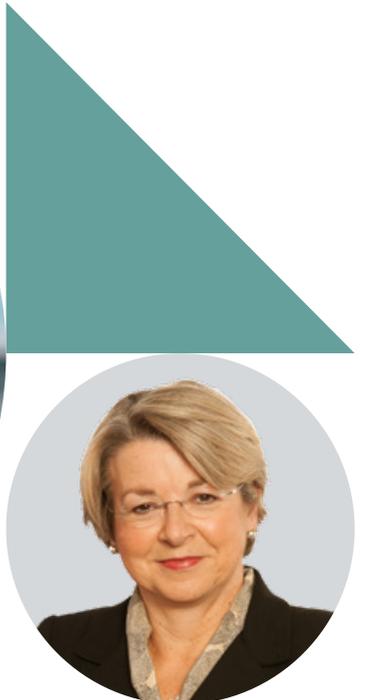


ALLEN & OVERY

Adapting to a new world

Alumni Yearbook 2021



Welcome to your 2021 Alumni Yearbook

A year when resilience and resourcefulness came to the fore to counter the worries and challenges of restrictions on movement, social distancing and life in general.

Although 2020 was ‘a year like no other’, 2021 hasn’t witnessed a rebound to the pre-pandemic normal. In fact, with health, business and travel uncertainties continuing to wash over the world, it’s understandable when we hear of friends and colleagues feeling disoriented and feeling that way ourselves.

Last year, we wrote about Allen & Overy’s overnight transition to a virtual law firm. This year, we can see that many positives have come out of this new way of working. On the whole, our people were well supported professionally and personally so they could make the most of the circumstances in which they found themselves and this allowed the business to continue with minimal interruption.

However, many of us have discovered the hard way that home working has its drawbacks. Without doubt, many of us long for a return to the office environment, for a range of reasons. But that leaves us with a challenge as the world – and consequently the way we work and live in our new environment – has fundamentally changed. How do we adjust to merge the best of the old and the best of the new into something that works for the business, our clients and our people?

The pandemic has caused A&O, along with the rest of the world, to face a unique crisis. There have been many initiatives to try not only to help our staff work from home but also, and equally as important, to help them feel connected and supported. A&O is a world-leading law firm and a successful business and the extent to which we’re able to help our staff, and society more generally, is inextricably linked to this position. We should never lose sight of that.

Covid-19 has undoubtedly had a profound effect on the way firms like A&O work. That’s one of the themes we explore in ‘Hybrid ways of working’ on pages 12-17. It’s definitely a work in progress whose ideas, initiatives and in-house workstreams dovetail with our focus on sustainability on a global scale, as explained in ‘The transition to a sustainable economy’ on pages 22-27. There will be challenges and there will need to be flexibility from all, as highlighted by Wim and Gareth on pages 4-11.

We also continue our reporting on the impact of diversity and inclusion (D&I) and social mobility work in A&O. A number of D&I networks are now established and are open to alumni. These include A&Out, Race & Ethnicity@A&O, the Society of East Asian Lawyers (SEAL), the U.S. Black and Latinx Affinity Group (BLAG), the

U.S. Asian Affinity Network (AAN), and the U.S. Women’s Committee. Details on all these groups can be found on the Alumni Network website benefits page. Alumni membership of the soon-to-be-launched A&O Social Mobility Network will also be possible.

Like so many things in life, social mobility is a journey, not a destination. We want everyone, regardless of their background, to be able to build a successful career and achieve their full potential at A&O. Progress has been made but we have a way to go, as we are reminded in ‘A busy year for social mobility work’ on pages 38-41.

As for our own Alumni Network offerings, it’s gratifying to see how pandemic considerations have spurred interesting new developments. We couldn’t meet face to face, so we decided to increase the number, size and content of the various digital communications sent out to members. Our virtual events included talks with David Morley, Carly Martin, Judith Gill QC, Sietze Hepkema, Shruti Ajitsaria and Tobias Greven; a careers workshop for alumni in seven jurisdictions who are now working in-house; trainee class reunions; a U.S. Law Group reunion; and ‘Alumni Week’, our series of 18 alumni-led events, which was attended by more than 600 members globally. If you missed any virtual events, you can watch recordings (go to the Alumni Network website events page for details).

“As we approach 2022, I hope that we’ll see a return to face-to-face gatherings and with it the joy of reconnecting with friends and former colleagues.”

All of this, and more, has taken place online, which means we’re reducing the number of live meetings whilst trying to maintain personal contact. It’s so much easier working with people when you’ve met them and formed a bond. The initiatives that we see offices around the world taking to encourage interpersonal interactions seem tailor-made for a global firm like A&O.

All the same, in 2022 we’re planning to arrange a number of in-person events where you can meet old friends and celebrate milestones, both personal and business. Already, as 2021 draws to a close, we’re seeing a small-scale return of in-person events such as trainee class reunions limited to 20 people. In November, we welcomed 50 alumni to a reception in our Prague office. It was a great opportunity to reconnect with former colleagues and friends, and to showcase our newly built premises at the Missouri Park building located in the heart of the Karlín district.

In 2022, we intend to host the London Retirees Summer Party, the Former London Partners and Directors Reception and a Global Alumni Reunion.

When I became co-chair of the Alumni Network, my old friend Alex Pease told me the Alumni team was very good, experienced and a pleasure to work with. If that sounded too good to be true, it was actually an understatement. Our core team of Stella Ekkeshis, Jenny Enever and Joanna Hughes deserve all the credit and I hope my admiration and appreciation for them is widely shared by all alumni. I’d like to thank Pauline McFerran for her eight years of service

in our team. She left A&O in July to move from Belfast to London to take on a new role and I wish her all the very best. I’d also like to welcome Cara McKinstry into the team. Cara joined us in August as our new Alumni Assistant based in Belfast.

A further recognition of their efforts came when our flagship publication, the Alumni Yearbook, was cited by the Institute of Internal Communication in its 2020 national awards programme as the ‘Best channel for members/ stakeholders’ – the second time the team has won this award. The judges called it “a great submission with clear objectives around creating ambassadors for the organisation”. “It was great to see the Alumni Network identifying content of value as part of the planning,” they said, adding they “loved the approach taken and the skills used.” Well done, team!

As we approach 2022, I hope that we’ll see a return to face-to-face gatherings and with it the joy of reconnecting with friends and former colleagues.

Meanwhile, I hope you enjoy this year’s edition of our yearbook.

With best wishes,

Boyan Wells
Co-chair, Alumni Network





“We want to retain the benefits of the flexibility we’ve adopted since the pandemic, but ensure that we don’t lose the benefits of working together in person.”

Wim Dejonghe, Senior Partner



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Emerging stronger and better from the Covid-19 crisis

In April 2021, Wim Dejonghe and Gareth Price met in person for the first time since becoming senior and managing partner – almost a year into their term together. With the Covid-19 crisis continuing to impact businesses throughout 2021, they assess A&O's response and what lies ahead.



Q: The past 18 months have been turbulent – how do you reflect on that period for A&O?

Gareth: We started FY21 back in May 2020 hoping for more certainty, but instead we got prolonged uncertainty as the pandemic continued.

Wim and I had spent time at the start of our term together stepping back to think about who we are as a business and where we're going – our purpose and vision – and putting in place broad strategic pillars to help guide our decision-making. The financial performance we achieved – client revenue up 5% to GBP1.77 billion and profit before tax up 19% to GBP822 million – is a consequence of finding the right balance across the three pillars of our purpose: clients, people and society. That's what I'm most proud of this year.

Wim: The past 18 months have certainly tested us. In May 2020 markets were still turbulent so we maintained a relatively cautious approach – focusing on cash preservation, rolling out virtual working practices and taking necessary short-term decisions – until we could better see where the markets were headed. That was not so much driven by concerns for the financial stability of our business, but was more about our partners' determination to keep our teams together.

But the markets in the second half of the financial year were astonishing: by the end of it, every one of our transactional and disputes practices had seen revenues increase on the previous year and we delivered a strong performance across all regions, in particular the UK, Europe and the U.S.

Gareth: The drop in busyness over the first few months of FY21 was completely wiped away. We've recovered in a way that nobody would have predicted back then and have been able to 'accelerate out of a corner', as Wim puts it, because of our strong belief in a high-performance business model built on exceptional people and exceptional client service.

Q: How would you summarise your progress against strategic priorities?

Wim: Despite the crisis, our longer-term strategic priorities haven't changed. We're still focused on building our capabilities in important markets such as the U.S., Germany and China, as well as continuing to invest in technology both on the legal tech side for us as a business and for our clients, and also our global technology sector.

The U.S. has been a real success story in 2021. We've opened two offices in California – LA and Silicon Valley – and announced the opening of a third in

San Francisco, which are a real boost to our tech sector capabilities. We've grown by 35 partners overall since March 2020 – 30 lateral hires and five internal partner promotions – which is fantastic.

Driving more action on diversity and inclusion (D&I) continues to be a big priority across our business too, as does reducing our carbon footprint. These are issues that our people, clients and, frankly, wider society take very seriously, which allows us to push harder on them.

Gareth: Both D&I and carbon footprint priorities link in with our wider focus on sustainability and ESG (environmental, social and governance) goals. In some senses, ESG is a bit like digitalisation in that it affects everything we're doing internally and with clients. It's one of the biggest issues for corporate boards right now and presents a lot of opportunities.



“Driving more action on diversity and inclusion (D&I) continues to be a big priority across our business too, as does reducing our carbon footprint. These are issues that our people, clients and, frankly, wider society take very seriously.”

Wim Dejonghe

Q: Tell us about the carbon footprint target you have set.

Wim: We've worked with an expert to conduct a full analysis of our impact and set ourselves a target of a 50% reduction in absolute annual global carbon emissions by 2030, from a base year of 2019, before the pandemic started.

This is independently assessed and approved by the Science-Based Targets initiative, which means it's consistent with the most ambitious goals of the Paris Agreement.

Gareth: Within this, air travel is an obvious area to look at as it accounts for more emissions than the combined electricity and gas consumption in our buildings. We don't want to stop people getting together completely – connectivity is a key enabler of our business – but we know now that a lot of meetings we would previously have flown to can be done virtually just as effectively.

We'll also be reviewing office space around the world as we expect many people to continue working from home for some time each week. This is a big piece of work for us but one that will bring major benefits.

Q: With the added pressures of the pandemic, how are you addressing people's wellbeing?

Gareth: This has been an incredibly hard time for a lot of people – dealing with isolation, separation from family and friends, going in and out of lockdowns, home-schooling children, working from laptops in small spaces – so it's been more important than ever to stay close and understand what people need. Initially, that was practical support to ensure everybody had the right equipment to work remotely, but as the crisis has continued it's become more about keeping people connected and protecting their mental and physical wellbeing.

Wim: Our network of Mental Health Advocates across the firm has really helped us to spot issues and embed the principles of the Mindful Business Charter we've signed up to.

Gareth and I normally have a lot of informal contact with colleagues when we visit offices, but moving to a virtual environment removes that and, if you're not careful, reduces contact to a series of one-hour meetings, so you lose the human connection. Our feeling was that

to keep people connected we had to set the tone from the top. I wrote a monthly blog to share my own experiences, including recovering from a serious bike accident, and received so many responses from people sharing their stories too, which was wonderful but also showed how much some were struggling.

Gareth: When you're not getting together in person, sometimes you can't see where the problems are. But we felt that if you could see the most senior person in the firm sharing personal challenges, you might do the same, and then all of a sudden you don't feel quite so alone with some of your challenges.



“If you could see the most senior person in the firm sharing personal challenges, you might do the same, and then all of a sudden you don't feel quite so alone with some of your challenges.”

Gareth Price

Q: How have you stayed connected to our alumni community throughout the pandemic?

Gareth: We really hoped our face-to-face events would start up again in 2021, especially our Global Alumni Reunion, but it just hasn't been possible.

We've been able to resume some small events but the focus has again been on finding ways to stay connected with our alumni community virtually. We hosted our first Alumni Week in November: a takeover by alumni leading a whole range of events and sessions with authors, historians, and health and wellbeing experts. The variety of things our alumni are doing is amazing.

We've also seen an increased interest in our mentoring programme that pairs A&O staff and partners with alumni, which has given us another way to support people during the pandemic. We've expanded the programme and now have A&O and alumni mentors in 16 locations around the world.

Q: Another priority you mentioned is D&I - what progress have you made and what is your focus going forward?

Wim: The first thing to say is that I don't believe any organisation in today's world can sustain its success without being diverse and inclusive. A huge amount of work is going on across our business on this, so this year we launched All In, which is our commitment to creating an inclusive environment that celebrates and embraces difference.

Progress can appear slow, but I see a real change in that diversity is now part of every talent discussion. That's how, long term, we will achieve the diverse partnership and organisation we want.

Different offices have different challenges but we're pushing at a very granular level for teams to work as hard as they can.

The thing that links everything together is inclusion: that's where the main challenge is and it's why we need to increase our understanding, remove unconscious bias and have more open conversations.

It requires cultural change, which means each of us must be conscious of the impact we have on those around us. It's not something that happens overnight but I see real commitment to this.

Gareth: When you join a global firm, your background and your experiences prepare you in different ways. Part of that could be your social background, your race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or disability. The point is, we have to be an organisation that's open to everyone and celebrates all the differences people bring. That's what makes us relevant and innovative and it's the belief behind All In.

Wim: In terms of priority areas, we're still very focused on race and ethnicity. We did a big review of our data in London and were the first firm to publish what's known as 'ethnicity stay gap' figures, which highlight the issue in our profession of retaining ethnic minority, and particularly black, lawyers who leave their firms on average earlier than their white counterparts. We've now set targets for recruitment and progression to tackle this.

Internationally, we've had colleagues sharing their stories to build a better understanding and to encourage more conversations about race. We should be extremely grateful to these colleagues, actually, because it's not easy to tell your story in front of your peers or indeed your bosses.

In terms of gender, we're continuing to make progress – 45% of partner promotions in 2020 were women and this year it was 33% – so we've achieved our target of having at least 30% women in our partnership candidate pool by 2021. But that was never the end goal, so we're looking again at targets for gender.

Gareth: One area we're talking more about is the importance of allyship for minority groups. For our LGBTQ+ community, for example, we want A&O to be a supportive place to be openly 'out' because, for some, life outside of work is not. Ensuring visible and vocal support through active allyship is therefore crucial, particularly during lockdowns, so we've been working to show what that looks like. Our new global disability network, AccessAbility, is playing an important role in that too.

Socio-economic background is also a growing area of focus and something I personally feel strongly about, particularly as it often compounds other barriers within our profession. I was invited to join the advisory board to the independent task force commissioned by the UK government and run by the City of London Corporation, which aims to improve socio-economic diversity at senior levels in financial and professional services across the UK [see pages 38-41]. But it's by no means an issue confined to the UK: helping those with potential rather than the most polished individuals shine through and progress is a challenge every country faces. I'm also delighted to see that the focus of our new global charity partnership is helping young people break out of cycles of deprivation [see pages 52-53].

“A&O will always be a people business, but one that’s increasingly powered by technology. It’s the future of law.”

Gareth Price



Q: On that subject, what have been your other pro bono and community investment achievements this year?

Wim: We concluded our global charity partnership with Hope and Homes for Children in July, having extended it to continue our support during the pandemic. We contributed GBP2.3m overall – which is remarkable given that we couldn’t run our normal programme of fundraising events for much of the time – which enabled the charity to reach 136,000 at-risk children in 2020 alone. That was a record for it [see pages 54-55].

Gareth: It’s also remarkable that our pro bono hours increased by 11% this financial year to nearly 49,000. It says a lot about the people we have here that even during a difficult period they made

more time to support others. We’ve also recently changed our policy to ensure that every hour of legal pro bono work now counts as chargeable time for our lawyers, which we hope will encourage more involvement. It’s such valuable experience for everybody to gain.

Q: Advanced Delivery & Solutions has been a big focus for A&O in recent years. What’s new?

Gareth: One thing we’ve taken from the past 18 months is that fundamentally A&O will always be a people business, but one that’s increasingly powered by technology. It’s the future of law.

For me, Fuse continues to be one of the most exciting areas of our business. It’s our innovation hub where we provide

an environment for cohort members, clients and our lawyers to combine world-class legal analysis with the best technology. We brought in a new cohort of 11 start-up companies from around the world in May; they’re developing solutions to address issues such as ESG and cryptocurrency compliance.

A&O Belfast is also a great model for providing specialist support and knowledge to clients, so we’re looking at expanding that to other parts of the world to provide 24/7 coverage. I think clients have also found Peerpoint very valuable in offering quality contract lawyers at a time when businesses are dealing with unprecedented and complex staffing needs [see pages 46-51].

Q: What impact has Brexit had on A&O's business?

Wim: So far, very little. The volume of purely UK-related work we do is quite small: London is more about English law governing global transactions. Across our Middle East, Asia and continental Europe practices a lot of work is under English law – for example, real estate finance, even when the assets are in Spain or Germany – so Brexit has not impacted that for now, but the question of the longer-term impact remains to be seen.

Q: What does the next 12 months look like as people return to the office?

Wim: I think it will take time to settle into a new 'normal', but my personal view is that offices will become more collaborative spaces where people come to work together rather than work individually – not only in the legal industry but more broadly, in part driven by environmental objectives.

We want to retain the benefits of the flexibility we've adopted since the pandemic, but ensure that we don't lose the benefits of working together in person. We expect to see 40% of work done remotely and teams will agree how best to organise themselves in the way that's most effective for their clients and the team.

Gareth: We all possess, sometimes without knowing it, tacit knowledge that's vital to the performance of the business. Sharing this non-codified knowledge between colleagues – and indeed generations – is one of the key reasons the office will always be at the heart of A&O.

People here really know each other; we know each other's qualities as well as technical abilities, and that massively benefits clients. Learning and development is crucial for younger team members but it's a lifelong experience for everyone, so we do need our people to be in the office for some of the time to maintain that knowledge transfer, collaboration and relationship-building.



“We want to retain the benefits of the flexibility we've adopted since the pandemic, but ensure that we don't lose the benefits of working together in person.”

Wim Dejonghe

Q: Finally, as the year draws to a close, what are your reflections?

Wim: We want to keep the best of what we've learned from this crisis, much of which has been a greater empathy for the different priorities and challenges people face, as we've seen into each other's lives more than ever, and trust that our people can balance the priorities of work and home life in ways that suit them.

We've come through this in a strong position entirely because of the commitment of our people, both to each other and to our clients. For that, we're immensely grateful and proud, and on a personal level, I'm so looking forward to being able to engage more with people again.

Gareth: I agree. I want every person who walks through the door of A&O and every client that works with us to feel that sense of pride along with a sense of belonging. That's really important to me as we move forward.

This pandemic has led us all to reflect on our own outlooks and aspirations and what we truly value in our lives. One of the things I will appreciate most is the importance of connectivity and interaction – almost an implicit reliance on one another. That, I think, will inform business and politics for generations to come.



Wim Dejonghe
Senior Partner
A&O: 2001-present



Gareth Price
Managing Partner
A&O: 1994-present





“We’ve come through this in a strong position entirely because of the commitment of our people, both to each other and to our clients. For that, we’re immensely grateful and proud.”

Wim Dejonghe

Hybrid ways of working: a new normal





Covid-19 has demonstrated that changes to how we work could make lives easier as well as benefitting productivity. Can we merge the best of yesterday and today's practices for a new tomorrow?

If the Covid-19 lockdown has shown one thing, it's that it's easier to get out of the office and work from home than to get back into the office.

That's the view of Patricia Rogers, Chief Operating Officer of IT & Shared Services, who says A&O has done an "amazing amount of work in a sustained fashion" looking after its people through this difficult period.

The 16 months up to July 2021 did a lot to progress the culture of remote and flexible working across A&O; with the return to some offices in September 2021 came the opportunity to preserve the best of that experience.

In many ways, the pandemic accelerated changes that were already happening at A&O with, for example, the use of

"seamless" technology and initiatives such as iFlex flexible working arrangements.

It's a work in progress, but with internal research showing that hybrid arrangements encompassing office and remote working are beneficial to both A&O and the individual, momentum is building, with workstreams looking closely at what's best for individuals, A&O and our clients.

Patricia says experience underlined the need "to structure the return to office working very carefully; certain aspects needed to be addressed.

"When we discussed what these aspects were – how and where we work, the tools we need to carry out our work, maintaining security and confidentiality – they fell neatly into six categories, which gave us our workstreams."

They are:

- Employee life cycle;
- Place;
- Technology;
- BD & CRM – Client engagement;
- Client confidentiality and data security; and
- Physical security.

Patricia points out this framework was designed for the UK offices but would be "eminently usable" should other offices choose to use it. "All our people are trying to move in the same direction in respect of hybrid working."

Policies fit for purpose

‘Employee life cycle’, managed by Global HR Director, Sasha Hardman, is about “how we bring hybrid working to life”. It has been looking at policies to make sure they’re fit for purpose in the new working environment, to change them if necessary, and to make sure people managers have the guidance and tools they need. Sasha says: “Working in a hybrid way will be challenging.”

Paul King, Head of Hospitality Services, and Rachel Labo, Business Senior Manager, manage the second stream, ‘Place’, which aims to make sure the firm’s offices are supporting the new hybrid way of working and which supports the firm’s sustainability objective.

Rachel says the team is planning to build an experimental space within the London office for partners and staff to trial different ways of working. Data and feedback from this ‘Future Space’, which will go live in summer 2022, will inform space planning for the future.

Patricia says Belfast provides a good case study for the creative use of space. The office had just completed an 18-month project to realign its office space to accommodate an “agile” working environment prior to the pandemic. Surveys before lockdown showed it was working as hoped, and made moving into lockdown “very simple”, she says. “From a practical perspective, getting back will be easy as well.”

Efficiency is a watchword for the ‘Technology’ workstream, managed by Simon Wagstaff, Global Head Tech Services and Eric Theboul, IT Head, Europe and Africa. The key element, says Simon, is that “we should all be able to have a seamless working experience wherever we are”.

The same must be true for clients. Katharine Taylor, Global Head of FIG, managing the ‘BD & CRM’ workstream,

says the focus is on being “flexible and adaptable for our clients – the client experience must be seamless”.

How close is this to happening? “Close,” says Patricia, “but technology is always evolving – you solve one problem and something new will pop up.”

Challenge lies in security

Technology impacts the ‘Client confidentiality and data security’ workstream, where Chief Information Officer Mark Jones is directing efforts focused on cybersecurity. The world expects more to be done electronically, and procedures such as signing documents are getting better and better. The challenge lies in ensuring client – and our own – data remains secure when people are working from myriad locations, using all systems.

A final workstream, managed by Ed Clark, is looking into the ‘Physical security’ of our London office, whose use is expected to change as hybrid working evolves.

“In a nutshell,” says Patricia, “what we’re trying to do is address how employees work, giving them the tools, whether HR or technology, to do their jobs and engage with clients in a way that suits them best while making sure data remains secure.”

“Our workstreams are evolving; I think they address all the right things and are being put to the test as we have re-occupancy of our buildings.”

Redefining success

A&O people, like so many in professional services, are increasingly choosing to structure careers to better suit their lives, redefining success and using flexibility to find a better work/life balance.

As Sasha Hardman notes, time in the office is important “in order for teams to be cohesive and for people to learn and develop” because everyone has a responsibility to help each other. A&O is leaning toward a hybrid arrangement of time in and out of the office on a 60:40 ratio.

“Trust underpins this kind of working arrangement,” says Sasha. “We know we ask a lot of our people, so in return we have to trust them to deliver. People have different styles of working and priorities change, so there has to be give and take.”

Agile and flexible working are two points on a common scale. “Agile is the informal end,” says Sasha, where, on an ad hoc basis, people have flexibility within their working hours to respond to whatever is going on in their lives.

Flexible working, at the more formal end of the scale, allows for people to work fewer days each week, for example, or to take extra annual leave, perhaps during school holidays.

But it’s not just for parents, Sasha says, and not just for lawyers. “We’ve had examples of an associate taking time out to train for the Paralympic Games, and people having flexibility to study something completely different – whatever the motivation, if it’s something we can make work on both sides, then let’s have a discussion about it.”

Partner Denise Gibson takes Januarys off through an arrangement to build in more downtime across the year. “It’s a quieter month for my practice and means that, while my children are pre-school age, we can get back to Australia to spend time with family. Once my kids start school, I’ll think about the next solution. What works for people will change at different stages of life.”

There are considerations, however, about the right time to make such arrangements work.

As Sasha points out, during the junior stages of careers, learning, developing technical skills and building networks are all crucial, so it's important to consider the impact of hybrid and other working arrangements.

"It doesn't mean it's impossible, but in any role the key is to think carefully about what will work for you, your team and your broader career."

It's also important to remember that these arrangements don't have to be long term. "Life changes and careers change – the important thing is to ensure lines of communication are open and to be honest on both sides about how things are going."

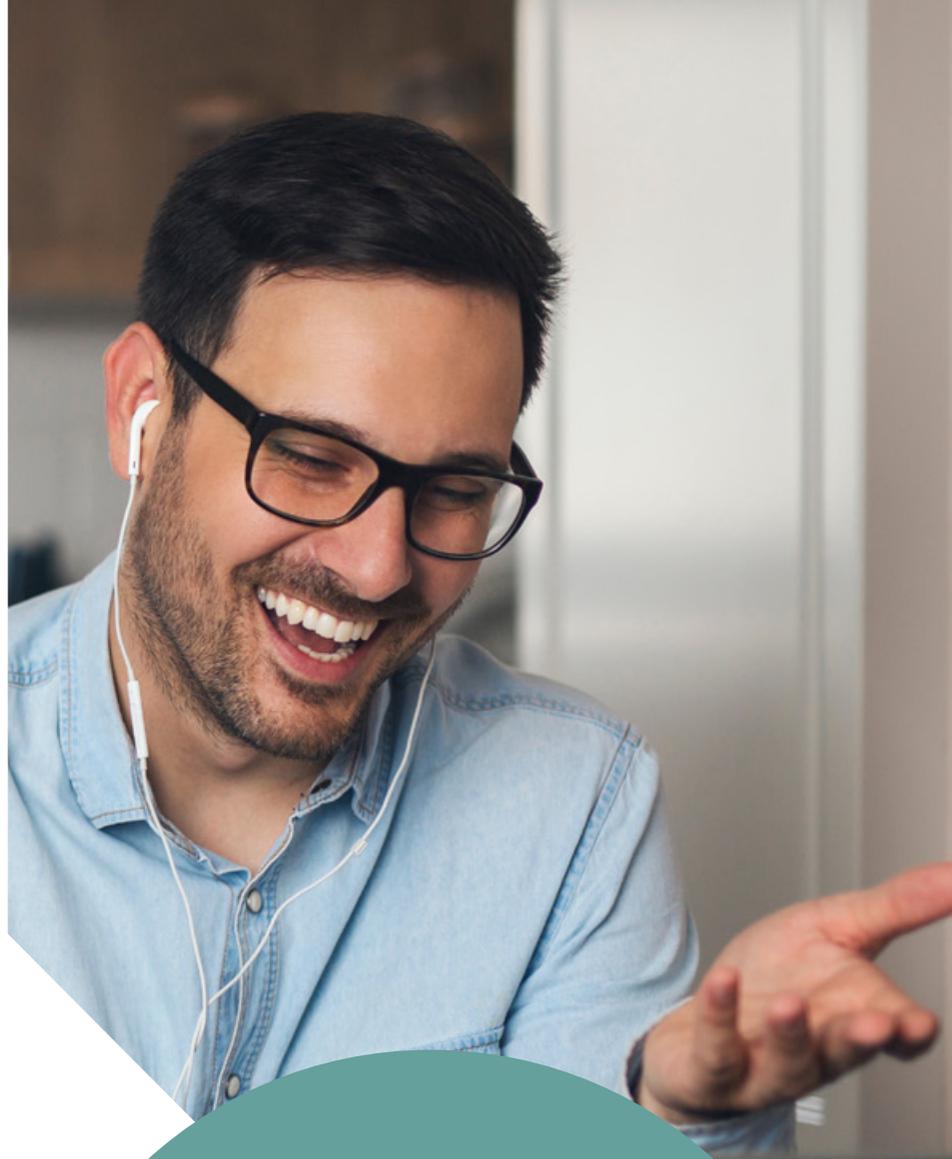
"Joy of seeing each other"

Senior Partner Wim Dejonghe has no doubt about "the huge benefits that come from the simple but very important joy of seeing each other and being together in the office." Without the office, he observes, "some of the fun has gone out of work."

Writing in blog posts, he said: "In the last 12 months we've had to learn a whole new range of habits – and have done so with remarkable success. Now we have the chance to find a middle road, combining the best of the old and the best of the new."

He warned that adopting hybrid working "will be tricky at times." Arrangements will differ office to office [see pages 16-17], based on local laws, customs and ways of living as well as ensuring we can respond to our clients' needs.

"If we are careful and clever about it, we can devise a new way of working that will foster greater and more effective collaboration while helping to make A&O the diverse and inclusive place we all want it to be as well as maintaining its position as one of the world's leading law firms."



“We know we ask a lot of our people, so in return we have to trust them to deliver.”

Sasha Hardman

Around the A&O network, offices rose to the lockdown challenge of maintaining some of the buzz, inspiration and energy of the office, and looking after colleagues' health and wellbeing.



Amsterdam's innovative talk show proves a hit

Amsterdam called its internal engagement campaign Working Apart Together (WAT). Launched in October 2020, it included surprise gift deliveries, interactive group activities, a newsletter and a popular monthly talk show.

The 45-minute lunchtime programme, presented live from the Amsterdam office, invites guests to introduce business issues and topics of interest. Managing partner Justin Steer and senior partner Brechje van der Velden are strong supporters, and alternate as co-host, alongside Michele Zwarts, senior manager in Communications and PR.

"The focus is on promoting A&O's culture, human connection and enforcing a sense of pride in the firm," says Dominique Van Dreven. "Feedback has been so positive that the talk shows look set to continue post-Covid."

The talk show format has been successfully applied to external webinars, client events and explainer videos on issues such as data protection and hostile takeover defence.

Madrid's virtual seminars a hit with clients

Good communication was key to A&O Madrid's "reinventing ourselves" successfully. Externally, the virtual seminars of the A&O University for clients proved a success. Rather than holding sessions in the auditorium, as envisaged when the university was created, it went online, starting with sessions on arbitration in June 2020, corporate in October 2020, banking in March 2021, and restructuring at a later date.

Internally, the A&O Life weekly newsletter distributed through the first half of 2020 helped hold the team together. "The cover was always a picture of one

of us at home," says Ana Isabel Delgado, marketing manager. For health and wellbeing, the office offered virtual training and "Smart running" guided by professional personal trainers.

While the annual alumni event was not possible this year, Madrid sent its alumni reusable water bottles to reinforce the message that keeping in touch with them was as essential as water itself.

Bratislava colleagues adapt to hybrid model

To accommodate hybrid working, Bratislava carried out a partial redesign, which involved converting some offices to a shared desk arrangement, and creating collaboration spaces. Eva Sednickova, HR and office manager, says colleagues "adapted to the new situation" of virtual internal and client meetings. "We also held our first virtual hearing which took two weeks."

New space age in New York and LA

The new Los Angeles office opened in June 2021 with space for all 12 people to work safely. Meanwhile, the New York office is undergoing reconfiguration to make it fit for the future as our people return to a mix of office-based and home-based working.

"The space is still configured to suit partner/PA ratios of years ago," says Patricia Meinen, Head of Business Services, "and 40% of colleagues also share offices." The main considerations for the renovations were to be prepared for the future, should another variant cause problems, to allow for social distancing and to use the space more efficiently.

Jakarta makes team wellbeing a priority

A number of initiatives at the Jakarta office were aimed at supporting the wellbeing of our people in this new working world. As the end of 2021 approached, colleagues remained in full work-from-home mode. Project manager Abdelon Salimi says a return to the office might start in early 2022, on a two-group rotation system.

Counselling was extended to cover not only career-related matters but also specialised support in personal wellbeing. From July, Covid-19 Home Services treatment has been available for Jakarta colleagues and their families "to give our employees peace of mind".

"We launched an employee recognition platform to sustain the culture of giving recognition for a job well done – particularly critical in this time of virtual working," says Abdelon.



Thriving in a world of constant change

People get itchy feet and change jobs; with A&O alumna April Rinne, it's more like an itchy mind because she wants to change conventional thinking and make the world a better place.

Every four years or so, says April Rinne, "something shifts"; she spots a new trend, grasps its potential and looks for a way to make things happen.

So far, this restless urge – besides taking her to more than 100 countries – has led her from microfinance to strategies for dealing with constant change, dipping into the Sustainable Development Goals, the sharing economy and the future of work along the way.

She's been recognised by the World Economic Forum as a Young Global Leader, and *Forbes* magazine named her in its list of 50 Leading Female Futurists. She advises organisations large and small around the world.

In 2021, she added 'author' to her personal descriptors after publishing *Flux: 8 Superpowers for Thriving in Constant Change*. With multiple translations in the offing – four so far (Spanish, Chinese, Russian and Norwegian) and several others in the works – sales of her book suggest it is on its way to becoming an influential reference for the post-Covid-19 world.

“My career has never been about me. It's about how I can serve and help create a better tomorrow for humanity.”



Encouraged by A&O partners

A&O entered April's story – and vice versa – in 2003 when U.S. Law Group partners Jeff Golden and Chris Bernard encouraged her as a young associate to pursue microfinance: the provision of small loans and savings products to the economically active poor. April had seen microfinance work first-hand as a policy analyst for Women's World Banking and in her travels throughout the developing world.

What attracted her to A&O was what she saw as the firm's pioneering spirit. A&O had "people scattered all over the world, doing wonderful things". Jeff and Chris saw the long-term value of an approach to microfinance that blended corporate and pro bono models, and since the mid-2000s, she says, "there's been an explosion in impact investment and 'financial + social returns' activity."

In 2008, the Gates Foundation invited her to advise on access to finance for clean water and safe sanitation, its so-called 'taps and toilets' project and an example of the multiple interlinkages in such initiatives.

April offers one insight: "If you want to keep girls in school, you don't merely need to invest in books and tuition: you need to install a toilet.

"The moment girls hit puberty, they start leaving school. The overwhelming majority of schools [in developing countries] don't have toilets – so girls stay home a few days a month. Eventually they get too far behind to catch up."

Focus on water and sanitation

A year later, in 2009, she became global director of WaterCredit at Water.org, one of the world's largest water and sanitation non-profits. She led its efforts for four years, overseeing teams – and in many cases building them from the ground up – in as far-flung locations as India, Cambodia, Kenya and Peru.

Around that time, the smartphone "showed up", as she puts it. This was a game-changer. She'd been involved in mobile banking innovation – helping economically active poor people access finance – but smartphones took this access to a new level: access to physical goods, expertise, space, and more. This also pointed April in a new direction: the sharing economy.

'Access over ownership' is the sharing economy's mantra. The concept is to build communities by sharing and using resources more effectively and sustainably. Shared ownership helps people save money and earn income in new ways.

"I thought there was something really big here. It had potential everywhere. How do I get involved?"

She knew the skills she was developing were transferable, but her time as a lawyer was the credential that carried her furthest – to the World Economic Forum.

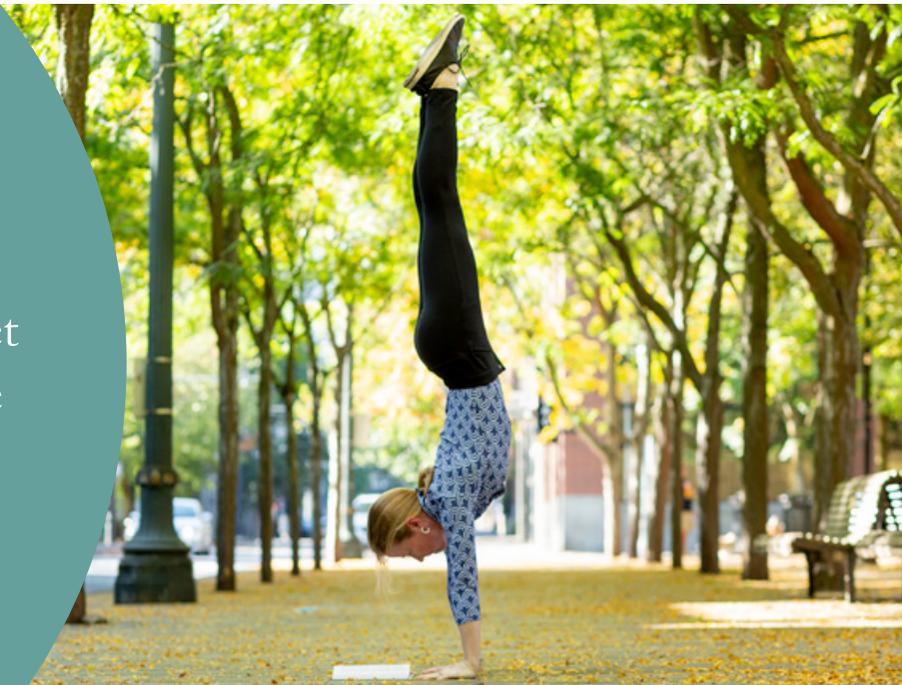
She went to Davos in 2013 to advocate for the sharing economy. "Most leaders there looked askance," she recalls, although many now embrace the concept.

For her part, April saw the power of something that gave people the ability to access what they needed, when they needed it. She says: "Ownership underpins our structures and systems, but it can lead to isolation from both a legal and human perspective. Nobody was prepared for this change; nobody was speaking that language."

Independence and public speaking

After four years in global development, and encouraged by her husband, Jerry, she joined the Collaborative Lab, a consultancy focused on the sharing economy, as Chief Strategy Officer. Leading its Shareable Cities practice, she "learned a lot about what works and what doesn't". After a year, it was time to branch out on her own.

"Right now we're in the early stages of a big shift. A lot of people are saying the world they were told they'd get to live in doesn't align with the world they actually inhabit."



That was in 2014. Since then, April Worldwide has taken her alongside and into an astonishing variety of organisations; among them she names Airbnb, Intuit, Nike, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and “lots of governments”, which she has advised on topics such as inclusive business, the sharing and collaborative economy, the future of work, sustainable development, cities and global expansion.

Part of the “great joy of independence” has been her discovery of public speaking. She’s in demand as a conference keynote speaker and is featured in numerous online videos, including the well-known TEDx series of ‘ideas worth spreading’.

And now there is writing and ‘flux’. It’s a good story.

April had long been aware of how learning to deal with constant change plays out at the individual, organisational and societal levels. Around 2015, she started thinking about it as a book.

Her way of seeing the world developed into what she calls a “flux mindset” – consistently seeing opportunities in change – and “flux superpowers” which she describes in her book (see sidebar). “I landed on these eight after many months of contemplation. I’m grateful to say I haven’t found number nine yet!”

As she sees it, a lot of organisations and individuals struggle with change and finding their place or role in an uncertain future. This relationship to change is at the core of her book and what sets it apart from others focused on change management or lifestyle strategies, though she acknowledges she’s “walking a fine line” between business/leadership and lifestyle.

There’s a strategic business-oriented element to her book, she says, but it has to start with individual self-awareness. “Understanding this – what drives you, what delights you, what scares the daylight out of you – is one of the most important things we can do.”

Big shift in expectations

Key to the theory of flux is what April calls our script. She says: “Everyone has a script. It’s the norms, narratives and stories that guide our lives. Our script gives us a framework for the world that we expect to live in.

“Right now we’re in the early stages of a big shift. A lot of people are saying the world they were told they’d get to live in doesn’t align with the world they actually inhabit.

“What we need is a new script that’s fit for a world of flux.”

A flux mindset, she says, is the ability to consistently see change – good and bad, welcome or not – as an opportunity for growth. “Opening a flux mindset is acknowledging that your relationship to change could improve.

“I’ve never met anyone who has change all figured out.”

And just in case anyone who knows April’s propensity for ‘kicking up’ is wondering, she’s still doing handstands in the most exotic and unexpected places she finds on her travels. Handstands have changed her perspective on the world, she says. “The same situation looks totally different when you’re upside-down.”

It’s also a helpful analogy for everyday life because “some things look a lot better that way.”

Reconnect with April Rinne at allenoverly.com/alumni.



April Rinne

Founder & Chief
Change Navigator
at April Worldwide,
2014-present
A&O: 2004-2006

‘Continuous change and fluidity’

Flux, April tells readers, is both noun and verb; as a noun it means ‘continuous change’, and as a verb it means ‘to learn to become fluid’. Her book suggests both are key to coping with the slings and arrows of modern life.

April offers insights into what she calls a flux mindset and the eight ‘superpowers’ that “help you live our life with hope rather than fear, calm rather than anxiety, and curiosity rather than paralysis”. They are:

- Run slower: to thrive in a fastpaced world, slow your own pace
- See what’s invisible: when the future is uncertain, concentrate on what you can’t see rather than what you can
- Get lost: this is how you find your way in the landscape of change
- Start with trust: assume good intent even when trust seems broken
- Know your ‘enough’: in a world relentlessly striving for more, know when your cup is full
- Create your portfolio career: treat your career as a portfolio to curate rather than a path to pursue
- Be all the more human (and serve other humans): use your humanity to help others
- Let go of the future: understand what you can and can’t control to unleash your best self

On the whole, we lack the vocabulary to talk about the constant, ever faster pace of change that many people feel, she says. “Of course, simply defining a problem doesn’t solve it, but it’s hard to surface a meaningful conversation about something if we don’t even have the right words.”

That’s something April’s book sets out to correct as it “serves to raise awareness and spark discussions about learning to flux, together”.

The transition to a sustainable economy: why it is relevant to everyone

As the world grapples with climate change and natural system degradation and their implications for life on earth, A&O has a key role to play in helping put sustainability at the core of all client decision-making.

The thing about humans, says Kelly Sporn, senior policy advisor in A&O's Environment, Climate and Regulatory Law Group, is "we're not good at looking down the road. We're geared to a short-termist point of view."

"With the challenges posed by climate change, biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, we need to act now to prevent catastrophic consequences in the future."

Until relatively recently, actions addressing ESG (environment, social and governance) and sustainability tended to be seen in many quarters as a corporate social responsibility issue. "That is changing," says Kelly.

Companies now have to navigate a "complex plethora of sustainability developments" from every direction – from new regulations and soft policy requirements, to market-led changes, investor demands and stakeholder engagement. Along with a raft of internal experts, Kelly works with clients from a variety of sectors and geographies to help them do just that.

The term 'ESG' has been around for more than a decade. It was coined in 2005 by the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative (UNEP FI) in its 'Who cares wins' report that encouraged investment in strategies with non-financial objectives. "It was effectively a product label," says Kelly.

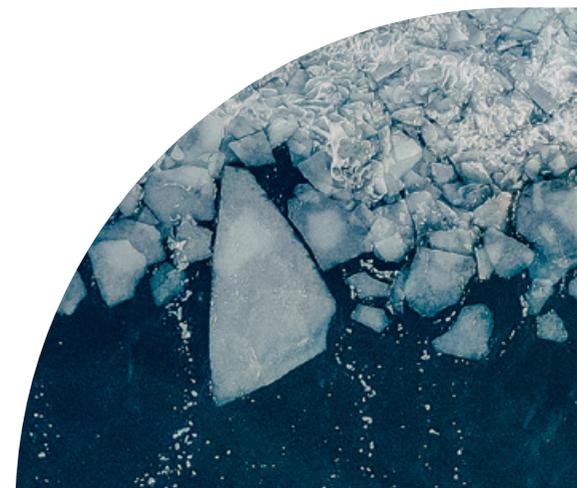
"For many, ESG has related to an ethical choice – what's good for the broader community, the planet and society – rather than being focused on financial returns."

In recent years, the policy debate has moved from a collection of non-financial objectives to focusing on specific sustainability goals. The shift was galvanised at COP 21 in 2015 by the adoption of the Paris Agreement, which aims to limit average global warming to no more than two degrees, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which broadened the focus to other environmental issues and social issues.

The concept of climate financial risk was highlighted by the establishment of the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD).

It drew attention to the financial risks arising from increased physical risks caused by climate change, and the risks related to the transition to a decarbonised policy.

An example of climate financial risk can be seen with a house that is built on land increasingly subject to flooding due to changes in climate and extreme weather. This physical risk will translate into credit risk for the bank that is using the house as security for a home loan; it may also make insurance unfeasible for insurers. "TCFD has recast the narrative on climate change as a systemic risk to our economy," says Kelly.





“For many, ESG has related to an ethical choice – what’s good for the broader community, the planet and society – rather than being focused on financial returns.”

Kelly Sporn

Beyond climate change

The policy focus has centred on climate action following the Paris Agreement, particularly since a report by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicated that we have to make significant emissions cuts by 2030 in order to meet the Paris targets.

But climate change is not the only strand to sustainability. “Biodiversity loss and natural system degradation is occurring at an unprecedented rate,” says Kelly, “with animal species declining by more than 60% on average since 1970 and more than 75% of land being impacted by human expansion.”

The topic has been of concern for some time, and the equivalent to COP 26 for biodiversity, CBD COP 15, was held in China in October 2021. Events such as Covid-19 are throwing sharper focus on the issue, with evidence of a link between the loss of biodiversity and climate change and a rise in pandemics.

The social aspect of ESG constitutes a set of objectives in their own right, such as gender equality, decent work and quality education, but its relationship to the climate and environmental goals means the transition to net zero will affect how our whole economy works.

“If you don’t take into account the social impact, you potentially risk having not only stranded assets but stranded communities.”

All of this has to be underpinned by good governance: accountable, transparent and embodying stewardship. “Governance is shifting from being an objective in its own right to something broader underpinning environmental and social objectives,” Kelly says.





“Those institutions that can get their arms around the requirements are likely to benefit from the opportunities that will flow from the changes and we need to be suitably immersed in the technical detail of the requirements to help clients spot those opportunities.”

Kate Sumpter

Capital directed toward the goal

Recognition of the issue is a start, but it's only the start. The big question remains how to achieve the Paris Agreement's targets for limiting global warming, when it will take an investment in the order of USD3-5 trillion per year, as estimated by the Global Financial Markets Association and Boston Consulting Group.

Kelly says: “Governments don't have enough to do it on their own. Private capital will be needed to meet decarbonisation and other sustainability goals.”

Banking partner Kate Sumpter agrees the transition to a sustainable economy requires enormous investment and the financial sector, as an intersection for capital allocation, “will play a major role” in promoting sustainability and sustainable management.

PSL counsel Oonagh Harrison adds: “The vast majority of governments, policymakers and regulators around the globe recognise that the financial services sector, as important global economic players, must contribute to sustainability. The UK's Treasury, for example, believes that financial services will have a bigger role to play in tackling climate change than any other sector.”

A number of global and national initiatives are driving the transition towards carbon neutrality. The sheer volume and overlapping nature of these initiatives mean that our clients face significant strategic and operational challenges.

Kate says: “Those institutions that can get their arms around the requirements are likely to benefit from the opportunities that will flow from the changes and we need to be suitably immersed in the technical detail of the requirements to help clients spot those opportunities.”

‘Competency greenwashing’

While many new rules and requirements have been focused on financial services, the importance of integrating sustainability into corporate governance and strategy is gaining more attention from policymakers. Kelly supports moves to prevent “competency greenwashing”.

“Boards need to ensure that they are being properly advised on what they need to consider regarding sustainability,” she says.

“Reading a few articles on sustainability isn't a qualification for advising on it,” she adds. “It is a multidisciplinary field with an academic foundation. It requires a complex web of expertise that rarely resides in one person.”

She observes that businesses' approach to sustainability tends to fall into two camps: those which react to external developments such as regulation and activism on a piecemeal basis and those which are making the sustainability transition the centre of their strategy.

Some businesses are still seeing ESG as a collection of non-financial or ethical considerations, and not everyone is affected by the rising tide of developments to the same degree...yet.

“We're seeing a fundamental systemic shift the likes of which we've never seen. It's bigger than the credit crunch of 2008. And what we've seen so far is just the tip of the iceberg.”



Kelly Sporn
Senior Policy Advisor
A&O: 2020-present



Kate Sumpter
Partner
A&O: 2008-present



Oonagh Harrison
PSL counsel
A&O: 2012-2016, 2018-present

“The vast majority of governments, policymakers and regulators around the globe recognise that the financial services sector, as important global economic players, must contribute to sustainability.”

Oonagh Harrison





Tim Conduit
Partner
A&O: 2005-present



Chris Bishop
Partner
A&O: 2006-present

Sea change in structured finance

Sustainability-focused structured financings have recently moved from niche to mainstream in the market. These mirror the growing global focus on the sustainability of investments, and investor interest in human rights considerations.

“We are on the cusp of a sea change,” said Tim Conduit, London-based Capital Markets partner. “Sustainability awareness and compliance is becoming simply a matter of good governance and risk management.”

Key milestones in this trend were the 1999 creation of the UN Global Compact, the UN Principles for Responsible Investing in 2006, the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the UNFCCC Paris Agreement in 2015, and now, with its renewed focus on climate finance, the Glasgow Climate Pact from COP 26.

“Changing investor sentiment, greater regulation and increased litigation and shareholder activism in the human rights and environmental space worldwide over the past decade have combined with these global initiatives to create a snowball effect,” he said. The pandemic has further focused the minds of governments, regulators and investors on sustainability and pushed the ‘S’ in ESG to the fore.

Sustainable finance products are increasingly varied and innovative. “Although in the past investors tended to focus on green investments, we have now seen, for example, the issuance of ‘blue’ bonds – the marine equivalent of ‘green’ – and diversity bonds recognising (for example) gender-balanced corporate boards,” said Tim.

It’s a fast-evolving landscape, but the implications for the market are significant. In particular, he said, the adoption of a ‘green supporting factor’ – a controversial proposal to lower capital requirements for products based on their perceived sustainability – could create a seismic shift in the markets.

‘I think about livelihoods’

Economic transition is a classic ‘one size does not fit all’; Chris Bishop, a Banking and Finance partner based in Singapore, sees crucial differences that make the European approach less appropriate in developing economies where the bulk of his work is focused.

“When I think about transitioning the economy, I think about livelihoods,” he says.

While developed markets face a challenge of “sustaining the status quo”, he says, achieving a basic modern standard of living is the difficult task facing countries such as Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand with their widely dispersed populations.

Low-carbon energy is a key consideration. China, Laos and Vietnam are all developing hydroelectric projects on the Mekong River and its vast basin. The quandary is how to limit the environmental damage caused by damming the river and tributaries.

Chris would like to see “a more nuanced conversation” with less focus on financing through transition and more focus on people. For example, a community that may be 15 years away from replacing its coal-fired power station with alternative sources of electricity should be able to refinance the coal-burner in the interim, as that is part of a successful and managed transition.

“I don’t think regulations as contemplated in Europe allow for that in the developing market. But that’s what transition means in Asia.”



Matt Townsend
Partner
A&O: 2000-present



Xue Wang
Partner
A&O: 2007-present

Business community under the spotlight

“I can’t remember a time when corporates and the business community have been under such a societal, stakeholder and regulatory spotlight,” says Matt Townsend, partner and co-head of the International Environmental, Climate and Regulatory Law Group.

“Corporates now recognise that climate and other sustainability factors have the potential for major negative impacts on their business prospects.”

People are engaging more, he notes, but to what effect? Historically, the challenge to getting action has been finding the connection into the topic.

Public outcry over a company’s poor ESG behaviour can precipitate a temporary fall in share price, but there appears to be little widespread appetite yet to boycott products.

At the moment, the bigger pressure on corporates is coming from a regulatory and compliance shift with “a massive policy engineering exercise from governments and central bankers like [former Bank of England governor] Mark Carney to redeploy private capital for green and sustainable purposes”.

Investors are pushing for greater transparency and “meaningful” data, and there’s a “hard edge behind that on how they deploy their capital”.

He sees transparency becoming an important aspect of “product”: where a clothing brand’s cotton is sourced; how investment opportunities are detailed; or the husbandry policies of farms supplying meat to a steakhouse.

“In my view,” says Matt, “there’s still a massive education process to make sure we all have a long-term horizon.

“We can’t look at sustainability in the abstract; we have to look at wider human impacts. There has to be a recalibration.

“I think it will take time. We may get to a result that the end-buyer isn’t going to like.”

China ‘somewhat of a leader’

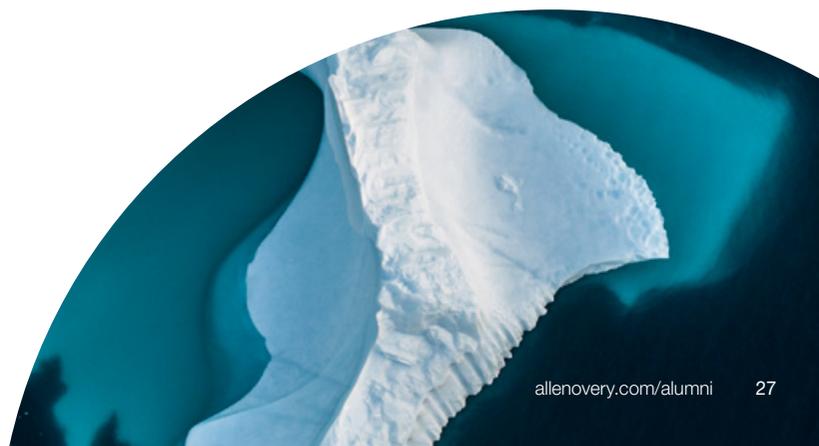
Banking and Finance partner Xue Wang has extensive experience working with Chinese companies, financial institutions and policy banks. She says “people are not wrong” in their assessment of China as a huge energy consumer, but often fail to appreciate the country “is somewhat of a leader in some aspects, especially on energy transition”.

Much of China’s policy focus now is on transitioning to more green, sustainable sources of energy. Under its Paris Agreement NDCs, China has committed to reach carbon peak by 2030 and net zero by 2060, and its commitment to reaching these targets is reflected in its latest five-year plan and throughout national and regional policies.

While the transition will be difficult, Xue believes “there’s a huge amount of energy and policy drive in the economy to make it happen.”

She says China already has a “substantial penetration” of renewal energy which goes largely unreported because there is little foreign investment and big plans for new mega-scale renewables projects in coming years as part of the plan to meet their Paris Agreement commitments. China is already the world’s third-largest market for offshore wind.

Japan is also seeing a drive to develop offshore wind, along with onshore wind and solar, to transition from its reliance on imported natural gas. Xue says, “a huge thing here is transitioning to hydrogen and ammonia. There’s a lot of talk not just in the transport sector but also in terms of introducing ammonia into the energy mix to decarbonize power generation.”



Milestones on the road to sustainability

Two paths, one destination: meet alumni Duncan Lee and Elsabé Schimmelpenninck van der Oye who are each working in their own way to make a difference to the environment.

Duncan Lee got a little more than he bargained for when he headed to Hong Kong from London in 2007 to “experience life in a new place”.

However, 14 years and a couple of financial and political crises later, he’s still there; enthusiastically so in his current role as director of Investment Environmental, Social & Governance, Group Investment for AIA, the largest independent publicly listed Pan-Asian insurance group.

“ESG and sustainability are increasingly important for all responsible companies as they realise their stakeholders extend beyond the shareholders and to the communities they serve, and I find it interesting,” he says.

“There’s a lot to do to raise awareness and further the sustainability agenda, for example, through policy and regulatory enhancements, but ‘so far, it’s been a blast’.”

Duncan qualified at A&O in 1999 and was a senior associate in Derivatives and Structured Finance (DSF) until 2004 when he went in-house at Bank of America in Canary Wharf. Three years later, he “got an itch” for change and joined Barclays Capital in Hong Kong, which was looking for someone with a legal background for its investment banking business.

“I was curious to see what life was like on the front office side,” he says.

That was in 2007 – a year before the global financial crash, which had implications for the business deals he had worked on. His “escape route” was an internal opportunity at Barclays that took him back into the more familiar structured products and derivatives.

In 2015, Duncan and his fiancée (and now wife), Iris, took a year out to travel, refresh and recharge their batteries. Getting back into the job market was anything but straightforward.

He eventually went to AIA Group as a contractor to provide investment legal advisory and transactional support. Upon being made permanent in 2017, he became involved in ESG on the investment side, and soon found himself running the programme, alongside his other work.

It opened up a different range of possibilities. “For a start, it meant working closely with the Group Chief Investment Officer who was passionate about ESG and very much led from the front. My personal profile increased within the firm, working with colleagues from other areas and other members of the Group Executive Committee.”

But it was a juggling act to keep up with his investment legal responsibilities. So, toward the end of 2019, with ESG too becoming a core focus area for AIA, Duncan opted to lead investment ESG efforts full time.

“ESG permeates Group Office’s thinking at AIA,” says Duncan. “Stakeholders expect it, the President and Group CEO will frequently speak on ESG matters and AIA’s achievements, as demonstrable proof that the firm is serious about ESG and following through on its commitments published in documents such as the new Group ESG Strategy launched in March 2021.

“Further embedding ESG within the Investment function has sometimes been challenging,” he says. “However, everyone recognises the overall direction of travel.

“At AIA, we believe in ESG as part of our corporate purpose to enable our customers to ‘live Healthier, Longer, Better Lives’, and are keen to demonstrate to our stakeholders that we can do it well and create even more value in the communities we serve.

“We want to achieve so much in relatively little time. We’ve been patiently implementing change based on alignment and consensus – but ultimately there has to be demonstrable progress or you start asking yourself challenging questions as to intent, and our investors will certainly demand it.”

There are “implications”, says Duncan, in decisions such as exiting from coal mining and coal-fired power generation in direct managed investments, which the group announced in March 2021.

“ESG and sustainability are increasingly important for all responsible companies as they realise their stakeholders extend beyond the shareholders and to the communities they serve.”

Duncan Lee



“As Asia is still developing, some countries will burn more coal in industry and power plants. This may mean, without exception, we cannot invest in their national electricity generation companies if they use coal. However, when they transition to renewable power, we can invest or reinvest.”

“We’re not an impact investor; integrated ESG risk management, the desire to drive sustainable behaviour and generate sustainable long-term financial outcomes shape the way we invest, but we are mindful of the impact our investments have.”

Even with group-level standards within its investment governance framework, occasionally it’s a challenge to “think about certain things differently”, he says. “Portfolio managers, for example – are they constantly thinking about all the right ESG issues as they make investment decisions?”

“Mindsets need to evolve, with persuasion, influence and constant communication. That’s why top-down messaging is so important. And luckily, at AIA, we have this.”

Other aspects of ESG work, including regulatory consultations, investor communications, research into ESG in companies and scoring, are being introduced into the governance framework. “Strategic decisions have to be implemented through AIA’s group-level machinery accompanied by communication, advocacy and influence; the mentality and discipline you learn as a lawyer is a benefit in this context, and I’m grateful for my A&O experience and having worked with great people across the firm.”

Duncan’s A&O years remain a career highlight. Among his alumni contacts are Roger Lui, Yvonne Siew, Matt Hebburn, Simon Sinha and Marcus Norton, a member of Duncan’s 1997 intake at A&O “who showed great foresight and embarked early on a career

path in sustainability, and is now a senior executive at one of the leading environmental non-profit organisations in London.”

For his part, Duncan sees no reason at present to consider another move. Hong Kong’s vibrant, cosmopolitan society has lost none of its fascination and interest for him. It’s easier to travel around than London, thanks to its public transport system, and the diverse nationalities and interests among its population are reflected in the cuisine of an active restaurant scene. For its size, Hong Kong provides keen hikers like Duncan and Iris, who is an asset manager for a property development company, plenty of options; in normal times, they take advantage of its position as one of Asia’s key travel hubs to travel overseas.

“I came to Hong Kong to experience life in Asia and make a living. For me, we still have that, and I am very lucky and happy.”

“...ultimately there has to be demonstrable progress or you start asking yourself challenging questions as to intent, and our investors will certainly demand it.”

Duncan Lee



“People remember the story long after they’ve forgotten the figures.”

Elsabé Schimmelpenninck van der Oye

Storytelling is a vital communication tool – just ask A&O alumna Elsabé Schimmelpenninck van der Oye. She’ll tell you it’s what connects dreams with reality in the world of conservation, biodiversity and sustainability.

“I would love to be that connector,” she says. “People remember the story long after they’ve forgotten the figures.”

A former Banking associate in the Amsterdam office, Elsabé became part of that world when she joined Lookfar Conservation in 2021 as Director of Sustainability Strategies. She’s working on strategy to connect data, finance and storytelling.

She says: “Coming from the business world, it feels like a gift just to be allowed into the conversation.”

Her own story is one of discoveries made and opportunities taken. She unexpectedly discovered, during a two month internship with A&O in 2004, that she loved law and especially the Banking practice, and stayed eight years.

Opportunities took her to Paris in 2012 where she worked for ING Bank and then, four years later, to Chicago.

She and her family settled in the suburban village of Glencoe. She became involved in politics through the local Sustainability Task Force, first as a member and then as its head at the request of the Village President. It was a baptism by fire.





“I’d always been subconsciously aware of the various topics,” she says. “Growing up in the Netherlands, this knowledge is built into us with things like the emphasis on cycling, the waterways and land reclamation.”

It’s knowledge based on feeling, not study, and the prospect of promoting awareness among Illinois business people drove her “back to the books”. She enrolled at Harvard Business School for an online course on sustainable business strategy. “That gave me guidance. Sustainability is my passion but I want to approach it in a structured way.”

Then Covid-19 and another unexpected move “threw us a curve ball”. Her husband, Pieter Drost, accepted a transfer back to Paris – just as Chicago went into lockdown.

“Imagine selling your house and moving in the midst of the pandemic, with two young children, everybody working from home – and a new puppy. It was interesting.”

“The power that big firms like A&O have to change the mindset and create awareness with clients is wonderful.”

Her move to Paris coincided with the expansion of Lookfar Conservation, whose founder, Scott Stone, she had met in Glencoe, and she became one of four directors – all ex-lawyers.

Lookfar describes its mission as defending wild and wondrous places and working with the people living in and among them. It helps mostly small, front line conservation groups in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa with biodiversity conservation, ecological restoration, and regenerative agriculture projects, focusing on project design and fundraising, data technologies, sustainable business models, and storytelling.

“We focus on what we can do and on what is working,” says Elsabé. Her experience in banking and financial law might seem a world apart but it “enabled me to do what I do now. Hopefully those worlds are merging.”

She credits A&O – “such a wonderful school” – with teaching her the skills she now brings to the table, including how to talk to and connect with people of vastly different experience, and the ‘can do’ approach.

From her new perspective, she is astonished by the gap between the not-for-profit (NFP) and business worlds. This is regrettable because they need each other. NFPs, though minnows in financial terms, have a big impact.

Resources resulting from their work underpin commercial efforts.

However, people immersed in fieldwork can find it daunting to engage in the boardroom where discussions might touch on financial return on investment (ROI), for example, which is alien to their ambitions.

“I see it as a personal mission in a sense to try to connect these two where I can,” says Elsabé. “I want to empower NFPs at least to have access to knowledge of finance.

“People need to have the confidence to talk to each other.”

The pandemic, she says, has shown not just how easily technology can connect people but how unevenly distributed it is. People in many countries continue to do everything by hand, carrying a clipboard into the field – the starting point for a project called Clipboard to Cloud that Lookfar is working on with one of its partners, Fair Trade Certified.

“Briefly, we want to unleash the power of technology to connect producers to consumers and to create more transparency in supply chains,” says Elsabé. Giving farmers a mobile device to upload crop details to the cloud, via an app, saves a tremendous amount of time. “Farmers can scale up and are directly linked to each other, brands and consumers. So Clipboard to Cloud will be enabling a better, fairer future.”

“I want to empower NFPs at least to have access to knowledge of finance.”

Elsabé Schimmelpenninck van der Oye

Two other projects involve GPS mapping. One, being developed in Ecuador in partnership with Fundación Jocotoco and Third Millennium Alliance, will help farmers transition to sustainable land use and regenerative agricultural practices and to measure the amount of carbon the trees on their land are capturing, opening up the possibility of selling carbon credits to those needing to offset emissions.

The other, a project called Restor launched by Crowther Lab at ETH Zürich, aims to record and connect ecorestoration work around the world by creating a Google Maps for restoration efforts.

Elsabé says: “Much restoration work is local and those involved don’t know

about other projects, even nearby, who they could share knowledge with. Restor is another creative use of technology and data.”

Attending A&O’s virtual spring conference on ESG was like “coming home” and meeting like-minded people who have “taken different paths but evolved the same way”.

“It is my impression that A&O is taking sustainability seriously. It isn’t a separate pillar but something to be integrated into every part of society and by introducing the topic into deals, A&O is doing exactly that.

“The power that big firms like A&O have to change the mindset and create awareness with clients is wonderful.

“Like Matthew Townsend said at that A&O conference, it’s good that more people are now joining the conversation.

“It all starts with speaking to each other, connecting – getting a better understanding of what each party is doing. The transition has started and if we keep on connecting, I believe everything is possible.”



Duncan Lee
Director, Investment ESG,
Governance & Legal,
Group Investment at AIA
A&O: 1997-2004



Elsabé Schimmelpenninck van der Oye
Director of Sustainability
Strategies at
Lookfar Conservation
A&O: 2005-2012

Reconnect with Duncan Lee and Elsabé Schimmelpenninck van der Oye at allenover.com/alumni.

From a distance, but close-up

Sethu Khumalo and Qi Xie, two of A&O's 2020 intake, had to adjust swiftly to virtual working – and A&O couldn't have been more helpful in supporting them.



“My seniors were great, and I was always impressed that they made time for me.”

Sethu Khumalo

Connected during lockdown

Sethu (Siphosethu) Khumalo joined the Johannesburg office in February 2020 to complete his training.

I was training to become a lawyer with a small firm in Johannesburg and getting on all right, but I had bigger ambitions. My particular field of interest is litigation. I knew A&O was expanding its Litigation team, so I contacted the partner, Gerard Rudolph, and asked if I could complete my training with A&O. Happily, he agreed to it.

I joined in February 2020, before the world knew about the devastating impact of Covid-19. I worked in the office for six weeks before lockdown was announced and we were all told to go home. It was remarkable how quickly A&O adapted to everyone working from home. They provided me with extra monitors and assistance with IT to make sure I could work efficiently and seamlessly, using A&O's various systems.

It was helpful to have spent a few weeks in the office. I was inducted, got to know the working processes, and, of course, met everybody I needed to. I was well set on my training path.

During lockdown, I felt connected with the firm, which, of course, was absolutely critical. There were weekly virtual catch-ups, but more than this, we had an 'open line' policy – the virtual equivalent of an 'open door' policy in the office – which meant I always felt able to contact my bosses and partners, no matter how senior, if ever I had questions or needed help. When I did make use of the open line, I made

sure that I was well prepared with my questions, and had good reasons for asking them.

As one of the youngest members of the department, which has about 19 people, I found this particularly helpful. My seniors were great, and I was always impressed that they made time for me. I've also got to know many other colleagues through social events and fun events, such as virtual quiz nights.

Lockdown certainly didn't have a negative impact on workflow. I was busy right from the day I joined, working and assisting on a number of arbitrations, cross-border work and construction disputes. On one case involving a wind farm in central Africa, I was assisting one of the counsel with draft documents going back and forth through the early hours of the morning as we finalised time-critical advice for our clients. This has all been new and enjoyable and precisely why I chose to work for a global law firm.

Nevertheless, there have been drawbacks with working remotely. I wasn't allowing myself time to switch off from work and found that I was on my laptop all the time, often without any breaks. I've learned to be more disciplined; now I take regular screen breaks during the working day and make time to exercise for an hour each day in the morning or evening.

Once we're allowed to travel more freely, I hope to take advantage of A&O's programme of international secondments. I'd love to spend time in another office. However, I'm taking things day by day. I know I have to earn my stripes and build my reputation.

I'm a firm believer that we're a product of our community, and that places an obligation on us to give back to the community that has made us who we are. There is the philosophy of Ubuntu in African culture, which teaches us to assist our fellow man whenever we can. Before I joined A&O, I was active in community matters at Rhodes University, my alma mater. Although one of South Africa's elite universities, Rhodes University is situated in a poor area of the Eastern Cape province.

As a student, I proposed a number of initiatives while serving under two student bodies. In 2015, I started a student mentorship programme, under which Rhodes law students tutored high school students in the neighbouring township of Joza. Then, in 2018, I championed a book drive, where Rhodes students could donate second-hand books (novels, textbooks, study guides) all of which went to a local library in Joza. Having found my feet as a qualified professional, getting into pro bono and charity work is something I intend to do.



Sethu Khumalo
Associate
A&O: 2020-present

Everyone had a global perspective

Qi Xie completed the U.S. summer associate programme before joining the London office in September 2021.

I was born in China and went to study in Massachusetts as a 17 year old. There, I studied maths and French, but I also took some classes in law, which got me thinking that this was something I might pursue as a career. In 2018, I started my first year at the University of Chicago Law School.

As a rising second-year student, I applied to the A&O U.S. summer associate programme. I had two reasons for wanting to do this in the London office: first, because I was interested in working for a truly international law firm, and second, because my boyfriend lived in Paris, and London would be closer to Paris than New York! When I interviewed for the programme, I was struck by the internationalism, which reinforced my choice. Everyone I met had a global perspective.

When I was accepted on to the summer associate programme, I was of course expecting to attend in person. But then, in March 2020, my visa was cancelled, and the whole programme switched to being online – due to Covid-19.

The programme, which was condensed into six weeks, worked very well; in fact I would say super smooth. It really tried to replicate the in-person experience. There were nice, small touches; for example, sending a fruit basket to my house, as well as providing me with the right IT equipment. I had a couple of technical problems early on, but someone was always on hand to solve them.

The internship also included some fun social aspects, including yoga and cooking classes, as well as a trivia competition. For a cocktail-making class, they actually sent me the shaker set!

The main thing was that I learned a huge amount. It was intensive: there were back-to-back sessions. I was involved in a major deal, a high-yield offering for a European entertainment company, as well as a research project in which I and another intern were asked to make a presentation at the end of the programme.

I was well mentored by a fourth-year qualified lawyer. I had daily calls with him to discuss the assignments, which I found helpful to deal with the moving pieces.

After completing the programme, I returned to my studies to do the third year of my degree course. I have also taken the New York Bar exams and expect to get the results in December 2021.

Thankfully, I impressed A&O enough during the programme to be offered a job. I joined A&O in September 2021 as a U.S. law clerk in the Corporate Finance department in London, focusing on capital markets deals. I chose this type of work because I like getting to the root of clients' businesses, which you need to if you are going to advise them on major capital markets deals – whether they are raising debt, or issuing equity in one form or another.

I initially worked virtually when I joined the London office, going into the office more and more as it re-opened. The office feels huge: I'm still getting used to finding my way around.

It's been great meeting the other first years as well as associates and partners in the group, most of whom I met virtually last summer but it definitely feels different meeting in person. Luckily, the group sits together so I never have to walk far to reach someone.

I've been busy right from the off, assisting with due diligence and backup tasks. There is flexibility to work from home, so I've been taking advantage of that on days when I have an early morning call, for example.

I'm also looking forward to exploring the Spitalfields market area during lunch breaks or after work.



Qi Xie
U.S. law clerk
A&O: 2020-present



If you're considering a career change and a return to A&O, visit the A&O careers portal for opportunities across our global network.

A busy year for social mobility work

A&O has long been committed to social mobility and working with like-minded organisations. Several new and exciting initiatives continue this tradition.

One of the important developments in 2021 for all A&O offices was social mobility being chosen as the theme for this year's global charity partner, as in almost every country children's socio-economic background still has the biggest impact on their life chances.

In the same way that every A&O office will have tailored opportunities to get involved with the work of our charity partner, Street Child, each A&O office promotes social mobility in the best country-specific way possible.

The London office enhanced its support for students from socially mobile backgrounds in August 2021, announcing a three-year programme that offers both financial and non-financial assistance to students who have participated in either of A&O's social mobility programmes, A&O Accelerate or Smart Start. A&O has increased the number of bursaries from two to six and the amount awarded to each student has increased to £15,000.

The bursaries are awarded to high-potential students about to embark on their university studies with a particular interest in a career in law. This is an extension of an A&O bursary programme that has been in place since 2006, set up by alumnus and former Senior Partner Guy Beringer. Vimal Tilakapala, head of A&O's UK Tax practice, and Emma Turnbull, Community Investment Manager,

oversee the bursary programme. Vimal has undertaken this role since 2011 and Emma has been involved since the start.

New solicitor apprenticeships at A&O

Social mobility initiatives are not limited to students going to university; a new opportunity announced by A&O in June 2021 is the solicitor apprenticeship route to becoming a qualified solicitor in London. The UK is unusual in allowing this route; most countries where A&O operates require new joiners to have obtained a degree before they join to train as a lawyer.

The first cohort of six A&O solicitor apprentices will start in September 2022, alongside around 40 trainees (half of the full-year cohort of 80 trainees). The current plan is to add a cohort of new apprentices each year.

This will be a six-year apprenticeship, at the end of which those taking part will be awarded an LLB (Hons) Law and Legal Practice by BPP University and a Solicitor Level 7 Apprenticeship, as well as becoming a qualified solicitor upon passing the Solicitors Qualifying Exam (SQE). A&O apprentices will spend time in the firm's legal practice groups, and have the opportunity to work in Fuse, A&O's tech innovation hub, as well as the Markets Innovation Group, Legal Tech, eDiscovery and Project Management teams. Apprentices will spend four days

a week working in the business, with one day allocated to study.

"We are very excited to be going down this path," says James Partridge, the graduate recruitment partner and training principal. "A&O has always encouraged social mobility down the years – although I don't think it was ever expressed in those terms – and it felt very A&O to introduce solicitor apprenticeships. When I put it to management, everybody was behind it."

Joanna Hughes, who assisted James to launch A&O solicitor apprenticeships, partly with knowledge she gained as a member of a working group of the City of London taskforce to boost socio-economic diversity at senior levels in UK financial and professional services, says the objective is simple: "We want A&O to be the destination for the best people, regardless of background."

Belfast apprenticeships

In 2013, IT apprenticeships started in the A&O Belfast office and now extend into business services, finance, HR, legal technology and marketing roles, in an award-winning scheme with Belfast Metropolitan College to design a curriculum and work-based learning. Ciaran McCallion, who heads the HR function in that office, says: "We have seen a high retention rate of 84% of apprentices. Apprenticeships now make up 5% of our Belfast workforce."



The Social Mobility Working Group

Promoting social mobility at the broadest level is coordinated by A&O's Social Mobility Working Group, which brings together the diversity and inclusion, graduate recruitment and Pro Bono and Community Investment teams – plus others with a personal interest in the subject – to join up A&O's thinking, generate ideas and track progress. The group's Social Mobility Action Plan focuses on four areas: outreach – raising aspirations; access – being open and accessible; culture – promoting an inclusive culture; and advocacy – influencing the wider debate.

The work of the working group is informed by various social mobility organisations, including the Bridge Group. A&O has taken part in studies in the UK by the Bridge Group alongside nine other major law firms. The first study looked at early careers and found that trainees from lower socio-economic backgrounds were statistically more likely to be in the top decile of performers, but were also more likely to leave their firms early. The second study, published in 2020, showed that lawyers from lower socio-economic backgrounds take on average a year and a half longer to progress to partnership than their peers from higher socio-economic backgrounds – a trend reflected in other sectors.

Wider still than the work of the Social Mobility Working Group, and new for 2021, was the launch of All In. A global, virtual event series in May to kick-off All In included various luminaries giving accounts of their careers and overcoming social mobility disadvantages. This was followed later in the year with an external rollout of All In to clients, alumni and others.

“All In is A&O's commitment to create an inclusive environment that celebrates and embraces difference,” says Ian Field, chair of the Social Mobility Group and one of five regional D&I partners. “All In embraces three concepts: A&O being totally committed to the idea of diversity and inclusion; individuals being able to bring their whole selves to work; and everybody playing their part so we can create a more inclusive culture. It marks an important milestone as we increase momentum towards becoming a truly inclusive organisation.”

Starting a solicitor apprenticeship scheme will be another step towards A&O becoming a fully inclusive organisation, Ian adds: “We have the experience with Smart Start students, who are still at school, but this will be different, with young adults who are full-time with A&O. We are taking special steps to let A&O know well in advance they are coming, to prepare them for the change, to educate people in being careful in how the apprentices are

welcomed and integrated, and to make the process as smooth as possible.

“Our aim is that all people can be themselves and be fully accepted for who and what they are, and that our culture is open to all.”

The new A&O Social Mobility Network will be open to all alumni. Email thealumniteam@allenovery.com if you are interested in joining as a member when it is launched.

Going global with the Social Mobility Network

Look out in early 2022 for the launch of the A&O Social Mobility Network – an affinity group for A&O colleagues and alumni who self-identify as being from a socially mobile background, and allies. The Social Mobility Network has been launched by Emma Turnbull and three associates in the Social Mobility Working Group – Nathan Charnock, Mateusz Maciejewski and Jennifer Spring – and aims to be a global network in the same way as other D&I networks offered by A&O.

Qualified by aptitude

Ceris Gardner joined A&O in 1978 at the age of 24 as a manager in the Probate department. She qualified as a solicitor in 1988 and was made partner in 1991 in the Private Client department. She became a founding partner of Maurice Turnor Gardner (MTG) in May 2009.



Ceris Gardner didn't originally want to be a lawyer. She'd taken languages at university, joined the civil service and worked in the Capital Taxes Office, which at that time was called the Estate Duty Office of the Inland Revenue. It was there, while she was studying a number of law subjects, that her interest in law in general was piqued.

Her boss, Michelle Bate, moved to A&O in 1977 to work in the Probate department. A year later, A&O contacted Ceris to see whether she might be interested in joining A&O as well. She was, and joined in 1978.

Before long, Ceris found herself branching out into other areas of work, mostly to do with trusts. Looking back, she remembers that those with aptitude were encouraged to develop their expertise, "although, to be frank, this may have had more to do with fee-earning than personal development," Ceris jokes.

It was William Norris, then head of the Private Client department, who saw potential in Ceris and encouraged her to qualify as a solicitor. She studied for two years in the evenings to take the CPE conversion course. However, she had to look for a way to do her two-year training contract (then called articles) without having to sit in the different departments.

That was because A&O wanted Ceris to continue as a fee-earner in private client throughout her training. To achieve that, she took additional exams to become a legal executive on the understanding that if she then passed her solicitors' final exams, she would qualify as a solicitor. A&O also gave her six months' study leave before she took her finals in July 1988, ten years after she had joined the firm.

After 13 years at A&O, Ceris was bold enough to approach William Norris and enquire about whether there was any prospect of her being made partner ("which I thought must be out of the question, given that I was not originally a qualified solicitor"). "That's interesting," William replied, "because we have just been talking about putting you forward for partnership."

It was an interesting practice, not least because, as A&O globalised and opened more offices, she and others in private client gained a greater range of international clients. From advising purely UK-resident and domiciled individuals, they advised those looking to move to the UK on business, to invest in UK property, to send their children to UK schools or, generally, to seek advice on how to manage their international assets from a tax and succession planning point of view.

That continued until 2009, when she, Clare Maurice and Richard Turnor left A&O to start up their own law firm, Maurice Turnor Gardner LLP (shortened to MTG), with A&O's encouragement and support. The move has been successful; MTG has flourished, even with the challenge of the pandemic.

Ceris is still a few years away from retiring and loves every minute of her work. "When people ask me what I like about being in my own firm, I say 'fun and freedom'!"

"We have just been talking about putting you forward for partnership."

Knowledge and the joy of passing it on

Barry Bloom joined A&O at 16 in August 1964 as a junior in the general office. He moved after a year to become a managing clerk in the (then) Corporate/Commercial department, and then became an associate in the Corporate department, where he continued for the rest of his time with A&O. He handled and advised on thousands of transactions over the course of his career.



Talk about good timing. When Barry Bloom, as a timid 16-year-old, interviewed for a job as a junior in A&O's general office in 1964, he was asked by Major Sandell, the office manager, if he had good contacts in the print or newspaper business.

Somewhat puzzled, since he had only just left school, Barry replied that he didn't. Why?

Because, Major Sandell said, the firm had that very day placed advertisements looking for someone to work in the general office, so he must have had advance warning.

Barry laughs at the memory. In reality, he had applied to A&O because someone had suggested he approach law firms for work and, by virtue of starting with an 'a', A&O had been on top of the list.

Another coincidence was that he started on the same day in the general office as Dave Timms, whom he had bumped into on the railway platform. They would also retire from the firm on exactly the same day in 2005, Dave having followed a similar path to Barry, except Dave worked in the Property department.

In the general office, Barry helped with everything from distributing the post to picking up cigarettes for those partners who smoked (which was then, strange to relate, permitted in the office). After a few months, he was moved from the general office "out in the corridors", which meant he started doing clerking (what would nowadays be called a paralegal).

Barry had yet another piece of luck when he was placed with Eddie Edwards, a managing clerk in the Corporate/Commercial department who had been with A&O since its first day. Barry soon learned the art of researching legal questions, mostly to do with the 1948 Companies Act and schemes of arrangement. "I built up a very good knowledge of the Act and I absorbed all this information like a sponge," Barry recalls. He sat with Eddie for the next couple of years before Eddie retired and Barry moved to sit with Arthur French, who had also been with A&O from the start.

Still only 20 years old when Arthur French retired, Barry went to work for Tony Herbert, from whom he learned "the ducking and diving of how to get deals done". Through the 1970s, Barry worked on countless transactions for Hestair as it went on an acquisition spree, including buying Maclaren Buggies, Kiddicraft and selling a subsidiary company, which involved a trip to Australia. "This was great for me. Here I was, in the thick of some major transactions and delivering some great results for clients."

After working for Tony Herbert, Barry hooked up with David Wootton and there followed another decade or more of interesting deals, including many for The Thomson Organisation.

Barry was a first port of call for lawyers, senior and junior alike, seeking technical as well as practical answers. "I had bibles for every transaction and I knew my way around them backwards.

I knew many standard company resolutions to the extent that I could dictate them. The junior lawyers liked to come and talk to me because they didn't find me intimidating. I used to enjoy passing on knowledge. I believe the junior lawyers who worked with me liked that."

While working with David Wootton, Barry also worked for Charlie McKenna and others, and was experienced enough to operate on his own. That Barry was able to run his own transactions is tribute to the trust placed in him by the partners, even though he himself had never qualified. "It wasn't specifically stated, but simply by proving myself, I was given the responsibility for managing deals from start to finish and working directly with clients. A&O gave me every support to work on my own."

He retired from A&O in 2005 after 41 years. "I loved every minute of my time", Barry recalls, "and I worked with wonderful people and made many friends. They say that more people came to my and Dave Timms' leaving parties than anyone else's!"

“By proving myself, I was given the responsibility for managing deals from start to finish and working directly with clients.”

Sustainability climbs up boardroom agendas

Dutch partner Jochem Spaans considers himself fortunate to be in a practice that's important from business, social and personal perspectives. Welcome to environmental law.



“ESG and sustainability have emerged from something on the side to a major boardroom item.”

‘Interesting’ and ‘fascinating’ are words that frequently enter a conversation with Jochem Spaans. It’s obvious he’s lost none of the enthusiasm that helped propel him to the top of his field.

A personal interest in all things ‘green’ and in the technological changes that fuel green growth played a big part in his decision to pursue a PhD in environmental law. It then led him to a practice in the Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) field.

Interest is what lured him away from A&O for a short period, and what brought him back when he realised how much he missed the complex – and fascinating – work he could be involved with at A&O.

Today, as an Amsterdam-based Environmental and Public Law partner within the Projects and Real Estate practice, he relishes being at the epicentre of an important area of law. As he notes: “ESG and sustainability have emerged from something on the side to a major boardroom item.”

Jochem specialises in EU environmental law, spatial planning law and general administrative law, and he’s never been busier.

He’s still connected to his faculty at the Vrije Universiteit (VU) in Amsterdam as an assistant professor, which is a plus, says Jochem. It helps that he enjoys writing: he’s currently working on the next edition of a textbook on Dutch public law that he is co-authoring.

“Academia is intellectually an enriching opportunity,” he says, and highly valued in the Dutch profession: there’s a list in the Netherlands that ranks firms by

the number of their people who are associated with universities.

No intention of practising law

Jochem initially had no intention of practising law: he was enjoying academia but felt he needed a “useful day”. He spoke to his professor, Hendrik Jan de Ru, who happened to be an A&O partner, now retired. The upshot was an invitation to join his team part-time while Jochem completed his PhD.

Part-time evolved into full-time and he “grew into the role” in the Amsterdam office, where he’s remained except for a spell in New York with Ken Rivlin, partner and head of the U.S. Environmental team, plus a year away.

That happened in 2019 when, after 16 years with the firm, Jochem was invited by one of the oldest and most prestigious Dutch firms, NautaDutilh, to lead its Public Law team. He accepted.

Then Covid-19 struck. Working from home after only about three months physically in the office was much more difficult than he’d imagined. Especially hard was building new relationships.

“One of the things I learned in my short time there was how deeply engrained A&O is in my DNA – which is not surprising, given how long I had been with the firm,” said Jochem.

“I missed the A&O mentality, the international work, the platform and network. I always massively

enjoy working with the A&O global Environmental Law team.

“If you want to do really complex, interesting work, you have to do it together.”

Friendships impossible to ignore

The friendships with colleagues such as Ken Rivlin – but also various Amsterdam partners, including Leon Hoppenbrouwers and Zeeger de Jongh – were impossible to ignore. Hendrik Jan de Ru was one; another was Henry van Geen, now also retired, a partner he worked with for most of his professional life. “We’re different in many ways,” says Jochem. “But we share a deep interest in the law. I learned a lot from him.”

The pandemic gave Jochem a lot of time to think before a fortuitous meeting with his old friend Werner Runge tipped the scales. When restrictions lifted, Werner, a former partner and now of counsel in the Amsterdam office, dropped by for a cup of coffee and ended up staying for more than three hours of intense conversation.

“We talked about how as lawyers we can contribute to sustainability – not just in environmental work but in financing work, which is his specialisation, and other practice areas and jurisdictions.

“I realised I missed doing this. And I knew Werner felt the same.

“I’d learned and grown a lot in that period at NautaDutilh,” he said. “I needed time away to realise how deeply the DNA of A&O is ingrained in me.”

“One of the things I learned in my short time there was how deeply engrained A&O is in my DNA... I missed the A&O mentality, the international work, the platform and network.”

Sustainability moved up the agenda

Despite being away for less than two years, Jochem saw a sea change on his return to A&O: ESG and sustainability had emerged from something on the side to a major boardroom issue.

“I feel I’m in a sweet spot because of my professional expertise. These issues are now on everyone’s agenda.

“We’ve seen in the Netherlands and globally a clear development in ESG that obviously helps.”

He points to the landmark 2019 Urgenda Climate Case – a global first – in which citizens established that their government had a legal duty to prevent dangerous climate change. The Supreme Court ordered the Dutch government to take urgent and significant action to cut emissions.

Further developments in the corporate world suggest citizen action is building momentum, which Jochem finds fascinating from a legal and societal perspective. He notes in particular the 2021 case involving Royal Dutch Shell, which revolves around compliance with an unwritten duty of care.

“Legally, it’s super-fascinating,” he says. “Although Shell complies with the environmental laws where it operates in this respect, the court says it’s not enough to prevent dangerous climate change.

“It sparks a whole set of questions: if complying with the law is not enough, what is?”

A bold ruling

Jochem recognises other jurisdictions may look at matters differently, and that such a “bold ruling” should be tested at a higher level. Nonetheless, it is a “far-reaching” decision that reinforces his decision to re-join A&O.

In the Netherlands, he says, lawyers working in environmental law “know each other professionally and often as friends. We’re both a relatively small country and a relatively small group who practice in this field, at this level.

“I know how strong our international Environmental Law group is,” he says. “With Ken in New York, Matt [Townsend] in London, Gauthier [van Thuyne] in Brussels, Romaric [Lazerges] in Paris, Udo [Olgemoeller] in Frankfurt, Goran [Galic] in Perth and so many others – I could really go on – we have a well-connected network with excellent lawyers around the globe.”

That network and reach becomes significant as corporations increasingly accept that emissions and climate change are cross-border problems, connected globally just as supply chains are.

It gets interesting legally, Jochem says, when legislators adopt supply chain remedies to tackle societal problems such as fair salaries for workers in primary industries. The impact of regulations applied to companies in one jurisdiction reaches far beyond its borders.

“That explains why that type of legislation is popular and makes what I’m doing interesting on an international platform,” he says.

Complex, technical work

Environmental law is not for everyone, although in his view it is “one of the most fascinating areas of practice”. The work itself is legally technical and requires a grasp of detail to understand the many complex laws governing the field.

Jochem has found himself advising companies in industries such as chemicals and electronics on “what’s allowed and what’s not”, as he puts it. He enjoys the technical dimensions of the work.

“To advise your client about the rules covering the type of combustion plant they want to build, you must understand exactly what they’re doing, what fuels they plan to use, what will be released. Any related litigation is hugely detailed and complex.

“You shouldn’t be doing this if you don’t like the nitty-gritty of in-depth analysis.”

Convinced it was right

Jochem has his parents to thank for his lifelong interest in the environment: they taught him an appreciation of his natural surroundings and sustainability by example. “We travelled everywhere on public transport,” he recalls.

Passing a similar approach on to his son and daughter, who are five and ten respectively, is challenging, but they do live in an “almost carbon neutral” house Jochem and his wife had built. It’s thermally heated via a 200m-deep borehole, and packed with other technological, sustainable features.

He says if he's learned anything in his career to date, it's how blessed one is to be able to do work that is – that word again – interesting. Every day is different.

“Career and life are all about networking, the longevity of your relationships, their intellectual and geographic spread and so on.

“I'm sure I'll be learning new things the rest of my career. You're fortunate if you can dedicate yourself to something that allows this kind of lifelong learning.”



Jochem Spaans

Partner
A&O: 2000-2019,
2021-present

Reconnect with Jochem Spaans
at allenovery.com/alumni.

No more 'business as usual'

A&O's Advanced Delivery & Solutions suite has succeeded in turning its ambitions – to rethink 'business as usual' and find smarter, more effective ways of working – into strengths to celebrate.

Advanced Delivery & Solutions (AD&S) covers a growing suite of businesses delivering A&O's services in new ways, developing market-leading legal tech, fostering innovation and providing specialist strategic advice to clients.

"AD&S is evolving into a real powerhouse for innovation in how we deliver our traditional services and how we develop new services," says Andrew Trahair, partner and head of AD&S. "The pandemic has thrown up a lot of challenges, but that plays to our strengths."

During 2021, aosphere – its first business – marked its 20th anniversary [see page 50] and Peerpoint opened in the U.S. and Middle East [see pages 48-49].

"Our Markets Innovation Group has also been very active", Andrew says, "providing scaled solutions such as IBOR Matrix, which is helping financial institutions transition from LIBOR and other benchmarks to new risk-free interest rates at scale. In fact, digitisation is an area for which we're developing a broadly more comprehensive strategy, both internally and for clients."

Meeting the 'more for less' challenge

Our Legal Services team in Belfast is also approaching a milestone anniversary. In the ten years since its launch in 2012, it has grown from just a few lawyers to nearly 130 associates, legal professionals and scientific and technical analysts.

"We've successfully responded to the 'more for less' demand from clients," Andrew says, "by using tech-enabled, cost-efficient resourcing on elements of larger matters, while maintaining the quality clients expect."

The team, led by partner Angela Clist, is made up of experienced associates who manage junior legal professionals in a range of projects, from large-scale document reviews to specialist research.

"The model of Belfast working in close partnership with the rest of our international network, supported by project management and workflow technology, has been very effective – so much so that we're looking at opening two more bases to cover other time zones," Andrew says.



The continued rise of A&O Consulting

Another success has been the growth of A&O Consulting since its launch in 2018. “We started A&O Consulting in response to requests from clients for high-level, strategic guidance on regulatory issues, which they weren’t finding elsewhere,” Andrew says.

“Our CEO, Sally Dewar, has built a hugely talented and experienced international team of former regulators, industry leaders and consultants, which has been key to our success with clients.”

In addition to its regulatory and compliance expertise, A&O Consulting is advising businesses on wider areas of governance – including sustainable business outcomes – corporate purpose and culture, and business transformation.

Sally says, “it’s been another busy year for us, with the pandemic presenting ongoing challenges, including the impact on businesses of emerging from lockdowns and adjusting to a new normal.”

A particular growth area is transforming in-house legal functions. “Data is central

to every area of a business now, so making better use of it is becoming a hot topic for general counsel wanting to measure, track and improve the performance of their function.”

The team recently developed a data-driven reporting model for the legal and compliance team within a global asset manager. “We built a platform with around 80 performance metrics to provide insights that will improve decision-making and risk management – ultimately enabling the legal function to improve showcasing its value to the wider business,” Sally says.

“Our plan for the coming year is to continue expanding our use of consulting services across A&O so that we dovetail non-legal consulting with our more traditional legal services seamlessly for clients.”

What else is coming up for AD&S?

A priority for the coming year is to expand the Legal Services team beyond Belfast into new markets. Andrew says, “we’re planning a ‘follow the sun’

capability which will see us opening a hub in Perth, Western Australia, to cover the Asia-Pacific region in the second quarter of 2022. In the U.S. we’re in the process of identifying the best location based on time zone, availability of talent and cost. We’re also planning to extend our eDiscovery and document review services, particularly in the U.S.”

International expansion is also on the cards for legal tech, opening a base in Asia in the coming year and, further down the line, establishing a presence in the U.S. “With three new offices on the U.S. West Coast now, there’s an obvious link up with all the tech innovation there.”

Underpinning all of this, Andrew says, are AD&S’s practice group leads and process improvement specialists now working across A&O’s global business.

“Collaborating with our practice groups to adopt and integrate AD&S services is a key priority for us – that is how we can best help clients respond to the challenges they face and ensure we remain at the cutting edge of the market.”

“Data is central to every area of a business now, so making better use of it is becoming a hot topic for general counsel.”

Sally Dewar

Bringing interim lawyer placement into the mainstream of law

Peerpoint, A&O's flexible resourcing business, opened its newest bases in the U.S. and Middle East in 2021, and now has more than 350 consultant lawyers across its network.

Peerpoint launched in 2013 at a time when contracting was common practice in sectors such as IT and creative industries, but less so in law. As head of talent Marie Kirby explains, the past eight years – and certainly the last 18 months – have brought consulting fully into the mainstream of the legal sector.

Marie says, "some people are calling this 'the great reset'. It's certainly been a time for individuals and businesses to reassess priorities and look at the future differently."

The trend at the start of the pandemic was largely an influx of lawyers at the early stages of careers coming to Peerpoint, she says. "They'd either left jobs to go travelling or taken a role that didn't materialise because of Covid and were stuck in 'no-man's land'. So they turned to us as a way of finding new options while keeping a top name on their CV."

The broader trend as the pandemic continued, however, has been people adjusting to a new reality and choosing consulting as a long-term option. "A lot of people are rethinking their careers and looking for the variety, control and new learning opportunities consulting brings," says Marie. "In-house lawyers, for example, can sometimes hit a career ceiling and see fewer options to progress, so consulting offers different challenges and opportunities in new environments. Sometimes a change is as good as a rest, and this change can give their career the boost it needs."

“Some people are calling this ‘the great reset’. It’s certainly been a time for individuals and businesses to reassess priorities and look at the future differently.”

Marie Kirby





An appealing choice for both lawyers and clients

The current market is heavily talent-driven, Marie says. “Clients’ use of consultants has steadily increased since Peerpoint launched, attracted by bringing in extra resource without fixed costs, finding specialists for specific work or scaling up to cover larger projects. Add in the additional challenges brought by the pandemic, and it’s easy to see why demand for consultants has grown so much.

“We have so many great opportunities right now that also offer more flexibility in how and where people work. Some roles are entirely remote; if clients can’t source the right talent in their local market, they’re often open to someone doing the role from another location. Ultimately, they want the best people.”

Peerpoint isn’t just about sourcing roles, Marie says, it’s about building careers and supporting consultants to be the best they can be. “That’s particularly important for early- to mid-stage lawyers to ensure they don’t get stuck at a certain level. We actively help people move through career stages or change direction in the flow of work.”

Expanding Peerpoint’s footprint

Internationally, Peerpoint now covers most major regions. “Listening to where clients need more resource will influence how we next expand our footprint,” Marie says. “In the meantime, we’re excited about growing our UAE and U.S. businesses alongside our more established regions.”

Diversity is a key priority too, to support the ambitions of both A&O and its clients in this area. “We’ve had real success working with A&O’s returners programme, for example, bringing back into work people who’ve had extended career breaks”, Marie says. “Consulting is a great option for people who have commitments outside of work and it’s helping to bring a more diverse group of talented people on to the Peerpoint panel and to our clients.”

Alumni are always high on the wish list, Marie adds. “A&O’s alumni network has been our biggest source of talent from day one, so if anyone is rethinking their priorities and career, come and talk to us. A lot has changed in the consulting market and there are more options and ways of working than ever before.”



aosphere – 20 years of making the complex simple

Launched on the legal market in 2001, aosphere offered something not seen before: in-depth analysis of complex legal and compliance issues, researched by specialist lawyers and condensed into user-friendly online guides for clients – one annual subscription fee, no billable hours and no hidden costs.

Today, aosphere has nearly 600 global business subscribers, 15,000 individual users and 15 products ranging from derivatives and e-signatures, to financial services marketing rules.

Disrupting the market

"Twenty years ago, our clients' approach to cross-border legal compliance was to commission bespoke surveys or conduct their own lengthy analysis," says Marc-Henri Chamay, CEO of aosphere.

"We could see huge duplication of effort, major cost implications and increasing difficulty keeping up with regulations. We felt we could address that by developing a set of standard resources on the most common yet complex issues, to give clients instant answers to their global compliance challenges."

Three trends have accelerated the adoption of aosphere, Marc-Henri says. First, globalisation and the number of jurisdictions clients operate in; second, the increasing complexity of regulation; and third, a stronger focus on cost control.

Navigating data privacy

aosphere has responded to these changes by launching new services in new areas. Its latest product, for example – Rulefinder Data Privacy – analyses the complex area of data privacy law.

"Data privacy is like water: it gets everywhere," says Claire Farley, executive director of aosphere. "More jurisdictions and sectors are introducing regulations as regulators are increasing their focus, so we felt there was a real need for a tool to help clients."

As with other aosphere products, Rulefinder Data Privacy's analysis is organised in layers of detail, from traffic-light colour coding and at-a-glance summaries, to sourcing reports from leading local counsel.

"Its strength lies in our team of experts," Claire says. "They've asked the right questions at a local level and thought through how we display content for different scenarios."

Claire joined aosphere in 2007 to design a new Shareholding Disclosure product and has worked on the development of several others since. "We're often working with clients who have used other aosphere products and have ideas for where we can help them in more areas."

A good aosphere product, Claire explains, covers recurring legal or compliance issues across multiple jurisdictions where the content is constantly changing.

"Rulefinder Data Privacy is a perfect example. I became involved at the stage of simplifying the incredibly detailed and granular content the team was collecting, and thinking through fact patterns for organisations, like where they process data, where individuals are located, and what the governing laws of relevant contracts are."

The key to aosphere's success

"Central to aosphere's business model is simplicity," Marc-Henri says. "We monitor extremely complex topics for a huge number of jurisdictions, but the skill is in how we summarise and deliver analysis in a simple way."

"The breadth of information we've acquired, the quality of our team and the simplicity to clients of paying an annual fee with no hidden charges – that's why our client base has grown."

While Covid-19 hasn't impacted most areas of compliance, it has, says Marc-Henri, put a spotlight on certain issues. "Last year, for instance, we launched a service analysing the validity and enforceability of e-signatures."

Looking ahead, a key aim is to expand aosphere from its base of mostly financial services organisations to the wider corporate world. "With a product like Rulefinder Data Privacy, we're providing a solution to a challenge that virtually all multinationals face," Marc-Henri says. "Tackling these types of universal issues is what drives us on to the next phase of aosphere."



Andrew Trahair
Partner and head of AD&S
A&O: 1989-1997, 2001-present



Sally Dewar
CEO, A&O Consulting
A&O: 2018-present



Marie Kirby
Head of talent, Peerpoint
A&O: 2014-present



Marc-Henri Chamay
CEO, aosphere
A&O: 2001-present



Claire Farley
Executive director, aosphere
A&O: 1996-present

“We’ve successfully responded to the ‘more for less’ demand from clients by using tech-enabled, cost-efficient resourcing on elements of larger matters, while maintaining the quality clients expect.”

Andrew Trahair

Street Child – our new global charity partner

Introducing Street Child, our new global charity partner, an organisation dedicated to improving the life chances of children in challenging and resource-poor environments.

Every child deserves the chance to go to school and learn. Street Child believes that and is doing its utmost to make that a reality wherever it operates.

From September 2021, Street Child has had the support of A&O after it was chosen by vote as our new global charity partner for two years. Nearly 2,500 people across A&O took part in the July ballot.

“We chose social mobility as the focus of our new partnership because in almost every country children’s socio-economic background still has the biggest impact on their life chances,” says Hilde van der Baan, Amsterdam partner and co-head of A&O’s pro bono and community investment programme.

“Most of our offices run programmes to provide access to education and employment, so we want to bring that experience and commitment together

to raise GBP1 million and provide significant pro bono support for Street Child.”

Education and sustainable livelihoods

Street Child’s work targets children in low-resource environments and emergency situations across Africa, Asia and the Middle East. It focuses on a sustainable combination of support to protect children from harm, create safe schools, increase capacities of caregivers and communities to build environments for children to flourish, and help state systems provide high-quality, equitable education and livelihood skills.

Founded in 2008, the charity seeks out situations where gaps exist between the needs of children and the aid they’re getting. This often makes it one of the only organisations operating in areas hit by sudden crises – Nepal after its

earthquakes, for example – as well as situations of protracted conflict or slow-onset crises such as the Ebola epidemic in West Africa.

It also targets hard-to-reach environments such as the refugee camps in Bangladesh, carrying out work through partner organisations that understand the local context.

London partner Philip Bowden knows the charity well. “I’ve been a supporter of Street Child’s work for years,” he says. “It’s an impressive organisation and have pledged to make a material contribution to increase safety and access to learning for one million children from 2021-2024.

“I’m very pleased that A&O will play a role in this and I hope our staff and alumni have lots of opportunities to get involved with Street Child’s work over the next two years.”



“I’ve been a supporter of Street Child’s work for years. They’re an impressive organisation.”

Philip Bowden



Pathways to secondary education in Sierra Leone

As with all of A&O’s global charity partnerships, a portion of the funding – GBP500,000 – will support a specific project, with the balance to be used by Street Child on an ‘opportunity for impact’ basis.

The A&O-funded project is in Sierra Leone, where Street Child will reform 40 under-resourced rural primary schools, help 1,000 families build their businesses so they can afford to keep their children in education, and enrol 1,500 girls in secondary school.

The charity says a girl’s lifetime earnings are enhanced by 25% for every year of secondary school she completes. Most of these girls will be the first in their family to reach secondary education.

Tom Dannatt, founder and CEO of Street Child, says the charity has been working in Sierra Leone since 2008 alongside its partner, Street Child of Sierra Leone.

“In 2018, we launched our Right to Learn project to transform education in the rural Eastern Province, where children are the least likely to make it to secondary school – in fact half don’t even complete their basic education. Covid-19 has exacerbated this, with schools closing for six months – the second time in five years after the Ebola outbreak of 2014-16.

“With A&O’s support, we’ll be able to scale up our work, from transforming primary schools and training teachers, to identifying girls at risk of not continuing their education and supporting their caregivers through our flagship Family Business for Education model.

“We’ve seen the impact A&O has had with previous charity partners and are very excited and grateful for this opportunity to work together.”

Stay up to date with our global charity partnership and wider pro bono and community investment work in our magazine *Increasing Access* on allenoverly.com.

“We chose social mobility as the focus of our new partnership because in almost every country children’s socio-economic background still has the biggest impact on their life chances.”

Hilde van der Baan

A record GBP2.3m for Hope and Homes for Children

A&O staff and alumni contributed a record-breaking GBP2.3m to our previous global charity partnership, Hope and Homes for Children, which ended in July 2021.

During the partnership, A&O staff donated GBP1.83m, contributed GBP507,000 worth of pro bono time and GBP6,000 of in-kind support for the charity's campaign to end the institutional care of children around the world.

The two-year partnership was due to end in September 2020, but was extended to support Hope and Homes for Children during the worst of the pandemic.

Becoming first responders during Covid-19

Kate Welsby from Hope and Homes for Children says Covid-19 has been more than a health crisis for vulnerable families already living in poverty. "At the start of the pandemic, our frontline teams in many countries became first responders, largely because we already had access to marginalised families," she says.

"Our first priority was to stay in contact with the most at-risk children and provide essential food and healthcare supplies to families. As the pandemic continued, we were increasingly supporting the mental wellbeing of families struggling with the isolation of lockdowns and at greater risk of family separation and child abandonment."

Despite those extra challenges, Hope and Homes for Children has continued its longer-term campaign.

"We've succeeded in closing all but four orphanages in Bulgaria and are making progress in Romania, Rwanda and Moldova too," Kate says.

"It's within our grasp to demonstrate that eliminating institutionalised childcare is achievable. This genuinely would not have been possible without A&O's involvement."

Reforming child protection in India and Nepal

A key aim of the partnership was to raise GBP500,000 to fund work in India and Nepal to tackle the root causes of orphanage confinement.

"Families are often coerced into sending their children to institutions, believing they'll have access to a better education and life," Kate says. "In fact, globally, eight out of ten children in orphanages have a living parent who, with the right support, can provide a stable, loving home."

In Nepal, most of the 567 orphanages are located in popular holiday destinations. Children once confined there are at risk of being neglected, abused and exploited to elicit donations from tourists.

"Despite the Covid-19 crisis, we've continued to help thousands of high-risk children in India and Nepal," Kate says, "as well as creating support facilities like community hubs to provide catch-up education, safe spaces and parenting groups."

Influencing international stakeholders

An important element of the partnership has been to support Hope and Homes for Children's work to reform child protection globally.

Significant progress has been made in driving reform in Nepal, with 125 international non-governmental organisations committing for the first time to promoting family-based care over institutions.

A key pro bono project was researching how the Convention on the Rights of the Child is implemented in eight South Asian countries, highlighting where more action is needed. This formed the basis of an article for a leading academic journal and will feed into a major conference on childcare reform for policymakers across Asia.

An A&O team has also been developing a tech solution to give those working in India's courts and administrative system easier access to its child protection laws – an invaluable tool for social workers.

136,000 children protected in one year

"A&O's efforts have been incredible," says Mark Waddington, CEO at Hope and Homes for Children.

"Extending our partnership enabled us to plan projects strategically so that in 2020 alone we prevented 136,000 children from being separated from their families – more than in any other year. We've also achieved a number of major advocacy goals, including a commitment by the EU to reform childcare across Europe.

"All of this has been possible because of A&O's commitment, expertise and generosity, which have given thousands of children a chance to go home and be with a family that loves them."



hope and homes for children



Record fundraising efforts

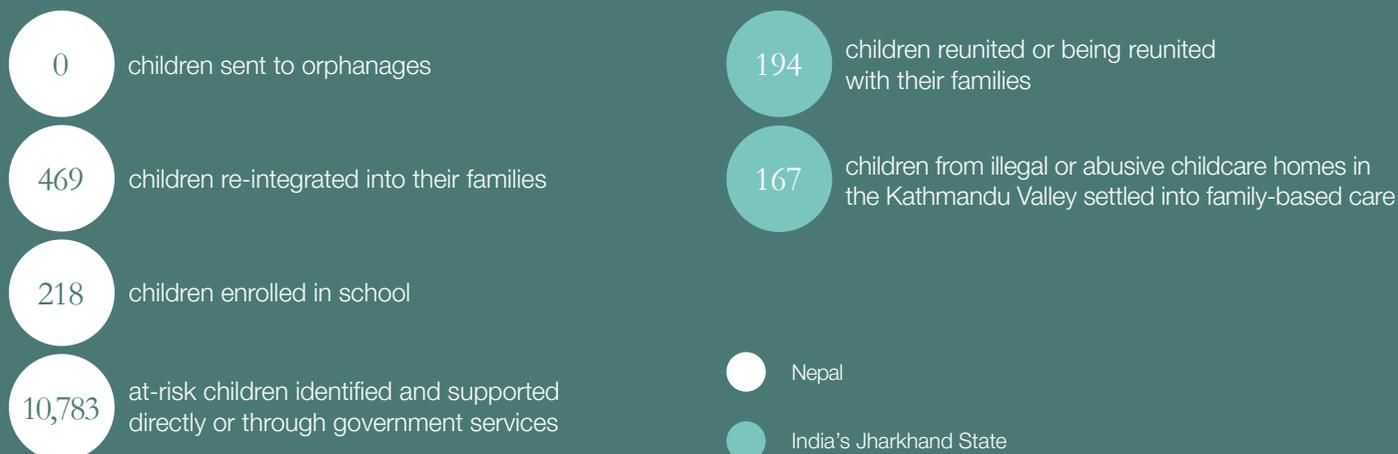
Throughout the partnership, fundraising events at 40 offices included:

- 'First Hour, First Day' 2021: 990 people donated GBP475,000 – a record for A&O
- 193 colleagues from 22 offices travelled more than 40,000km in a virtual challenge to circumnavigate the globe, our largest-ever charity event
- 17 people – including Global Alumni Managers Stella Ekkeshis and Jenny Enever and alumni Jane Gibson and Jody Smith – trekked 70km across the Carpathian Mountains and visited Hope and Homes for Children in Bucharest

“All of this has been possible because of A&O’s commitment, expertise and generosity, which have given thousands of children a chance to go home and be with a family that loves them.”

Mark Waddington, CEO at Hope and Homes for Children

The impact of our partnership in Nepal and two districts in India’s Jharkhand State



In memoriam

The Alumni Network remembers A&O colleagues and friends who passed away in the last 12 months



Geoff Fuller

A&O: 1984-2021

ICM consultant and former partner Geoff Fuller, who “embodied all the values of a true A&O partner”, died in January 2021. He was 59.

Geoff was with A&O in London for more than 35 years, joining in 1984 and becoming partner ten years later. He became a consultant after retiring in 2017.

Known for greeting everyone with a smile and going out of his way to help others, he was “a joy to be around”.



Peter Brodigan

A&O: 1952-1996

Peter Brodigan, a former senior member of the Tax department in London, died in January 2021 at the age of 84.

Peter was 16 when he joined A&O in 1952. During his 44-year career with the firm, he played a significant role in the establishment of the Tax department that exists today.

He retired in 1996.



Brian Hudd

A&O: 1989-2004

Brian Hudd, a buyer in the Finance department in A&O’s London office between 1989 and 2004, died in February 2021 at the age of 77.

Brian’s former colleagues remember his dry sense of humour. They described him as loyal, hard-working and popular with colleagues and suppliers alike.



Richard Challinor

A&O: 1995-2021

Richard Challinor, who died in April 2021, was based for several years at A&O's Canary Wharf office in Bank Street, where he managed the Office Assistants team. He transferred to the Mailroom in Bishops Square in 2010 when the Bank Street office closed.

Former colleagues remember him as a valuable and conscientious member of the Mailroom team, well known in the London office through his duties which took him all over the building.



Owain Morgan

A&O: 2000-2004

Owain Morgan, a former associate in A&O's London Litigation department between 2000 and 2004, died in April 2021. He was 44.

Owain secured a graduate training contract with A&O and qualified into the Litigation department. A highlight of his time with A&O was the pro bono work he undertook, which contributed to the abolition of the mandatory death penalty in Jamaica.



Zbigniew Mrowiec

A&O: 2009-2014

Zbigniew Mrowiec, a former partner in the Warsaw office, died in April 2021 at the age of 55.

Former colleagues described him as a dynamic and driven lawyer and a joy to work with. He was also a wonderful host to colleagues who visited Warsaw.



Providence Napoleon

A&O: 2015-2021

Providence Napoleon, an associate in A&O's Litigation group in Washington, D.C., who was widely recognised as a top up-and-coming antitrust lawyer, died in April 2021. She was 34.

Former colleagues described her as a compassionate and loyal friend who was relentlessly positive and fiercely resilient.



Jack Hughes

A&O: 1938-1985

Jack Hughes, who died at the age of 101 in July 2021, was the leader of A&O's Pensions practice for many years in the London office. He retired in 1985 after 47 years of service.

Jack's former colleagues described him as being, in every sense, a true gentleman who was prepared to give of his time and knowledge to anyone who sought his help.



Katrin Stapper

A&O: 2000-2021

Katrin Stapper, who was Head of HR in Germany, died in July 2021 at the age of 52.

Katrin joined A&O in 2000 and was well known across the A&O network. She was a valued member of the HR team and worked tirelessly in Germany for more than 20 years.

Read the many personal tributes from
A&O and alumni colleagues at
allenovery.com/alumni.

Please contact the Alumni team
if you would like to share a
personal tribute with
other members of the
Alumni Network.



Ron Cook

A&O: 1968-1994

Ron Cook worked in A&O's Property department in London for 26 years before retiring in 1994. He died in September 2021 at the age of 87.

Ron was in former partner Rod Brown's team for a number of years until he retired. Rod recalls: "I was in my late 30s when he joined me, and he never ceased to be amused at the incongruity of working for, as he put it, a young lad like me.

"But he was utterly charming, albeit occasionally grumpy when he thought that a lawyer on the other side was being unreasonable...He worked hard and competently. Most of all, he was reliable, and got the job done. I remember him fondly."



Greet Vanslambrouck

A&O: 2001-2021

Greet Vanslambrouck, counsel of A&O's Banking practice in Belgium, died in September 2021. She was 50.

Greet had been with A&O for more than 20 years; she was promoted to counsel in 2006. She gained the respect and admiration of her colleagues with her warmth, kindness, intelligence and professionalism.

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Credits

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