# ASHLEY POPLE

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**Application to 2020 PhD Workshop on the Economics of AI**

Artificial intelligence will likely transform labour markets. As a final year PhD student in Economics at the University of Oxford, I study the role of emergent technologies in shaping labour markets and how best to design online markets for matching workers to firms, with a focus on developing countries. Following recent advances in automation technologies in manufacturing, there has been renewed interest in a services-led development model, as showcased by India. However, advances in artificial intelligence (AI) also threaten to substitute – or alternatively, complement – workers and accelerate reshoring. Together with Katherine Stapleton and Alexander Copestake (Oxford), we explore how AI adoption both within India and its main export partners (UK and US) affect employment and the skills distribution in India's service sector. In addition to national firm and labour surveys, we have unique access to Naukri.com job postings, the largest India jobs platform with 50 million registered jobseekers.

Emergent technologies have not only shaped the nature of work, but also the ways in which workers find jobs. In a second set of projects, I run experiment in collaboration with Google on its job matching platform connecting low-income youth to blue collar service sector jobs in Bangladesh and on Upwork, the largest freelancing platform worldwide. Transitioning job search online has substantially reduced the cost, but also increased the volumes of ill-targeted applications, challenging predictions that digitisation should necessarily improve job matching. Congestion makes it harder for firms to find the right workers. I investigate whether introducing application costs that vary in size and content attracts higher quality applicants and improves retention.

My interest in AI extends beyond my research. In 2018, I co-developed a report under the Rhodes Artificial Intelligence Lab to advise the UK's Institute for the Future of Work on the use of machine learning in informing policy. I was offered an internship with Bloomberg Beta, San Francisco, that invests in future of work start-ups using machine learning. I attended a departmental reading group on "Machine Learning for Economists".

In light of my current research, I would love to participate in the 2020 PhD Workshop on the Economics of AI.

# Ashley Pople

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## Education

**University of Oxford**

*DPhil (PhD) in Economics* *2016–present*

- Supervision: Stefan Dercon and Abi Adams-Prassl
- Research interests: Development, behavioural and labour economics
- Scholarships: Rhodes Scholarship; Hertford Senior Scholarship; Department Bursary
- Teachng: Teaching assistant on microeconomics for MSc in Economics for Development; Seminar leader in development economics for Exeter Summer School
- Reading groups: Applied Micro; Machine Learning for Economists; Firms, Labour and Organisations (OxFLO)
- Qualifying exams: Econometrics; Advanced Econometrics; Public Economics; Urban Spatial Economics

**University of Oxford**

*MSc in Economics for Development, first class* *2015–2016*

- Awards: George Webb Medley Prize *proxime accessit* for Best Overall Performance in the MSc
- Thesis on crowding out of private transfers by state pension in South Africa awarded distinction

**University of Cape Town**

*BCom Honours in Economics, first class* *2014*

- Scholarships: National Research Foundation Honours, David Pitman Bursary and Sheila Van Der Horst Bursary
- Awards: Bain and Company Award for first place in BCom Honours in Economics stream
- Thesis on detrimental ranking of poor households under National Student Financial Aid Scheme awarded distinction
- Teachng: Tutor Coordinator overseeing 90 economics tutors; Head Tutor for Advanced Macro and Micro

**University of Cape Town**

*BCom Politics, Philosophy & Economics, first class* *2011–2013*

- Scholarships: UCT Commerce Scholarships and Dean's Merit List awarded annually for GPA of over 80%
- Awards: Hirsch Zitron, Genesis Analytics and ERSA Prizes awarded for first place in third year economics

## Working papers

**Artificial intelligence and employment in India's service sector**

*With Katherine Stapleton and Alexander Copestake*

We study how the adoption of artificial intelligence in India and its main export partners, USA and UK, affect employment and skills in India's service sector using Naukri.com job postings.

**The paradox of search frictions in online job matching**

*Single-authored*

I investigate whether introducing application frictions that vary in size and content attracts higher quality applicants and improves retention on Google's online job matching platform in Bangladesh and Upwork.

**Learning to see the world of opportunities: The impact of visualisation on entrepreneurial success**

*with Nava Ashraf, Gharad Bryan, Alexia Delfino, Emily Holmes and Leonardo Iacovone*

We study whether visualisation can be used to access information more efficiently and improve decision making. We test our primary hypotheses that visualisation improves performance in economic choices and can be taught through a randomised control trial with 1967 vulnerable entrepreneurs in Colombia.

**Overcoming setbacks: Beliefs and effort**

*With Salman Asim, Stefan Dercon, Paul Collier, Sonja Vogt and James Walsh*

Through lab-in-the-field experiments with 800 Malawian primary school students, we disentangle the effects of distinct beliefs on effort in response to setbacks.

**Evolving support networks: Crowding out of private transfer in South Africa**

*Single-authored*

I study the extent to which an exogenous increase in household income through the state pension crowd out inter-household private transfers in South Africa. I find evidence in support of substantial crowding out.