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Issue 07

The Productivity Institute launch | Covid recovery | Social entrepreneurship

Wellbeing measure
Interview with David Gregson

How to influence emotions
Professor Karen Niven

The future of audit
Yasmine Chahed shares her views

Online learning
New executive programmes

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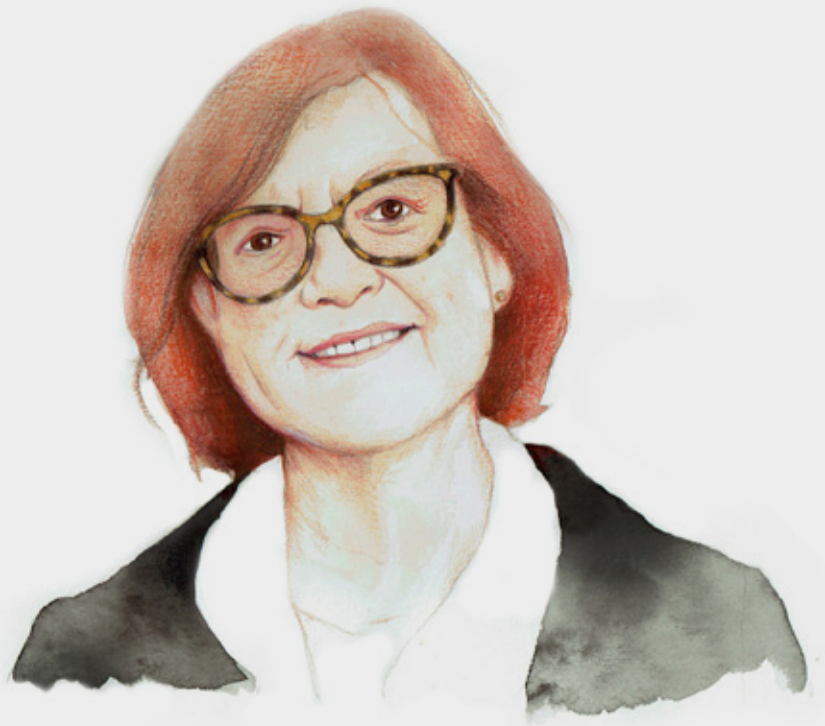
Resetting the dial



Guest welcome: Damaris Albarran

Anyone wondering what business schools are doing to help us recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will find many answers to their question in this issue.

With the pandemic casting such a strong light on deep social and economic divisions across the UK, the social enterprise movement has gained a much higher profile in recent months. But what you may find surprising is that the sector already contributes more than £50bn a year to the UK economy, with thousands of businesses supporting environmental issues or helping vulnerable or under-represented groups.

The University of Manchester and Alliance MBS have been at the forefront of this movement for more than a decade, helping students and staff create innovative social enterprises. Our international reach is significant in this context too as many social enterprises have been founded by overseas students who have identified social issues in their adopted city and wanted to help.

This trend is epitomised by Indian student Mohammad Afridi (see page 36). He was recently named among the top 50 BAME UK tech entrepreneurs of 2020 after successfully trialling his on-demand delivery platform to help vulnerable people across Manchester city centre during the first national lockdown in the spring.

Economic climate

Given the tough present economic situation, getting involved in social enterprises can surely bring untold benefits for students. Indeed, right now there is much that the Masood Entrepreneurship Centre and Alliance MBS are doing to help students in this regard.

An example, as School Director for Social Responsibility Hongwei He writes in this issue, is how we are using the development of e-learning and blended learning as an opportunity to embed a greater focus on social responsibility into our curricula.

He adds that the School is also in a uniquely strong position to contribute to the fight against Covid-19 due to our diverse expertise. For instance new research in the fields of accounting, finance and economics can provide policy advice during the ongoing pandemic and post-pandemic recovery, while our healthcare and operation management teams can help organisations prepare for a reframed future.

Precarious work

Research into the increasingly widespread phenomenon of precarious work in labour markets has been a particular focus within our Work and Equalities Institute (WEI) in recent years. One ongoing project is being headed by PhD researcher Eva Herman who, thanks to a CASE studentship, has been looking at the care and hospitality sectors in the UK in order to better understand the causes and consequences of precarious work, and how it affects men and women in different ways.

During her study she has been co-supervised by Oxfam GB which has been conducting its own research into precarious work and low pay, and which has built up a number of connections with academics at WEI specifically to help inform its own policies and initiatives.

Productivity

Meanwhile the UK's long-standing poor productivity record has also been brought into very sharp focus by the pandemic, and it was great to hear over the summer that Alliance MBS will host The Productivity Institute, a new £32m research project (see page 6).

A partnership with eight other institutions across the country, the Institute will aim to help policy and business leaders across the UK understand how to improve productivity and living standards as the economy recovers from the impact of the virus. I would urge you to read Managing Director Professor Bart van Ark's column in this issue where he talks about his hopes and aspirations for the Institute, and where you can also find out how to get involved with its work.

Finally, do read too our alumnus profile of David Gregson, who also sits on our School Advisory Board, and who talks candidly about the fantastic campaign he is heading up to measure the wellbeing of schoolchildren across the UK. Again, there has surely never been a more pressing need for such an initiative.

Damaris Albarran is Chair of the Advisory Board at Alliance Manchester Business School

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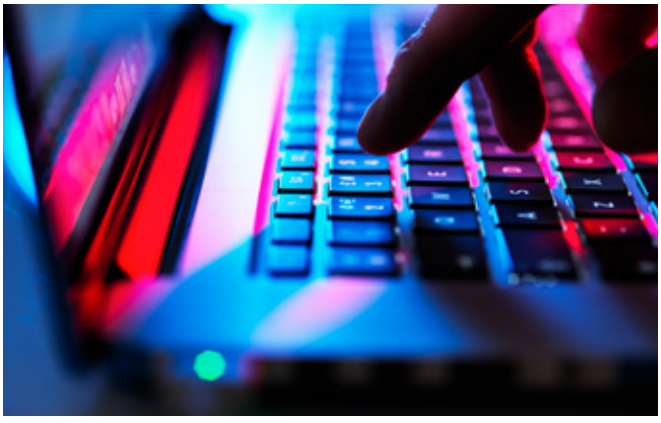

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Fixing the puzzle

The Productivity Institute is a new £32m project that will support world-leading research and inform government policy.

Bart van Ark
Managing Director, The Productivity Institute

Why focus a £32m research grant on the UK productivity puzzle? The issue is not new, and despite the ink that has been spilled and words that have been spoken, productivity growth has stubbornly stalled in recent years.

Productivity is important from a purely monetary perspective: if production per hour worked since 2007 had increased at the same rate as in the 15 years before, today's economy would have been some £300bn larger, equalling an average of £11,500 per household.

But that's not the whole story. Nobel price-winning economist, Paul Krugman, once quipped: "Productivity isn't everything, but in the long run it is almost everything." That statement is no overstretch. Productivity helps businesses to use their resources efficiently, freeing up money for investment in new business activity and jobs. Productivity supports workers' incomes. And productivity helps society as the proceeds from technology and innovation spill over to other parts of life, including healthcare, education and smarter ways to clean up the environment.

Better understanding

Yet in recent decades many of those mechanisms have broken down. Why?

There are many reasons. We may be mis-measuring the real productivity gains in a predominant services economy with a larger share of output being delivered in digital format. For example, how much do free apps and streaming add to productivity? And how do we compare the productivity of a gig worker with that of a traditional factory worker?

Perhaps the productivity debate has been too much dominated by economists. Modern day economists have gone well beyond traditional neoclassical models by incorporating technological change, innovation and market imperfections in their thinking. Other disciplines can help though to get to a better understanding of what motivates people to invest in education and training. Why companies flourish in one place and not in another. And why productivity gains seem to have helped profits more than labour income, and why the latter has become increasingly unequally distributed.

Reducing productivity gaps

We also need to tackle the unusually large productivity gaps between regions and nations in the UK. Businesses are often facing too small markets. There is a lack of coordination to scale up, raising important political economy questions about the benefits and challenges of devolution.

Finally, businesses (and perhaps even policy makers) have become captured by short-term thinking and are driven more by quarterly earnings than by long-term growth objectives. This hampers reaping the long-term benefits from innovation, and goes against the grain of building a net-zero carbon economy.

No single bullet

There is no single bullet to resolve the productivity puzzle. We need multiple disciplines to help understand the causes of the puzzle. We need a comprehensive and coordinated approach to strengthen productivity with research, business and policy in the room. And we need to focus on the long-term economic and social benefits of productivity, and better manage the short-term trade-offs.

If the £32m investment in The Productivity Institute makes us smarter about the key drivers for productivity growth and contributes to policies and strategies that help reverse the slowing trend, it would be money well spent. ●

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Addressing the productivity puzzle

The Productivity Institute brings together experts from around the nation to understand, measure and enable improvements in productivity – one of the UK's biggest economic challenges to improve economic prosperity and wellbeing.

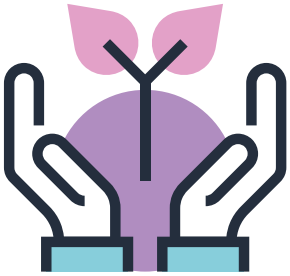
Both the growth rate and the level of productivity, or the amount of production per hour worked, in the UK is worse than the US, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Spain. Since the end of the 2008 financial crisis UK productivity growth has been virtually nil, even though output grew and unemployment reached record low levels until Covid-19 hit the UK – a conundrum dubbed the 'productivity puzzle'.

Addressing this puzzle could lead to better jobs, higher living standards and the country becoming richer on a per-person basis.

Funded by a £26m investment from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) – the largest in its history - and supported by another £6m in terms of contributions from participating academic organisations, The Productivity Institute will focus on research, translating those insights into long-term policy responses and regional engagement with business.

- Eight key research themes (see right) will be led by nine academic partners spread across the UK and include a Fellowship Programme. The Institute's headquarters is at Alliance MBS.
- A National Policy Council will highlight regional, national and international good practices, and interact on a regular basis with representations from the UK government as well as devolved nation administrations.
- Eight Regional Productivity Forums will be made up of local policy makers, authorities, business leaders and partner institutions, seeking to understand regional differences and develop solutions through events and workshops. They will be based in and focus on England's North West, North East and East, the Midlands, London and the South, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Themes



Social, environmental and technological transitions

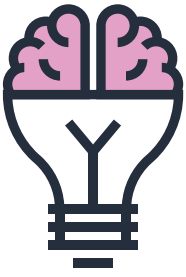
Coming decades will see major transitions as the UK adopts new technologies and responds to climate change. There are both opportunities and risks for productivity, jobs and the distribution of the gains emerging from digital transformation and green growth. These transitions will require transformative changes in business models, skills needs, infrastructure, regulatory policies and markets.

Macroeconomic trends and policy

Many of the UK productivity issues reflect economy-wide failures. From a private finance viewpoint, a large financing gap for business seems to have emerged as banking restrictions on lending lead to shortfalls in productive investment. From a fiscal viewpoint, public investment in productivity-enhancing infrastructure may be limited by the fiscal regime and accounting frameworks used by the Treasury.

Geography and place

The low productivity levels of some regions or areas of the UK, and the consequent disparities in income and broader wellbeing, are widely documented. There are lessons to be learned concerning the effectiveness of local economic development strategies, infrastructure investment, land use and housing policy, educational and social interventions, and their interactions.



Knowledge capital

The institutional structure of research in the UK seems not to provide the coordination necessary for success, particularly in high technology and high value-added areas. There is a need to better understand and measure the impact knowledge capital and other types of intangible capital created by the public and private sectors on productivity.

Institutions and governance

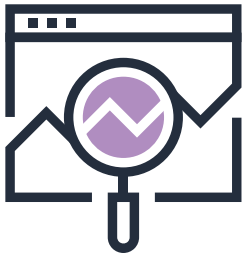
UK productivity suffers from over-centralised decision making, top-downism, short-termism, silos, and the absence of effective joined-up government. The geographical concentration of power may stifle local initiative and innovation. A common research theme is the need to better recognise the interactions between those taking the decisions and those affected by them.

Organisational capital

Stagnant long-term productivity growth in UK firms has been linked to low levels of investment, failures in technology diffusion, short-termism, and a general decline in business dynamism. As the UK seeks to develop a more activist industrial strategy, key questions arise on barriers to entry, obstacles to innovation in SMEs, and the resilience of supply chains.

Human capital

The UK labour force is characterised by strong high-end skills, weak vocational skills and a relatively low level of basic skills such as numeracy and literacy. More research is needed on which skills and abilities are important for productivity and wellbeing, and how these can best be developed and deployed in a rapidly changing digital economy.



Measurement and methods

Productivity is fraught with measurement issues, notably to do with output in service sectors, regional price and productivity differentials, intangible inputs and environmental capital, and knowledge. New techniques and novel data sources, including administrative data and 'big-data' at granular levels, can help to gain deep understanding of regional, national and firm-level productivity drivers.

Partners

University of Cambridge

Cardiff University / Prifysgol Caerdydd

ESCoE Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence

University of Glasgow

King's College London

Queen's University Belfast

Warwick

National Institute of Economic and Social Research

The University Of Sheffield.

Find out more and get in touch at **ambs.ac.uk/productivity**

Managing emotions

Emotions are central to achieving most work-related goals, and shape our wellbeing and performance.

Karen Niven

Professor of Organisational Pyschology

Among some managers there are still perceptions that emotions are somehow contrary to success in the workplace, they get in the way of making good decisions, undermine productivity, and are essentially something you want to avoid. The perception is that emotions are irrational and can undermine our success at work.

I couldn't agree less. Instead, I would argue that emotions are central to achieving most work-related goals. They can most definitely shape our wellbeing and performance, and likewise shape how creative and innovative we are.

So if we agree that emotions are central to achieving work goals, how can we influence them?

Shaping feelings

The focus of much previous research in this area has been on how we can manage and shape our feelings ourselves, what we can do personally to improve our performance and productivity. But is it possible to shape in a strategic way the feelings of other people around us in the workplace as well?

I would argue that you can, via a process known as interpersonal emotion regulation (IER). Over many years colleagues and I have been building a research programme in this area trying to explore its relevance to everyday life, looking at how and why people influence feelings of those around them on a daily basis. And from a large number of research studies where we have explored this process, the response from organisations has been overwhelmingly positive. This is something that really resonates with people.

Strategic approach

According to researchers of IER, there are four main ways in which we can influence the feelings of others. To explain, let's take the example of a worker who is suffering from anxiety due to a high workload.

One way of approaching this issue is through a **problem-focused** approach to try to change the worker's situation, which in turn should help to reduce their anxiety. So a manager might offer to simply reduce a colleague's workload by offering to take on additional duties.

Another approach could be a **cognitive** approach, where instead of changing the situation, you try to change how somebody thinks about it. You can do this either by diverting attention away from the issue (e.g. telling jokes to distract the worker from their problems and make them feel happier) or by casting the situation in a different light (e.g. reframing the high workload as an opportunity to impress management).

A third approach is **socio-affective**, where the focus is on communicating validation and care within the relationship. You aren't trying to change the situation or how the person thinks about it, you just want the person to feel supported. In the given example, the manager could empathise with the colleague's stress and listens to their concerns.

A final option could be a **response-focused** approach, which seeks only to change the person's outward expression of emotion, such as telling the colleague to try and calm down and not worry.

Which strategy is best depends on what you are trying to achieve. However our research has shown that, broadly

For those of us working remotely, all our communication is technologically mediated and more formalised. We are having less informal, spontaneous conversations which are normally the best opportunities to manage other people's feelings.

speaking, strategies that involve problem solving, cognitive reframing, and socio-affective approaches tend to be most effective. By contrast, response-focused and cognitive diversion approaches can appear dismissive and are typically not well received. Coming across as authentically acting in the interests of those whose emotions you are trying to manage is another key factor that aids our effectiveness, whatever behaviours we use.

Remote working challenge

A key thread of our research is the importance of bonding and the fact that there are so many contexts in which forming better relationships with others in the workplace is really the key to having a better organisation.

This is particularly true if you are joining a new organisation, or are a leader of a new team where establishing new strong bonds with colleagues is really important. This is also critical in a very low trust context such as managing organisational change which is likely to meet high resistance.

Given this, the fact that so many of us have been working from home during lockdowns in response to Covid-19 poses a particular challenge. However I would argue that because remote working is hard, isolating, stressful and challenging, it makes IER even more important given we feel less connected with colleagues.

Less formal

The problem is that implementing IER strategies is so much more difficult right now. For those of us working remotely, all our communication is technologically mediated and more formalised. We are having less informal, spontaneous conversations which are normally the best opportunities to manage other people's feelings.

For managers it is really important right now to carve out opportunities to be more spontaneous and informal to understand how others are feeling and protect their wellbeing. One simple example might be taking a couple of minutes out of your day to send an email to someone to see how they are, not in an intrusive way but in a genuine, supportive manner.

Another example might be to factor IER into the feedback we give people – both formal and informal – so that we include more praise and validation. In smaller meetings, spend a couple of minutes chatting informally and showing interest in others (just as you would whilst waiting for colleagues to filter into an in-person meeting in non-pandemic times).

With a lot of us feeling very distant from others there has actually never been a more pressing time to try and influence the feelings of others.

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Listen to Karen's recent Alliance MBS podcast on emotions **here**

Long-term recovery

Alliance MBS has secured funding to support research into the long-term recovery of local communities from the damage caused by the pandemic.

Duncan Shaw

Professor of Operations and Critical Systems

The coronavirus pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges to communities across the world. Many are rightly focused on how we come out of the other side, and how organisations can work together to drive long-term recovery in what is a very complex political landscape.

A specific project that I am heading is looking at precisely these challenges. Part-funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), part of UK Research and Innovation, it brings together specialists from Alliance MBS, the Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute (HCRI), and The University of Manchester to develop guidance and create a framework that can be used to build resilience in local communities post Covid-19.

A team of academics will analyse how stakeholders such as local government, the emergency services and volunteer groups have responded to Covid-19 in the UK and overseas, before identifying the changes that need to be made to better support short-term recovery and drive long-term renewal within local communities.

Using this information, academics will then partner with Local Resilience Forums – groups of representatives from local authorities and the wider public sector – in Merseyside, the Thames Valley and Essex to develop and test a resilience framework.

Framework

We will also be working closely with regional stakeholders to share lessons of successful recovery, and use these learnings to develop an actionable framework that can be used to drive resilience at a local level in a world post-Covid.

The framework will specifically be designed to enable local communities to better plan, prepare and respond to emergencies like the pandemic. For example, by emergency services collaborating to meet new demands or utilising the support of individuals that want to help but aren't affiliated to an official public body – commonly known as spontaneous volunteers – in the disaster response phase.

Incidentally I have actually been researching the need for a UK policy towards spontaneous volunteers ever since 2013, originally following a number of flooding incidents in the UK. Along with colleagues I subsequently developed an international standard, ISO22319, which has not only been used by local authorities across the UK but has now been adopted by local authorities all over the world, especially in regions such as South America which are particularly susceptible to natural disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes or wildfires.

The standard has been instrumental in changing management practices in local governments which have used it to directly shape national government policy.

Recovery from Covid-19

The recent funding announcement from the ESRC actually follows a 10-month project during which I and colleagues have been working with organisations worldwide to ensure local communities can recover from Covid-19.

This includes specialists in the areas of critical systems, emergency response, community resilience, humanitarian aid and mobilisation, digital solutions and security, viable systems, healthcare delivery and operations management. In particular we produced a guide outlining the key issues for recovery from the pandemic, which summarised and supplemented existing guidance on recovery from disasters and pandemics in the unique context of Covid-19.

The guide defines exactly what recovery means in the context of the pandemic, and why its nature is different. It also looks at the key groups which should be involved in a recovery, and the associated challenges. The guide concludes by outlining what actions should be considered in both the short- and long-term.

All year we have also been producing The Manchester Briefing which contains international lessons on response and recovery, and we have been truly heartened by the fantastic feedback and response we have continued to receive.

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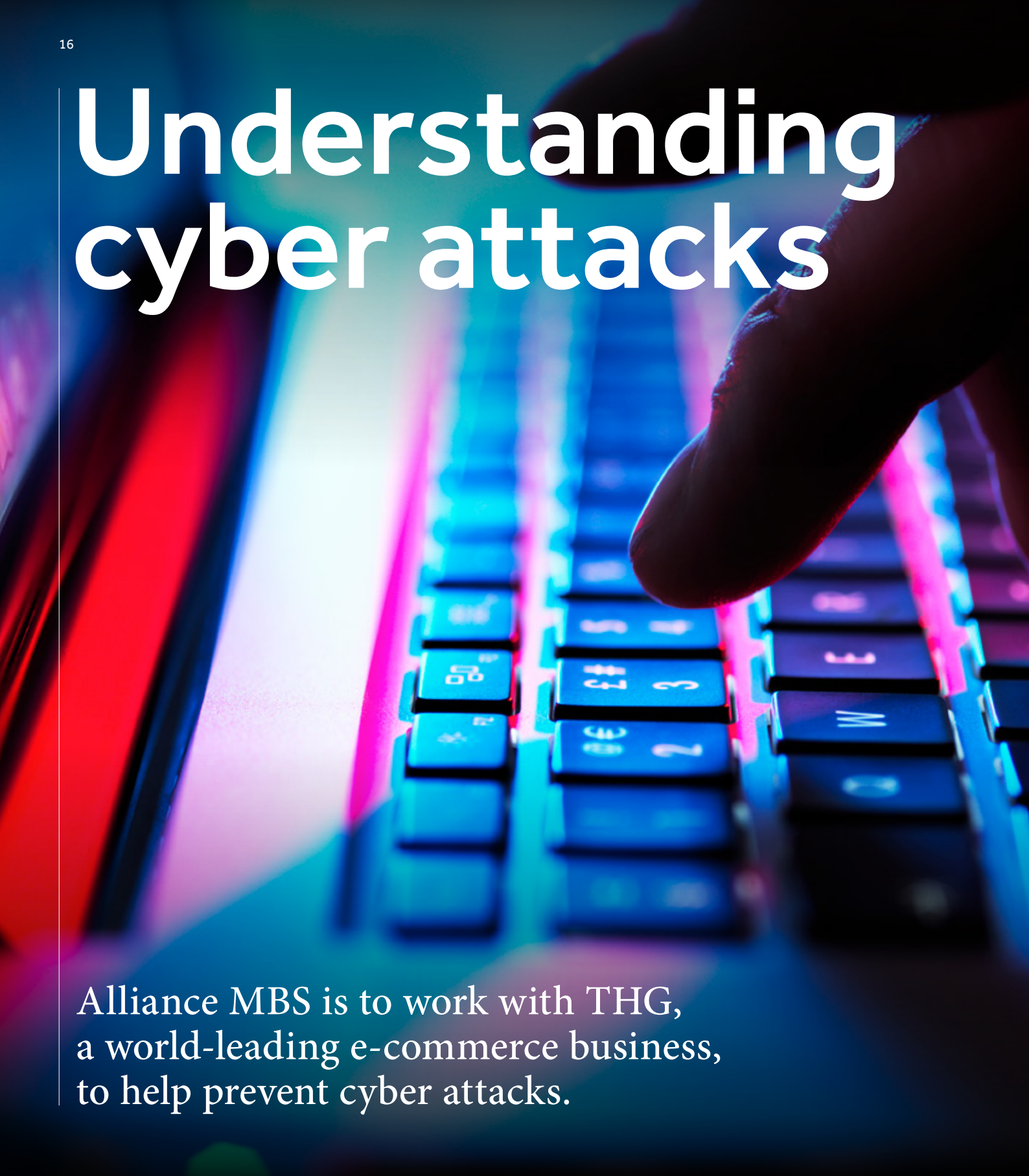
Understanding cyber attacks



Alliance MBS is to work with THG, a world-leading e-commerce business, to help prevent cyber attacks.

Dr Richard Allmendinger and Dr Elvira Uyarra from Alliance MBS are to work with one of the world's leading e-commerce businesses on a major research project to help prevent cyber security attacks.

Alongside computer scientists from The University of Manchester the pair will work on the research programme with Manchester-based THG which is a global technology business and consumer brand owner. THG has world-class technical and research teams who will be applying their findings to the cutting edge of UK and global digital security through the project.

Preventing cyber attacks

The £5.8m project, known as Soteria, runs from January and is being funded by Innovate UK's Digital Security by Design (DSbD) initiative. This aims to prevent hackers from remotely taking control of digital systems such as autonomous cars, personal computers or smart home security systems, as well as protect businesses from cyber attacks and data breaches.

The Soteria project is also partnering with Oxford University and is one of two new research programmes announced by Innovate UK. Soteria will specifically work with Arm's technology platform prototype Morello to understand how to improve security and enable the development of new cyber security services and products.

Research findings from projects such as these are much needed given that almost half of UK businesses reported cyber attacks or breaches last year. The global e-commerce market is also expanding rapidly, a trend which has only been further accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Online retail in the UK accounted for about 20% of total retail spending in 2019 and is forecast to be well over 50% by 2030.

Timely

Dr Richard Allmendinger, Business Engagement Lead at Alliance MBS and Senior Lecturer in Data Science, said: "It is fantastic to have been awarded this timely grant, and collaborate with THG, a global Manchester-based e-commerce giant, our colleagues from Computer Science, and Oxford University on the emerging technical and productivity-related challenges around cyber security.

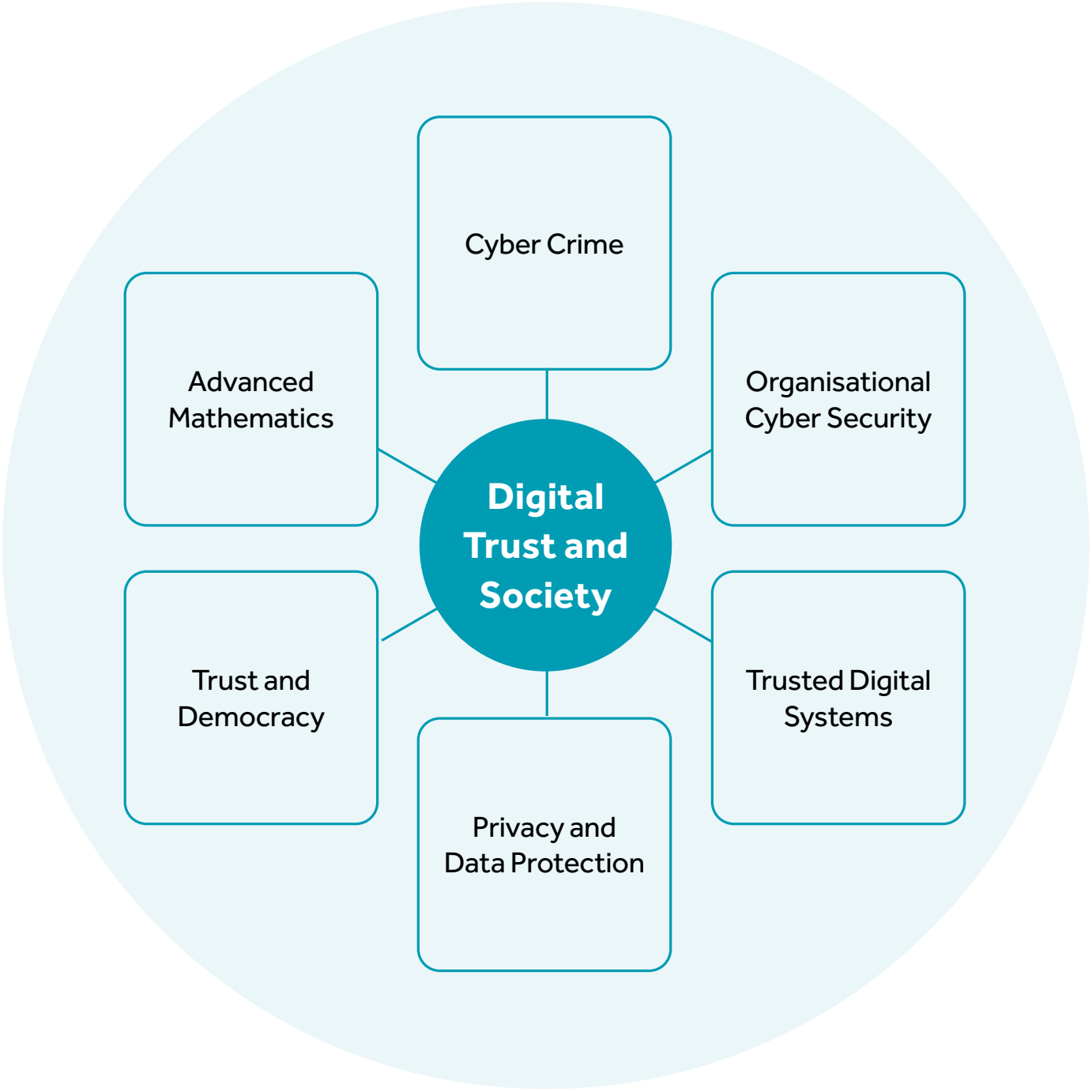
"Alliance MBS is thrilled to be making use of its research expertise in decision science and innovation to lead the work strand around understanding and quantifying the impact of cyber attacks on productivity, and then using these insights to enable optimised business decisions. The Soteria project also provides a great opportunity to complement the work of The Productivity Institute which recently launched at Alliance MBS."

Track record

Professor Mikel Luján, Arm/RAEng Research Chair and Royal Society Wolfson Fellow, said: "The University of Manchester has a world-leading track record collaborating with Arm Ltd., and as such is recognised as an Arm Center of Excellence. Soteria is a very exciting opportunity to contribute to the Morello platform developed by Arm Ltd. with our expertise in runtime systems, software verification and computer engineering. The collaboration with THG provides a unique opportunity to transform the security foundations of the digital infrastructure of e-commerce as well as improve the security of UK companies."

Digital Security by Design Challenge Director John Goodacre said: "The project led by THG will provide a crucial demonstration of the security benefits DSbD technology can bring to the e-commerce industry."

Launching in spring 2021 The University of Manchester's Centre for Digital Trust and Society will be led by Faculty of Humanities in close partnership with computer science, reflecting the central importance of the social dimensions of digital systems.



The Centre is being led by Professor Emma Barrett, Strategic Lead for Digital Trust and Security. Explaining the background she said: "Over the last couple of years we have been pulling together different research clusters from across the University with the overall aim of building up world-leading research and capacity from multiple perspectives. The fact that this initiative is being led by humanities represents a sea-change in thinking about real world security problems and the ways in which research can help solve them."

At the heart of the Centre's structure are core research streams (see left) which build on existing research strengths. Projects across research streams will allow cross-disciplinary perspectives and research stream leads will be encouraged to collaborate. For instance, one example might be a collaboration on financial digital crime between the organisational security and digital crime and deviance streams.

Organisational security

Professor Barrett said there were massive opportunities for Alliance MBS around the organisational cyber security cluster. "What businesses keep telling us is that they want to know how to embed cyber security in the workplace. It is about the human angle as much as the technical angle.

"Areas that are relevant to Alliance MBS include cyber crime, fintech, digital inclusion, trusted business systems, privacy and data collection, to name a few. Businesses are facing big problems in the here and now but they also need to scan the big problems looming on the horizon too, and some organisations have security problems that span multiple clusters."

The Centre will also feature many business collaborations, such as with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and with GCHQ which recently opened an office in Manchester city centre. "Manchester is fast becoming a centre of excellence for cyber security and digital security and we can leverage that," added Professor Barrett. "One of the precise reasons why GCHQ has opened a Manchester office is that it has realised that it cannot tackle all these challenges on its own anymore because technology is moving so fast.

"Opening an office in Manchester also means it can tap into Manchester's considerable talent pool, while opening our Centre at the same time means we can also further build on our existing relationships with GCHQ and GMCA."

Another University of Manchester strength is the EPSRC-funded SPRITE+ (led by Professor Barrett), a national network which brings together academics, industry, government and law enforcement partners to share and generate knowledge about security, privacy, identity and trust in the future digital economy.

SPRITE+ is one year into a four-year grant and already has almost 500 members from across the UK and beyond, and gives the University a central position in the UK cyber security landscape.

Impact

Dr Richard Allmendinger, Business Engagement lead at Alliance MBS, heads up the organisational cyber security cluster. He added: "The Centre is a great opportunity for Alliance MBS colleagues to feed into a topic that is of great importance in the digital age we are living. But it also aligns very well with our research expertise in areas such as organisational psychology, behavioural science, innovation research and AI.

"Thanks to the likes of GMCA, GCHQ, and numerous other cyber security organisations and initiatives like SPRITE+ and the Cyber Foundry, we have an amazing cyber ecosystem right on our doorstep allowing us to translate our research expertise into practice to create a tangible impact."

Aims

The Centre will also work alongside the University of Manchester's Digital Futures platform and with the Institute for Data Science and Artificial Intelligence, as well as the Thomas Ashton Institute, and the LawTech and FinTech initiatives.

The Centre's central aims are to:

- further develop an innovative and ambitious intellectual agenda by bringing together existing research clusters
- provide a platform for extending institutional, regional, national, and international reach
- build the foundations for an enduring programme of externally funded research (and associated teaching and learning activities)
- work towards establishing The University of Manchester as the focus of national and international excellence in trust and security in digital society

Embedded in policy

A study with Oxfam UK into precarious work shows the strong policy benefits of doctoral research.

Eva Herman

Phd Researcher

Research into increasingly widespread precarious work in labour markets has been a particular focus within the Work and Equalities Institute (WEI) in recent years.

One ongoing project is being headed by PhD researcher Eva Herman who, thanks to a CASE studentship, has been looking at the care and hospitality sectors in the UK in order to better understand the causes and consequences of precarious work, and how it also affects men and women in different ways.

CASE studentships, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), provide an opportunity for PhD researchers to gain first-hand experience of work outside an academic environment, with the student working on a doctoral project supported by both expert academic supervisors and a co-supervisor from a non-higher education partner organisation.

During her study Eva has been co-supervised by Oxfam GB which has been conducting its own research into precarious work and low pay, and which has specifically built up a number of connections with academics at WEI to help inform its own policies and initiatives.

Interactions

Eva says that in order to understand precarious work you have to understand the interactions between state policies, employer strategies, and the worker's own home life. "I specifically wanted to find out how employers shape certain types of work in different types of sectors, and deliberately chose care and hospitality as I had previously worked in both industries. Also, while the care sector is dominated by women, in hospitality the gender split is much more even which enables us to look in-depth at gender issues too."

In total Eva conducted 72 interviews with employers, workers and volunteers. "Our key finding was that in order to understand the shape that precarious work takes you need to explore how contracts, time and income interact with each other. Precarious work cannot be judged by looking at any one of these alone."

Her research unearthed a number of different employer strategies which lead to precarious conditions. These included salaried workers doing unpaid overtime, those on zero-hour contracts working regular hours, shift workers working extra hours to make ends meet, and the use of volunteers to help reduce labour costs and maintain service operations.

Home life

The findings also showed how the worker's home environment was important too. Adds Eva: "We found that the choice to work overtime is mediated by household income, caring responsibilities, and the employment of other household members. For example, women working night shifts often do so to ensure caring responsibilities are met, and an important aspect of precarious lives is the way families plan together and work out who is going to do what."

The research also found that workers on precarious contracts do not automatically have precarious

We realised it would be impossible not to talk about Covid-19 and what we found was that before the pandemic people were most interested in hours and the way they were structured. However in today's environment hours and pay are not as important as we thought and the contract has become key.

lives themselves. For instance some voluntary workers have comfortable lives and simply do it as an extra activity.

Covid impact

Just as Eva was finalising her research earlier this year the pandemic struck which forced her to update her study. "We realised it would be impossible not to talk about Covid-19 and what we found was that before the pandemic people were most interested in hours and the way they were structured. However in today's environment hours and pay are not as important as we thought and the contract has become key."

Eva's supervisor Professor Jill Rubery, Director of WEI, said that by re-interviewing people Eva had gone "above and beyond" in terms of her research and made her work even more publishable. "The pandemic has shown how research can be completely sidelined by events. In this instance conducting the interviews again has been a really strong future-proofing exercise."

Collaboration

Professor Rubery said the success of the project owed much to WEI's established links with Oxfam UK. "I have been involved in a number of CASE studentships and this was an excellent example of the benefits they can bring."

Silvia Galandini, Research Manager at Oxfam GB, said the biggest benefit of the programme was having access to academic knowledge and high quality evidence, research which was already helping to shape its own policy work.

"As an organisation we also benefited from Eva coming regularly into our office where she helped us deliver some training too. Eva herself was also able to gain insight into how a big organisation works in terms of research and policy, so there was a mutual benefit as we shared ideas. It was a really enriching experience for all involved because the research was embedded in policy discussions, and I encouraged everyone in our team to connect with Eva and her work."

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A new benchmark

The wellbeing of our children has been ignored for far too long and it's time to assess it in every school classroom, says Alliance MBS alumnus David Gregson.

David Gregson

MBA alumnus and Advisory Board member

By his own admission David Gregson has enjoyed an education second to none. Head boy at the independent Edinburgh Academy, a BA in Natural Sciences at Cambridge University, and then on to a highly successful corporate career. He also took his MBA at Alliance MBS from 1981 to 1983.

He might therefore seem a rather unlikely figure to now be advocating a national drive to measure, and ultimately help improve, the wellbeing of today's schoolchildren. But it is precisely because of his own happy upbringing and privilege that today he feels so passionately about young people having access to the life chances that he has enjoyed.

Earlier this year his Gregson Family Foundation published a report arguing for the adoption of an annual student wellbeing assessment in every secondary school in Britain. In making the claim it drew heavily on the most recent PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) data which not only compared student performance in maths, reading and science across numerous countries, but also asked teenagers about their wellbeing.

The results were stark. British teenagers are among the least satisfied with their lives in the world, coming fourth from bottom of the 79 countries surveyed. Just 35% of UK students described themselves as "always happy". Tellingly, British children had the highest fear of failure of any nation.

Gregson says the findings were something of a light bulb moment for him. "I have always had a passionate interest in education and my overriding feeling when I heard these results was that I wanted to find out why the UK was doing so badly. What were the economic and social reasons for these feelings among our young people? And what can we do to turn this around?"

Dutch experience

Another strong reason for his interest was his own personal experience and the fact that he has lived in the Netherlands with his Dutch-born wife for the last 14 years, a country which also just happens to have among the happiest children in the world.

"As I looked further into the whole subject I realised that as a country the UK just didn't seem to have the machinery to look at wellbeing and say this is really important. And yet the academic literature couldn't be clearer. Time and again the biggest predictor of a happy adult is a happy child. Imagine how much more productive we could be as a society if we tackled this properly? The fact that I live in the Netherlands where wellbeing is fully engrained across society only further motivates me."

So what is driving this malaise among UK schoolchildren? Much of the blame is often laid at the pressures of our exam system and school league tables which put exam attainment front and centre, and Gregson couldn't agree more. "Exam success is so deeply ingrained in our thinking and our education system is far too skewed towards results. For some reason we appear to think that a child with good exam results is a satisfied child later in life, but that doesn't always follow.

"Our vision is to trigger a step change in education such that the system is rebalanced to give greater parity to

mental health and wellbeing. For instance, we know that less than half of schools in England collect wellbeing data of any kind, without any consistency of criteria. Don't get me wrong, attainment and testing is of course essential. But on its own it is an insufficient benchmark of how our children are doing, and how well we are preparing them for their future lives."

Greater Manchester trial

Schools and education leaders may soon be offered the chance to find out after the campaign for a wellbeing assessment – in a programme to be led by The University of Manchester alongside the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families - recently received a massive boost when Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham and politicians from the ten Greater Manchester local authorities endorsed plans to run a pilot in secondary schools across the ten districts.

Gregson says that Greater Manchester is an excellent place to trial the initiative because of its devolved healthcare model, and hopes the trial will be launched in 2021.

"The most important thing is that we show how integrated, holistic data can really help improve the lives of children in terms of showing the challenges they face. Right now we are working on the key metrics which we will be using."

He expects the assessment to corroborate what schools already know. "What I expect is that the socio-economic determinants of health inequality are actually similar to the wellbeing determinants. That means poverty, parental relationships, peer groups and community relationships, and so on, all play vital roles."

Gregson admits that raising the £1m to finance the pilot, a fundraising effort which he will be overseeing, is tough in the present economic climate given the pandemic. But he believes this can be overcome because of the seriousness of the issue. "Put it this way, why wouldn't anyone want to try to discover more and seek to tackle this problem? If you were in business and had a KPI showing you were one of the worst in the world at something you would pretty quickly want to do something about it."

Covid-19 impact

Gregson says the pandemic has only accentuated growing concerns over the wellbeing of our children. "It has made the rationale for what we are trying to achieve even clearer. At the end of the day this is about building a grand coalition between government, charities and businesses to tackle the problem."

The wellbeing of adults is of course also under immense threat, a crisis which will inevitably affect children too. "Government has to do whatever is required to support business right now and I think, generally speaking, it has taken the right approach even though we are facing a ballooning of debt levels," he adds. "But the impact on business is utterly immense and we haven't even begun to see the full fallout yet in terms of job cuts."

He concedes that those in more privileged positions such as himself, will also have to pay their share. "When it comes to paying back the cost of Covid-19 we are going to have to take a very hard look at the UK tax regime. Our tax take is currently around 32% of GDP, but in a country such as Denmark it is currently 45%. It is inevitable that that UK percentage will have to rise."

Reimagining the future

But despite the chaos all around us, Gregson says planning for the future has never been more important and that goes for government too.

"The tricky bit in any crisis is how you replace engines in mid-flight and that applies to governments as much as to businesses. For instance, driven by both Covid-19 and Brexit, the dominance of London as a financial centre must at least in part be under threat and we must use our incredible powers of ingenuity to reimagine what financial services will look like while also reducing our dependence as a nation on the sector.

"The very best businesses are good at reimagining the future, they horizon scan and know where they are heading. But reimagining the future of a whole country is a far more difficult exercise. But it's not impossible. Look at New Zealand where every policy in Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's government is now centred around wellbeing measures and assessments. It shows the art of the possible.

"Whether you are in business or government, forcing yourself to think about what the future will look like can bring with it a breadth of thought that you didn't think you ever had." ●

“The very best businesses are good at reimagining the future, they horizon scan and know where they are going.”

University of Manchester Wellbeing Project

In recent years there have been increasing calls for a national system to assess and monitor young people's mental health and wellbeing.

Greater Manchester has now been suggested for a trial as it is the only city-region in England with a devolved health care budget and so has the appetite, structures and ambition to deliver services on a holistic basis.

The North West also has the third highest rate of mental health difficulties among under-19s in England, and the Manchester city-region is one of considerable social and economic contrast across its ten boroughs and includes some of the most deprived and least socially mobile areas in England. These social factors also influence the level of mental health related need in the city-region as children in low income families are nearly twice as likely to experience mental health difficulties as their more affluent peers.

The wellbeing measurement and improvement framework for secondary schools will track a cohort of around 18,000 young people over a three-year period, while also providing annual snapshots of a further 16,500. It will provide a comprehensive annual assessment of key aspects of young people's lives in the recovery process, e.g. mental health and wellbeing, stress and coping, social interaction and support, life readiness (e.g. life skills, worries, future careers plans), health behaviours (e.g. physical activity), socio-economic factors (e.g. poverty), and Covid-19 items (e.g. activity during and since lockdown) via a secure, online platform.

The University of Manchester and Anna Freud Centre will collate all the research findings and feedback results to schools, local leaders and policy makers and other interested parties.

David Gregson sits on the Advisory Board of Alliance Manchester Business School and, as mentioned, took his MBA at the School. He was the School's Alumnus of the year in 2015.

During a distinguished corporate career David has sat on the boards of some 30 companies and charities while also co-founding a leading private equity firm, Phoenix Equity Partners. Today he is a board member of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, as well as of Pro Bono Economics which helps charities understand and improve their impact and value.

Throughout his career he has also brought his business acumen to the world of sport. For instance he sat on the Mayor of London's Legacy Board of Advisors for the London 2012 Olympics, was chairman of the Lawn Tennis Association between 2012 and 2018, and today is a board member of the FA Womens Super League and Women's Championship Board.

He aligns this personal interest in sport with strong views on the overwhelming case for a greater focus on sport and physical activity in the UK. Last year the Gregson Family Foundation wrote a report on this very subject, arguing that the UK was facing significant challenges in continuing to encourage physical activity, including sport.

Causes

It said that austerity following the financial crash in 2008, demands for a greater share of funding for other social programmes. the pressure on the school curriculum for improved academic attainment, funding strains on the NHS, and the impact of social media on student focus, were among the causes contributing to a strain on participation levels across sport and physical activity levels more generally.

Says David: "International data show clearly that the UK is inactive, overweight and unhappy compared to other countries - both elsewhere in Europe and across the rest of the world. This paper sets out the case - backed by research, evidence from other countries and current trends - for a sport and physical activity focused, government-wide approach to grassroots physical activity and sport at all age levels."

You can read the report **here**

Radical overhaul

The time has come for meaningful audit reform.

Yasmine Chahed
Visiting Research Fellow

A string of eyebrow-raising company collapses, including retailer BHS and construction company Carillion, have prompted three independent reviews in the past two years to recommend a radical overhaul of British auditing.

Yet the UK government has done little. Audit reform has been talked about for so long that business school students now produce dissertations on the history of 'future of the audit' studies. Indeed many of today's issues were raised in the McFarlane report in 1992 and there is no lack of consensus around the need for change. Auditors have repeatedly failed to warn investors of looming problems. But politicians have failed to deliver substantive reform that serves the public interest.

Public costs

Every company collapse is a potent reminder that society is the auditor's ultimate client. The public, not just shareholders, typically bear the costs of mismanagement. Carillion's 2018 collapse threw 2,000 staff out of work and landed taxpayers with an estimated bill of £148m.

Government departments and regulatory bodies issue seemingly endless "calls for views" to establish what reforms need to be pursued and implemented. This is problematic because it puts officials under pressure to identify the "ideal" reform and encourages those with material financial interest to criticise and eliminate radical reforms.

We end up with the lowest common denominator. Over the years, every aspect in the audit environment has been tinkered with – a few more standards here, a bit more oversight there, some additional independence and competition arrangements, a tweak of the professional training curriculum and a shopping list of extra items that auditors should tick off.

But the core concept of auditing has not been updated in decades. It remains largely backward looking, standards driven, and financial statements focused. Contrast that with an economy that aspires to be digitalised, sustainable and fairer – no wonder auditors fall short.

Assurance

As Britain recovers from a global pandemic, delivering proper audit reform has never been more important. Society needs assurance that the companies it depends on for jobs, investment returns and tax revenues are being run responsibly.

I believe last year's review by Donald Brydon which I worked on, offers a coherent road map for change. First, fundamental audit reform starts with the concept of audit, not the market for audit services, nor its regulation. If businesses are to fulfil richer purposes and values, then those of auditing must shift too.

The government should enshrine the Brydon review's broader definition of audit in company law: "The purpose of an audit is to help establish and maintain deserved confidence in a company, in its directors and in the information for which they have responsibility to report, including the financial statements."

Second, we need to create a safe space for experimentation, true problem solving and innovation. This would

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broaden the possibilities for reform and allow us to look beyond the standardised definitions of an audit.

Third, if we want auditors to do more, we should make the case for a new, vibrant audit profession. Intellectually, it has long been argued that the auditor would serve the public interest if they acted as a form of moral arbiter in business. In that case, we need to change the auditor's benchmark for judging whether confidence in a company, its directors and the information they produce is "deserved". Rather than just checking that the numbers are correct, they should decide whether the company is abiding by the terms and conditions by which society grants companies a licence to operate.

Now, more than ever, auditors should be inspired by the role they can play to help restore trust in corporate Britain, enhance its resilience and, ultimately, build back better.

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> Every company collapse is a potent reminder that society is the auditor's ultimate client.

Academics from the Accounting and Finance division at Alliance MBS have made a major contribution to a study into the future of corporate reporting.

In October the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) published a discussion paper outlining a more agile approach to corporate reporting which challenges existing thinking about how companies can more effectively meet the information needs of investors and other stakeholders.

Paolo Quattrone, Professor of Accounting, Governance and Society, Visiting Research Fellow Dr Yasmine Chahed, and Alliance MBS alumnus David Gorman, were all on the advisory group for the study.

The report also cites a recommendation made by Chris Humphrey, Professor of Accounting, as part of his work as a member of the advisory board which assisted Sir Donald Brydon's recent independent review of the quality and effectiveness of audit. Specifically the FRC study cites a recommendation that called for the introduction of Public Interest Statements and Reports.

Said Professor Quattrone: "The accounting profession and practice are undergoing profound changes and this report comes out at the right moment to shape its future. With the growth of demand for data on various societal and environmental issues, the report plants the seeds for a fruitful debate around future corporate reporting solutions and options."

Proposals

The report considers a common criticism that annual reports are too long, and that information can be difficult to access. With companies and society at large facing significant challenges, which have only been heightened by the pandemic, the FRC says stakeholders are ever more interested in companies' wider actions and the reporting that supports these.

Among its proposals are a new common set of principles that applies to all types of corporate reporting, objective-driven reports that accommodate the interests of a wider group of stakeholders, and embracing the opportunities available through technology to improve the accessibility of corporate reporting.

FRC Executive Director of Regulatory Standards Mark Babington said: "This paper proposes a more agile approach that is responsive to the needs of users of accounts. To build trust in business we need a modern corporate reporting system that is transparent, flexible and puts users of corporate reporting at its heart."

New opportunities

Alliance MBS is partnering with online education provider Emeritus to create a series of online executive education courses.

As the Covid-19 pandemic has only accentuated, to thrive in an increasingly digital workplace it is essential that those in management and executive positions develop new skills and knowledge. A series of new online executive education courses at Alliance MBS will aim to do exactly that.

The first three courses will cover data science, digital transformation in healthcare, and fintech, and will build on Manchester's reputation for driving the region's position as a burgeoning tech hub.

Professor Fiona Devine, Head of Alliance MBS, said: "This new partnership supports our shift to further establish Alliance MBS in the online learning sphere, leveraging the use of technology and an Artificial Intelligence (AI) driven commercial strategy to help deliver our courses to new global audiences.

"In a constantly evolving economic and business landscape, the courses are designed to support executives navigating the current climate, and Emeritus are the ideal partner in helping us to deliver this, sharing our vision for learning, innovation and student success."

Digital transformation

Panos Constantinides, Professor of Digital Innovation and Digital Learning Lead for Executive Education at Alliance MBS, said the Covid-19 climate has altered the way we do things and has had a significant impact on strategies for digital transformation across sectors.

"Leaders in fintech and healthcare in particular need to adapt to these changes, and these courses seek to map out and address new challenges and opportunities faced by different organisations in the digital age. We are already planning ahead for many more courses that will help to equip leaders with the skills and knowledge to leverage digital capabilities within their own organisations."

Data Science for Business Decision Making is a two-month (4-6 hours per week) course which started in December 2020 and which equips participants with an applied understanding of data science for business decision-making. They will also acknowledge current and future developments in data science and their implications for business and management practice.

Digital Transformation in Healthcare Services is also a two-month course which launched in December. It will teach existing and aspiring digital leaders across health and social care, including Chief Clinical Information Officers and senior operational, technical and clinical managers. Participants will gain an understanding of how they can mobilise digital technologies from mobile and wearable devices to digital platforms and AI in order to transform their services across the healthcare ecosystem.

Fintech

A third course, Economics of FinTech and Digital Money, explores areas including the fintech revolution and the technological disruption in financial services, regulation and competition, digital strategy, and the economics of platform business models in banking. Participants will also examine the crypto economy and governance of blockchain systems, the economics of payments, data and AI. The eight-week course launches in early 2021.

Dawid Rheeder, Director, University Partnerships UK & Europe at Emeritus, said: "Alliance MBS is at the forefront of providing innovative, flexible learning opportunities to meet student demand both locally and internationally. We are excited to partner with the School to offer a range of highly relevant online courses to professionals focused on obtaining new knowledge and enhancing key skills to help define their career progression in the years to come."

Alliance MBS alumni will receive a 10% discount on these programmes.

Social benefit

Dr Rob Phillips, Senior Lecturer,
Masood Entrepreneurship Centre

Involvement in social enterprise gives students untold benefits, says Rob Phillips.

Keep-On-Keep-Up, Clintouch, Give Me Tap, 4Lunch, The Ash Company, Invisible Manchester and Bundlee. These are just some of the social enterprise businesses that the University of Manchester and Alliance MBS have been supporting in recent years.

We are not alone. Indeed today social enterprises contribute more than £50bn a year to the UK economy, often filling gaps where problems are not solved by governments or councils. But whilst social enterprises are run in many ways as a normal business, with a financially sustainable model and with the founder hoping to make a living from their activity, the business also has very clear social aims driven by the passion of the founder.

Aims can be wide ranging from environmental issues such as reducing food waste or plastic, to helping vulnerable or underrepresented groups such as women, BAME, refugees or prisoners. For instance Manchester-based Keep-On-Keep-Up, a system for helping prevent accidents in the elderly in their homes by keeping them active, has proved invaluable during the pandemic. Social enterprises also often employ disadvantaged people, furthering their social impact. In fact, in contrast to 'regular' businesses, research has indicated that about 40% are led by women and 35% by BAME.

Higher profile

Of late, social enterprise has gained from a higher profile and a clear pipeline of help and support has developed such as mentoring organisations and incubators and accelerators.

More funders are seeing the benefits of investing too. While the Manchester based Co-Operative Bank has had a focus on ethical and sustainable investments for many years, venture capital companies are also now turning to social enterprise investments as part of their mission. Funders such as Mustard Seed, Earth Capital and the Bridges Fund are looking for social as well as financial outcomes.

Interestingly, here in Manchester many social enterprises have been founded by overseas students who have identified social issues in their adopted city and want to help. This fits with research that suggests that immigrants are twice as likely to start a business compared to the indigenous population, and bringing ideas from different cultures to a new environment is often a successful way of starting a business.

Summer activities run for students by the Masood Entrepreneurship Centre (MEC) at Alliance MBS have shown a large interest from overseas students who are interested in a variety of issues including plastic waste, healthier food and less waste, skill building for young people, reducing loneliness and helping vulnerable communities.

Pandemic impact

Talking of vulnerable communities, the pandemic has also focused many students' minds on existing problems that have been magnified during the crisis.

For example Mohammad Afridi (see overleaf) trialled Delikart, which delivers any item to your door, as a not-for-profit venture during the height of the lockdown, making 1,700 deliveries for those self-isolating in central Manchester. Mohammad has now successfully applied for the universities' entrepreneurship visa scheme managed by MEC.

And Manchester graduate James Augustin used his CoronaUnity platform, which matches student volunteers who want work experience with community projects, to link up students with small businesses which were struggling due to Covid-19.

Uncertain future

With an uncertain job future for graduates, having entrepreneurial skills is important for any career and involvement in social enterprise gives students benefits beyond simply helping out at a charity or fundraising.

Indeed the practical skills of running your own business are identified in the EntreComp Entrepreneurial Competencies Framework developed by the European Commission. This is a comprehensive list of attributes agreed by scholars that are important in being an entrepreneurial individual.

Practical experience can complement the competencies that are taught in class, such as dealing with uncertainty, mobilising resources and working with others. Indeed many students feel that starting a social enterprise gives a sense of real involvement and leadership, which is not only more personally satisfying but also better for the C.V.

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The lockdown of Manchester city centre turned into an opportunity for student Mohammad Afridi to trial his business idea.

While studying for his BSc Accounting degree at Alliance MBS, student Mohammad Afridi also began researching and planning his own peer to peer delivery platform DeliKart which aims to deliver any item direct to a customer's door.

The idea first came to him when he once ran out of TV remote batteries on a cold, wintry evening in his flat and wondered why there wasn't a home delivery service in Manchester city centre for goods other than groceries and take-out food.

When the pandemic struck in March he quickly realised it was an opportunity to trial his business idea, strictly on a not-for-profit basis, by working with charities across the city to help deliver groceries to the elderly and those self-isolating so that they didn't have to venture outside.

As he explains: "I had been researching the idea for a couple of years and had already built the website and a prototype of the basic app, so had the infrastructure I needed to see if it could work. I approached charities across the city including Human Relief Foundation, We Feel Good Club and FareShare

which agreed to spread the word about our website and app and then let their volunteers act as couriers who could go out and buy the groceries and deliver them. I also enrolled student friends to help with making deliveries too."

Testing the model

Mohammad, who was recently named among the top 50 BAME UK tech entrepreneurs of 2020, stresses that during those difficult early days of lockdown it was never about making money. "Instead we simply used our model to help the people of Manchester during such a difficult time. But it proved a testing ground for me to see if the model worked."

In total during the first lockdown DeliKart made 1,700 deliveries across the city centre, and having tested its potential the business then made a further 2,400 deliveries over the summer after hiring its own set of delivery drivers.

Having recently secured a visa to stay in Britain, Mohammad is now looking to roll out the business further and secure external seed investment to scale up the business. As part of the plan he is also looking to build a platform to support small stores.

As he explains: "The second lockdown only further showed the importance for any physical store of having an online offering, and we can come in and support smaller businesses which currently have no online presence. The effects of this crisis will last for many years and ultimately people will go out less for shopping and use apps and online services far more."

Mohammad stresses that the support he received from the Masood Entrepreneurship Centre (MEC) and at Alliance MBS he will take throughout his career.

"Alliance MBS and MEC told me so much about social entrepreneurship and I will be forever grateful. The social mission of DeliKart will always remain paramount to me, it is in my DNA."

The effects of this crisis will last for many years and ultimately people will go out less for shopping and use apps and online services far more.

Awards

As well as being named among the top 50 BAME UK tech entrepreneurs of 2020, Mohammad has also been nominated in pro-Manchester's Made in Manchester Awards which celebrate the best of the city's young business talent.

He has been nominated for the entrepreneur of the year award, and also for the lockdown hero of the year award. The winners will be announced in February.

Global award for Riddi

At the recent PIEoneer Awards University of Manchester graduate Riddi Viswanathan was awarded the International Alumni of the Year 2020 award for her contributions to diverse student communities, particularly for her vital role in the #PoststudyWorkVisaNOW campaign and addressing hate crime in UK universities. The PIEoneer Awards are the only global awards that celebrate innovation and achievement across the whole of the international education industry.

Riddi, who was also supported by the Masood Entrpreneurship Centre during her studies in Manchester, said the award felt something of a bittersweet moment given that students across the world are facing major challenges in the wake of Covid-19 as well as increased threats of visa revocations in some countries. "We can only truly celebrate international education when all students, regardless of the colour of their passports, can access education equally, globally."

While studying in Manchester Riddi founded the Generation Purple start-up which aims to enhance diversity in graduate recruitment through digital initiatives. After graduating she worked at the University of Manchester Students' Union as a diversity officer and was its first full-time International Students' Officer representing more than 40,000 students across the University.

All our responsibility

Professor Hongwei He,
Professor of Marketing and
Director for Social Responsibility

The pandemic offers a unique opportunity to further embrace the social responsibility agenda.

Despite the arrival of vaccines there is an acceptance that Covid-19 will still be with us for some time. As academics and staff working in a business school we, like everyone, are adjusting to this new normal and working out how to shape and direct it for the better.

During this difficult time business schools are in a unique and strong position to be more socially responsible for a number of reasons. Not only do we have increasingly diverse expertise but it also presents an opportunity to develop our students to be more socially responsible business and societal leaders.

Diverse expertise

With the pandemic affecting every single aspect of our society, business schools are also in a unique and strong position to contribute to the fight against it due to this diverse expertise.

For instance, new research in the fields of accounting/finance and economics can provide policy advice on economic and financial incentives to keep the economy going during the ongoing pandemic and post-pandemic recovery.

Behavioural science is particularly suited to offer insights on the compliance issues regarding rules of social distancing, quarantine and self-isolation. While marketing and consumer behaviour research can help with the development of effective communications and social marketing campaigns.

And healthcare management, sustainable consumption, and operation management teams, such as those at Alliance MBS, have been at the forefront of helping organisations prepare for recovery. People management and organisational research can also help with understanding employee mental health issues and work-life balance, and providing safer workplace environments. There is also a role for big data and analytics in helping to predict the development of the pandemic and with coping and intervention strategies.

Socially responsible leaders

Developing socially responsible graduates is one of the core missions of the University of Manchester's Social Responsibility (SR) strategy, and Covid-19 also presents an opportunity to further achieve this mission.

For instance we can use the opportunity of e-learning and blended learning development to embed more SR materials in our curricula, while we can also ask students to develop communications campaigns to encourage people to adhere to social distancing rules.

We also have a responsibility to educate and help our students behave in a socially responsible way during their studies, and their own experiences in controlling the spread of Covid-19 helps them to be socially responsible graduates.

Business schools have been leaders in driving societal changes and business/social innovation thanks to our close links with industry and other institutions, our research with social impact, and our track record in educating future leaders.

We now need to take a leadership position with regards to our continued efforts in fighting Covid-19. Taking proactive initiatives, establishing partnership and collaborations, and simply being a good role model are some of the ways of leading during this difficult time. We should be the beacon for hope and optimism and set good examples for others to emulate and follow.

Being prepared for recovery

Finally, SR is more important now because we should be prepared for the post-pandemic recovery.

One day Covid-19 will disappear, or at least be diminished. But it has changed the world, accelerating trends such as working from home, online shopping, and the transformation of high streets and city centres. In this context, business schools should capitalise on their strengths and expertise to contribute to our society's adjustment to these accelerated changes. At the same time we also need to adapt to new ways of conducting research and educating our students.

Moreover, the pandemic has exposed and exacerbated both new and ingrained social issues such as inequality, discrimination, and mental wellbeing. Not only do we need to tackle these issues ourselves, but also we need to offer advice and solutions to the wider community.

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Bookshelf

A guide to recent publications by our academics

How humans judge machines
César Hidalgo
The MIT Press

In his new book César Hidalgo, Honorary Professor at Alliance MBS, compares the reactions of people to scenarios describing human and machine actions.

Data shows that people do not judge humans and machines equally, and that these differences can be explained as the result of two principles. Firstly, that people judge humans by their intentions and machines by their outcomes. As such people judge machine actions primarily by their perceived harm, but judge human actions by the interaction between perceived harm and intention.

The second principle is that people assign extreme intentions to humans and narrow intentions to machines. Technically, this means that people judge the intentions of humans using a bimodal distribution (either a lot or little intention) and the intention of machines using a unimodal distribution. This tells us that people are willing to excuse humans more than machines in accidental scenarios, but also that people excuse machines more in scenarios that can be perceived as intentional.

The experiments presented in this peer-reviewed book were approved by the Internal Review Board (IRB) of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). These experiments involved almost 6,000 individuals who were assigned randomly to either a treatment (machine) or a control (human) group.

What do dreams do?
Sue Llewellyn
Oxford University Press

Do you need your dreams explaining? Well, Emeritus Professor Sue Llewellyn might be able to help.

With a background in health services research, about 10 years ago she began to research and publish on dreams and memory processing across the sleep cycle. In this her latest book she talks about how we have puzzled over dreams for centuries, asks whether dreams are just mental froth or whether they have a real purpose, and also shows how to identify patterns in your own dreams.

She argues that, originally, we dreamed to survive. Dreaming brains identify non-obvious associations, taking people, places, and events out of their waking-life context to uncover complex and, seemingly, unrelated connections. In our evolutionary past survival depended on being able to detect these divergent, associative patterns to anticipate what predators and other humans might do, as we moved around to secure food and water and meet potential mates.

Making associations drives many, if not all, brain functions. In the present day, dream associations may support memory, emotional stability, creativity, unconscious decision-making and prediction, while also contributing to mental illness.

Navigating the return-to-work experience for new parents: Maintaining work-family wellbeing
Edited by Sir Cary Cooper,
Maria Karanika-Murray
Routledge

Parenthood can be one of the most fulfilling, altering, and challenging life events. This book is set against the reality of many parents' return-to-work experience, the task of re-engaging with work and maintaining a job or a career, and the difficulties that parenthood poses for balancing the demands of a new family with the demands of work.

It helps us understand this reality, give voice to new parents, and offers relief in the knowledge that we know a lot about these challenges and, most importantly, how we can start to address them.

The book, co-edited by Sir Cary Cooper, 50th Anniversary Professor of Organisational Psychology and Health, brings together a number of internationally recognised experts from research, practice, and policy to explore the issues and offer evidence-based solutions around return-to-work after having children.

It covers topics such as equality, stereotypes, work-family conflict, training and development, and workplace culture, whilst integrating research and policy and illustrating learnings with case studies from parents and examples from countries that lead the way. The aim of the book is to appeal to parents, researchers, and employers.

ORIGINAL THINKING APPLIED

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