

RSA

21st century enlightenment

Journal Autumn 2012



State of flux

Traditional power structures are dissolving rapidly.
Can we reshape them for a better future?

Adam Lent and **Madsen Pirie** assess the prospects of the Millennial Generation
Zygmunt Bauman on why greater cultural awareness could save Europe from decline

Case study: Reap & Sow

These are some of the first products made by Reap & Sow, co-founded by RSA Fellows Kate Welch and Rebecca Howard.

The venture piloted in Durham with the help of £7,000 from RSA Catalyst and support from design students through the RSA's cultural partnership with Northumbria University. Reap & Sow works with emerging UK-based designers to create home and outdoor living ranges made by people in prison or upon their release. In doing so, it creates genuine employment and life prospects for ex-offenders.

Kate Welch was recently chosen by the RSA Social Entrepreneurs Network to be one of nine 'spotlighted' social entrepreneurs for 2012.



Can RSA Catalyst help your idea?

Each year, RSA Catalyst awards £100,000 in grants to turn Fellows' ideas into action

Have you identified an innovative solution to a social problem?

Is your idea in its early stages of development?

Do you see value in working with some of our 27,000 RSA Fellows?



We support new Fellow-led ventures that tackle a social problem in a sustainable way. We award initial grants of £1,000–£2,000 and additional grants of £5,000, and support projects by mobilising other Fellows, such as those who offer their expertise through the RSA SkillsBank.

To find out more and apply for support, visit the Catalyst webpage: www.thersa.org/catalyst



“SOCIAL PESSIMISM IS IN DANGER OF BECOMING A SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY”

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Fellowship Council

Bob Porrer

Dr Irene Campbell

**New chair and deputy due to be elected at
the first meeting of the incoming Fellowship
Council on 20 September*

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Dr Kathy Seddon

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Jenny Bland

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East of England

East Midlands

Ireland

London

North East

North West

Scotland

South Central

South East

South West

Wales Cymru

West

West Midlands

Yorkshire

Chair

Malcolm Noble

Peter Robertson

Denis Stewart

Joyce Arram

Jan M Portillo

Lilian Barton

John Naylor

Tony Hoskins

Dr Irene Campbell

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Bill Gibbon

Nick Clifford

Ann Packard

Eugenie Violet Teasley

Bethan Michael

Kath Davies

Julia Goodfellow-Smith

Wiard Sterk

Nick Garrick

Marion Simon

“WE NEED CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS MORE THAN EVER BEFORE”



LUKE JOHNSON

The launch of the RSA Action and Research Centre will enable the Society to continue – and strengthen – its efforts to promote 21st century enlightenment through a growing range of projects

This will be the last *RSA Journal* to be published under my chairmanship. When I became chair in 2009, I determined that part of my role was to work with the board to ensure that the RSA had sound finances, the appropriate infrastructure and governance procedures that were fit for purpose. These issues are all vital, but it is the RSA's charitable mission and its delivery that have most engaged me. I was keen to ensure that the institution does not just have sound values and innovative ideas, but that it also contributes to worthwhile improvements in the world.

I encouraged the executive team and staff to meet four key objectives: to pursue and build upon our excellent work in education; to ensure ever-greater engagement with our 27,000 Fellows by carrying out an in-depth analysis of their interests and passions; to encourage Fellows to carry out their own initiatives; and to ensure that the field of enterprise assumed greater prominence in the work of the Society.

I am proud to see education at the heart of the Society's work: building on the success of its academy in Tipton, it is now creating an RSA family of academies. The RSA is on its way to re-establishing itself as a powerful thought leader in education policy and practice.

Promoting enterprise is a passion for me and I am pleased that the RSA is more focused on this area, not least in this journal. It is not easy to build a new strand of work, especially when much of our project work must be externally funded. Progress has not been as dramatic as I might have hoped, but a number of enterprise initiatives are now going ahead and this theme is back at the heart of the RSA's concerns.

I have always stressed the importance of Fellows being engaged in delivering our mission. I am an enthusiastic advocate and supporter of RSA Catalyst, which helps Fellows to develop events and projects in their local areas or communities of interest. In 2011/12, Catalyst awarded Fellows' social ventures a total of £100,000 in grants of £1,000 to £5,000. I hope that this fund continues to grow so that some of the RSA's most powerful effects are the result of initiatives from Fellows themselves.

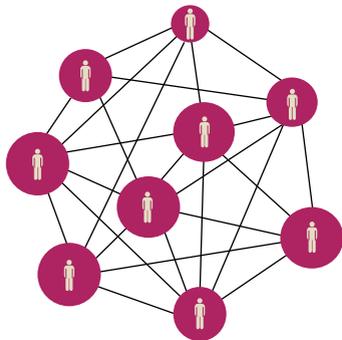
In December 2011, the board instigated the first comprehensive survey of Fellows' views. This examined a broad range of RSA activities and facilities and will be repeated regularly. It was welcomed by many Fellows as an opportunity to provide detailed feedback and has generated more than 600,000 words of qualitative data, which will be analysed in more detail as a second phase of this project over the coming months. I am confident that the RSA will use the results as a baseline for us continuously to improve our offer to Fellows.

I do not find the minutiae of governance procedures exciting, but I believe the governance review and changes we have overseen have put the Society on a much firmer footing. I am delighted by the progress we have made in developing the Fellowship Council and the new, more open framework for relations between John Adam Street and the nations and regions. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Bob Porrer, who, as chair of the Council, has worked tirelessly and dedicated huge amounts of time to developing the governance recommendations and enhancing the Fellowship Council's role.

Having seen what can go wrong with big capital projects, when it came to the refurbishment of the ground floor and historic Great Room, I expressed reservations. After much discussion, however, Trustees unanimously voted to move forward with the proposals. Our trust has been repaid: this historic House has been restored to its former glory, incorporating the very best technological capacity, and will generate significant funds for the RSA's work. This will enable us to expand our connection with Fellows and I am very grateful to everyone who contributed to the Great Room Appeal.

These are complex and challenging times. We need civic associations such as the RSA, with its focus on innovation and enterprise, its independence and combination of practical action and ideas, more than ever before. In recognition of this, we have decided to relaunch RSA Projects as the RSA Action and Research Centre.

This edition of the journal focuses on some of the wider social changes that the new Centre will need to address. It explores the outlook for the Millennial Generation, whose members will become our future leaders and workers. They and the RSA will no doubt face plenty of challenges. I will watch the RSA's progress with sincere interest and all good wishes for the future.



CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

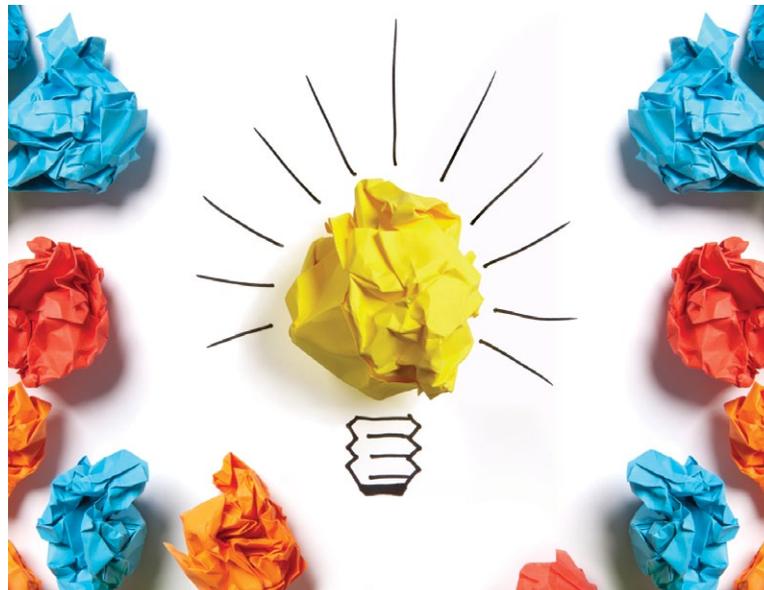
PRESCRIPTION FOR WELLBEING

People at risk of isolation and vulnerability will soon be able to receive ‘social prescriptions’ that help them use local resources to improve their mental wellbeing, thanks to a new project launched by the RSA’s Connected Communities programme.

The Social Mirror initiative, which has been approved for funding by the Nominet Trust, will see the RSA and MIT develop a ‘social app’ that aims to help people participate in their communities. By responding to a series of online questions, users will receive an automatic analysis of their social networks, as well as advice about how they could use their connections to improve their mental wellbeing.

By testing the app’s effectiveness in different contexts – such as among GPs or other health practitioners – the RSA will evaluate the impact of these social prescriptions on people’s mental wellbeing, their sense of attachment to (and participation in) their local communities and their use of public services.

For more information about the Social Mirror initiative, contact Gaia Marcus, Connected Communities researcher, at gaia.marcus@rsa.org.uk



PROJECTS

RSA ACTION AND RESEARCH CENTRE

RSA Projects has been renamed the RSA Action and Research Centre to better reflect the team’s dynamic approach to both the ‘thinking’ and ‘doing’ aspects of its work.

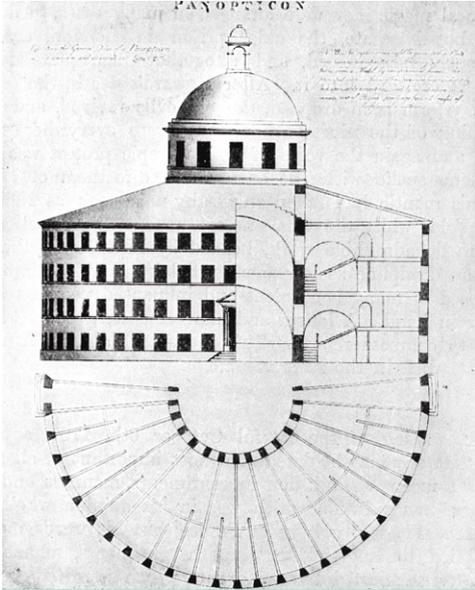
The change recognises the considerable expansion of, and changes to, projects in recent months, including greater emphasis on social innovation as well as research. Major initiatives are now underway in manufacturing, design, and drug and alcohol recovery, and the RSA’s family of academies is undertaking its first school improvement programmes (see page 40).

To showcase some of these exciting activities, as well as to celebrate the refurbishment of the House, the RSA is holding a week-long series of events from 10 to 15 September. Highlights include the annual RSA president’s lecture, delivered by Richard Florida and attended by HRH Princess Anne; chief executive Matthew Taylor’s annual lecture; and other high-profile speakers such as Jesse Norman MP and UK digital champion Martha Lane Fox.

The RSA is holding a workshop on 11 September that aims to encourage and support young entrepreneurs. This will coincide with the publication of a new RSA pamphlet arguing that the so-called Millennial Generation has the potential to lead the UK and the wider world into a new era of enterprise and innovation (see page 16). Enterprise among young people will become a key concern for the new Action and Research Centre, building on the history of the RSA while facing up to a significant challenge that the UK needs to address if it is to return to economic health.

For more information about the RSA Action and Research Centre, contact Adam Lent, RSA director of programme, at adam.lent@rsa.org.uk

“ENTERPRISE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE WILL BECOME A KEY CONCERN FOR THE NEW CENTRE”



RSA TRANSITIONS

FROM VISION TO REALITY

The RSA is taking Transitions, its ambitious prisons project, to the next stage in 2013.

Last year, the RSA, working alongside a group of Fellows, published its vision for a social enterprise model of custody and rehabilitation services. This included a 'Transitions park' element, where prisoners and ex-offenders would be able to work in social enterprises and gain access to resettlement services on a single site. Having secured initial funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Tudor Trust, the RSA aims to translate this vision into reality.

Funding – which will include money raised by a dinner held at the RSA and attended by HRH Princess Anne – will go towards a feasibility study that will test the park element of the project on two sites, including HMP Everthorpe in East Riding, Yorkshire.

The next stage of the project will involve practical action – including a land and buildings survey and efforts to engage Fellows, community, employers and service users – and research into key areas such as the role of technology and green industries. The aim is to complete the feasibility study by the end of 2013 and develop a business plan and investment strategy for progressing the project..

Ed Cornnell, governor of HMP Everthorpe, said: "The Transitions model is ambitious, but it is also grounded in common sense. Many of the people we work with struggle to secure work and resettle on release, either because they do not have the skills, confidence and stability to move forward or because their criminal record makes securing work difficult. We are working with the RSA to develop a model that seeks to overcome these barriers and create jobs. It will benefit people leaving the prison and the local community."

■ For more information about RSA Transitions, contact Rachel O'Brien, project director, at racobrien@gmail.com



SOCIAL BRAIN

CULTIVATING CURIOSITY

Schools and parents must foster a more curious attitude among young people if we are to address complex social challenges such as the energy crisis, according to an RSA report.

The report, produced by the Social Brain team, identified a strong link between curiosity and innovation, but warned that modern lifestyles – particularly an over-reliance on technology – may promote short-term curiosity at the expense of long-term thinking.

To build on the findings, the RSA teamed up with British Gas Generation Green to launch a contest to identify the UK's most curious children. Twelve children between the ages of 7 and 14 were selected from more than 70 candidates to attend a workshop, where they shared ideas for how to tackle challenges related to energy use.

The Social Brain project – shortly to be relaunched as the RSA Social Brain Centre – has been researching behaviour change since it was set up in 2009. Recent work includes an investigation into the psychological demands of civic participation, an evidence review on the challenges of decision-making in adult social care and the provision of advice to a retail bank on how to encourage customers to save more.

Dr Jonathan Rowson, director of the new centre, said: "The range of our work continues to expand, but always focuses on how we make and justify decisions, how we form and change habits, and how we regulate our patterns of attention."

■ For more information about the centre, visit www.thersa.org/social-brain. To find out your own curiosity profile, visit www.generationgreen.co.uk/curiosity

GOVERNANCE

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The RSA's Annual General Meeting (AGM) will take place at 5pm on 3 October 2012 at 8 John Adam Street. Fellows will by now have received the notice of the meeting and a proxy form. This year, the board of Trustees has put forward three resolutions: to approve the election of Vikki Heywood as chair, to approve the election of Hanif Virji as treasurer and to ratify the terms of office of Jackie Elliman and Keith Read.

We strongly encourage you to vote on this year's resolutions, either by attending the AGM in person or by appointing a proxy who can vote on your behalf. Voting instructions can also be given electronically at www.votebyinternet.com/rsaagm2012

■ *The AGM will be followed at 6.30pm by the Inaugural Lecture of the 259th Session. All Fellows and their guests are welcome to attend the lecture: to book your ticket, email lectures@rsa.org.uk, visit www.thersa.org/events or call +44 (0)20 7451 6868*



FELLOWSHIP COUNCIL

TRUSTED ADVISERS

Since its creation in 2009, the Fellowship Council has evolved into a valued advisory body, voicing Fellows' views on everything from governance issues to funding decisions.

The Council consists of 40 Fellows who represent the RSA's broad range of activities. It has made a major contribution to recent governance changes, having created 14 new-style regional and national teams, with more flexibility and clearer accountability.

Among the Council's achievements over the past three years have been its contribution to the modernisation of the Fellowship Charter (led by the then-chair Tessa Britton); enhanced financial and other support for the regional and national networks; its decision to initiate a review of thematic networks; its work on digital engagement strategies, which is now feeding into the design of technical support; and its involvement in selecting the proposed new chair of the RSA.

A particular success has been the formation of the Catalyst Working Group, which has considered 327 project ideas from Fellows. The group has provided advice, support and, in some cases, funding to help develop these projects.

The incoming Fellowship Councillors (35 of whom have now been elected) face considerable challenges, including how to improve the channels used to share good practice and replicate successful Fellow-led initiatives; how to help the Fellowship to navigate technological change; and how to engage Fellows further in project activity.

Bob Porrer (pictured), outgoing chair of the Fellowship Council, said: "The Council has worked hard to build the foundations for greater involvement of Fellows; we need to see the experience and skills of its Fellows as a key contribution to the RSA's charitable mission. I hope that the new Council will rise to the challenge."

NEWS IN BRIEF

NEW RSA CHAIR

Subject to Fellows' ratification at the Annual General Meeting on 3 October, Vikki Heywood CBE – who has been executive director of the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) since 2003 – is to take over from Luke Johnson as RSA chair. Her career highlights have included leading the transformation of the RSC's Stratford-upon-Avon home, raising £110m to support its capital programme and building local and national enterprise partnerships. She said: "Following the many achievements of Luke Johnson, I am delighted to have been invited to become the chair of the RSA. I am committed to exploring every opportunity to work together to achieve our ambition of a more principled and prosperous society."

GOING COOPERATIVE

The 2020 Public Services Hub is working with Oldham Council and the Leadership Centre for Local Government to assess the town's progress in implementing a cooperative model of local

government. Launched in October, the Hub's report explores how the council is transforming its relationship with citizens through strong local leadership, devolution to neighbourhoods and cooperative partnerships. It asks whether these reforms can help the council achieve its goals of increasing public trust, improving community wellbeing and promoting greater innovation.

DESIGNING THE OLYMPIC GAMES

Twelve Royal Designers for Industry (RDI) were commissioned to design some of the most iconic features of the London Olympic and Paralympic Games. Edward Barber and Jay Osgerby designed the torch, whose three-sided form represents the number of times London has hosted the Games; Thomas Heatherwick designed the cauldron, out of which rose the Olympic flame; David Watkins designed the medals; and structural engineer Chris Wise contributed to the design and construction of the velodrome, which was recognised for its energy efficiency.



HOW TO CHANGE THE FUTURE

People who attempt to tackle huge global problems often find themselves frustratingly stuck. They cannot solve the problems in their current context, and they cannot transform the context on their own. The people whose cooperation they need do not understand or agree with them; nor do they trust them or one another. So how do we change the future? Pioneering transformative scenario planner Adam Kahane visits the RSA to outline a powerful new methodology for doing just that.

Where: RSA
When: Tuesday
2 October, 6pm



HOW TO DE-SPIN A PARTY CONFERENCE

What does 'spin' look like in an age of transparency? Despite the rise of online democracy and people power, politicians hold down-to-earth press conferences in tractor factories and broadcast their fondness for the humble pasty. But award-winning journalist and author Eliane Glaser argues that this 'call me Dave' sincerity is actually spin's modern mutation: deception disguised as openness and engagement.

Where: RSA
When: Thursday
11 October, 1pm

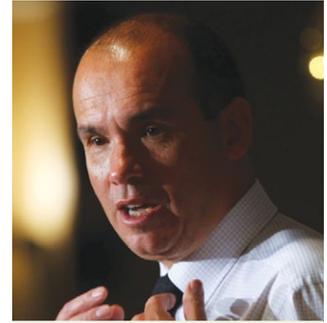
RSA Events development officer Abi Stephenson selected the highlights above from a large number of public events in the RSA's programme. For full event listings and free audio and video downloads, please visit www.thersa.org/events



HOW TO GOVERN INTELLIGENTLY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

For decades, liberal democracy has been trumpeted as the best system of governance available to us. But in a rapidly changing cultural landscape, is that any longer the case? How can east and west learn 'best practice' from each other in order to survive the unique challenges of the 21st century? *New Perspectives Quarterly* editor Nathan Gardels (above) and investor and philanthropist Nicholas Berggruen discuss.

Where: RSA
When: Thursday
8 November, 6pm



HOW TO BLOW THE WHISTLE

Where were the whistleblowers when brokers were selling risky sub-prime mortgages, when MPs were claiming for duck houses and when bankers were manipulating the LIBOR rate? What makes a person sacrifice a huge salary and stand up to the giants? Join Michael Woodford, ex-chief executive of Olympus, as he explains how he discovered a multibillion-dollar accounting fraud at the firm and became the first ever president to blow the whistle.

Where: RSA
When: Thursday
29 November, 1pm

POWER FAILURE

Faced with the dissolution of traditional hierarchies and diminishing allegiance to civic institutions, politicians will need to draw on all of humanity's competing instincts to tackle entrenched social problems

By Matthew Taylor

Even during a double-dip recession, in international and historical terms, Britain in 2012 is a rich country with the capacity to become richer. Yet today, hundreds of thousands of older citizens will fail to receive the level of care they need to enjoy dignity, let alone a reasonable quality of life. The individual prospects of British children continue to depend more on class background than ability or merit. Millions of people who want full-time jobs are without them. And, despite our best intentions, we are still far from working out how to live within the limits scientists think we should set as a matter of global urgency on carbon emissions. There are as many reasons to believe that these problems will get worse as there are that they will get better.

Most of us would like to live in a more caring, socially just, economically dynamic and environmentally responsible country. The challenge is to close the gap between our aspirations and the trajectory on which current thinking and action places us. But to do this, we need to think afresh about social power, where it comes from and how it might be rekindled.

Responding to an ageing population, increasing social mobility and the need for environmental sustainability are examples of what some analysts call 'wicked' issues. They have complex causes and multiple stakeholders, and they are unlikely to be fully solved in the foreseeable future. Most importantly, while many policy interventions seek merely to adapt an aspect of underlying patterns of public attitudes and behaviour, significant progress may demand more far-reaching changes in social norms, expectations and capabilities.

More than 50 years have passed since John F Kennedy said: "And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country." In the decades since then, our understanding of what drives

MATTHEW TAYLOR
IS CHIEF EXECUTIVE
OF THE RSA

citizens to do the right thing has advanced. Insight from behavioural economics, social psychology and social marketing led, in 2008, to the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit publishing a paper that looked at how to encourage healthy eating, educational participation and environmental responsibility. David Cameron's concept of the Big Society also focused on encouraging people to act together for social good, particularly at the neighbourhood level. But the Big Society idea has floundered and, rather than engaging with deeper systemic challenges, the focus on behaviour change remains at the margins of policymaking.

The impression is of politicians gingerly prodding, but failing fully to confront, a wider problem of social aspiration. The lens through which problems are viewed can be telling. A recent report on failing care for frail older people in hospital blamed managers and a lack of compassion among nurses. Yet neglect is more likely when a vulnerable person has no advocate. The problem is, therefore, about not only public-service standards but also the isolation of many older people. This provokes much wider questions about society and our responsibilities to one another. A facile debate about social mobility focuses almost entirely on how to get talented poor people to be upwardly mobile (even though this may simply concentrate disadvantage among those left behind), but questions about the characteristics of a just society or the fierce resistance of the privileged to downward mobility are avoided. Because progress involves challenges to current ways of thinking and of perceiving our best interests, it seems hard even to debate these issues openly and honestly.

SOCIAL PESSIMISM

Nearly two decades after Kennedy's inaugural speech, in a powerful but now largely forgotten presidential address, Jimmy Carter alerted his country to a phenomenon new to the modern era: the fact that most people thought







America would get worse, not better, in the future. At the time, Ronald Reagan and others attacked Carter's concern as being 'un-American' but, since then, social pessimism has tended to deepen across the west. People explain their gloom in terms of specific grievances or a sense of disillusionment with politicians, but is there something more fundamental at play?

Conventional politics focuses on who should have power and how it should be used. Social pessimism is a symptom of a deeper feeling of powerlessness – the idea that not only are we failing to use our power to make society stronger, but also that there is simply not enough constructive power available to tackle difficult issues. Instead, the power we have seems more suited to blocking change. Political systems are silted up by vested interests and a determination among citizens and their representatives to protect assets accumulated in easier times.

Defined simply, power is the capacity to achieve desired objectives. It can be expressed in various ways: through coercion, explicit persuasion or an ability to shape norms and assumptions. We can also think of social power as having three distinct forms. First, the downward power of hierarchical authority associated most strongly with the state. Second, the lateral power of solidarity and shared values generally associated with the idea of community. Third, the upward power of individual aspirations, which tends to be associated with markets. Wicked problems are, by definition, tough and multifaceted, so we need to draw on all forms of social power to tackle them. When progress seems impossible, we revert to a fourth way of thinking about power and change: fatalism.

Different ways of viewing and exercising power have been more or less dominant at different times in our history. For example, despite the occasional outburst of solidaristic

rebellion such as the Peasants' Revolt, the medieval period was characterised by religious fatalism and feudal hierarchy. In the 20th century, by contrast, the decades after the Second World War were characterised by the confident bureaucracies of big government and big corporations, while social liberalism and consumerism offered unprecedented individual freedom.

POWER SHORTAGE

As we saw in the wake of the credit crunch, there are times when only decisive, top-down leadership will suffice. Beyond such exigencies, however, hierarchical authority is beset by doubt. From MPs to bankers, and from the Catholic church to newspaper editors, those in authority have seen their behaviours subjected to aggressive scrutiny and have been found wanting. While there is a danger in exaggerating previous levels of faith in politicians, the 2012 annual Edelman Trust Barometer survey found that the proportion of people inclined to trust government in 18 countries had fallen to a new low of just 38%. Several factors combine to generate this loss of faith.

First, after the post-war decades of full employment, rising family incomes and social wages, the current economic and fiscal crisis is exacerbating longstanding problems of high unemployment and stagnant living standards for most workers. In the corporate sector, too, the rate at which big companies fail or lose their reputations is accelerating, while the post-war employers' promise of a job for life and secure pension have long since been abandoned.

Second, post-war affluence, rising levels of education, innovation in consumer markets and mass migration have all contributed to changes in the make-up of the public and its norms and aspirations. The result is a more complex society

“ONE-DIMENSIONAL CULTURES OR APPROACHES ARE INFLEXIBLE AND PRONE TO COLLAPSE”

and a public that has more differentiated needs, more gains to protect and more personalised expectations.

Finally, technology has increased the pressures on western governments: easier accessibility to information, the importance of flat networks and the speed of online mobilisation all represent challenges to top-heavy bureaucracies.

What about the second form of power, social solidarity? Private affluence, population mobility, mass-cultural exchange and social diversity are implicated in the decline of solidaristic institutions and impulses. Evidence from social psychology shows that even those who have inclusive and liberal worldviews tend to trust people they know and who are similar to them. So, in an ever more footloose and diverse world, it is hardly surprising to find evidence of falling levels of trust in strangers, particularly in areas that have become more diverse.

The past 30 years have seen a rapid decline in active membership of, and even nominal allegiance to, civic institutions such as the organised church, trade unions and political parties, all of which offered ‘congregational’ spaces and opportunities for cooperative action across significant boundaries of interest and identity. Changes in class have also been important: we have seen a fracturing of working-class communities – most vividly illustrated by the shift of social housing from a mainstream tenure of choice to a residual sector for people without work – and of the middle class. Meanwhile, the wealthiest individuals have detached themselves into a global elite.

In contrast with the decline of authority and solidarity, individualism is the strongest force of our times. However, it takes a form that is problematic not just for society – in that it drives inequality and unsustainable levels of consumption – but also for the individual. Many indicators, such as rising life expectancies and a greater tolerance of diversity, point towards social progress. But others, such as the incidence of diseases of overconsumption and mental illness, can be seen as evidence of the pathologies of consumerist individualism. Furthermore, a wealth of behavioural research has not only shattered the economists’ myth of utility-maximising rational man, but has also challenged many of the common-sense self-perceptions that feed narrow individualism. Research shows, for example, that most people systematically exaggerate their intellectual consistency, their talents and their virtues.

The problem may not, however, be to do with individualism itself. Personal ambition and self-confidence are the corollaries of achievement and enterprise, and concern for the unique individual is at the heart of the human rights movement and much religious doctrine. But individualism unrestrained by the bonds of social obligation and the constraints of wise

hierarchy is prone to myopia, hubris and self-destruction. In the absence of countervailing forces, fatalism has filled the gap in our view of society and its possibilities. It is this combination – individualism and fatalism in the context of a loss of faith in hierarchy and a loss of solidaristic capacity – that gives rise to the trend towards social pessimism.

CLUMSY SOLUTIONS

The relationship between the different forms of social power is the focus of a group of researchers who draw on the work of the anthropologist Mary Douglas. Under the unhelpful banner of cultural theory, they argue that when it comes to complex and contested change, the hierarchical, solidaristic, individualistic and fatalistic perspectives are ever-present as competing diagnoses, dispositions and prescriptions.

Each form of power has distinctive qualities. The strategic capacity of hierarchical approaches is set against a tendency to be controlling; solidaristic cultures foster selflessness but can also breed insularity and sectarianism; individualism is creative and dynamic but can also be selfish and irresponsible. Exponents of cultural theory make the case for ‘clumsy solutions’, which combine the three active forms of social power while recognising the ubiquity of fatalism. Rather than seeking to resolve or suppress the inherent tensions among different ways of seeing and exercising power, clumsy solutions acknowledge and work with those tensions.

Organisations or strategies that rely on only two of the three active forces of change are likely to be sub-optimal in the face of complexity. For example, public-sector organisations tend to have strong hierarchical and solidaristic tendencies but find it difficult to value or develop the capacity for risk-taking and innovation associated with individualism.

One-dimensional cultures or approaches are inflexible and prone to collapse. An example is provided by the intense individualism of investment banks. Not only did these institutions eschew any sense of value-based solidarity, but the pace and scale of the transactions carried out by individual brokers also defied effective hierarchical oversight. At the other extreme, a historical study of communes (avowedly solidaristic institutions) found poor survival rates except where strict rules and obligations were enforced, presumably by some form of hierarchy. The failure of the Soviet empire can be seen as a case study in the pathologies of a predominantly hierarchical culture (belying its solidaristic claims).

Cultural theory offers two intersecting routes to tackling wicked issues: first, fostering forms of hierarchy, solidarity and individualism that better fit 21st century challenges, and second, combining these into clumsy solutions.

A number of examples suggest how this approach might have helped policymakers achieve greater success or avoid strategic errors. The progress made by the last government in pursuit of its ambitious goal of eradicating child poverty should not be underestimated. However, not only could more progress have been expected given the benign economic and fiscal environment, but the government also sought to solve the problem alone, rather than tapping into social solidarity and >>



individual aspiration. A contrasting narrowness is illustrated by David Cameron's Big Society appeal to new forms of solidarity and social responsibility. An important reason for the idea's loss of credibility was the absence of a coherent model of change for government and of any explanation of why individuals might be expected suddenly to become civic activists. Crossing both parties, the approach taken to economic policy up until the credit crunch – from fawning over financial capitalism to encouraging mass property speculation – not only assumed but also encouraged a form of narrow individualism that ignored the economic role of social solidarity.

A more effective approach to a social challenge such as how to provide for a growing elderly population would seek to mobilise all the forms of social power. The national and local state, and other agencies working through hierarchical channels, would frame the issue in a way that inspires, engages and educates people. It would provide a rationale for difficult strategic policy choices, such as funding long-term care, targeting benefits more effectively and offering tax breaks. Hierarchical interventions would be designed to enhance the scope for solidarity (intergenerational and local) and individualism (personal responsibility).

POWER RENEWAL

While the sources of social power on which a clumsy solution should draw are clear, it is less clear whether these sources of power are fit for purpose.

The contemporary frailties of hierarchy (in terms of performance, trust and responsiveness) demand a different form of leadership, combining clarity and ambition with openness and flexibility. Professor Keith Grint of Warwick University has made the case for leadership that is about “questions, not answers”, “relationships, not structures” and “reflection, not reaction”.

As Grint argues, authority today must be earned in new ways. Modern politicians excuse a lack of clarity or courage by referring to the vagaries of public opinion or the vested interest

within their own shrinking political power base. Similarly, in a system that lacks effective stewardship, corporate leaders feel constrained by investor short-termism. Yet despite paying lip service to consultation, leaders continue to behave as if top-down policies had no limitations, risks or drawbacks. We need leadership that is bolder in its aims and clearer in its values, but also more candid about the limits of central control and knowledge.

Governments need to build a supportive framework upon which civil society can develop its own solutions. There are echoes of this principle in the model of the ‘post-bureaucratic state’ articulated by David Cameron and his allies before and after the 2010 general election. Devolving power, opening up official data and encouraging new forms of results-based payment are all important steps but need further refinement. However, the exigencies of coalition government, combined with a difficult economic environment, have so far rendered the promised revolution in governance limited and inconsistent. In particular, the shift from a consumerist to a relational mode of public services is partial and halfhearted.

As hierarchies search for ways to connect and manage members, their leaders often seek to invoke solidaristic values. The debate over the nature of ‘Britishness’ and the advocacy of a Big Society are recent examples. Meanwhile, consistently high levels of public concern about immigration provide a reminder that concerns about belonging and fairness are as likely to involve fear of change as they do hope for the future.

Solidaristic impulses exist at every level, from national celebration to good neighbourliness. The challenge is to articulate or channel the capacity needed to confront difficult social problems. At the national level, for example, we lack the kind of sustained social partnership that has enabled Germany to manage its economic cycle more successfully than the UK. In comparison with the post-war model, a new corporatism will need to be more open in its goals and methods, more engaging in its communication and decision-making processes, and more accountable for its performance.

This is likely to be as challenging for the hierarchies of civic organisations as it is for those ministers and civil servants who have been brought up to view corporatism as an anachronism. Despite new forms of networking, most people are members of one or more traditional membership organisation, ranging from small local sports clubs to the National Trust. Yet consumerist techniques for fundraising and mass marketing remain much more developed than strategies for membership engagement and collaboration.

With evidence that even the third sector's legitimacy is starting to erode, the leaders of civic organisations need to confront tensions between the difficult process of negotiating a change in partnership and the special pleading and shroud-waving that achieve short-term mobilisation. An interesting initiative is the Common Cause alliance of development and environmental charities that is exploring how to go beyond traditional social marketing to have a deeper impact on social values. There are also new types of civic group. London Citizens has been the highest-profile example of a renewed interest in community organisation. However, as the rise and fall of the Occupy movement demonstrates, there is a substantial challenge in moving from a mode of protest and campaign to a broader movement that has greater normative depth and organisational reach.

As some forms of associational life have declined, others have flourished. The internet is awash with new mothers, patients with long-term conditions, hobbyists, technology geeks and campaigners. Yet online communication is more effective at

short-term mobilisation than long-term cooperation. It is better at bringing together people who share interests and beliefs than enabling more diverse groups to debate, organise and develop solutions. We need to see more experimentation when turning online networks into loci for real-world organisation, especially ones that engage disadvantaged communities.

The fast-growing discipline of social network analysis – of which the RSA is a leading practical exponent – offers new ways of mapping face-to-face and online networks, and exploring their potential as the foundation for improving life chances and collaboration.

As Adam Lent explains in this journal, technology, consumer innovation and changing attitudes are likely to lead to further advances in the scope for individuals to exercise choice and generate value. While credible hierarchies and stronger solidarity can help to align individual aspiration with the kind of social ambition and responsibility necessary to solve wicked problems, it is also important that the trends Adam describes are matched by insight into the limitations of possessive individualism.

In the wake of the credit crunch and subsequent scandals, for example, there seem to have been genuine attempts in some quarters to explore the foundations for ethical capitalism. In many parts of the world, educationalists are making the case for a greater focus on life skills and philosophical reflection in children's learning. Finally, policymakers are becoming more interested in understanding the determinants of wellbeing.

A DIFFERENT ANGLE

For those who live in the richer two-thirds of the globe, modern life offers opportunities and protection beyond the dreams of our ancestors. Yet many of today's problems feel intractable, and social pessimism is in danger of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. Politicians, policymakers and all of us who seek to influence them need to look up from the often thankless task of applying the currently fragile or distorted tools of social power to the more fundamental and exciting challenge of renewing and combining these tools.

The search for clumsy solutions is more akin to a form of design than to traditional policymaking. In seeking to engage each dimension of power, it relies on holistic and systemic principles, but in responding to the tension among those dimensions, it relies on experimental and pragmatic practice. As in design, sometimes the best solutions emerge from adaptation or instinct.

During the Olympic Games, we saw a vivid example of the scope for clumsiness. At the heart of the success lay strong and effective hierarchical leadership from the organisers of the Games, the powerful solidarity of national pride and the Olympic spirit and, of course, the enthralling efforts of individuals competing to be the world's best. Rarely, if ever, are the ingredients for progress so richly available as they were for London 2012. Nevertheless, to see a nation that is prone to scepticism and pessimism amazing itself and impressing the world with its capacity for engagement, mobilisation and collective joy is to get a glimpse of the alignment of forces that could enable significant progress in tackling wicked issues. ■

FELLOWSHIP IN ACTION

SOCIAL VIRTUAL BOARD

Social entrepreneurs will soon have access to high-level advice from a Social Virtual Board set up by Joyce Turton FRSA.

Turton noticed that social entrepreneurs had a lot of passion and drive, but sometimes lacked the business skills needed to deal with challenges such as financing growth. While many schemes offer social entrepreneurs business advice, mentoring and help finding investors, they rarely provide the board-level expertise needed to scale up a business.

The Social Virtual Board, whose members will be drawn from the RSA Fellowship, aims to provide cross-functional support to social enterprises. With the help of RSA Catalyst funding, Turton plans to run a six-month pilot with social entrepreneurs who need help developing longer-term strategies.

"Social entrepreneurs have to make a profit if they are to achieve change in their communities," said Turton. "We want to help them do that in the most cost-effective way possible."

■ *To join the Social Virtual Board or to put forward your social enterprise for the pilot, register for the SkillsBank at www.thersa.org/fellowship/skills-bank, quoting 'Social Virtual Board'. To find out how Catalyst might support your own project idea, visit www.thersa.org/catalyst*

YOUTH

MILLENNIAL GENERATION

1998



GROWTH

PROSPERITY

TECHNOLOGY

43%

wanted to be millionaires by the age of 35

48%

wanted to run a business

A TIME FOR HEROES?

Now, more than ever, we need young people to use their collaborative and technological skills to overcome economic challenges and help shape a more prosperous future

By Adam Lent

“We’re not putting this back in the bottle [...] The open world is bringing empowerment and freedom.” The Canadian businessman and writer Don Tapscott is optimistic about digital technology’s potential and, in particular, the transformative possibilities it offers to the people he calls the Net Generations.

Tapscott has carried out large-scale studies on the attributes of a cohort that is also known as Generation Y or the Millennials: roughly speaking, those people who are now in their 20s and 30s and have grown up in the digital age. He concludes that they tend to place a high premium on self-reliance and education, are broadly tolerant of difference, are open to collaboration and understand the need for civic responsibility.

This echoes the work of US historians William Strauss and Neil Howe, who have identified generational archetypes – prophet, nomad, hero and artist – that repeat themselves every four generations. For Strauss and Howe, the Millennials belong to a hero generation: they experience proactive – rather than reactive – parenting, come of age at a time of societal shocks and, by responding to these, evolve into ‘young adults’. They become institutionally powerful in mid-life, focused on the external world and finding solutions to contemporary challenges.

Some argue that generational analyses of this sort are limited or that these accounts are distinctly North American.

ADAM LENT IS THE
RSA'S DIRECTOR
OF PROGRAMME

There is no broad consensus on the particular characteristics of the Millennials, nor does everyone agree with the positive reading of newer technologies. Indeed, this cohort has been variously labelled narcissistic, cynical, hedonistic and brand obsessed. Some see the impact of social media and a search-engine culture as alienating and distracting, reducing our capacity to think deeply about the world.

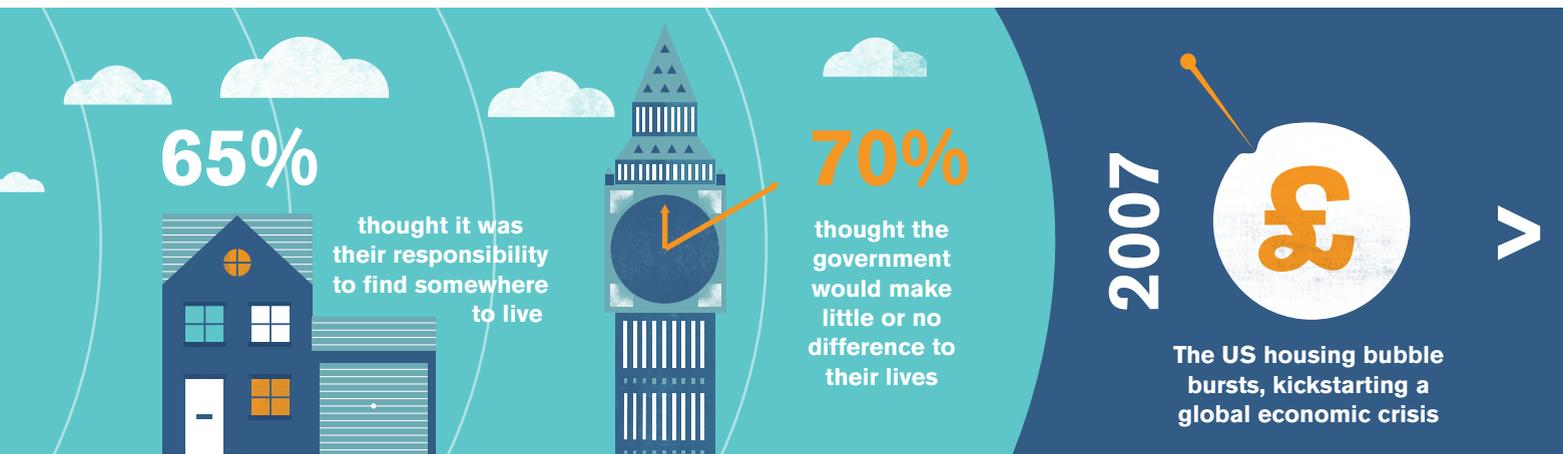
What does seem clear is that recent decades have seen a technology-enabled shift akin to the revolutions wrought by mass production in the first half of the 20th century and by flexible production in the second half.

FALLING TRUST

We live in pessimistic times. The UK has seen a long-term decline in people’s trust towards those in authority and towards their neighbours, combined with falling living standards and a stagnating economy. In this context, some find it hard to imagine any heroes emerging.

At a time when the economic, political and social challenges we face require, more than ever, a response built on a resourceful, engaged and civic-minded population, the chances of achieving this can seem more distant. We know that the state cannot simply step in to resolve the growing crisis in social care and other demographic challenges. We know that shifting the UK economy towards exports and sustainable growth depends on our own innovation and entrepreneurial spirit. We have

ILLUSTRATION: JAMIE PORTCH/YCN



accepted that the pervasive gap in educational attainment that condemns so many to deprivation can no longer be solved by public spending and Whitehall targets.

Can we find the right spirit, the appropriate energy or even the correct language to focus our minds and our will on these massive tasks? There are two major reasons for optimism.

The first is the radical transformation that we are seeing in organisations in all sectors in the UK and across the globe. A world of innovation and enterprise is emerging, thanks to a new openness driven initially by the spread of Web 2.0 and, increasingly, by rising consumer expectations of ever-greater control over the products and services they purchase.

In the new business paradigm, companies are learning that they cannot create productivity, market share and innovation by keeping a fierce hold on processes and information. Only by giving customers, citizens and external experts access to these processes, and allowing them to participate in their design, can organisations match the speed and complexity of their sphere of innovation. How else do we explain the spiralling interest in 3D printing technology, which gives consumers the power to manufacture goods using open-source software? Or the fact that one of the most potent sources of information in the world is an online, freely available encyclopedia written by its users?

This transformation thrives on the resourcefulness, the willingness to engage and the spirit of entrepreneurial collaboration of the millions of people who were once regarded as passive customers or ignorant service users. It is in these very qualities that we find the second reason for optimism.

As part of its Millennials project, the RSA commissioned analysis from the National Centre for Social Research on the trends facing this cohort. This found a fourfold increase in the percentage of Millennials in particular sectors (including communications) who want to start their own business, compared with Generation X at the same age. Millennials are more likely to be unemployed and less likely to be living at home (they are more than twice as likely to rent as their Generation X counterparts). Nearly half say that they are willing to take risks, compared with 23% of Generation X.

What begins to emerge is a picture of a generation that is more comfortable with taking risks and whose appetite for enterprise is both driven and hampered by economic circumstance. Through research, engagement and practical innovation, the RSA's project seeks to understand how we can harness and enhance this promise and capabilities and the contribution they will make to pulling us out of the current crisis. As Tapscott argues, unless we understand the Net Geners, we cannot begin to understand the future or how they can shape our world. ■

■ For more information, contact Adam Lent at adam.lent@rsa.org.uk

FELLOWSHIP IN ACTION RE-WRITE

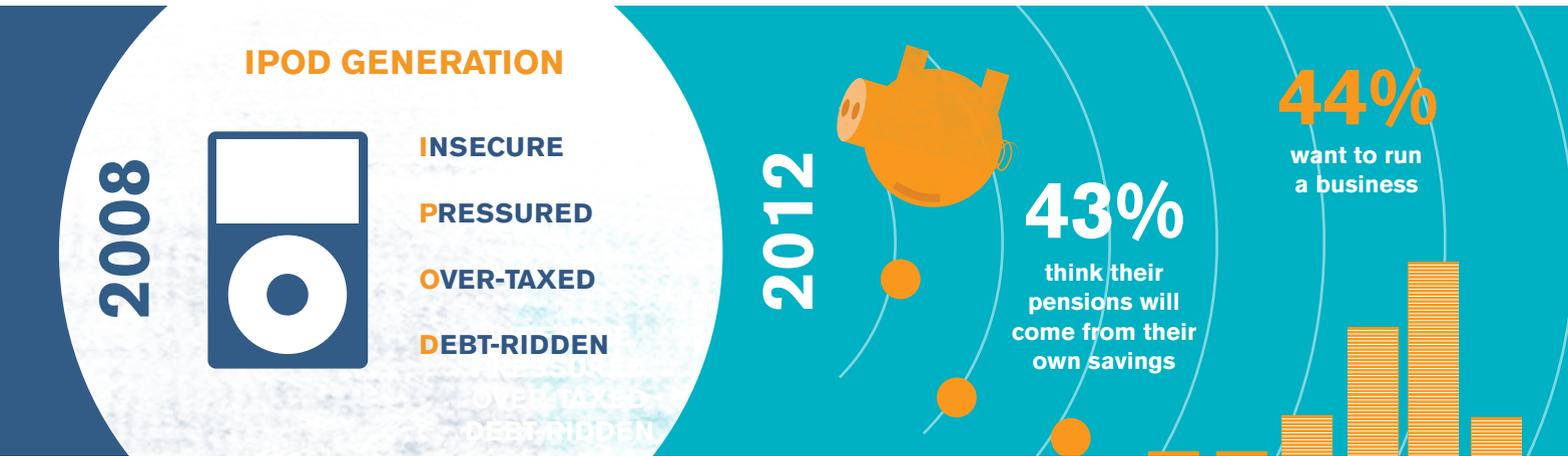
Two RSA Fellows have designed a smartphone and tablet application that enables people to donate directly to charitable causes as they read current affairs content.

Paul Bailey and Russell Hendrie, both 23, came up with the idea for the app when responding to a Student Design Awards challenge. The brief asked candidates to design a project that would make it easier for people to donate to charity.

The Re-Write application allows people to swipe across the screen of a news story they are reading online – for example, coverage of a natural disaster – to obtain information about relevant charities and donate money to them. The newspaper can then build up an online record of people's donations.

Bailey and Hendrie have benefited from RSA Catalyst funding and from the RSA SkillsBank, which brought them into contact with a Fellow who is experienced in web development. They are now building a prototype of the application that they plan to pitch to an online newspaper.

■ If you can support this project, register for the SkillsBank at www.thersa.org/fellowship/skills-bank, quoting 'Re-Write'. To find out how Catalyst might support your own project idea, visit www.thersa.org/catalyst



PORTRAIT OF A GENERATION

Fourteen years ago, a UK-wide survey identified self-determination and entrepreneurial ambition as the core characteristics of the so-called Millennial Generation. Today, against a much tougher economic backdrop, how do the views of young people compare with those of their predecessors?

By Dr Madsen Pirie

In 1998, just over a year into the life of the new Labour government led by Tony Blair, the Adam Smith Institute commissioned polling organisation MORI to survey the attitudes and ambitions of the young people who would come of age at the turn of the millennium. We dubbed them the ‘Millennial Generation’.

We wanted to find out what young people thought about the government, society and their own futures. The results were unexpected in some cases and provided little comfort to politicians. More than seven in 10 young people thought that the government would make very little or no difference to their lives, and a large majority thought that it would be up to them, rather than the government, to secure a job and a home.

The eye-opener among the findings was that the most common career goal for respondents (48%) was that of running their own business. Many of them (43%) listed “being a millionaire by 35” as one of their main ambitions.

We need, of course, to put these answers into context. They came after a long period of economic growth and prosperity, when new technology – in the shape of mobile phones and the internet – was opening up new possibilities and the dotcom bubble had yet to burst. Perhaps the optimism that young people showed at the time resulted from the changes that

were taking place and the opportunities that these changes created for individual achievement.

By 2008, the economic backdrop had changed so much that the think-tank Reform dubbed 18–34-year-olds the ‘iPod Generation’, standing for ‘Insecure, Pressured, Overtaxed and Debt-ridden’. Today, the economic and political landscapes continue to evolve: prosperity is no longer taken for granted, and jobs for young people are harder to come by, though we are nowhere near the more than 50% youth unemployment rate witnessed in Greece and Spain. First-time buyers now find it difficult to gain access to mortgages and deposits, and many commentators suggest that members of the younger generation will find life more difficult than their predecessors did.

THEN AND NOW

So, how have these changes affected the way young people think about their futures? The Adam Smith Institute recently commissioned a poll from YouGov* and, although like-for-like comparisons cannot be made, the answers that young people gave shed light on their attitudes today.

Seventy per cent of those in the 18 to 24 age group agree that it is their own, not the government’s, responsibility to secure employment, and only 4% disagree. Nearly half of them (49%) agree that they would like to run their own business at some

DR MADSEN PIRIE
IS PRESIDENT OF
THE ADAM SMITH
INSTITUTE



stage, versus 27% who disagree. Both of these figures suggest that today's young people still have the self-confidence and ambition shown by their millennial predecessors.

When it comes to pensions, young people are equally determined to fend for themselves: 44% agree that most of their pensions will come from their own savings, nearly three times more than the 16% who disagree.

The only major change from the 1998 survey concerns housing: the majority of the 18–24 group (52%) agree that the government has a duty to secure housing for people like them, compared with only 15% who disagree. It looks as though today's young people think they will be unable to buy a home without help, whereas in 1998, most of them thought that they could do it themselves. This shift in perspectives is more likely to reflect the increased economic hardship that young people face than a change in their personal ambitions.

Despite the economic challenges, it seems that young people do not want decisions to be taken on their behalf. Almost half (47%) of 18–24-year-olds disagree that politicians and civil servants are well equipped to make personal decisions on their behalf, versus 17% who agree. This seems to tie in with the views given in the 1998 survey that young people expect their prospects to depend on their own decisions and activities.

When we published the first survey, we described the young people it surveyed as seeming “optimistic, self-confident and ready to make their own way in the world”. Intuitively, one might suppose that today's bleaker economic outlook would have dented young people's optimism and self-confidence, but apart from their chances of home ownership, there is little to suggest that this has been the case. They seem to want and expect to do things for themselves.

Observation suggests that young people today are as fluent with new technologies as their predecessors were, and maybe more so. Social networking, smartphones and iPads have appeared on the scene and been seamlessly incorporated into their lives. These developments have all enhanced opportunities, and young people have taken the lead in adopting them.

We found the members of the Millennial Generation to be more tolerant than their predecessors, and this still appears

to be the case today. We also detected a strong degree of determination among the young people we surveyed 14 years ago. Given tougher times now, that determination and ambition might have given way to resignation, but there is nothing to suggest that this has happened. Indeed, it might be that the recognition of tougher times gives a message that determination is needed more than ever.

Our final verdict was that the qualities of young people at the turn of the millennium indicated that the coming century might well be in safe hands. That has not changed. ■

* All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov plc. Total sample size was 1,742 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 12 and 13 August 2012. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

FELLOWSHIP IN ACTION

THE VITAL FEW

Teenagers in the south-east of England will be taking part in the Vital Few project, which aims to give young people the knowledge and confidence to pursue entrepreneurial goals. Mark Hadley FRSA is working with Fellows in the Bexhill and Hastings regional group and four local schools.

The project includes 'drop' days on which Fellows with business experience can meet and advise young people who are interested in starting their own businesses. The team will create an 'information vortex' that will be available to schools, those in vocational training and school leavers. It will include information about starting up and developing a business, stories from successful entrepreneurs and contact details of local businesses that can offer work experience and mentors. It may also include 'enterprise pods': small commercial sites where pupils can work independently on new business ideas.

“Plenty of resources are already available to entrepreneurial young people, but few have longevity,” said Hadley. “The Vital Few will aim to interact with pupils over a longer timescale.”

■ To support the project, contact fellowship@rsa.org.uk

“HAVING AN IDEA IS ONLY ONE SIDE OF THE STORY”

Two young inventors – Pavegen founder Laurence Kemball-Cook and Raspberry Pi co-creator Eben Upton – share their experiences of entrepreneurial success and discuss what schools and governments can do to nurture talent in the next generation of business leaders

Laurence Kemball-Cook: The idea for Pavegen goes back to 2009, when I was looking at low-carbon energy generation for cities. I was thinking about how to augment solar and wind power, especially in areas where those solutions aren't reliable or viable. It occurred to me that there was an untapped resource that we weren't yet harnessing: people.

Eben Upton: The Raspberry Pi story started with trying to solve a simple problem, too. We were trying to increase applicant numbers for the computer-science degree at Cambridge University. At the same time, we needed a machine to fill the gap in kids' bedrooms that was left when the eight-bit computers from the 1980s went away.

Kemball-Cook: Of course, having an idea is only one side of the story. The next challenge is finding the funding to scale up the business. For us, that initially meant developing a prototype with a small amount of funding from friends and family. This proved that the concept was viable and gave us something tangible to attract investors for a second round of funding. Once we had those resources in place, we could start to establish low-volume production, accelerate our product development and make international sales. We're still working towards achieving mass-production at low unit cost, but we have a clear trajectory ahead.

Upton: Our initial working capital came from the Raspberry Pi Foundation's trustees. Later, we made the transition to a capital-light intellectual property licensing model. We had no idea we'd have so much success with Raspberry Pi. We thought we might sell 10,000 units over the lifetime of the product.

Kemball-Cook: Proving that the Pavegen technology works is only the start. My aim now is to reach a stage where we

LAURENCE KEMBALL-COOK FRSA IS THE FOUNDER AND CEO OF PAVEGEN. EBEN UPTON IS A FOUNDER AND TRUSTEE OF THE RASPBERRY PI FOUNDATION

can install the technology in every major city in the world. The idea is simple to understand, but complex to design and build. We're doing well at bringing costs down, but I won't relax until Pavegen is cheap enough to roll out everywhere. That, for me, will represent success.

Upton: I agree, and that's why cost efficiency is at the heart of Raspberry Pi's development. Industries can end up artificially fixated on particular price points, when, in fact, launching a 'good enough' device at a much lower cost can be incredibly disruptive and can bring a lot of value to suppliers and customers.

Kemball-Cook: In my view, cost and sustainability are two of the most important factors for any invention. At Pavegen, we need to ensure that we can guarantee the supply of our products over a long enough time period and at a sufficient scale for them to be cost- and carbon-effective. This means sourcing recycled and sustainable materials and understanding our products' carbon efficiency. As a cleantech product, Pavegen isn't about answering a moral question, it's about fulfilling a practical requirement for reliable low-carbon energy. Big global challenges, such as resource scarcity, energy prices and carbon emissions, require a great deal of ingenuity.

Upton: We're seeing a lot of that ingenuity in India, where the concept of Jugaad, or frugal innovation, is getting attention. But it's worth remembering that many of the innovations that have come out of India wouldn't have been possible without the primary innovations that tend to come from wealthy, more developed societies.

Kemball-Cook: For my part, I don't see innovation as the preserve of the west, but it's certainly easier to develop a technology in a richer country where you have everything at your fingertips. Once the technology has been scaled up, it can 

LOW-COST POWER
 TECHNOLOGY
 CROWDFUNDING
 RELIABLE LOW-CARBON ENERGY
 People
 "young people are VITAL to innovation"
 "WE NEED TO GET STUDENTS AND INSTITUTIONS EXCITED ABOUT ENGINEERING and COSTLY SUSTAINABILITY"
 SCALE UP
 ARBITRARIAN STARTS TO TAKE HOLD
 CARBON GENERATION
 INGENUITY
 LIGHTBULBS



Laurence Kemball-Cook is an industrial engineer who designed the technology behind Pavegen, a kinetic floor tile that generates energy from people's footsteps to power pedestrian lighting, advertising and other low-energy applications. Since setting up his company in 2009, he has won contracts to install the Pavegen technology at major sites such as Westfield shopping centre in Stratford, London. A former winner of the RSA's Design Directions competition – which awarded him £5,000 worth of funding – Kemball-Cook is a firm believer in the importance of giving young people the support and resources they need to develop entrepreneurial ideas.



RESPONSIBILITY I'M NOT SURE
WHETHER YOU CAN REALLY
TEACH ENTREPRENEURIAL
COX SKILLS. "I ALWAYS TELL KIDS
THAT THE BEST
WAY IS TO LEARN
BY DOING
JUGAAD they should go
and sell
something on
ebay, create
an
NOT-FOR-PROFIT-ORGANISATION wash
cars
or mow
lawns.
INNOVATION



Eben Upton helped to develop the technology behind Raspberry Pi, an affordable, credit-card sized, single-board computer that can be used to teach basic computer science in schools. Upton co-founded the Raspberry Pi Foundation in 2008 and launched the first working models of the device in February 2012. He now divides his time between the University of Cambridge's Computer Laboratory, where he works with volunteers to develop Raspberry Pi, and southern California, where he is a technical director at Broadcom.

be applied to developing economies. We'd like to see Pavegen in places where people need low-carbon, low-cost power, from the *favelas* in Rio to the slums in Delhi. But this can't happen without the funding and skills we need to scale up early-stage technologies, whether that happens in London, São Paulo or Beijing.

Upton: It's vital to put in place the right structures to achieve that level of growth. We set up the Raspberry Pi Foundation as a not-for-profit organisation, and this has been key to our success. There's a growing awareness that alternative forms of corporate structure can offer advantages in terms of flexibility and employee engagement; witness the government's interest in John Lewis-like organisations. Globalisation and improvements in communications are allowing small organisations to achieve things that only large, monolithic organisations could achieve before.

Kemball-Cook: There are definitely plenty of opportunities for good ideas. The advent of digital and social media has given businesses platforms for exposure that simply weren't available before. As a result, we're seeing the emergence of new investment models such as crowdfunding, which the government has now legalised in the UK.

Upton: Young people are ideally placed to take advantage of this shift by starting their own businesses. I was very lucky to stumble into entrepreneurship at the age of 20; we need to do more to make bright young people aware that this is a career option.

Kemball-Cook: Like you, I was fortunate to start my entrepreneurial journey at a young age, but I only had a small amount of funding and had to work out of my tiny Brixton flat. I think the government could provide much more help to young entrepreneurs, perhaps by offering tax breaks on national insurance and on other employee contributions. Young people are vital to innovation because, without dependants, they have much lower risk profiles. That gives them the freedom to take chances and develop their ideas.

Upton: I always tell kids that the best way is to learn by doing: they should go and sell something on eBay, create an iPhone app, wash cars or mow lawns. I'm not sure whether you can really teach entrepreneurial skills.

Kemball-Cook: True, but schools and universities do have a role to play in getting students and institutions excited about engineering. Technology has never been so accessible, which creates opportunities for young people who have ideas and skills. Gone are the days of asking design and technology students to design bookshelves. Today, students can make use of 3D CAD software and rapid-prototype modelling of their designs. Thinking of an idea is one thing; it's when they actually build a product that their ambition starts to take hold.

Upton: Once they reach that stage, though, they need to be prepared to start small and grow organically. At the moment, I think there's too much focus on the *Dragons' Den* view of what it means to be an entrepreneur. Starting a company isn't just about finding angel investors, writing the perfect business plan or winning a popularity contest.

Kemball-Cook: Yes, but even small businesses need cashflow to develop and grow. It's easy to get stuck in a chicken-and-egg environment: you have an idea but no funds to develop it, so you need to be resourceful. My advice would be that unless you have big backing or a very low-cost innovation, it's essential to create early revenue streams in your venture, rather than investing too much time in a technology that could take many years to become profitable.

Upton: Flexibility is important, too. Raspberry Pi nearly ran into a wall at the end of 2011 when we found that the demand for our product outstripped our capital supply by a factor of 10. In response, we pivoted to an entirely new model, licensing our technology and brand to a pair of large public companies.

Kemball-Cook: If you're going to succeed in business, you have to believe in your product and be determined to get it to market. Finally, you need to build a strong network of people around you, because there are only so many hours a day that you can work. ■

RSA STUDENT DESIGN AWARDS

The RSA Student Design Awards scheme has rewarded craft, ingenuity, insight, communication and socially responsible design since its foundation in 1924. Each year, the RSA works with leading design educators to devise briefs that challenge young designers to use their skills to tackle 21st century problems.

This year, the RSA has consulted with designers, Royal Designers for Industry, sponsors, design tutors, past RSA award winners and other stakeholders to refine the judging process. Judges will now take into account six criteria – social benefit, research, design thinking, commercial awareness, execution and magic – each of which is weighted differently according to the brief.

The 2012/13 briefs address important social, environmental and economic issues, such as the future of work and how we can better understand the value of water.

■ For updates on the RSA Student Design Awards, contact Sevrá Davis at sevrá.davis@rsa.org.uk or follow us on Twitter: @RSADesignAwards

RECONSTRUCTING EUROPE

If we are to build a future for Europe, we must establish a collective identity that celebrates, rather than obscures, cultures present in its member states

By Zygmunt Bauman

Dark clouds are gathering over the European Union. It has become clear that none of the inherited or extant political agencies, designed originally to serve a society integrated at the nation-state level, is fit to lead a united Europe. In many countries, citizens are exposed day in, day out to the unedifying spectacle of governments looking to the markets for permission for (or prohibition against) what they intend to do – and, in particular, what their citizens would dearly wish and demand them to do. It is the markets now that have usurped (not without the endorsement of helpless and hapless governments) the first and the last words in negotiating the line separating the realistic from the unrealistic. The term ‘markets’ is shorthand for anonymous, faceless forces with no address: forces that no one elected and that no one is able to constrain, control or guide.

The popular impression – and, increasingly, the expert opinion – is that elected parliaments, and the governments that the parliaments are constitutionally obliged to direct, are incapable of doing their jobs. No more capable are the established political parties, which are notorious for going back on their poetic electoral promises the moment their leaders enter ministerial office. Hence the deep – and deepening – crisis in public trust. The era of trust in the effectiveness of nation-state institutions is giving way to an era of institutional un-self-confidence and popular mistrust in governments’ ability to act.

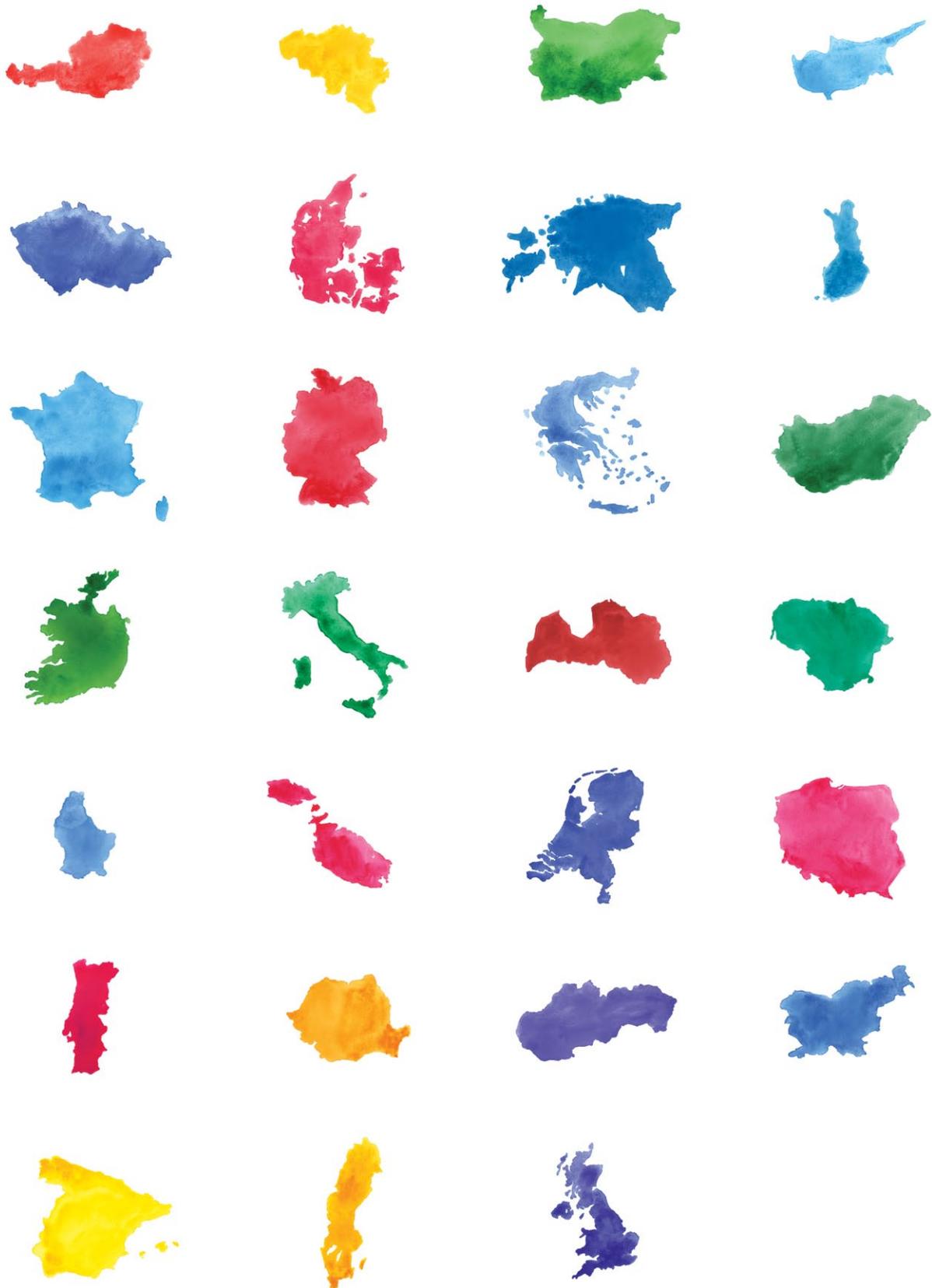
The idea of the state’s sovereignty goes back to 1555. The formula *cuius regio, eius religio* (he who rules determines religion of

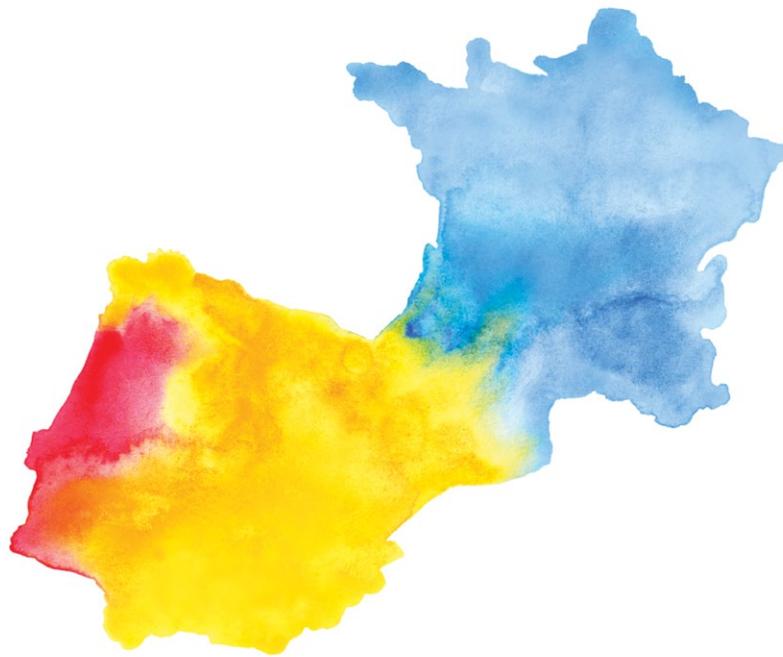
the ruled) was coined at a meeting in Augsburg held by warring dynastic rulers who were desperately seeking an exit – or, at least, a respite – from the protracted, gory and devastating religious wars that were tearing Christian Europe apart. This formula gave rulers the full, unconstrained right to proclaim and execute the laws binding whoever happened to inhabit the territory under their rule. Since its inclusion in political vocabulary, the concept of sovereignty has referred to a territorially confined state of affairs and entitlements. As Machiavelli argued, the sole obligation of a prince is the *raison d’état* (*état* meaning state in the sense of a territorial entity defined by its borders). The Augsburg formula may be read not only as the founding act of the modern phenomenon of state sovereignty, but also as the textual source of the modern concept of state borders.

It took, however, almost another 100 years of bloodletting and devastation before the Westphalian sovereignty agreement was negotiated and signed in 1648 in Osnabrück and Münster. It was then that the principle recommended by the Augsburg formula truly took hold of European social and political reality, giving every ruler full sovereignty over the territory he ruled and its residents. From then on, rulers were entitled to impose laws that would override the choices made individually by their subjects, including the choice of god they ought to believe in and worship. This formula laid the foundations of the (secular) political order of the emergent modern Europe by creating the model of a nation-state. According to this model, the nation uses the state’s sovereignty to set apart ‘us’ from ‘them’, and reserves the monopolistic, inalienable and indivisible right to design the

ZYGMUNT BAUMAN
IS EMERITUS
PROFESSOR OF
SOCIOLOGY AT
THE UNIVERSITY
OF LEEDS







order binding the country as a whole. The state claims its right to its subjects' discipline by invoking the commonality of national history, destiny and wellbeing.

That historically composed pattern, chosen from many other conceivable ordering principles, has been 'naturalised' in most of Europe over the course of subsequent centuries. At the same time, it has been gradually, yet steadily, imposed by Europe-centred world empires on the planet through long series of wars waged against the local, all-too-often stubbornly resistant realities. (Think, for instance, about the crudely artificial 'national borders' of the postcolonial states that have barely contained tribal feuds, or the gory fate of the post-Yugoslav republics.)

PEACEBUILDING EFFORTS

After the horrors of the two world wars of the 20th century, governments attempted – for the first time in history – to establish a planet-wide consensual order of peaceful cohabitation. This order – the Charter of the United Nations – was founded on the Westphalian model of sovereignty, with the rulers of sovereign states called to collectively monitor, supervise and defend those conditions of peaceful coexistence. One article of that Charter prohibits attacks on “political independence and territorial integrity”, while another sharply restricts the eventuality of an intervention from outside into affairs of a sovereign state, however outrageous such affairs could be.

We still live in the post-Westphalian era, licking the as-yet-unhealed (perhaps incurable) wounds that the idea of state sovereignty has delivered – and continues to deliver – to social bodies. The process of emancipation from the shadows cast by Westphalian sovereignty is protracted and has been, thus far, painful and anything but uniform. While many powers (finances, commercial interests, information, the drug and weapon trade, criminality and terrorism) have already obtained – in practice, if not

in theory – the freedom to defy and neglect that phantom, politics is still smarting under its constraints. The conspicuous absence of global political agencies that are capable of catching up with the global reach of these powers is, arguably, the main obstacle on the rough and bumpy road towards the cosmopolitan consciousness that would match humanity's new global interdependence.

The UN – the institution that comes closest to the idea of a global political body – has the tooth-and-nail defence of the Westphalian principle written into its Charter. The kind of 'international' (read: inter-state, inter-governmental, inter-ministerial) politics that the UN promotes and practises is not so much a step on the road towards a global politics as a major barrier set across that road.

On a somewhat lower, but structurally similar, level, look at the euro. It is absurd for a common currency to be sustained by 17 finance ministers, each representing his or her country's sovereign rights. The plight of the euro is just one of many manifestations of a double bind: the condition of being clenched between the ghost of Westphalian state sovereignty on one side and the realities of supra-national dependency on the other.

Putting this in a nutshell, we are still deprived of a global equivalent of the institutions that our grandfathers and great-grandfathers designed to secure the marriage of power and politics at the level of the territorial nation-state. What is left to us is to wonder whether this challenge can be met by the extant political institutions, which were created and groomed to serve a quite different level of human integration and to protect that level from all and any intrusions 'from above'. It all started, after all, with the monarchs of Christian Europe fighting to stave off the papacy's attempts to oversee their dominions.

For a few centuries, that inherited settlement was relatively well attuned to the realities of the time, but this is no longer the case. Our interdependence is already global, whereas our instruments of collective action and will-expression are local, and stoutly resist

“OUR INTERDEPENDENCE IS ALREADY GLOBAL, WHEREAS OUR INSTRUMENTS OF COLLECTIVE ACTION ARE LOCAL”

extension, infringement or limitation. The gap between the scope of interdependence and the reach of institutions called to service it is already abysmal, yet it is widening and deepening every day. Filling or bridging that gap is, in my view, the meta-challenge of our time, and one that ought to take priority in the 21st century. We need first to meet this challenge so that other, derivative challenges can start being earnestly, properly and effectively confronted.

RECONCILING WARRING STATES

There are reasons to interpret the attempts to build a political superstructure over Europe – led by Schuman, Monnet, Spaak, Adenauer and De Gasperi immediately after the Second World War – as a reaction to a perceived fall in European self-assurance. It must have been obvious to those sober-minded activists that Europe’s position in the world could not be sustained by the scattered, uncoordinated, often inconsistent actions of relatively small and weak territorial nation-states. Before attempting to rebuild Europe’s standing in the world, it was first necessary to reconcile its warring member states.

It is too early to sum up the results of this historic initiative. After all, the founding fathers of political Europe had undertaken quite a task: the building of a pan-European, transnational solidarity that would unify nations that for hundreds of years had reasserted their identities by stoking the fires of discord with their neighbours. There are those who doubt the possibility of such a transnational solidarity, known sometimes as a ‘sense of European identity’. Nation and state, they say, are conjoined once and for all in the eyes of God and history, and only within this framework can human solidarity be a natural attribute of human co-existence. Without a historically formed national destiny, only fragile, unstable and inherently temporary alliances are possible, entered into through tedious negotiation and sensible, but unenthusiastically accepted, compromise.

Jürgen Habermas provides the toughest of arguments against this opinion, pointing out that democratic order need not be supported by an ingrained idea of ‘nation’ as a pre-political community of fate and destiny. He argues that the might of a democratic constitutional state is based precisely on its potential to create and recreate social integration through the political engagement of its citizens. National community does not precede political community: it is its ongoing product. The claim that a stable and self-perpetuating political system cannot exist without a consolidated ethnocultural entity is neither more nor less convincing than the claim that no ethnocultural entity is capable

of consolidating and acquiring the strength to self-perpetuate without the help of an efficient political mechanism.

This is neither the place nor the time for deep speculation on the relative values of these opposing views, nor, I would add, would such speculation be fruitful. The dispute can only be settled authoritatively by political will and the institutional achievements of the Europeans (which, unfortunately, have so far made their importance felt mainly through their invisibility) and not by philosophical deliberations, however subtle or logical. The jury is still out on the fate of political unity in Europe and it is hard to say whether there has been progress or regress in the matter.

I would, however, like to share one observation that sociological diagnosis authorises me to make. Wherever the source of its power lies, the stimulus to political integration and the factor necessary for progress is a shared vision of a collective mission. Where are we to find such a mission in our Europe of 2012?

It would appear, and luckily so, that we will find it neither in military might nor even – considering the economic miracles that are happening in China and Latin America before our very eyes – in economic power. There is a sphere in which the historical experience of Europe and her acquired skills are second to none. Since it so happens that this sphere is literally a question of life and death for the future of the planet, the value of what we, the Europeans, can bring as a legacy with which to equip the rapidly globalising world cannot be underestimated. We need it to aspire to what Emmanuel Kant identified as *allgemeine Vereinigung der Menschheit* (general unification of mankind) and, by extension, to universal, worldwide peace. This legacy is the historical shaping of European culture and our contribution to it today.

Europe succeeded in learning the art of living with others. In Europe, the ‘other’ is the neighbour, and Europeans, whether they like it or not, must negotiate the terms of neighbourhood in spite of the differences that separate them. The situation of the European, marked as it is by multilingualism, proximity of the other and an equivalency of others in a limited space, can be seen as a great laboratory of new forms of human community. It is a school from which the world might acquire the skills that could make the difference between survival and demise. “To acquire the art of learning from one another and to share that skill with the rest of humanity is the task of Europe,” said the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer. I would add: it is Europe’s mission, waiting to be reformed into a vocation and a destiny.

It is impossible to overstate the importance of this task and of Europe’s determination to undertake it. Indeed, >>

“THE WHOLE OF EUROPE IS TRANSFORMING BEFORE OUR VERY EYES INTO A MOSAIC OF DIASPORAS”

it is a *sine qua non* in times when only friendship and robust (or, in today's parlance, 'proactive') solidarity are able to lend a stable structure to human cohabitation. As Europeans, we should be asking ourselves: what steps are we taking to realise this vocation?

Seen from a bird's-eye view, the world appears today to be an archipelago of diasporas. By their nature, diasporas call into question hitherto-unquestioned assumptions about the inevitable correlation of identity and citizenship or habitat, of spirit and place, of a sense of belonging and territory. The whole of Europe is transforming before our very eyes, though in different regions and at different rates, into a mosaic of diasporas. Without the policy of forceful assimilation, it is possible to safeguard one's national identity on one of the diaspora islands, as one would at home. In fact, neighbouring or intermixed diasporas may actually enrich one another and grow, rather than diminish, in strength.

LOST IN TRANSLATION?

We should not expect immediate results, but there are opportunities to accelerate this process by consciously seeking to merge cultures. Nothing slows the process as much as that confusion of tongues known in times past to the builders of the Tower of Babel. The European Union recognises as official as many as 23 languages, but there are countless provincial languages on top of these. Most of us, with the exception of a handful of outstanding polyglots, are denied access to the majority of European languages. We are all, on account of this, handicapped and impoverished. So much human wisdom has been passed on in stories told in unintelligible dialects. One of the most significant components of this hidden wisdom is the surprising similarity we see in the fears, dreams and experiences of parents and children, spouses and neighbours, and friends and foes, regardless of the language used to express them. What a great deal we could learn from one another if we could share these concerns.

We could gain so much wisdom, improve our communities and stand a far greater chance of achieving our world mission if part of the European Union's funds could be used to finance the translation of the literature of all its member countries, making it available in print and other commonly used media. I am personally convinced that such a rich treasury – bringing together all that is most valuable in the experience and thought of every one of the nations making up the European Union – would be the best investment for the future of Europe and the success of its mission.

The future of political Europe hangs on the fate of European culture. That fate – considering the increasingly, and no doubt irreversibly, diasporic composition of Europe – depends on our ability to learn the art of transforming cultural differentiation from passive to active. We must see it not as something to put up with

but as something to celebrate; we must accept it as an asset, not dismiss it as an impediment. It is not a new requirement, although it is easy to forget its history or dismiss its role in the past when we view it from the perspective of our own era of nation-building, with its emphasis on the homogenisation of culture.

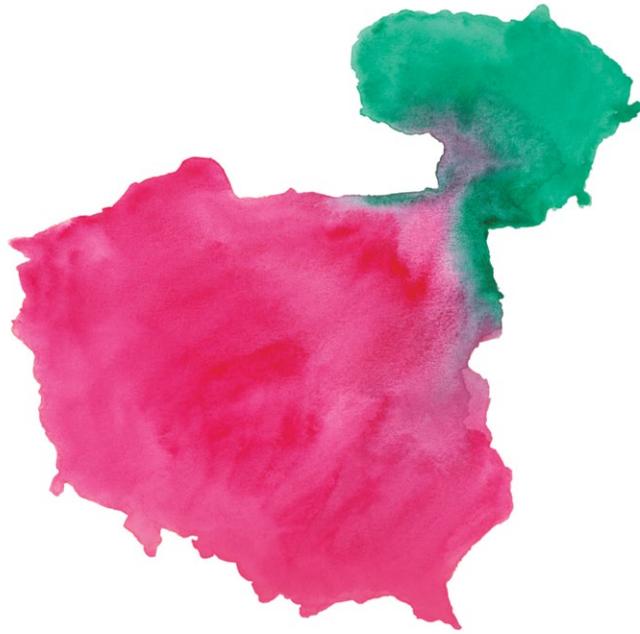
It is high time to bring back to our collective memory the fact that the conflict-free, mutually beneficial cohabitation of different cultures was considered the norm for centuries, and continued to be so until very recently in many parts of central Europe. If we believe Titus Livius, the rise of the Roman Empire was due to the consistent practice of granting all conquered and annexed peoples full citizenship rights, while paying due tribute to the gods that the newcomers worshipped. The Roman tradition of respect for different cultures was not, as it turned out, to be inherited by the heirs of the Roman Empire or observed later in Europe's history.

As western Europe plunged into a century of bloody and destructive wars of religion, sowing the seeds of hereditary animosity, a significant part of Europe east of the Elbe was able to stay away from fratricidal massacres, thereby protecting the legacy of religious tolerance. An outstanding example of an alternative to the Westphalian system was the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, a state known for its generosity in granting self-governing powers and independent cultural identities to ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities spread throughout its territory. This helped it to avoid the bloodshed and religious atrocities that befell other, less fortunate European states. However, partitions effected by its voracious neighbours – dynastic monarchies of overt or covert national ambitions – dealt a fatal blow to this unique commonwealth. Cultural autonomies – fortunate majorities and unfortunate minorities alike – were subjected to forced Russification in the east and a no less (perhaps even more) ruthless Germanisation to the west, supplemented by intermittent religious wars such as the anti-Catholic offensives of the Orthodox and Lutheran churches.

CULTURAL INTOLERANCE

History books credit modern history with promoting tolerance, yet there is no doubt that cultural intolerance was an inseparable companion of the two major and tightly intertwined modern endeavours: nation-building and state-building. National languages called for the stifling of local dialects; state churches demanded the suppression of religious 'sects'; and 'national memory' called for the annihilation of local and collective memories.

Only one great European monarchy, close to the geographical centre of Europe, resisted this popular tendency right up to the breakout of the First World War. This set of diverse ethnic groups was governed from Vienna, which was at the time



a breeding ground for some of the most fascinating and far-reaching contributions to European philosophy, psychology, literature, music, visual and dramatic arts. It is no coincidence that it was there that a programme of political integration based on the idea of personal autonomy took root. The Marxist writer Otto Bauer described this programme as a way of “organising nations not into territorial bodies, but into free associations of individuals” in which political integration was separate from national identities.

This project was one of the casualties of the First World War. At the gathering of victors in Versailles, Woodrow Wilson, updating the Westphalia agreement of 1648 and raising its ideas to the rank of general rule, proclaimed the indivisible sovereignty of a nation on its territory as a universal principle of humanity.

It fell to all Europeans to live in an era of advancing, and possibly unstoppable, diasporisation, with the prospect of all regions of Europe transforming into bands of mixed populations. According to the latest demographic predictions, the number of inhabitants of the European Union (currently about 400 million) is set to shrink in the next 50 years to the order of 240 million, which would effectively render obsolete the kinds of lifestyle we are accustomed to, and interested in, maintaining. Demographers tell us that unless at least 30 million foreigners settle in Europe, the European system will be incapable of surviving.

Proactive responses to the emerging situation are, however, few, sluggish and painfully slow. Provoked by pressure or blackmail resulting from the occasional flaring up of tribal sentiments, they are offered with no particular enthusiasm. Yet the future of Europe’s political and cultural existence depends on the rethinking and reversing of the trends of the past 400 years of European history. It is high time to consider whether the past of geographically central Europe might not be the future of European politics and culture. In fact, might it not be the only future capable of safeguarding our European civilisation? ■

FROM THE ARCHIVE

AN INTERNATIONAL HISTORY

Almost since its foundation, the RSA has nurtured ambitions of global growth. The Society’s 1755 *Plan* made a provision for the election of “foreigners, or persons [who] do not usually reside in Great Britain”. These ‘corresponding members’, 200 of whom were elected over the first two decades, came from continental Europe, the West Indies and the US.

In the 19th century, the RSA developed its international links by inviting foreign dignitaries, such as Napoleon III, to become members. The Great Exhibition of 1851 attracted visitors from the colonies to the Society, and in 1869, a new London-based Indian section held its first meeting to discuss commercial and industrial issues relevant to India. A series of sections relevant to the colonies were subsequently created.

The RSA’s relationship with its American members deepened in the 20th century. The Benjamin Franklin Medal, introduced in 1956, honoured individuals, groups or organisations that enhanced Anglo-American understanding in areas related to the RSA’s agenda. This paved the way towards the establishment of the RSA’s US chapter in 1991.

Today, the RSA’s international network remains strong, with 2,314 Fellows (8.55% of the Fellowship) coming from outside the UK and Ireland. Earlier this year, the first round of Connectors – overseas Fellows who raise awareness of the RSA’s work in their local areas – came into office.

■ For more information about the RSA’s international remit, contact Josef Lentsch at josef.lentsch@rsa.org.uk

A BRAVER POLITICS

In an age when political battles are won and lost in the very public arena of the mass media, politicians are too often tempted to make reactive, rather than strategic, decisions. Can the new generation of politicians learn to take a longer-term perspective?

By Kwasi Kwarteng MP

The relationship between politicians and the media has become increasingly unhealthy in the past 20 years. The power of the media in public life has made bold decision-making more difficult.

In his evidence to the ongoing Leveson Inquiry, former prime minister Tony Blair told a telling anecdote: “Back in the ’60s [...] a cabinet decision would go on for two days and at the end of it they would have a show of hands [...] By the time I became prime minister, if a cabinet meeting went on for two days – I mean, forget it. It would have been total crisis mode for the whole of the government.” Even in his own time, Blair suggested, we had gone from a world in which “you could more or less say, ‘Right, here’s the story of the day’” in 1997 to “a different story in the morning, the noon, the evening” in 2005.

The new strength of the media has important implications for the way in which we do politics. The 24-hour news cycle has forced political decision-making to accelerate. At the same time, the challenges facing our politicians are becoming more complex. As our society ages, and we face new challenges from dynamic overseas competitors, difficult

KWASI KWARTENG
MP IS A
CONSERVATIVE
PARTY POLITICIAN

choices will have to be made. There are no easy answers. These decisions will only be harder in a world in which the media has so much influence.

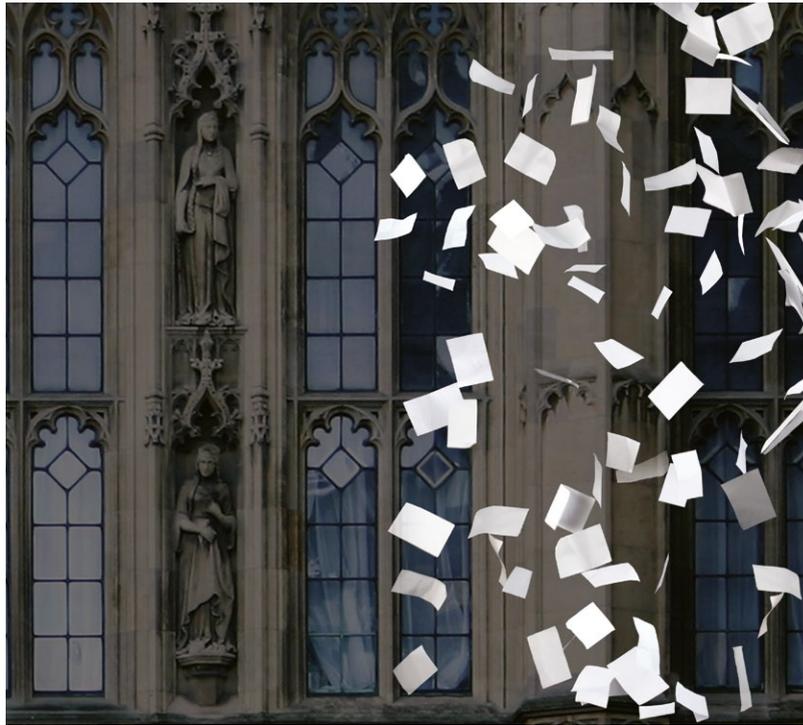
UNDER THE THUMB

The press has always held great power, and politicians have always done their best to keep on its good side. Alfred Harmsworth, later Lord Northcliffe, was one of the most powerful media figures of the Edwardian age. He created the *Daily Mail* and, arguably, much of what we now think of as popular journalism. Its formula for success was clear: simple writing, human-interest stories and patriotic pride. In 1903, he boasted that “every extension of the franchise renders more powerful the newspaper and less powerful the politician”.

Indeed, the press barons of the past would not only run campaigns in their papers, but also, if necessary, launch their own candidates at by-elections. In 1921, Lord Northcliffe and the *Daily Mail’s* Anti-Waste League won three by-elections, helping to bring about the so-called Geddes Axe cuts. At the end of the decade, Lord Beaverbrook created the Empire Free Trade Crusade political party, angering Stanley Baldwin so much that he made his famous complaint that “what







the proprietorship of these papers is aiming at is power, and power without responsibility – the prerogative of the harlot through the ages”.

For all that politicians obsess about the latest headlines, many political scientists have argued that the impact of newspapers on votes is exaggerated. What really matter to voters are what political scientists call the ‘fundamentals’, such as how well the economy is doing. If a politician wishes to be re-elected, reducing unemployment is far more important than winning the favour of the *Sun*.

The past 20 years have, arguably, seen the pandering of British politicians to the press reach a new level. In the early 1990s, the Labour Party was a fierce critic of Rupert Murdoch and News International; by July 1995, Tony Blair was giving the keynote speech at a News International summit in Australia. Lance Price, a former deputy to Alastair Campbell, once claimed: “No big decision could ever be made inside No 10 without taking account of the likely reaction of three men: Gordon Brown, John Prescott and Rupert Murdoch.”

Both major parties have suffered from reacting excessively to short-term headlines. The recent budget U-turns were seen as damaging less because of the unpopularity of the policies themselves and more because of the ease with which the government changed its mind. A few days of complaint by the *Sun* and its “Who VAT all the pies?” newspaper campaign was enough to see the end of the ‘pasty tax’.

It would be unfair to blame the media alone for the reactive nature of much of modern politics. The day’s headlines are just one influence on the modern political war room. The results

from the parties’ own polling and focus groups can be just as influential. These tactics came of age in the 1990s, perfected by the skilled practitioners of the Clinton and Blair campaigns. At their best, they allowed politicians to connect more deeply with the hopes and concerns of ordinary voters. At their worst, they provided politicians with excuses to avoid the inconvenient messages that they had a responsibility to convey to the public.

The technique of focus groups descends from their original use during the Second World War, when sociologists attempted to study the impact of the military’s propaganda films. After the war, focus groups were widely adopted by advertisers and private industry and, by the 1980s, their use was common in the political process. Focus groups helped Tim Bell to optimise his 1978 ‘Labour isn’t working’ campaign, persuaded the first George Bush to increase his attacks on Michael Dukakis and taught Neil Kinnock to update his image.

In the 1992 presidential campaign, Bill Clinton took their use to a new level. Thanks to focus groups, Clinton knew that it was better to ‘invest’ in education than to ‘spend’ on it. He was later to observe: “There is no one more powerful today than the member of a focus group. If you really want to change things and you want to get listened to, that’s the place to be.”

Equally keen on the new techniques was the late Philip Gould. By the 1987 UK general election, Gould was commissioning new polls and focus groups every single day. After observing the success of Clinton’s disciplined approach, Gould returned to Britain to implement these tactics at the heart of New Labour, when he became Tony Blair’s chief pollster.

“VOTERS RESPECT POLITICIANS WHO GET THE BIG STRATEGIC DECISIONS RIGHT, NOT THOSE WHO GIVE THE PERFECT SOUNDBITE ON THE NEWS”

Despite this discipline, it would be an exaggeration to say that New Labour managed to control the media narrative throughout its time in power. If a neutral outsider randomly sampled the press coverage of the party between 1997 and 2010, that person would probably walk away with a fairly good understanding of the never-ending Blair-Brown feud. He would have a much less clear idea of the strategic policy decisions made by the New Labour government.

PRESSURE FROM ALL SIDES

In the meantime, behind governments’ frantic attempts to influence short-term headlines, Britain’s long-term problems remain large and menacing. Over the course of the 20th century, government spending in the west has grown from about 10% to 50% of GDP. Ever more generous benefits, increased health spending and slower productivity growth than in the private sector have ensured that the cost of the state continues to grow.

Added to these cost pressures, we now face new expenses from an ageing population in which fewer people work. Revenue from significant traditional sources such as North Sea oil and gas is likely to fall. The Office for Budget Responsibility calculates that, on top of today’s austerity programme, we will need an additional £100bn in spending cuts or new taxes. The Institute for Fiscal Studies estimates that, by 2060, pensions and health spending alone is likely to make up half of all government spending. It is not inconceivable that the cost of health could double, rising to 16% of national income.

One option to meet these pressures would be to increase taxes. The Institute for Fiscal Studies estimates that paying for these age-related costs would require about 5.4% of GDP in new taxes. For reference, the UK’s largest current tax – income tax – brings in revenue worth about 10% of GDP.

Even those who are politically amenable to such an option must recognise that there are limits to this strategy. The state cannot simply grow as a proportion of the economy forever. There are limits to the government’s ability to raise taxes without discouraging work. Many economists believe that we are near the limit, if not past it, of our ability to increase tax without significant damage to growth.

A more mature debate is needed when it comes to discussing growth and our economy’s long-term competitiveness. If the

financial crisis has brought one fact to our attention, it is that we are not as rich as we once believed. Across the political spectrum, hard trade-offs and difficult decisions need to be made. How can we reduce the burden of regulation while ensuring that we do not sacrifice social protection? How can we do our bit to protect the environment without falling into the trap of gesture policies that harm the economy? Nobody likes construction in their back garden, and yet Britain is critically short of infrastructure such as new houses, roads and runways.

Politics at its best brings people together around achievable, long-term objectives. Politics at its worst fixates on the short term, setting interest groups against one another. In this model, whoever can complain to the media loudest wins.

For the past two decades, all of the political parties have competed on which could be seen as the most competent and which could show itself to be the most friendly or empathetic to the largest number of voters. The way to prove this was through careful day-to-day control of the media, ensuring that the party never moved too far from the perceived views of the average voter. Underlying this approach was the general assumption that the economic problems of the developed world had been largely solved. “No more boom and bust” and “sharing the proceeds of growth” are phrases that now seem naïve; they show the complacency of that era.

Today, that view has been overturned. For politicians who are operating after the crash of 2008, a more direct appeal to the electorate – telling the truth and saying what you believe – is likely to be better rewarded in the long run. Both the media and voters ultimately respect politicians who get the big strategic decisions right, not those who give the perfect soundbite on the *News at Ten*. Strategic decisions, in turn, may involve temporary unpopularity and a willingness to disagree with the mainstream view.

The challenge for a new generation of politicians is to be prepared to be bold. They must be unafraid to make decisions removed from the vortex of immense media pressure. Politicians who say what they truly believe are rewarded in the long run. The public has become cynical that politicians will say anything to get a good headline. The new generation of politicians should be doing their best to dispel this impression. ■



BETTER BOARDS

The financial crisis has triggered concerns about a widespread failure in business leadership. What can company boards do to establish more effective governance systems?

By Denise Kingsmill

Today is not an easy time to be a board director, following a financial crisis that may come to be seen as the turning point of modern capitalism. The many post-mortems of the crisis have spread blame far and wide. Governments, central banks, regulators and auditors – as well as the management and boards of various troubled financial institutions – have all been implicated in *ex post facto* investigations and rationalisations of the global downturn.

As so often happens at times of economic stress, the governance of companies has again become an issue of public debate, with a growing perception of a failure in corporate leadership. At a time when the role of boards is increasingly subjected to the glare of public scrutiny, the pressures on, and responsibilities of, directors have increased. They are expected to ensure compliance with increasingly complex

BARONESS
KINGSMILL HOLDS
A NUMBER OF
NON-EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR AND
ADVISORY ROLES
AT INTERNATIONAL
COMPANIES

reporting and other regulations, safeguard against excessive risk and hold managers' feet to the fire to satisfy the insatiable demands of the market for improved quarterly returns. They also have to deal with thorny issues such as executive remuneration, succession planning, environmental issues and business sustainability, together with corporate responsibility and reputation. The time involved in fulfilling the demands of board directorships increased significantly during the financial crisis and its aftermath.

Board agendas can become overloaded, and some chairmen are more interested in getting through the business on time than in encouraging constructive debate. To cope with the workload, more board business is devolved to committees, with the result that, in some companies, the audit committee can take longer than the board meeting. The risk here is that process takes the place of discussion and the board as a whole is not engaged in addressing some of the most important challenges facing the company. This can lead to directors becoming more like

“BOARDS MUST HAVE THE COURAGE TO CONFRONT THE BIG ISSUES”

corporate policemen: enforcing rules rather than working collaboratively with one another and with management; and ticking boxes rather than tackling issues.

One possible solution for some companies could be professional boards made up of full-time, specialist directors with deep experience of complex board issues, supported by staff and advisers. This would be particularly appropriate in the case of bank boards, where the business’s complexity and the asymmetry of information between executives and board members meant that the part-time non-executive directors had little understanding of the scale and gravity of the impending 2008 financial crisis. The professional board should not be involved in the day-to-day running of the company, but should devote its energy to longer-term issues of strategy, sustainability and political and social engagement, in addition to monitoring executive performance.

The risk here is that the board steps on the toes of management and impedes, rather than supports, the operation of the business. Independence could be eroded over time in the case of full-time, salaried directors. There may also be practical difficulties of recruitment and remuneration. Nevertheless, some companies could find this a valuable way of improving stewardship.

TUNNEL VISION

The financial crisis has exaggerated the tendency towards short-termism. Instead of focusing on seeking new opportunities, markets and ways of doing business, boards and management can become preoccupied with financial re-engineering, mergers and acquisitions. They often spend more time talking about how to ‘make the numbers’ than about matters that are fundamental to their competitive advantage, such as innovation, customer satisfaction and employee skills. Board decision-making can easily become distorted by the requirement to disclose more and more data on a quarterly basis, and by analysts’ sell, hold and buy reports.

The instincts of the trader have replaced those of the engaged investor, so that, instead of participating in a dialogue with companies about strategy or performance, equity holders may simply exit without explanation. This is exacerbated by the changing profile of investors caused by the globalisation of financial markets and the use of algorithmic trading systems. I know of more than one CEO frustrated by a falling share price despite good trading performance.

Professor John Kay has made practical suggestions about how to tackle these market shortcomings in his recently published review of UK equity markets. Among his recommendations are ending quarterly reporting, fundamentally changing the incentives for market participants (including company directors and asset managers), rewarding only long-term

business performance and requiring that fiduciary obligations are applied to all relationships in the equity investment chain. If implemented, these could go a long way towards changing corporate culture and restoring trust in the market.

Nevertheless, boards themselves need to spend time re-evaluating their purpose and function. For too long, the dominant ethos of the boardroom has been to maximise short-term gains on behalf of shareholders, sometimes at the expense of a longer-term focus on issues such as customer loyalty, competitive positioning, the development of employee skills, a rational approach to risk management and the fulfilment of the company’s values and mission. We need a major shift in board priorities if we are to balance the demands of the market with the more fundamental measures that are essential to long-term corporate health and sustainability.

It is likely that boards will have to change not only their focus, but also their composition. Greater diversity of experience and culture has long been a spoken-of ideal but has rarely been achieved in boardrooms. Whatever their composition – and whether challenging or supportive of management – boards need to have, above all else, the goal of good governance, progress and growth. They must have the courage to confront the big issues and use their best endeavours to get them right on behalf of the company. ■

FROM THE ARCHIVE

TOMORROW’S COMPANY

In 1993, following a lecture by Professor Charles Handy on the topic ‘What is a company for?’, the RSA launched Tomorrow’s Company, an inquiry into the role of business in a changing world.

The three-year inquiry – led by Sir Anthony Cleaver, the then-chairman of IBM UK – challenged senior executives from 25 companies to contribute their views on the nature and purpose of business. The findings of the inquiry, published in 1995, called for an inclusive approach to business success that would see every company define and communicate its purpose and values; develop a unique success model; place a positive value on its relationships; work in partnership with stakeholders; and maintain a healthy reputation.

The project’s legacy has been enduring: the Centre for Tomorrow’s Company, which was founded in 1996 with the support of the companies involved in the inquiry, remains an influential voice in debates about the future of business. More recently, the RSA revisited some of these issues with the launch of the Tomorrow’s Investor project, which encouraged ordinary citizens to take a more proactive approach to managing their pension funds.

■ To read the latest report from Tomorrow’s Investor, Seeing through the British pension system, please visit www.thersa.org/projects/tomorrows-investors

BEYOND THE OBVIOUS

Why have politicians so rarely lived up to their promises to tackle climate change? Perhaps the problem lies less in a lack of political integrity than in a failure to frame the debate in the right way

By Eric Knight

In 2007, an Australian prime ministerial candidate told the electorate that climate change was the greatest moral, social and economic challenge of our generation. Within four years of being prime minister, Kevin Rudd had not only dropped his government's carbon-pricing policy for political reasons, he had also lost the leadership of his own party, making him one of the few prime ministers in Australia's history to suffer that fate.

How do we make big decisions in a world that has a short attention span? When it comes to complex social challenges such as climate change, it is common to hear politicians invoke the language of moral crusade. Politics is presented as a battle between good and bad, moral and immoral, self-interested and altruistic. I want to suggest that, for many complex problems, it is not morality that gets in the way of decision-making; it is communication. We all want a better future for our children and grandchildren. The challenge is agreeing on the tools we use to get there.

This struck me in a conversation I had in mid-2010 with Kumi Naidoo, the international executive director of Greenpeace, on a train from Oxford to London. By any account, Naidoo is an impressive individual. He grew up on the rough side of Durban, South Africa, in the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1980s, he won a Rhodes scholarship to Oxford to study politics, and afterwards returned to his homeland to fight apartheid alongside Nelson Mandela and lift his countrymen from poverty.

There is much to admire in Naidoo's personal story. But as I spoke to him about the politics of climate change, I could not help but disagree with him. For Naidoo, persuading people of his point of view on climate change

was all about images. It was about showing pictures of, and telling stories about, how climate change was affecting people. It meant showing the sinking islands of the Pacific and the droughts of Africa. One effective example, he told me, was a picture he had seen of the dry weather in Australia. As he had passed through London's Heathrow airport, he had seen, on the front page of a major daily newspaper, an image of a fish lying dead in Australia's Murray Darling River. The headline read: "Is Australia the first country to suffer from climate change?" Just that visual, Naidoo said, was more powerful than the words in the article.

Showing dramatic pictures of the weather is a compelling way to frame the debate, but it is also the wrong one. If you held the opposite view to Naidoo on climate change, you would also turn to the weather to make your point. As President Barack Obama flew out of Copenhagen in December 2009, he flew into a snowstorm – both literally and figuratively – on the east coast of the US. At the time, Obama was proposing the creation of a federal agency on climate change. Yet it seemed absurd to make the case for global warming at a time of incredible cold. The weather was why people struggled. By applying the wrong frame of reference, we set out on the path to failure.

Fighting climate change through the optic of the weather is tactically appealing for one obvious reason. The weather is visible, whereas carbon emissions are invisible. Invisibility tends to be a common theme among today's complex social problems. It is because they are intangible that we struggle with them. Take immigration. It is easy to see foreigners. But to identify at first glance whether they have entered the country legally or whether they are net contributors to society is, frankly, impossible. Finance is the same. Hard currency >>

ERIC KNIGHT IS
AN AUSTRALIAN
AUTHOR AND
ECONOMICS
CONSULTANT





represents only a fraction of the money flowing around the world. It is the invisible flows of capital that have the power to bankrupt nations.

In the 1940s, the cognitive psychologist Karl Duncker described our tendency towards “functional fixedness”. We are drawn to what is visually compelling or immediately obvious. As a result, we often miss the quieter logic of things. This was not a comment about human rationality: we make perfectly rational decisions, but within a blinkered or narrow frame of reference. Our ability to solve complex problems is more closely correlated with the way information was presented to us than with our underlying intelligence.

Herbert A Simon, the 1978 Nobel Laureate, described this phenomenon as “bounded rationality”. His work informed the research of Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, who would later define a field of research in behavioural economics. But this work was usually geared towards economics rather than politics. Rarely did these researchers ask questions about how public-policy debates played out in the collective conscience, even when the implications were significant. What happened when you substituted bankers for voters, and purchasing decisions for the fate of the globe?

ASKING THE WRONG QUESTIONS

Returning to the case of climate change, I believe we have misframed this issue in two ways. The first is with respect to the ‘first order’ question: is climate change a problem worth worrying about? Early on, this question was framed as a choice between believers and sceptics. Al Gore captured the world’s attention in 2006 when he set out the scientific evidence for

climate change in *An Inconvenient Truth*. Those who disagreed (Lord Monckton and Christopher Booker, among others) made the opposite case. But both sides were guilty of the same mistake: they called on the public to make a scientific decision when too few of us had the qualifications needed to make a reasoned judgement. The relevant question was always authority rather than science. Whom should we choose to believe, when we ourselves lack the relevant expertise?

This is an ancient question for democracy and is far from simple. The Gore-Monckton debate did more to obfuscate than to clarify. Were they speaking as scientists or politicians? The same could be asked of Rajendra Pachauri, the former head of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which was responsible for pooling and summarising the opinion of the world’s leading academic scientists. Pachauri made the case that there was no room for doubt on the science of climate change. Yet such a comment sounded more political than scientific. After all, doubt had fuelled the scientific revolution: *nullius in verba* – take no man’s word for granted – was the motto of the Royal Society. It would have been better if the debate had been framed more precisely around scope: those areas in which democracies decide versus those in which democracies delegate to experts. It is my view that a healthy democracy requires some (albeit limited) delegation to experts. By framing the climate-change debate as a contest between belief and scepticism, we called on people to make a false choice.

The debate has been further complicated by misframing the ‘second order’ question. Assuming that climate change warrants our attention, what should we do about it? This issue is too often presented as a choice between environmental protection

and economic growth: you could save the planet or you could consume endlessly, but you could not do both.

This 'second order' dilemma involved a conceit about consumption. In an essay called *On Disgust* (1927), the little-known Hungarian philosopher Aurel Kolnai linked our fascination with overconsumption with the idea of death. Overconsumption connoted excess, decay, a life gone to seed. It made for a compelling narrative, but it distracted us from simple logic. Thomas Malthus, in the 18th century, had been focused on overconsumption and what excessive breeding had meant for the sustainability of Britain. But his dystopian predictions had not come to pass because he had overlooked an invisible variable: technological innovation.

The same confusion has emerged in the climate-change debate. Imagine a world in which people fly endlessly around the world, drive enormous cars and eat doughnuts all day. If each of those activities were carbon-neutral, none would make a spot of difference to climate change, yet we would still have a problem with them. Gluttony is an age-old dilemma, but addressing climate change has more to do with the carbon intensity of production than it does with consumption. Technology is the invisible key.

Sustainable development expert Tim Jackson's analysis of our technological trajectory, which builds on the work of biologist Paul Ehrlich, paints a gloomy picture of the future. Over the past two decades, the carbon intensity of every dollar of global GDP consumed has only improved by about 0.7% annually. Assuming that the world's population swells to nine billion and our incomes grow beyond the global average of \$5,900 a year, it will be the planet that suffers. Technological innovation is "nothing short of delusion", Jackson writes in *Prosperity Without Growth*. "There is as yet no credible, socially just, ecologically sustainable scenario for continually growing incomes for a world of nine billion people."

But Jackson's analysis is mistaken for a single reason: he studies the global citizen, when no such thing exists. The world is not made up of average global citizens. It is made up of people who live in smoggy, industrialising China, or remote, rural Africa, or technologically progressive Europe. When you study the statistics of the International Energy Agency by nation rather than by average, a different picture emerges. The developed world has undergone a technological renaissance, with per capita carbon emissions in decline, while parts of the developing world continue to pull themselves out of poverty. The question is not about whether we can progress technologically; it is about whether we can deploy the technological innovations of the developed world in the developing one.

Jackson's error goes to a deeper and highly counterintuitive point about the solutions to complex social problems in an era of globalisation. The answers that will define our prosperity are not necessarily global or averaged; they are local and specific. They are the solutions that work with a particular

"FOR MANY COMPLEX PROBLEMS, IT IS NOT MORALITY THAT GETS IN THE WAY OF DECISION-MAKING; IT IS COMMUNICATION"

set of individuals given their histories and contexts. Some commentators find this view disconcerting because it lacks the certainty of a single, universal idea. That is also, however, what makes it closer to reality. Our future will be defined by leaders who can communicate a common vision but who have the skills to decentralise the execution of that vision. Only by animating local communities to reach their potential will we unleash a way to innovate in fragmented landscapes.

In 1990, the late political scientist Elinor Ostrom set out in *Governing the Commons* an intriguing and controversial argument about how the world worked. Contrary to popular imagination, tragedies of the commons could be solved. "Many analysts – especially in academia, special-interest groups, governments and the press – still presume that common-pool problems are all dilemmas in which participants themselves cannot avoid producing suboptimal results," Ostrom wrote.

Her view was that complex problems could be solved when communication was free, vision was shared, trust was high and communities were mobilised from the bottom up rather than the top down. It was not an ideological position; it was an empirical one, borne out by case studies originating in places ranging from remote fisheries in Turkey to fragile ecosystems in the Swiss Alps.

This perspective challenges conventional thinking about our prospects for a better world. It injects modesty into singular, universal notions about progress and places faith in people, with their ears to the ground, coming up with our best answers. We are already beginning to see the emergence of creative solutions to climate change, ranging from the invention of the Ambient Orb – a consumer-electronics device that changes colour as the price of electricity increases – to the pre-industrial lifestyles emerging in New York's inner-city boroughs and, more broadly, a bottom-up approach to international climate negotiations.

What sits behind each of these solutions is a belief in transferring power to the people. We have the capacity to solve our trickiest problems and, in some cases, are already doing so. But we need leaders who can help us to apply the right perspective to the world around us and focus our minds on answers that sometimes lie just out of view. ■

Eric Knight's book, Reframe, is published by Biteback.

FAMILY VALUES

As the RSA's family of academies grows, so does its potential to combat social disadvantage and inspire greater ambition among students of all ages and abilities

By Alison Critchley

When the RSA announced its intention, in spring 2011, to build on the success of the Tipton Academy by developing a family of schools, the number of academies nationally stood at 409. As of July 2012, there were 1,957 open academies in England, with several hundred more schools approved for conversion.

There has also been a marked change in the types of schools becoming academies. In January 2011, two-thirds of academies were 'sponsored': established to replace underperforming or unpopular schools, often in new buildings. Today, 81% of academies are 'converter' schools: those judged by the Department for Education to be performing well, and set up independently of other schools or an academy chain.

The growth of the RSA family of academies over this period has been more measured. We are now a family of four, with a fifth on the way. Unusually among academy chains, the schools include both sponsored schools and converters. A board that comprises both RSA trustees and headteachers from the schools within the family governs RSA academies. Our model offers an alternative to not only the top-down approach of some of the larger academy sponsors, but also the potential for isolation and insularity that an academy converting alone might face.

So, will the RSA academies improve the outcomes for children who attend them? We expect that this year's proportion of children achieving five 'good' GCSEs, including English and maths, in our schools will increase (although only a politician would seek to attribute this to the RSA, given our relatively recent involvement with some schools). More importantly for

ALISON CRITCHLEY
IS EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR OF
RSA ACADEMIES

sustained improvement, we are beginning to arrange practical school-to-school support. Whitley Academy, for example, has provided invaluable help to Arrow Vale RSA Academy as the latter has gone through its conversion process. It will continue to provide practical support, including the secondment of a senior member of staff to Arrow Vale. In the autumn, we will begin to develop the principle of sharing good practice among all schools within the family by carrying out a peer review. This will map strengths and areas for development so that schools can share best practice.

Improved examination results and a strong Ofsted report, important as they are, are not sufficient in themselves to ensure that schoolchildren fulfil their potential in higher education or the world of work. This challenge was put succinctly by a taxi driver on a recent trip to Arrow >>

ADOPT A STUDENT

Adopt a Student is a mentoring scheme that Lilian Baylis Technology School has introduced to link sixth-form students with individuals who work in a professional field. The aim of the programme is to address one of the barriers faced by our young people: a lack of knowledge and experience of the professional world. A number of RSA Fellows have volunteered to participate in the scheme at Lilian Baylis from September, and we are now seeking Fellows to support a similar scheme at Whitley Academy. Each mentor will be matched with a student and asked to meet them at least once every half term.





Vale. He told me that his younger brother was a “bright lad”, currently in the sixth form at the school I was visiting, but that his ideas about what he might do after school were limited to what he saw his older brothers doing: driving a taxi and working in a takeaway restaurant. The older brother felt he should do ‘more’, but everyone was a bit stuck as to what that ‘more’ might look like.

This is where the RSA family of academies has something unique to offer. Through the involvement of some of our 27,000 Fellows, we can and should make an enormous difference in helping young people to develop aspirations and ambitions that are broader than those of their immediate family and

community. By offering careers talks, visits, work experience and mentoring, schools in more advantaged areas can use their networks of parents and alumni to do just that. The schools within the RSA family are all serving communities with above-average levels of deprivation and do not, on the whole, have parents or alumni who bring these types of connections. Fellows and Royal Designers for Industry have already demonstrated enthusiasm for working with our schools where opportunities have arisen and, as the family grows, we are seeking Fellows who can participate in new projects.

We will create a strong link between the schools and the wider work of the RSA’s education team, so that policy development is informed by practice. By combining thought leadership and practical innovation, we aim to create a virtuous circle between research and action in the education sector. For instance, the current RSA-Pearson Think Tank Academies Commission, which is examining the impact of the ‘mass academisation’ of state schools on educational outcomes, will inform how we develop our ‘family of academies’ model.

So, where next for RSA academies? The immediate priority is to consolidate our work with the existing family by further developing school-to-school support and increasing the opportunities for RSA Fellows to work with schools. We also

OUR ROOTS, OUR COMMUNITY

During the coming school year, the academies within the family will work together and with Fellows to create an exhibition about their local communities. This might include:

- geographical representations of the local community, such as photographs, videos, sculptures, paintings and collages that showcase the school and its surroundings
- stories and poems by writers and authors who have lived in or written about the area
- architectural descriptions or dialogue about local buildings
- historical perspectives on events or individuals who have made a difference to the local community.

These are just first thoughts. We are now looking for Fellows who can help the schools to develop the ideas and put them into practice, perhaps by offering a visit to a venue of significance or by helping students with designs, displays, interviews and presentation techniques. If you have an idea for something you would like to work on with students in your local area, email education@rsa.org.uk

ANIMATING RSA ANIMATE

During 2012–13, RSA Education will work with teachers from the academies to develop resources to support the classroom use of the RSA Animate series. Teachers around the world already use these animations to inspire pupils, but many others would benefit from some simple, flexible guidance and additional resources that support lesson-planning. We are at an early stage in this process, but would welcome input from Fellows, especially those with expertise in any of the specific themes that the RSA Animate series covers.

“IMPROVED EXAMINATION RESULTS ARE NOT SUFFICIENT IN THEMSELVES TO ENSURE THAT SCHOOLCHILDREN FULFIL THEIR POTENTIAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION OR THE WORLD OF WORK”

wish to see further gradual growth in the West Midlands and London. Schools joining the family will place a particular emphasis on increasing social mobility by ensuring equality of opportunity, challenging discrimination and narrowing the attainment gap to enable young people to realise their potential. The fifth school joining the group in January is a middle school for children aged between nine and 13, and we hope that, over time, the family will also include primary schools.

These developments are ambitious and not without their challenges. As we continue to expand the RSA's family of academies, new questions will emerge. How do we strike the appropriate balance between autonomy and accountability for

schools? How far can – and should – we encourage innovation and experimentation within our schools when they will be judged on their exam results? How can we truly encourage collaboration among and beyond these schools? Whatever the answers, we know that they will not be worked out alone in a quiet corner of John Adam Street, but with the full engagement of all members of the RSA family, including its Fellows. ■

■ *This school year, we will be introducing a regular email bulletin for Fellows who are interested in hearing about the RSA family of academies. To sign up, or to express an interest in participating in any of the projects outlined here, email education@rsa.org.uk*

FELLOWS AS TRUSTEES AND GOVERNORS

Fellows play an important role in the governance of RSA academies as a whole, as well as on the governing bodies of schools within the RSA family.

Sue Horner FRSA has been appointed chair of the RSA Academies Board. She has more than 30 years' experience in schools and education, most recently as director of curriculum at the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. She led the revision of the secondary curriculum in 2007 and played a major role in the Rose review of the primary curriculum. She was also, until recently, chair of Booktrust, the largest literature charity in the country.

At school level, we have appointed RSA governors who can offer both professional skills and expertise and a broader knowledge of the RSA and the opportunities that partnership with the RSA could offer. As the family grows, we will need additional governors in the Redditch area to work with Arrow Vale RSA Academy.

WORKING WITH ROYAL DESIGNERS FOR INDUSTRY

Over the past year, students from the RSA Academy in Tipton and Whitley Academy in Coventry have had the opportunity to work with Royal Designers for Industry (RDI). Robin Levien RDI visited the RSA Academy in Tipton in 2010 to open its design and technology department by setting a design challenge for two teams of students to complete. Later that year, both teams took part in a tour of his studio in London, followed by a visit to Tate Modern. Levien is now mentoring two sixth-form students by acting as their professional client, setting them briefs and commenting on their first designs.

In autumn 2011, students at Whitley Academy had the opportunity to work with Stephen Jones RDI, milliner to the likes of Princess Diana, Gwen Stefani and Beyoncé. The students were set the challenge of designing a hat that represented their character and interests, an exercise that boosted their self-confidence and self-esteem while developing their design skills.

RESTORED TO GLORY

The refurbishment of the RSA House has helped create spaces that are easier to navigate, more flexible and more welcoming for Fellows and visitors

By Andrew Summers

With the first phase of refurbishment of the RSA House completed, Fellows and visitors now enter an environment that makes the most of the RSA's 250-year history, blended with its 21st century enlightenment mission.

At the heart of the project has been the refurbishment of the Great Room. The new design means that it can be adapted for a wide range of uses, from lectures, conferences and exhibitions to dinners and weddings.

The room now has a flattened floor, flexible seating and a movable stage. Its main feature – *The Progress of Human Knowledge and Culture*, a series of paintings by James Barry – has been enhanced. Movable screens can be installed to bring remote audiences into the room and the lighting can be adapted to suit the occasion.

The staircase leading to the Great Room has been uncovered to reveal the original mosaic tile pattern. The House now features two contemporary lighting installations designed by Troika, one of which hangs above the staircase and one of which is located in the Benjamin Franklin Room.

The ground floor has been opened out to create a more welcoming reception area that includes a series of touchscreens. These show information about events, projects, publications and Fellows' networks. The screens display a live videostream of lectures, along with a live Twitter feed that shows viewers' comments.

ANDREW SUMMERS
FRSA IS CHAIRMAN
OF THE RSA HOUSE
DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE

A new signage system, designed by Pentagram with support from wayfinding experts, helps visitors to navigate the ground-floor spaces. Disabled access has also been improved.

In one of several new meeting rooms, a projected wall screen allows Fellows and other visitors to access information and collaborate on projects or business ventures.

Matthew Lloyd Architects led the design of the refurbishment project, supported by a range of specialists including technology consultancy Vanguardia. The practice worked hard to restore some of the building's original features while introducing high-quality audiovisual technology. Sustainability was a key concern throughout the project: the architects used materials that have a long lifespan, such as oak and slate. Wherever possible, furniture, fittings and other materials were sourced from British manufacturers.

The team of designers, contractors and consultants who carried out the project worked well together to complete it on time and within budget. It is appropriate that this refurbishment should have been completed in London's Olympics year, given that one of the paintings in the Great Room shows the original Olympians. They can now look down on a significant legacy for the future.

Matthew Bates, RSA venue director, said: "We look forward to welcoming many more Fellows and visitors to the RSA House so that they can enjoy its elegance and sophisticated technology. More than ever, they will now be aware that the RSA has a distinguished history but is very much an organisation of the 21st century." ■

ADAM STREET



JOHN ADAM STREET

This plan shows the development of the ground-floor spaces at the RSA House. The area has been divided up in a way that reflects the original Georgian houses on John Adam Street

NEW FELLOWS



NDIDI OKEZIE

ENGAGING IN EDUCATION

As an associate director at Teach First, Ndidi Okezie seeks to combat social disadvantage by better engaging young people and parents in discussions about the education system.

Having been a teacher herself from 2003 to May 2012, working her way up to the position of assistant principal at Burlington Danes Academy, Okezie has seen at first hand the power of peer-to-peer influence in improving the prospects and aspirations of disadvantaged young people.

"I think the biggest challenge for the education system today is to involve pupils more actively in the debate," she said. "It's important that they feel they can contribute to shaping the education system, rather than simply having it delivered to them from above."

Earlier this year, Okezie set up a social enterprise – the talk-show network Nexus 1st – that seeks to meet this challenge by broadcasting programmes that invite adults and young people to discuss current issues. She hopes to take the conversation further at the RSA, which she describes as "representing everything [she is] passionate about".

IN BRIEF

Here are a few more new Fellows who are working to drive social progress:

Nico Perez is co-founder of Mixcloud, an internet radio startup based at London's 'Silicon Roundabout' that provides a platform for on-demand radio shows, DJ mixes and podcasts, including the RSAs.

Lisa Oulton is director of Future Foundry CIC, which promotes the work, skills and history of craftspeople in the East Kent area, as well as training young people interested in the industry.

Stephen Robertson is director general of the British Retail Consortium, which is recognised for its powerful campaigning on behalf of members, its influence within governments and its provision of authoritative retail information.

Jillian Miller is executive director of the Gorilla Organization, which funds community-led projects in Africa that aim to save gorillas from extinction while alleviating poverty.



HELEN FARR

ENERGY CHANGE

Helen Farr is principal policy adviser for energy at the Institution of Engineering and Technology, where she coordinates the provision of advice to the government. She has helped to bring together leading engineers from the energy, IT and communications sectors to debate smart metering and smart grids in the UK.

Farr's work promotes public awareness of how energy policy is changing and the new challenges and opportunities that are emerging. "Energy needs to be addressed from a whole-system perspective, and consumers have a vital role in that system," she said. "The choices that individuals make about energy supply and use are becoming increasingly important. We need to find ways of engaging the widest-possible user community in debates about reducing future energy consumption and shifting consumption to times when there is less stress on supply."

Farr decided to join the RSA because she wants to use its networks to debate these issues more widely. She said: "Interdisciplinary teamwork is vital to solving the infrastructure challenges of the future."

YOUR FELLOWSHIP

Explore opportunities to get involved at www.thersa.org/fellowship

Networks near you: connect with other Fellows at one of the regular local networks and events taking place throughout the world.

Online networks: RSA Comment and FRSA online spaces enable you to debate, engage and connect.

Fellowship newsletter: a fortnightly e-newsletter about your activities that details ways for you to get involved.

Fellowship Council: keep up to date with Council activities.

Spread the word: help build a progressive society by nominating other Fellows.

Fellows' facilities: use the RSA House library, archive, bar, restaurant and meeting spaces.

Turn your ideas into action: the Catalyst Fund supports new and early-stage projects aimed at tackling social problems.

THE NEW BRICOLEUR

The message of Rob Fraser's and Andrew Thomson's article ('The new artisan', Summer 2012) closely chimed with a recent talk I gave at the University of Leeds on why we must make applied, creative intelligence attractive to the next generation. But rather than advocate the 'new artisan', I argued from my position as a graphic designer that education and the creative industries should encourage the 'new bricoleur'.

Back in 1978, Colin Rowe used Levi-Strauss's term 'bricolage' to describe a design process that uses the discipline of the scientist to explore and interpret technologies to find form, rather than a singular orthodoxy. I would like to make the case that although digital technology such as the cloud has enormous advantages, we must guard against a digital orthodoxy by sustaining and integrating heritage skills through cross-disciplinary approaches.

Bricoleurs can analyse their tools, be they heritage or digital, and combine traditions of the past with new technologies. In art, design and craft, education must embrace interdisciplinary approaches and critical thinking to retain a counterculture and avoid following the easier path of corporate software solutions. That path leads to stagnation and dull homogeneity.

The silo mentality, in education or industry, is hard to challenge when some departments today guard their funding jealously. It is all the more crucial, then, to encourage the enterprising spirit of the mavericks and the new bricoleurs.

Let us build bridges in a hybrid of heritage and digital skills across all areas of the economy.

—Iain Macdonald

IN PRAISE OF CRAFTSMANSHIP

Rob Fraser's and Andrew Thomson's profound and pertinent article ('The new artisan', Summer 2012) would make excellent bedtime reading for politicians, employers and educationalists. It is essential that creative design is seen as combining the academic with the scientific and aesthetic to the benefit of mankind. Its practitioners are special individuals who seek perfection, but who are rarely rewarded financially in a way that is appropriate to their talents. We admire the work of surgeons; why not apply the same criteria to other practical skills?

Britain has built its reputation on the skill and production of its people. In recent times, this has been overtaken by finance and greed. The Olympic Games have clearly shown what this wonderful small country is capable of. We must use this as a springboard for future development, and reclaim our position as a leading and respected creative nation.

—Bernard Pumfrey

THE PREMIUM AWARD SCHEME

In the note on the Premium Award Scheme in the latest issue of the *RSA Journal*, the original premium is described as taking the form of medals and bounties. In fact, the premiums were both money and medals.

Bounties were awarded when the Society received an invention or idea worthy of encouragement for which it had not offered a premium.

—Susan Bennett



SHIRKING RESPONSIBILITY

In Ian Bremmer's lecture (Review, Summer 2012), he asserts that, "as a poor country", China is "unlikely to take action on protecting the climate". Yet there is an awful lot of evidence, such as China's investment in solar technology and wind power, to suggest that Beijing is very alive to issues of climate change. It is also, of course, churning out carbon dioxide from power stations, but what about rich countries such as Britain? Are we without guilt? Look at the way our diesel cars are not only polluting our city streets, but contributing to climate change as well.

—Terence Bendixson

Please send us your thoughts on the *RSA Journal* by emailing editor@rsa.org.uk or writing to: Editor, *RSA Journal*, Wardour, 5th Floor, Drury House, 34–43 Russell Street, London WC2B 5HA. Or comment online at www.thersa.org/journal



THE LONG RUN

12 JULY 2012

How do we respond positively to an ageing society? A panel of experts discusses the challenges ahead

“PLANNING PHYSICALLY DELIVERS MENTAL REWARDS, NOT ONLY ON THE OLYMPIC FIELD BUT ALSO IN LIFE ITSELF”

Tom Kirkwood: The average length of the human life has doubled over the past 200 years. This is unquestionably one of humanity’s greatest achievements, yet expressions such as the ‘grey tsunami’ and the ‘ticking timebomb’ of demographic change suggest that there is a great deal of anxiety about the fact that people are living longer. How can we celebrate the achievement while looking at what can be done to improve our experience of ageing?

Sarah Harper: There are three issues to consider. The first is whether the eight million people in the UK who are expected to live to the age of 100 will experience good or bad health in their later years. At the moment, although we are extending the period of health within total life expectancy, we are also increasing the proportion of frailty.

The second issue relates to generational succession. What happens when we do not inherit anything from our parents, or even our grandparents, until we reach 80? The final issue is about how we cope with these long lives. Will we have to rethink the traditional life course of education, work and retirement, particularly if we are retiring at 55 and living until 110? As a society, we may need to create more fluidity across the life course.

Tom Kirkwood: We need a better understanding of what happens as the

ageing process advances, recognising that there are reasons to be positive but difficulties to navigate too. People aged 85 or above represent the fastest-growing sector of the UK’s population, yet we know remarkably little about them.

In Newcastle, we have been conducting a study that aims to give us an image of what life is like for a representative group of 85-year-olds. First, we determined the number of illnesses every individual was suffering from, and second, we asked each of them to rate their health and quality of life. Although all of them had illnesses, nearly four out of five rated their health as ‘good’, ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’. What is more, when we assessed participants’ ability to perform certain functions of daily living, such as shopping, cooking and managing their finances, we found that nearly 30% of men and 15% of women could do it all. This flies in the face of the common perception that life during advanced old age is miserable.

We need to recognise that, in these changing times, there is a moving boundary of old age. We must prepare people for later life and manage the transitions that come with it, including the challenges of altering self-image.

Frances Corner: Fashion, which many people see as ephemeral and frivolous, is critical to improving quality of life in old age. As humans, we have always been concerned about beauty: we give

voice to the people we are through the clothes we wear and the way we style ourselves throughout our lives. So, how do we create visual role models for the world we are moving into? How can we imagine a different way of being older? We live in a profoundly ageist society in which the majority of people who work in advertising are under 50 and have little interest in selling products to older people. As consumers, we must demand more inspiring role models.

Simon Mason: For me, being a role model means trying to perform at the highest capacity as often as possible. The benefit of sport is the mindset it helps create: it is about a desire to be active and to attack life with energy and enthusiasm. For an older person, it does not matter whether that translates into simply walking down the stairs to prepare breakfast or becoming an over-75 competitor in an international sporting event. The performance level is irrelevant; it is the mental desire to get up and do something that defines the individual. Planning physically delivers mental rewards, not only on the Olympic field but also in life itself. ■

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: TOM KIRKWOOD IS DEAN FOR AGEING AT THE INSTITUTE FOR AGEING AND HEALTH, NEWCASTLE; SARAH HARPER IS DIRECTOR OF THE OXFORD INSTITUTE OF POPULATION AGEING; PROFESSOR FRANCES CORNER FRSA IS HEAD OF THE LONDON COLLEGE OF FASHION; SIMON MASON IS A TRIPLE OLYMPIAN



HOW TO FACE THE DIGITAL FUTURE WITHOUT FEAR

5 JULY 2012

Technology is transforming the way we live and work, says Ben Hammersley, but are we thinking far enough ahead?

We are living through a revolutionary period in human history that is being driven by certain technological rules of thumb. If we do not understand those rules – that is, if we do not understand the present as we are building the future – we are going to get ourselves into trouble.

Moore's Law is a good illustration of this. In 1963, Gordon Moore, who was the chief engineer of Intel at the time, looked at the designs that were coming out of the company and realised that, every 12 to 18 months, the power of a computer chip would double for the same cost. This constant doubling of computing power is the background thrum to which today's revolution is playing along.

Assuming that Moore's Law is correct, the technology that we have at our disposal will, in 2045, be 4.32 billion times more powerful than it is today. We have no idea what we will be able to do with that kind of power, yet businesses, governments and the military – as well as anybody who is considering having a child – are having to plan for this future. Politicians may be passing laws today – for example, on copyright, censorship, surveillance or budgeting – that will be in place for 10, 20 or 30 years, by which time they will refer to technologies whose computing power we cannot possibly imagine.

So what does all this extra power allow us to do? One example is algorithmisation: the realisation that the vast majority of people and activities can be replaced by

clever computer programmes. We are starting to see this process happen already, particularly in the financial markets. About 90% of the equity trades on the British stock markets are now not made – nor even decided – by a person; instead, they are executed by an algorithm that runs on computer power. The same process could be used in the law, in a lot of medicine and for many other professions as well.

Yet the most disruptive technology of all is the one we have in our pockets: the mobile phone. Over the past 10 years, we have been taken over by extraordinarily clever and highly connected devices that now have intimate places in our lives. We have been using these devices for such a long time that we have learnt certain mental habits that have changed the way we behave.

In education, for example, we now learn pathways rather than facts. We no longer need to remember the date of the Battle of Waterloo; we simply need to learn how to find it out. Why would any of us learn facts when we have, within millimetres of our skin, a device that enables us to travel down those pathways to find out almost any fact we want? Take phone numbers: nobody remembers them any more because we have a device that remembers them for us. The mobile phone has, to all intents and purposes, become a slightly slower version of our memory.

These are the fundamental forces that are shaping the future of humanity. Those of us who understand them – or want to learn to understand them – have a responsibility to tell friends, colleagues, politicians and elected officials about their implications. Right now, we have entrusted our future to people who are confused by the present, and that is no way to go forward. ■

BEN HAMMERSLEY FRSA IS A TECHNOLOGIST, AUTHOR AND BROADCASTER

FOR HIGHLIGHTS OF FORTHCOMING EVENTS, SEE PAGE 9

MORE FROM THE EVENTS PROGRAMME

Pioneering academic, author and director of the Mindsight Institute **Dan Siegel** outlined how our minds could be made more resilient; **Dan Ariely**, bestselling author and professor of psychology and behavioural economics, examined the mechanisms at work behind dishonest behaviour; ex-Wall Street derivatives trader **Frank Partnoy** revealed the science behind our decision-making disasters and successes; and **Dr Naif al-Mutawa**, creator of comic superheroes THE 99, spoke about the importance of cultural interpretation. In the second of our RSA/Teach First debates, **Stephen Twigg MP**, shadow secretary of state for education, **Jo Shuter**, headteacher, and **Anna Vignoles**, economics of education professor, asked whether education was the key to social mobility. At our Camp Bestival panel event, Kids Company founder **Camila Batmanghelidjh** argued passionately about the future of young people. We were also delighted to launch 'The Forum', a new series produced in association with the BBC World Service that explores big global challenges. In the first instalment, **Mary Robinson**, former president of Ireland, discussed the nature of inequality with a panel of experts.

The highlights above are just a small selection of recent events from the RSA programme. All of these, and many more, are available as audio downloads at www.thersa.org/audio

Full national and regional events listings are available at www.thersa.org/events

#restless

Highly creative but deeply frustrated, young people today have the potential to make or break our society's future

By Owen Jones

For much of the boom period, young people were dismissed as the *X Factor* generation, more likely to vote in reality-TV shows than to enter a polling booth. Even after Lehman Brothers came crashing down, apathy seemed stubbornly rife: while 76% of over-65s voted in the 2010 general election, only 44% of under-24s turned out. Among young women, it was just 39%.

Few now decry the apathy of our youngsters: handwringing now focuses on a new restless generation. A few months after David Cameron and Nick Clegg cemented their partnership, the biggest student protests since the 1960s spilled over into pitched battles with the police. Occupations of universities and shops whose owners were suspected of dodging taxes followed. Even more dramatic turbulence was to come: in the hot autumn of 2011, English cities burned as thousands of predominantly young people rioted and looted.

A word of warning: the term 'generation' is the most meaningless of all the demographic categories. Take Harriet, the daughter of a multimillionaire hedge-fund manager. She is a student at a top independent school; she can expect indefinite financial support, whether for a deposit on a trendy London flat or to survive in the unpaid internships that are the first foot on the ladder for many professions; and she can draw on her parents' extensive personal connections. Contrast her with Scott, the son of an unemployed ex-miner in Ashington, once the biggest mining village in the world but devastated since the pits closed in 1986. There are few well-paid, secure jobs to aspire to; no networks or funds to draw on. The interests and concerns of Harriet and Scott are so divergent that they may as well live in parallel universes.

Restlessness, then, is confined to a significant chunk of working-class and middle-class youth who, for the first time since the Second World War, face worse prospects than those of their parents. Many middle-income, skilled jobs vanished in the 1980s and 1990s, leaving a so-called hourglass economy with prestigious – but often inaccessible – professional jobs at the top and low-paid, insecure, low-prestige jobs in the service sector. More than a million people now work in call

centres; an equivalent number worked down the pits at the peak of mining. Retail is the second biggest employer in the country. This is not to glorify the male-dominated, dirty, backbreaking jobs of the old industrial world, but few aspire to these new jobs, which often lack the sense of pride and worth of those they replaced.

Even if young people accept the burden of tens of thousands of pounds of debt for the supposed privilege of a university education, the service sector remains a likely destination: at the end of 2011, more than a third of recent graduates were in non-graduate jobs, compared with a quarter a decade before. At the same time, living standards are falling at their most sustained rate since the early 1920s and youth unemployment remains stubbornly above a million.

Here are the sources of restlessness, but it lacks a coherent political expression. In another age, leftist movements could expect to benefit. However, the rise of the New Right, the Thatcherite smashing of the labour movement and the triumphalism unleashed by the end of the Cold War crippled the traditional left as a mass force. Just 14% of private-sector workers are now unionised, and little more than one in 10 workers in their early 20s are trade-union members. Restlessness may be widespread, but there is a lack of organisational muscle and coherent political ideology to express it.

That is why other forms have filled the vacuum. Social media performs the job that once fell to shop stewards and left-wing agitators. A Twitter hashtag can allow any would-be activist to get involved in a local protest or national demonstration, delivering instant and up-to-date information about logistics. Facebook events – where you can invite 300 friends to an action in minutes – are far more effective and efficient than forlornly handing out leaflets in a town centre on a Sunday afternoon. During last year's riots, BlackBerry Messenger proved far speedier than its most primitive ancestor, word of mouth.

A restless generation with little chance of a secure future could challenge an unsustainable status quo. New technology is not, however, a substitute for political direction. Without a focus, restlessness could yet prove to be a destructive force, rather than a creative one, for the young and for society as a whole. ■

OWEN JONES IS
AN AUTHOR AND
COMMENTATOR

Help future generations fulfil their potential



1755

RSA awarded its first premiums for new products and inventions

2010

RSA Catalyst set up, seed funding Fellows' projects that make an impact in the UK and internationally

1856

RSA launched the first national exams for vocational qualifications

2008

The RSA Tipton Academy opened, continuing the RSA's strong commitment to education

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RSA

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Change of scene



You'll notice a few changes on your next visit to the RSA's Vaults restaurant

In our new space, with its specially commissioned murals, we're now offering themed dinner menus and an extensive Sherry list, as well as lunch and afternoon tea

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