



When people come together, the possibilities are endless

In 1754, the RSA was founded by a group of like-minded individuals in one of Covent Garden's vibrant coffeehouses. In that spirit, we are proud to welcome you to Rawthmells, our 21st century enlightenment coffeehouse. What could you achieve today?

Find out more www.thersa.org/coffeehouse



RSA
JOURNAL

21st century enlightenment

Issue 3 2018

21st century enlightenment

Matthew Taylor on refreshing the RSA's mission

Henry Tam sets forth his idea for a modern-day Great Reform Act

Trine Flockhart explores the changing international order and three alternative futures

Patron of the Society

HM The Queen

President

HRH The Princess Royal

Board of Trustees

Chair

Tim Eyles

Deputy chair

Peter Fell

Treasurers

Sarah Ebanja

Stephen Gleadle

Ian Coleman

Jan Portillo

Kully Thiarai

Philippa Wilson

Rod Hyde

Saleh Saeed OBE

Sue Siddall

Tanya Hine OBE

Executive

Chief executive

Matthew Taylor

Director of external affairs

Nina Bolognesi

Director of innovation and development

Rowan Conway

Chief operating officer

Carol Jackson

Director of the Action and Research Centre

Anthony Painter

Director of Fellowship

Oliver Reichardt

RSA (The Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce),

8 John Adam Street,

London WC2N 6EZ

Tel +44 (0)20 7930 5115

www.thersa.org

Registered as a charity in England

and Wales, no. 212424 and in

Scotland no. SC037784

RSA Journal, Volume CLXIV

No. 5575, Issue 3 2018

ISSN: 0958-0433

RSA Journal

Editor

Jane Douglas & Milena Bellow

(editor@rsa.org.uk)

Creative director

Ben Barrett

Senior designer

Johan Shufiyani

Publisher

Emma Fisher

Production director

Angela Derbyshire

Production manager

Jack Morgan

Managing director, Wardour

Claire Oldfield

CEO, Wardour

Martin MacConnoil

Commissioning editor

Rachel O'Brien

Distribution

Ann Gutowski

The RSA Journal is published

for the RSA by Wardour,

5th Floor, Drury House,

34-43 Russell Street,

London WC2B 5HA

Tel +44 (0)20 7010 0999

www.wardour.co.uk



The RSA Journal is printed on 100% recycled paper, which is Forest Stewardship Council certified and Carbon Balanced.

Thematic Councillors

Creative Learning and Development

Lucy Griffiths

Chris McLean

Economy, Enterprise and Manufacturing

Jan Floyd-Douglass

Ann Thorpe

Public Services and Communities

Claire Haigh

Brian McLeish

Area Councillors

Central

Peter Clitheroe

Jay Singh-Sohal

Rachel Sharpe

Ireland

Dr Kieran McGeown

Suzanne Lyle

London

Bhavani Esapathi

Kuki Taylor

Ann Longley

North

Sharon Jandu

Pamela Ball

Maurice Ward

Scotland

Neil McLennan

Lesley Martin

South East

Caroline Clark

Don McLaverty

Jim Zalles

South West

Stephen Horscroft

Nick Parker

Michelle Preston

Wales

Leonie Ramondt

Vacant

International Affiliate Chairs

Australia and New Zealand

Mark Strachan

United States of America

Lolita Jackson

Note that Rod Hyde and Lorna Prescott remain Chair and Deputy Chair respectively of the Fellowship Council until the incoming Council appoints new representatives in the new year.

RSA House can host private dinners, meetings, parties and more, for groups of up to 220, catered by our in-house partner, CH&Co.



The team look forward to welcoming you.



© The RSA. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part prohibited without prior permission of the RSA. The RSA and Wardour accept no responsibility for the views expressed by contributors to the RSA Journal, or for unsolicited manuscripts, photographs or illustrations, or for errors in articles or advertisements in the RSA Journal. The views expressed in the RSA Journal are not necessarily those held by the RSA or its Trustees. For more information about how we use your personal data, visit www.thersa.org/privacy-policy.

To book your event contact us on **020 7451 6855** or email house@rsa.org.uk

www.thersa.org/house



Tim Eyles



“As we evolve, we must continuously strive to increase the impact of our work”

It is my honour to take over from Vikki Heywood as Chair of the Board and – on behalf of the RSA, its Fellows and partners – I would like to thank her for handing over the Society in such an excellent position after her six years with us. A few weeks into my new role, I am already struck not only by the commitment of all the RSA staff and our Fellows to making an impact on wider social change, but also by their openness to confronting the challenges this brings.

I arrive at an exciting time. From ensuring the refurbished RSA House is as lively and open to as many people as possible, to sharpening the focus of our activities through which we try to define and measure progress, the RSA is going through a renewal. As we evolve, we must of course continuously strive to increase the impact of our work, including through strong partnerships and ensuring that our messaging is coherent to all our stakeholders.

This edition of *RSA Journal*, which – unusually – explores the RSA itself, is one part of this process. As Matthew Taylor argues, in articulating our vision of a 21st century enlightenment and in addressing today’s tumultuous social, economic and political environment, we should never lose sight of the RSA’s unique and crucial role of enabling Fellows and an empowered citizenry to take action.

In his piece, Anthony Painter, head of our Action and Research Centre (ARC), explains the method of change we adopt. Progress, he argues, is not forged by heroic individuals, but by multitudes working together. This vision of citizen-powered change is reflected in our ARC projects, which increasingly use deliberative democracy to shape policy suggestions and work with the institutions they seek to influence. Key voices from our economy, education and public services teams offer their insights and more detail on our change aims and the practical ideas that are up for discussion, experimentation and democratic engagement.

Our RSA US Chair, Lolita Jackson, discusses how the Society is developing internationally, and Alexa Clay, who leads activities in America alongside Lolita, speaks to author Anand Giridharadas about the difficult questions social enterprises should be asking themselves.

But it is not only RSA voices that have contributed to this edition of the journal. In her article, Trine Flockhart writes about the international world order. We are in a time of significant change, and it is uncertain what the international order will look like even a few years hence. Flockhart puts forth her argument that we are heading for a multi-order world. Although this will be a turbulent transformation, she argues that if we improve and empower our institutional architecture we will be in a good position to respond.

Meanwhile, Henry Tam sets out his vision for a Great Reform Act for the 21st century, with which we can tackle the problems of rising authoritarianism and the post-truth world.

From the RSA’s earliest days in an Enlightenment-era coffeehouse, Fellows have always been the Society’s driving force. Our head of Fellowship, Oliver Reichardt, explores what this means today, from Fellows’ engagement in our events programme, to participation in ARC projects and networking events both around the world and online, using our new collaborative platform. RSA Catalyst, our funding programme, supports Fellows who are experimenting with how to turn their ideas into practical action. As our Engagement Manager, Amy Butterworth, explains, this is about much more than money.

As the RSA opens the doors of its new coffeehouse, Rawthmells, in London, we aim to spark a new progressive era. We invite you, wherever you are in the world, to take up the baton of enlightened change by turning the ideas developed and shared by the RSA into action. ■

Tim Eyles is the RSA’s new Chair

THE RSA EDITION

Long read



10 CITIZEN-POWERED PROGRESS

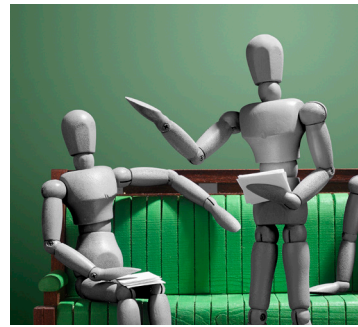
Matthew Taylor sets out the RSA's vision for a 21st century enlightenment that is truly universal



26 A MULTI-ORDER WORLD?

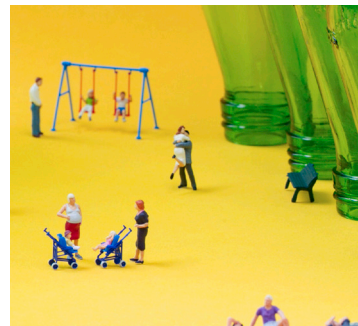
Trine Flockhart posits that there are three potential new world orders ahead of us; whichever wins out, it will be a time of great change

Medium read



16 DEMOCRACY ENDANGERED?

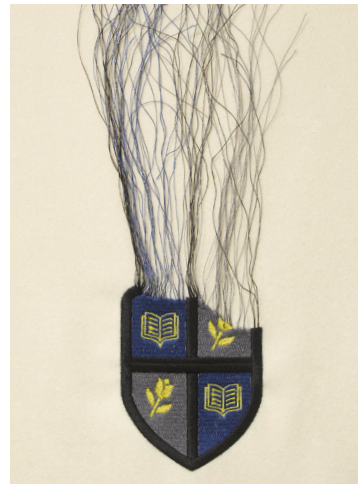
The creation of a Democracy Commission would be a step in the right direction, says Henry Tam



“Passing power downwards is vital, and it will only make a difference if it is accompanied by deep democratic reform”

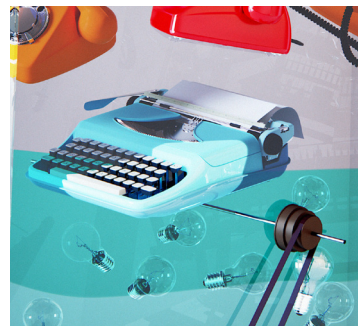
32 BRITAIN'S NEW GIANTS

Five Giants loom over the UK; Ed Cox sets out the RSA's ideas about how best to tackle them



38 SCHOOLS UNLEASHED

Julian Astle calls for urgent reform of the numbers-based education system



44 MACHINE LEARNING

We need not fear automation, if we pursue it on our own terms, say Benedict Delloit and Brhmie Balam

Short read

20 SOCIAL HEROES

It is the many, not the few, who bring about real, lasting change, says Anthony Painter



22 THE ENGINE OF CHANGE

Director of Fellowship Oliver Reichardt says Fellows have a great deal to contribute to 21st century enlightenment

“Whatever policies you do in your bubble, people need to understand them”

24 TRANSATLANTIC FELLOWSHIP

RSA US Chair Lolita Jackson chats with Rachel O'Brien

“Business thinking has become our culture in the US, including our culture of thinking about change”

36 FUEL FOR THOUGHT

Those who have power and want to make a difference should give it up rather than give back, Anand Giridharadas tells Alexa Clay

42 INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Leeanne Clark and Jamie Cooke write about RSA Scotland's partnership with the SCLD

52 FUNDING THE FUTURE

The RSA's Catalyst programme assists Fellows' social change projects



54 LAST WORD

Head of RSA Radio James Shield extols the virtues of podcasts

Periscope

- 1 Out of almost 45 million votes cast in the 2017 UK general election, there were just 28 alleged cases of someone voting with a false identity (page 19).
- 2 The RSA's talks have been viewed online over 200 million times (page 22).
- 3 After Donald Trump pulled the US out of the Paris Agreement, 300 American cities pledged to comply with its strictures anyway (page 24).
- 4 As the old global order transforms, three different perspectives are currently in competition: a multipolar future, a multi-partner future and a multi-order future (page 29).
- 5 The RSA's New Giants work found that environmental concerns were a major worry, whether in the form of climate change, air pollution or consumer culture more broadly (page 32).
- 6 Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities start school 15 months behind their peers (page 41).
- 7 The RSA Fellowship is getting more diverse and younger; 40% of new Fellows are female (page 42).
- 8 Predictions of a high-tech job revolution may be overstated. According to PwC, in 2013 just 6% of UK jobs were of a kind that did not exist in 1990 (page 44).
- 9 The RSA's Catalyst funding programme has distributed over £672,000 since its launch (page 52).
- 10 American radio journalist Terry Gross has conducted more than 13,000 interviews over the past 43 years (page 54).

Research



NEW ECONOMY LEAD

Asheem Singh will guide the team on some ambitious new projects

Asheem Singh, who previously led ACEVO, the UK's largest charity and social enterprise chiefs' network, has joined the RSA as its new Director of Economy. He has worked for several leading thinktanks and has authored or edited many reports on subjects from welfare to housing, social change and economic justice.

"I'm delighted to join the RSA's world-class team and to become part of the future of this august

institution. The RSA's unique blend of big ideas and practical action has never been more needed than now, as we take on the great unknowns of 2019: Brexit and beyond," said Asheem.

With this in mind, Asheem wants the RSA Economy team to include major new strands of inquiry into spreading ownership, wealth and opportunity in post-Brexit Britain. Projects under way include the Future Work Centre, which follows RSA Chief Executive Matthew

Taylor's employment review for the prime minister, and the Forum for Ethical AI, which is engaging the public on the ethical dimensions of artificial intelligence.

Asheem said: "The RSA Economy team will challenge conventional thinking on the issues that matter. In a time of grotesque wealth inequality and rising anger we will craft ambitious projects and pilots that deliver a true ownership economy, and work to rebuild our fractured system."

■ To find out more about the RSA Economy team's work, contact Asheem on asheem.singh@rsa.org.uk

Society

PITTSBURGH SUMMIT

RSA US hosted the Future of Work Summit in Pittsburgh in September, bringing together speakers such as the mayor of Pittsburgh, Bill Peduto, localism expert Bruce Katz and RSA Chief Executive Matthew Taylor to discuss how radical technologies are changing the nature of work, and the wider social impact.

The summit comprised five panels, including a conversation about the tech-driven revival of Pittsburgh's economy, which is increasingly centred on new technologies such as AI.

One of the central themes was the extent to which this shifting landscape may leave some behind. The summit focused on how to ensure everyone benefits from the city's transformation. This included discussions about increasing economic security and the potential role of a universal basic income, an area that the RSA has worked on. Bruce Katz spoke about the importance of 'new localism', citing Mayor Peduto's statement that Pittsburgh will stand by the global climate agreement regardless of national politics.

The Future of Work Summit portrayed a sense of optimism for the future of Pittsburgh and other post-industrial cities in this era of rapid technological change in the workplace.

■ To get involved in the RSA's Future of Work programme, contact fabian.wallace-stephens@rsa.org.uk

Photography by Paula Siqueira

RSA insights

£3bn

EU subsidies of £3bn are currently given to UK farmers, but Type 2 diabetes costs the NHS and employers £20bn. The UK is losing an opportunity to reverse the spiralling costs of diet-related ill-health, and connect food, farming and public health, says the first report from the RSA's Food, Farming and Countryside Commission (FFCC).

■ Visit www.thersa.org/ffcc to find out more.

7%

If diabetes were less prevalent in Michigan by 7%, the state would have swung to Clinton instead of Trump, according to *The Economist*. Wild speculation, or does physical pain have more influence on our politics than we admit? Listen to the discussion on *Polarised*, an RSA podcast.

■ Listen on Google Podcasts, Apple Podcasts, Spotify or at polarised.simplecast.fm

21%

Just 21% of Populus November survey respondents think Britain will be a better place to live by 2030. We clearly need a new approach to society's problems and a fresh injection of ideas. The essays in this edition of the journal offer a starting point for the debate and upcoming RSA events will welcome global thinkers, including Deanna Van Buren and Michael Sandel, to add their perspective.

■ Find out more: www.thersa.org/events/join-the-conversation

THE VERBATIM FORMULA



Only 6% of children in care went on to higher education in 2016. A practice research project, The Verbatim Formula, uses its 'portable testimony service' to share these young people's experiences and their expertise as a diagnostic for shared dialogue and organisational change.

■ Find out more at www.theverbatimformula.org.uk

Agenda

LEARNING ABOUT CULTURE



- SHARING**
to support colleagues and peers so that they improve and more participants benefit.
- SOURCING**
appropriate evidence to design projects for impact.
- LEARNING**
from evidence that can tell you accurately what you have done, the difference you have made and how you might improve.
- LEADING**
on project evaluation through collective ownership.

The RSA has launched the Cultural Learning Evidence Champions Network that connects 90 artists, educators, evaluators, cultural organisations and funders to encourage better use of evidence and evaluation in arts and cultural learning. The Network is part of the RSA's Learning About Culture programme. You can find out more in Rawthmells on 27 November and discover how the Network and the RSA can support you to be more evidence-rich.

■ To find out how to get involved, contact the team at culturallearning@rsa.org.uk

ARE YOU A PUBLIC ENTREPRENEUR?

Our public services have been battered by austerity and our systems are increasingly unfit for purpose. Yet across the country we see public entrepreneurs seeking to overcome these barriers. The RSA's Public Entrepreneurs programme will explore how these individuals bring innovative solutions to social challenges, with a focus on procurement and commissioning.

■ If this sounds like what you're trying to do, get in touch with Ian Burbidge, Associate Director of Public Services and Communities at the RSA, at ian.burbidge@rsa.org.uk

Fellowship

New Fellows

Ngwarati Mashonga is the Executive Director of Riders for Health International, a not-for-profit social enterprise that aims to provide reliable transport for healthcare services in rural Africa. Ngwarati specialises in setting up logistical and supply chain networks to help him achieve his vision of a world in which everyone can benefit from healthcare, no matter where they live.

Lauren Anders Brown is an award-winning independent filmmaker who specialises in making documentaries with a focus on global health and humanitarian issues. Lauren also makes fundraising and advocacy films for UN agencies, non-profit organisations and NGOs, and she is a member of the International Cinematographers Guild.

Make the most of your Fellowship

By connecting online and sharing your skills. Search the Fellowship at www.thersa.org/fellowship. While you're there, don't forget to update your own profile: www.thersa.org/my-rsa.

■ Follow us on Twitter @theRSAorg
Our Instagram is www.instagram.com/thersa.org
Join the Fellows' LinkedIn group www.linkedin.com/groups/3391

Meet other Fellows in person at Fellowship events and network meetings, which take place all over and are publicised on our website www.thersa.org/events.

Grow your idea through RSA Catalyst, which offers grants and crowdfunding for Fellow-led and new or early-stage projects with a social goal.

■ Find out more at our online Project Support page www.thersa.org/fellowship/project-support

Events

CATCH UP ON THE CONVERSATION

Unmissable online highlights from a packed public events season, selected by the curating team for your viewing pleasure!

No more #FOMO. Whether in New York, Nairobi or Nottingham, you need never miss out on another big thinker or world-changing idea.

■ Subscribe to our YouTube channel and 'like' us on Facebook to catch up on the latest content, direct from the RSA stage to a screen near you.

■ [youtube.com/theRSAorg](https://www.youtube.com/theRSAorg)
■ [facebook.com/rsaeventsofficial](https://www.facebook.com/rsaeventsofficial)



How can we bring people together and strengthen social connections? **Eric Klinenberg**, the Research Director for Barack Obama's \$1 billion Hurricane Sandy rebuilding programme, shows that properly designing and maintaining our 'social infrastructure' might be our best strategy for a more equal and united society.

■ Watch now: youtu.be/GKkmiQPthqU
■ #RSASociety



Young people get a bad press, but new RSA research reveals they are actually changing the world. Founding CEO of Reclaim **Ruth Ibegbuna** joins a panel to discuss the RSA's latest report on the gulf between public perceptions and the reality of young people's lives.

■ Watch now: youtu.be/3MnmC8MGZp4
■ #Teenagency



What is the future of the UK in Europe? First Minister of Scotland **Nicola Sturgeon** outlines the potential challenges and opportunities presented by the Brexit negotiations.

■ Watch now: youtu.be/_x3eyQ29sbU
■ #RSABrexit



How do we tackle issues like racism, identity and belonging in 21st century Britain? Barrister, broadcaster and author of the bestselling book *Brit(ish)*, **Afua Hirsch** offers a clear-eyed view at an exclusive RSA event at Wilderness Festival.

■ Watch now: <https://bit.ly/2EQMWLb>
■ #RSABritish

CITIZEN-POWERED PROGRESS

As the RSA celebrates the opening of its ambitious new space in John Adam Street, it is an opportunity to reflect on the Society's mission as a beacon of 21st century enlightenment

by Matthew Taylor
 @RSAMatthew

‘Why don’t more people understand what the RSA is?’ This is an issue we often discuss at the RSA. In fact, it sometimes feels like a rather touchy subject.

Unhelpfully for my colleagues and Trustees I am ambivalent. On the one hand, institutions, like individuals, tend to be unrealistic about how deeply they appear in anyone else’s thoughts. A few people may perhaps recall the last high-profile report the RSA published or know about the part of our output that relates directly to their interests. But why should they go out of their way to find out more? When I ran the thinktank the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) in the early 2000s, we seemed to be on Radio 4’s *Today* programme or featuring in *The Guardian* every other day, but a lot of our work still felt largely invisible.

On the other hand, what first attracted me to the RSA was the institution itself, and its combination of history, culture, products, methods and assets. When we undertook a strategic review some years ago the

single principle most discussed was ‘alignment’. How could the different parts of the RSA better reinforce each other to achieve greater impact?

The review came up with a mission statement for the RSA: ‘Enriching society through ideas and action.’ It sounds rather generic and anodyne so we do not quote it very often, but it is precisely this combination of ideas and action that is at the core of my belief that the power of the RSA lies not just in all the good things we create but in our very nature as an institution.

Looking back on that strategic review something else strikes me. It was rather self-serving. Of course, we genuflected to the usual list of big issues – from climate change and demography to austerity and democratic discontent – but the sense of urgency came primarily from our appetite to succeed. Today, for an organisation with our history, any consideration of our future must start by asking what we can do, not for ourselves, but to address the growing threat to enlightenment values. ▶

Matthew Taylor is the Chief Executive of the RSA



“If enlightenment values are in question then who better to lead the fightback than the RSA?”



21st century enlightenment

The RSA's better-known strapline is '21st century enlightenment'. The impressive renovation of our historic John Adam Street headquarters – featured in this edition of the journal – includes many references to our rich heritage. Not only was the RSA formed in the midst of the 18th century Enlightenment but we have also, from the start, been an organisation that has sought to embody those principles that have so transformed the world. A greater awareness of our past, prompted also by the residency at the RSA of Dr Anton Howes, whose new history of the Society will be published next year, reminds us of the many times across the centuries when the RSA has had a great impact. If enlightenment values are in question then who better to lead the fightback than the RSA? And how do we take this long view while also injecting a sense of urgency into what we do?

This does not lead us to be uncritical about the history of the enlightenment project or fail to recognise how it has been misused and twisted across the centuries. The original Enlightenment spoke of universalism but often perceived only privileged white men as full citizens. Many of its architects – the philosopher David Hume,

for example – were enthusiastic racists. Not only did its champions somehow manage to square their principles with the excesses of colonialism, but aspects of Enlightenment thought were ruthlessly reinterpreted by the murderous tyrants of the 20th century. Even today, those who claim to be enlightenment warriors can seem more obsessed with attacking the exaggerated excesses of identity politics than addressing the continued denial of justice and practical freedom to large numbers of their fellow citizens.

Moreover, as I argued in my annual lecture back in 2012, a 21st century version of the project needs to recognise how the core ideas of the original Enlightenment have become hollowed out. An important task for the RSA is to renew those ideas and seek to apply them to modern challenges.

Autonomy, universalism, humanism

There are many different accounts of the Enlightenment and some scholars – Jonathan Israel being perhaps the most controversial – have even argued that there were two Enlightenments, one much more radical than the other. My starting point comes from the Bulgarian-French historian and philosopher

Photography by Soia. Photo retouch by Zebra

Tzvetan Todorov, who argued that the three core, revolutionary principles of the Enlightenment were 'autonomy', 'universalism' and 'humanism'.

Autonomy is often equated with freedom. A famous argument about freedom, taken up by Isaiah Berlin among others, is whether it should be seen, as John Stuart Mill argued, primarily as 'freedom from' interference by the state or others, or whether it also requires 'freedom to', in the sense of the resources necessary for someone realistically to have any degree of autonomy in a modern society. I am in the latter camp but my lecture made a different point. Arguing, on the one hand, against the idea of *homo economicus* – the mythical perfectly informed utility-maximising individual and – on the other hand, against the acquisitive idea of freedom as ever-greater consumer choice, I posited that real autonomy could only come from self-awareness (the knowledge, for example, that we are inherently social beings) and self-control. In this I was strongly influenced by many RSA speakers – behavioural economists, social psychologists and neuroscientists – who have over the years described the mounting evidence of human cognitive limitations and inherent biases.

The enhancement of greater autonomy is an important theme in many RSA projects. We believe that schools should be about creating confident and ambitious learners, not just young people who know how to scrape through examinations. Surveys show that a sense of autonomy is an important part of job satisfaction and that its absence is one of the biggest causes of stress and illness. Our Future Work Centre is seeking to counter both determinism and widespread public pessimism about technological change by exploring sector by sector how machine learning, robotics and other advances can be used to improve the quality of jobs. And our thinking on economic insecurity aims to understand and counter the widespread sense that many people, and many places, lack agency; a feeling many see as a wellspring of populist sentiment.

The idea of 'universalism', the principle that every person should be afforded equal dignity and basic rights, underlies modern arguments for social justice. Over time, the idea of universal rights has become more socially inclusive and more substantively expansive, recently culminating in the commendable ambition of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In terms of social justice, recent decades have seen a narrowing of inequality between nations but a widening gap within them. As national inequality rose in the eighties and nineties some on the right rejected the very idea of social justice as a dangerous justification for state interference.

Today there is wider recognition of the scale of inequality and its malign effects but profound disagreement about what can and should be done about it.

For many RSA projects the question of how to address disadvantage and exclusion is central. It can be seen in the make-up of the Academy schools we have chosen to sponsor and the emphasis in our education work on closing the attainment gap. It is there in our research on how to strengthen communities and the public services they receive. It is core to our work on inclusive growth.

In my annual lecture I suggested that in the diverse communities of our shrinking, interdependent world the 21st century enlightenment idea of universalism should not only be about equality and entitlement but also connection and bonds. From tackling climate change to our response to the ongoing refugee crisis to our ability to cut through the morass of identity politics, a capacity to empathise with and respect people different to ourselves is vital. This is a subject we have often addressed in our public events. Our research team has explored barriers to social integration. Our championing of the arts is based in part on their capacity to promote empathy and build bridges. But this may be an area where our Fellows are ahead of us.

We rely on your generous annual donation but that can sometimes make the Fellowship feel exclusive. This may be why so often Fellows choose to develop initiatives that are about bringing people together in their localities and exploring what can be done to tackle exclusion. I am writing these words on a train on my way to a Fellow-led RSA Engage event in Leicester; its theme is 'diversity and inclusion'.

The last of Todorov's Enlightenment fundamentals is 'humanism'. This principle has two complementary parts. The first is the idea that it is up to citizens – not priests or royalty – to determine what is in their best interests. The second is the assumption that human progress can and should be measured above all else by an increase in aggregate human fulfilment.

The first idea gives rise to the unfolding story of democratic enfranchisement. Until very recently it looked like this would have a happy conclusion. Optimism reached a highpoint with the fall of the Berlin Wall and Francis Fukuyama's infamous announcement of the "end of history" with the ultimate triumph of liberal democracy. Since then, the failure of democratic governments to solve difficult issues – ranging from stagnant living standards to managing immigration, the rise of populism and growing disenchantment not just with government but with democratic politics – the successes of China and the aggression of Russia have

shattered that optimism. If the RSA events team were to decide to restrict our programme only to authors exploring the crisis of democracy we would not find ourselves short of speakers.

The idea of progress in human terms saw its philosophical expression in the utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham and his followers. Progress could be secured by the power of reason and the scope of science and technology to improve the world. And so indeed it has proven, as latter day enlightenment warriors, such as Steven Pinker, continuously assert. Why is it, they ask, that we are so loath to recognise that reason, invention, democracy and markets have led today's citizens to be healthier, longer living, better educated, more tolerant and peaceful than ever before? The only thing standing in the way of further progress is the credence given by a misguided citizenry to the rabble-rousing alarmism of politicians and the predilection of left-wing intellectuals to be sirens of crisis and oppression.

Determining a better future

Statistics support the assertion that we have never had it so good. But complacency is challenged by the past, present and future. To treat the totalitarian horrors of the 20th century as a mere bump in the upward road is as unconvincing as it is inhumane. Today, how can we celebrate our achievements as a species without acknowledging the terrible plight of the world's poorest, the damage we are doing to our planet, the scale of inequality in most nations and the emergence of new developed-world concerns ranging from the growth of mental illness to the parlous state of liberal democracy? Furthermore, while Pinker and his allies may view the growing pessimism of old world citizens as irrational, perhaps it is a symptom of a more profound loss of direction.

It is easy to confuse the fact that scientific discovery and economic growth constantly create new possibilities with the idea that in themselves they comprise human progress. One reason the RSA intersperses talks on design, education, technology and economy with more philosophical, even sometimes spiritual, reflection is that 21st century enlightenment must involve humanity finding richer ways to discuss and determine what a better future should mean. This need is heightened by the risk that growth will soon tip us into planetary disaster or that technology could run out of our control.

This may sound abstract but it is about how the world feels to us every day. The challenge of articulating practical utopias is exacerbated by the sense that we, as humans, are no longer in charge. For more and more citizens – including senior politicians

and company CEOs who may be seen to form the power elite – day-to-day reality involves trying to survive in systems of such complexity and flux that they are impossible to understand, let alone imagine being redesigned through human agency. In a world that continually spews out ever more commentary and opinion, has the relationship between our capacity to have ideas and effect change ever been more attenuated?

Action, not just thought

Which brings me to action. If I could only take one aphorism with me to a desert island it would be 'it is not hope that leads to action so much as action that leads to hope'. Finding a route to social progress is like trying to untangle a ball of wool. There is no harm in devising a detailed strategy and there are certainly tactics to avoid, but it is probably only by carefully tugging at the loose strands that we can make any progress.

Perhaps what most distinguishes the RSA from other thought leadership organisations is our emphasis on action. It is there in our model of change, based in a detailed analysis of why change so often fails. We call our approach 'think like a system, act like an entrepreneur'. It is there in the idea of 'partners in change', where our research and engagement seeks to help organisations whose values we share make greater impact. These range from a housing association in Rochdale wanting to offer local people better opportunities, to government departments seeking advice on public engagement and progressive employers wanting to use technology to create better work. And, of course, it is there in our Fellowship, a social movement of change-makers in whom we have steadily increased our investment of time, energy and resources over the past decade.

Perhaps it is my age but I find different contexts have a strong impact on my state of mind. When I am around people whose instinct is to try to make a difference, such as RSA Fellows, who want to talk about initiatives, experiments and new conversations, I feel energised and hopeful. But when the topic is the difficulty of getting government to act, of reforming creaking national institutions, or persuading the political class to put the public interest ahead of personal survival or sectional advantage, the energy levels soon plummet.

The temptation is to abandon the latter world and live only in the former. But for society this will not work. What social innovators and entrepreneurs can achieve is in reality severely constrained by the environment in which they operate. In the RSA's own



“Perhaps what most distinguishes the RSA from other thought leadership organisations is our emphasis on action”

work on public entrepreneurship we have shown how potentially powerful innovations that could hasten profound change are often repelled by a 'system immune' response. As Jeremy Heimans and Henry Timms argue, understanding the difference between old power (hierarchical, exclusive, controlling) and new power (networked, inclusive, generative) is only useful if we can work out how to channel the energy and creativity of the latter towards the difficult and complex problems faced by the former. For example, we expect those in traditional positions of power to be held to public account, particularly in government; we see it as a positive and essential element of decision-making. Yet inflexible or punitive forms of accountability can contribute to a fear of failure and aversion to change. The solution is not to abandon the ideal of answering to the people but to reform the systems and norms of accountability so they are compatible with experimentation and innovation.

The RSA is an old establishment organisation proud of our enlightenment history. We value the trust and the networks we have built with decision-makers and our reputation for independence. But we

are also a kind of social movement brimming with the energy of impatient problem solvers and innovators. How can we help to reimagine and redesign social institutions, processes, norms and expectations so the power of the new can flow into and reinvigorate our isolated, unloved political system, our creaking, often dysfunctional institutions, and our polarised, distorted public discourse? And how do we do this as technological change generates new possibilities, dangers and dilemmas?

With a new Board Chairman and the opportunity to refresh our strategy, the mission of the 21st century RSA combines these two elements: first, a deep commitment to enlightenment values, not preserved in aspic but continuously interrogated and held up in the light of contemporary challenges; and second, an unerring focus on action to achieve the next stage on the journey of human growth and fulfilment. This may sound grandiose but look carefully and you will find it in the way we have refurbished our historic house, our best research projects, our most widely disseminated content, and the thoughtful endeavours of our nearly 30,000 Fellows. ■

DEMOCRACY ENDANGERED?

If democracy in the UK is to survive the rising tide of post-truth and authoritarianism, we need a Great Reform Act for the 21st century

by Henry Tam

🐦 @HenryBTam

The proverbial vultures are circling. Brexit has driven many in the UK to ask if leaving critical decisions affecting a country to a binary vote by people with insufficient grasp of the complexities involved is no better than a coin toss (or indeed worse, since how a coin lands cannot be affected by false and distorted information).

At the same time, almost a third of eligible voters in the UK have, in recent decades, routinely stayed away from the ballot box. Meanwhile, the electoral support won by far-right parties across Europe and, more recently, in Brazil, and the success of Donald Trump in the US suggests that vast numbers of people are better disposed towards autocratic leadership than the protection of human rights or democratic accountability. This trend has been confirmed in research cited by Roberto Foa and Yascha Mounk in their recent paper in the *Journal of Democracy*. Add to this the global rise of one-party China, and increasingly we hear that democracy's time is almost up.

However, democracy has always evolved in response to changing circumstances. Admittedly, it tends to do so slowly and only after vociferous and sustained demands. In Britain, after the progress secured by Magna Carta and De Monfort's parliament in the 13th century, it was not until after the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688 that more effective limits on how ruling powers would be exercised were set out in the Bill of Rights of 1689. When questions were raised about the system of representation itself, it took until 1832 before the Great Reform Act finally conceded that changes had to be made to electoral arrangements. Even then, it took nearly a further century before the incremental increases to the franchise finally encompassed all women and men in 1928.

As we approach the 2028 centenary of universal suffrage, it is time that the many concerns democratic theorists have been raising for decades are turned into

concerted calls for a new reform programme. To save democracy, a 21st century Great Reform Act will need to bring in changes in three key areas: political communication, the education of citizens and the regulation of electoral arrangements.

Responsible communication

First, instead of backing away from the work started by the Leveson Inquiry or meekly submitting to media manipulation in print or digital form, we need robust regulation and independent enforcement to deal with the propagation of falsehoods and misdirection. No democratic country allows the freedom of speech to become a licence to lie. In America, even the much flaunted injunction that "Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press", has always been interpreted by US lawmakers as being fully compatible with setting legal limits against irresponsible communication in the forms of incitement to lawlessness; obscenity; unauthorised disclosure of private information; false/misleading information; or damage to national security.

The UK's well-established judicial system is more than capable of ruling against a range of unacceptable communications; from individuals spreading malicious rumours about an innocent person, to companies deceiving the public with misleading advertising campaigns. But this power must now reach beyond the communications of the press and public to protect the functioning of democracy itself. For example, when false or misleading messages are circulated in the name of politics about the harm caused by immigrants, or the advantages of cutting back cooperation with other countries, they should be subject to not lower, but higher standards of public scrutiny.

This would involve developing an independent, publicly funded adjudication service that can act swiftly against attempts to mislead people on matters relating

Henry Tam
is author of
*Time to Save
Democracy*, and
former Head of
Civil Renewal at
the Home Office

to public policy. It should be presided over by judges, given effective investigative powers and backed by penalties. We would then be in a stronger position to deter political deception, especially if politicians knew they could be removed from office were they found to have committed legally defined acts of irresponsible communication in securing electoral support.

Some may try to get around this by hiding behind anonymous third-party campaigns, and claiming that they have nothing to do with the rumours and lies spread by others against their political opponents. This should be tackled by the 'repudiation' test. For example, if a candidate is benefiting from a smear campaign against a rival, orchestrated by some group supposedly acting of its own accord, the candidate can be asked to put on record if he or she repudiates the allegations as unfounded. If the candidate responds in a way that lends credence to rather than rejects claims that are maliciously fabricated, that could be grounds for conviction for political deception; penalties could then be served that may include loss of office.

Citizenship education

Second, the marginalisation of citizenship education must be reversed. The notion of teaching people how to behave as responsible democratic citizens has been reduced to a shallow school subject for which teachers receive neither sufficient guidance nor training. While the original intention of not overburdening teachers with instructions was admirable, it is now generally recognised that more specific contents and pedagogic techniques should be provided so all young people can learn not just about how government institutions work, but also what the implications of different proposed policies may be. Our young people should also be familiar with how to debunk political rhetoric and gimmicks, and what questions to pose about contrasting options that have been put forward, in order to secure outcomes that will benefit their communities and the country at large.

Beyond school, lifelong education should include cultivating all citizens' understanding of political processes, and it must be given the resources to do so. Many people are unaware of what different political parties have in store for them, or how they can access relevant information or deliberate constructively with public officials and their fellow citizens in order to gauge what they should support or avoid. We accepted that people should learn more about what is good or bad for their health, finances and the environment, even though certain organisations would prefer we did not, as they stand to profit from ignorance. While some politicians will similarly want to stand behind 'buyer beware' slogans and oppose the widening of political literacy, better adult education in democratic

skills and understanding is vital if people are to make proper use of their power as citizens.

Instead of confining the celebration of citizenship to one-off ceremonies, there should be regular events supported through local authorities that bring people together to share their thoughts on specific public policies, both with one another and with representatives from public bodies. There is a wealth of research and case studies that show how public bodies can function more effectively through well-designed deliberative and participatory public engagement. For it to be utilised, public officials and citizens need to be equipped with the skills and confidence to work together in defining and pursuing the common good. Such evidence-based education would do more to promote community cohesion and active citizenship than politicians pontificating about 'common values' that are either too vague to be meaningful or so arbitrary as to be aggravatingly divisive.

Beyond the affairs of government, citizenship education should also cover how to develop and sustain workplace democracy. For most people, their experiences of organisational decision-making are shaped by what happens at work. Autocratic management in conventional companies is inimical to democratic deliberations and the formulation of collective agreement. The advancement of workplace democracy is not only valuable because it will help increase people's ability to engage in strategic thinking and policy assessment, but also because members of worker-owned enterprises are far less likely to be subject to exploitation and job insecurity, and hence more able to engage with public policies.

Electoral regulation

Finally, the Electoral Commission should be radically revamped to become the Democracy Commission, a new body with the statutory authority to protect democratic arrangements from partisan tampering and put forward authentic improvement proposals. The government of the day could ask the Democracy Commission to review particular issues and come up with recommendations for parliament to consider, but it would no longer be able to change voting rules and procedures by its own executive power.

As things stand, the Electoral Commission's powers are very limited. For example, it advised all parties to abide by the agreed limits on campaign spending in the 2015 general election, but the Conservative government was nonetheless able to change the law, increase the limit by 23%, and go on to outspend other parties. When its spending still exceeded the raised limits, the Commission could do little more than fine the party a paltry £70,000 for its transgression. By contrast, the Democracy Commission would be empowered by law



“A 21st century Great Reform Act will need to bring in changes in three key areas: political communication, the education of citizens and the regulation of electoral arrangements”

to declare electoral victories void in proportion to the amount any party spent over the set limit.

Parallel with limits on campaign spending, action is needed to curb the power of private wealth to shape public policy. At present, corporate chiefs can buy influence by donating vast sums to politicians, giving them in-kind support such as office and communication services, offering them luxurious 'fact finding' missions around the world and hinting at lucrative assignments or non-executive directorships in the future. Instead of leaving the maintenance of probity to civil servants accountable to government ministers, it should be up to the Democracy Commission to set limits on what is permissible and enforce them with penalties that may include suspension or even removal from public office.

The Democracy Commission would also ensure that only fair and feasible proposals to change electoral arrangements are put to parliament. That would have prevented the government in 2014 from hastily bringing in a new, untested voter registration system, which experts warned against. Instead of seeking advice on how to proceed, the government accelerated the process. At the time, the Electoral Commission estimated almost two million people would drop off the electoral register as a result, comprising mainly the most disempowered in society, such as students, the poor and minority ethnic groups in inner cities. A similar problem is brewing with the government's proposal to introduce voter ID requirements. According to research by the Electoral Commission, out of almost 45 million votes cast in 2017, there were just 28 alleged cases of someone voting with a false identity. Yet to eliminate this 0.00006% of illegitimate voting, the government wants to impose requirements for photo IDs that are not possessed by around 7.5% of the electorate (about 3.5 million people), predominantly those who are poor and marginalised.

There are a range of other challenges that the Democracy Commission could help to address, including putting forward alternative electoral systems that may give a meaningful vote back to the 26 million voters who live in constituencies that are highly unlikely to go to another party at each election (almost 57% of the 650 parliamentary seats are considered safe in this sense). It could also play an important role in assessing how democracy is served by the setting of thresholds for a majority vote to count as valid. In the absence of an independent authority, the government has been able to impose a threshold on trade unions in the name of democracy so that, in cases where 'important public services' – such as the health, education, transport, border security and fire sectors – are involved, at least 40% of all those eligible to vote must back a strike before it can legally go ahead. The same government allowed the Brexit vote to count as irrevocable when only 37% of those eligible to vote gave it their backing.

There is considerable resistance to reforms of these kinds. So it is understandable that some argue we should just concentrate on encouraging people to register and vote. But if systemic deception is allowed to continue, ignorance of politics and public policies persists, and electoral arrangements are left to unscrupulous manipulation, we could simply end up with more people voting for what would be damaging for them, their communities and the country.

The reforms outlined here may not deliver all the improvements that are needed, since by its nature democracy has to adapt and evolve continuously. They will, however, go a long way towards revitalising democratic governance and enabling us to steer public policy more in line with informed public understanding. The precise contents for the proposed reform bill will need to be explored, debated and refined. That process should begin now. ■

SOCIAL HEROES

We often look to brave individuals to lead the way, but history shows that it is through large movements that change truly comes about

by Anthony Painter

🐦 @anthonypainter

Hidden in the story of human progress lie acts of extraordinary collective leadership. Struggles are hard won but often, over time, the toil and bravery of the many fades from view, leaving a residue of heroic figures, great discoveries, and battles lost and won. Enlightenment values, of freedom, humanism and universalism, advance when this collective leadership is visible, and recede when it is absent. In times of confusion, much like our current era of geopolitical, cultural, economic and ecological tumult, we hope for saviour figures. Yet, the historical record suggests, it is movements rather than individuals that shift history.

To take just one historical example, when we think of the abolition of the slave trade, we immediately remember William Wilberforce, the campaigning MP who led the parliamentary movement towards abolition. Few will recall Thomas Clarkson, who effectively devoted his life to ending the slave trade. Even fewer would cite Olaudah Equiano, the former slave who bought his freedom and then wrote an autobiography to tell the tale to rapt audiences across the country. It was partly in the civic and intellectual cauldron of late 18th century London, in its printing shops and coffeehouses (from which the RSA also sprung into life), that radical reform was fomented.

Even less is known of the enormous movement behind abolitionism – of trade and then slavery in British colonies. Mary Birkett, the poet, Hannah More, the poet-writer, and Mary Wollstonecraft were all prominent in the early movement. Sailors and doctors who travelled on slave ships detailed the horrors of the trade, leading to opinion-swaying pictorial portrayals of inhumane conditions. Josiah Wedgwood produced a famous medallion with the slogan: “Am I not a man and a brother?”

By the 1820s, movement leaders such as Elizabeth Heyrick were also asking: “Am I not a woman and a sister?” Heyrick would publish the case for immediate rather than gradual abolition, from which Wilberforce recoiled. The women’s sections of the abolitionist

movement were the most active, intellectually robust and politically demanding. The link between the attitudes that sanctioned slavery and the oppression of women and working people back home did not go unnoticed. Abolition would have been unimaginable in 1833 without the work of Heyrick – who did not quite live to see abolition – and many others. And, of course, there was the role of the slaves themselves. Resistance had become more frequent. The riots in the Caribbean created both an economic cost and a shock to the system, catalysing change within the movement.

Enlightened change contains critical components, pursued relentlessly over time by multitudes. Without such movements, reform can be superficial, fleeting and incomplete. Abolitionist movements combined forceful aims, the diligent gathering of evidence – not just of an oppressive present but a different possible future – and the spread of ideas and knowledge that could lead to real change. Of note was the ability of the movement to build smart alliances, sometimes with plantation owners themselves. History is not always made by heroes and reform may involve a role for those we disapprove of. An early member of the Society of Arts and plantation owner, Joshua Steele, more ameliorist than abolitionist, experimented with more humane treatment of slaves, and no slave purchases from trading ships, demonstrating the economic inefficiencies of the slave trade in the process. Ideas were combined with interests, pressure and experimentation, and disseminated at scale. So it was that history was shifted.

At the RSA, we seek ideas to open up the possibility of experimentation, alongside engaging civic networks to spread ideas and practice; our Fellowship being one such crucial network. This journal includes articles (based on an essay collection to be published in November) by leading voices in our work on economy, education and public services. Together, they show that we see our role as spotting good ideas, developing them with others, testing them in partnership and working with our network of Fellows



“Good ideas, tested, shared and taken up by a broad range of people, can illuminate potential new paths”

and wider civic and practitioner networks to spread and develop them further.

We cannot promise anything as dramatic as the abolition of slavery, but what we can do is learn from the historical record of progressive change. Good ideas, tested, shared and taken up by a broad range of people, can illuminate potential new paths and create the pressure needed to meet some of the challenges we face, whether locally, nationally or beyond. No organisation can do this alone, nor should they even try. The RSA’s vision of a 21st century enlightenment, its mission of citizen-powered change that turns ideas into action, can contribute in the future as it has in its past.

The pieces included in this edition of *RSA Journal* do not claim to be exhaustive in terms of the challenges we face. They do not start off from the standpoint that we have all the answers; we do not. But what they seek to do is move beyond analysis alone to propose real changes that are up for discussion, experimentation and democratic engagement.

This speaks to the method of change we have been developing in the RSA’s Action and Research Centre. Research-backed ideas are just the start. We also seek to develop an understanding of change and bring a wide array of voices into our work. It is in this spirit that we took the insights developed in our report *The New Digital Learning Age* and that we worked with dozens of partners from business, schools, universities, culture

and the arts, community groups and local authorities in Brighton, Plymouth and Greater Manchester to develop our Cities of Learning programme. Pilots will follow in 2019. Likewise, our Citizens’ Economic Council was so successful in breaking down the barriers between economic experts and citizens that the Bank of England took up the idea of citizen deliberation. The Future Work Centre blends cutting-edge research with sectoral co-design to help widen pathways to good work. And, rather than sitting in oak-panelled rooms, the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission has been out on the road and working with communities to support them in imagining a smaller environmental footprint, a healthier population and thriving rural communities.

To paraphrase cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead, never doubt that a movement of people, imbued with a sense of mission, knowledge, the willingness to experiment and share ideas and practice can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. We face some daunting challenges, including climate change, technological transformation, an ageing society, economic insecurity and inequality, and a democracy and society that appears deeply divided. A commitment to change – among many – now seems like a prerequisite for the future success of our modern societies. A 21st century enlightenment, in its purest form, will be a mass partnership that can bring about lasting change. ■

THE ENGINE OF CHANGE

How is the Fellowship part of 21st century enlightenment?

by Oliver Reichardt

A commitment to Enlightenment values and an unerring focus on action are the cornerstones of the RSA's mission today, as our Chief Executive Matthew Taylor sets out in his essay (see page 10). As the nature of the RSA and its mission have evolved down the years, one element has remained constant: the importance of the Fellowship.

Debates in our Great Room are hugely popular today, just as they were 244 years ago when it first opened. The original RSA Journal contained virtually verbatim reports of lectures. Our modern day equivalent is the streaming of our talks online, and with over 200 million views, there is still clearly a thirst for debate. Equally important are the many other platforms for discussion that the RSA fosters, such as our local and thematic networks, events, website and this journal. We receive continual feedback from Fellows who say the connections they have made through the RSA have been instrumental in their lives, whether through nourishing conversation or through partnerships that have developed as a result. Through these conversations and partnerships, the RSA's values are amplified.

The original Enlightenment was not only about debate; it was also anchored in scientific discoveries and technological innovation. The RSA of the 18th century embodied this by spreading practical solutions to the challenges of the day. Our main tools to this end were the prizes the Society issued for the best ideas, which were then promoted to ensure they were put into use. A special feature of the RSA prizes was that the winner could not patent their idea. From the beginning we were about public gain, not private. About not just ideas but ensuring they were taken up and put into practice to benefit as many people as possible.

This carries through to the RSA of today. All our research projects aim to have a practical element, and we are supporting more Fellows than ever before with their projects and social enterprises. As just one example, we are supporting a Fellow who aims to set up a network of co-operative regional banks.

Not only will the banks support their customers rather than maximising shareholder profit, they will also ensure money flows back into the local economy. Although undoubtedly challenging, this is the kind of bold, practical initiative that we are particularly keen to support.

Another key element of the original RSA, a belief that a better world is possible, is perhaps the least tangible, but most important, aspect of the institution's values, and one that has remained unchanged to this day. Without such a belief, the worth of all our work becomes questionable. We undertook research last year on the values RSA Fellows hold. The results showed that the vast majority have a very similar set of principles. So aligned were they that, although the interests of Fellows are hugely varied, we can say that what unites us as a Fellowship is our shared values. These include a strong desire for fairness and justice; cautious optimism about the future; a practical, inquiring mindset that makes connections and tries to understand the bigger picture; self-assurance with a sense of self-agency; and a positive attitude to change, if it seems worthwhile. These are just the kinds of values that our founder William Shipley, the other 11 original members of the Society, and Fellows through the ages would also have held.

We find ourselves in an uncertain, challenging world where the old systems no longer seem capable of guiding us on our way. There is more need than ever for a new age of enlightenment thinking, and an organisation such as the RSA, with its Fellowship of like-minded individuals, can contribute a great deal to the wider discussion and the development of pragmatic solutions. With the shared goal of bringing about 21st century enlightenment, we should be at the forefront of demonstrating how debate and pragmatic optimism can translate into a better future.

Our Fellows have already produced many projects that have effected change, and I believe there is much more that, together, we can achieve. It is why we are



Illustrations by Ben Mimers

committed to supporting more Fellows' projects that can have societal-wide change; it is why we have invested in Rawthmells, our enlightenment coffeehouse with its focus on discussion and debate; and it is why we have partnered with Wazoku, an online platform where Fellows can collaborate on projects and ideas.

Equally important, the number of Fellows continues to grow, and is now nearing 30,000. By expanding our group of like-minded people we can gain in strength to ensure those changes we want to bring about are taken up and implemented. We can bring about the 21st century enlightenment we all want to see. ■



TRANSATLANTIC FELLOWSHIP

RSA US Chair Lolita Jackson speaks to Rachel O'Brien about city resilience and the RSA's strengths and global reach

Rachel O'Brien: You survived two terrorist attacks, one in 1993 and 9/11. You've talked about how those experiences helped you to reset what you call your inner compass?

Lolita Jackson: I thought I was going to be a managing director in finance by the age of 40. After going through that twice I realised I wasn't really motivated by those things. I was making people a lot of money, but I wanted to make a practical difference to the world around me. For example, I worked on a subway line in New York. We weren't building the subway, as it was a state project, but the city needed someone mitigating the after-effects of the construction. Now I ride that subway every day and that's a lasting legacy. That is what's important.

O'Brien: You have talked about the centrality of relationships in tackling the big challenges New York faces. What are those challenges and how do those relationships make an impact?

Jackson: We need to be able to house everyone who wants and needs to live here, and ensure a quality of life where people can have decent work and the skills needed. The work I do day-to-day is about climate change: making sure we breathe healthy air, continue to drink clean water and keep the things that are working, while stemming some of the storm clouds that could be coming if we don't take action. A lot of people in Europe don't realise that many cities and states in the US have a great deal of autonomy. The role of cities in driving this change came into stark

relief when I was in Scotland speaking to 400 people at the European Climate Adaptation Conference the day Trump pulled out of the Paris Agreement. In response, 300 cities around the US said 'we're still doing it anyway'. Our mayor signed an executive order saying all city agencies had to go as far as the Paris Agreement strictures in their agency practice.

I've had four very different jobs since joining the mayor's office. One thread that links them is the importance of communication and relationships. This may be talking to people about how we can mitigate a bad construction project. Right after Hurricane Sandy, it was about responding to people who had lost their homes or even family members. Now my role is to make sure that people understand the policies New York is adopting and the way in which climate change affects people's lives. Whatever policies you do in your bubble, people need to understand them.

O'Brien: You're a busy woman. Why did you agree to be Chair of the RSA US? We're delighted you have, but what motivated you?

Jackson: I tend to be a person that's elected to help organisations shift and change direction. The benefit for me is connectivity, being able to link to the broader world of ideas both in my own field and in areas relatively new to me. For example, I am interested in the changing world of work and universal basic income, both things I knew almost nothing about before becoming the RSA's US Chair. I've been able to learn how cities in the US are considering those ideas and the RSA in the UK is helping to propagate this through research and RSA Fellows. We need to do more things that are global and not just London-centric if we want to truly be a global 21st century organisation.

O'Brien: In your role in the New York City mayor's office, you've got formal policy levers that you can pull. What can institutions like the RSA bring to the picture when it comes to responding to the challenges facing cities?

Jackson: Make sure that the research is contextualised for the audiences that need to hear it in the various places around the world. So, for example, in the US, prison reform may mean something very different than in the UK. We have some economic challenges

that may be slightly different than some of the things that happen in the UK.

One of the things the RSA does as well is bring people into a practical conversation and encourage them to think differently. In creating resilient cities, this is about cities coming together to talk and think through the unique challenges they have and where they can share best practices. Some of the smaller cities may be more agile than cities like New York. For example, we have a very significant partnership between Glasgow, New York and Pittsburgh through 100 Resilient Cities and two of those chief resilience officers are both in the RSA. Another example is a forum in San Francisco about the changing world of work, where the RSA UK's researcher was able to participate on a panel with someone who used to work for Uber, as well as a representative from the California governor's office; both were RSA Fellows. It's amazing to have that kind of breadth within the RSA family, to talk about policy implementation and research together.

O'Brien: What's your strategy in relation to the offer for US Fellows?

Jackson: Our long-term aim is for Fellows to contribute to research, to write papers or case studies, and to involve US Fellows with the work that's happening in real time. Even with social activities, we try to include a policy conversation, either from a practitioner or from the research side. Me being the RSA US Board Chair represented a lot of change. I'm the only female US Chair and I'm definitely the only one of colour. For some Fellows that have been around a long time it can feel like a lot of change is happening at once, but everybody needs to be part of that change, have a seat and a say.

O'Brien: Finally, you are a successful jazz singer in your 'spare' time. Tell me more.

Jackson: I learned to play instruments and read music at a young age, and I always said this saved my life. Sports, and the arts in particular, allow that breadth of possibility for a young person to discover who they are and what they can do. My singing weaves together my creative side, project management and my work with the RSA. It's about getting change to happen, but in a creative and different way. ■

Lolita Jackson has worked in the New York City mayor's office for the past 13 years. She is a special advisor on climate policy and programmes and is also an accomplished jazz singer

A MULTI-ORDER WORLD?

The international order is in the midst of a transformation. History shows that such processes are rarely painless, but this time the change is likely to be more fundamental than ever before

by Trine Flockhart
 @TrineFlockhart

Set up under American leadership in the aftermath of the devastation of the Second World War, the dominant liberal international order is now in crisis. We are witnessing a shift in power from the West to 'the rest' that may well represent an epochal transformation in the maintenance of international order and global governance.

The system of institutions and relationships that emerged from the war was built by – and most definitely for – the United States. The new order was anchored in the liberal internationalist ideals of philosophers such as Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill and implemented the ideas of Woodrow Wilson that had failed so spectacularly following the First World War. The goal was cooperation through a broad institutional architecture covering finance, trade and security. The driving force behind its establishment was President Roosevelt's vision for a cooperative international system based on shared rules and agreed principles: the 'rules-based international order'. This was designed to ensure Roosevelt's four freedoms: freedom of speech; freedom of worship; freedom from want; and freedom from fear.

In practice, the noble ideas of global cooperative governance did not turn out as originally anticipated.

The onset of the Cold War resulted in new lines of division, with regional institutions such as NATO, and what was later to become the EU, added. In fact, contrary to the belief of President Trump, European cooperation and integration was actively encouraged in the late 1940s by the US and was even a precondition for receiving Marshall Aid. Since then, NATO and the EU have been cornerstones of the liberal international order.

Following the end of the Cold War, the rules-based international order expanded to a global scope and became more focused on democracy and human rights. Although the liberal values and the emphasis on human rights did not resonate with all states, it was believed that the order was resilient and had global appeal due to its deeply embedded practices and openness for all to join, with no apparent attractive or viable alternatives. There was a broad consensus that most states would benefit from its rules and could have a say through its multilateral institutions. That optimism has lately given way to apprehension. Today, all of the institutions of the liberal order are in a state of crisis, seem unable to respond to a rapidly growing catalogue of challenges and are perceived by many to have failed in the implicit promise of delivering the four freedoms.

Trine Flockhart is a professor of International Relations at the University of Southern Denmark



Order transformations

Today there are significant signs that we are in the midst of a full-scale transformation of order. The most obvious signs are the articulations of alternative conceptions of order that ultimately challenge the power, principles and institutions that have formed the foundation of the liberal international order and global governance for the past 70 years. These include the Russian vision for a Eurasian order and the ambition of Daesh to establish an Islamic order. Less direct, but no less important, is the establishment of Chinese parallel institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) that indicates a strategic vision for a global and regional order based on Chinese rather than Western institutions.

Shockingly, contestation – and outright rejection – of the values and institutions that underpin the current order is not just coming from ‘outsiders’ such as Russia and China or from ‘rejectionist’ powers such as Iran and North Korea, or from non-state actors such as Daesh. Contestation is also coming from those who most thought would support the liberal international order, such as the emerging democratic powers of India, Brazil and South Africa, which each appear reluctant to fully engage with the liberal international order.

Of most concern, however, is the growing level of resistance to the liberal order from within the US and Europe: through the anti-globalisation movement on the left and a new form of populism on the right. Both are reactions to what is perceived as the excesses and failings of liberal politics, such as growing inequality, unfairness and not being heard in the political process. They have in common a deep-seated dislike of the multilateral institutions that have formed the basis of global governance for nearly 70 years. Both forms of contestation reject key values and practices of the liberal order, but they have, broadly speaking, reacted in different ways. Those disputing the liberal order on the left have often done so through protest movements, with many turning their backs on electoral politics. Meanwhile, detractors on the right have given rise to a new active engagement in electoral politics among people who have not recently been fully engaged in the democratic process, which has taken many by surprise. The Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump appear to be outcomes of these new patterns of political participation.

At the same time, the emergence of illiberal governments within the European Union, such as in Poland and Hungary, as well as high levels of electoral support for populist rightwing parties – even in traditionally stable democracies such as Sweden –

is a deeply concerning development that challenges democratic principles and constitutes an outright rejection of the traditions of liberal internationalism. In concrete terms, the emergence of illiberal politics, especially in the EU, has negative consequences for the cohesion and effectiveness of the EU, particularly in its ability to address challenges such as migration and climate change.

The most surprising development is that, with the election in 2016 of Donald Trump as President of the US, we have arrived in the bizarre situation where the foundational principles and institutions of the liberal order are challenged by its own leader. Today, the US-led international order is headed by a president who is openly hostile to the principles that were formulated and practised by successive post-war US administrations. Trump does not adhere to its institutional practices and does not appear to value the friendly and constructive relationships it has nurtured. This is unprecedented territory and leaves the liberal international order in a delicate position, which may hasten its demise.

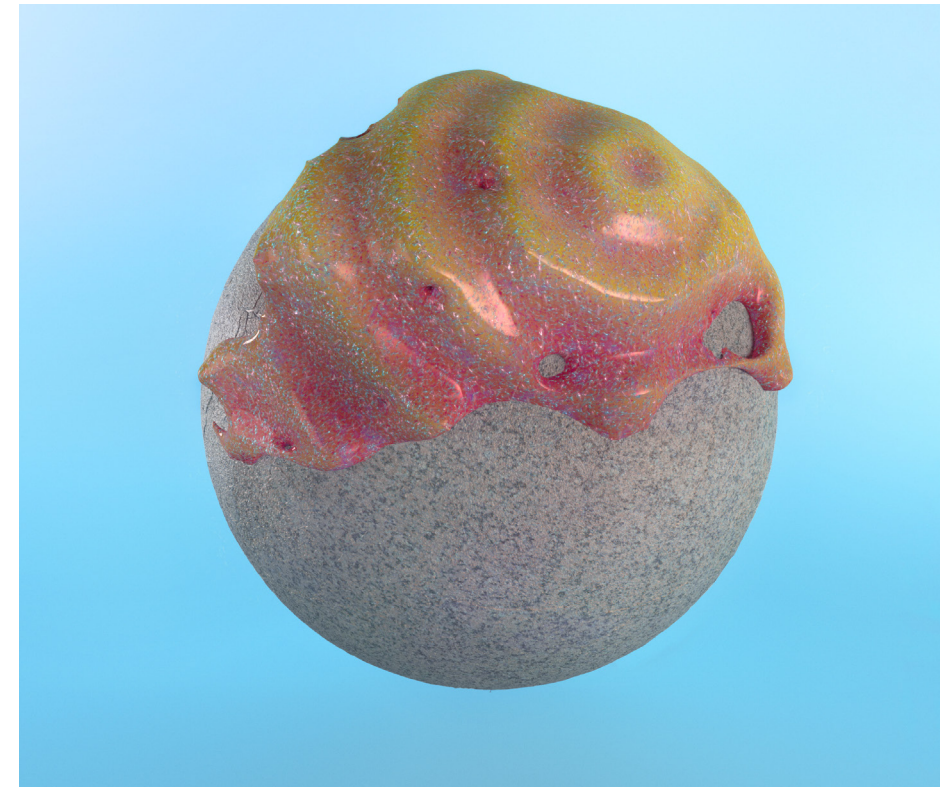
Learning from the past

Order transformations tend to take place through processes that typically reach into all spheres of life and are often associated with uncertainty, conflict and contestation. Although the end of the Cold War showed that order transformations can be swift and largely peaceful, historically, they have been neither.

In the three other order transformations that have taken place in the past 400 years, the process has on each occasion been long-lasting, violent and anchored in seemingly unrelated events that led to social transformation and political upheaval at the domestic level. This was the case in the Thirty-Years’ War that ended with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, and the Napoleonic Wars that ended with the Concert of Europe in 1815. It was also the case in the slow deterioration and eventual collapse of the European order that started with the rise of nationalism in the mid-19th century and violently culminated in the First and Second World Wars in the first half of the 20th century. The latter process spelled the end of European hegemony and *Pax Britannica*, but it did not end the liberal underpinnings of order, as the baton of leadership passed (peacefully) from Britain to the US to establish what became the post-war liberal international order, or *Pax Americana*.

In each of these four transformations of order (1648, 1815, 1945 and 1989), the liberal international order, or earlier versions of it, has been on the winning side, expanding its geographical scope and consolidating

Illustrations by Ben Miners



“In the current order transformation, it seems likely that, for the first time, the liberal order will not be on the winning side”

liberal principles and rules. However, in the current order transformation, it seems likely that, for the first time, the liberal order will not be on the winning side and may even contract and see its principles undermined rather than reinforced. This process will be experienced in the West as deeply unsettling and will have important political consequences.

Three alternative futures

Inevitably there is no agreement about what kind of order will emerge from the current process of transformation. Three different perspectives are currently in competition. Each sees the crisis of the liberal order in a different light and predicts alternative outcomes. These can be summarised as a multipolar future, a multi-partner future and a multi-order future.

The first position is the most prevalent in scholarly and policy circles. Proponents of this position argue that what lies ahead is a multipolar world in which several great powers will compete and use traditional balance of power politics to balance each other and advance their own interests. In this view it is anticipated that the international system will revert to a past system of multipolarity much akin to what was in place during the 19th century. This position assumes the continued primacy of the US, but the balancing

may take the form of either active military power projection, primarily against China, or domestic US policies that have international implications, such as the guarding against foreign influence through trade or (unfair) binding international agreements.

The foreign policy of the Trump administration appears to be a mixture of these two positions. The US will claim primacy and seek to reject any competing claims to America’s leading position, especially from China, but will also withdraw its support (political and material) from multilateral projects. We have already seen this in play with the withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, the UN Council on Human Rights and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), also known as the Iran Nuclear Deal. Although proponents of this position are probably surprised about the extent of the Trump administration’s rejection of the multilateral principles underpinning the current order, they maintain that multilateralism was never a realistic proposition because states always act in their own self-interest. The post-war American voluntary (and admittedly partial) adherence to the rules of international organisations, they argue, was an anomaly.

The second – multi-partner future – position is the most prevalent among liberal internationalists such as

Hillary Clinton, Angela Merkel and Tony Blair, and is based on the belief that we will see the maintenance of the status quo through reform. Proponents of this position argue that the US will attempt to, on the one hand, maintain its leadership position, but on the other hand, enter into partnerships with new actors that, it is assumed, can be co-opted into a reformed version of the existing order. This position assumes a continued high level of American engagement in global affairs and multilateral institutions, but, importantly, in partnership with allies and other stakeholders in the global order. Proponents of this position say these allies must contribute a greater share to the costs of meeting the new challenges that will inevitably result from a globalised and rapidly changing world.

Had Hillary Clinton won the 2016 presidential election, there is no doubt that the agreements the Trump Administration has pulled out of would still be receiving American support. However, it would be naive to assume that the multilateral institutions of the

liberal order would have remained unaffected. The US would almost certainly have attempted reform of existing institutions in two ways. First, it would have tried to reduce the costs incurred by the US, and second, it would have addressed (at least procedurally) the issue of representation in the multilateral institutions by non-western actors. To be fair, there is no reason to believe that reform of the post-war multilateral institutions would have been any more successful than it has been in the past, so this commitment would have been paying lip-service to a problem that appears to have no feasible political solutions. With regards to the issue of reducing costs, it is likely that a Clinton administration would have been tough on extracting greater contributions from allies and partners alike. While the burden-sharing debate in NATO would have been conducted in a more diplomatic way, there is no doubt that the days when the US was prepared to pay for European security are over, regardless of who sits in the Oval Office. The same is true of trade, where the US almost certainly would have insisted – again perhaps less aggressively – on a more level playing field and an end to what is seen in America as unfair terms of competition and unfavourable trade balances.

A multi-order future

The third position emphasises that the new international system will not only be characterised by a diffusion of power, but also by diversity of ideas and identities. This position holds that what lies ahead is a multi-order world, in which several international orders will co-exist as states with similar identity signifiers, such as culture, ideology, geography or religion, come together to form clusters around a leading state. Once clusters of like-minded states (or non-state actors) are formed, they are likely to adopt the values, practices and institutions of the leading state, thus forming a new international order. In principle this is not a new process, and has been seen on several occasions in history. However, until the European expansion in the 16th century, there was only limited interaction between the different international orders, which were largely self-contained, adhering to their own rules, values and norms and meeting their challenges alone through their own institutions. In a globalised and digitalised world such isolation is no longer possible, which is why governance structures will be needed to facilitate cooperation between the different international orders.

The challenge in a multi-order world will be to reach global consensus on how to meet collective challenges while accepting diversity in domestic and order-specific affairs. We will need to accept that different



“The new international system will not only be characterised by a diffusion of power, but also by diversity of ideas and identities”

orders have fundamentally different conceptions of what constitutes ‘the good life’. In this view, the expectation is a new form of international system, which is composed of several different international orders and lacking any deep overall shared values and practices. In a multi-order world, new forms of relationships between composite and diverse actors will have to be established. This scenario will require a fundamentally different form of diplomacy across lines of division, involving complex power relations, different partnerships and institutions, and across different cultures with different domestic governance structures.

Until recently, it was assumed that the position of the US in the multi-order world scenario would be to seek to remain the leader of liberal states. Proponents of this position argued that America would aim to strengthen the core, cohesion and magnetism of the existing liberal order by providing leadership and support for the institutions that, for better or for worse, are best placed to meet some of the many challenges and mitigate some of the negative consequences arising from globalisation and rapid changes in technology, demography and climate. However, the Trump administration makes this option an unlikely outcome; in fact, the opposite appears to be the case.

A rough ride ahead

The transformation of order is always turbulent. However, if – as I believe – the future ahead is a multi-order one, then it is likely to be particularly turbulent because the level of change will be dramatic. Moreover, the shift towards a multi-order world will be experienced in the West as a loss of power and influence, and therefore as negative and deeply unsettling.

The best way to meet the gathering storm of change would be to enable, improve and empower the unique institutional architecture that has been built over the past 70 years to respond as best as possible to processes of change that can be neither stopped nor controlled. An understanding that the best we can hope for is to mitigate the negative consequences of the unfolding process, and to be prepared to meet the challenges of the modern world, would be a good starting point. Unfortunately, populist and irresponsible politicians have done the exact opposite by apportioning blame to various groups for the extremely complex and demanding challenges we now face, and suggesting that it is possible to ‘take back control’, or return to a better past. It is time for a new debate based on the understanding that there are no easy solutions in times of great change, but that the ‘winners’ are those who can navigate ‘the rapids’ into calmer waters. ■

RSA Fellowship in action

Latin Elephant

Patria Roman-Velazquez FRSA set up Latin Elephant in 2014. The charity works with migrant-owned businesses in London, assisting them with sustainability planning so they can thrive as urban regeneration schemes spread through the capital. The organisation is the recipient of a £10,000 RSA Catalyst Scaling Grant, which it will use to expand its work across London. Latin Elephant’s main focus at present is Elephant and Castle, where the long-standing shopping centre is undergoing a major regeneration that will affect the small businesses that have been there for many years. Brixton and Seven Sisters are the charity’s next destinations. “Regeneration in London is happening everywhere, and it has an impact on high streets and migrant economies. You can’t keep pushing people further out,” says Patria.

Latin Elephant runs workshops for small business owners and assists them in areas such as planning processes, employment rights and understanding their leases. The technical jargon around business planning can be hard for anyone to understand, and particularly for people whose first language is not English. Latin Elephant gives migrant businesspeople a voice by putting them in touch with policymakers and helping them to understand how the systems work. The organisation also works on community engagement, producing documentaries and films and using photography to show the importance of these communities.

■ For more information on Latin Elephant, email info@latinelephant.org

BRITAIN'S NEW GIANTS

Inequality, disempowerment, isolation, intolerance and climate change are the five main problems the UK faces today. But how to tackle them?

by Ed Cox
 @edcox_rsa

On a hot July evening, RSA Fellows and others met in Hastings to talk about Britain's 'New Giants'. We were left in little doubt that the town, like many seaside locations and smaller cities across the country, felt disconnected from an otherwise prosperous south-east, and ignored by those in power. It was the same story at workshops throughout Britain. Even at our event in London, the talk was of isolation, disaffection and hyper-connected communities struggling to find a common cause.

Recalling William Beveridge's Five Giant Evils of 1942, some workshop participants reflected how straightforward the social challenges seemed back then: squalor, ignorance, idleness, want and disease, each with a practical prescription for a big state solution. Many bemoaned the work still not completed on these giant evils. With the nation in an anxious mood, it was not difficult to elicit and explore examples of contemporary concerns, nor to find consensus from around the UK about the nature of Britain's New Giants.

In every place we visited, one Giant towered over all the rest: inequality. Income and wealth inequality were at the forefront of people's concerns and considered symptomatic of a society that had lost its moral compass. In places such as Manchester, Hastings and Glasgow there was also a deep sense of spatial inequality, with a visceral resentment towards the concentration of power in London. Racial and gender inequality were also significant concerns, as was the impact of inequality on our physical and mental health. For some, inequality lay at the root of hopelessness and lack of aspiration; what they called 'apathy'. Many Fellows saw this problem as symptomatic of our broken democratic system.

Others focused on different types of disconnection and insecurity. Isolation and loneliness were highlighted not only as symptoms of an ageing society, but also as problems affecting us all and key contributors to the apparent deterioration in the nation's mental health. A lot of blame was heaped on technology, and social media was pinpointed as fertile territory for growing levels of intolerance and polarisation.

In every session, environmental concerns surfaced as a big shadow on the horizon, whether in the form of climate change, air pollution or our consumer culture more broadly.

Inequality. Disempowerment. Isolation. Intolerance. Climate change. These are Britain's New Giants, closely interrelated and identified by RSA Fellows and others with unerring consistency right across the nation, and with which we must grapple today.

A new social settlement

Beveridge's generation designed the welfare state to tackle the Five Giants of his day, so in the face of the New Giants our concern must be to revisit this challenge. Though Beveridge never intended the state to have such a dominant role, the twin pillars of social security and the National Health Service (NHS) put government and its associated bureaucracy centre-stage. Despite significant successes, the excesses of monolithic state solutions have too often occluded progress and generated perverse incentives, deadweight costs and diseconomies of scale. Where many other nations saw the writing on the wall at the end of the 1970s and began to decentralise, in the UK – in England in particular – creeping centralisation has exacerbated the sense that big government keeps getting it wrong.



Perhaps the conjunction of 'welfare' and 'state' has been the problem? Beveridge himself wrote a later report in 1948, *Voluntary Action*, about the value of citizen action in providing "services of a kind which often money cannot buy". Notions of voluntarism have always played a role in British society. Whatever perspective we might wish to take on the relationship between state and voluntary action, few would doubt its central significance in the wellbeing and prosperity of a good society.

However, in recent years, despite imaginative attempts to galvanise social action, it has been difficult

for civil society to do much more than mitigate the consequences of sharp reductions in public expenditure. A decade of austerity has plunged health and social care systems into regular crises and caused many councils to close down whole systems of local social support such as children's centres, libraries and voluntary sector grant-giving. It is not that civil society has not stepped up. But in too many cases, social action has simply involved picking up the pieces of a fracturing system.

The struggle to recover from the global financial crisis and a decade of austerity, and facing up to the New Giants, has stirred those who might advocate the

RSA values of humanism, autonomy and universalism to a new mission.

Our vision is of a society where citizens, businesses and governments work together, in policy and in practice, to tackle inequalities of income and wealth, of health and wellbeing, and of place, power and exclusion, through a new social settlement that reconciles welfare with opportunity and social action.

Just as Britain's New Giants are closely interrelated and have many faces and dimensions, so our new social settlement necessarily involves coordinated activity across different disciplines and sectors and at different spatial scales, from the very local to the global.

People and public services

At the heart of a new social settlement, there must be a shared endeavour to ensure that everyone has the capability to participate in economic, political and social life. If notions of 'inclusive growth' are to be anything other than wishful soundbites, then towns and cities across the country need the courage and entrepreneurialism to experiment with radical ideas and action on the ground.

One such idea is a universal basic income (UBI). Beveridge's welfare state was predicated upon the principle that every citizen deserved a level of economic security to support them and their families. However, the concept of conditionality that has increasingly shaped today's benefits system has failed to enhance claimants' motivation to work while being harmful to their mental and physical health. For example, the controversial Universal Credit system has become a source of deep insecurity and, as such, the very inverse of what Beveridge originally intended. UBI, on the other hand, is not dependent on income and so is not means-tested. It is a basic platform on which people can build their lives – whether they want to earn, learn, care or set up a business – and, crucially, it can be embedded in systems of wider community support. The RSA wants to champion further experiments in the UK and is already working with local authorities in Scotland to test the feasibility of this radical new approach. A new social settlement would see the introduction of a benefits system designed to tackle economic insecurity, not make it worse.

Another key plank of Beveridge's welfare state was the notion of what we have come to call 'public services', the NHS being the most celebrated example. In recent times, the RSA has devoted much effort to understanding the developing relationship between citizen and state in the realm of public service provision. Our work on 'health as a social movement', for example, identified eight key principles to give people more control over the resources in their communities that affect health and wellbeing. As our health needs

become more complex, so we need to move away from the big levers of the central state towards more agile approaches to commissioning and care. To face up to challenges such as social isolation – a big focus for our future work programme – we will need a new generation of 'public entrepreneurs'. This will break down the silos between public, private and third-sector agencies and overcome the resistance to change so often found in current systems.

As enterprising as we might be with our future public services, there are limits to what can be achieved as the public spending pot gets smaller relative to GDP and the demands of an ageing society grow. Despite numerous reviews about the future costs of health and social care, we seem no closer to any politically palatable and sustainable solutions. With the moral sentiment of the nation now tilting away from further austerity, there can be a more open public debate about how we pay for more effective public services. A new social settlement could reset ambitions for the proportion of GDP we are prepared to invest in our public services.

Place and power

Even if a new social settlement is to recast a national approach to economic security and public expenditure, we know that results will vary across the country. The UK is far from united and has greater levels of regional inequality than any other European nation. This is in no small part due to the runaway dominance of London over the past few decades. The city's status as a global hub for financial services means it is propped up by preferential policy treatment and disproportionate public and philanthropic spending. While London overshadows other big cities, the differences between cities and our smaller towns, and coastal and rural areas, are also growing. And even within our towns and cities, local inequalities abound, with struggling neighbourhoods sitting sometimes just yards from much more prosperous places.

Housing lies at the heart of the problem. There are fundamental flaws in the way we consider housing in the UK. Our new programme of work on housing equity will explore how to liberate the very different housing markets that exist from place to place with bottom-up, neighbourhood-based solutions. We will also explore, in greater detail, the power of place. This involves investigating the ways in which heritage, identity, transport, energy and sustainability can support greater economic and social security, and the ways in which social infrastructure – our libraries, parks, stations, community centres and the like – can help to create more healthy and connected neighbourhoods.

None of this can be dictated from Westminster or Whitehall. For too long, idle threats of postcode



Photography by Christopher Boffoli

lotteries have been used to hoard power in central government, when in fact it is centralised policymaking that has so damaged economic productivity and public service reform and caused the local inequalities such policies were apparently designed to address. As was argued by last year's RSA Inclusive Growth Commission, a new social settlement must involve a comprehensive devolution agreement between central and local government in England that gives combined authorities and reconstituted regions the kinds of power and fiscal freedoms currently only afforded to the devolved nations.

Passing power downwards is vital, and it will only make a difference if it is accompanied by deep democratic reform. With new powers must come new accountabilities and a democratic system that is alive to the opportunities of new cultural norms and technologies. Many have campaigned for change on different fronts, and at the RSA, our chief executive, Matthew Taylor, has argued for a shared campaign for deliberative democracy as a "gateway reform" in the transformation to a new democratic system.

There is huge merit in this argument. Deliberative experiments such as citizens' juries and assemblies have been used in Ireland, Australia and elsewhere to address the kinds of complex social and economic challenges that characterise 21st century Britain. Had we reached deeper into the democratic toolbox

than to a referendum to address Britain's highly sophisticated relationship with the European Union, a 'people's assembly on Brexit' might have had a greater chance of avoiding the deep divisions we now see, even if the overall outcome would still have been to leave. Deliberative democracy as a practical means of reaching beyond shallow public opinion and rebuilding political trust is an idea whose time has come. Our new social settlement must involve three national deliberative assemblies each year, each one leading to further parliamentary debate and action.

From Hastings to Glasgow, Oldham to Swindon, Cambridge to London, Britain's New Giants are looming large, foreshadowed by Brexit uncertainty and a decade of austerity. Other nations have managed to move past so-called 'peak inequality' and so can we. To do so will require a shared endeavour, with every person recognising their common humanity, every place given its due autonomy and every public institution committed to more inclusive service provision.

Recasting notions of 'welfare' – human flourishing – in a post-crash, post-Brexit Britain may seem a daunting task. Public, private and third-sector entrepreneurs can rise to the challenge and, through their collective intelligence and collaborative design, lay out a new social settlement – in policy and in practice – to shape the rest of this century collectively and democratically. ■

“Business ethics, culture and vocabulary have conquered the discourse of social change”

Anand Giridharadas talks to head of RSA US Alexa Clay about altering the narrative around how we create real societal change

🐦 @AnandWrites

Alexa Clay: What made you really start to critique the social change sector?

Anand Giridharadas: I felt like I lived in this generation that had sincere intentions and a naive understanding about how change actually works. At the heart of the disconnect was a view of change that has been conquered by market thinking; above all by the idea of the win-win. The idea that change must be congenial to power. That the only acceptable, practical forms of change are those that bring the powerful along, put them on the board, make them feel useful, don't ask them to sacrifice. Over time, I realised I didn't buy that story. I had to investigate it.

Business thinking has become our culture in the US, including our culture of thinking about change. The business ethic is all about tomorrow: it's all about making a deal. It's all about solutions, about moving forward. That's fine if you're selling ice cream, but business ethics, culture and vocabulary have conquered the discourse of social change and ruined how we think about social problems. So suddenly the discourse about empowering women becomes, let's not make this about the past, let's just move forward. That doesn't work because the way in which, historically, women have been undervalued and disempowered is a crime, not an

efficiency problem. You can't solve a crime by moving forward. You can solve a crime by investigating, doing justice, figuring out what happened, creating preventative measures. There are a whole bunch of things you do, many of which are backward looking, for the sake of a forward-looking purpose.

Clay: You write that the people who are meant to be the stewards of an intellectual tradition are being co-opted by the markets.

Giridharadas: It's very clear that the system is indecent. However, a lot of the people from these elite worlds who uphold this indecent system are in themselves decent. It takes a lot of ideas to soothe the cognitive dissonance of wanting to be a good person while living at the top of such a manifestly cruel system.

So there came to be a need for ideas that would reassure them and make them feel that they're part of the solution not just part of the problem, and that nothing too fundamental needed to change. That space gave rise to the 'thought leader'. This kind of court jester thinker. The thinkers who the powerful like to keep around. Who will write about how Facebook is connecting the world not how it's a monopoly. Who will write about how women should lean in more, not

how we should have maternity leave from employers and federal government.

Three major sources of support for thinkers have dwindled in recent years. Newsrooms, academia and book publishing. What has taken the place of these are the conference circuit and the speaking circuit. You can make quite a good living, but to do that you've got to play the game. So there have arisen these thinkers who figure out that if they pull their punches and talk more about lean in than maternity leave and more about charter schools than equal schools they will get invited back and they'll get awards and patronised. Because our sources of public-spirited support have dwindled what is left is kind of plutocratic support for ideas.

Clay: Forums such as TED seem in some ways a potent symptom of everything you're indicting. What alternative mediums would you like to see?

Giridharadas: One thing to think about is how to get people to subscribe to publications so things are more democratically funded. A lot of these conferences that have aspirations to be serious forums for ideas need to do a better job at firewalling their sponsors. No one who advertises in the *New York Times* has any expectation of any kind of coverage. That should be the case even in these forums, which make money from these people. They should be much more provocative of power and not at ease with it.

Clay: A lot of the culture you critique is inherent to Silicon Valley. As you think about the way Silicon Valley entrepreneurs are amassing power, does that pose a real risk and challenge?

Giridharadas: I think what's interesting is there's a really complicated relationship with power there. Silicon Valley has become the power centre of the world: small decisions made there have immediate effects across the globe. But there's a folk memory of being powerless, of being hackers on the edge of these big systems. It still thinks it's defined by this ethic of the outside. The problem is when you're very powerful and you think you're weak you abdicate responsibility. Again, that is how decent people can uphold an indecent system.

Clay: What recommendations would you have for someone who is in the tech industry and has amassed this kind of power and wants to make a difference to civil society and democratic institutions?



Giridharadas: First, they can shift from giving back to giving up. Giving back is when you're still standing on top of the bad system, throwing down a few scraps. Giving it up is saying, 'this isn't fair; I'm going to give in ways that interrogate my own privilege and put at risk the system that let me win'.

The second is to shift from crowding government out to crowding it in. A lot of these people create programmes that fully bypass government. When you work around government, you contribute to further weakening it. These people would do better to support initiatives that actually make government stronger over the long term. That could be training citizens, it could be empowering more people to vote, it could be rebuilding the civic fabric.

Clay: What would be your recommendation for a new generation of changemakers?

Giridharadas: I think a lot of us have been told a story about how to make change that, whether we realise or not, is essentially a business story. My advice is: next time you see a problem, think of a solution that would be public, universal, democratic and institutional. Start thinking about what fixes would solve the problem at the root for everybody. ■

Anand Giridharadas is the author of three books, the latest of which is *Winners Take All: The Elite Charade of Changing the World*. He writes regularly for the *New York Times*

Photography by Mackenzie Stroh

SCHOOLS UNLEASHED

An overhaul of the way we approach the entire teaching system is necessary, in order to produce inquisitive, independent-minded life-long learners

by Julian Astle

🐦 @JulianAstle

The word ‘Enlightenment’ can sound rarefied, elitist even; something that might consume the thoughts of a philosopher in an ivory tower, but which has precious little to do with the rest of us down in the square. Which is paradoxical, considering the central idea of the 18th century Enlightenment was that the people in the square need no longer defer to elites; that all of us, armed with evidence and guided by reason, can build a better world without recourse to superstition or dogma.

This enduring humanistic belief – that ‘we the people’ can discover what is true, decide what is right, and shape society accordingly – amounts to a declaration of intellectual, moral and political sovereignty. But claiming that sovereignty, and exercising it, are quite different things. If we are to create a 21st century enlightenment, we need to educate our children for that task.

That means inducting them into the great conversation of mankind; the unending dialogue between the living, the dead and the yet-to-be-born. It means introducing them to the best that has been thought, said and done, and equipping them to appreciate, interrogate, apply and build on this. It means providing them with a more complete and generous education in academics, aesthetics and ethics; an education of the ‘head, hand and heart’.

Yet too many children and young people today receive a narrow, hollowed-out, instrumentalist education that is specifically designed and tightly calibrated for the task of getting them through exams, but which does not prepare them for life. To understand why this is, we need to understand the system in which our children study and teachers work. Above all, we need to understand the impact of the current numbers-based performance management system; the tail that wags the dog in English education.

Education by numbers

There are 10 categories of problem that stem directly from the use of metrics to measure school and teacher performance. While each should cause ministers serious concern, together they should lead them to commit to the system’s urgent reform.

The first is goal displacement, the temptation for professionals to focus on outcomes that are being measured, while ignoring others that also matter, and often matter more. This usually involves focusing on students’ academic progress to the exclusion of their physical, social, moral and spiritual development.

The second is the tendency to engage in activities that produce temporary, superficial or entirely illusory gains, but which nonetheless allow schools to tick a box on a performance data spreadsheet. Teaching to the test is the most widespread and damaging example.

The third is gaming, a serviceable definition for any decision that puts the institutional interests of the school before the educational interests of the child. This includes schools cheating in exams, manipulating admissions and exclusions, narrowing the curriculum and entering pupils for easy-to-pass qualifications of little value.

The fourth is the creation of system-wide dynamics that work to the disadvantage of the poorest communities and most vulnerable pupils. Using pupils’ test scores to measure teacher and school effectiveness makes teachers wary of working in schools where attainment is likely to be relatively low, such as schools with high numbers of pupils on free school meals or with special educational needs.

The fifth is short-termism. This is most apparent in the tendency to focus resources on those year groups that are sitting high-stakes tests while underinvesting in younger pupils. This leads to an over-reliance on quick-fix, data-driven, deficit-focused interventions



and the neglect of long-term fundamentals, curriculum design above all.

The sixth is pupil disengagement. Attending an exam factory school is grim. It may result in a child knowing how to answer a four- or eight-point question, but will they know how to think for themselves? Will the prospect of further learning be something to look forward to, or something to be avoided as soon as the law allows?

The seventh is the stifling effect of metric-based accountability on experimentation and innovation. Since these can lead to failure, where the consequences are severe, school leaders become risk-averse and controlling, reducing teacher autonomy, discouraging creativity and demanding compliance.

The eighth is the increase in teacher workload as they are required to track all these numbers. This contributes to the ninth category, the demoralisation of the workforce. It would be hard to think of a better way of sapping teachers' morale than ordering them to meet widely-gamed numerical targets upon pain of sanction. This undermines their agency, corrodes their professional identity and damages their self-esteem.

All of which leads to the final problem, which now confronts the British government, an inability to attract and retain enough teachers.

A chance for change

There are two reasons for thinking real change might be achievable. The first is the teacher recruitment and retention crisis. As Barack Obama's Chief of Staff, Rahm Emmanuel, said, "never let a crisis go to waste". England's teachers would be well advised to heed his words. This crisis cannot be solved without government listening to teachers and responding to their concerns.

The second is the work of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, who has been clear that she wants to use her time at the inspectorate to end this tyranny of numbers and get schools re-focused on the things that really matter. If Spielman wants to hold schools to account for the quality of the education they provide, not just the results they get, she will need to convince a sceptical Department for Education that such a subjective power is safe in the hands of her inspectors. Even if she wins that battle, all the hard work will still be in front of us. For what is required is a new settlement based on a fundamentally different relationship between government, schools and the communities they serve.

If it is axiomatic to state that a 21st century enlightenment needs to be people-powered, it should be equally self-evident that educating for enlightenment must be driven from the bottom up. The existing settlement, of governmental command-and-control, has taken us as far as it can. Where the old system was

shaped by the number crunchers and data managers, the new one needs to be designed for inquisitive students, reflective educators, mission-oriented schools and supportive communities.

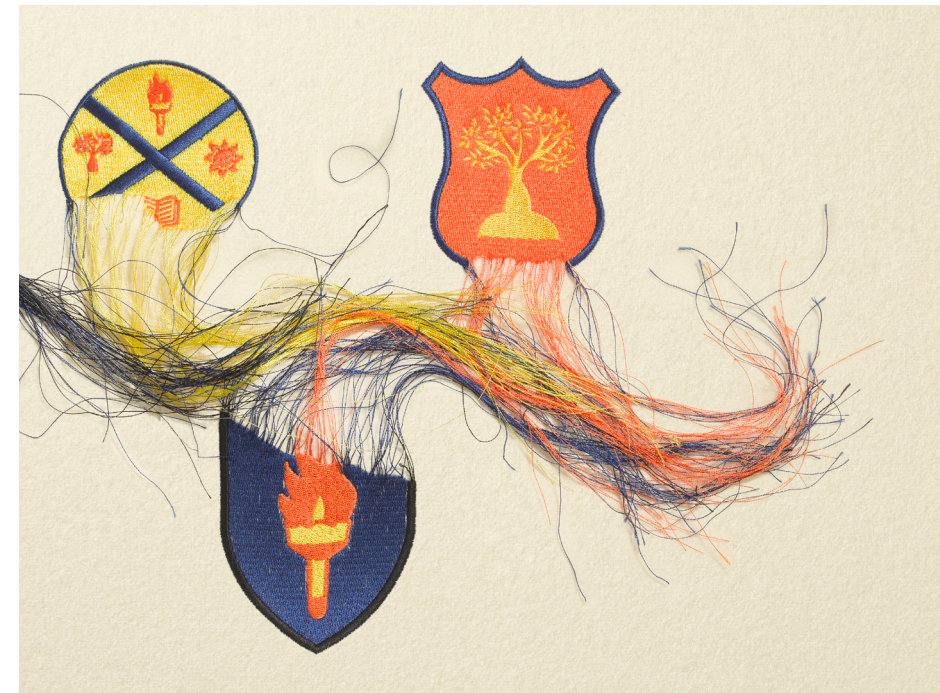
If we are trying to produce inquisitive, independent-minded, life-long learners, we need to educate them accordingly. The clear lesson from both cognitive science and educational research is that, at the start of the long journey from novice to expert, this requires plenty of clear, explicit instruction and deliberate practice so as not to overload the pupil's limited working memory. But over time, teaching methods need to shift from the monologic to the dialogic, the didactic to the dialectic, with responsibility and control gradually shifting from teacher to student. The goal, however, remains the same throughout: to teach the student not what to think, but how to think.

A complete and generous education – of deep learning, real understanding and true appreciation – requires that the student be given the time and space to learn and overlearn, to practise and repeat, to delve deeper or digress, to challenge and question, to discuss and debate, and, throughout, to pause, consider, evaluate and reflect. It is one that immerses the student in the logic and language of the disciplines and introduces them to their differing perspectives on, and contributions to, the world. It is explicitly open-ended, embracing dualism, doubt and irresolution. It deals in the subjective and the objective, encouraging students to develop their own opinions, but demanding that they be informed and evidenced. It provides the student with opportunities to share their learning in myriad ways and values education above all for its intrinsic benefits; its power to enrich, confound, inspire and amaze.

Such an education cannot be provided by teachers whose job is to hit numerical output targets using a limited range of prescribed methods. Downloadable lesson plans and pre-prepared scripts are how the system mandates adequacy, not how it will unleash greatness.

Anyone who has engaged with the evidence of what works in education will know what a complex, layered and highly intellectual profession teaching is. Effecting an invisible change in the minds of the 30 unique individuals in front of you, knowing whether and when that change has occurred, and proceeding at a pace that does not overwhelm the slowest and bore the fastest, is an almost impossible task. To do it well requires the teacher to be an expert not only in their subject, but in how to teach it. This requires gathering evidence from multiple sources: cognitive science, classroom trials, school-level attainment data and real-time formative assessment data. To do it well requires the judgement of a highly skilled professional.

It would be a mistake to conclude that the challenge of delivering a world-class education is a technical one.



“We need to tell students that today matters and that they do not have to wait to create, contribute and make a positive difference”

Ultimately, education is values-based and goal-driven. Its essential character depends on the sort of adults you are trying to produce, and the sort of world you are trying to build. Which is why the best schools are always mission-led. What that mission is will vary from school to school but what matters, assuming compatibility with Britain's core democratic values, is that there is one and that it drives everything the school does.

It would be hard to overstate the importance of mission. As an expression of shared values, it provides a school with an identity, and the school community with a sense of belonging. As an expression of shared aims, it provides governors and leaders with a lodestar that prevents them being blown off course by the shifting short-term demands of the external accountability system. It also provides a school with a set of organising principles that should govern everything it does. It should be visible in a school's culture and curriculum, its policies and practices, its rituals and routines.

No school is an island

Even the best schools cannot overcome the problems many children face without the support and engagement of the wider community.

Pupils who qualify for free school meals currently arrive at primary school an average of four months behind their peers and leave secondary school 18 months behind. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities start 15 months behind and finish three years behind. If schools are to provide those children with the support they need to prosper, they need help

from parents, carers and families, from other public agencies and services and from the charities, working together to dismantle the many barriers children face. And if schools are to provide those children with the opportunities some take for granted, they need the help of businesses, professional bodies, arts and cultural organisations, colleges and universities, all of which can give young people the sense of agency and creative possibility that comes from realising the limitless ways to find meaning and create value in the world.

The final ingredient in an enlightenment education is perhaps the most fundamental. It is to challenge widely-held views about young people's characters and schooling's purpose. In a recent RSA-commissioned poll, adults were asked to choose from a list of six adjectives – three positive, three negative – to describe teenagers. The most popular answers were 'selfish', 'lazy' and 'anti-social'. A parallel survey of those aged 14 to 18 found that 84% want to help others, and that 68% have done so through volunteering and social action. This gap between perception and reality is shocking and cannot help but damage young people's sense of worth. If we give up on our children, we should not be surprised if they give up on themselves.

The other prevailing attitude that must be challenged is that school is a necessarily joyless experience but that it will be 'worth it in the end', a sacrifice today rewarded tomorrow. The problem is that tomorrow never comes. We need to tell students that today matters and that they do not have to wait to create, contribute and make a positive difference. ■

INCLUSIVE GROWTH

RSA Scotland's partnership with the SCLD has helped the organisation to be more open, stimulating and inclusive; we encourage further such programmes across the Society worldwide

by Leeanne Clark and Jamie Cooke

🐦 @JamieACooke

As Matthew Taylor writes elsewhere in this edition of *RSA Journal*, a central task for the RSA today is to ensure that the principles that underpinned the Enlightenment – autonomy, humanism and universalism – continue to drive the work we do today. Central to this is diversity, which means working to ensure that our Fellowship continues to be a community of motivated individuals who identify with our objectives but is also reflective of the world in which we operate. And we are making strides in this direction. A rising number of women are becoming Fellows, with 40% of those joining now female; the Fellowship is getting increasingly younger; and the Society regularly undertakes accessibility audits. However, we want to go further in creating a more diverse Fellowship.

In Scotland, a group of Fellows are launching a network for female FRSA. The Fellow-led Disability Group in London is exploring issues around the barriers faced by people with disabilities in the workplace, tying closely into our Future of Work programme. Linking partnerships with organisations like the Fulbright Commission to established projects such as the Student Design Awards helps us engage with a new generation of Fellows outside the UK.

A new project in Scotland captures this spirit of openness and inclusion in an inspiring way. The idea was developed by Chris Creegan FRSA in his role as Chief Executive of the Scottish Commission for Learning Disabilities (SCLD). Chris was conscious that in his working life he met talented, creative people with learning disabilities, none of whom would have heard of the RSA, let alone considered becoming a Fellow. He challenged the RSA to respond to this opportunity, to, as he put it: “Open up the Fellowship, often perceived as being the preserve of the intellectual elite, to the world of intellectual disability.”

The RSA has embraced this challenge. After a Scotland-wide search, six new Fellows were recruited,

which was celebrated at a ceremony in Edinburgh (a seventh Fellow joined a year later following the first ever Scottish Learning Disability Awards). The cohort dramatically proved that this was not a tokenistic gesture, bringing powerful examples of creativity in action with a choreographer, a writer, an artist, community activists, a storyteller and a bagpiper.

Leeanne Clark, a member of the group and co-author of this piece, described her experience. “Being an RSA Fellow and having the support of the SCLD has helped make my dream of writing a book about my life a reality. I have written 18 chapters of the book, *The Real Me*, and am about to work with colleagues from Moniack Mhor (a prestigious writing community in the Highlands of Scotland) to begin the editing process. Meeting up with the other six Fellows in our group has been really important and I've enjoyed being part of the group, meeting new people all working on fantastic projects. We meet together every three months and it's great to talk to and share our ideas with one another. We learn a lot from one another.”

The group have undertaken work together, including presenting their project ideas at a workshop at The Gathering, which is the largest voluntary sector conference in Scotland. Leeanne also spoke at the RSA Scotland conference this year.

“The people who attended said my presentation was the most inspiring of the whole conference,” said Leeanne. “And in September I did a pitch about my book at the RSA Engage event in Edinburgh. I got the chance to meet other Fellows who share my ideas, and I made some good contacts.” Other members of the group have contributed to partnership events with the Fulbright Association and the US Consulate, and the RSA Scotland Conference, and have received Catalyst funding.

The relationship is not one-way. Like many new Fellows, they have benefited from being part of the RSA,



but have also helped to improve and challenge us as an organisation. The RSA has learnt a lot from individual Fellows in the group and from the SCLD, which has been central to supporting participation. One of the key questions this work has raised is how the RSA can ensure that as many people as possible can engage with the vast range of materials and thinking that it produces. Innovations such as the RSA's *Animate* and *Shorts* are great examples of how key speeches and RSA work can be presented in creative ways that are more accessible and incredibly popular. But we are not there yet; the group has highlighted how the RSA's ways of communicating – for example, dense research reports – can still be off-putting for those with various barriers to participating.

This is a good challenge that arises from a desire for the RSA to be all that we aspire for it to be: open, stimulating, innovative and inclusive. At the heart of this challenge is not to change what we do but to make how we provide information about our work easier to access. The RSA uses a lot of complicated words and jargon and this can make understanding emails and newsletters a real challenge for those who might not be able to read very well. In response to this feedback we have created an easy-read version of the Catalyst funding application form and are working to explore how we can make other material more accessible.

Leeanne and the wider group want to make a positive contribution to the RSA, and have volunteered to meet with anyone interested in how they can increase their impact. Experience has shown that this can be useful not just to those people who have a learning disability, but also to others who may have challenges around literacy or for whom English is a second language.

“Ultimately, we don't want to just have seven RSA Fellows with a learning disability,” said Leeanne. “We want to share what's worked in Scotland with the RSA across the UK to get more people with learning disabilities interested in joining the RSA.”

As we start to create a truly inclusive 21st century enlightenment, these initiatives are just the kind to ensure the RSA can fully realise its mission of citizen-powered progress. ■

RSA Fellowship in action

Chatty Café

When in a café on maternity leave with her newborn son, Alexandra Hoskyn noticed there were a lot of people sat alone who looked like they would welcome the opportunity to strike up a conversation. From here, her idea for the Chatty Café Scheme was born. “I feel quite strongly about thinking of innovative ways to tackle issues”, says Alexandra. “I can see there are a lot of archaic systems not necessarily working for today's population. I'm always going to be someone who wants to change things.” Under the scheme, cafés set up a designated table or area where people can sit to show they are happy to chat to other customers. The project really took off after Costa Coffee expressed an interest. The company initially trialled the scheme in 25 stores, and from there it has expanded to around 400 Costa stores today. More recently, Sainsbury's has begun to pilot the project.

Alexandra is the recipient of a £2,000 RSA Catalyst Seed Grant, which will be used to look more closely into who has used her idea and benefited from it, in order to see where the scheme might go next.

■ To find out more about the Chatty Café Scheme contact Alexandra on alexandrahoskyn@gmail.com

Author and FRSA Leeanne Clark is about to publish her first book about her own experiences of the care system

Jamie Cooke is the Head of RSA Scotland

Image by iStock. Illustration by Cameron Morgan

MACHINE LEARNING

We need to adopt new technologies in order to remain competitive, but automation must be implemented on our own terms

by Benedict Dellot and Brhmie Balam

🐦 @BenedictDel @Brhmie

In 1921, Czech playwright Karel Capek introduced the term ‘robot’ for the first time to the English language. His science fiction play, *R.U.R.*, depicted a future where human clones would “do the work of two-and-a-half labourers”. Their purpose? To free people from oppressive toil and allow them to lead lives of leisure. The story does not end well. Realising they are smarter than the humans who created them, Capek’s robots overthrow their masters and, in typical cyborg fashion, begin to eradicate humans from the face of the Earth.

Fast-forward to 2018 and popular culture is again dominated by tales of machines gone rogue, from *Ex Machina* to *Black Mirror*. But while the existential threat of robotics and AI remains firmly confined to science fiction, the prospect of new technologies changing the face of work appears real. PwC expects 7 million UK jobs to be wiped out by 2040, whereas the Bank of England puts the figure at 15 million by 2035. Whichever prediction you care to believe, this picture is alarming.

Yet at the RSA we believe that the UK needs to accelerate its take up of technology if it is to move to a high-skilled, high-productivity and high-pay paradigm. Automation must be pursued on our own terms, with good work guaranteed through a new economic settlement of mass ownership, a data commons and a reimagined social contract.

The myth of mass job losses

Our starting point is to call out the myth of mass automation, which has an unhealthy grip on the media and public’s attention. New developments in fields such as deep learning, transfer learning and cloud robotics are indeed remarkable. Autonomous vehicles are now being tested in most developed countries, as are parcel delivery drones and cancer-detecting algorithms. Such feats would have seemed impossible just 15 years ago.

Yet for every jaw-droppingly impressive technology we hear of, there is another that silently falters without notice. IBM’s Watson computer has made several incorrect treatment recommendations for cancer diagnosis. Google Translate still struggles with large passages of text, despite years of tinkering.

Nor do technologies always substitute labour. Self-driving cars may replace taxi drivers and machines may replace parts of a warehouse operative’s job. But CAD software extends designers’ abilities to create compelling visuals, just as robotic medical tools allow surgeons to make more precise incisions.

On the occasions where automation does replace tasks and jobs, the savings to consumers and employers are not lost. In a process the RSA calls ‘recycled demand’, automation can lead to productivity gains and thereby cheaper goods for consumers. The money saved can be spent either on more of the same product or in another market, thereby reviving demand for labour.

Quality over quantity

For all the talk of an impending labour market meltdown, joblessness in the UK is at its lowest since 1975. Less certain, however, is how the quality of work will change as technology advances.

Many believe new machines will replace lousy jobs with better ones in emerging digital industries. New systems need to be designed and monitored, experts say, and their outputs explained. The number of programmers has grown by 40% since 2011, and IT directors have doubled over the same period. Others doubt a high-tech job revolution is around the corner. An investigation in 2013 by PwC found just 6% of all UK jobs that year were of a kind that did not exist in 1990. We may be creating jobs, the authors argue, but they are more or less the same as 30 years ago.

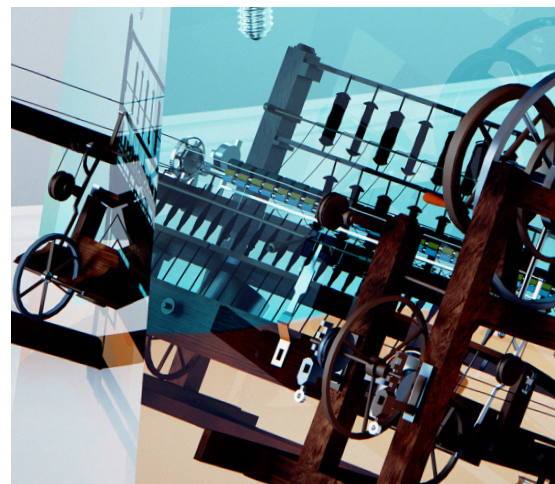
Pay is another area of contention. A study of 28 OECD countries by US economist David Autor found that, although technology has not been



Benedict Dellot is Head of the RSA Future Work Centre

Brhmie Balam is a Senior Researcher in the RSA’s Economy, Enterprise and Manufacturing team

“Educators, employers and policymakers need to be mindful stewards of technology, overseeing its creation and adoption”



employment-displacing, it has reduced labour’s share in value added (with owners of capital – machines – gaining the rest). This does not necessarily mean wages have fallen for workers, but rather that they have missed out on the spoils of new wealth. Again, these claims are contested. In 2015, Georg Graetz and Guy Michaels analysed industrial data for 17 countries from 1993 to 2007. Their results showed that industrial robots raised labour productivity, increased value added and augmented worker wages (although averages can hide wide variations in wage changes).

Technology’s impact on management practices is equally debatable. Biased algorithms used in recruitment could exclude minority groups from new job opportunities, surveillance software could erode the privacy of workers, and gig platforms – which would not exist without sophisticated algorithms – could atomise working partners, undermining job security in the process. Alternatively, recruitment algorithms could remove bias from hiring decisions, and surveillance software could prevent accidents and discourage workers from freeriding on the efforts of others.

Too many robots?

Different machines will have different effects on workers. Some will de-skill jobs, reduce the bargaining power of employees, impinge on privacy and put workers under greater scrutiny. Others will enliven and enlarge workers’ capabilities, help them to achieve more and better-quality work, and raise wages. Automation will create winners as well as losers.

Yet this debate is largely irrelevant if technology is not adopted, and herein lies the great irony of debates on technology and work. Despite the magnitude of commentary on automation, the RSA’s research shows our economy is automating relatively slowly and among only a narrow group of firms. A 2017

RSA/YouGov survey of UK business leaders found that just 14% of businesses are actively adopting AI and/or robotics, or soon plan to.

Other research comes to the same conclusion. The International Federation of Robotics finds the UK has just 71 robot units for every 10,000 employees, compared with 189 in the US and 303 in Japan. Overall business spending on ICT, machinery and other equipment has barely budged in real terms since the turn of the millennium.

Far from being a cause for celebration, low technology adoption rates could weaken the UK economy and our future prosperity. First, automation is a means to raise productivity, without which we are unlikely to see a return to real wage growth. In terms of GDP per hour worked, UK workers are 26% less productive than their counterparts in Germany, and 23% less productive than US workers.

Second, without adopting technology our businesses cannot hope to be competitive internationally. If our businesses do not automate, they will struggle to cut costs and win clients, and jobs will be lost regardless. Automation in this sense can protect domestic work, not act as its adversary.

Third, widespread under-investment in technology risks a small number of large, tech-led firms racing ahead of the competition and gobbling up market share. Apple already shows signs of moving into healthcare, Facebook into banking and Amazon into bricks-and-mortar retail. Concentrated markets are a threat to jobs and a risk to democracy.

The value of automation is demonstrated by our European neighbours. Germany is one of the most automated economies in the world, with more robots per worker than any other country in Europe. But it also has one of the strongest manufacturing bases and has experienced real wage growth every year since 2014.

Illustration by Peter Crowther

Automation on our own terms

We need to accelerate the adoption of new technologies in a way that delivers automation on our own terms. If new technology is adopted without due care it will sharpen inequalities, deepen geographic divisions and entrench demographic biases within our workplaces. Educators, employers and policymakers need to be mindful stewards of technology, overseeing its creation and adoption, and establishing a new economic settlement for good work to prevail.

First, we need a social contract fit for the modern labour market. If automation leads to even moderate job losses, inequalities of distribution or puts downward pressure on wages, we will need a means of sustaining the living standards of people within work, not just outside of it. This provides one of the reasons for committing to universal basic income pilots (as the RSA is now supporting in Scotland); establishing a new welfare deal for the self-employed, with more rights in exchange for higher national insurance contributions; and creating Personal Training Accounts, which would give every worker an individual budget to finance lifelong learning.

But top-down policy is not the only means of supporting workers. The RSA’s Future Work Awards will soon highlight inspiring examples of grassroots innovation that are reinforcing economic security from the bottom up. Among them are new insurance packages for gig workers, collective sick pay funds for the self-employed and recruitment algorithms that are designed to boost diversity in hiring decisions.

Second, we need to promote mass ownership and a stakeholder society. If automation means more income flowing to capital over labour, workers must have a stake in the former (the businesses and technology that are becoming ever more profitable). Both Labour and the Conservatives have promoted share ownership schemes, but altogether mainstream proposals have so far been piecemeal. The RSA recommends a Universal Basic Opportunity Fund, which would be created through a government endowment, replenished annually with levies on wealth, profits and data transfers, to be invested in infrastructure and global equities to pay out periodic dividends to every citizen.

Millions of us already have stakes in businesses deploying technology through our pension schemes or other investments. These investments are often small individually, but campaigns like Divest Invest, which seeks to accelerate clean energy investment, show how collective power can shift business behaviour. But ownership should not stop at conventional shareholding. The RSA has promoted the community ownership of business as a way of giving people a stake in the services they rely upon and value. One example is South West Mutual, a customer-owned

bank established by RSA Fellows that will work for the benefit of savers rather than distant shareholders.

Third, we need a new approach to data, which treats it less as an individual asset to be exploited and more as a common asset to support broader social goals. As pools of data expand to power new technologies like AI, we must ask how workers can have a greater say over how data is used and under what conditions.

Increasingly, there are calls for individuals to reclaim control over their own data, so that they can manage and monetise what they share. However, the RSA and the Open Data Institute believe it is better to frame this challenge in terms of data rights that apply to all, not least because financial returns on data at an individual level are unlikely to reflect its real value. A new Rights Framework for Data could help people exercise more power over how their data is used. A framework could, for example, limit workplace surveillance, which, according to a recent RSA/Populus survey, half of all workers fear.

Corporations, the state and public services must also develop transparent governance structures to demonstrate how data rights are safeguarded, while not shying away from using data to create better products and services. GDPR is a leap forward but more could be done voluntarily. For example, organisations could commit to disclosing which automated decision systems they use, for what purposes and with what safeguards.

Ending the digital dogma

In the heated debate that surrounds technology, it is easy to forget that we have choices. Investors can choose which technologies to back. Tech companies can choose which projects to prioritise and which features to build into their products. Employers can choose which technologies to purchase and how to deploy them. Educators can choose which skills to equip young people with. And policymakers can choose the terms of our tax and welfare systems.

Just as the pioneers of the Enlightenment struggled against the dogmas of church and state, so too must a 21st century enlightenment challenge the deeply embedded logic of scientific progress and the market. Rather than believe that if something can be automated then it should be, as a society we must continue to ask what technology is for. And, more importantly, how will it help us achieve the goal of good work for all?

Though they may have been painful in the short term, previous eras of technological progress were a tremendous force in making societies more free, humane and equal. It may not feel like it now, but in 30 years’ time we will undoubtedly be more prosperous. The question is whether everyone shares in the spoils. ■



INTRODUCING RAWTHMELLS

Three years ago I was sat around a table at RSA House with my colleagues, reviewing the results of a recent Fellowship survey. While many Fellows had commented on the valuable connections they had made at the House, it was painfully clear that space (or lack thereof) was a critical issue.

Three years later and we have opened our 21st century enlightenment coffeehouse, Rawthmells; named after the first meeting place of the RSA's founding Fellows. None of this would have been possible without the input of Fellows, who not only helped us choose the name and cemented the idea of an enlightenment coffeehouse as the way forward, but also assisted in developing many of the ideas that will make Rawthmells exceptional. These range from collaborative walls to a Fellowship table designed to foster new connections. I am particularly excited to see the impact of our new mini-amphitheatre, situated in the heart of the coffeehouse and free to use by anyone with a new, exciting idea.

While half the Fellows using the house come from outside London, we know that some Fellows rarely get the opportunity to visit. As such we wanted to take Rawthmells out to the Fellowship, and are doing so through a digital ideas platform (donated by a Fellow) where those with an idea or project can share it with others around the world, and collaborate together. Do have a look at www.thersa.org/RSAideas.

Thank you to the 4,000 Fellows who have engaged with the project so far. Whether you have contributed an idea about how the coffeehouse will support the RSA's mission, helped us select the name, or attended one of our many events about the coffeehouse, you have really made a difference. Of course, remodeling two floors of a 250-year-old building is not without cost, so a special thanks to the following Fellows, whose names are listed on the next few pages.

I look forward to having a drink with you in Rawthmells.

Photography by Billy Bolton

Many thanks to all of our supporters

Stephen Acklam • Reverend William Adams • Dr John Agnew • Sir Richard Aikens • Charles Ainger • Camilla Aitchison • Reverend Christopher Aitken • Lionel Akid • Paul Allin • Martin Allison • David Allison • Dr Joseph Amamoo • Mohammed Amin • Said Amiri • Ian Anderson • Rolande Anderson • Nigel Andrews • Katya Andrusz • Robert Annibale • Zeev Aram • Carmela Arturi • Stephen Atkinson • Frank Attwood • Humphrey Avon • Sir Alan Ayckbourn • Mark Ayre • Solange Azagury-Partridge • Bryonie Badcock • Janet Bagot • Patricia Bagshaw • Peter Bailey • Tracey Balch • Michael Ball • Trevor Band • John Barber • Peter Barber • Dr Keith Barker • Ian Barlow • Sir Nicholas Barrington • Nigel Barron • Professor Sarah Barrow • Tim Bartlett • Nigel Barton • Dr Raymond Batchelor • William Bates • Professor David Bates • Dr Christopher Batt • Elizabeth Bavidge • Dr Trevor Bayley • Catherine Bearder • David Beck • Robert Beckett • Andrew Beharrell • Antonia Belcher • Peter Bell • Ann Bell • Ross Bellamy • David Benson • Dr Anthony Bethell • John Bevan • Alison Bevis • Dennis Bexson • Bijon Bhowmick • Juliette Bigley • Richard Bird • Edwina Biucchi • Francis Black • Michael Blair • Francis Blake • Sir Quentin Blake • Andrew Blazye • Sonia Blizzard • Anne Boddington • Robert Bogin • Sir Michael Bond • John Booth • John Booth • William Bortrick • Eleonora Botti • Charles Boundy • Ronan Bouroullec • Robert Bowler • Dr John Bowman • Sir Jeffery Bowman • Dr Adrian Bowyer • Professor Patrick Boylan • Captain Peter Boyle • Katie Bradford • Francis Brake • Professor Carol Brayne • John Brearley • Linda Bretton • Peter Brew • Martin Brewis • Sarah Brooke • Rt Hon Sir Henry Brooke • Dame Susan Bruce, DBE • Professor Johanne Brunet • Jonathan Bryant • Craig Bryce • Robert Buckler • Andrew Burden • Alick Burge • Sir Stuart Burgess • George Burne • Dr Iona Burnell • Alison Bye • Joseph Byllam-Barnes • Anthony Cadwallader • Hongbing Cai • Frances Cairncross • Maxwell Caller • Roger Camrass • Councillor Anthony Carella • Rachel Carnac • Enrico Carpanini • Ock Carter • Jonathan Carter-Meggs • Sir Nic Cary • Enid Castle • Paul Cawood • Justin Cernis • Professor Sylvia Chant • Field Marshal Sir John Chapple • Ian Christie • Dr Geoffrey Claridge • David Clark • Stephen Clark • Peter Clarke • Reverend Michael Cleaves • Mark Clenshaw • Christopher Clifford • Jamie Clyde • Jill Cochrane • John Cockburn • Laurence Cockcroft • Dianne Coe • Paul Coggle • Professor Raymond Coker • Sara Coldicott • Robin Cole-Hamilton • Steve Coles • Stephen Collas • Dominic Collier • David Colville • Constance Travis Charitable Trust • Michael Convey • Dr Peter Cooper • John Cooper • Professor Aldwyn Cooper • Leonora Corden • Dr Helen Corkill • Peter Cornish • Harold Couch • Michael Coupe • Derek Cox • Michael Coy • Sir Howard Craig-Cooper • John Crampton • Ron Crank • Dr Tim Crayford • Gerard Creaner • Frederick Creyke • Prof. Lord William Critchley • Marie-Therese Crowle • Mary Crowley • Paul Crudge • Edward Cullinan • Philip Cullingford • Sean Cushing • Sir Eric Dancer KCVO CBE JP • Christine Dandridge • Michael Darbyshire • Amédée Darga • Vanessa Dart • Adrian Davies • Meryl Davies • Dr Trevor Davis • Sevrá Davis • Peter Dawes • Jeffrey Day • Thelma de Leeuw • Peter de Voil • Keith Deacon • Patricia Dean • Dr Michael Denham • John Denham • Celia Denton • Peter Desmond • John Dewhurst • Julia Dewhurst • Julia Dias • Antony Dickinson • David Dickinson • John Dixon • Dr Alan Dobson • Paul Docherty • Professor Mischa Dohler • Dr Thomas Downing • Revd Canon John Draper • Professor James Drife • Dr Michael D'Souza • Prof. Sir James Dunbar-Nasmith • Archibald Duncan • Hugh Dunn • Victoria Dyer • Simon Dyson • Francesca Ecsery • Dr Mary Ede • Roy Edwards • Timothy Edwards • Sir John Egan • Dr Alison Elliot • Professor Nick Ellison • Chris Elston • Sir Jeremy Elwes • David Elyan • Ronald Emerson • Grattan Endicott • Simon Esterson • Rt Hon Sir Terence Etherton • Beryl Evans • John Evans • John Evans • Michael Exeter • John Farago • David Farbey • Dr David Fawkes • John Fendek • John Fenwick • Baron Timothy Ferdinand • Dr Martin Ferguson-Pell • Dr David Fish • Alexis FitzGerald • Peter Flaherty • Sarah Fletcher • Barbara Follett • Dr Elizabeth Forbes • Professor Brian Ford • Reverend Richard Ford • Lady Catherine Forester • Nigel Forrest • Dr Dayo Forster • Alan Foster • Nicholas Frank • Hilary Fraser • Robbie Frazer • John Freeman • Peter Freeth • Thomas Fremantle • Dr Tim French • Peter French • Christine Freshwater • Dr Heather Fulton • Clarke Fyfe • Nora Galley • Malcolm



Oliver Reichardt is the RSA's Director of Fellowship

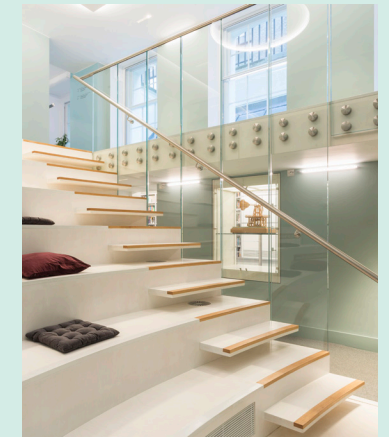
Gammie • Trish Gant • Dr Ruth Gardner • Martin Garthwaite • Caroline Garvey • David George • Sqn Ldr (Retd) Anthony Geraghty • Jonathan Gestetner • Commodore Ian Gibb • Kenneth Gibbs • Dr Walter Gibson • Professor Nigel Gilbert • John Gilhooly • Dr Scherto Gill • Peter Gillman • John Gillman • Elizabeth Glasgow • Gordon Glass • Clare Goddard • Kevin Goldstein-Jackson • Christopher Gooch • Professor Peter Goodhew • Pamela Gordon • Professor William Gosling • Jan Gower • Dr Jane Grant • Ian Grant • Brian Graver • Allan Graveson • Richard Greenhalgh • Professor Simon Gregson • Simon Grey • Matthew Griffin • Dr Roger Grimshaw • Rodney Gritten • Dr Harriet Gross • John Grubb • Graham Guest • Kenneth Haddon • Andrew Hall • Clare Hall • Nigel Hallard • Eric Halsall • Robert Hamilton • Percival Hammond • Brian Hammond • David Hampshire • Julia Hands • Dr Kenneth Hardman • Dr Ronald Harkess • Mark Harman • Hugh Harris • Jonathan Harris • Dr Thomas Harrison • Lord Simon Haskel • Geoffrey Haslam • Martin Hazell • Margaret Hedley • Donald Hefferon • Katrin Henkel • John Herdson • Dr Stephen Herman • Professor Ali Hessami • Jeffrey Hewitt • Randal Hibbert • Brian Hibbert • Toni Hicks • Kelvin Hide • John Higgins • Jim Higginson • Dr Gillian Hill • Kathryn Hindley • Tatjana Hine OBE • Andrew Hinton • Jennifer Hobbs • Peter Hobbs • Patrick Hobbs • John Hobson • Professor Richard Hodder-Williams • Christopher Hodgson • Gregory Hodgkinson • Sir Christopher Hogg • Patricia Hohmann-Barker • Mark Holford • Graham Hopkins • David Horner • John Howells • Venetia Howes • Sue Howes • Dr Matthew Huddleston • Liam Hughes • Robert Hulley • Professor Pali Hungin • Lindsay Ibbotson • Professor Grazia Ietto-Gillies • Selwyn Image • Paul Inglefield • Jeane Irvine • Professor John Izod • Anthony Jacobson • Robin Jacques • Rita James • Professor Mary James • Thomas Jelley • Professor Roger Jeynes • Henry Jodrell • Dr Robert Johns • Colin Johns • Dr Peter Johnson • Carl Johnson • Stephen Johnson • Peter Jones • Peter Jordan • Kishor Joshi • Portia Kamons • Martin Karaffa • Denis Keeling • Julian Kelly • Dr Terence Kemple • Michael Kersey • Dr Alison Kidd • John King • Malcolm King • Jennifer King • Edward Kinsella • Neil Kirkbride • Melanie Kirkbride • Naledi Kline • Robert Knox • Michael Kraftman • Ian Lacey • David Lamb • Professor Richard Lamming • Ralph Land • Travis Latham • Professor Diana Laurillard • Kevin Lawley • Dr Kenneth Lawrence • Professor Penelope Lawrence • Dr John Lazar • Dr John Leake • Professor Mark Lee • John Leech • Professor Karen Leeder • Alan Leibowitz • Mark Lemmon • George Lengvari • Norman Lessels • Tom Levitt • Laurent Levy • Oscar Lewisohn • Professor Yaojun Li • Dr Jonathan Lipkin • Peter Lipscomb • David Littlejohn • Leora Lloyd • Jiggy Lloyd • Professor Bruce Lloyd • Geoffrey Lord • Denis Loretto • Christopher Lucas • Ian Luder • Reverend Lawrence Luscombe • Dr Michael Lyons • Martin MacConnol • Duncan Macdiarmid • Ian MacEachern • Nigel Mac-Fall • Timothy Macfarlane • Alan MacKay • Alexander Mair • John Makepeace • Deirdre Mansi • Lorenz Manthey • Robert Marchant • Caroline Marcus • Godfrey Marks • Nick Marsden • Peter Massingham • Claire Maxwell • Kiki McDonough • Robert McFarland • Jeanette McFarland • David McGowan • Ian McGowan • Stryker McGuire • Cresson McIver • Andrew McLelland • Brendan McMahon • Noel McMullen • Professor Stephen McNair • Henry Meakin • Professor Anthony Meehan • Professor Geoffrey Meen • Sailesh Mehta • Raymond Mellor • Ralph Meloy • Steven Michael • Sir Peter Michael • David Miller • Susan Mitchell • David Moloney • Sir Mark Moody-Stuart • Jane Mordue • Dr Barrie Morgan • Karen Morgan • Professor David Morgan • Patrick Moriarty • Professor Michael Moriarty • Jill Morris • Professor Howard Morris • Margot Mouat • Mark Mount • Kate Mountain • Clive Mowbray • John Mowbray • Dennis Muirhead • Andy Mullins • Kevin Munday • Dr Campbell Murray • Dr Stephen Myers • Dr Graham Mytton • Sandy Nairne • Professor Shuichi Nakayama • Charles Naylor • Sean Nesbitt • Terry Neville OBE • Alan Newman • Marc Newson • David Nicholls • Karen Nicol • Bob Niven • Michael Ocock • Thomas O'Connell • Ann O'Connell • Kingsley Odame-Danquah • David Odgers • Dr Ita O'Donovan • The



Venerable Clifford Offer • Sqn Ldr John Ogle • Terence O'Keefe • Dr Sue Oreszczyn • Richard Organ • Mark Ormerod • Wendy Orr • Alfred Owen • Lola Owolabi • Guenever Pachent • Julian Pallett • Paul Palmarozza • Gomathi Panchapagesan • Gillan Paris • Alan Parker • Julian Parker • Julian Parrott • Alan Parry • Victor Parry • John Parsons • Dr Greg Parston • John Patrick • John Patisson • Claudia Payne • D'Arcy Payne • Michael Peachey • David Peacock • Christine Pearce • Ian Pearson • Robert Peett • Giles Pemberton • Alexander Pepper • Sir Denis Pereira Gray • Graham Peters • Michael Phair • Dr Mary Pickersgill • Mark Pitman • Gabriel Popescu • Jan Portillo • Stephen Potter • Christopher Power • Karina Prasad • Catherine Price • David Prichard



Relax and share ideas over a coffee in Rawthmells



• Ian Pryce • Robert Pulley • Brion Purdey • Earl William Radnor • Johanna Raffan • Dato Raiss • Siegfried Ramseyer • Dr David Randall • Josef Ransley • Geoff Raw • Jane Rayner • Rupert Readman • Utz Reiff • Dr Bill Reith • Professor Robert Rennie • Charles Reynolds • Michael Richards • Dr Jeremy Richardson • Charles Richardson • William Richardson • Sheila Richardson • Martin Riddiford • Frederick Riding • William Ridley • Peter Riley • Edith Riley • Dr Gerald Rimmington • Sara Rix • Janet Robb • Phil Roberts • David Robertson • Lawrence Robertson • Edward Robinson • David Rocklin • Jenni Roditi • Dr Anthony Rooke • Professor Fiona Ross • Kevin Rowen • Dennis Rowley • Davo Ruthven-Stuart • Dr Peter Sadd • Philip Sadler • Rt Hon Sir Timothy Sainsbury • Professor Edward Sallis • Ekrem Sami • Philip Sams • Jane Samsworth • June Sanders • Daphne Sanderson • Ann Santry • Maitreyee Sarcar • Peter Saunders • Martin Saville • Richard Saxon • Hugh Scantlebury • Sir David Scholey • John Scott • Ellen Scott • Prof. Sir Peter Scott • Jill Segal • Graham Sessions • Annabelle Shaw • Alfred Shedden • Philip Sherman • Graham Shirville • John Shrigley • Robert Siaens • Julia Sibley • Sue Siddall • Professor David Sigsworth • Peter Simor • John Simpson • Wing Cmdr Gilbert Singleton • Sir Christopher Slade • Rodger Slape • Trevor Slater • Greg Slay • Iain Sloane • Graham Smallbone • Douglas Smith • Laurie Smith • Sir James Smith • Keith Smithson • Audrey Songhurst • Dr Ann Soutter • William Speechley • Roger Spence • Lord Charles Spencer • Graham Spooner • Diana Springall • Catherine Springett • Colin St Johnston • Del Staecker • Margaret Stamper • Geoffrey Stanton • Ian Stanton • Madeline Steele • Pippa Stevens • Helen Stevens • Hugh Stirk • Sir Richard Storey • Roy Storrs • Josephine Storrs • Christopher Sturman • George Sutherland • Elizabeth Sutton • Claudette Sutton • Richard Swanwick • Sydney Swayne • Christopher Sykes • Sir Hugh Sykes • Sidney Syson • Edward Tadros • Roger Tant • Professor Cyrus Tata • Anthony Taylor • Kevin Taylor • Victoria Teggin • Subhash Thakrar • Nicholas Thomas • Meryl Thompson • Anthony Thorne • Alan Thornton • Robert Thornton • Professor Alan Thornton MBE • Mark Thriscutt • John Tiller • Ina Tomkinson • Sir Michael Tomlinson • Alan Tomsett • John Toovey • Ian Tough • Reverend John Travell • Michael Truscott • Geoffery Tudhope • Dr Philippa Tudor • Paul Twivy • William Tyson • Sachchidanand Unavane • William Underwood • Lady Elizabeth Vallance • Dries Van Noten • Nicole Vanderbilt • Dr Aran Verling • Hanif Virji • Faith Wainwright • William Wakefield • Alexander Walkington • Shona Walton • John Ward • Peter Ward • Tony Ward • Professor Neil Ward • Robert Ward Dyer • Richard Warley • Frederick Warren • Lawrence Waterman • David Waterman • Michael Waterson • Reverend John Wates • Wing Cdr Alan Watkins • Peter Watts • Philip Welch • Peter Wells • Professor Elizabeth Wells • Alexis West • Professor John West-Burnham • Ian Whalley • Dr Ralph White • Marian Whitehead • Professor David Whittingham • Stephen Whittle • Dr Nick Wickham • Barnaby Wiener • David Wightman • Hugh Wilding • George Wilkinson • John Willan • Deborah Williams • Raymond Williamson • John Willis • Elizabeth Willis • Karl Wills • Thomas Wilson • Melba Wilson • Philippa Wilson • Reverend Alan Winn • Philip Winterton • Edwina Wolstencroft • Jeremy Wong • Gilbert Wood • Eric Woodcock • Professor John Worthington • Patricia Wright • Professor Anthony Yates • Roger Young • George Zandona • John Zealley • Peter Zinkin

FUNDING THE FUTURE

The RSA's Grant programme is open to all Fellows who have new, innovative projects that will help solve a societal problem

by Amy Butterworth
 @butterworthamy

Launched in 2010, the RSA's Catalyst programme has so far funded nearly 200 Fellow-led projects and distributed over £672,000. Every year, a portion of Fellows' contributions is put aside to fund social change projects created and headed by Fellows from across the globe. Catalyst has evolved over the years; since 2016 we have opened for applications three times a year, and we now receive up to 50 applications per round for the £2,000 Seed Grant or the £10,000 Scaling Grant. In the past two years alone, we have received nearly 400 applications from around the world, and funded nearly 60 projects in Vietnam, Peru, Uganda, North London and Newcastle, and everywhere in between.

However, the programme is not just about giving out money. The application process is just the start of a long-term conversation between RSA staff and Fellows regarding which societal needs we should address, interrogating how we can do so using effective project design and – most importantly – how to then set the wheels in motion. There are many grant programmes out there, but there are a number of factors that make the Catalyst programme distinct.

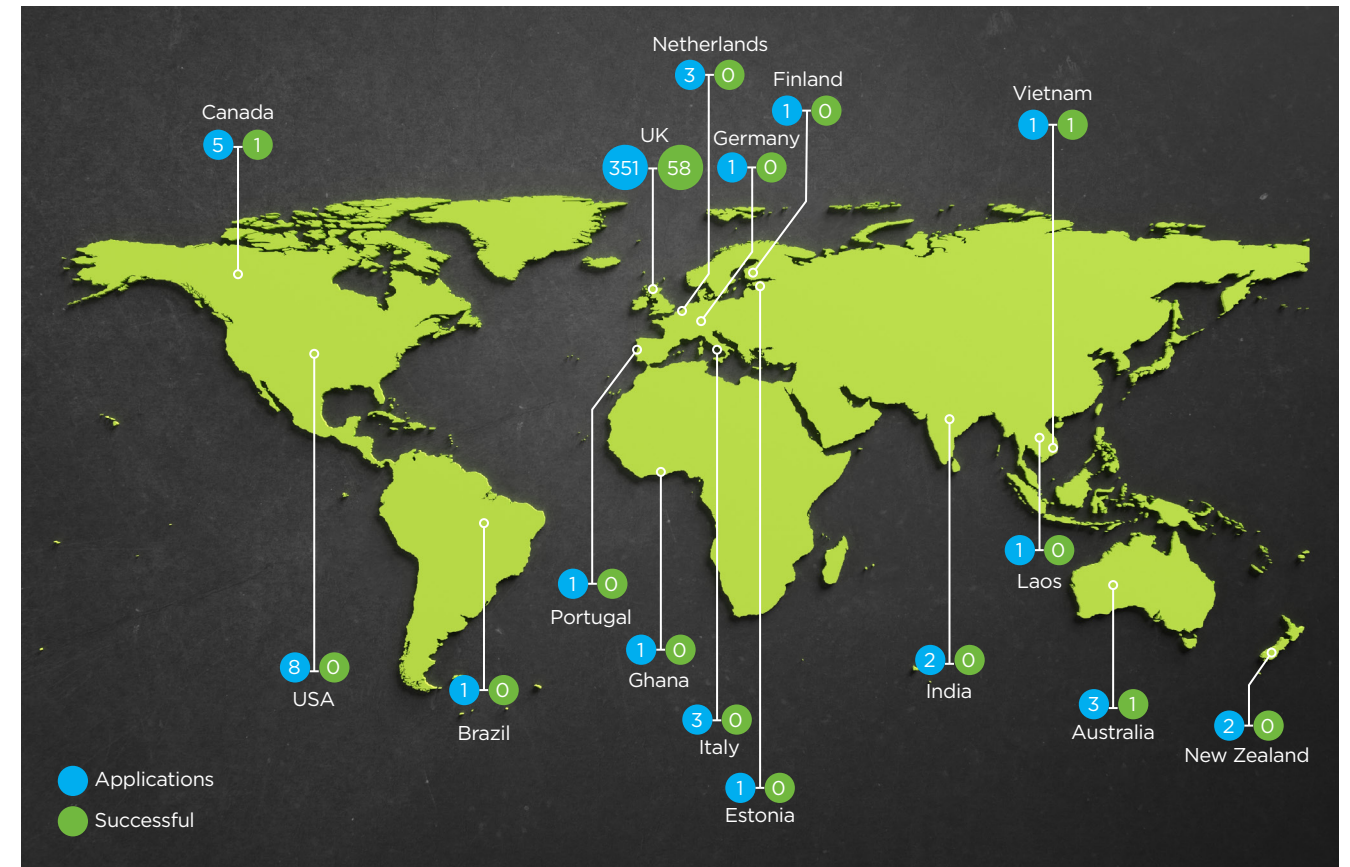
First, true to our principles, we encourage *reflective thinking* about each project and its design as well as the development of the Catalyst programme itself, taking an iterative approach to ensure we support our applicants while remaining true to the RSA's mission and values. The process prioritises locally-led projects that have identified a specific societal need and propose practical action to address this, encouraging applicants to reflect on project design and the best way to make the desired impact.

For example, Alice Merry FRSA, based in Peru, recognised that although Lima has a phenomenal heritage, it has remarkably low numbers of local

visitors to its museums. This is largely down to the high cost of travel from poorer neighbourhoods to the museums, and the subsequent entry fees. Instead of trying to attract people to museums, Merry created Wak'a, an interactive pop-up museum installed in areas such as beaches and shopping centres. Using Catalyst Seed Grant funding, Wak'a pop-up museums have been able to reach around a thousand people a day, a remarkable achievement considering that nearly half of Peru's 25 regions receive fewer national visitors to their museums in a whole month. Wak'a is currently fundraising to scale up its network in 2019.

Second, we encourage *robust and sustainable* plans. It is important that applications address plans for the project beyond the grant to ensure that they are sustainable and that applicants have thought about how they will measure impact. We try to lead by example, by publishing our own impact reports, and encourage Fellows to do the same. Bonnie Chiu FRSA used a Catalyst Scaling Grant to further develop Lensational, her global operation to empower young women using photography. As the initiative expanded, instead of 'professionalising' paid staff members, Bonnie used the Scaling Grant to maintain the bottom-up nature of the community and to recruit photography, media and arts professionals as ambassadors and changemakers. Bonnie had applied before unsuccessfully, and used the feedback she received from the Catalyst panel to rethink her application.

Third, we *provide networking opportunities*. Alan Bec FRSA received a Catalyst Seed Grant for his project, the-wib (wellbeing indicator) badge: a dial you can wear day-to-day to signal your energy and wellbeing. A Catalyst grant was awarded so he could fund a research stage of his prototype, testing out how it manifests in healthcare, business and education. The



Location (by mailing address of applicant, not project location) (JAN 2016 - MAY 2018)

programme also helped to connect Alan with other FRSAs who work in the space of wellbeing, setting in motion further collaboration.

As part of this third area, we also enable projects to connect. Frequently, there are a number of similar projects that come through the application process, and we believe that sometimes a shared goal can be easier to work towards. For instance, Rick Hall's Lab_13 and Anita Shervington's BLACK Steam, which are both trying to encourage more diverse youth engagement in STEM in the UK and Africa and beyond.

Fourth, we provide applicants with *support from RSA staff*. We carefully match Catalyst recipients with staff who have relevant experience or an interest in the project's area of work. For Accumulate, an arts programme for people with experience of homelessness, project lead Marice Cumber FRSA had the support of Tom Harrison, an RSA researcher with expertise in mental health issues who has an interest in supporting those dealing with homelessness.

Through their collaboration, we promoted Marice's call for a Business Development Manager (who was recruited after Marice's RSA blog was shared on LinkedIn) and for other organisations working in the space of upskilling those making the transition from homelessness to employment.

Finally, the Catalyst programme is funded by Fellows. Every year, £100,000 is set aside to fund the programme; every penny is made up of contributions from Fellows. This creates a dynamic process where Fellows are potentially contributing to their own future projects, or supporting other FRSA's in their active quest for positive social change.

With every round of applications, we are inspired and delighted by the innovative and unique projects created by Fellows. The Catalyst programme upholds a special strand of the RSA's DNA, continuing to democratise the best ideas to serve our society in the most effective way. We believe that those closest to the issues have the best solutions, and we look forward to seeing what ideas our Fellows come up with next. ■



Five podcast recommendations to help us all be better listeners

by James Shield

🐦 @jshield

Over the past 43 years, the American radio journalist Terry Gross has recorded more than 13,000 interviews with entertainers, politicians and writers for *Fresh Air*, the nationally syndicated show she presents from the modest offices of WHY-FM, Philadelphia's public radio station. Most of her guests, even regulars like humourist David Sedaris, have never met her. Instead they speak to Gross from remote studios, usually in New York or Los Angeles, while she listens, curtains drawn. The conversations sometimes assume the tone of one of those phone calls in which a degree of distance somehow makes it easier to be honest.

In the US her status is that of a national interviewer – she was awarded the National Humanities Medal by President Obama – and she is revered by fellow radio journalists. Ira Glass, host of *This American Life* and producer of blockbuster crime podcast *Serial*, wrote in 2015: “I’ve always admired how well she imagines herself into the mind of the person she’s interviewing. Like she once asked the magician Ricky Jay something like ‘Is there ever a trick where the behind-the-scenes stuff – the secret stuff we don’t see – is actually more interesting than what we do see?’ Inventing a question like that is such a pure imaginative act of empathy.”

In a polarised world it is worth seeking out interviewers with a gift for empathic inquiry, and podcasts are where you’ll find some of the best. In *Political Thinking*, the broadcaster Nick Robinson is freed from the Punch-and-Judy format of BBC Radio 4’s *Today* programme, emerging as a generous long-form interviewer. His conversations with the UK’s political big beasts are what you would expect, but

episodes with newcomers from the 2015 and 2017 parliamentary intakes – less hardened, less media-trained – are his best. (Turns out, politicians are people too.) Meanwhile, the phenomenally successful *New York Times* podcast, *The Daily*, is where you will find the best audio journalism on Trump’s America. An interview with a former coal miner with black lung disease was an arresting listen: “If I had to do it all over again, guess what? I would make the same choice.”

Podcasts have also become one of the few remaining ‘safe’ spaces for political discussion to take place in good faith. The medium’s resistance to going viral means there is little risk of being taken out of context or wilfully misunderstood. Helen Lewis often prefaces her comments on the excellent *New Statesman* podcast with “I would never write this online, but...”

The BBC’s *The Grenfell Tower Inquiry* podcast is a very different exercise in listening. In near-daily episodes, it reports from the independent public inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the fire that destroyed a London tower block in June 2017, killing 72 people and shocking the country. It was introduced by its presenter Eddie Mair with these words upon its launch in May: “It will not be entertaining. Some of it will be gruelling and harrowing. I can think of many reasons why you would not want to listen.” And yet there is an odd form of comfort in listening to the truth being methodically uncovered. During the inquiry’s first phase, we hear from firefighters who risked their lives despite faulty equipment, residents who raised concerns years ago, neighbours who helped one another through the smoke. The second phase, focusing on the causes of the fire, will require us to listen very closely indeed. ■

James Shield is Head of RSA Radio. *Polarised*, Matthew Taylor and Ian Leslie’s RSA podcast investigating the political and cultural forces driving society further apart, is in its second series

Illustration by Daniel Triendl