innovation. These include food waste reduction in the supply chain, where together, they identify various scenarios for future organic tea.
The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented economic shock with the International Monetary Fund forecasting a 4.9% decline in global GDP during 2020. The recovery from this crisis is highly uncertain with many businesses, particularly those in the service sector, unable to operate at full capacity. However, the pandemic also offers an opportunity to reshape the economy through a ‘green recovery’, with the UK Government committed to building back greener and using this investment as a means of addressing underlying economic imbalances.

The notion of a green recovery has gained traction due to the temporary improvement in air quality achieved during the period of lockdown. However, as the International Energy Agency point out, this is no cause for celebration. Instead, there needs to be the development of a set of policies that ensure environmental gains are secured through sustainable means. Critically, there needs to be a focus, from policymakers, on aspects such as mobility and using investment in electric vehicles, for example, as a means of capturing both economic and environmental benefits.

Potentially, investment in green technologies represents an opportunity to generate prosperity and reduce some of ‘scarring’ wrought by the pandemic. For example, supporting the development of electric vehicle charging infrastructure may provide opportunities for new businesses to emerge.

However, the benefits accruing from a green recovery are not just for the longer-term. Research from Hepburn et al (2020) found that implementing policies designed to secure a green recovery would have more immediate benefits than those generated by traditional measures. For instance, the installation of new electric...
vehicle charging infrastructure can be done quickly, and will not be impacted by the need for social distancing. Critically, investments such as this can enable a quick return to the labour market for those seeking work.

Although the current government has made the commitment to build back greener, the UK is currently lagging behind other nations in formulating investment plans in this space. For example, in Germany, the government COVID-19 recovery programme is to allocate around £46bn to investments in clean technologies such as electric vehicles. In contrast, the UK proposals announced so far allocate around £3bn worth of investment in comparable areas. To secure ‘market leadership’ the UK will need to expand this investment, but will also need to consider more holistic solutions addressing some of the key challenges of the pandemic.

Whilst the Confederation of British Industry has identified technologies such as carbon capture, hydrogen and electric vehicles as key areas for investment, these proposals need to go further than simply prescribing areas for spending. For example, investment in these technologies must be supported by an extensive retraining programme in order to ensure that employment opportunities are available for those who have lost their jobs during the pandemic. Moreover, the green recovery also has a potentially significant role to play in ensuring the future vibrancy of urban areas that are currently struggling due to the absence of office workers and shoppers.

Ensuring the future vibrancy of city locations is imperative for policymakers. A green recovery can help to modernise the transport offer in these areas, bringing new technologies into the mobility mix. In addition, encouraging the usage of electric vehicles in these locations will have further benefits in terms of improving the environment and potentially making these areas more attractive to visitors. However, these proposals must be inclusive as there is a danger that some groups could be left behind or unfairly penalised due to the level of technological change associated with a shift to a greener economy. For example, if financial penalties are levied on ‘conventional’ vehicles due to their greater level of emissions, this is likely to be highly regressive and impact those on low incomes hardest. In addition, if cashless and touchless systems form part of the public transport offer, there needs to be consideration given to how those without access to the internet or bank accounts will be impacted.

Finally, there also needs to be continued investment in incentives in order to encourage behavioural change from consumers. New technologies also provide the basis for exploring alternative multi-modal platforms, such as connecting e-scooters with rail, in order to provide these passengers with a viable last mile alternative to using bus services. Potentially, a green recovery could provide the basis for a long-term economic transformation leading to the development of new industries and a greater resilience. However, if consumers, for example, cannot be convinced about the merits of this approach then it is likely to fail. Therefore, in order to secure a successful green recovery there needs to be ‘buy in’ from all stakeholders otherwise the opportunities that are afforded by this agenda may not be taken.

References

SECTION 2 – The Views From Our Experts

Clean Air Zone: Will Birmingham Triumph or Go Up in Smoke?

By Dr Anitha Chinnaswamy, Assistant Professor of Environment and Computing, Coventry University

Over 90% of the European citizens are exposed to annual levels of outdoor air pollution that are above what is specified in the World Health Organization’s air quality guidelines.

High concentrations of air pollutants result in several typical health effects, both short- and long-term, from headaches, nausea to lung cancer, heart disease and even damage to the brain, liver or kidneys. It is known to exacerbate the impact of pre-existing health conditions, such as for people with asthma, respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses and especially for the elderly and infants. This is particularly true for Birmingham, UK’s second largest city where air quality in 2018 breached both the national air quality limits for NO2 and the WHO guideline for particulate matter. This is having a massive impact on people’s health and quality of life. A study by Kings College London found that children who live in Birmingham could have their lives cut short by up to seven months.

Public Health Risk
Numerous UK cities were found to exceed WHO air pollution limits resulting in major public health risk. Poor air quality is the greatest environmental risk to public health in the UK.

Recent research commissioned by Public Health England has found that the health and social care costs of air pollution (PM2.5 and NO2) in England could reach £5.3 billion by 2035. These costs are also a result of the cumulative costs of diseases that have been strongly associated with air pollution such as heart disease, asthma, lung cancer, dementia, to name a few. PHE states that if all the associated diseases are to be included, air pollution may result in 2.4 million cases of disease in England alone between now and 2035.

In addition, PHE states that air pollution is estimated to cause 1,460 excess deaths a year in Birmingham and the surrounding areas. Air pollution is not localised and does not respect borders, hence neighbouring cities and towns may experience the impact of these high emissions. Coventry that shares a border with Birmingham also has been found to have dangerous levels of pollution. NO2 levels it was found were breached several times against the legal limits. A strong co-relation is found that air quality is poorer in less affluent areas, resulting in a wider socio-economic disparity.

Studies have demonstrated that even small changes in levels of pollution can result in a large contribution, that is even a 1µg/m3 reduction in PM2.5 concentration annually could prevent 50,000 new cases of coronary heart disease and 9,000 new cases of asthma by 2035.

What’s Causing This Pollution?
Traffic related pollution is stated to be the main cause for this pollution, it is found that levels of NO2, the noxious gas that is detrimental to health that are at unprecedented levels. Brake dust produces some of the most harmful kind of air pollution than vehicle exhausts. Brake dust are minute particles that measure less than 2.5 thousandths of a millimetre, i.e. less than one thirtieth the width of a human hair. These can then easily pass the nasal cavity reaching vital organs such as the heart, lungs and bloodstream, weakening the immune system and result in cardiovascular diseases, cancers and in some instances even death.

At the end of March 2019, there were 38.4 million licensed vehicles in Great Britain, a 1.4% increase compared to March 2018. Cars
make up the majority of licensed vehicles. There were 31.7 million cars (82.5%), 4.1 million LGVs (10.6%), 0.5 million HGVs (1.3%), 1.3 million motorcycles (3.3%), and 0.9 million other vehicles (2.4%) licensed at the end of March 2019.

Road transport is the main source of NOx, one of the most harmful pollutant gases, irritating the lungs and potentially causing breathing difficulties. PM2.5, which includes soot and dust generated by the burning of fuels and from brake pads being applied to tyres, is more widely spread. There’s overwhelming evidence that vehicular air pollution has a significant impact on human health. Contrary to popular belief, drivers are not protected from emissions as they are inside a vehicle. In fact, studies demonstrate that it leads a rapid accumulation of air pollutants within the vehicle. This was observed as drivers moved across London, with levels of pollution inside the vehicle often exceeding 100 µg/m³. A Coventry University funded study in collaboration with BBC WM also examined the impact of air pollution on drive-thru users and employees in 10 major cities. Our study in collaboration with BBC WM also examined the impact of air pollution on drivers moving across London, with levels of pollution inside the vehicle often exceeding 100 µg/m³. A Coventry University funded study in collaboration with BBC WM also examined the impact of air pollution on drive-thru users and employees in 10 major cities. Our study demonstrated that the NO2 levels in the drive-thru location in Birmingham exceeded 19% of the total time measured. Employees of these drive-thru locations and the general public are exposed to toxic fumes that can have adverse effects on health.

EU commission Warning To The UK

In 2018, the UK met the limit value for hourly mean nitrogen dioxide (NO2) in 41 out of 43 zones. Seven zones were compliant with the limit value for annual mean NO2. The remaining 36 zones exceeded this limit value.

The UK had been referred to Europe’s highest court for failing to tackle illegal levels of air pollution. The UK had been given a final warning by the European commission that has the power to impose multimillion-euro fines if the countries do not address the problem swiftly. Hence the UK government was forced to implement stricter measures and develop a comprehensive clean air strategy.

The Government Response

To improve the air quality in some of the major affected cities, the UK government planned to introduce five Clean air zones, to be operational by 2020. The cities include Birmingham, Leeds, Nottingham, Derby and Southampton. Birmingham is set to introduce its Clean Air Zone in June 2021.

The Clean Air Zones in Birmingham will not affect private car owners, but will only see the most polluting vehicles, like old buses, taxis, coaches and lorries, discouraged from entering the zone through charges.

A Clean Air Hydrogen Bus Pilot also has been initiated, where Birmingham City Council is deploying 20 new hydrogen double-decker buses. These buses will consume four times less fuel in comparison to standard diesel buses emitting only water vapour, hence will have no CO2 emissions or other harmful gases.

But this will only be effective if the public use the buses, bus usage in the UK has experienced a decline over time reducing by almost half from 5.3 million passenger journeys in 1986/87 to 2.8 million passenger journeys in 2016/17. Buses historically are considered a low status mode of transport that lack the convenience, freedom and privacy that personal vehicles offer.

Do Clean Air Zones Work?

Although there is research that establishes that in London’s clean air zones, there was a drop in PM, a study from the Netherlands though found clean air zones had not made any significant difference. In addition, clean air zones found that it had made ‘no discernible differences’ to NOx concentrations. Furthermore, it has been revealed that although these zones may reduce PM pollution, they do it at the expense of air quality outside the zone. To avoid upgrading their vehicles, drivers of older vehicles may drive longer distances to avoid the zones, only contributing to another zone. So, shouldn’t policies include vehicle upgrades, pro-environmental behaviours and investment of resources to mitigate the effects of air pollution?

The Impact of COVID-19 on Pollution

Covid-19 dramatically changed the way we live, work, and travel. Lockdowns globally witnessed the impact this had on air pollution due to the reduced levels of traffic. A reduction of 62% in air-polluting emissions was seen with a significant drop of vehicular traffic in cities alongside reduced industrial and commercial activity.

However, with cities relaxing lockdown and some semblance of normal life being resumed, traffic and corresponding emission levels have begun to rise again. A report from Greenpeace stated that, whilst NOx and PM levels initially decreased in China following the initial lockdown as a result of Covid-19, levels of these pollutants were found to be higher this April than they were at the same time last April.

In the UK, the fear over social distancing and the use of public transport may result in citizens re-evaluating the mode of transport they chose to go to work. This may result in a significant increase in the number of people choosing to drive to work in the ‘safe’ environment of their personal vehicles.

What Needs To Change?

Scholars in the field of environment study believe that there is a relationship between environmental knowledge and significant environmental behaviour. One of the ways to avoid harming the environment and prevent its destruction is the change in human behaviour towards and in the direction of the naturalist dimensions. According to the social psychology theories, the change in the behaviour will not happen on its own but requires changes in knowledge and attitude. Hence, it is at the heart of government policy making that proper knowledge would have tangible effects on behaviours.

With the explosion of technologies and their impact, can IoT prove to be a solution that can help right now? IoTs, a far less expensive option are small, low cost, mobile-enabled sensors that can be placed in cities at various strategic points. These sensors can then provide a comprehensive picture of the levels of air quality in near real time aiding faster decision making and resulting in mitigation actions.

Data collected from these sensors can result in better management of traffic, health assessments and also monitoring personal exposure to air pollution. When this data is available to the public, it provides them with knowledge and empowerment, resulting in pro-environmental behaviours and attitudes. IoT platforms, together with AI systems can help achieve a cost-effective way of measuring pollution, help populations understand the impact better, resulting in an improved environment and cleaner air not only in certain zones – but everywhere in the city.
After months of increasingly desperate pleading by industry insiders, July 2020 saw the Johnson government bow to pressure and announce £1.57billion worth of investment to protect arts, cultural and heritage institutions from the economic ravages brought by the Coronavirus pandemic. Justifying the price tag, Oliver Dowdon (Secretary of State for the Department of Culture, Media, and Sport) (DCMS) described arts and culture as ‘the lynchpin of our world-beating and fast-growing creative industries’ acknowledged by Rishi Sunak (Chancellor of the Exchequer) as ‘critical to keeping our economy thriving, employing more than 700,000 people’. Hot on the heels of this creative industry bailout was the July announcement of a £500m Film and TV Production Restart Scheme to insure losses incurred by projects that re-commenced shooting but were further delayed by Coronavirus. The cumulative £2billion of assistance to the creative industries (defined as those ‘which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent’) feels generous. It is not when placed in the context of recent years in which the provision of fiscal support to the creative industries by British governments has become de rigueur.

Since 2007 the creative industries have benefitted substantially from corporate tax relief (other tax reliefs for Film and TV have existed in various forms since the 1990s). Originally directed at the film industry (2007 Budget) tax relief has subsequently been extended to animation, high-end television and video games (2012 Budget), theatres (2014 Budget), Children’s television (2015 Budget) and orchestra’s (2016 Budget) and museum and galleries exhibitions (2017 Budget). Support provided to the creative industries in the form of lost taxation rose to £3.906billion by 2019-20 with popular television series such as the ‘The Crown’, ‘Sherlock’ and ‘Game of Thrones’ all productions benefitting from tax relief.
Even the attempt by Johnson government early in the Coronavirus crisis this year to support the creative industries through (albeit maligned), a Cultural Renewal Taskforce was within the norm of British creative industrial policy, which has included the creation of several government-industry institutional structures. Since its first meeting in July 2011, the Creative Industries Council (CIC) has been a forum in which government ministers from the DCMS and Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy rub shoulders with industry executives and identify ‘barriers to growth’ and a ‘voice for the creative industries’. Theresa Mays’ conservative government added to this institutional framework with the creation of the Creative Industries Trade and Investment Board (CITIB) to promote exports. The CITIB was developed as part of the Creative Industries Sector Deal, itself part of the May’s government industrial strategy published in November 2017. The sector deal built upon recommendations made by the Bazalgette Review and was developed in with input from the CIC and Creative Industries Federation (an industry trade body). The sector deal brought with it a raft of new spending pledges worth £150m to assist the creative industries and ‘make Britain the best place in the world for the creative industries to thrive’. The May government also supported the creative industries with other smaller schemes of funding such as a music export growth scheme and the Constable Fund to halt the decline of Children’s television produced in the UK. In total, the May government’s creative industrial policy (including corporate tax relief for 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19) cost £2.936bn. The Johnson government signalled its intention to perpetuate this creative industrial policy with its pre-Covid introduction of a £250m Culture Investment Fund for innovative projects in the culture and creative sectors.

Assiduous historical audit of British creative industrial policy would have started in the early 20th Century. In 1927, the UK Government acknowledged the relevance of film production to the British economy through the Cinematograph Films act, which extended state support to the film industry to protect it from American competition and to promote exports. Its modern history nevertheless goes some way to demonstrate the substantial economic support delivered by governments in many countries (including in Britain) over recent decades in the form of ‘hidden’ industrial policy. Successive British government have treated industrial policy as a ‘love that dare not speak its name’ cloaking their many industrial interventions (in sectors well-beyond the creative industries) behind a discrete veil of alternative nomenclature and political rhetoric that has eulogised market-based solutions. It is only since the global financial crisis of 2008 that British governments have had the courage to mention they implement industrial policy and only since the rise of Theresa May (2016-2019) that a British government has explicitly articulated it in a white paper. Tracing the extent of industrial policy in the decades prior to 2008 will require evolution in our definition of the term. It will also challenge our perception of it as a failure.
I Can’t Save Because…

By Dr Helen Roby and Dr Alessandro Merendino

Saving is like taking exercise. We all know we should do it but find excuses or reasons not to. According to a survey by Lloyd’s Bank in 2019 as part of their ‘How Britain Lives’ study, a third of British adults do not save money regularly, with one in five unable to survive longer than a month on their savings if they were to lose their job, and 30% able to survive no longer than 6 months. Saving is a crucial way to give financial security for that rainy day, especially with the uncertainties and pressures on livelihoods from Covid 19 or to allow for those little luxuries in life.

As part of the ‘What Works’ project funded by the Money Advice Service, researchers in the Centre for the Business in Society at Coventry University undertook a set of before and after interviews with participants that had completed a ‘Managing my Money’ course developed at The Open University. The course focused on giving participants tips and to develop skills for saving and budgeting.

In these interviews participants talked about their experiences of saving and the challenges they encountered. There were a range of explanations given for why people did not save ranging from external factors, such as low income, loss of job, pester power of children and internal factors including, wanting to spend money on going out, impulse buying or ‘wasting money’ on unnecessary things. Many of the participants were frustrated that they could not save regularly as they knew it left them vulnerable to meet that unexpected bill when the washing machine or the car went wrong. Not having savings prevented them from having a holiday or getting that long dreamed for new bathroom or car.

However, we also found some interesting tips on how to save even when money was tight. One participant talked about a community led saving scheme, called a ‘Pardoner’, more common in Asian and ethnic communities. The idea is to pay in a small amount on a regular basis and then through a draw, you receive a lump sum to pay for that new washing machine or presents for Christmas. Others that were members of a credit union found the ‘inaccessibility’ of the credit union a great way to save. Credit unions, traditionally, are financial co-operatives set up by members with something in common to benefit their community, not always with online banking facilities. If you wish to withdraw money you may need to physically go to the credit union. This physical barrier of needing to make a journey was often enough to prevent people from withdrawing their savings and in some cases, to forget the money was even there.

The Managing My Money course and the free to download and use MoneySkills app, developed by Coventry University, encourage people to draw up a budget to help make ends meet and then to put a small amount of money regularly into savings. It could just be a few pounds each week, but by doing this often, it soon builds up into a more substantial sum that could pay for a new washing machine. So, when you are sitting on the sofa procrastinating about taking exercise, perhaps think about putting that spare change in your pocket into the piggy bank.

Turning to the big initial conundrum, “I can’t save because…”, our informants suggested some reasons why it is hard to save but also some possible solutions to save more every month.
I don’t have enough money at the end of the month.

Solutions. Many participants found the “1p challenge” incredibly helpful. They saved one penny on day 1, 2p on day two and so on. After 365 days, they would end up with savings of over £650.

Some found it useful to set up a direct debit into their savings account at the beginning of the month instead of at the end, so it just became like another bill.

My kids are my priority.

Solutions. Having priorities worked well for a lot of participants as a way of working out what was and what was not essential, and to help motivate them to save.

I don’t know how to save.

Solutions. Our participants realised that saving is, in fact, relatively easy. We have developed the MoneySkills app, free to download and use on iOS and Android, or in a web-based format. The app helps you to create a monthly budget that helps visualise the income, the expenditures and the savings.

My rent/mortgage and bills are too high.

Solutions. Housing expenses like rent and utilities should be around 35% of the household income; however, it can fluctuate to almost 50% depending on which area. Our participants found extremely useful and cost-effective to shop around and visit the comparison websites to find cheaper deals. By switching to a more affordable provider, some participants manage to save at least £50 per month, i.e. £600 per year. Other participants got rid of their credit cards with an expensive interest rate to pay or transferred the balance to 0% options.

My partner spends all the money.

Solutions. Many of our participants said they found it hard to talk to their partner about money. Some found it helpful to work together to develop monthly budget and decide together how much money to save per week. A shared goal was useful.

Further Reading

For further reading about our interventions and the findings of our research, please see the final project report and other publications.


To support people to build their financial wellbeing and resilience, we have developed a free to use App, called MoneySkills, to support people to make small changes to enable them to make a big difference.

The MoneySkills app provides content on budgeting and saving through:

- short video clips;
- e-zines; and
- an interactive budget planner.

MoneySkills is available free on iOS from the App store or for Android from Google Play Store and also as a web based application.
ANNOUNCEMENTS

Currently In-Production Journal Special Issues from CBiS

**Technological Forecasting and Social Change:**
“Tensions in the Data Environment – Can Organisations Meet the Challenge?”
Professor Maureen Meadows.

**Journal of Sustainable Tourism:**
“Sustainability Knowledge Management and Organisational Learning”
Professor Alexeis Garcia-Perez.

**Journal of Marketing Management:**
“A Critical Social Marketing Research Agenda”
Professor Sally Dibb.

**International Journal of Lean Six Sigma:**
“How Does Lean Six Sigma Improve Organisational Resilience Post the COVID-19 Pandemic?”
Professor Benny Tjahjono.

**Sustainability:**
“Practice-Based Models of Circular Economy”
Dr David Bek and Professor Benny Tjahjono.

**European Urban and Regional Studies:**
“Urban Europe, Precarious Futures?”
Dr David Jarvis, Dr Paul Sissons and Dr Jennifer Ferreira.

Forthcoming Conferences from CBiS

CBiS hosts *Urban Europe, Precarious Futures?* online with the journal *European Urban and Regional Studies* (EURS) on 2 December 2020 – Dr David Jarvis, Dr Paul Sissons and Dr Jennifer Ferreira.

We are chairing and hosting the prestigious *European Conference on Knowledge Management, 3-4 December 2020* – Professor Alexeis Garcia-Perez.

The EDIE cluster will co-convene the 12th *Chinese Economic Association European Conference, 12-13 December 2020*, hosted online in collaboration with the University of Surrey and Tsinghua University, examining “China’s Deepened Reform and Openness” – Dr Senmao Xia.

An international conference on *Tourism Crisis and Disasters: Responses, Recovery and Resilience*, is planned for March 2021 – Dr Vijay Reddy.

CBiS is hosting the *Future of Food 2: Eating Socially and Sourcing Sustainably Symposium, June 2021*, in partnership with Nottingham University Business School. Partners include the Co-op, Highways England, British Poultry Council, WRAP, Coventry City of Culture, Food Ethics Council – Dr Jordon Lazell and Dr David Bek.

CBiS will be once again hosting the highly regarded *Disability Sport: Promoting Human Rights, Diversity and Inclusion?* conference, staged alongside the Olympics next summer, 30 June-2 July 2021 – Dr Ian Brittain.
Changing Behaviours to Improve Economies & Society

Through understanding and interrogating the impact of organisations’ activities, behaviours and policies, CBiS’s research promotes responsibility and inclusivity, seeking to change behaviours in order to achieve better outcomes for economies, society and the individual.

Promoting sustainable production and ethical consumption

Challenging irresponsible finance and nurturing responsible personal finance

Shaping the use, privacy and security of data in organisations and society

Creating new models and policies for inclusive economic development
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The Centre for Business in Society

Changing behaviours for the benefit of economies, society and the individual

The Centre for Business in Society (CBiS) is the principal research centre within the Faculty of Business and Law at Coventry University. CBiS is home to thirty five specialist researchers, over 20 Associates, a dedicated research support team, over a hundred PhD researchers, most of the Faculty of Business and Law’s professoriate and many staff in the Faculty currently undertaking their sabbaticals. CBiS also looks after the Faculty’s new professional doctoral programme, the DBA.

Through understanding and interrogating the impact of organisations’ activities, behaviours and policies, CBiS’s research promotes responsibility and inclusivity, seeking to change behaviours in order to achieve better outcomes for economies and societies.

CBiS’s traditional core interests in sustainability and economic development are now joined by teams exploring two of the biggest sources of business’s impact on society in recent years: post-financialisation and the implications for economies and the individual; along with the explosion of big data and the digital economy, and the ramifications for organisations, consumers and society.