



# RSA

21st century enlightenment

Journal Issue 4 2015

## Community chance

**Matthew Taylor** argues the case for both communitarian and top-down approaches to policymaking

**Anthony Giddens** discusses the risks and opportunities of the digital revolution

**Hilary Cottam** on innovation in public services and the gap between rhetoric and reality

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## “MAKING THE CASE FOR THE COMMUNITARIAN WAY SHOULD NOT INVOLVE REJECTING OTHER APPROACHES”

MATTHEW TAYLOR, PAGE 14

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*Registered as a charity*

*in England and Wales*

*no. 212424 and in Scotland*

*no. SC037784*

*RSA Journal, Volume CLXI*

*No. 5564, Issue 4 2015*

*ISSN: 0958-0433*

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**RSA Journal**

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*The RSA Journal is published  
for the RSA by Wardour,  
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London WC2B 5HA  
Tel +44 (0)20 7010 0999  
www.wardour.co.uk*

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# “THE QUESTION IS HOW MORE COMMUNITIES CAN PLAY A BIGGER PART IN MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN”



VIKKI HEYWOOD, RSA CHAIR

*Alongside our core work this year, the RSA’s priority has been to look at how we can increase our impact and influence. This has involved clarifying our methodology and further engaging Fellows, staff and Trustees in a consultation about our ongoing priorities. We agreed to focus on three areas where beneficial change is needed and which play to our strengths as an organisation: Creative Learning and Development; Economy, Enterprise and Manufacturing; and Public Services and Communities.*

One of the questions cutting across all of these areas is how more people and communities can play a bigger part in making the changes they want to see, happen. This question speaks to the RSA’s core idea of increasing individual and collective ‘Power to Create’, and our view that there is, at this time, an unprecedented opportunity in the modern world to expand the scope for human creativity, whether we are working with educationalists, public service professionals or policymakers. This edition of the *Journal* picks up this question.

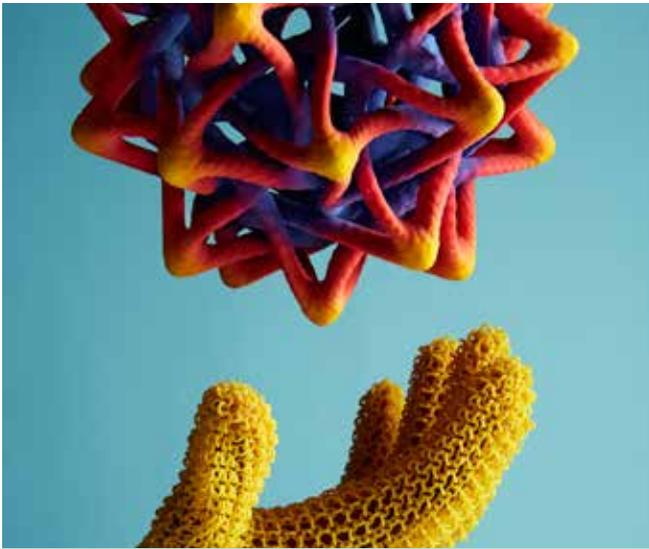
Hilary Cottam, social entrepreneur and founder of Participle, looks back on her experience of engaging communities in public service design in practice, and points to the broader changes needed to support this, while the outgoing chief executive of Save the Children, Justin Forsyth, sets out some of the changes that large charities need to embrace if they are to mobilise public support and influence partners in change.

The experience of both, and indeed the RSA, suggests that the power to create change lies in placing less emphasis on predetermined solutions controlled from ‘the centre’, and more emphasis on taking a more emergent approach backed by a clear, shared mission which enables and facilitates others to do the same. Matthew Taylor challenges both the top-down technocrats and the communitarians among us to learn from each other; the former to understand that expertise often lies within communities and service users, and the latter to be more robust in evidencing its case.

In his interview, Anthony Giddens focuses on the profound changes being brought about by the digital revolution; one he argues which requires much deeper thinking if we are to shape its impact, offset risk and maximise opportunity.

A recurrent theme throughout this edition is the extent to which people’s ability to shape the world around them can be more equally distributed and the journal includes three pieces outlining the RSA’s work in this area. Anthony Painter sets out our thinking on citizen income, while Matthew Parsfield shares the findings of our latest Connected Communities work, which shows how working with local people to invest in ‘community capital’ can create a range of significant individual and collective benefits. Fellow and entrepreneur Indy Johar argues that there is a ‘maker revolution’ emerging that needs to be supported by radical institutional and regulatory changes if it is to be inclusive.

All these projects have involved Fellows and none of them would be possible without the support of the broader Fellowship, which has grown considerably this year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Fellows for their help and to wish you all the best for 2016. ■



## DESIGN

## MAKER SPACES

The number of maker spaces – open-access workshops that host a variety of tools – in the UK has increased from a handful a decade ago to over 100, according to a new RSA report.

*Ours to Master* argues that maker spaces can help people master technology for a more human end, with many of them hosting 3D printers as well as more traditional tools such as sewing machines and potter's wheels. Coming together with others to create, fix and modify objects can boost people's sense of agency, enabling them to learn new skills and providing opportunities to start new businesses. The report argues that while making may be a natural impulse, it is also instrumental in achieving wider life goals.

The report's authors suggest that maker spaces can be sites of agitation, where communities experiment with a different way of living and champion particular values. MadLab in Manchester runs workshops teaching people how to eco-retrofit their houses, while the RSA's Great Recovery team organises events at Fab Lab London to raise awareness of circular economy principles.

A YouGov survey published at the same time as the report found that 57% of British adults would like to learn how to make more things that they and their families could use, while 61% wanted to gain a better understanding of how the things they use work. Around a quarter (24%) were interested in using a maker space in the future.

RSA senior researcher Benedict Delloit said: "The RSA's central purpose is to look at ways in which people's desire to create and work together can be realised. Our work on maker spaces shows the benefits that arise from providing a shared space and culture of endeavour. Social change does not always come through grand political projects but through the outcome of thousands of creative acts that build individual and collective self-assurance and fulfilment.



## RESEARCH

## IN RECOVERY

National and local commissioning bodies need to better understand the importance of co-producing interventions that support drug and alcohol recovery with service users, communities and partners, according to a new report published by the RSA.

The report, *Whole Community Recovery*, reflects on four years of working with national substance misuse treatment provider CRI, on a public service delivery contract, which explored what taking a whole person, place and community approach meant in practice.

It recommends that the Department of Health should engage with Public Health England, NHS England, professionals and service users to develop a shared and consistent understanding of recovery. Outcomes should be measured in a way that reflects individual and community recovery. Public Health England should also drive the development of a Creative Commissioning for Recovery approach, which would review the skills, knowledge and tools available and send a clear message that innovation will be welcomed and rewarded.

■ *Whole Community Recovery: the value of people, place and community can be downloaded at [www.thersa.org/recovery](http://www.thersa.org/recovery)*



## INTERNATIONAL FELLOWS

# COMMONWEALTH CLUB

In preparation for Malta hosting the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in November, the Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network, headed by Arif Zaman FRSA, held a briefing at the RSA on The Human Welfare Economy for High Commissions. The briefing highlighted the relevance and resonance of the RSA's work with the Commonwealth agenda on entrepreneurship, economic development and women's empowerment.

The RSA was subsequently invited to address the CHOGM Business Forum on Empowering Entrepreneurs. "The opportunity to explore common issues facing entrepreneurs from a really diverse range of viewpoints and contexts is one that only international gatherings like this can provide, demonstrating the value of the RSA's growing global presence," said Tony Greenham, director of Economy, Enterprise and Manufacturing at the RSA.

"The Commonwealth proved to be a particularly rich context given its natural cultural diversity together with its new focus on female entrepreneurs. This was the most diverse and balanced panel I have ever participated in. Connecting together the RSA's research on self-employment with the need to unleash creativity in the classroom resonated strongly with the audience, who were open to the argument that enterprise is not just the preserve of the private sector but should be recognised and encouraged as a key driver of social progress for communities and public services."

The Commonwealth's potential as a powerful catalyst for action is a key focus of the RSA's global strategy and we look forward to working more closely with Commonwealth agencies to explore opportunities to increase our global impact.

IMAGES: GETTY, ISTOCK, IKON IMAGES



## HEALTH

# PATIENT POWER

One in four areas in England has worryingly high rates of premature mortality for people with mental health conditions, according to the new RSA Open Public Services Network (OPSN) project on comparative mental health data.

The aim of the initial data analysis was to better understand the degree to which primary care services are meeting the physical health needs of people with mental health illness; it showed that GPs are under-testing for physical illnesses among these patients.

Funded by the Cabinet Office, and working in partnership with NHS England, the Health and Social Care Information Centre, Mind and Healthwatch England, the RSA's aim is to develop an online tool for mental health service users which allows them to compare local performance at the clinical commissioning group level and band the groups by their ability to support users.

Commenting on the data, Minister for Mental Health Alistair Burt said: "This site is a good example that will help ensure our NHS has high-quality services across the country and inform our thinking of how to measure mental healthcare in our new CCG scorecard."

Find out more at [www.thersa.org/action-and-research/rsa-projects/public-services-and-communities-folder/mental-health/long-life.html](http://www.thersa.org/action-and-research/rsa-projects/public-services-and-communities-folder/mental-health/long-life.html)



## DESIGN

# RDI AWARDS

Five of the UK's best designers have been recognised for their outstanding contribution to design and society by becoming Royal Designers for Industry. At an awards ceremony held in November, new Master of the Faculty Betty Jackson RDI welcomed this year's appointees: Michael Anastassiades RDI for his excellence and innovation in lighting design; Kate Blee RDI for contributing her outstanding expertise in textiles to social investment projects; Kim Colin RDI for her sustained excellence in product design; Karen Nicol RDI for pushing new boundaries in fabric and stitch design, promoting recycled textiles; and David Pearson RDI for his distinctive and innovative contribution to British publishing.

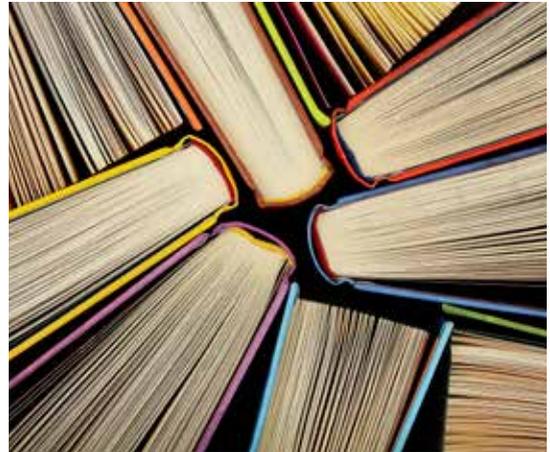
Three honorary awards were given to non-UK designers Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec Hon RDI, and Niall McLaughlin Hon RDI. Commenting on the RDIs, chief executive Matthew Taylor said: "The RSA is committed to encouraging and rewarding outstanding designers who challenge convention, discover new insights, and improve our quality of life. These eight leading practitioners are from wide-ranging disciplines and are united by a driving commitment to innovate, create, educate and inspire others through design."

## EMPLOYMENT

# SELF-EMPLOYMENT

How do you make life more liveable for the self-employed? Building on two years' research and input from its Fellows, the RSA self-employment charter aims to answer this question, setting out a positive vision for meaningful self-employment and key recommendations for how to get there. A new animated short RSA film – *Does it take money to make money?* – draws on the projects' findings and explores the challenges faced by the less affluent when trying to start a business.

■ To view the charter, animation and our recent reports, go to [www.thersa.org/self-employment](http://www.thersa.org/self-employment)



## EDUCATION

# FURTHERING EDUCATION

A series of essays to be published by the RSA this spring will reimagine the future of further education and skills. The RSA's Action and Research Centre is working with the Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL) to look beyond the period of intense change that the sector has experienced with the aim of sharing and incorporating this new thinking across the RSA's projects.

Subject to almost continuous restructuring and top-down change, the further education skills sector is often misunderstood or dismissed as the educational also-ran. For the RSA, however, its complex relationships with employers and communities, and blend of educational, training and social functions make it a crucial force in helping us to achieve our core aim of unleashing the 'power to create'. Diverse in its intake, the sector has a proud track record of working with learners who have not achieved well at school.

The book of essays, *Possibility Thinking*, builds on FETL's excellent 2014 *Remembered Thinking*, and forms part of the RSA's mission to close the creativity gap in learning, and will consider how the creative capacities of learners within the further education sector can be developed. To coincide with the book's publication, the RSA will convene a series of summits for leaders in further education to create a platform for debate about creating a self-improving, self-determining system. The education team will be working with Fellows through the Innovative Education group at each stage of the project.

■ To find out more about Innovative Education go to [www.thersa.org/action-and-research/rsa-projects/creative-learning-and-development-folder/innovative-education](http://www.thersa.org/action-and-research/rsa-projects/creative-learning-and-development-folder/innovative-education)

## PREVIEW



### **BUILDING A TEACHER-POWERED EDUCATION SYSTEM**

Our new report for the World Innovation Summit in Education argues that education systems should create platforms for innovation that are focused on the long term, equity-centred, humanising and – crucially – teacher-powered. Distinguished educationalist Professor Andy Hargreaves considers what it would take to flip the system so that teachers are at the steering wheel of education reform worldwide.

**Where:** RSA  
**When:** Monday  
25 January at 6pm



### **THE BOSSOM LECTURE ON ARCHITECTURE AND SOCIETY**

Paul Morrell OBE is a chartered quantity surveyor and the Government's former chief adviser on construction. In his Bossom Lecture for 2016, he will ask how the professional sector might draw on its past to redefine its future role.

**Where:** RSA  
**When:** Thursday  
4 February at 6pm



### **SMART CITIZENS = SMARTER STATE**

Do we need a completely new vision for participatory democracy? Professor Beth Simone Noveck, New York University academic and former technology and innovation adviser to the White House argues that public decision-making could be more effective and legitimate if our institutions knew how to use technology to leverage citizens' expertise.

**Where:** RSA  
**When:** Thursday  
18 February at 1pm



### **INDUSTRIES OF THE FUTURE**

How will we adapt to the rapid global developments that shape all aspects of our lives? Former senior adviser for innovation to secretary of state Hillary Clinton, Alec Ross, explores the technological and economic trends that will shape the next 10 years, from cybersecurity and big data to the codification of money, markets and trust.

**Where:** RSA  
**When:** Thursday  
25 February at 1pm

*Events and RSA Animate producer Abi Stephenson has 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](http://www.thersa.org/events)*

FOR HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT EVENTS, SEE PAGE 49

# CONNECTING THE DOTS

*Building communities is not only intrinsically good; it can benefit the economy and public services too*

by Matthew Parsfield  
 @mparsfield

In an era of severe austerity in public services and with no sign of a more generous public funding settlement on the horizon, policymakers and politicians of all shades are increasingly looking to communities to play a bigger role in contributing to public life. From David Cameron's flagship 'Big Society' agenda to a new NHS strategy that states the intention to harness the 'renewable energy' of patients and communities, the UK government has expressed the desire to see resilient communities that are better able to support themselves and reduce pressure on public services. These strategies are not always successful in their efforts to understand what communities are and how they function. Over the past five years, the RSA has been exploring communities in depth, and we suggest that it is in the connections within communities – the relationships that link people to other people and institutions – that these benefits might be found.

Social relationships, simply put, have value; indeed the concept of fellowship is as much a part of the RSA's DNA as are creativity and innovation. The organisation was formed in 1754 to encourage the 'arts, manufactures and commerce' of Enlightenment ingenuity, but it was created as a 'Society', in appreciation of the fact that, without sympathetic others with whom to share ideas and from whom to gain support, encouragement and companionship, the individual's power to create stands little chance of being realised. The belief that the source of the 'good life' is in the connections and interactions between people is the core of just about everything the RSA has ever done, from our origins as a coffee house meeting place, and the establishment of our formal Fellowship to countless networks and social movements.

The RSA's Connected Communities work sits within this tradition. This autumn we published *Community Capital*, the final publication of our five-year programme, which explored the importance of social relationships and how we might understand them better in order to tackle the problems

MATTHEW PARSFIELD  
 IS A RESEARCHER  
 IN THE ACTION AND  
 RESEARCH CENTRE  
 AT THE RSA

of social isolation and low mental well-being in deprived communities. The report explains how working with local people to invest in 'community capital' – the potential assets that lie within the positive relationships and connections that all communities have – can create a range of significant individual and collective benefits. These include substantial increases in well-being, more active citizenship, economic advantages and potential savings to public services' budgets.

A wide range of partners and collaborators contributed to this work, including: academics from the Centre for Citizenship and Community at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) who ran the programme with us; an economics team at the London School of Economics' (LSE) Personal Social Services Research Unit, which conducted an economic evaluation; formal delivery partners in each project location; and an army of volunteer community researchers. With these partners, we surveyed almost 3,000 people in seven locations around the country about their subjective well-being and the networks of people who are important in their lives. We then reflected this data back to communities, so they can see the strengths and deficits of their local areas, and then worked with local people in each area to co-produce new social interventions. This kind of collaboration was key to the programme and emblematic of the social network approach advocated throughout the lifetime of Connected Communities: good things can happen when people come together to collaborate on a common endeavour.

Our report concluded that investing in interventions which build and strengthen networks of social relationships can generate four kinds of social value or 'dividend' shared by people in the community. First, a well-being dividend. Social relationships are essential to subjective well-being and life satisfaction. In a survey of 2,840 people, the variable most consistently associated with having higher well-being was 'feeling part of a community', while the variables most negatively associated with well-being were identifying something or somewhere locally that you avoid or something that stops you from taking part in a community. >>



Second, a citizenship dividend. There is latent power within local communities that lies in the potential of relationships between people. However, access to this power is uneven, and many people do not enjoy the full benefits of active citizenship: for example, 60% of people we surveyed at the beginning of our research could not name anybody they knew who had the power or influence to change things locally. Conversely, our method of working with people to reflect upon their social relationships and the under-used assets in their communities and social networks led to substantial positive effects on personal empowerment, and higher levels of civic participation and individual and collective agency.

Third, a capacity dividend. Concentrating resources on networks and relationships, rather than on the 'troubled' individual as an end-user, can have beneficial effects which ripple out through social networks, having positive effects on people's children, partners, friends and others.

Finally, such an approach can generate an economic dividend. Researchers at the LSE analysed the economic impact of some of the RSA's interventions, and sought to quantify the potential of social relationship-based interventions for notional savings in public finances, as well as contributions to the wider economy. The evidence here and elsewhere has shown that investing in interventions that build social relationships can improve employability, improve health (which has positive economic impacts) and create savings in health and welfare

## **“60% OF PEOPLE COULDN'T NAME ANYBODY THEY KNEW WHO HAD THE POWER TO CHANGE THINGS LOCALLY”**

expenditure. One pilot study – a social group set up by and for single mothers in County Durham – found that strengthening people's social networks reduced their use of certain health services by up to 34%.

These dividends can be achieved by a managed approach to unleashing the value of community capital; like other forms of capital, this can be increased, reserves of it can be unlocked and putting it to use can bring about great social, economic and personal benefits. We arrived at these findings not through theorising, but through extensive on-the-ground practical experience gained from working within communities. From Murton, a village in County Durham, to New Cross Gate in London, the seven localities we worked in varied in their characteristics, assets and patterns of social connections and isolation. In each one we worked with local people to test new approaches to improving the social networks of support and connection among residents. But, while this local approach is critical, all communities, social networks and individuals have assets that can help to create community capital and generate social dividends.

The Connected Communities approach developed iteratively and can be summarised as 'understand, involve, connect'. To take one of the most notable examples: in Murton this approach was successfully employed to develop an effective new peer-led model for reducing isolation among single mothers in the village, with researchers first working to understand the networks of social relationships in the area, involving the affected people in a response, and developing a means by which people could better connect to one another in order to enjoy the benefits of improved well-being.

At the outset of the programme, analysis of a survey of around 400 adults in the village revealed that single parents were particularly vulnerable to low well-being caused by social isolation. In response, Dr Manjit Bola from UCLAN worked with the community development charity East Durham Trust and the local NHS trust to convene a series of workshops with single mothers from the village. The aim was to gain additional insight into what problems single mothers faced in the village and what might help to address these problems. Participants spoke of how their daily routines and obligations had led to deep loneliness, with informal contact with other adults a rarity and the television often the chief companion.

Considering what might help them, the women spoke of the desire for “somewhere to go” where they could socialise with other people in an informal and non-bureaucratic setting.

### **FELLOWSHIP IN ACTION SPEAKING OUT**

Modern city life can often seem unwelcoming and intimidating, with people on public transport trying to avoid eye contact or engrossed in their smartphones. Hoping to address this is Ann Don Bosco, who, along with Polly Akhurst, formed Talk to me, a campaign designed to promote interaction between strangers. “Our cities are transient and there is more diversity; people can feel disconnected,” Ann explains.

The campaign started simply, with volunteers wearing a 'Talk to me' badge to encourage conversations with strangers. With further support from the RSA and a successful Kickstarter campaign, it has now grown into a larger programme of events, with Talk to me days, panel debates and get-togethers being organised and downloadable toolkits created that allow communities everywhere to get involved.

Despite people's initial reluctance to take part when they first hear about the event, they almost always have a positive experience once they do, says Ann. She adds: “Recently we've started running workshops, with advice on how to start or stop a conversation, so we're realistic about the challenges.”

■ *Find out more at [www.talktome.global](http://www.talktome.global)*



Murton Mams was set up as a response, with the participants at the original research workshops and several other mothers (mostly but not prescriptively single parents) meeting once a week at an informal morning club incorporating a crèche, kitchen and sitting room in a village community centre. The peer support, social enjoyment and entertaining activities (from cookery classes to massage therapy sessions) available at the club have seen the Murton Mams group continue for two years so far, with the local NHS trust funding the replication of the model in a number of other villages in east Durham.

The form of the co-produced interventions in other Connected Communities sites took on a different shape. In Knowle West, a district of Bristol, research revealed that high numbers of local people were relying on doctors for social support, and were unable to mention any other people in their personal networks who they could go to for advice or support. Meanwhile, other residents spoke of a wealth of local amenities, clubs and classes available in the local area; these were apparently unknown or unused by those isolated individuals who were presenting frequently at the GP surgery.

With the support and input of local voluntary and community groups, the RSA worked with colleagues from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Knowle West Media Centre in developing a digital ‘social prescribing’ tool, the Social Mirror app, a touchscreen multiple-choice survey conducted by volunteers on tablet computers in GP waiting rooms. Targeted particularly at older adults, the app was used to help assess whether a user might be socially isolated, and if necessary suggest a local social club or activity that they could take part in and meet other people through, for example walking groups, lip reading classes, or history clubs.

Connected Communities demonstrated the value of working to stimulate community capital. The ‘dividends of community capital’ in reality meant that a number of previously isolated people who took part in these projects had the confidence,

connections and motivation to get jobs, take up university or college courses, or start volunteering in their communities to help others. Some noticed improved relationships with their families or colleagues, or reported health benefits such as losing weight or no longer needing anti-depressant medication. Our evaluation of some of the pilot projects showed that participants were using medical services less than they had done before, and that their self-assessed life satisfaction and mental well-being had improved by an average of 20% on common survey indicators.

At any time, but perhaps especially during a prolonged period of austerity, when public services can ill afford to miss opportunities to achieve more sustainable outcomes for their service users, there are great advantages to be gained through statutory services gaining an enhanced literacy of community. Implicitly or explicitly, they should ask their service users the question: “What is your community as you yourself understand it, and how might we protect, maintain, improve or support your access to it?” Professor David Morris from UCLAN, who worked on the programme with the RSA team, has cited the sociologist Amitai Etzioni in describing the advantages of such ‘communitarian’ approaches; building community capital is good per se, as well as purposeful and practical. Reduced public expenditure, small economic boosts, and a boon to rates of volunteering and civic participation are all to be welcomed.

The essence of fellowship, which the RSA has always valued so highly, is that something like the ‘good life’ lies within people’s relationships to others. As the moral philosopher John Macmurray observed, while through the efforts and laws of society we pursue various means to an end, a community – that state wherein people “are in communion with each other and their association is a fellowship” – is an end in itself. ■

■ *The report can be read and downloaded at [www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/community-capital-the-value-of-connected-communities](http://www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/community-capital-the-value-of-connected-communities)*

# A COMMON SENSE

*To solve complex societal problems, we must use both the communitarian and technocratic tools at our disposal*

by Matthew Taylor  
 @RSAMatthew

Improving the effectiveness, efficiency and popularity of public service interventions is a core and constant concern for government at all levels. At any time there are hundreds if not thousands of change processes being pursued. But behind the continuous search for improvement there are more basic debates, prompted by a sense that the public policy challenges we face cannot be met by incrementalism. In areas ranging from health and social care to policing and housing, voices are growing calling for a paradigm shift; not just restructuring public services but reconceptualising them in the light of modern expectations, capabilities and needs.

Starting from a presumption in favour of community-based solutions, the RSA's research and experimentation have provided granular insights into a series of questions such as how to boost public service volunteering, how to strengthen social networks in deprived areas and how to sustain people's recovery from addiction. Our work is helping to develop a new framework for understanding both why public policy interventions fall short and the ingredients we need to combine to achieve a step change in performance.

## COMMUNITARIANS VERSUS TECHNOCRATS?

The dichotomy has been given various names, but there is a discernible, albeit sometimes fuzzy, boundary between communitarian and technocratic approaches to

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public and social policy. For the latter, the search is for scalable solutions. Once the right intervention is identified, it is then a matter of arranging things so that this solution can be delivered as reliably and uniformly as possible. Although conclusions are often more subtle than their mandate, the government's seven What Works centres are an attempt to share evidence and encourage impact evaluation; problems are identified, solutions designed, and interventions piloted and scientifically evaluated, then implemented across the relevant service.

Of course, many top-down solutions are imposed on a weaker evidential basis than this. Indeed, some seem primarily inspired by political concerns (what has been called 'policy-based evidence making'). Still, however, the assumption is that expertise and authority lie at the top of the chain of command and that the primary requirement of those at the bottom – including citizens themselves – is for consent and obedience.

In recent decades the top-down approach has been supplemented by the favouring of market mechanisms. Technocratic and market incentive-based solutions can be successfully melded but currently in many areas, such as the NHS and schools, tight regulatory regimes sit uneasily alongside quasi-market mechanisms, with the combination too often militating against collaboration and innovation – the 'payment by results' model being a prime example.

For communitarian approaches, in contrast, it is the quality of engagement among front-line service >>>



## **“IN MAKING THE CASE FOR COMMUNITY-BASED POLICY INTERVENTIONS WE CANNOT RELY ON EVIDENCE ALONE”**

providers, clients and citizens that is crucial. Successful interventions are not the result of uniform service delivery but arise from solutions co-produced through relationships between and among local agencies, service providers and citizens. As a corollary, power in this model is decentralised and the boundaries between the bureaucratic rationality of the state and affective domain of civil society are deliberately blurred.

Although most of us would claim to be pragmatic – being technocratic when there is clearly one best way to do something and communitarian when the case for local solutions seems strong – the two tribes have a tendency to exaggerate the evidence for their positions and to caricature their opponents’ position. For example, communitarians tend to be sceptical about national systems of measurement and grading, such as performance tables, seeing them as ignoring context and legitimising competition and regulation, while technocrats tend to be unenthusiastic about citizen mobilisation, seeing it as unfocused and unpredictable. Yet, taking an educational example, not only are effective use of performance data and strong links between schools and local communities both important resources, there is also no reason that they cannot be part of the same strategy.

To an extent, of course, people’s opinions are shaped by their roles. Senior Whitehall civil servants err on the side of top-down technocracy while third-sector organisations, especially local ones, tend to lean towards communitarian solutions. As an organisation philosophically committed to human creativity in the broadest sense (what we call the ‘power to create’) and which seeks to mobilise the efforts of our Fellowship of 27,000 – many of whom are active in local civic life – the RSA is to be found on the communitarian side of this debate. Indeed, we have



developed the concept of ‘social productivity’ as a measure of the largely communitarian aspiration that public service interventions encourage and empower people to contribute to meeting their own needs.

The communitarian tribe will welcome several reports that have been published by the RSA in recent months. Our work on volunteering calls for unpaid citizen effort to be seen as an integral part of public service models. The Connected Communities report demonstrates the impact of initiatives based on strengthening social networks on well-being and other objectives.

Meanwhile, an evaluation of our Whole Person Recovery project shows the benefits of models of intervention that help people move away from problematic substance misuse in a way that empowers the individual and their communities to tap into and make best use of their own capacity. This approach, which we have tested in practice in west Kent, include the creation of ‘recovery communities’ for current



and former service users and stresses the importance of ‘recovery capital’ – the assets within individuals and their communities – in driving recovery.

Through projects like these, the RSA begins to be able to make a strong case for an approach based on locally implemented, co-designed and co-delivered interventions in which the efforts of professionals and paid workers are blended with the voluntary efforts of individuals and networks. We hope these reports are useful as evidence, to guide future practice and to strengthen the role of the RSA as a convener for those favouring similar approaches.

### **MAKING THE COMMUNITARIAN CASE**

The advocates of communitarian approaches – including the RSA – should, however, be honest and realistic about the evidence. On the one hand, these reports, like most research on the efficacy of such initiatives, demonstrate important but modest gains in comparison to more

top-down interventions. Second, relatedly, by their very nature, these locally specific, relational, emergent methods depend hugely on the quality of the people implementing them, the context in which they are working and the relationships they are able to build. At the best of times the public sector finds it difficult to transfer good practice and scaling up; in the case of communitarian approaches it is even less wise to make the assumption that because something works in one place it will work equally well in another.

This leads to an important conclusion: in making the case for community-based policy interventions we cannot and should not rely on evidence alone. There is an echo here of an argument made a few years ago by the eminent criminologist Professor Shadd Maruna. Speaking about the debate between the advocates of rehabilitation versus incarceration, Maruna argued that the conclusions drawn from a huge body of largely inconclusive evidence partly reflected the broader context for criminal justice policy (ideological presumptions, financial limits) but also, crucially, what it is we care about.

If we value redemption and forgiveness as social norms we should prefer rehabilitative strategies, but incarceration will be favoured if principles of shaming and punishment are seen as more necessary for social flourishing. Also, while the evidence about reoffending is complex and contested, community-based sentences are demonstrably better in their wider outcomes for families and disadvantaged communities, for example in relation to poverty and children’s well-being.

The power of research findings on communitarian interventions similarly depends upon values and framing. Even if the evidence about what works is ambiguous, communitarians should simply prefer solutions which rely upon and foster agency among citizens to ones that treat citizens as mere service consumers or clients. Communitarian solutions both rest upon and encourage what Richard Dagger refers to as civic virtue: “The virtuous citizen must be free, but not simply free to go his or her own way. Instead the citizen is free when he or she participates in the government of his or her community.”





The word community is used promiscuously in public discourse, so communitarians need to distinguish themselves by working with an explicit and ambitious account; for example, the three attributes that the philosopher Charles Taylor has argued go to make up the ideal of a community: “Shared values and beliefs, direct and many-sided relations and the practice of reciprocity.”

Again echoing the structure of Maruna’s argument, the normative dimension underpinning communitarian approaches can be reinforced by a wider evaluative lens. The RSA’s Connected Communities and Whole Person Recovery projects demonstrated outcomes related to the specific forms of ‘many-sided relations and reciprocity’ engendered by the projects: improvements in well-being, life chances and sustained recovery could be shown. Unfortunately these programmes are not funded to enable longer-term evaluation, yet it is a reasonable hypothesis that the habits of individual agency, collaboration and problem solving inculcated by these programmes will to some degree persist in people and places, thus making it more likely that they will be able to respond actively and creatively to future challenges and opportunities.

Individual initiatives, therefore, may have an enduring effect on what the sociologist Robert J Sampson has referred

to as “collective efficacy”. This combination of cohesion and agency was identified by Sampson’s research team as the critical factor explaining why similarly disadvantaged areas in Chicago achieve different outcomes in terms of measures of population well-being such as crime rates and public health. This civic externality should be an underlying aim of all communitarian interventions but it is one that is largely treated as exogenous to technocratic approaches.

#### **COMMUNITARIANISM AND SYSTEM CHANGE**

Making the fullest and best case for the communitarian way should not involve rejecting the value of other approaches. Partly this is the ‘horses for courses’ argument implied earlier. For example, in highlighting the value of recovery capital, the RSA’s Whole Person Recovery work does not ignore the role that treatment plays in stabilising people’s lives. Likewise, if I need a new hip and there is one best way to perform the procedure, I want systems to ensure best practice is followed and have no desire for my surgeon to consult me or my wider neighbourhood before following clinical guidelines.

More broadly, the value of communitarian approaches can be enhanced by thinking about the contribution they make to system change. To this end, the RSA has used a

framework derived from cultural theory to explore how best to produce solutions to complex problems.

Our application of the theory sees human behaviour in groups, organisations and institutions emerging from the complex interaction of three active elements. These elements are the foundational sources of our ways of seeing the world, of being in the world and of seeking to change the world. Because the three elements generate both insight and energy, because they operate at every level from individual decisions to global treaties, and because they combine and react against each other in many different ways, understanding how they operate in any particular context can be difficult and open to many interpretations. However, despite this complexity and despite the difficulty of achieving and maintaining balance between the elements, in most circumstances the most effective people, organisations, policies and institutions combine them.

We call the three elements ‘individualism’, ‘hierarchy’ and ‘solidarity’ (the final term differs from the word ‘egalitarianism’ more often used by cultural theorists). In summary: individualism can be understood as the element associated with self-interest, competition and enterprise. In public policy we tend to associate this most with the market. Hierarchy is based on the sense that there is, or needs to be, order in the world; it is about making and obeying plans and rules. We tend to associate this most with the state. Solidarity is about belonging and believing (something which can inspire both altruism and trust but also tribalism and fear of change). While individualism and authority are in large part about the differences between people, solidarity is about what we share with others in terms of identity, culture and fellow feeling. We tend to associate this most with the third or civic sector.

Given the preference for solutions which combine the power of all three types of impulse, the RSA argues both for communitarian (broadly solidaristic) approaches while believing also that such solutions should be willing to draw on the power of hierarchy and individualism. Indeed, we can go further: the best communitarian solutions are those which are compatible with hierarchical and individualistic interventions; norms and bonds working with appropriate and legitimate rules and regulations and using the drive of innovation and incentives. This may seem obvious, but it

## **“THE BEST COMMUNITARIAN SOLUTIONS ARE COMPATIBLE WITH HIERARCHICAL INTERVENTIONS”**

is rare for any solutions to try to mobilise all three forms of social power while acknowledging the difficulty of balancing them and sustaining that balance over time.

### **A WHOLE SYSTEM APPROACH**

The idea that public service solutions should summon up and enhance the capacity for self and mutual help among citizens (particularly those most dependent on public services) has been around for as long as the modern state. But in recent times, in the face of changing public expectations, the intractability of certain complex social problems and the impact of austerity, this idea has come particularly to the fore.

The challenges of adapting to the needs of an ageing population, for example, include greater health and social care costs, an increasing pension bill to be paid by a smaller working-age population, and the need to fight isolation among older people. Some of these problems demand traditional policy interventions. However, others such as isolation and loneliness can only be fully tackled through community engagement. The role of community projects in fighting social isolation is powerfully demonstrated in the successful and durable interventions made by a number of communities featured in Connected Communities.

In Connected Communities, Whole Person Recovery and other reports, the RSA’s research and innovation has added important insights and evidence to the communitarian case. However, this evidence needs to be seen in the light of our philosophical orientation and the wider goal of building community resilience and capacity. Furthermore, complex problems need a ‘whole system’ approach. Communitarian interventions are a challenging but vital part of such solutions, but they work best when combined with benign forms of hierarchical and individualistic dynamism. Our future research will turn increasingly to this question of how to achieve this difficult but powerful balance. ■

# BETWEEN JOBS

*The benefits of hard work are often extolled, but whether predictable or precarious, it isn't always what it's cracked up to be*

by Jesse Potter  
 @jessepotter

Meaningful work which is well paid, worthwhile and satisfying should be the centrepiece of any equitable society. Yet the reality of 'hollowing out', 'zero hours', the 'sharing economy' and low pay reflects a crisis of work for most Western economies that is difficult to ignore. For these reasons, an explicit re-rendering of work and career must acknowledge the negotiations, sacrifices and acts of resistance that individuals – in the face of work which, in numerous ways, falls short – make on an everyday basis. It acknowledges that we cope; that we conscientiously 'labour' in making our working lives satisfying and meaningful, and that we often do so in the face of work that is misaligned with our intrinsic values. This labour often takes place in between or on the 'edge' of jobs and careers. It is enacted at the intersection of seemingly (separate) public and private spheres. This practice, of attempting to make lives meaningful, is an under-acknowledged aspect of what it means to work. Nonetheless, the specific activities and articulations involved are integral features of contemporary social life; particularly when our productive activity fails to meet the rigid and often unattainable parameters of success and fulfilment.

My argument is based on research exploring individuals who underwent significant work-life change, moving between unrelated jobs and careers such as a marketing executive who became an artist; a teacher who became a builder; and an actuary who went into radio production. The stories and experiences of those individuals reveal what could be described as an 'edge' condition; one in which work fails to provide intrinsic meaning, productive satisfaction, conventional success,

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or a predictable pathway. My interest is in how, considering the wider prevalence of these conditions, we cope or manage to find meaning when faced with them. Among my research subjects were individuals who gave up the financial security and validation of professional careers. Some of those individuals made sense of such trade-offs as the opportunity to live with no regrets; others worried about the impact of that insecurity on their children; and others still believed it to mark the end of intimate relationships which hinged on the steady progress of a stable path. What they show us is that we rationalise, make sacrifices, reject success and conflate the productive with the personal; and we do so especially when the possibilities of productive life are misleading, unreliable, or not entirely clear.

If work remains a cornerstone of contemporary social and personal life, then working on the edge describes contemporary work as a space of ambivalence; a space suggestive of not merely the cracks within the institutional fabric of work, but of those very spaces within ourselves. These discrepancies undermine idealised notions of a coherent and cogent working life. They point to long-running tendencies towards de-institutionalisation and individualisation, as well as the notion that linear, fixed phases of the 'life-course' – with a coherent beginning, middle and end – inadequately account for the fragmented construction of a working life. The rise of the freelancer is one part of this broader fragmentation. And the fact that we are living longer than ever before makes that fragmentation both possible and necessary.

Work has long drifted from the (real or perceived) certainties of stable, life-long employment. Instead, integral to what we might understand as one's career are a myriad of decisions and entanglements, some of which are inseparable from our jobs, and many of which occur far away from the productive arena. We know this because our conversations about work



are incessant; and invariably drift from the organisational, institutional, or structural to our feelings, relationships, values, desires and commitments.

So how do we cope? The people I spoke with faced a problem of narrative: how to maintain a sense of their lives as meaningful or whole when faced with organisational, institutional and structural conditions working against those desires. So they quit or were fired, or worked less or sometimes more. They argued with family and intimate others, or found God, or had what Norman Denzin refers to as “epiphanic experiences”. They rationalised intrinsic dissatisfaction with material comfort, or financial uncertainty with deeply held values and commitments. Mostly, though, they struggled with expectations for what their working lives should be like: stable, forward moving and successful. They felt intense pressure to be, as one of my interviewees put it, “on that path, to having that kind of life”.

These conversations, it seems, are a vital component of any working life. Regardless of where we stand in the social or

productive hierarchy, or whether we are on the front line of the latest shock to the structural economy, we actively work on mending, or reconciling, the productive and the personal. These suggestions are not intended to ignore the very real need to intervene in a structural economy teetering towards failure. The reality of interminable recession and instability as a core feature of the contemporary productive moment are necessarily central to our concerns and conversations. Rather, these suggestions simply point to the need to (re)articulate the everyday acts of creativity, critique and capitulation that go into the labour of making working lives meaningful. That labour should be considered an integral feature of what it means to work, or have a career. It compels us to look beyond the structural or institutional productive frame, and reinsert our-*selves* into the current work debate. Working on the edge, in this way, problematises the need for work to be what it is often not – stable, progressive, life-long and meaningful – challenging the cultural agreement that ‘onwards and upwards’ is the litmus test of a ‘successful’ career. ■



PHOTOGRAPHY: TARA SWART

# A GREATER GOAL

*Charities must embrace organisational change if they are to keep the trust – and the generosity – of the public*

by Justin Forsyth  
 @justinforsyth

Over my working life I have worked as both a campaigner targeting the government from the outside and inside government, where I have been on the receiving end of campaigns. For the past five years I have been back on the outside as chief executive of Save the Children. I am often asked what I have learnt as I've switched 'sides'. The answer is simple: there are no sides. Or, more precisely, the two sides are not inside and outside, but people in both camps who are either restless for change or people who find comfort in the status quo. And I am clear – effective charity leaders must be unambiguously, relentlessly, ferociously of the former. Given the scale of our ambitions for social justice, the nature of shifting power dynamics driven by everything from the digital revolution to the rise of the emerging economies, and the degree of scrutiny that all institutions – from banking and politics to the media and charities – now come under, we simply do not have the luxury of standing still.

As I leave Save the Children, I am more convinced than ever that it is in the resilience and ingenuity of children and their families surviving and even thriving against the odds that we will help find the solutions to the big global challenges of poverty, extremism, inequality and climate change. But I am also less convinced that the traditional international charity model is up to the task of remaking the 21st century unless we undertake some radical – and controversial – changes.

In the past few years, the charity has undergone a huge transformation, doubling our income to nearly £400m and recruiting nearly a million supporters. That groundswell of generosity and activism has enabled us to more than double the number of children we reach from 8 million to 17.4 million in recent years. Going

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from a much-loved national charity to a global cause has not been easy and there is as much to learn from our mistakes as from our successes. If I could sum up what I have learnt in one line it would be this: if charities are not prepared to change, we will, in turn, be less able to change the world.

Save the Children has set itself the goal of ending needless child deaths in this generation. That means no parent would have their heart shattered as they buried a child who had died from a disease we know how to treat, or because they did not have enough food in a world of plenty. Success would mark an incredible moment in the history of humanity and I passionately believe that this is possible in our lifetimes. But charities like ours should not even consider taking on such ambitious goals if they are not prepared to embrace some fundamental changes to the way they work. Here are five lessons drawn from how our organisation has changed – imperfectly – over the past five years, which present a much broader and deeper challenge.

The first lesson is that it is more important to build a shared platform than to build one organisation; one that Save the Children's founder – Eglantyne Jebb – tried to teach us a century ago when she said: "I believe we should claim certain rights for the children and labour for their universal recognition, so that everybody – not merely the small number of people who are in a position to contribute to relief funds, but everybody who in any way comes into contact with children, that is to say the vast majority of mankind – may be in a position to help." From the very beginning, we have been about providing a platform that enables everybody to do their bit to change children's lives. Yet, nearly 100 years on, we are still trying to find new ways to be an organisation that does partnership by default.

One example is the Humanitarian Leadership Academy (HLA), a new venture designed to train the next generation of humanitarian leaders to respond to crises in >>



their own countries. The people best placed to respond swiftly and sustainably to many emergencies are not always aid experts scrambling to deploy from London or Washington, but people who are already there who have been equipped with training and resources. Having fundraised for the HLA and provided all the back-office functions to get it off the ground, we have now released it as a global public good. Why? Because building a platform that enables many organisations to come together and people to self-organise to do their bit has much greater impact than us trying to control and choreograph everything from one place to one masterplan.

The second lesson is that it is more powerful to recruit unexpected allies than to galvanise the usual suspects. I took a lot of heat for forming a partnership with GSK – a company I used to campaign against when it opposed cheap Aids drugs – but under new leadership it has prioritised creating change for children, including reformulating an antiseptic found in mouthwash into a gel that prevents serious infection of the umbilical cord, a common cause of death for newborn babies in poor countries. We call that approach ‘core business’; seeking to influence the day-to-day activities of our corporate partners and harness their business power for good. Some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are willing to work with the private sector, but only at arms’s length, with corporations stumping up cash and both sides moving on. Suspicion of the private sector has traditionally been associated with NGOs that are self-styled ‘radical’, but I cannot think of anything more conservative than accepting money without trying to change the behaviour of those who give it. Those who have opposed these kinds of partnerships have sometimes accused us of straying too far from our roots, but our very first donation, in

1919, came from the lawyer who prosecuted Eglantyne Jebb for distributing distressing flyers of starving children in Trafalgar Square. She was so impressive during her trial that he decided to pay her fine. This was the start of Save the Children’s long-held desire to expand the choir rather than just preach to it.

The third lesson is that it is as important to build an exceptional team as an exceptional idea. Looking back on my time as chief executive, I don’t think I did enough to bring my whole team with me on driving the change we desired. My focus on achieving ambitious outcomes for children and my fear about the challenges we faced made me focus more externally than internally. I have learnt that if you do not focus on building a team and establishing a culture that empowers people then you can put that change at risk. At times I have focused too much on pursuing ideas around a set of ambitious outcomes, and not enough on bringing all staff on board with the vision and creating the right kind of culture for everybody to play a part in delivering it. I have not done enough to embed my way of thinking into the organisation or been open enough to having the organisation embed its way of thinking into me. This is an important leadership lesson for me that I hope I can take into future roles.

The fourth lesson is that mass and mainstream is what gives permission for edgy and sharp. Before this role I spent six years working in the prime minister’s office as an adviser. In that role I was on the receiving end of precisely the sort of campaigns I used to orchestrate in my previous life at Oxfam, and now lead. The lesson I have drawn is that organisations that are mindlessly critical have limited influence, just like those organisations that dole out praise to power when it is not deserved. The real power comes from being scrupulously fair, so that your verdict

# “IF CHARITIES ARE NOT PREPARED TO CHANGE, WE WILL, IN TURN, BE LESS ABLE TO CHANGE THE WORLD”

on a policy really means something. But what differentiates a campaigning organisation from a columnist, think tank or academic is that when we offer a verdict, we can mobilise thousands of people behind it, and it is based on our experience on the ground, often in the toughest places.

Our drive to ‘Restart the Rescue’, for example, persuaded all the major UK parties to pledge support for restarting refugee search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean this spring. We got those commitments during a general election campaign in which immigration was a hugely controversial topic and where plenty of people advised us that this campaign would not go down well with ‘Middle Britain’. In fact our supporters responded in huge numbers and also responded to the child refugee fundraising appeal we launched. One of the reasons that people who would never describe themselves as ‘activists’ will come on a journey with us to more controversial areas is because we have worked so hard to be a mainstream cause.

## FELLOWSHIP IN ACTION

### KICKSTARTING COUNTING

At first glance, you might think football and maths make odd bedfellows. But for Dr Oscar Mwaanga, an associate professor in the sport at Southampton Solent University and founder of EduMove, the two go hand in hand. With the help of a £2,000 Catalyst grant from the RSA in 2014 he launched EduKicks, a project that aims to get children interested in maths by playing the beautiful game.

Through his previous work in Zambia, Oscar had seen how movement games can encourage pupils to learn about various subjects including HIV/Aids life skills and empowerment. “We design football drills that target the areas the school wants us to address – for example, teaching about triangles by passing a ball around at different angles, or using premier league table points difference as context to teach addition and subtraction,” he explains.

Additionally, children who are good at football are paired with those who excel at maths, which encourages peer learning and teamwork, adds Oscar, who has plans to grow the project further. He says: “One of the challenges is trying to scale up from mathematics to other subjects, and also introduce online delivery, where more remote schools can access the resource.”

■ *Find out more at [www.edumove.co.uk](http://www.edumove.co.uk)*

We are always more interested in reaching families on their sofa or at school than having the approval of a radical fringe.

The final and, in many ways, the most important lesson is that who you are should determine what you do, not the other way around. When I first arrived, I was worried that the charity had become an international development organisation, not a children’s rights organisation. We had drifted a bit from our core mission: saving children’s lives and helping children fulfil their potential. Being clear on our core mission and then building from that has allowed us to take more risks and be more ambitious. We returned to one clear question: ‘who are we?’. The answer is simple: we are Save the Children, so we have to do whatever it takes to save children.

That sort of simplicity has emboldened us to take risks. For example, we have pioneered what we call ‘signature programmes’ – very ambitious programmes to end child deaths, protect children in tough places and ensure they can learn – focusing on the most marginalised and deprived children. These are initiatives that have a big impact on the ground but also capture what works and, through evidence, try and lever wider transformational change. They have a high chance of impact but also, because they are so incredibly ambitious, an in-built risk of failure.

When your overriding objective is saving and changing children’s lives it can be tempting to be cautious and keep doing the same things the same way. I understand that instinct, but it is completely wrong. It is precisely because what we do involves children and because lives are at stake that we have to be prepared to take bold decisions that might not work. We have done that by merging with another charity – Merlin – to create a world class front-line health team (the ‘Emergency Health Unit’) and by being willing to take on unprecedented challenges, like running an ebola treatment centre in Sierra Leone, which stretched us beyond our comfort zone. We have been lucky that both initiatives worked, but I would be lying if I said there was any certainty that they would.

Applying these lessons has taken us closer to the kind of innovative, porous, networked organisation these times demand, but we still have a long way to go before we have fulfilled our potential. As I pass on this extraordinary organisation to the next lucky person to walk in Eglantyne Jebb’s lengthy shadow, I would urge them – and others – to be inspired but not constrained by that inheritance and to be as radical in creating something fit for our century as she was in building something transformative for hers. ■



ILLUSTRATION: FERNANDO VOLKEN TOGNI

# REALITY BYTES

*Anthony Giddens and Matthew Taylor discuss what the digital revolution means for both institutions and individuals*

🐦 @AnthonyGiddens, 🐦 @RSAMatthew

**MATTHEW TAYLOR:** The digital revolution has led to us adopting a whole new set of ways of being that we didn't necessarily choose. Are we now living in a world where we are just at the mercy of whatever the latest technological shift is, or is it possible for us to be able to stand back, shape the stuff that makes our lives better and leave behind the stuff that doesn't?

**ANTHONY GIDDENS:** The digital revolution is like a huge global wave breaking through people's lives. This is probably the fastest period of technological innovation in human history in terms of its speed and global scope. When it was first invented, the telephone took around 75 years to reach 50 million users. The first iPhone came on the market in 2009, smartphones generically a little earlier; today there are more than two billion smartphones in the world. Cutting-edge technology has never gone directly to the poorest regions on such a level in the way mobile phones have. There are now more mobiles per capita in Africa than any other continent. These transformations are being driven by the internet, of course, but also, crucially, by supercomputers and robotics.

A moving connection between these three is what is transforming our lives. A smartphone is more powerful than a supercomputer of 30 years ago – and such a computer used to occupy many metres of floor space.

If you go to a strange city, you don't need to ask where a restaurant is. You can just find it, using GPS. Migrants fleeing from Syria into Europe are using smartphones to find their way, keep in touch with others and even check what the authorities in different EU countries are doing. They take and send photos along the way.

**TAYLOR:** This technology is facilitating new possibilities and forms of expression, but have we no ability

to stand back from it and question if it really makes our lives more meaningful?

**GIDDENS:** I don't think the digital revolution is a superficial phenomenon, where you get addicted and it leads you to a superficial form of life. You've got the whole world's knowledge in your pocket. People can become more knowledgeable than ever and do things they couldn't before. A smartphone, computer or iPad gives you awesome algorithmic computing power. We can live a 'just-in-time' life in a way that would not have been possible even a couple of decades ago. The same is true on an institutional level. These are deeply structural changes, affecting everything from the economy to politics. It's like the industrial revolution – not yet as profound, but happening at a far quicker pace.

**TAYLOR:** The industrial revolution gave rise to institutional and political reforms as a response to the conditions it created, and its possibilities. What is the equivalent for the digital age that enables us to put human ends at the heart of what's going on?

**GIDDENS:** The digital revolution is plainly affecting politics deeply already, although a lot of work needs to be done to track exactly how. In most democratic countries there is widespread disillusionment with established political parties, and mistrust of political leaders. They are seen as remote from the ordinary citizen. And they are, compared to the immediacy of the digital world. The book *Disaffected Democracies*, by Susan Pharr and Robert Putnam, charts all of this out very well on a statistical level for 18 different democratic states. So these changes are structural. I'm not saying the digital revolution is the only thing causing them, but it's definitely one of them. With a smartphone you can feel empowered where you didn't previously; you can, >> for example, check up on any politician you want to.

ANTHONY GIDDENS IS A SOCIOLOGIST AND A FELLOW OF KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE. HE IS A FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE LSE AND A MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS

## “THOSE ON THE CENTRE-LEFT NEED TO ENGAGE IN A PROCESS OF PROFOUND RETHINKING”

And orthodox politics is indeed creaky and slow compared to the immediacy of the digital world – which has become the everyday world for most citizens. We have to find some new modes of democratic representation that reflect the desire for more direct involvement and transparency in decision-making by elites. So far, experiments with e-democracy, citizens’ juries and referenda haven’t proved terribly successful, so there’s a structural gap at the heart of politics, which is unsettling. When it overlaps with the general feeling that you’ve lost control of the wider world, you can see why politics is becoming a lot more fragmented.

**TAYLOR:** Do you see any signs of institutions – particularly political and democratic institutions – adapting to this world? In a more parochial context, what do you make of the rise of Mr Corbyn and the movement he represents?

**GIDDENS:** Corbyn and the movement that has grown up around him are an unstable mix of the old and the new – 1970s radicals mixed up with a new internet digital-based generation, some of whom have been attracted into politics for the first time. As such, it seems to me pretty unstable. Nevertheless, it is also a call to action for more moderate forces on the left, who must use it as an opportunity for a thorough strategic rethink. Coming to terms with the digital revolution will have to be part of that, although only one element of a much more wide-ranging enterprise.

But there is also a huge economic dimension to this revolution. It seems almost certain that it will transform large chunks of the labour force and, with it, welfare and education. A large swathe of manual, white-collar and professional jobs look vulnerable to a combination of supercomputing power and robotics. So we’ve got to track these trends and work out their implications, not just for the economy but for welfare too. Without detailed analysis, there is no hope of developing effective policy.

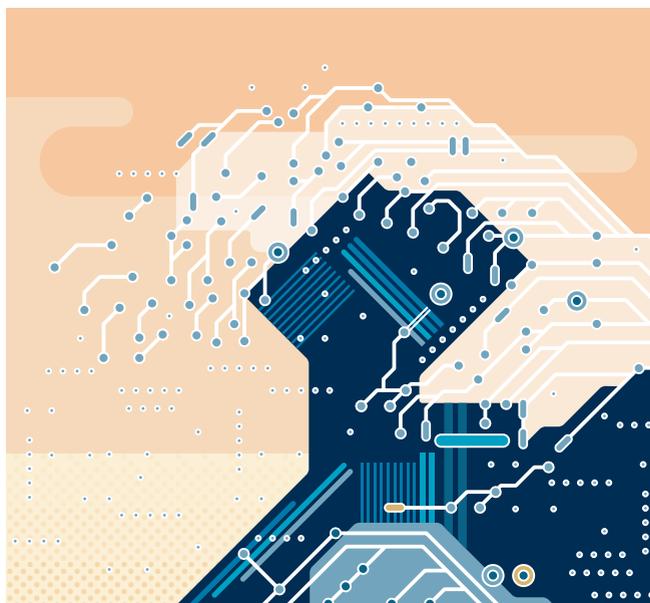
Around 20 years ago, I played a part in the reconstruction of the centre-left, subsumed under the label ‘the third way’. That notion was widely misunderstood, especially by critics on the left. It was not a form of neoliberalism or a succumbing to the dominance of the market. On the contrary, the point was to develop a form of political theory and practice that went beyond traditional, top-down socialism on the one hand, and market fundamentalism (ie neoliberalism) on the other. Nor was it a superficial exercise in spin. It was driven by deep intellectual roots and involved collaboration between researchers from a range of different countries. That collaborative intellectual effort was crucial to the period of success that centre-left parties enjoyed in different parts of the world. We tried to identify the changes at work in the industrial countries and elaborate a policy response to them guided by progressive values. Today, those on the centre-left need to engage in a similar process

of profound rethinking, in a very different context from that period, even if some themes remain the same – including the need for a wide-ranging critique of neoliberalism, coupled with a renewed defence of the public sphere. I’m at one with at least some of the themes pursued by Mr Corbyn, even if he hasn’t so far elaborated policies that have much purchase on them.

For all its talk of occupying the centre ground, the current government is pursuing a radical austerity agenda and a destructive one. The structural consequences are damaging and must be confronted. Isn’t there a paradox when a country has to get two state-controlled overseas companies to build its nuclear power plants because it has lost the skills to do so itself? We used to be the cutting edge of those technologies. Sometimes you do need to protect certain kinds of regions and industries. Once you’ve lost the skills you will struggle to get them back again. Long-term structural investment cannot be created by a blind faith in the vagaries of the marketplace. However, we must look ahead rather than back to a lost past in working out a response to these issues.

**TAYLOR:** We’ve never had global corporations with the power of the likes of Facebook and Google before, and leaders such as Mark Zuckerberg and Sergey Brin aren’t constrained or held to account. When it comes to extreme inequality, should the goal be to make the super rich accountable and bring them back towards everyone else, rather than allowing this elite that is potentially able to hold the rest of the world to ransom?

**GIDDENS:** We want the leaders of the global corporations to have a social conscience, that’s for sure. Enlightened business leaders can play a very constructive role in the contemporary world – think how positively Bill Gates has responded to that challenge. Mark Zuckerberg has recently pledged to give away 99% of his wealth, although no one is quite sure exactly how he plans to do that. However, they are in a minority. Nations and transnational groups must work together to constrain the activities of global companies where they seek to escape regulation. The G8 and G20 can have a big influence here. We cannot stop trying to find more effective modes of global governance. In some ways they become more possible than in the past.



Extreme inequality is a huge political issue, locally, nationally and globally. Cutting a swathe through that must be one of the main preoccupations of a reconstituted left; Thomas Piketty and others are entirely right about that. Among other areas of concern, it is crucial to make progress in curbing the role of tax havens in creating global inequality. The digital revolution should help advance the cause here. Now that most money has become electronic it is harder for the super rich to hide their fortunes from scrutiny. The International Consortium of Journalists has done pioneering work here.

**TAYLOR:** Daniel Bell's phrase – when he said that more and more in the modern world, the nation-state is too small for the big problems in life and too big for the small problems – keeps coming to mind. He said it 50 years ago, but it's truer now than it has ever been. When it comes to global institutions, clearly we want those that will work towards giving a voice to everyone. But when it comes to the digital revolution, what is the normative dimension to this?

**GIDDENS:** It was prophetic and, as you say, as timely today as when he first coined it. At the same time, the nation-state doesn't disappear. Many people have made that mistake. At one point a few years ago I had on my shelf a dozen books called 'The End of the Nation-State' or something similar. I took a very different view. For the first time in history, the nation-state has become a more or less universal form – the last of the empires disappeared with the collapse of the Soviet Union. At the same time, it is subjected to the stresses and strains of which Bell spoke – the pressures of decentralisation and regional identities on the one hand, and its relative impotence in a globalising world on the other. That is why

collaboration between states will be so important for the immediate future, fractured and difficult though it is.

We are moving into a difficult and potentially dangerous period of world history. The digital revolution, as I have stressed, is very mixed in its consequences. In combination with other major trends in world society, it is helping create what I call a 'high-opportunity, high-risk' society – a crucial concept in my eyes. We have opportunities today that were wholly unavailable to earlier generations. In the course of my work on the digital revolution, I have been tracking its likely impact on medicine and healthcare. The overlap between supercomputers and genetics – each of which essentially deals with information – is promoting huge advances in medical diagnosis and treatment. The opportunity side of the digital revolution is gigantic. But so are the risks, which overlap with other fundamental problems we face in the 21st century such as climate change, the unrelenting growth in the world's population, the existence of nuclear weapons and other factors. Most great innovations in history begin and end in war and the digital revolution is no exception.

**TAYLOR:** David Deutsch argues that all problems are problems of knowledge. The only response to dangers created by knowledge is to create even better knowledge, which enables you to manage those risks. Do you think that's right?

**GIDDENS:** No, I don't. I think the risks are real, and we may not be able to cope with them. Knowledge can be put to nefarious purposes as well as socially beneficial ones. We're in a 'don't know' world, in terms of risk. Risk and opportunity intermingle in ways that are difficult to predict – knowledge and innovation always cut both ways. ■

# MIND THE GAP

*Negotiating the pathway from rhetoric to reality in community-centred work is still the major challenge of our times*

by Hilary Cottam  
✉ @HilaryCottam

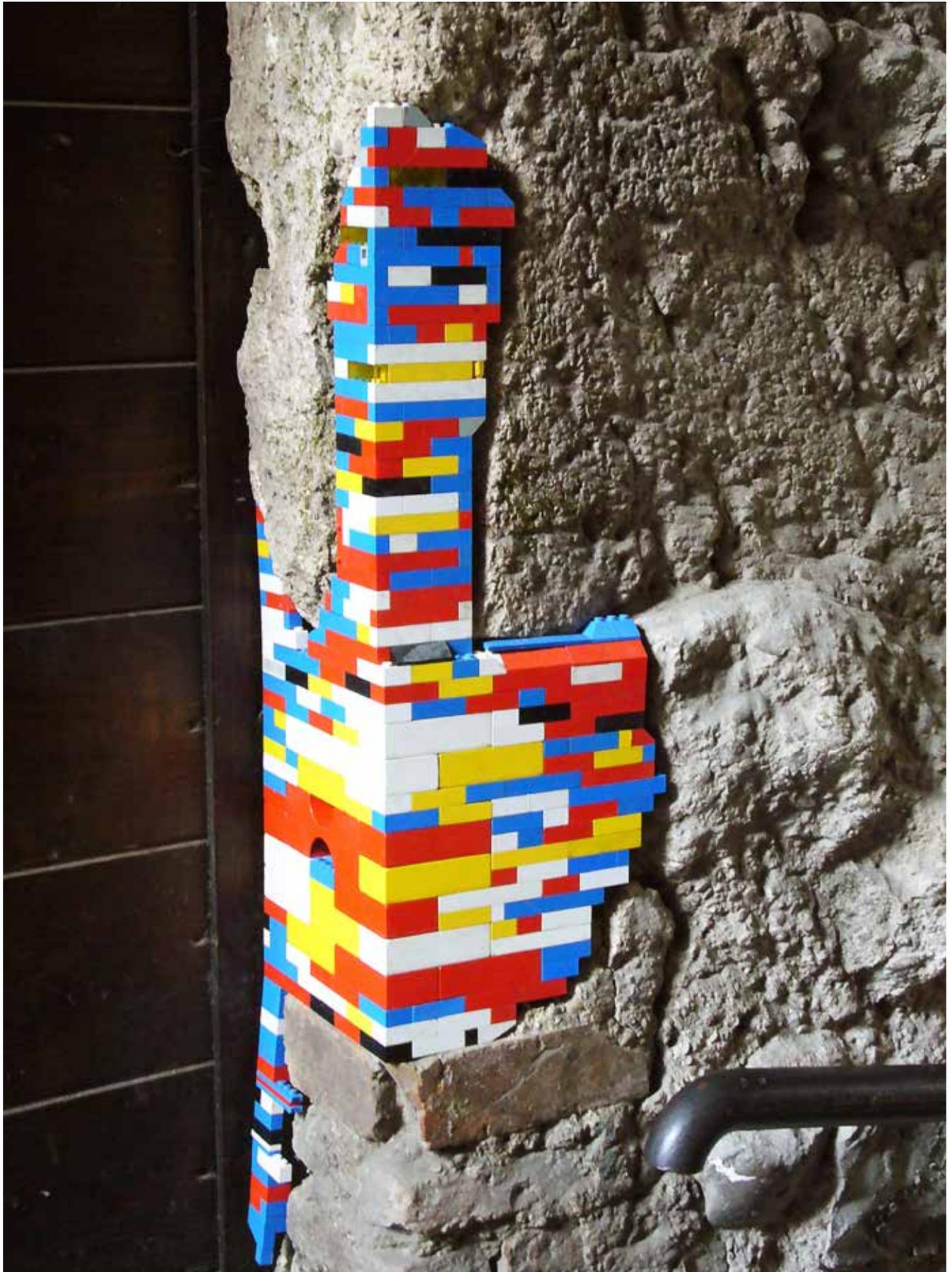
**B**efore Beveridge and the postwar welfare state, the solution to finding work was rooted in community. There was a local and close-knit form of support for those who lost their jobs: the local pub. In many communities across Britain, working people saved small sums with their local publican on a weekly basis. For the worker who lost their job there was a small sum of cash and also, critically, a network of relationships: friends who could give you some moral support, introduce you to someone who might have work and give you a bit of a push if you seemed to have lost the motivation to get out there and look.

These informal, community-based systems were swept away in the 1950s. New unemployment services such as the job centre and benefits were a pillar of the postwar welfare state. These services, like all other areas of the welfare state, have been subject to waves of reform in the intervening decades, but scratch beneath the surface, the logos, the talk of ‘best practice’ and ‘personalisation’ and you will find little has really changed. The essential mechanics of the job centre and welfare to work are still those of the 1950s. A time traveller from that era might remark on the new colours of the sofas but they would discover a queue and a service that they would recognise.

Beyond the doors of the job centre, however, the world of work has radically transformed. The industrial model of a job for life has been replaced by a flexible labour market in which most of us can expect to change jobs at least eight times over the course of our working life.

There are the challenges of structural unemployment >>

HILARY COTTAM  
IS A SOCIAL  
ENTREPRENEUR





– places where good work has disappeared – and the increasing difficulty of progressing between a junior and more senior job in what labour market specialists refer to as ‘the hour-glass economy’.

Few deny that the current system is broken. Young people starting out, older people whose skills are out of kilter and the many who are simply looking to get on and progress are poorly served. Less remarked upon is the critical fact that most new jobs are not advertised. Data from sources as diverse as LinkedIn, the Federation of Small Businesses and surveys for the *Wall Street Journal* suggest that as many as eight out of 10 new jobs are not formally advertised.

It turns out that in the modern labour market, the best way to find work is to have a diverse social network – in other words a broad and connected community – and to know how to use it. Standing in a queue with others also locked out of work, filling out your CV and applying for the same small pool of jobs is unlikely to work very well.

For the past 10 years I have led Participle, a social enterprise and an experiment. We have been designing

working exemplars of a future welfare state that start with people, their communities and relationships, building on, enhancing and measuring capabilities.

“Get me out of here” read the message emblazoned across a false door we had hastily erected in the job centre. Anyone who offered us £5 could come through the door and work with us. First up was Leroy: “It’s been hard signing on every week, being treated like I am not worth anything,” said Leroy. “I am not a lazy person.” Next came an exasperated Jack: “They just don’t get you... they keep telling me to wear a tie at interviews.” And so it continued. We raised the price, to no avail: it felt like everyone wanted to come through our door.

We started to work together to design a different approach to unemployment. With an eclectic group of people in work, out of work and somewhere in between, we started to organise meet-ups in cinemas, cafes and pubs. We worked to tell different stories about ourselves, to think laterally about skills and how to get started, sharing every idea and opportunity that we came across. We learnt rapidly what worked and what was challenging and we iterated our ideas.

A new approach with supporting tools was developed: the foundation of the service that became Backr (a community that backs you to succeed). We developed technology to enable a small team to work with a much greater number of people, bringing new members face-to-face, engaging in structured exercises and drawing on community support.

By 2015 we had worked with over 1,000 people. An independent evaluation of Backr by the auditors PwC showed strong evidence both of hard outcomes (people into work) and of the causal link between an approach rooted in relationships and employment outcomes. The evaluation concluded that Backr delivered a consistently positive impact. An approach rooted in community cost significantly less and Backr also gave people a sense of resilience and self-belief, which we can assume will help them to continue to progress and ride the next downturn.

If unemployment services are a worn out pillar of the postwar welfare state, the challenges of ageing are of a different order. Today in Britain there are more pensioners than young people under the age of 16. One in five of us will live to see our 100th birthday. This wonderful longevity is, in part, due to the success of the 1950s welfare state and the introduction of a national health service. However, these demographic shifts were not foreseen and were not planned for. Services are stretched, care is poor, if not absent altogether, and our ageing society has become a source of panic rather than celebration.

From the perspective of our services and welfare institutions there is just not enough to go around. Starting in people's lives, however, the picture looks rather different: we see the abundance of time, talent and potential. Around 80% of Britain's wealth is in the hands of older people and many of them are inventing new ways to live and age. Others and their families are suffering, without resource and with challenges that seem insurmountable. The picture, in other words, is mixed but what is immediately clear is that resource lies with older people themselves, even if the resource is poorly distributed.

At Participle, we asked how we could support every older person to flourish. Working initially with just 100 older people, along with their friends, family and neighbours, we asked what was needed. At first people told us how to improve the current offer. It takes time to get beneath the surface, to the emotional level, to people's dreams and aspirations. New solutions come from very different ways of working. We continued to listen and be present without an agenda, and we heard people say they wanted two things.

## **“FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF OUR WELFARE INSTITUTIONS THERE IS JUST NOT ENOUGH TO GO AROUND”**

First, a rich social life: not to be befriended but to meet with the like-minded, make new friends and do interesting things. Second, people want on-demand practical support: someone to go up the ladder and change a light bulb.

We hired a couple of handy people, rented a phone line and started a membership service called Circle. In London there was an attempt to grow Circles at speed, which was unsuccessful. In other places such as Rochdale and Nottingham, Circles became rooted in their local communities and the wider service ecosystem, transforming the lives of their members. As the relationships between members grew and deepened (something we measured) other impacts started to show: a significant decline in the numbers making unnecessary visits to their GP, for example. Over the years, thousands of people have become members.

Growing a diverse community that includes the young, the old, the active and those who need more support is intensive: it takes time and skill to encourage those who have lost their confidence or mobility to take part. Each Circle is run by a small team of staff and volunteers. Technology enables this small team to respond on demand, support a diverse social programme and keep track of who needs help, all at relatively low cost.

Members call Circle when their pets are unwell, or they simply need someone to chat to but also when they urgently need help, perhaps after an operation. A rich and varied social calendar involving art tours, darts, knitting circles or hot air ballooning offers something for everyone. And over time, we have seen something very interesting develop: the community friendships that form take over from the practical offer.

The story of Belinda who joined her Circle at a time when she felt lonely, stuck and rather down is typical. She let her local Circle know she was going into hospital for a knee operation. Damien, who ran her local Circle, knew she would be out of action for a while so called her to find out what support she would need. “Oh no,” Belinda responded, “Florence is doing the shopping, Tony is doing the garden and Melissa and Jo are popping in to cook and chat.” In total, five other Circle members had >>

organised everything she needed. Inviting Belinda to a Circle event was the start of a process that allowed natural friendships to form, relationships that are now making the difference and enabling Belinda, who is in her eighties, to flourish.

Backr and Circle offer just two examples of how we can build new services and approaches with people, in ways that cost less and work better. Backr is closer to a traditional service model, where individuals sign up and receive structured support, albeit of a different nature rooted in the development of a person's broader capabilities and drawing on the support of a wider network. Circle is not a service in a traditional sense; it is a curated community whose membership provides on-demand practical and social support to others.

These services work, in large part because there is coherence between what they offer externally and their

## “TODAY, WE HAVE A GAP BETWEEN INTENTION AND REALITY, BETWEEN RHETORIC AND UNDERSTANDING”

internal culture and ways of working; closing this gap is central to their success. At Participle, we developed the concept of the 'relational worker'. Through delivering services to thousands of people across Britain we learnt about the practices, cultures and ways of working that could support a housebound elderly person to flourish once again or a long-term unemployed person to take control of their own journey back to work. But we also learnt about the systems, cultures and practices that enable those at the front line to work in this way, in challenging, often high-stress jobs. It is a model in which you are encouraged to bring your whole self to work.

Participle's models are innovative in the UK context precisely because ideas of community and humanity have not been grafted on to services that were never designed to operate in these ways. In his pioneering book, *Reinventing Organizations*, Frederic Laloux has shown how a number of extraordinary organisations (from manufacturing to hydraulic engineering) have reinvented their management practices, by taking a different perspective on how we can relate to one another. One example is Buurtzorg, a Dutch homecare service that put relationships back at the heart of an organisation that had become increasingly target driven, with a corresponding decrease in care standards and staff morale. Enabling nurses to work in self-managed teams and spend time nurturing those they visit has not only improved care, it has also dramatically reduced the service's cost base. The critical part of the story is this: the Buurtzorg model grew through an understanding that community and relationships were needed at work if the effects were to be felt by those receiving care.

Most of what has passed for reform of the welfare state in recent years has been the very opposite of this approach. The adoption of the principles and relationships of the commercial world such as the introduction of targets, regulatory agencies and the predominance of financial benchmarks, have split off organisations from the communities they are meant to serve. They have split off those who work within organisations from their own

### FELLOWSHIP IN ACTION

#### BUURTZORG IN BRITAIN

With UK healthcare services increasingly feeling the strain of an ageing population, Brendan Martin and his team at consultancy Public World, a social enterprise, are working to introduce a new homecare model that might relieve some of the pressure.

They are supporting British health and social care organisations to adapt and adopt the Buurtzorg model, founded in the Netherlands in 2007 by a group of district nurses eager to focus on the relationship between carer and patient rather than on completing specific tasks. Buurtzorg nurses help clients with things like dressing and bathing as well as clinically, but it works out cheaper because they strengthen the clients' own capabilities and networks, and work in self-managed teams.

Buurtzorg founder Jos de Blok was awarded the 2014 RSA Albert Medal, and Public World's partnership with Buurtzorg grew out of Brendan and Jos meeting then. With the support of a £2,000 RSA Catalyst award, Public World plans 'test and learn' projects to identify and learn how to overcome the obstacles to applying Buurtzorg to Britain.

The benefits are potentially enormous. "Buurtzorg has produced better care at lower cost while winning Employer of the Year for four years," says Brendan. "If we can apply those lessons here, the future of health and social care will look very different."

Find out more at [www.publicworld.co.uk](http://www.publicworld.co.uk)



motivations and creative energy. The academic Theo Mars, who has worked on the history and politics of public administration, has described these changes as the restructuring of public action into programmes of “service delivery to citizens” and later to “consumers”, leading to a fundamental restructuring of the relationship within and between the public and public sector organisations.

In this context, the work of Participle and the findings of the RSA’s Connected Communities research can be seen as the recovery of something lost as much as it is the discovery of something new. As the market-based reforms of recent years have become increasingly contested and failed to achieve the hoped-for results, an interest in community has been reawakened.

At the same time, the concepts of delivery, users, consumption and commissioning have not only shaped past decades of policy and practice, they have shaped how we see the world, our language and approach. They have also rendered some things unsayable. Indeed, we have contorted ourselves to such an extent that, despite the recent interest in putting relationships at the heart of a future welfare state, some rather well known gurus in the area have been heard to ask how we can commission a relationship.

It is, of course, not possible to purchase a relationship. Nor is it possible to boil community practice down to the financial language of dividends and the traditional metrics of outcomes. Communities and relationships are based

on respect, a balance of power, authentic reciprocity. And so there is a gap: policymakers and well-meaning commissioners know intuitively that new models that start with people and are rooted in community make sense and are the future, and yet they are unsure as to how to proceed.

Shifting from one model to another requires a different starting point and new questions. The relational work exemplified by Circle and Backr (and the RSA’s Connected Communities work covered earlier in this journal) asks questions about the nature of the society we want to live in, how we think about ourselves and what we want to create together. Circle and Backr embody different values and beliefs about the purpose of the welfare state.

Asking and answering these questions requires brave leadership, some upfront investment (which is currently almost impossible to find) and a commitment to authenticity: to close the gap between the external and the internal. So today, we have a gap between intention and reality, between rhetoric and understanding but this need not be a source of discouragement. We are on the cusp of a revolution as bold as that of the original welfare state: just as during the ’50s, the models of today will be swept away. The important thing is to make sure that the new starts with people and their communities. ■

■ For more information, see Hilary’s TED Talk on social justice at <http://bit.ly/1M7zQV8>

# THE SHAME GAME

*Moral emotions have long been used to change people's behaviour, but is shaming still relevant in modern society?*

by Jörg Wettlaufer  
 @joewett

**I**nstitutionalised shaming is becoming fashionable again. Since the early 1990s, we have seen restorative justice experiments with so-called reintegrative shaming; official authorities use online pillories to inform the public about offenders in the neighborhood; and very recently, the environmental movement has rediscovered the normative power of shame in its battle against the destruction of the greatest common good of mankind, our planet. What is this almost-forgotten weapon about, and can it do good in our modern and constantly changing world?

Let's consider first how shame, the underlying moral and self-conscious emotion, is understood today. Of course, one will find many different definitions in the relevant disciplines, but there are also some aspects that most scientists agree upon nowadays. It is undisputed that shame is an unpleasant feeling; an emotion with a strong bodily component. It is very probably caused by an interaction of the limbic system with the orbitofrontal cortex that acts directly on the sympathetic nervous system and causes blushing, as neuroscience tells us. But there are more visible signs of shame.

In shame condition, people lower their faces, drop their shoulders and give the impression that they want to vanish into the ground, presumably because it is rooted in appeasement behaviour already known in primates. Therefore, one can distinguish between a phylogenetic older appeasement-shame and a younger conformity-shame: two different sides of the very same emotion as proposed by Daniel Fessler, an evolutionary anthropologist from the University of California, Los Angeles.

## DEEP-ROOTED

This distinction is supported by linguistic evidence. Shame is a universal pan-human emotion and the blush is present in all cultures and ethnic groups. Given how

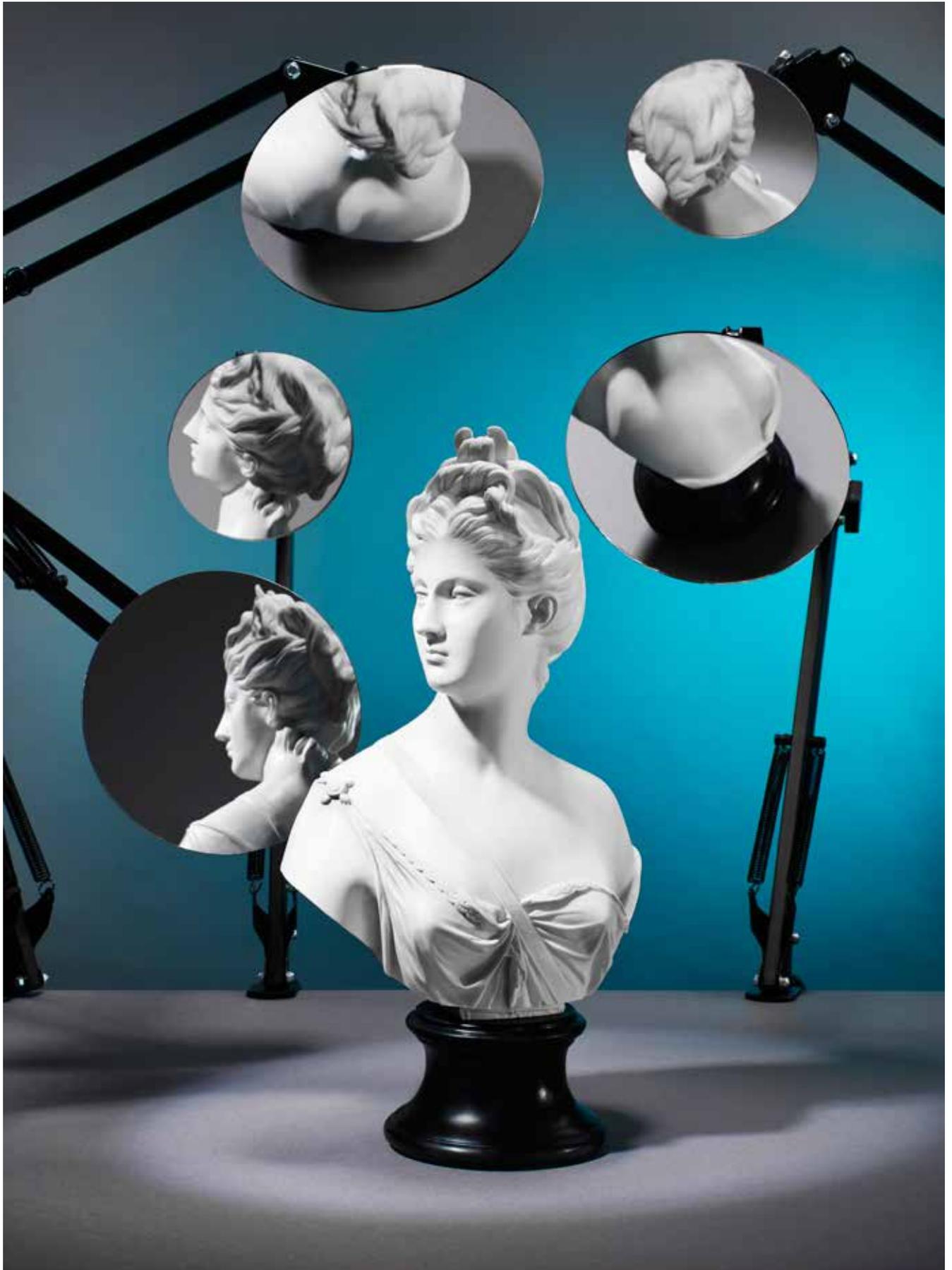
JÖRG WETTLAUFER IS A DIGITAL HISTORIAN AND EVOLUTIONARY ANTHROPOLOGIST AT THE GÖTTINGEN CENTRE FOR DIGITAL HUMANITIES

deeply this emotion is rooted in the human nervous system and brain, there is no doubt that it has been selected as part of evolution and thus is a functional adaptation. Cooperation is a very likely candidate for the selection pressure that shaped the ability to feel shame, because it is an effective but not physically wounding punishment for non-conformity to the norms of a group that one is identifying with. This makes shame culturally flexible (with no fixed rules on what to be ashamed of), yet effective in all possible environments and groups of all sizes that share common norms and moral standards.

Briefly, we can say that shame consists of a physical reaction to a transgression of cultural norms, and is elicited by behaviour that is deemed inappropriate in terms of in-group norms. But how do we learn about these rules and know what to be ashamed of? Following such rules is a skill that is learned during infancy and childhood through good examples or shaming by a caregiver. This is universal and can be found in all cultures, although some East Asian and Pacific cultures seem to play on the use of shame in education more than others. At the end of adolescence, the most important threshold to becoming an accepted member of the group of adults is not sexual maturity but the ability to control body and mind according to the rules and norms during infancy and adolescence, in order to perform as an effective member of the team. As opposed to guilt, shame always affects a person's identity as a whole.

Nudity, in the sense of not wearing a distinctive cultural marker, is associated with shame in all traditional cultures because it presents the body in its natural state – which lacks the distinctive feature of humankind, the alteration caused by the apple from the tree of knowledge – as the Bible puts it. Nude bodies remind us of the natural layer upon which humanity is built, as they react to stimuli from a basic domain of life that even a strong tool like shame for self-control cannot easily cope with: sexuality and procreation. This shame – related to the human body – can also be understood in terms





## “IT IS CRUCIAL THAT THE SHAMED PERSON IDENTIFIES WITH THE NORMS OF THE GROUP”

of consciousness about the additive character and fragility of emotion-based normative control that guides humans in their social relationships and makes interactions so different from what the great apes, for example, show us. At least it gives us the possibility to act differently.

In science and humanities, shame and humiliation are considered to have a function in society, at least since Adam Smith's study of moral emotions in 1759. Looking back further to Genesis and the Bible makes it evident that this perspective was not totally new in the 18th century. But the relationship between the emotion shame and the very human ability for cooperation in large groups has been a matter of scientific research for only about 20 years.

### WIDESPREAD USE

This functional link between shame and cooperation is worth exploring in more detail with the help of empirical evidence from European historical societies. In the high and late Middle Ages, from 1100 AD onwards, shaming punishments were widespread throughout Europe, from Portugal to Poland, Sweden to Sicily. This calls for some explanation, and also enables us to look empirically at how historical societies made use of shame and the possibility of imposing this emotion in the name of law and order on individuals. At the same time we can observe if the effect was as desired and why the practice was given up during the 18th and early 19th centuries in most parts of the western world.

In Europe, shaming punishments and customs of reprimand have a long history dating back to classical Greece and probably far beyond, but in the Middle Ages and the early modern period, they were established in public penal law and attained an official character. Such formalised shaming punishments seem to originate in the educational mandate of a powerful institution that looked to establish both general and special prevention (deterrence and reformation). European cultures, like others, put considerable value on the concept of honour or public *fama* in the given period, as well as on the integration of the individual into group structures.

In recent years, a debate about the influence of church law on the development of public penal law in the European high and late Middle Ages has shed some light on the strong interconnections between theological discussion about

penance and the practical execution of law in this period. It has become clear that secular penal law borrowed in many ways from ecclesiastical law, and the emergence of some 'new' forms of punishment, for instance the institution of the pillory in the second half of the 12th century, can only be understood in this context.

### PUBLIC CONFESSION

During the 12th century, the pillory appears in the constitutions and liberty charters of townships (which were granted by bishops and other clerics), incorporated into light correctional penalties. Furthermore, during the 12th and 13th centuries, the pillory turned into a device for public confession in the presence of laypersons, thereby joining an induced or even forced penitential shame to allow for the subsequent reconciliation of the offender within the group. The pillory, or public exposure in the marketplace for misdemeanours or sins committed in public view of a township, combined the practical aspect of promulgating important information about violators of communal peace with the Christian goal of forgiveness through penance. Shame was, at this time, a well-established part of penance and confession.

Medieval European citizens heavily relied on Christian values and cooperative behaviour. Loyalty to the community had to be promised by oath, and mutual trust was a core element of daily life. To a significant degree, shaming punishments were used to punish defection and misdemeanour that were relevant for cooperation, especially in the high Middle Ages. We can observe an emphasis on perjury, fraud and adultery, ignominious words, blasphemy and, later, theft. The baker was punished with the tumbrel or dunked into mud for baking bread that was too small, the fishmonger was put in the pillory for selling rotten fish, and so on. Moral failure in the eyes of the community to which one belonged was punished with shame, if money did not do the job of altering behaviour in the first instance. It was and is crucial for the function of shaming punishments that the shamed person identifies themselves with the values and norms of the group. In this perspective, the rise of shaming punishments in western Europe during the Middle Ages was, notably, due to the development of the cities as units of identification, which people belonged to the most, apart from family ties.

However, public shaming did not evolve in the way it was originally intended by judges who were inspired by the Christian tradition of public penance and confession. Very early on, the pillory became an instrument of stigmatisation and exclusion rather than one of reconciliation or reintegration. The stigmatising character of shaming punishments continued to have a predominant effect on these punishments (also called 'honourific' to denote their long-term consequences). Only



later, during the 16th and early 17th centuries, do we observe a movement towards reinforcing the penitential and ‘confessional’ character of the pillory, through the reintroduction of a ‘new’ instrument known as the iron collar (*halseisen* in German, *carcan* in French), which differed from the original pillory only with respect to the lack of infamy attached to its use. Ironically, the iron collar was also soon associated with the same stain of infamy.

### MODERN SOCIETY

Coming back to modern times, what can we learn from the experiences of our ancestors? Can we learn anything at all, as the situation in modern society seems at first glance totally different from what made up a medieval town in the 12th or 13th century? First of all, the historical evidence seems to prove the theoretical framework of shame supporting cooperation in a very literal sense: shaming was used in conflicts where somebody did not behave according to the very basic learned norms and moral values around justice and mutual trust. People endangering the peace of a town and cheating their neighbours were often shamed and later expelled, sometimes banned forever from the town or territory in order to preserve the conditions seen as required for strong cooperation within the community. Moral emotions were thus for a certain period of European history an important building block for effective cooperation in groups relying on mutual trust.

Shame can indeed be a strong incentive to alter behaviour; it can effectively remind a person of shared norms and help them to regain control over body and mind in the way it was learned during childhood. In medieval literature, shame was often referred to as a kind of confusion of the mind, which allows for reorientation. Shame may even help to break the vicious circle of drug abuse or other dependence. But it only works

if everybody agrees on the norms, and if the culprit identifies themselves with the norms of the group. This is in fact no longer the case in pluralistic societies with very heterogeneous norms and values. While adultery (literally “violation of conjugal faith”) came top in leading to persecution with shaming punishments in the Middle Ages, nowadays there is no such normative understanding of this behaviour. Shaming with the positive intention of reformation works best in small face-to-face groups, where everybody knows everybody and values are shared. This feature is made use of in restorative justice, where offenders are shamed within their peer or family group. But there is considerable difference between a reintegrative shaming conference held in modern Australia and sitting in the pillory in a medieval market.

What is the potential future of the social usage of shaming? In fact the modern pillory stands no longer at the marketplace, but can be found in its modern counterpart, the internet, where people can shame and blame others on social media. Here we have, in contrast to medieval times, a potentially unlimited public and – more importantly – no judge to reflect about the ‘sentence’ or feel responsible for decisions. One thoughtlessly posted photo or tweet can destroy whole lives. Shame is still a powerful weapon and should therefore be used carefully and with consideration, if used at all. The online pillory reminds us that it can also be a spectacle for the onlookers and bystanders to shame and humiliate others; all the more so, as the reaction of the victim is not directly visible any longer.

Looking back at history, shame does not seem to be the right tool with which to save the environment and the earth. One would be better off trying honour, which seems to perform – according to recent findings in game theory experiments – as well as, and even better than shame to motivate people not to cheat on values needed for cooperation. ■

# A MATTER OF MAKING

*As the maker movement takes off, our institutional infrastructure is in danger of being left behind*

by Indy Johar FRSA  
 @indy\_johar

There is a cool new story in town: the ‘maker revolution’. Driven by rapidly shifting technological capabilities and the DIY aspirations of the YouTube generation, we see 3D printing and wiki- or micro-production of furniture, homes, and even guns, evolving rapidly. Some have heralded this disruptive transformation as the next industrial revolution. For if the 20th century advanced the democratisation of consumption, they argue, the 21st century should focus on a new democracy of production.

Where the industrialist of the 19th century dreamed of mass production, mass consumption and market efficiency, the maker renaissance we are living in is a rebellion against this mode of production. In the same way YouTube democratised the media, so too does the maker revolution enable and empower people to create, this time through a more playful, experimental set of purposeful activities that transcend traditional notions of ‘consumption’ or ‘production’.

This is a future that has the capacity to lead to a world where customisation and artisanal craft are the default, not the pricey added extra. Where products are not just one of thousands but are thousands of one-offs. Where innovation is open and versionable, driven by the tinkerers, iterators and context not the centralised corporate lab.

This new ‘craft economics’ puts higher value on outcomes and contextual relevance than on mass output and mock differentiation, and is one where localised production renders obsolete the opaque supply chains that cause such environmental and social damage across the world. From perpetual product homogenisation and optimisation driven by corporate markets, we may be seeing the reemergence of a more variegated, context-driven landscape of making, remaking and use. However, the current renaissance of the maker goes beyond shifting consumer and market

behaviours and signifies the possibility of an even more systemic revolution; one which is both small but globally connected, micro yet massive.

Organisations such as Wiki House, Opendesk, Arduino RepRap and Open Source Ecology are using radically new methods, practices and organisational forms to develop a new generation of sustainable and innovative processes, products and services, sharing a commitment to open-source principles, democratic participation and transparency while fostering cooperation and collaboration at a scale, scope and speed previously unimaginable. This marks a growing transition from the closed company and cluster logic towards shared and democratised innovation across an open network of companies and hubs.

While these high-profile cases often attract the headlines, the real challenge is reimagining our institutional architecture to match the possibility offered by emerging technologies. Just as the Victorians imagined new institutions such as what is now the British Standards Institution and renaissance Italy imagined the concept of IP and patents, we need to make sure that the rules of the game match the possibility of the moment.

Currently, we sit on the cusp of multiple futures, much like the sharing economy a few years ago. Will the maker movement end up being de-facto centralised by traditional financiers, insurers and 20th century consumer rights, unconsciously driving extractive behaviours as happened with sharing platforms like Airbnb and Uber? Or can we build a fairer, more democratic architecture? One that leverages the new capabilities of democratised and distributed, purpose, production and innovation to advance an inclusive economic settlement for our age.

The industrial revolution entrenched its dominance over the original maker and craft movement through the efficiency of centralised, process-driven control over the means of production and structures of risk, liability, responsibility and intellectual property. For the maker movement to become more than a fad, we need to reimagine these institutional

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norms leveraging new technologies that embrace the decentralising and democratising possibilities offered by the ‘near-zero marginal cost society’ heralded by thinkers such as the American economic and social theorist Jeremy Rifkin.

Crucial in all this is the idea that open making be positioned to unleash more than strictly economic process efficiencies; it can unlock democratic and distributed innovation and thereby the deep transition to economies of democratic purpose and belonging. It is a true craft revival, which can generate fresh sources of meaningful work, learning, identity and innovation. To achieve this, a new type of institutional economics is required.

This revolution requires us to systemically reinvent the dark matter of our society: the institutional infrastructure of our civilisation, including its notion of incorporation, accounting, governance, design, investment and legitimacy. It requires more than cutting red tape; it is a revolution that will require us to structurally remove the privilege of the closed, professional validation and embrace an open, social mechanism driving by blockchain, which could be used as a fully open, distributed ledger to verify ownership, provenance or credit worthiness.

Given these possibilities, now let us reimagine consumer and producer rights and responsibility in this hybridised and fused economy, acknowledging the implications of decentralised and open supply chains of value; reimagine convenience, insurance and warranties to embrace the capacity of real-time distributed design, production and assembly with just as much gusto as

we embrace fancy websites, CNC machines and personalised jewellery. We must reimagine new versionable standards and protocols for real-time dynamic interoperability between tools, machines, platforms and design software, as well as reconceive management so that it is not about control and centralised efficiency but about the flourishing of purpose, intelligence, innovation and interoperability of the system you operate in, not just the corporate you run. Fundamentally, we must acknowledge that value creation is a product of innovation across systems collaboratively not centrally, nor by one single hero or artist. Thereby we need to build a notion of compensation focused on contribution not biased towards the soft lock-ins of centralised coordination or management.

These are some of the challenges we face. They reach far beyond the stardom of cool products and imply radical changes to how institutions are shaped and how they behave. Addressing them will be critical if we are to realise the great promise offered, the democratising power to – quite literally – create our society. We need institutions like the RSA to go ‘back to the future’ and start hosting the makers of today, as began with its recent Maker Summit, so they can reimagine and build the institutions of tomorrow. This, increasingly, is our challenge in unleashing the matter of #openmaking. ■

■ *With thanks to Joost Beunderman, Andy Reeves and Dan Zastawny for their contribution. For more information about Dark Matter Laboratories, visit [www.project00.cc](http://www.project00.cc)*

# BACK TO BASICS

*Embracing a citizen income for all requires a radical overhaul of the welfare state. It's time for a rethink*

by Anthony Painter  
 @anthonypainter

What sort of lives do we want to lead? It's a deceptively simple question but it's one that has enormous consequences for the collective provision we make through the tax and benefits system. From the early 20th century, our welfare system and the public services that sat alongside it suggested a particular ideal. We wanted to support industrial-age man (and his supportive wife). They would have free education, healthcare and social insurance for periods of unemployment and in old age.

As we came to the final decades of that century, we started to answer the question in a different way. Society's norms and its institutions – such as the household – were beginning to change. Women, rightly, wanted more independence and no longer subscribed to the supporting role that had been cast for them. In any case, post-industrial Britain no longer provided enough decently paid jobs to support a 'single breadwinner' model of the household so there was a case of needs must as we considerably changed our welfare system. We began to focus more on households than on breadwinners. Ultimately, a means-tested system was established alongside a minimum wage. Its aim was to support households (rather than individuals) in low-pay work.

But this created an issue. What if people, supported by a more generous welfare state, decided to choose leisure over work? The system gave people a small incentive to work (by disregarding earnings at a low level before withdrawing benefits through a 'taper' as earning increased). But still that was not seen to be enough. So a

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 DIRECTOR OF POLICY  
 AND STRATEGY AT  
 THE RSA

whole architecture around 'conditionality' was established. Individuals had to show they were actively seeking work when without it and that they were seeking more work when they had too little. This was driven by political anxiety around free-riders but also, if a means-tested system is in place, the less people earn, the more it costs. So it pays, in theory if not in practice, to spend a few billion on coercing people into more work.

Now, we have a system that combines means-testing and coercion. This is called tax credits and will soon become the universal credit introduced by work and pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith. The sanctioning state has, in quite an arbitrary manner, meant the sanctioning of benefit recipients at quite a rate – almost 20% of jobseeker's allowance claimants. HM Revenue & Customs generally secures the conviction of a couple of hundred tax evaders each year. These are law-breakers: sanctioned benefit claimants can simply be people who missed a Jobcentre Plus appointment because the bus didn't arrive.

Means-testing has been somewhat successful in reducing poverty for families (though not singletons) and does encourage people to get back to work quickly. The type of work doesn't matter to the system as long as you are in work. That you may quickly pop out of work again doesn't matter either as long as you quickly get back to finding work again. What this means is that one-third of society is locked in a merry-go-round of low paying, 'flexible' work, and periods of low hours or unemployment. Involuntary zero-hours contracts are emblematic of this system.







To return to the core question, what sort of life does our welfare system support? It is a system for a post-industrial world of a highly flexible, low productivity service sector. The dynamic of modern welfare supports jobs and work and elevates that above pretty much all else. We have a system that fits snugly with the economics and politics of the past 30 years – welfare at the sharp end. But does this fit with an ambitious and optimistic vision of the lives we could lead if the welfare state supported our creative potential? The RSA's recently published report on basic income, *Creative Citizen*, *Creative State*, argues that the current system is failing and a practical alternative could be available.

Basic income is a very simple and powerful form of welfare. Essentially, the RSA's model of basic income involves giving every adult around £3,700 a year with up to £4,200 for each child (on 2012-13 levels). A family of three with a child under the age of five would receive in the region of £11,000 a year. This replaces all tax credits, child benefits and personal tax allowances. When combined with the proposed 'national living wage', the RSA system aims to ensure that families on low pay at least match what their entitlements would be under universal credit. As a system, basic income has been criticised for failing to protect some families with single earners on low pay. The RSA's system is designed to address this weakness.

The overall cost would be somewhere in the region of 1% of GDP in addition to the current system of taxes and benefits. We argue this is affordable. The state will be reduced

to 36% of GDP by 2020 under the government's plans so 37% is hardly unimaginable or unachievable politically or fiscally. Expansion of the tax credit system in the 2000s cost in excess of 1% of GDP, while discretionary changes to personal allowances, corporation taxes, inheritance tax and fuel duty made by the current chancellor are well in excess of 1% of GDP, despite austerity. So the change is not unprecedented, by any means.

We must keep coming back to the question of what types of lives we want our welfare system to support. This is where basic income becomes powerful. Essentially, it is a bedrock on which to develop our future. It supports work, as all an individual pays on each extra pound they earn is tax and national insurance (32% on current rates). There is no means-tested taper that can remove up to, in effect, 80% of additional income as in the current system. So the incentives to work are strong. However, it also supports those who want to learn to improve their prospects. The choices are the individual's and do not have to be justified to an intrusive state bureaucracy (saving £5bn in the process). Basic income also provides some support for those who wish to set up a business or care for others. In other words, it is a basic building block of security on which to develop your ideas and potential. That is its power.

Importantly, basic income is a system that is adapted to the type of economy and society we are likely to see developing in the next few decades. Lloyd George and Beveridge's system was right for the industrial age. Gordon

## **“BASIC INCOME IS THE RIGHT SYSTEM FOR THE DIGITALLY CONNECTED AGE”**

Brown and Iain Duncan Smith’s welfare system was for the post-industrial age. Basic income is the right system for the digitally connected age. This implies a different economic and social imperative.

In a recent speech to the Trades Union Congress, the Bank of England’s chief economist Andrew Haldane outlined the risks facing today’s workforce. A number of deep trends are beginning to emerge. The very wealthiest are capturing an outsized share of income. Pay and productivity have separated, to the detriment of the median worker, and underemployment has become endemic. It is difficult to separate the cyclical from the structural but we may be seeing, in part, the impact of technology on workers.

From the current vantage point, there can be little certainty about the final impacts of change. Haldane, using a model developed by Carl Frey and Michael Osborne at the University of Oxford, forecasts that 35% of workers have a high chance of their work becoming automated and 28% face a medium chance. There have been some sensationalist predictions of tech-induced unemployment on the back of this type of data. The more likely scenario is mass underemployment. And indeed, 15% of workers are in work for which they hold a higher qualification than is required.

Fears about automation and work are not new. Consistently, over the history of capitalism, this cycle of anxiety has reemerged. There is a technological ‘lump of labour fallacy’ (that there are a set number of jobs and workers). We know, however, that the job market is dynamic. New types of work are emerging all the time, at the top and bottom end of the skills range. We can be sure that large numbers will have to adapt to technological change. Indeed, a recent report from the McKinsey Global Institute concludes: “Clearly, organizations and governments will need new ways of mitigating the human costs, including job losses and economic inequality, associated with the dislocation that takes place as companies separate activities that can be automated from the individuals who currently perform them.”

This is why the idea of a universal basic income has been receiving considerable attention in Silicon Valley.

The exponential rise of computing power is making rapid structural economic change and, consequently, labour market change highly likely. If median and low-paid workers continue to suffer they need a better platform. Basic income is the foundation of that platform, enabling people to retrain, set up a business and manage unforeseen changes in their working lives (without disincentivising work). It also ensures a healthier demand side of a future economy.

Alongside this technological shift we are also certain to see the expansion of the caring economy. As we age as a society, the responsibility for caring for elderly family members and neighbours will become more distributed. At least, we should hope that it does. This might require some intensive longer-term periods of care and short periods at short notice. Some of this will be through the private and public sector. But there will also be an expansion of volunteer and family carers. To care in this way may require stepping away from the labour market for periods of time. The last thing we would want in these circumstances is to justify ourselves to Jobcentre Plus. Basic income will provide support for the caring, sharing society. Again, it’s not the entire answer but it is a key building block.

At some point we are going to have to address the ‘lives we want to lead’ question in the context of a current welfare state that neither commands support nor is particularly effective. By way of comparison, the basic income-style system used in Alaska inspires widespread political support among its citizens. We will experience rapid technological change in the near future, albeit with uncertain impacts – one more reason to ensure a basic level of security. And as we age, we will want to establish different caring relationships with one another and need the flexibility to do so.

So why would the RSA propose such a significant break with the current welfare system? The answer is simple: if people are to pursue creative lives that make a contribution, basic income is peerless. A context of failing welfare and social and technological change make the imperative for change stronger. Basic income is a simple system that provides a basic platform on which people can pursue their lives. It underpins freedom and creativity.

Sometimes the status quo blinds us to real alternatives. Universal basic income is not only an alternative but a good one. The global conversation has begun in Finland, the Netherlands, the US, Germany and Switzerland. The RSA is already a voice in that debate. We hope you’ll add yours too. ■

## NEW FELLOWS

### AMJID KHAZIR



After forming Media Cultured in 2012, Amjid Khazir became a Fellow this year. “We look to tackle radicalisation, racism and anti-Muslim

hate by using film and media in schools and colleges, training teachers to deliver a message to counter the ideology and narrative of extremists in the classroom,” he says. “I think that ties with how the RSA looks to develop initiatives in matters of engagement and within wider society.”

The motivation for Amjid’s work arose from tragic circumstances: his uncle died after being attacked in a racially provoked incident in 2011. “Terrorism in Paris can have repercussions in Scotland, where a takeaway is attacked, or in London where people might be abused on buses because of the way they look,” he says.

Media Cultured aims to provide the resources that combat misrepresentations in the media by training practitioners and delivering workshops to enhance social cohesion. “We’re getting amazing feedback, and with the government having passed a law to have the public sector do more to tackle extremism, it shows how important this work is,” says Amjid. “I want to tackle the causes of and pathways to extremism. I don’t want to look back and think I could have done more. It’s up to us to succeed.”

🐦 @AmjidKhazir

### LINA SRIVASTAVA



Based in New York, Lina Srivastava has worked with some of the world’s biggest social-impact organisations, from

Unesco to the World Bank, as well as documentary filmmakers looking to generate activity around their stories.

“My company is a social innovation design firm,” she explains. “We create a strategy for different projects through the use of culture, media, technology, arts and storytelling, resulting in multi-stakeholder engagement and action on human rights or development. We focus on an affected community, and we make their solutions – their voice – primary. This is community-centred narrative design, and more powerful than data or journalism alone.”

One successful project was the strategy created around Sundance Film Festival award winner *Who is Dayani Cristal?*, a documentary investigating deaths along the US-Mexican border. “We helped show the human impact and what this means for people, so it’s not solely about numbers or political direction, but the people affected by the policies in place,” she says.

Lina is hoping to take a similar strategy to the Mediterranean, focusing on the refugee and migrant crisis there. “If people want to help, then I would love to hear from them.”

🐦 @lksriv

### IN BRIEF

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

**Rebecca Trevalyan** is a community builder for Impact Hub Brixton, a shared workspace for social entrepreneurs. She has also co-launched the Library of Things, a network of community spaces lending out essential items such as DIY tools and kitchenware to people living nearby.

**Sally-Anne Greenfield** is CEO of Leeds Community Foundation. She is a passionate advocate of inspiring and enabling change in local communities, and believes that truly collaborative action comes from people from all walks of life pooling their resources to make a difference together.

**Dr Salman Waqar** is a clinical fellow for Health Education England. His achievements include founding a social enterprise for aspiring young artists. He hopes becoming an RSA Fellow will enable him to contribute to projects in communities he couldn’t previously access.

**Cath Denholm** is director of strategy for NHS Health Scotland, where she has been instrumental in leading the delivery of a new strategy aimed at reducing health inequalities. She is interested in connecting more with thinkers and policy shapers across fields that will influence the social future.

## YOUR FELLOWSHIP: ENGAGE WITH THE RSA IN FOUR MAIN WAYS

**1 Connect online:** Search for Fellows online at our brand new website. Visit [www.thersa.org/new-website](http://www.thersa.org/new-website) for details of how to login. You can also follow us on Twitter @theRSAorg, join the Fellows’ LinkedIn group and follow our blog at [www.thersa.org/blogs](http://www.thersa.org/blogs)

**2 Meet other Fellows:** Fellowship events and network meetings take place across the UK and are an excellent way to meet other Fellows. Visit our website to find an event in your area.

**3 Share your skills:** Login to the website to update your Fellowship profile and let other Fellows know about your skills, interests, expertise and availability.

**4 Grow your idea:** RSA Catalyst offers grants and crowdfunding support for Fellow-led new and early-stage projects that aim to tackle a social challenge. Visit the Project Support page on our website.

Explore these and further ways to get involved at [www.thersa.org](http://www.thersa.org)



## CUSTOM-MADE

Susan Silberberg's people-centred placemaking ('The common thread', Issue 3 2015) invites the additional consideration of how to sustain place. Diverse expressions of rural place on England's hills have inspired worldwide acclamation but their seemingly unchanging nature hides a vulnerability that reflects a lack of policy direction.

Multiple stakeholders with agendas for public and market goods now occupy centre stage, leaving agricultural communities marginalised. Cultural land shaping has its origins in the genesis of agriculture. Our hills are not just what we see, but what lies in our heads. Adapting to changing environmental, economic and social conditions created a cultural landscape of unique quality and diversity.

The key to agrarian land shaping has been custom, based on principles of antiquity, continuance, certainty and reason. Critically custom was local, giving it the force of law, and offering communities the opportunity to express their diversity in land management as "seemed to work best for them in a particular place at a particular time with flexibility to change." Custom is rooted in 'bottom up'.

Custom no longer "hath the force of law". Instead, it has been subsumed by top-down policies, formulaic thinking and distant decision-making. In two generations the process of land shaping has been turned on its head. A narrative of culture that was sustained through shaping its own future and being accountable for it is now at risk from an increasing focus on top-down management, whether by neglect or lack of understanding. The result is the loss of a sense of purpose and being valued. Regenerating genuine participation in shaping the future is vital to sustainability, and particularly in supporting succession by the next generation. What is the future for custom?

"If the land is to be used well, the people who use it must know it well, must know how to use it well, and must be able to afford to use it well." (Wendell Berry – farmer-poet)

– **Dr Andrew Humphries**



## DIGITAL DISTRUST

Jeremy Rifkin argues ('Market share', Issue 2 2015) that a fully digitised economy will bring extreme productivity and transform society for the better. Roger Taylor ('Patient power', Issue 2 2015) quotes Vinod Khosla's belief that the majority of physicians' work will be replaced by hardware and software.

Smart grids, driverless transport, the 'Internet of Things' – what could possibly go wrong? The IT industry is very young and software development is still a craft, rather than the mature engineering profession that it needs to be. Too few programmers have formal qualifications in computer science or software engineering, and most follow a test-and-fix approach that can never deliver the evidence that the software is safe or secure enough for critical applications.

As a result, software typically contains more than 10 errors per 1,000 lines of code, often more. When important systems contain several million lines of code, that is clearly unacceptable. It is one reason why software suppliers do not accept liability for the consequences of their errors, and why it is practically impossible to get adequate insurance to cover the damage caused when one of these errors is exploited by a cybercriminal.

At present, software vendors sell substandard products with impunity. The profits flow to those quickest to market and the consequences of poor engineering are suffered by their customers and by society. Until this market failure is corrected, it would be foolish to put even more trust in software.

– **Martyn Thomas CBE FREng FRSA, Livery Company Professor of IT at Gresham College**

Please send us your thoughts on the *RSA Journal* by emailing [editor@rsa.org.uk](mailto:editor@rsa.org.uk) or writing to: Editor, *RSA Journal*, Wardour, 5th Floor, Drury House, 34–43 Russell Street, London WC2B 5HA.

## COMMERCE WITH A CONSCIENCE

20 October 2015



**James Timpson** proposes a new approach to retail management that empowers individuals

My great, great, great grandfather started opening up Timpson shops in Salford and in 1903 these started repairing shoes. My experience of this work started in my gap year when I was sent to run the London shops. Every one tripled its turnover because I was the boss's son and could break all the rules: I could order whatever stock I wanted, do deals, change the displays, and keep the shops open for longer. I thought, if I can do this, why can't everybody?

When I came back after university I really started to think about what sort of culture I wanted to work in. I wanted to run the business by treating everybody as an equal and have a long-term view. The people who serve customers are the kings and queens of the business. They can do whatever they want to serve customers the way they see fit. They can charge whatever they like, order whatever stock they want and do displays however they wish. Everybody else's job is to let them get on with it.

I had some big battles to change the culture, especially at what was then called head office. Twenty years on, this upside-down management is the only way to run the business. We do not have an HR department but a colleague support team; its job is not to tell anybody what to do but to support our area teams. We know our people and if someone has a problem, it's normally from outside work. Our job is to try and help them, not hit them with a letter from HR.

We have only two rules: put the money in the till and act the part (by turning up on time, being nice, kind and polite and so on). We have a simple way of recruiting that is all about personality. We want wonderful people but also need to look after them. If you work for us, you get your birthday off as an extra day's leave. We offer colleague loans. If you get married, we provide you with a wedding car and a

**"I AM INTERESTED IN THE CURRENT AGENDA ABOUT CREATING NEW KINDS OF PRISON"**



driver and you get an extra week off and flowers. We have a scheme called Dreams Come True and every week do things for colleagues to help them outside work, because we know what a difference it makes to them when they are in work.

People may think our organisation is kind and we are lovely to everybody, when actually we are commercial and strict on the quality of the people we have in the business. Everybody knows that there are some who aren't good enough or who undermine the culture.

So while we have managed to create a culture where people do feel comfortable and part of a family, we are rigorous on the people side of things. Every business and organisation needs a drug that makes people go to work in the morning and work really hard. For us, it is commission. We set a sales target each week and anything over that target, our colleagues get 15% with no cap. We have not changed the formula in 20 years.

Lots of companies have a CSR department that is not really taken seriously. I don't think that approach has a future; companies need an ethos running all the way through and to do that you need to engage with your community. Now, 10% of all of our colleagues are ex-offenders and they are some of the best people we have. They stay longer, are more loyal, more honest and they take more money. As a commercial leader of the business, that's exactly what I'm looking for.

I am interested in the current agenda about creating new kinds of prison. Even politicians recognise that we cannot keep going the way we are, where about half of those leaving prison come back in again within a year and hardly any find work. We have a health service that makes us better, an education system that teaches us and a defence service that keeps us safe. We need a prison system that can be a place of enlightenment and, where you have an excellent governor, this can happen.

I'm hoping that the future will see fewer, better prisons and that those people who leave prison find more companies that are fortunate to have them serving customers every day of the week. ■

## RSA MAKERS SUMMIT

2 December 2015



**Tim Jackson** argues that the heart of the maker movement is in creating meaning

Prosperity transcends material concerns. It isn't just about stuff or subsistence or nutrition or shelter. Actually, there's a really important part of the human condition that is about participation in society, about having a rightful place, having something good to do, and leaving something good behind; having a sense of meaning and purpose.

The one thing that really strikes me about 'making' is how profoundly satisfying it is, from all sorts of perspectives. Because you are contributing something in a very tangible sense to society. You're contributing with your creativity, you're doing it through your ingenuity and you're using everything from keratin to synthesised materials in very, very clever ways.

My father worked for Philips for all of his life, making electronic things, working out how to make them and getting immense satisfaction out of solving making challenges. When he read *Prosperity without Growth*, where I was saying all these things, talking about the linear throughput of material stuff and how we had to redesign our economies, he said, "Well, I'm going to have to start again really," and I said, "Dad, it's too late for that." But there is a point to his critique of the book. There is a lot of not just satisfaction but ambition in the ingenuity used to recreate our world through materials.

My son is an archetypal hippy survivalist – he came from the 1970s somehow. He loves the idea that we can be self-sufficient, that we can be out there in the wild, that we don't need these massive oppressive structures. We don't even need money in his world. We need the creativity of our own handiwork to provide for ourselves in a sustainable way without screwing everything up. For him, it's that simple. And so that absorption of our ingenuity in material tasks to

**“MAKING IS SATISFYING  
BECAUSE YOU ARE  
CONTRIBUTING SOMETHING  
TANGIBLE TO SOCIETY”**



create our world is an incredibly important one. For me, in the middle, I want to emphasise that one thing: it is about meaning. Is there a sweet spot with the maker movement in sustainability? I think maybe there is. Is there a sweet spot of what we might call 'good' work – work that doesn't destroy the environment, that provides things and services that people need, and that is immensely satisfying? If there is, it probably sits right in the maker movement.

My one encouragement is that we shouldn't just think about making things or money, we should think about making community, making whole, making connected, making meaning. ■

### MORE FROM THE EVENTS PROGRAMME

Renowned naturalist **Sir David Attenborough** and explorer and conservationist **Tim Flannery** championed the natural world, and ask what can be done about climate change; economist **Frances Coppola** made the case for a universal basic income; internationally acclaimed fashion designer and educationalist **Betty Jackson RDI** looked at how craft and technology drive innovation; **Robert Shiller**, Nobel Prize-winning economist, explained what needs to be done so that markets help rather than harm us; a panel of healthcare experts including **Sunny Dhadley** and **Mark Moody** discussed how to meet the challenges currently facing the recovery sector; education experts including **Laura McInerney** and **Marcus Bell** investigated questions around tuition fees and teacher training; and clinical lecturer and co-founder of social enterprise Peek **Andrew Bastawrous** extolled the virtues of digital healthcare reaching people in remote areas. For highlights of forthcoming events, **see page 9**

*These highlights are just a small selection of recent RSA events. All of these, and many more, are available as videos on our popular YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/user/theRSAorg](http://www.youtube.com/user/theRSAorg)*

*Full national and regional events listings are available at [www.thersa.org/events](http://www.thersa.org/events)*

D I S E N G A G E M E N T

*The customer's always right, they say, but what happens when organisations take customer service too far?*

*By Frank Hore and David Low*

Effectively engaging employees and focusing on the customer are contemporary mantras in most organisations, be they private or public. But sometimes senior management's efforts to engage prove inadequate and what looks like customer focus is a symptom that all is far from well.

What happens then, when senior managers are out of touch with their workforce, when the need for change fails to convince, and when managers continue to drive customer focus without fully grasping what it means?

In short, when employers fall short of employees' expectations in this respect, emotions can become driven by an acute sense of futility, uncertainty and injustice. Some people will try to send messages to senior management, using what limited avenues are open, to get them to see reason.

Failing that, they may find themselves recalibrating their customer focus and the results can be startling as well as darkly comic. We remember taking a domestic flight, shortly after a certain airline had adopted a new no hot food on short-haul journeys policy. Cabin crew slapped sandwiches down in front of us, saying: "Terrible, isn't it? Management decided our costs were too high, so this is all you get. I expect you'll want to complain? We'll be around in a minute, with complaint forms..."

As morale dives, employees – cut off from the people driving the organisation's strategy – can become convinced that they are heading in the wrong direction. Passive aggression can begin to rule, accompanied by a collective rolling of eyes and a reluctant compliance: 'If that's the way they want it, we'll play along and watch the place collapse.' Further down the road lurks whistle blowing and sabotage, last-ditch efforts, in their eyes, to put the business back on course.

Indeed, a disturbing form of 'changing sides' can take place; where the employee adopts the behaviours of the customer. In one instance, we saw a central support function aping the behaviours of its internal clients. There, employees had gone further than taking the side of customers;

they had *become* the customer. They worked in a planning department, which had started out with a mature focus on governance and internal efficiencies, with the objectivity and balance this implied.

Unfortunately the department's customer was a strategic business unit with a 'salesy' culture; exactly what the company felt it needed at the sharp end. It was also typically entrepreneurial in rejecting structure and standardisation, with no time for help from the centre, controls and constraints.

It took three years for the transition to take effect, during which the planning function was under pressure, workloads had escalated, budgets had contracted and the space at managers' disposal to manage shrank dramatically. People's self-esteem took a knock as professional standards declined; collectively, the team felt they were on a hiding to nothing and were sure the time was coming when they would be found wanting.

By aping the entrepreneur, the planners focused on the short term and the immediate, pragmatic fix, losing the ability to stand back and appraise situations dispassionately and give their internal customers the input they needed. Not surprisingly, things went from bad to worse.

Under pressure, they had seen the hopelessness of their condition and, by way of defence, unknowingly looked for a different persona, a different identity and even a different purpose to keep them safe. They fell upon a set of behaviours which mirrored that which had brought their clients success and approval, to the detriment of both. This phenomenon has been seen in the health sector, in trauma units (or similar) where health workers under pressure see themselves failing to meet their own professional standards and pick up the behaviours of their patients.

This is a condition typically brought about by pressure to produce results without adequate resources, and where employees feel they cannot engage meaningfully with senior managers. Of course, miracles do happen even when people are constrained by slim budgets, but critically, when all struggles are uphill and the stakes are high, managers who neglect staff engagement can see those very people lose sight of their core purpose and start to behave like the customers they are there to help. ■

FRANK HORE AND DAVID LOW ARE CO-FOUNDERS OF THE SERVICE MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP, A CONSULTANCY THAT ADDRESSES STRATEGIC AND ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES IN THE SERVICE SECTOR

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