

Accounting Matters

As I am writing this column, *The Economist* Espresso published “Nothing Matters” (Sept. 16, 2017). This obviously rang a bell about my own column here which I have been calling “Accounting Matters” ever since I started writing it annually for some years now for this magazine. *The Economist’s* “Nothing Matters” Espresso tidbit was about mathematics; not accounting (not that I would have expected it to be). The “nothing” referred to “absence” which in mathematics is “zero” and thus the article muses on the origins of the “symbol”, “placeholder”, or shall we just say, “digit” zero. Anyhow, the short article concludes with a philosophical closing that “it takes real vision to see what isn’t there.”



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Stretching this to accounting, it also takes at least some imagination (if not real vision) to see where accounting is, or lurks, even though one might not think so, or one might not necessarily see it (easily). Would anyone, for example, think of risk management as accounting? Corporate governance? Organisational control? Commission trading? Impact investing? And so on. Of course, risk management, corporate governance, organisational control, etc. are not accounting *per se*, but they are hard to imagine without accounting. And that is what the Department of Accounting at LSE has always had a vision and passion about: how accounting is embedded into, and enables and shapes, and even makes possible, a broad range of organisational and institutional arrangements quintessential to the functioning of the economy and society that would be hard to imagine without it, not just as a technical matter, say, but also, and especially, as a means to establish *accountability*.

This edition of the Magazine, unsurprisingly, illustrates this in spades. We have features on the research, teaching and public engagement by colleagues in our department on risk

management, risk culture, and “riskwork”; measuring social impact; the state and effects of harmonising accounting standards globally; financial management in technology startups; government and sectoral regulation; the use of “facts” (numerical statements, “accounting”) in political discourse; “new” management accounting practices; commission trading in the 16th Century; and much more. Did anyone fail to see the accounting?

And we also have the usual honors, prizes, awards, publications, seminars, and other accomplishments of our students and faculty, a real delight to see in such abundance. Please have a look, and please partake, in whatever role, in the delivery or fruits of the department’s education, research, public engagement, and discourse of accounting—in everything it is and for everything it makes possible, but also everything it is being shaped by—because “Accounting Matters”.