The Centre for Business in Society

Autumn Newsletter

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Welcome

A new academic year has started for CBiS, so welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter.

The end of year summer break presented an opportunity for the University’s leadership to reflect the relevancy and topicality of debt, ethical/sustainable supply-chains, impactful projects. Low carbon vehicles, there are very good impact cases emerging weekly. Everyone has a very significant role in this, working across 26 colleagues, with more papers published. CBiS’s research staff, permanent CBiS research staff, supporting the corporate plan’s desire based on their research cluster’s interests, two years. Carlos Ferreira and Nick Henry (PGRs), Faculty’s first professional doctorate, the REFable papers with colleagues at the Open University), CAPE project (Sally Dibb and Helen Roby, Community action platform for energy deliveries. These include the InnovateUK projects have joined CBiS in the Faculty of Business Research Centres, one of which now includes CBiS visiting researchers. In Brazil, there are collaborations on three projects, plus the EU CleanSky project and an ongoing CBiS visiting researchers. In Australia, strong relationships exist regarding co-tutelles PhDs, research collaborations and bids, staff mentoring and visiting staff arrangements, with Macquarie University, Swinburne, Deakin, and the University of Technology in Sydney, China, Europe, Brazil, Australia, and the UK. CBiS also staged a record number of events during the year, many of which are featured in this issue of our newsletter. One requires specific mention: The circular economy: transitioning to sustainability? Conference. In July, CBiS hosted this event for over 80 delegates drawn from across the globe, including academics and practitioners. Led by Professor Marijn Caren and Professor Sally Dibb, CBiS academics from each cluster and many of our PGRs created and hosted a very successful and impactful event. The keynote speakers were Martha Smith of Supep Kitchen. Professor Nick Michael Polomsky of Deakin University joined them on the plenary panel, led by our Visiting Professor Victoria Wells (Sheffield), to round up the event. It’s always nice to share good news... CBiS Associate Jill Timms has a new baby son, Frans. And CBiS PGR Director Andrew Perchard also has a new baby son, Giax! However, an unfortunate consequence of Giax’s arrival has been Andrew’s sensible decision to cease long distance commuting between Coventry and Scotland. Andrew leaves CBiS later this month for a post at Strirling University. The staff and PGRs in CBiS wish Andrew and his family all the best. Also adding CBiS is long time stalwart and Chair in CBiS, reflecting his own research record and significant contribution to the field. Dr Kevin Droughton’s success in attaining his PhD. Well done to Nick and Kevin.

Ten colleagues in FBL’s Schools spent their sabbaticals within CBiS during 2016/17. Perhaps more significantly, CBiS has just welcomed its first intake of research active FBL colleagues aligned to its core areas of interest and now granted Associate status by the University. Anthea Chinnaswamy (co-tutelle), Devon Barrow (forecasting analytics), DongWook Kwek (supply chain), Jackie Hu (supply chain), Jill Timms (sustainable supply), Mahmood Shah (finance/eBusiness), Qile He (supply chain), Husni Kharouf (internet communities), Huurn Khorvat (digital services/businesses) and Yue Meng (Retail Management) have landed from Madrid to join our Data, Finance projects, supporting Sally Dibb, Nick Henry and Lindsey Appleyard (FBL).

Since our last edition, Dr John Morris and Dr Hassan Adam have joined CBiS to work on our suite of responsible personal finance projects, supporting Sally Dibb, Nick Henry and Lindsey Appleyard. In recent weeks, Dr Sara Degli-Esposti has landed from Maastricht to join our data, organisation and popularly team. One piece of good news includes Deputy Director Professor Nick Henry’s promotion to a chair in CBiS, reflecting his own research record and significant contribution to the field. Dr Kevin Droughton’s success in attaining his PhD. Well done to Nick and Kevin.

In terms of milestones for CBiS reported to the SMT, David Jarvis has brought the Faculty’s first professional doctorate, the DBA, to market and our first cohort is engaged and creating their research plans. Our total number of PGRs now stands at 52, which is a three-fold increase over two years. Carlos Ferreira and Nick Henry have created a new degree programme based on their research cluster’s interests, the MSc in Social Value Accounting, supporting the corporate plan’s desire for research active FBL colleagues aligned to its core areas of interest and now granted Associate status by the University. Anthea Chinnaswamy (co-tutelle), Devon Barrow (forecasting analytics), DongWook Kwek (supply chain), Jackie Hu (supply chain), Jill Timms (sustainable supply), Mahmood Shah (finance/eBusiness), Qile He (supply chain), Husni Kharouf (internet communities), Huurn Khorvat (digital services/businesses) and Yue Meng (Retail Management) have landed from Madrid to join our Data, Finance projects, supporting Sally Dibb, Nick Henry and Lindsey Appleyard (FBL).

During the past twelve months, CBiS has staged a record number of events during the year, many of which are featured in this issue of our newsletter. One requires specific mention: The circular economy: transitioning to sustainability? Conference. In July, CBiS hosted this event for over 80 delegates drawn from across the globe, including academics and practitioners. Led by Professor Marijn Caren and Professor Sally Dibb, CBiS academics from each cluster and many of our PGRs created and hosted a very successful and impactful event. The keynote speakers were Martha Smith of Supep Kitchen. Professor Nick Michael Polomsky of Deakin University joined them on the plenary panel, led by our Visiting Professor Victoria Wells (Sheffield), to round up the event. It’s always nice to share good news... CBiS Associate Jill Timms has a new baby son, Frans. And CBiS PGR Director Andrew Perchard also has a new baby son, Giax! However, an unfortunate consequence of Giax’s arrival has been Andrew’s sensible decision to cease long distance commuting between Coventry and Scotland. Andrew leaves CBiS later this month for a post at Strirling University. The staff and PGRs in CBiS wish Andrew and his family all the best. Also adding CBiS is long time stalwart and Chair in CBiS, reflecting his own research record and significant contribution to the field. Dr Kevin Droughton’s success in attaining his PhD. Well done to Nick and Kevin.

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Faculty focus on research

As incoming Dean and PVC, we could not fail to be impressed by the huge strides made by the Faculty of Business and Law since REF 2014. The number of articles published in top-ranking journals has increased six-fold, there is a rapidly growing population of postgraduate research students, and we have already achieved more research funding in the last three years than for the whole of the last REF cycle.

The Centre for Business in Society (CBiS) has proved an extremely effective hub for our specialist research and advisory roles, as well as being a major research provider for the University. CBiS is the home of the Wellbeing and Financial Capability programme which brings together a number of strands from across the University, including the Centre for Corporate and Financial Integrity, the Centre for Business in Society, and the Centre for Business and Society.

As incoming Dean and PVC, we plan for a third Centre, we are exploring various niche areas of research portfolio through the establishment of two further research centres. The Centre for Corporate and Financial Integrity has already received University approval and will be conducting research in financial educational courses to improve financial well-being. The Centre for Business in Society (CBiS) has proved an extremely effective hub for our specialist research and advisory roles.

Looking to the future, the Faculty is committed to extending its research portfolio through the establishment of two further research centres. The Centre for Corporate and Financial Integrity has already received University approval and will be conducting research in financial educational courses to improve financial well-being. The Centre for Business in Society (CBiS) has proved an extremely effective hub for our specialist research and advisory roles. As we plan for a third Centre, we are exploring various niche areas of research portfolio through the establishment of two further research centres. The Centre for Corporate and Financial Integrity has already received University approval and will be conducting research in financial educational courses to improve financial well-being. The Centre for Business in Society (CBiS) has proved an extremely effective hub for our specialist research and advisory roles.

Research also has a huge part to play in portfolio development. We are already seeing the evolution of new programmes such as the new MSc in Social Value Accounting which is borne out of the research activity of CBiS. Such courses will help to define the ‘Coventry Way’ in research application and research led teaching.

The targets for research are ambitious. We are aiming to significantly increase the volume of bids submitted, attract more doctoral students, and produce more world-leading and impactful research. In order to do this, we must continue to provide a positive space in which to conduct research, together with appropriate support networks to ensure a sustainable and vibrant future.

New to CBiS

Hussan Aslam

Hussan joined CBiS in May 2017 as a Research Assistant working on the Payday Futures and Money Advice Service projects. Hussan has spent the summer interviewing people who have previously used payday loans but have been declared for a payday loan since the FCA regulations were introduced on high-cost credit.

“Since joining CBiS as a Research Associate at the end of June, having previously worked at University College London as a Research Associate and Teaching Fellow over the past two years. He is working on the Oak Funding Project Scaling Affordable Lending and the Monetary Advice Service project on financial education. He is currently putting the finishing touches to a research manuscript, entitled “Securing Finance and Mobilising Risk: Money Cultures at the Bank of England”, which will be published with Routledge in 2018.”

John Morris

John Morris joined CBiS as a Research Associate at the end of June, having previously worked at University College London as a Research Associate and Teaching Fellow over the past two years. He is working on the Oak Funding Project Scaling Affordable Lending and the Monetary Advice Service project on financial education. He is currently putting the finishing touches to a research manuscript, entitled “Securing Finance and Mobilising Risk: Money Cultures at the Bank of England”, which will be published with Routledge in 2018.

“I am delighted to be joining CBiS at an exciting time of growth and investment in research here. So far I have been travelling around the UK conducting research interviews and finding out about the affordable lending sector and our research partners. I look forward to collaborating with colleagues in the Inclusive Economies and Economic Development and the Sector, Economic and Financial Studies research clusters. Moving to this position at CBiS has already sparked my research imagination and I am developing ideas towards a research project on the way behavioural finance has been rolled out as policy response to the financial exclusion and citizenship agendas.”

Sara Degli Esposti

Sara Degli Esposti hit the ground running when she joined us in September as Research Fellow. She received the plaque for the best full-paper in the E-Business and E-Government track at the annual conference of the British Academy of Management (BAM17) for a paper co-authored with CBiSers Sally Dib and Kristelle Blundell. Still busy with the final stage of the H2020 project CANDID, she is looking for new project opportunities building on the experience of colleagues at CBiS and in other research centres.

“I am very happy to join CBiS and have the chance to contribute to the Data, Organisations and Society Research Cluster. These are very early days, so can’t say much more but it is likely that my next move will be to start networking with colleagues interested in digital technology, cybersecurity and privacy to join forces and expertise and create an interdisciplinary team. I am very much looking forward to it.”

Helen Roby

Since joining CBiS as a Research Fellow, Helen Roby has completed an InnovativeUK-funded project, Community Action Platform for Energy (CAPE) along with Sally Dib. She is now working on the Monetary Advice Service project in collaboration with other CBiSers and The Open University, as well as working with Alexis Garcia-Perez on the EU-funded NEWBITS project, exploring new business models for intelligent transport systems. Helen continues to work as an external supervisor at The Open University on two projects, one a CGI funded studentship looking at how future energy scenarios will develop as the energy sector strives to decarbonise, and the other exploring the efficacy of financial educational courses to improve financial well-being.

“I began my time at CBiS getting to know colleagues and understanding their areas of interest and how these fit into the research clusters. Presenting and taking part in the Faculty conference and the Circular Economy Conference have been a great way to meet colleagues both in CBiS and others across the Faculty of Business & Law. I also recently presented at the British Academy for Management Conference at Warwick University along with Faculty colleague, Deneise Dadd. I’m looking forward to working closely with CBiS colleagues on new projects under development and exploring collaborative opportunities with Delft University of Technology through their KIC funding initiative.”
May 2017 saw the launch of Coventry University’s first Professional Doctorate in Law’s DBA. The programme is managed by CIBIS and led by Dr David Jarvis, and draws expertise and inputs from academics across CIBIS and the wider Faculty. DBAs are aimed at senior decision-makers whose current roles and experience enable them to effect impactful organisational change as a result of the doctoral research that they undertake.

The Centre for Business in Society (CIBIS) is thrilled to announce a new collaboration with Network Rail, Virgin Trains, Serco, Alstom Transport, ID Systems Design, Serco, Alstom Transport, ID Systems Design, and Coventry University, aimed at creating a reliable railway for the passengers. Dr. Solon Magrizos, the Data in Society Review Panel for Network Rail’s London North Western Route said about the initiative:

“We have installed network monitoring equipment on our Pendolino trains in support of this initiative which we believe will benefit all users of the west coast route. With the data this equipment gathers, we will be able to identify and address potential infrastructure failures before they worsen, avoiding potential delays to services.”

Dr Alexeis Garcia-Perez said:

“The research requires an innovative approach to data analysis which looks beyond the infrastructure for which data is being collected to do a more comprehensive analysis as part of the rail system. This firmly positions Coventry University in the group of academic institutions leading railway research in the UK.”

Simon Taylor, Chair of the Systems Review Panel for Network Rail’s London North Western Route said about the initiative:

“We are really encouraged to get industry buy in to creating this data hub at Coventry, where we will eventually be able to share system data to enable innovation to happen at all levels of the industry and support the university sector in its railway research.”

Adrian Bullock, Fleet Project Manager said at Virgin Trains on the west coast:

“We have installed network monitoring equipment on our Pendolino trains in support of this initiative which we believe will benefit all users of the west coast route. With the data this equipment gathers, we will be able to identify and address potential infrastructure failures before they worsen, avoiding potential delays to services.”

The group has already participated in three weekend workshops designed to introduce them to Doctoral level study and support them in developing their research proposals. The project now is getting to grips with developing a literature review to situate their proposed research within contemporary academic, policy and practice frameworks. A second cohort will join the programme this month, and this will include four international candidates from Coventry’s partner institution in Oman, Mzosd East College (MEC).

Big Data

We live in an era of what is termed “big data.” One of the key ideas at the heart of these data is that data from different sources can be pulled together to give a richer picture of the customer. The Google service mentioned above is a good example. Yet it seems that many consumers have a belief in their own invisibility. For instance, if I wear a fitness tracker who on earth would be interested in how many steps I take today? However, if my step data could be linked with other data about me, perhaps this changes pictures. What if my step data was merged with data held by the NHS – potentially very sensitive data about my health? What if it was also merged with my internet browsing history (perhaps shopping for other health and fitness products and services) – and what about data on my personal financial details – my bank account, my credit card purchases? At what point do alarm bells start to ring up to me? If you have not heard the term GDPR before, you are likely to hear quite a bit about it over the coming months through to May 2018, when a new legal framework concerning personal data comes into force. One of the GDPR principles states that our personal data must be “collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and not further processed in a manner that is incompatible with those purposes”.

Recall the last time you were signing up to a website, perhaps to do some online shopping. Did you read the terms and conditions before you ticked the box to say you agreed to share your personal data? Research suggests that most of us don’t do so. That must mean that most customers have (at best) a hazy notion of what data we are sharing, with whom – and how it can be used and whether it can be shared with third parties too. For example, GDPR will mean that organisations will need evidence that we have given our informed consent when sharing our personal data. One suggestion is that when we agree to a data sharing proposition, we should receive a “data receipt” that records what data we have agreed to share, with whom, for what purposes etc. But will we still receive the receipt any more closely than we currently read the terms and conditions?

In June we learned that “Google is planning to track billions of credit card transactions to compare online ad clicks with money spent offline”. This will allow advertisers to see whether online ads can lead shoppers to make purchases later. Announcing the service, Google claimed that it captures around 70% of credit and debit card transactions in the US.

As we might expect, reactions to Google’s announcements were mixed. Critics argue that it represents another blow to privacy. Should we be alarmed that to learn that our internet browsing history, including ads we have seen, can be analysed alongside purchases we make later, in order to offer insights that will help marketers make their advertising targeting even sharper in the future? Do we ask ourselves when and how can information about our shopping patterns be used to the sort of analysis of our personal data to take place? Or do we shrug our shoulders and write it off as the kind of intrusion into our privacy that happens daily in the 21st century? We might even dismiss it as harmless; ‘nothing to hide, nothing to fear’ is a position that privacy campaigners like to challenge in the strongest terms!

Companies regularly tell us that they want to get to know us better – it’s about something int he for us, it maps a more personalised service, or great offers on products we love. But critics would point out that in order to receive these ‘benefits’, we are paying a price by sharing our personal data, sometimes unwittingly. Are we correct to worry that “If you are not paying for the product, you are the product?”

In a world of big data, we are all “prosumers”, i.e. we both producers and consumers. Some campaigners are looking for a way in which they can “take back control” of their personal data – arguing that “it’s my data, after all!” As part of this “taking back control”, some would like to ‘monetise’ their data – in other words, shouldn’t companies be prepared to pay me for my data, rather than accessing it for free? And if my aim is not to benefit financially, perhaps I would be happy to share my fitness tracker data (for example) with medical researchers or my favourite health charity, so that my data can benefit others in the future. We are surely likely to see more “data donation” of this kind in the years to come.

Other important principles within GDPR include the “right to rectification” and the “right to erasure”. In other words, if I want to correct some data that a company holds about me that is inaccurate or incomplete, or perhaps I want my personal data to be removed from a database altogether – I should be able to make this happen, without any great difficulties along the way. How hard is it to correct data that is out of date – or how hard is it to update your address when it’s “out of date”? Surely, if I do not want personal data about me to be processed, I should be able to let the business know; if I want my data erased, I should be able to demand it. And if I am happy to continue sharing personal data, I should be able to specify with whom and for what purpose.

With 98% of customers having their data shared, it is not surprising that businesses are putting customer privacy at the heart of how they operate? Surely, we will become more aware of the issues around sharing personal data with anonymous organisations, will we see consumers demanding a value proposition that reflects their privacy requirements?

For more information on the project “Monetize Me: Privacy, prosumers and personal profiling” Professor Maureen Meadows E: maureen.meadows@coventry.ac.uk
Community food growing: Sharing good practice

Senior Research Assistant Lizzi Bos was recently awarded £800 to run an event as part of the ESRC Festival of Social Science week in November, with a team from CBiS. The event aims to showcase community food growing in Lambeth, London and draws upon Lizzi’s doctoral research.

As well as sharing the research findings the event aims to celebrate successful examples of community food growing initiatives and collaboration between the community, Lambeth Council, and Myatt’s Fields Park (third sector organisation).

Lizzi is currently making a short film about her research findings which will be shown at the event. She recently revisited Lambeth to reconnect with participants from her doctoral study who were now more enthused than ever about community food growing, some of whom will feature in the film.

For more information about the event and the project please visit the website.

“I’m really excited about this event as it’s a great opportunity to promote the benefits of communal food growing in local spaces, and to hear about people’s real life and meaningful experiences. I hope that it promotes lessons learned from my research findings to ensure the sustainability of these key spaces for the community.”

Lizzi Bos

Mugs for Life: Taking a stance against disposable coffee cups

It is estimated that in the UK around 2.5 billion disposable coffee cups are thrown away every year. This is a staggering amount which combined with lack of suitable facilities to recycle existing cups in many locations across the country this is leading to a significant waste issue. One way of combatting this issue is to buy a reusable coffee cup, reducing the amount of energy needed to produce disposable cups, and to deal with their waste afterwards.

The Sustainable and Production Cluster in the Centre for Business in Society seeks to promote sustainable living in a number of areas of society and has decided to take a stance on the coffee cup issue. It is encouraging all its members to switch to a reusable coffee cup on campus, in an effort to reduce waste and encourage greater use from other people in the university. In the Jaguar Building where the cluster is based, reusable ‘Mugs for life’ are available from Costa Coffee.

This move builds on the work of one of the cluster’s researchers, Dr Jennifer Ferreira, who has been investigating sustainability in the coffee shop industry. Dr Ferreira’s article in the Conversation last year highlighted the scale of the disposable coffee cup issue, including an expanded recycling programme from Costa Coffee, and a vast array of reusable coffee cups becoming available from retailers. One company which produces these cups, KeepCup, claims that the 500 billion disposable cups thrown away around the world each year, if they were placed end to end, would circumnavigate the earth 1,360 times. The company highlights that switching to a reusable cup not only reduces landfill, but water consumption, use of raw materials, and carbon emissions. It’s a simple step people can make to take more sustainable actions in their daily lives, and it is hoped that university staff and students will continue to make the switch and reduce the number of disposable coffee cups ending up in landfill from Coventry University.

Facial recognition technology: Nothing to hide, nothing to fear?

Dr Alexeis Garcia-Perez, Professor Sally Dibb and Professor Maureen Meadows

A watchdog has warned that the Police National Database (PND), containing facial recognition photographs of at least 10 million individuals, risks ‘targeting innocent people’.

The PND has become a significant step in the Home Office’s efforts to use information technology to move from traditional record keeping to an intelligence-based policing. The information system garners relevance in the current environment, characterised by an increase in threats and decreased funding to fight crime.

However, while keeping individuals and cities safe remains the highest priority for the police, doing so while also meeting public safety standards for intelligent-based policing brings significant challenges. As a searchable, national database containing not only details of all individuals having been arrested as in the previous Police National Computer (PNC) system, the PND also includes photographs of different levels of image quality taken by facial imaging technology used in public places across the land. Many of these images are captured by Smart CCTV, a surveillance based security technology that gathers digital images which are then matched against a database.

The UK public is aware that photos are taken using the latest facial imaging technology in places such as airports. Generally, they support the use of these technologies, especially following terrorist or other breaches of national security. But this support is premised on the assumption that those who have nothing to hide also have nothing to fear. Concerns about privacy are inevitably heightened when there are reasons to believe that storage and analysis of those photos could bring negative consequences to innocent individuals. Facial recognition algorithms still are not mature enough to avoid bias in their interaction with other information systems such as an automated passport renewal system. Joy Buolamwini has written about how bias in algorithms, like human bias, results in unfairness and can lead to exclusionary experiences and discriminatory practices. Joy, a student at MIT, explains how a man of Asian descent experienced exclusion from seemingly neutral machines programmed with algorithms. The man erroneously had his eyes registered as closed by facial recognition software that analysed his photo during an interaction with an automated passport renewal system. The same principles could lead to wrongful allegations against innocent people.

Concerns have often been raised about the lack of specific regulation relating to the use of these technologies. There is consensus on the need for a revision of the current legislation to combat the changing nature of the technological landscape and its implications in crime fighting, particularly with regard to the legality of storing personal data of innocent people in an searchable database. As new legislation comes into force to guarantee the privacy and confidentiality of individuals’ data, the law must be interpreted and applied in the context of a diverse and changing society.

Our team of researchers in the Data, Organisations and Society cluster within the Centre for Business in Society, explore every aspect of society, from the workplace to the marketplace, to the way people live, communicate and learn, which is being transformed by the acquisition and analysis of data and their transformation into actionable insight. Visit the website to learn more.
How the collapse of Northern Rock was a stress test for the Bank of England

John Morris

On 14th September 2007, thousands of panicked customers rushed to withdraw money from Northern Rock after hearing that the Bank of England had stepped in to prop up the ailing bank.

A 30 per cent drop in Northern Rock’s share value followed, with many staff and customers losing thousands of pounds worth of shares because of it. But it was also part of a wider banking crisis, which had profound implications for the sector over the coming years. Northern Rock may not have been the moment when the crisis fully erupted but it can be considered to have been a stress test for the Bank of England in three key ways.

Firstly, the distress at Northern Rock was a stress test for the Governor of the Bank of England, Sir Mervyn King. His credibility as Governor came under test, over both his delivery of statements and fixation on moral hazard, as he flip-flopped over the terms by which the bank would lend to Northern Rock.

Secondly, the Northern Rock episode was a stress test for the edict in central banking that highlighting a problem can exacerbate that problem. Was it realistic to think that the Bank of England could delay an announcement on Northern Rock until after the weekend?

Thirdly and most significantly, Northern Rock was an early example that the Bank of England needed to widen its risk imagination. Northern Rock’s business model involved in gaining liquidity from a number of sources. It was thought to be highly unlikely that all of these sources would become impaired simultaneously. This low probability-high impact event can be seen as an early precursor to a change in risk culture in which the Bank of England required higher levels of regulatory capital to be held in order to account for extreme events.

This is now a major plank of the Bank of England's stress testing programme which has led to a better capitalised system.

“Although the run on Northern Rock was not without its victims, some good has come out of it. We now have a far more robust system of responsible lending within banking and the level to which savings are protected has increased.”

Dr Harjit Sekhon
Centre for Business in Society

The drama of transfer deadline day

Dr Andrew Jones

The drama of transfer deadline day makes compulsive viewing for many, but the sagas and spending of this summer indicate the transfer market is in need of significant reform.

Without rectifying some of the imbalances in the market, it is likely there could be serious long-term consequences for football. The ‘madness’ of transfer deadline day could reach new levels as clubs desperately try to strengthen their squads in an already inflated market for players. Those selling players will be seeking a premium price, and some expensive mistakes could be made in the rush to secure new signings. Dr Andrew Jones, CBiS Research Assistant and football finance expert, was quoted in numerous newspapers including The Times, Coventry Telegraph and Birmingham Mail and featured on BBC Radio Coventry and Warwickshire.

“Essentially the announcement of banning sales of new diesels from 2040 was a welcome one but not earth shatteringly surprising given the direction of travel. Many manufacturers have already committed to this as have other governments elsewhere. The electric vehicle market and supporting infrastructure is also evolving rapidly. The key issue remains the consumer. Electric vehicles still only have around 1% market share in the UK. Many barriers to adoption remain in the short term and as such government need to better incentivise to aid the transition. Scrapage schemes and electric vehicle experience centres, such as the one recently launched in Milton Keynes are examples. Our team of researchers also organised an electric vehicle showcase for rural businesses last year, providing business owners the opportunity to trial an electric vehicle to share findings and best practice.”

Professor Nigel Berkeley

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Professor Nigel Berkeley
Petrol Car Ban Won’t Work Without a Huge Investment in Electric Infrastructure

Britain will need many thousands more charging stations

Dr Jason Begley and Richard Brooks

The UK government is proposing a ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles by 2040, in a move that echoes a recent announcement in France.

Setting this sort of media-friendly target is a positive and welcome response to the challenge of air pollution across UK cities. But delivering the infrastructure, research and development support and incentives to switch to greener cars will be the hard part. If conventional vehicle manufacturers start getting nervous, then environment secretary Michael Gove may find the road to an electric future needs to be paved with more than good intentions.

Planned well, a ban on sales of conventionally fuelled vehicles could deliver long-term benefits for both air quality and economic investment in post-Brexit UK. There is no question that a switch to alternative-fuelled vehicles would significantly improve air quality in towns and cities. The actual benefit will not be felt for many years, but as battery prices are set to tumble over the next decade, it will be one more reason for businesses to switch to greener vehicles.

The 2040 target should encourage big electric vehicle manufacturers to invest in the UK. The country is a significant consumer market and has strong production capabilities in green technologies, especially the use of lightweight materials. BMW, for instance, has just announced it will build the fully electric Mini at its plant in Oxford. An even clearer example of policy driving private investment is Chinese carmaker Geely’s investment in a new hybrid model of the London taxi to take advantage of the capital’s new “ultra-low emission zone”.

Then there is the question of infrastructure. The UK has 6,535 charging points, which sounds like a lot. But compare that to Norway, which has slightly more stations for a population less than a tenth the size. The number of charging points will have to rise to hundreds of thousands. Still, it does establish a clear direction of travel for public investment but would make electric cars significantly cheaper and better.

Roads that charge your car as you drive would need a big initial investment but would make electric cars significantly cheaper and better. For car manufacturers, 2040 is several production cycles away. This gives them and the government time to think creatively about mass electric rotation. Roads that charge your car as you drive would need a big initial investment but would make electric cars significantly cheaper and better.

Self-driving cars and the trend towards mobility being a service you buy on demand through apps such as Uber might mean some people eventually don’t need to purchase vehicles at all. But these technologies are still many years away from the mainstream.

This highlights a key point: that a shift to sales of alternative-fuelled vehicles will not immediately reduce air pollution and will do nothing to impact on competition. Only a more comprehensive policy of shifting people to different modes of transport will achieve this, and here the government’s commitment shouldn’t be relied upon.

On an optimistic note, there are good reasons to imagine that a shift to greener vehicles may occur anyway. Pete Harrop, chairman of industry analysts IdTechEx, is bullish, predicting driving ranges of up to 1,000 miles and electric vehicles that can harvest solar electricity and act as batteries to store renewable power. “Electric vehicles are not simply catching up with conventional vehicles,” he told us. “They are overtaking.”

It’s clear which way the wind is blowing. Norway, an early market leader, wants to ban sales of new petrol and diesel vehicles by 2025, and the German upper house has debated a 2030 target.

By 2040, internal combustion engines may no longer be able to compete in the market. But whether the UK’s infrastructure is ready for millions more electric vehicles remains to be seen. Originally written for the Conversation.
Sustainable business is good business: A view from the cut-flower Industry

Dr David Bek

The negative impacts of global supply chains upon the environment are well documented [1, 2]. These impacts also have knock on effects for business reputation and resilience. But many people still believe that financial returns and economic growth will be harmed if action is taken to mitigate environmental damage. But the actions of leading firms do illustrate that implementing environmentally sustainable production practices in the UK and overseas can be achieved at the same time as building prosperous businesses. Sustainability and profitability are not mutually exclusive ideas. Rather pathways to sustainability need to be embedded by businesses and accelerated by policy makers.

Research within Coventry University’s Centre for Business in Society into the cut-flower industry [2] showed that there is plenty of evidence of innovative approaches to good environmental practices which are likely to improve the wider benefit of the bottom line and the broader economy.

Unsustainable Cut-flower Production: Water, Waste and Carbon

The cut-flower industry has rightly been criticised due to the wide ranging negative environmental impacts of its production processes [3].

1. Water Mismanagement: The growth and production of the cut-flower industry has been directly linked to reductions in fresh water levels, for example in the Lake Nasser region of Kenya, where roses are mass produced [4]. In addition, water quality can be deteriorating due to chemical runoff from flower plantations.

2. Waste Management: Dealing with waste is a major challenge in the cut-flower industry. A great deal of ‘green waste’ is generated due to the production of flowers, as stems need to be trimmed to the precise requirements of retailers, such as cutting the right length to minimise carbon footprint and screen out poor quality product disposed of [5]. Other forms of waste are generated throughout the production and consumption process, through the use of non-recyclable cellulose wrapping in household waste bins.

3. Carbon Footprint: This is also a significant problem, with flowers being transported around the world in order to ensure freshness and a long vase life. Whereas greenhouse production in cooler climates is also a major carbon source, as is the intensive use of fertilisers and pesticides.

Recognising Good Practice

Marks and Spencer in the UK embarked upon the Plan A programme in 2005 to provide a view to promoting ethical and sustainable practices within their business and across their supply base. We can see how this approach directly feeds into their relationship with overseas suppliers. South African company Fynbloem designed their cut-flower bouquets making facility to meet Plan A specifications. This includes seeking to become ‘water neutral’, which is being achieved by investing in a new reed bed, building tanks for collecting rainwater, installing a dam for water recycling, as well as high tech irrigation systems in their cutting flower contracts. Fynbloem are also investing in research into the potential to send flowers by sea freight rather than air.

So, let’s briefly look at some of the problems created by the industry across the globe.

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South African retailer Woolworths are also showing innovative approaches to sustainability by working in partnership with their suppliers. Measures they have adopted include removing cellophane wrapping from one of their protea bouquet lines. In marketing terms it makes sense for the retailer to remove the ‘toucheiness’ of the home-grown blooms, by not using plastic sleeves, and instead top packs are made from recycled cardboard. In addition, no chemical food sachets are provided to prolong vase life. Improvements in post harvest ‘cold chain’ technology and management by their local suppliers, Fynbloem, means that the flowers will look fresh for at least a week in the vase, therefore extra chemical inputs are not necessary.

So, why are these firms implementing these sustainability practices? Motivations are always complex but in these cases economic and environmental objectives are paramount, whether it is in the form of cost savings or meeting consumer expectations in order to retain and grow market share.

Woolworths have a reputation for providing quality products and trading responsibly, as articulated in their ‘Good Business Journey’ sustainability strategy. Blooms of proteas with no packaging, a recycled label and no chemical sachet allow Woolworths to demonstrate their sustainability credentials to their customer base. Furthermore, the costs of producing the bunches are recycled at their production facility for courtroom packaging or sachets.

For Fynbloem reducing water inputs is critical as water is a scarce resource in the Western Cape region of South Africa. Water costs are a significant threat to the business. Furthermore, more efficient water usage reduces the energy costs required to power the irrigation system. The economic argument is an important driver for the adoption of sea transport as air freight is expected to reduce nationally by, according to experts, 80%.

And doing things in a way that finds favour with their biggest market, Marks and Spencer, is clearly a major influence.

Act Now to Mainstream Sustainability

The message is clear, implementing sustainable measures can improve the bottom line by reducing costs and longer term risks and in some cases improve market share by re-assuring discerning customers. But what needs to be done to ensure that best practices become mainstream?

Voluntary measures by more innovative businesses are not enough on their own. The energy sector is today dependent on carbon emissions from stakeholders. Engaged consumer citizens can play a key role as businesses respond rapidly to market signals. At a macro level government policy and sentiment is critical. The UK government recently highlighted the economic imperative for the UK Government to act upon its unfulfilled 2015 commitment to produce a ‘25 year Environment Plan’ [6].

Actions that support the development of market friendly, innovative technologies and policies that favour environmental objectives and perhaps sustainable activities are critically needed. Voters and policy makers have many distractions currently, but environmental imperatives cannot be ignored any longer without political and public repercussions that will affect businesses, consumerists and politicians alike.

This blog is based upon a series of research reports led by Dr David Bek and Dr Jill Trimm focusing upon the global cut-flower industry. Financial support for the research has been provided by WWF-South Africa’s Table Mountain Fund and the researchers are grateful for the support of the Flower Valley Conservation Trust.

How Community Energy Matters

Global reaction to President Trump’s recent rejection of the Paris Climate Agreement is a timely reminder of the political, economic, and social importance of climate change. Meanwhile, the UK government has published new rules to increase flexibility in the generation, storage and use of electricity. Ministers hope that these regulatory changes will make it easier for individual consumers and communities to benefit from renewable energy. This then, is a useful moment to consider that sustainability and the need for renewables are as relevant to individual consumers as they are to national governments.

Many of us feel disengaged from the climate change debate, so you might be surprised to discover that community energy is a key part of the UK government’s plan for decarbonising the energy sector. Sustainability at the local level is important for several reasons. Community energy is considered by government to cover ‘aspects of collective action to reduce, purchase, manage and generate energy.’ They estimate that during the last five years some 6,000 community groups have become involved in these initiatives involving energy. Projects range from encouraging energy saving behaviour change, and installing energy saving measures such as roof and wall insulation; to joint purchasing of fuel and energy; the installation of renewable technologies, such as solar panels, ground source heat pumps and wind turbines; and trialing smart technologies in conjunction with industry partners.

Although such initiatives might seem small scale, estimates suggest that these projects could produce up to 14% of installed energy in the UK. Not surprisingly, local energy initiatives are being seen by government as an attractive bottom-up way to tackle climate change. Involving the public in local sustainability initiatives could also offer an effective route to wider behaviour change.

There are, however, many barriers to change that need to be tackled, particularly the low levels of public engagement with the sustainability agenda.

The CAPE Project

In a recent study funded by Innovate UK, CBiS researchers worked in partnership with Smartkibus, a smart energy SME, the Satellite Applications Catapult, Tech Mahinora, the Open University, Milton Keynes (Council and Community Action Min), to look at what it takes to get communities involved in local energy projects. Although the project was initially based in the Milton Keynes area, the study results are being used to roll the project out to other parts of the country.

The Community Action Platform for Energy Project – or CAPE for short – has developed an interactive website offering a one-stop shop for communities to get involved in local energy projects. CAPE is different from other community energy websites and resources, because it puts Big Data tools in the hands of local people. These tools bring together satellite images and heat maps of local buildings, energy performance and usage data, and sociodemographic information. Using clever algorithms to combine these different data sources makes users can find out, for example, how much energy they might generate or how much money they could save on their heating bills by installing solar panels or putting ground source heat pumps in their gardens.

Take a look at the satellite images in Figure 1. In the left image, you can clearly see the heat being lost from local buildings, while on the right, the potential for solar panels based on roof area and angle is visible. Such information offers vital insight into what the benefits might be of getting involved in certain kinds of energy projects.

Figure 1: Satellite images

Why Community Energy Matters

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What we Learnt

The project shows the role that Big Data can play in supporting community energy projects. Given access to the right tools, designed in the right way, these benefits can be made directly available to regular citizens who want to do their bit to combat climate change. We also learnt more about the variety of factors which motivate communities to get involved in community energy projects. As you might expect, some are personal and tangible, such as seeking to reduce household energy costs or improve the comfort of their homes. Other motivations are much more socially oriented. Some of these motives focus on tangible outcomes, such as the desire to create work for local tradespeople, or to ease energy bills for local people suffering fuel poverty. Less tangible motivations include wanting to build community identity, or feelings of empowerment arising when the community joins together behind a common goal. Interestingly, the desire to cut carbon is very low down the list of motives, if it features at all.

Local people, we discovered, are more likely to get involved in energy projects when all of the benefits arising from it are retained within the community.

As one community leader we spoke to explained: "We’ve used local designers, local web people, we try to stay with this aim in mind, others became involved in energy projects when all of the benefits arising from it are retained within the community.

That community energy can lead to a strong sense of community empowerment, we found evidence that success in one project – whether energy-related or not – can trigger interest in other community-based initiatives. For example, project partner Community Action MK has supported a number of successful local projects, including one to create a network of community energy champions. Our research findings serve to reinforce the view that communities have a crucial role to play in what government is referring to as the democratization of energy.

We are delighted that the CAPE project has won a Smart Cities 2017 award in the housing category, recognising the projects ability to improve living standards and support low cost living. These awards recognise best practice in smart city transformation across the UK.

The Smart City UK 2017 Awards are supported by highly regarded bodies such as TechUK and The Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET). To find out more, go to www.smartcityuk.com

Each of these communities had been on different journeys in relation to the energy projects they supported. One began by generating income from installing solar panels on the roofs of public buildings and then invested the income to enable local citizens to insulate their drafty Victorian homes. Another was building a community centre, where sustainable design was key to keeping fuel bills low. Understanding these differences, along with the varying contexts and factors which have motivated them is key for policy makers and other stakeholders seeking to improve engagement with community energy.

Reflecting that community energy can lead to a strong sense of community empowerment, we found evidence that success in one project – whether energy-related or not – can trigger interest in other community-based initiatives. For example, project partner Community Action MK has supported a number of successful local projects, including one to create a network of community energy champions. Our research findings serve to reinforce the view that communities have a crucial role to play in what government is referring to as the democratization of energy.

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Cut-flower value chains

Dr David Bek

CBIS research into certification and standards within the global cut-flower industry has continued to gather momentum.

In July, a workshop was held at the Techno Centre for stakeholders engaged at different nodes within the governance of cut-flower value chains. Participants included retailers, processors, certification bodies NGOs and academics. The workshop opened up debates about the role that certifications and standards can play in improving sustainability and ethical practices within the production and consumption of cut-flowers. Jill Timms and David Bek hosted the event which was very well received by the participants. Further details about the discussions at the workshop can be found in the following Blog entry, ‘Say it with Flowers’. A second workshop is planned for May 2018 to be hosted at MM Flowers’ headquarters near Huntington which will aim to set processes in motion to improve communication about sustainability standards within the industry more widely.

David Bek returned to South Africa’s Western Cape to continue research into the sustainability of the indigenous flower sector. The Western Cape region is currently suffering from a major drought which brought home the need for horticultural producers, such as flower growers, to manage water demands sustainability. This aspect of flower production is being explored in great depth by CBIS Doctoral Researcher Nora Lanari (see report on page x of this newsletter). During his visit David undertook interviews with wildflower harvesters, cultivators of hybrid species, packeted managers, retailers and regulators. Research was undertaken within the semi-formal sector in order to investigate impacts upon sustainability and livelihoods. This included visiting Cape Town’s historic flower market at Trafalgar Place where families have been selling flowers to local people and tourists for several generations. David also visited Fynbloem who export Cape Flora bouquets to Marles and Spencer in the UK. Fynbloem have a pro-active approach to sustainable circular economy practices which has paid dividends in terms of improving the productivity and efficiency of their business. Further information about Fynbloem’s approach to sustainability can be found in David’s Blog, ‘Sustainable Business is Good Business’.

David’s visit to South Africa provided an opportunity to initiate discussions with leading SA retailer Woolworth’s about collaborative research and impact work. As a result Woolworths Good Business Journey Manager, Kobus Pienaar and South African sustainability consultant Lourens Van Schoor visited CBIS in September. They led a seminar outlining Woolworths Foods’ approach to sustainability including detailing the retailer’s Farming for the Future programme which was introduced in 2009 to encourage more ecological practices amongst their 270 fruit and vegetable suppliers. The seminar stimulated a great deal of discussions around issues of food waste management, organic certifications and consumer understandings of sustainability. It is hoped that this exciting collaborative relationship will be further developed in the coming year.

Papers showcasing research from the cut-flower research project were given by David and Jill at the RGS-IBG Conference in London and the Development Studies Association Conference in Bradford. These conferences provided opportunities to share findings and to network with other researchers investigating ethics and sustainability within global production networks.

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Communication remains unrecognised. Market, appropriate knowledge and poor constraints, but the discreet problems of challenges are often quoted as key necessary technical expertise. Technical capital and run by those lacking in the very reliant on a high degree of social programmes to “boom” this industry are grossly underfunded and overstretched transfer is extremely limited with professionalization, frustrated by different level, this is an industry badly in need of national and international discourse between the local realities and the PGRs from the Sustainable Production and Consumption cluster planned and delivered the conference. The keynote speakers were Manisha Smith of the Centre for Business and Government and the University of Manchester, Professor Kiri Nii-nimaki of Aalto University in Helsinki and Dr David Peck from TU Delft and the EU KIC EIT Raw Materials. Their stimulating and insightful talks about the Circular Economy linked to social eating, sustainable fashion and sustainable cities set the context for the day and instigated discussions around social movements. Professor Michael Potokiny of Deakin University joined them on the plenary panel, led by our Visiting Professor Victoria Wells, to round up the event.

The conference was aimed at the emerging transition agenda for research within the broader social sciences around the interconnections between the circular economy and sustainability. 30 papers were presented within the ten themed roundtable discussions. Papers included topics as diverse as the future of electric vehicles; future of points and food waste; the role for citizens in circular transition cities, and access based consumption in the second-hand luxury market. Delegates and presenters represented a broad range of interdisciplinary interests in the topic, and contributed to lively, thoughtful and challenging conversations that explored some of the tensions and opportunities in the circular economy narrative and landscape. Those attending shared the view that if we are to achieve sustainable goals it will require fundamental shifts and disruption in our systems, structures, practices, lifestyles and thinking. Delegates said that the opportunity to share and exchange knowledge with colleagues who held different disciplinary perspectives, and who could offer alternative insights, was one of the most rewarding aspects of the day. Discussions were held on Twitter using #CE2S2017 in the lead up to, during and after the event, facilitating further networking and dialogue. New connections and collaborations across universities, countries and our own Coventry University are likely to emerge from this event.

Amira, University of Manchester said: “Great environment with fantastic discussion. Loved hearing about what other people are working on and thinking about.”

PGR poster competition prizes were sponsored by the Academy of Marketing Sustainability SIG, and presented by Dr Caroline Oates and Dr Claudia Henninger (SIG Leaders) to Lisa Ruetgers (1st); Rebecca Bleech (2nd) and Nora Lanari (3rd).

As part of the organising team it was pleasing to hear lots of complimentary feedback about the organisation of the day as well as the variety and quality of interesting topics presented by the speakers and via roundtable discussions. Most relevant to my own study of sustainable fashion shopping behaviour was the presentation by Professor Kiri Nii-nimaki and the roundtable discussions relating to frequent fashion shopping behaviour, clothing longevity and the spectrum of fashion rental.

“The thing I enjoyed most about the CE2S conference was the roundtable format of the event. It created a much more relaxed atmosphere that fostered lively discussions after each presentation. The biggest take away from the conference for me was from the brief presentation of Dr Mags Adams, Salford University, discussing the ontology of waste. My own research argued that considering the ontology of waste revealed how redistributing food waste did not lead to reducing food poverty as it does not address the origin of food waste (the way we value food) in a systemic way and does not address the structural challenges leading to food poverty. My own research focuses on water governance and how export-oriented horticulture companies influence water governance.”

Nora Lanari
Doctoral Researcher
50th Academy of Marketing conference

Natalie Dukes
The 50th Academy of Marketing Conference called for papers to demonstrate the ‘transformational power of marketing’ providing an opportunity to reflect on theories of marketing and how they may be used for the greater good.

My own PhD study centres around the theories of consumer behaviour and how this understanding may be used to encourage more sustainable behaviours in shopping for clothing. This appeared to fit well with the theme of the conference.

I submitted a competitive paper and abstract and was immensely proud to be invited to present at the main conference within the sustainability track.

My delight at being selected to present was quickly replaced by nervousness. Though used to presenting in a business environment, this was my first academic conference. I wondered how the audience would react to my work. My findings were not fully complete and implications yet to be written. Would I be able to adequately defend my study in front of a more experienced academic audience? However, I needn’t have worried. I found the audience to be interested, constructive and complimentary with other candidates also presenting early versions of their work.

It was interesting for me to hear how an unfamiliar audience perceived my work and theories. Their feedback has led me to more thoroughly explore and explain some areas within my thesis. It was also refreshing to listen to other presenting their thought provoking studies, I found the experience both enjoyable and worthwhile as well as great preparation for my forthcoming viva.

The next year’s Academy of Marketing Conference ‘Marketing the Brave’ is due to be held at the University of Stirling 2nd-5th July 2018 and I would encourage any marketing academic to find out more: www.academyofmarketing.org/conference/conference-2018

Lisa Reutgers
I also participated in the Doctoral Colloquium of the Academy of Marketing Conference hosted by Hull University Business School. I presented a paper with the title ‘An exploratory study of how selling surplus food can create behaviour change and reduce food waste’, which covers the research I am doing within the scope of PhD at CBiS.

My presentation entailed an overview of my literature review, explaining the problems caused by food waste, the extent and causes of food waste in the retail and hospitality sectors in Europe and potential market-based solutions. I am doing a case study research focussing on two business models to sell surplus food from restaurants and supermarkets to end consumers in two countries each.

The businesses I am investigating are in Denmark, where I can stay for almost one month, thanks to funding of the Global Researchers’ Fund. The businesses allow me to see how they do business, how they may be used for the greater good.

I presented my research design, including research questions, theoretical framework and methodology to experts in the field. After the presentation I received valuable feedback on my research. It was very helpful to receive external feedback, and to learn from the expert’s recommendations.

Furthermore it was very interesting to join presentations of other PhD students and to interact with them. This helped me to build a network. Additionally key note speakers provided interesting insights. In the evening students, experts and key note speakers enjoyed a great dinner together, followed by some dancing. For me, the Doctoral Colloquium was a great experience. I learned a lot, built a network and had fun! I was especially lucky, as I also won a bursary, including the registration fee, the dinner, and accommodation for the night after the Doctoral Colloquium and a reduced registration fee for the main conference.

The CBIS_CovUni group at @bam_ac.uk
Doctoral Symposium

Rebecca Beech
9:27 AM - 4 Sep 2017 from Coventry, England
5 Retweets 10 Likes

Award of Emeritus Professor of Automotive Business

Tom Donnelly
Professor of Automotive Business
Centre for Business in Society

Tom has made a hugely significant and good-humoured contribution for many years to Coventry University and is still involved in writing projects with CBiS staff, mentoring fellow business historians and automotive researchers, and supporting CBiS’s PGD. As Tom retires he leaves a gap in FBL’s research community which no-one will easily fill. The award of Professor Emeritus is very well-deserved. Tom retired from Coventry University on August 31st.

After graduating from the Universities of Strathclyde (BA) and Aberdeen (PhD), Tom became a lecturer at Lanchester Polytechnic (now Coventry University). Over many years he taught economic history, economics and strategic management, at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Tom became Head of the Department of Business and then of Management before becoming Head of Postgraduate Research Programmes in the Faculty of Business, in addition to serving on many OU committees.

Tom’s research has focussed on a number of areas in economic history and economic development, with a high concentration on the international automotive industry. Tom was appointed Professor of Automotive Business at CU in January 2006.

As part of his research, Tom was a founder member of the Centre for Local Economic Development (CLED), the Centre for Business History (CBH) and the Motor Industry Observatory (MIO), with all three now forming part of CBiS. The MIO was consulted regularly by national and international media, to comment on events in the car industry.

Tom has also been a Visiting Professor at the Institut d’Administration des Entreprises at the University of Caen, Oulu University of Applied Sciences in Finland, and the Silesian University in the Czech Republic. Tom is an Associate Editor of the Dictionary of National Biography (OUP).

Tom’s most recent research has focussed on the international automotive industry, with particular reference to Western Europe and China. The main thrust of the research has been on merger activity, restructuring in the UK industry, the growth and development of the industry in China, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the industry, and the challenges posed by climate change and alternatively fueled vehicles.

Professor Lyndon Simkin
Executive Director, CBiS
China’s only English radio station invites CBIs’s Donna Wong

The PhD by portfolio route
Dr Kevin Broughton

Over the last 12 months I have been undertaking the PhD by Portfolio route in order to obtain my Doctorate. I recently passed my Viva with just four minor corrections, so by the time you read this, I am hoping my corrections will have been done and it will have been signed off!

There are a number of routes to getting a Doctorate – each has its ‘pros and cons’, but in my view the key determinant is what is best for the candidate’s circumstances. For me, the PhD by Portfolio route was ideally suited to my circumstances – the nature of my research career in urban regeneration has been somewhat unusual and often focused on practice.

A very long time ago, I attempted to undertake the traditional route to a PhD following the passing of my Master’s. Unfortunately, for a number of reasons, I never progressed sufficiently and then, following full-time employment as a Research Assistant at a Midlands university, it was later agreed that I should drop out. I just wasn’t ready! Anyway, fortunately for me, I remarried with the same arena of research into urban regeneration across a number of universities, but also a stint in private consultancy before again arriving at Coventry University in 2007. This backdrop, whilst somewhat unusual as a career path, provided me with a solid foundation to develop my academic profile further here at Coventry.

Over the next decade I had developed sufficient academic publications and applied research projects to be eligible for the PhD by Portfolio route. In agreement with my preferred supervisors, I selected seven ‘outputs’ for my Portfolio – mostly published academic journal papers but also two substantial applied research reports – which offered the potential to be synthesised into a cohesive argument within the Critical Overview Document.

In my experience, the PhD by Portfolio route is neither easier nor harder than other routes... merely different. The challenge comes in utilising the Portfolio of ‘outputs’ in a way that draws them together into an overall argument that forms a linking ‘thesis’ or position. The traditional full-time or part-time ‘route’ for developing a thesis largely goes out of the window! The principle of making a contribution to knowledge remains critical, of course, but the broader rationale has largely been determined, the data has already been gathered and analysed and the findings are already relatively well-developed. The new knowledge is predominantly embedded within the published outputs.

The secret to developing a thesis through the Portfolio route is wise selection of the outputs. Each of the outputs broadly offer a cohesive argument when drawn together – that ‘golden thread’ that should run through all theses, regardless of the route taken. This is not easy - publications and other research outputs may have been developed for a range of different purposes at a time when no broader thesis was even being considered. Perhaps like the other routes, whilst there is a broad framework for ‘how to do it’, there certainly is not a blueprint! This is largely determined by the purpose and nature of the research, as with any thesis. Whilst this provides an element of academic freedom, it also poses challenges and, in my experience, quite a bit of ambiguity and frustration! However, this is the intellectual challenge that all academic researchers face and, with the support of good supervisors, just less than a year after enrolment I was sitting in my Viva defending my ‘thesis’. This last year has been a roller coaster ride but, in the end, very satisfying that my years of service in my area of research is recognised with this qualification, and that I will have achieved my aim of offering a cohesive argument when drawn together – that ‘golden thread’ that should run through all theses, regardless of the route taken.

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There are a number of routes to getting a Doctorate – each has its ‘pros and cons’, but in my view the key determinant is what is best for the candidate’s circumstances. For me, the PhD by Portfolio route was ideally suited to my circumstances – the nature of my research career in urban regeneration has been somewhat unusual and often focused on practice.

A very long time ago, I attempted to undertake the traditional route to a PhD following the passing of my Master’s. Unfortunately, for a number of reasons, I never progressed sufficiently and then, following full-time employment as a Research Assistant at a Midlands university, it was later agreed that I should drop out. I just wasn’t ready! Anyway, fortunately for me, I remarried with the same arena of research into urban regeneration across a number of universities, but also a stint in private consultancy before again arriving at Coventry University in 2007. This backdrop, whilst somewhat unusual as a career path, provided me with a solid foundation to develop my academic profile further here at Coventry.

Over the next decade I had developed sufficient academic publications and applied research projects to be eligible for the PhD by Portfolio route. In agreement with my preferred supervisors, I selected seven ‘outputs’ for my Portfolio – mostly published academic journal papers but also two substantial applied research reports – which offered the potential to be synthesised into a cohesive argument within the Critical Overview Document.

In my experience, the PhD by Portfolio route is neither easier nor harder than other routes... merely different. The challenge comes in utilising the Portfolio of ‘outputs’ in a way that draws them together into an overall argument that forms a linking ‘thesis’ or position. The traditional full-time or part-time ‘route’ for developing a thesis largely goes out of the window! The principle of making a contribution to knowledge remains critical, of course, but the broader rationale has largely been determined, the data has already been gathered and analysed and the findings are already relatively well-developed. The new knowledge is predominantly embedded within the published outputs.

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Spotlight!

A paper by Sally Dibb and Lee Quinn, that was originally published in 2010, was one of only 11 selected from hundreds for a special virtual issue of the Journal of Marketing Management to celebrate the Academy of Marketing’s 50th Anniversary. “Evaluating Market Segmentation Research Priorities: Targeting Re-emancipation”, published online here.

Congratulations to Harjit Sekhon. His paper ‘Perceptions of fairness in financial channels’, published in the International Journal of Bank Marketing, was selected by the journal’s editorial team as a Highly Commended paper ‘Good Work’. Sally Dibb was appointed to the Economic-Administrative Panel for Energy, Legislation and Finance, to look at the legislative framework and the economic implications for the energy sector. She was also invited to speak at a Centre for Research in Surveillance Technologies (CRiST) event on ‘Bringing social science rigour to your smartphone’ and presenting findings from the European funded SurPRISE project (Surveillance, Privacy and Security), which examined how citizens across Europe feel about the use of security oriented surveillance technologies.

Paul Sissons was invited to speak at an event hosted by Work Foundation on supporting more inclusive employment outcomes in growth sectors, with Anne Green (University of Birmingham) and Neil Lee (LSE). The presentation drew on a policy paper recently published as part of an ESRC project on harnessing Growth Sectors for Poverty Reduction: What Works to Reduce Poverty through Sustainable Employment with Opportunities for Progression. Paul Sissons was also invited to become an Associate of the Work Foundation, a leading think tank focused on policies and practices which can encourage ‘Good Work’.

As part of the AHRC “Responsible lending” impact project, Lindsey Appleyard with Prof Karen Rowlingson (University of Birmingham) and Prof Tom Sorrell (Warwick University) organised events in London and Birmingham inviting key Australian stakeholders to present to UK audience on high-cost credit regulation in Australia. These events were attended by over 50 people including banks (HSBC, Lloyds, Barclays), financial regulator (FCA), chair of Financial Inclusion Commission, third sector representatives, practitioners and academics.

Sara Degli Esposti. Sally Dibb and CBIS Visiting Professor Kirstie Ball, accepted the best full paper award for the E-Business and E-Governance track at the British Academy of Management Conference at Warwick University in September. ‘Watched or being watched? The double life of your smartphone’ explores findings from the European funded SurPRISE project (Surveillance, Privacy and Security), which examined how citizens across Europe feel about the use of security oriented surveillance technologies.

Sally Dibb was appointed to the Economic-Administrative Panel for the 2017 national review of research quality in Norway. Organised by The Research Council Norway, this review is Norway’s equivalent of REF and builds on Sally’s experience on the Business and Management Panel for REF2014.

Where we’ve been


Project updates

Sally Dibb and Helen Roby were part of the team that successfully completed the InnovateUK funded Community Action Platform for Energy (CAPS) project in June, total value £533,000. The project recently won a Smart Cities 2017 award in the housing category, recognising the projects ability to improve living standards and support low cost living. These awards recognise best practice in smart city transformation across the UK.

Sally Dibb, Lindsey Appleyard and Helen Roby began work on the Money Advice Service funded project, Financial Capability WHAT Works, total value £533,000, which will run until May 2018. Working in partnerships with researchers from The Open University, they were invited on the project in the summer by newly recruited FCA Hussan Aslam and John Morris.

CBIS was part of a successful bid to the European Sustainable Materials IRC, winning Euro 30,000 for CU’s share of Re-manufacturing Project (REMAN), involving multiple European partners. The project involves a collaboration between Sinead Ouilhon from TPSRC and Sally Dibb.
Andrew Jones has been awarded a grant to support his research, which investigates the ‘gadgetification’ of electric vehicles. Targeting electric vehicles (EVs) as a form of high-tech ‘gadget’ has likely led to widespread adoption of this technology. This study aims to assess whether an alternative approach of new market entrants, such as Tesla, in marketing the EV as a desirable gadget, could result in wider adoption and a step-change in sales.

This study, with Lyndon Simkiss, Sally Chibb and Nigel Berkeley, also aims to:

- Understand consumer behaviour and motives in relation to EV consumption
- Assess the role of brands in EV adoption
- Derive how novel business strategies and personal concerns are influencing consumption patterns

Currently, much existing research and insight positions the EV driver as a ‘consumer with a conscience’, motivated by a desire to help the environment or promote this cause to others. However, with adoption rates for these vehicles still low, this study investigates an alternative approach, which is the positioning of these vehicles as a form of high-tech ‘gadget’. For decision-makers within the automotive space, the notion that EVs are a form of gadget impacts upon their marketing and strategic choices.

This will not only impact the new players, such as Tesla, who have influenced the ‘gadgetification’ of EVs, but will also provide an assessment of responses from established firms in the market. This study will involve undertaking Focus Group sessions with consumers who will form the basis of understanding the EV consumer, and again, this provides valuable insights for those involved in marketing EVs.

The results of this study will have relevance for decision makers, practitioners and marketers within the EV industry, academia and policymakers in the field of transport, and consumers of vehicles.

A PhD in CBiS
CBiS’s thriving PhD student community is integral to the Centre and contributes to our wide-ranging research portfolio. Choosing to pursue a PhD within the vibrant and supportive intellectual environment of this Centre is attractive to a growing cohort of international PGDrs. Our research is grouped around the clusters as described in this overview.

Current CBiS doctoral research includes projects on the role of central and local government in regeneration, global sports governance, corporate social responsibility, supply chains, green technologies, sustainability, ethical consumption, the digital economy, responsible personal finance, data and analytics, data privacy, automotive innovation, industrial clusters and business strategy.

We welcome applications from suitably qualified self-funded or sponsored PhD candidates who will contribute to our research teams. Some studentships and bursaries are available at times. If you think you have what it takes to study for a PhD with us and have an idea you would like to discuss before you apply, please contact Dr Jason Begley at CBiS: Jason.begley@coventry.ac.uk

A Professional Doctorate: the DBA
The DBA is designed for practising managers with the experience and roles to facilitate impactful change within their organisations as a result of their research. The DBA programme is cohort-based, with groups of up to 10 candidates mentored throughout their research degree by an expert academic team. This part-time degree takes four to six years to complete. The programme contains some taught elements designed to enhance research skills and capabilities, the final award of the Doctorate is based on a portfolio of original research, presented in a thesis.

Candidates must have a minimum of five years’ practitioner experience in a relevant field; be undertaking a role within an appropriate setting that will allow the implementation of innovation and change necessary to meet the requirements of the programme; and have an identified external mentor who is an experienced practitioner in a relevant field. Interested candidates should contact the DBA Academic Director, Dr David Jarvis: david.jarvis@coventry.ac.uk
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- Alternative geographies of finance, Asset-based finance, Managing credit and debt

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Contact for:
- Responsible Finance, Financial Services, Banking Culture, Banking Reform, Organisational Culture and Organisational Behaviour

Dr David Bek
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- Corporate social responsibility, sustainability, local economic development and ethical trade

Dr Jason Begley
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- Economic History, Economic Development, national accounting, regional development and economic indicators, low carbon sector, low carbon mobility

Professor Nigel Berkeley
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Kevin Broughton
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- Voluntary/community sector, neighbourhood regeneration, organisational development of voluntary sector organisations

Professor Marylyn Carrigan
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- Consumer ethics, corporate social responsibility, social marketing, ethical marketing, sustainability

Professor Glauco De Vita
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- Foreign Direct Investment; Outsourcing/Offshoring

Dr Sara Degli-Espositi
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- Users’ privacy preferences; organisational strategies to comply with EU/UK data protection law; public perceptions of surveillance technologies; big data value, definition and risks

Professor Sally Dibb
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- Marketing strategy; behaviour change; big data; sustainability; strategic planning, charity trusts, expert REF reviewer

Dr Carlos Ferreira
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- Local and Regional Economic Development, Markets and Environmental Governance, Social Value Accounting and Investment, Responsible Business, Electric Vehicles, Cryptocurrencies

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- Sport Business, Economic Development and Sport, Ownership and Finance in Football, Low Carbon Vehicles

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- Supply chain sustainability, strategy and operations management

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- Strategic management; strategy tools, in particular scenario planning and visioning; Market segmentation, relationship marketing and customer relationship management (CRM); M&A (mergers and acquisitions); Customer data management, big data and privacy

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- Media sports broadcasts, digital sports piracy
The Centre for Business in Society

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 over thirty specialist researchers, a dedicated research support team, 55 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.