HOUSE OF LORDS

COVID-19 Committee

Corrected oral evidence: Life Beyond Covid

Tuesday 8 September 2020

10 am

Watch the meeting

Members present: Baroness Lane-Fox of Soho (The Chair); Lord Alderdice; Baroness Benjamin; Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen; Lord Elder; Lord Hain; Lord Harris of Haringey; Baroness Jay of Paddington; Baroness Morgan of Cotes; Lord Pickles; Baroness Young of Hornsey.

Evidence Session No. 1 Virtual Proceeding Questions 1 - 13

Witnesses

I: Brad Blitz, Head of Department of Education, Practice and Society, UCL's Institute of Education; Clive Lewis MP, co-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Green New Deal; Polly Mackenzie, Chief Executive of Demos; Anthony Painter, Chief Research and Impact Officer at the RSA.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

1. This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Examination of witnesses

Brad Blitz, Clive Lewis MP, Polly Mackenzie and Anthony Painter.

Q1 **The Chair:** Good morning and welcome to the COVID-19 Committee. Welcome to our Members and to our inquiry helpers, who will deliver some exciting and interesting views on the long-term implications of Covid.

I welcome the four witnesses and thank them for attending. I ask each of them to make some short comments about the work they are doing.

I remind Members and those giving evidence today that we are focused on the long-term implications of Covid, with a two to five-year timeframe. We know that all of you, in different ways, are working on the same longer-term views. We are very interested to hear how you are approaching your work and the themes that are emerging.

We have been doing a big exercise, going out to members of the general public. We have asked for people's written evidence and submissions via all kinds of different forms, traditional and non-traditional. We are also doing lots of groups over the next couple of weeks—drop-ins that we would have done in pre-Covid times. We will be able to talk to different people around the country.

We are very interested in hearing about how you are coming to your themes and what themes might be emerging. I am going to call on you individually to speak for a few minutes. We have been looking at three buckets: people's daily lives and how they have been affected in the home and their personal lives; their working lives; and how they think society is being affected as a whole. That is how we have been grouping things, but I do not want to constrain you in explaining what methodology you have been using.

Polly Mackenzie, will you go first and tell us what Demos has been up to and give some of your early thoughts?

Polly Mackenzie: Thank you. I am so impressed by this Committee and the approach you have taken to involving members of the public. It is really inspiring and exciting. I feel very privileged to be able to share some of our insights with you.

Demos is a cross-party think tank. Our whole mission is about involving the public and lived experience in public policy. In the light of Covid-19 we have started a process called Renew Normal. We are delighted to have the support of Baroness Morgan on that, along with a range of other figures from across political and non-political life.

The core of it is an open conversation with the public—a bit like the Committee. We started with an open survey that asked people to tell us anything. We have also used the same buckets: people's daily lives; their working lives; and their sense of how society is changing.

One of the key things we asked was: what have people changed their minds about? If you are thinking about the long-term implications, the

way in which it has shifted people's perspectives on what they want from their daily lives, how they want to approach their working lives and our economy, and how society ought to be set up is the crucial thing to start to look for.

Of course, there will be trends and forces that go beyond what public choice would drive. Nevertheless, we felt that our role in Renew Normal in involving the public was to identify, of all of this overwhelming experience of change, what it was that people wanted to cling to and to keep, and what it was that people wanted to give away to get back to normal as quickly as possible. We then wanted to work out what, of the things people wanted to keep, was sticky and what we should be investing in trying to keep.

We followed that up with a 10,000-sample poll to allow us to reach the groups that are more likely to be underrepresented in naturally coming forward with their ideas.

My overwhelming insight is that there are no simple answers. The experience has been incredibly divergent. It does not matter what you are looking at. With exercise patterns, there is a group who have got worse and a group who have got better. With food, work/life balance, relationships with family and neighbours, there is a group that has gone sharply in one direction and a group sharply in the other direction.

In general there is a tilt towards the fact that the more affluent you are, the more likely it is that things have got better—or the larger the group for whom things have got better—and the poorer you are, the more likely it is that things have got worse on those metrics, whether it is your financial situation, your spending patterns or your eating habits. Equally, there are still rich people whose lives have got worse and poor people who are telling us that their lives have got measurably better in some of the issues of daily life and working life.

When it comes to changing your mind, it is really easy when you are a policymaker or in political circles to assume that shifts in opinion within the bubble of Westminster are reflected by the public in their attitudes and opinions. There is not some sea change. There is no sense that Britain needs to be completely reinvented: in a way, I would suggest, this is really not 1945. There are areas on which people are changing their minds. We will be publishing more detailed data and doing a QA process on that at the end of the week. I shall be delighted to share the details with the Committee once I know that all the numbers are accurate.

People are just as likely, if not more likely, to have reinforced their views in one direction than to have changed their minds. We need to be really careful in imagining that this will be the total reinvention of everything, and that suddenly we believe in climate change, state-sponsored capitalism or total deregulation. People are quite cautious about changing their minds.

I have picked five areas where I am most confident that there will inevitably be long-term consequences. The first is that, because of this divergence of opinion and the tilt between income and demographic indicators, inequality on almost every metric will be sharpened, whether it be educational or health based. In all of it, inequality will get wider. People are giving us really strong indications that when it comes to working practices we are not going to shift to an exclusively home-working society, but a substantial minority of people want to shift their working patterns. That will have all sorts of knock-on consequences for travel patterns and city infrastructure. I am sure the Committee will be thinking that through in detail.

There has been a marked shift in people's opinions about what I might call strategic national resilience, or anti-globalisation, depending on how dramatic you want to be about it—a sense that we ought to be able to survive more on our own, whether that it is in relation to food, medicines, masks or Chinese infrastructure in our 5G network. We are picking up quite a shift in opinion about how independent we ought to try to be.

There will obviously be a shift in the amount of time we spend online and the services we expect around online living. People have tried it. Some will want to go back, but they will not all go back. That will again be a substantial economic shift.

The final thing and absolute top of polling that we will put out at the end of the week is green space. People have shifted how much they value green space in their lives and the lives of other people quite substantially. That is not to say that people have shifted their views dramatically about climate change. I personally think that climate change is existentially important, but I do not think we can see a shift in the public. In relation to green space and local environmental experiences, its role in personal and societal well-being and its value to other people and to a community is the biggest area where there is a dawning of people's realisations and a real shift. I think politicians should expect to find ways to respond to that increased public demand.

Those are my five: inequality; working practices; strategic national resilience; green space; and more living online.

The Chair: Thank you, Polly. That is immensely helpful and it is somewhat reassuring, having gone through 300 pieces of evidence, that there is divergence. Perhaps understandably, we can surmise that people find it hard to look very far in advance and are still quite surrounded by their own understandable complexity.

I call Brad Blitz to give us his initial thoughts. Then we will come on to questioning from Members.

Brad Blitz: Thank you very much, Baroness Lane-Fox. I thank the Committee for giving me this opportunity.

I am a professor at UCL. I am a Professor of International Politics and Policy. I am also head of the Department of Education, Practice and Society. I am going to be presenting some evidence, both on behalf of my department but also in recognition of the work that we have been doing with our partners openDemocracy, Schoolzone, London COVID-19 Care Central and the UCL Students' Union.

I want to share in particular the youth perspective—a young person's perspective. That is what we captured through the online competition that we organised.

By way of background, I should say that I speak as an educator and as a social scientist. It is clear from both perspectives that this pandemic raises many questions about the ways in which our society is organised and how our public health challenges might be managed.

UCL has been very much at the forefront of initiatives aimed at addressing many of these challenges. In particular, we have heard from public health experts, epidemiologists, scientists and economists. They have been sharing knowledge with a view to informing policy and improving practice—what we call impact-generating activities.

There are other forms of knowledge, too. It is not just produced by scientists or highly skilled individuals. As educators, we say that our job is to open doors. It would be a conceit to suggest that only professional educators are capable of opening eyes or should be the only ones tasked to do so. There are multiple forms of knowledge; in the wider world we are all learners. That is why, in particular, we wanted to hear the voices of students and children from the ages of 14 right the way up to young adults.

By way of background, I want to give you a bit of information and a bit of context about two events that crystallised in my mind the need for this type of competition. The first was in March. I remember reading a piece in the *New York Times* by a Harvard professor, Hannah Marcus, whose article was "What the Plague Can Teach Us About the Coronavirus". The sub-heading was, "We need to be on guard against the xenophobia and persecution that arose during outbreaks of that dreaded disease".

The author was applying her knowledge to the current situation. Of course, that is something we encourage our students to do. The article also came on the heels of an attack against an international UCL student from Singapore by the name of Jonathan Mok, who was beaten up on Oxford Street in the middle of the day. In spite of what he experienced, he put forward a really eloquent plea on YouTube for tolerance in this beautiful city.

Speaking to colleagues, we recognised that this was a learning opportunity. We recognised that as educators we should not miss a trick. We should use this as an opportunity to encourage students to explore the underlying social core for any economic assumptions that they might come across in their formal studies, whether about some of the issues

that Polly just mentioned—the effects of global trade, the management of borders and migration, the delivery of services and the supremacy of the state to manage the needs of citizens—and to open the door to them so that we could hear their voices.

Working with openDemocracy and a developer by the name of Wishpond based in Canada, a social marketing firm that has organised many corporate sweepstake-type competitions, we decided to organise an online competition whereby students would be invited to upload a short essay, a video or an image in response to the question, "What is your vision for life after Covid-19?" We were really pressing them for illustrations and projections of what a better life might look like.

We worked through a series of partner organisations that had far reach. Schoolzone is able to reach out to 160,000 teachers. We worked through the Students' Union at UCL. We worked through a student-to-student organisation called London COVID-19 Care Central, an organisation set up by University of London students for students who are experiencing anxiety and concern. Interestingly, many of them were young scientists themselves. They wanted to share information.

As a result of the competition we launched, we received 898 eligible entries from 36 countries. Then we launched a public vote. We received almost 10,000 votes. Interestingly, most of what we received were essays. We received 631 essays; about a third of that number were images; and a small number of videos. This was in many respects quite surprising to us. We assumed we were going to receive much more digital content, because the presumption is that that is where students live these days and that is how they communicate. What we received were very eloquent pleas in the written word.

Broadly speaking, we can summarise the content. The first was the yearning to be heard and to be valued: the belief that young people have opinions and insights. These focused very much on the future, but they also focused on relationships. There were discussions about family members and broad assertions about how they could mobilise to be heard themselves.

Related to this was a series of responses that responded, again, as Polly said, at both extremes. There was an eschatological sense of "what is the world coming to?" and some really positive, transformative suggestions about equity, improvements to public health and social injustice, especially systemic racism, as well as more efficient ways of using technology to communicate and reach out. There was an emphasis on the power and vitality of the arts, especially music. Music came up repeatedly.

Of course, global solutions were presented beyond the pandemic. The climate crisis came up repeatedly, in particular. Many suggested that a better world was possible. There was a strong focus on justice and fairness—as I said, largely to do with environmental justice.

At the same time we also heard and received a number of what might be described as pessimistic statements about the worsening of social inequalities, about poverty and about play space in inequalities. Many of the responses spoke to the students' very local situations; their neighbourhoods, their schooling and their family settings.

They spoke about lack of access, whether to green spaces, parks or play. There were concerns about food, insecurity and employment. There were concerns for their own future as well as global concerns about the rise in nationalism, the breakdown of global co-operation, attacks on civil liberties and concerns about state surveillance and despair.

What was also interesting was the way this was presented in art form. We received many collages—many attempts to bring together different media and different forms of information in one particular piece of art. While there was often an element of morbidity, you would find it contrasted against positive images in the same piece of art.

Sometimes we even saw that in the videos. I can think in particular of one video of an art student who had produced a dress that was coloured by bath bombs. She had created this beautiful dress for her end of year, closing-out, ceremony—her final review. She is walking through a cemetery, yet it was still joyous and she is still blowing bubbles. It is as if the cemetery is a backdrop. That was one that I remembered. There was often this element of irony in what was presented.

Overall, I would say that the competition was valued by teachers and by students. Even though the prizes were not financially that significant—no one was going to win a car or a holiday—none the less there was great interest in it. There was, again, recognition that this was a learning opportunity, and an opportunity for participation.

I might conclude by saying that once upon a time we used to talk more about child participation in schooling, in social work and in development agendas. There was greater recognition of peer-to-peer learning as well as horizontal modes of learning. I think we really want to encourage that. It is not that we do not recognise the ground-breaking work of scientists and the tremendous importance of scientific knowledge not only in combating this pandemic and bringing hopefully a vaccine very shortly to all of us, but in recognising that there are many forms of knowledge. As educators, I feel that that is what we should be encouraging. We want to force open the bandwidth to as many ideas as possible. This was one illustration of how that could be achieved.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Brad. It is always inspiring to hear about young people's creative brilliance in exposing the times they are facing.

I ask Clive Lewis to explain what your APPG is up to.

Clive Lewis MP: First of all, thank you for having me here today, Lords and Ladies. It is a great pleasure. I hope that the Sylvanian family

backdrop behind me does not dent my credibility. We are all living Covid lockdown in a variety of ways at the moment. That is certainly one for me.

First of all, the Green New Deal all-party parliamentary group that I co-chair with Caroline Lucas is behind this initiative. We have been working on an inquiry that we have called Reset. It is publishing the first report of its findings next Wednesday, which we will be more than happy to share with your Committee so that we can compare notes. We are still finalising our findings. There will be much more detail in our report, but I am happy to share some of the key elements today.

We launched Reset at the end of June because we wanted to find out what life in lockdown had been like for people across the UK. We wondered whether anything had changed for people, and what people might want to see changed as a result of their experience. We conducted a public survey and worked with the insight agency Opinium to explore the public's experience of lockdown. That included more than 3,000 people who filled in our full survey. We polled a representative sample of 2,000 UK adults. We then used those results to inform six four-hour-long workshops, in which 108 members of the public took part.

I want to go into a bit more detail about this. We were very thorough in how we went through this to try to give as broad a range as possible rather than speaking to what you may call the usual suspects—those who put themselves forward to engage. The workshops, all of which included a diverse range of people, were a combination of reflection and co-creation. We invited the public to imagine a different future. Our research team also interviewed a small number of people who do not have access to the internet, as Polly did, so that we could make sure we were inclusive.

We also worked with a digital ethnographer, who looked at discussions on Facebook groups across the country between the start of lockdown and the easing of restrictions at the end of July to get a full picture.

We analysed the data. We gathered in the poll, the workshops, the views and the digital ethnography to build up a picture of how people have been affected by the crisis and how they might want life in Britain to change as a result.

In doing this, it is important to express the fact that we wanted to take a small step in doing politics differently, remaking the broken connection between people and politicians. We wanted to start by listening to what people told us about the way they would like to see life change in the UK and what they want to see delivered from government in the future.

Across the workshops, on issues from food to jobs, travel and the way we consume, we found the majority united by a desire for a fairer Britain. That came out really clearly. When asked to imagine a future community, almost every participant in our workshops on homes and community cited greater equality as the best feature of their new community. As one

participant explained, in their future community everyone is treated as equal.

We also found a Britain that is kinder and more united than many politicians and much of the media seem to believe sometimes. We spoke to people from every walk of life and every part of Britain. We found a range of opinions, of course, but when we created a space for people to reflect on the last few months and how they might want to change as a result we found that it was remarkably consistent across social class, geography, ethnicity and age. We are finding a consensus here.

Overall, we found that people want life in Britain to be fair and greener and believe that the Government can, and should, intervene to make that happen. We found people's desire for fairness and a new-found respect for key workers, and the widespread belief that they should be better rewarded and a desire to address inequalities in the housing market.

People's understanding of who key workers are has expanded to include supermarket workers, delivery drivers and postal workers, among others. They think that they should be better rewarded for what they do.

An overwhelming majority of the public think that NHS workers, care workers, delivery drivers and supermarket workers should have better working conditions. A large majority of the public think that care workers and NHS workers should be paid more.

A large majority of the public want rent caps so that housing is affordable for all. Very few people believe that housing policy is currently working well.

We found that people want to work differently in the future, with potentially significant implications for our ability to reduce emissions if people commute less. Most of the people who have been able to work from home during the pandemic want many of the changes initiated under lockdown to be made permanent. People want the flexibility of being able to work from home where it is safe and it is possible to do so for some or most of the time.

We did find there were some differences between those who are a little bit older in their working lives and some of those who were younger. We have put that down to the fact that the younger you are, it is possible that you are house sharing or living with your parents and therefore do not have that space available to be able to work in the way that you wanted.

We also found that people were supportive of government intervention in the jobs market, with significant support for a jobs guarantee and some form of universal basic income.

Just over half of the public support a shorter working week. Participants in our workshops also told us that they want more time to contribute to their local communities and to be able to give back to the society that

they feel part of. As one participant in a workshop put it, "If you give us time, a lot of people would give back".

Staying local during lockdown has changed the way people think about their local areas. Participants in our workshops want more vibrant neighbourhoods, where their needs can be met without having to travel for the essentials of life and where there is less traffic.

We asked people to imagine the high street of the future. Participants in the workshops wanted to see green spaces, trees, community hubs, housing and cultural spaces alongside shops, with far fewer cars and electric scooters. I was quite surprised at that, but that was one of the things that came out.

People are also keen to see how technology can be harnessed to support local shops. People value green spaces enormously. We have heard that quite a bit so far during lockdown. Many of them wanted more investment in public green spaces, particularly in London. Even people with private gardens recognise the value of public green spaces. People see them as social spaces and vital for health and well-being.

In our workshop on homes and community, when asked to describe an object that symbolised community, most of the workshop participants chose to describe a green space. Access to a green space is uneven, though: 19% of people told us that they do not live within easy walking distance of a green public space.

Some of the most popular changes we heard about, including more green spaces, liveable streets, less traffic, more flexible working patterns and food grown closer to home, would also make a significant contribution to meeting the UK's zero carbon targets. Having seen the Government intervene in unprecedented ways, from guaranteeing income during lockdown to building emergency hospitals, people seem to have a renewed understanding that the Government are able to intervene to shape our everyday lives, and want a Government that will do so.

The Prime Minister has described his Government as a "people's Government". Our research found that this Government have a far greater popular mandate for much bolder action to achieve fairness and sustainability than they actually imagine.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that, Clive. It is interesting to see some of the things between the three of you, particularly green spaces and equality in the community.

Finally, but not least, Anthony, will you tell us a bit about the work you have been doing in the RSA?

Anthony Painter: Thank you, Baroness Lane-Fox, and I thank the Committee for inviting me. Like my fellow witnesses, I applaud the way in which you have cast the net wide on this conversation. I also applaud the work of my fellow witnesses, who clearly have done an enormous amount of public engagement work in this process.

As we think about how we bridge to the future, that will be a critical component of how we respond to what has been revealed through Covid.

The RSA combines research analysis, policy, thinking about how you design systems, engagement with practitioners and the public in order to try to understand society's needs, the changes that might be required, but also, critically, how change might happen.

The key thing about Covid is that it has revealed to an enormous extent how there are deep structural fractures and inequalities in society. Our governance systems are not yet purpose-built. Those fractures and systemic weaknesses have often hampered our ability to respond to the needs of the moment. They should provoke us into thinking very differently about how we respond to social, economic and service needs in the future.

There are three ways in which change can happen—one is the underlying need for change. Covid has revealed deep inequalities in race and ethnicity, economic position, access to housing, green space and the support that you get from public services and the community. There is a latent need for change.

There are moments when suddenly these features are revealed. Covid and pandemics are one such moment. Economic crisis and major cultural changes are others. Covid has been important in identifying where some of those fractures are.

The third step of change is that there is a viable coalition that wants to see change and can carry it through with public support and legitimacy, which is why the public engagement exercises that are undertaken by the organisations and the Committee are so important. You need to be able to sustain change over a period of time.

In preparation for today we had a look at some of the global responses to the global pandemic that were perceived to be successful and what were the features of those systems that were successful. We took a look at China, Vietnam, South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, Germany, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore—a group of nations that have been quite successful but are very different models.

The interesting thing about this conversation is that the responses can happen in many different governance systems across ideologies and across the political spectrum. There are a number of features that have been critical and from which we can learn as we go forward.

First, there needs to be strong co-ordination in responses, horizontally and vertically: horizontally between aspects of central government and vertically between regional and local government but also civil society, the commercial sector and so on. We have seen elements of this in the response to Covid—for example, the construction of the furlough scheme that was part of a social dialogue between the Government, the trade

unions, business and others. It points to the important way in which we might confront some of the challenges that have quite clearly emerged.

Societies that have been successful have high levels of trust. Those levels of trust can be cultural. They are about government practice, transparency and democracy. They are based on the capacity of a system to be resilient. Do you have spare capacity in the system to respond to challenges? Are supports sufficient—for example, social security, public services and universality? Is the system adaptive enough, particularly to the needs of particular exposed groups such as black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and poorer communities?

We have done quite a bit of survey work on essential workers and key workers who have had a different set of challenges—not financial or economic particularly, but more to do with mental health and well-being. How do we respond to those social health needs? So, capacity resilience, trust, co-ordination and learning over time, including from international examples.

We can build some of these lessons into how we move forward. There are probably two ways in which we need to go into this change tunnel from this moment. One is with the deep ethos of public engagement. We do not yet know how we need to respond to the challenge of green space, to housing, to reforming our social security system and to bringing health and social care together to ensure we can have better future work, more available to more people across time. We are very interested in the future of work, climate change, public systems and education and lifelong learning. Covid has thrown up challenges in a whole series of dimensions across all these areas, but we need to have a very considered response. Having responded at scale immediately, how do we, over the next two, three, four or five years, bridge to the future?

I think there are two main ways in which we need to do that. One is that we need a stronger sense of stability in the short term. We need a stronger understanding of the hierarchy of risk. What are our priorities for loosening lockdown and re-engaging? Obviously, key and essential workers are at the core of that. Opening up schools, universities and colleges may be at the top of that apex.

How do we respond to the opening up of the rest of the economy and the cultural sector alongside that? Having an understanding of the hierarchy of risks will be critical. Having public understanding and engagement about that is critical.

We need to set a series of policies and measures so that we understand how we can navigate the next year, 18 months or two years while we hope that one of the many research elements looking into vaccines is successful.

It is stabilisation in the short term. In the longer term, we need a deeper public engagement about how we respond to the challenges that have emerged.

We have proposed a sort of people's health and social care commission. There are lots of off-the-shelf solutions to how we bring health and social care together. What do we actually want and need from systems? What do the public expect? What values do they expect to encompass in that? It might be right to bring the care system together with the NHS, but could that be done differently? Do the public have different expectations of different elements of the system?

How do we reform and adapt our governance systems so they are co-ordinated better and have greater resilience and capacity? Again, public dialogue is critical as well as expert engagement across a whole series of fields.

We need a series of processes by which we have a public dialogue about the changes that we wish to see so that the fractures and fissures that have been highlighted by Covid can be responded to most effectively.

The Chair: Thank you, Anthony. It is interesting to get a different systems-change view as opposed to starting with public engagement.

I am going to open it up to Members to ask questions of our witnesses. Please raise your hand if you want to speak and direct your question to one or two of our witnesses.

Q2 **Lord Hain:** I want to ask Polly and Clive about the common finding about inequality and fairness. Was there any sense that people are willing to change their own lifestyles, in the case of paying supermarket workers, care workers and postal workers more, and to pay more for their food, their letters and their care? Was there any sense that people were willing to change their own lifestyles to get the greater equality they want?

Polly Mackenzie: That is the fundamental question. We have not completed our work. We will focus on that using a public engagement survey tool that has been pioneered in Taiwan—Polis. Demos has been exploring its use in the UK. I would not count my chickens, basically, is my first thought. People did say that key workers were more important during the pandemic than they thought they were before, but it is not very surprising that the richer you are the less likely you were to have seen that shift. Most importantly, when it comes to after the pandemic, do you still think key workers will be important? People on lower incomes tended to say yes, and people on higher incomes tended to say, "Nah, not so much".

There has been a shift in people's perceptions about the reliance that their lives, even affluent people's lives, place on the essential services provided by people on the lowest incomes, but we should not get carried away by the shift that happened during the pandemic, which was, "Oh my goodness, supermarket workers are essential". There will be a regression to the mean, and potentially quite a substantial regression to the mean.

We must not get carried away by a complacent view that the intensity and the deep emotional resonances and feelings that were there during

April and May will last. That is true when it comes to a sense of national unity and loving the Prime Minister and wanting his good health. A lot of that has evaporated. When it does come to the question of, "Will you accept the consequences for yourself of what you might loosely describe as a fairer society, or at least higher wages for those at the bottom?", we should be cautious about assuming that people are willing to take those costs on.

Clive Lewis MP: We asked people to imagine. We started from the perspective of, "What would you like to see changed?" Certain things came through—fairness, equality and green spaces. One that you could put a definitive cost on was better terms and conditions and wages for what they considered to be key workers.

Ultimately, once people have made a decision that they think should happen, it is for politicians to work out who pays for it. It is not necessarily that it simply has to come from taxing them more. We have tried to put a disproportionate weighting on the number of people we spoke to from C1, C2 and D social categories—a greater proportion of what you would call working people with less disposable incomes.

The job of politicians is to put forward proposals to pay for this. It does not necessarily follow that it will disproportionately land on them. What we were trying to say is that this has opened up avenues that people did not think were possible before. What would you like to see happen? It is now the job of politicians, economists and others to work out how we can do that in the fairest possible way.

One thing I would say is that not everything that people were talking about necessarily had a price tag attached to it. For example, during lockdown we know that when we were talking to people the issue of Black Lives Matter and the incidents that took place in the United States meant that the issue of fairness came to the fore. There is a link between the sense of people feeling collectively united together and trying to face something down. There was a sense of community. There was a more magnified sense of injustice when we saw that.

When we saw the death of George Floyd in the United States, I think that if that had happened outside of lockdown I am not sure whether George Floyd's name would have necessarily resonated as it now does. I think there was a particular moment during lockdown where people had a sense of belonging and engagement, which can rapidly dissipate. None the less, during lockdown when we conducted these surveys, some of those issues would not necessarily have price tags attached to them. There was a sense of things being done differently.

There is some cost in flexibility of where you work, whether at home or the office, but it is also about flexible ways of working that both employers and employees could engage in that do not necessarily have an overwhelmingly large price tag attached to them.

Q3 **Lord Pickles:** I thank the witnesses for giving some really interesting

evidence this morning. It could be that I have been rather affected by reading "Citizen Clem" over the summer. I was struck by what Polly said: this is not 1945. I am not entirely sure that I agree with that.

The political parties, for want of a better word, that want to go back to what it was like before the pandemic—those that mistake the echo of their own voice for evidence coming from the public—will fail. Those that lay down some plans for what a post-Covid world will be like are the political parties that will prosper.

My question to all four of you is: we have seen some trends. There is the trend towards online shopping and working from home. That has been going on now for a number of years. I read or heard something this morning that suggested that essentially what has happened during lockdown is that those trends have jumped 10 years in their predictions.

I know it is early days, but we can see that things have changed. We can see things that have got worse. Clearly, inequality has got worse. In the process of looking, what have you seen that was wholly unpredictable and that you doubt will be the same again? What do you feel about our future shopping and work needs? How much has that changed for ever, or are we on an upward trajectory?

Anthony Painter: Lord Pickles, some of the things you have mentioned are in the category that I described. Latent change was suddenly accelerated by this. It is not that it was unpredictable but that it just flipped the switch in some areas.

Of course, there will be some retreat. A minority of the working population, quite possibly, who worked away from the office are now reflecting on the commute and how they care for their families and balance their responsibilities of work and so on. That was very much underneath the surface, but it was not culturally sanctioned. How do you raise that as an individual? Suddenly, when you are one of millions who have completely changed their behaviour, you start to question the old way of doing things.

I think some of that will stick. Some of it will be very bad news for the high street, tragically. That is why we need to think about the response. We will need to do some rapid transition to think about how our town centres work, for example. We live in the context of a wider levelling-up agenda. That thinking is critical and will have to be supported by government with rapid engagement of local communities.

I think you are right that it will be very difficult for us more broadly to avert our gaze from the multiple injustices that have been highlighted. A lot of those are about our relationship with work. Your experience as a key or essential worker has been very different from a furloughed worker, for example. Those experiences will change again as, unfortunately, it is very likely that unemployment will increase. Some of those who have been on furlough may well be at risk. There is a feeling of risk not being distributed in the right ways. The systems of social support that are in

place are not sufficient to rebalance that risk in the way that people may perceive to be fair.

I think there is an opportunity for coalitions of change that respond to those challenges. Unpredictability in the future may come from unexpected coalitions and from different perspectives and voices that are not so ideologically charged but are quite practical in responding to the sense of injustice that many different communities and those who observe different communities will feel from this process. That is a live context. The challenge is how you create those coalitions of change in dialogue with people to work out what might be possible.

To link to the first question, on who might fund it, we need to have an advanced dialogue about how that might happen. People, when invited to such dialogue, can think about things in different ways. For example, the investment in the NHS funded by increases in national insurance of a decade or so ago was part of a longer dialogue of change. There is an opportunity for those dialogues with the electorate and citizens that could lead to longer-term change.

Brad Blitz: I think I would agree with Anthony. We are seeing a lot of acceleration but we are not necessarily seeing that much innovation—whether it is the fact that Zoom existed beforehand but now we are all using it constantly, or the fact that we are turning more to online shopping, although that has existed for the best part of 20 years.

What I do think is different and must be recognised is that 1945 set in train a series of liberal reforms and the development of principally liberal institutions. As I look at the world right now, I see not only the increase of nationalism but mercantilism and the rise of family illiberal policies and tendencies, antagonisms and authoritarianism. I see responses that are not conducive to the creation of a more collective and healing process, I am sorry to say. If we focus at the level of consumption or consumerism, we are missing part of the bigger picture here, which speaks to the ways in which people are able to enjoy their freedoms. That must be protected ultimately by strong democratic institutions. Democratic institutions and information systems are currently under threat.

I would be less optimistic about looking at these trends with a view to identifying changes of behaviour. We are currently in the middle of this. We will see not only additional inequalities but all sorts of constraints that may prevent us from acting as we might have done previously.

Clive Lewis MP: My party has always known that it does best when it articulates a vision of the future and a way of getting there: one that it can sell to people. I think that applies to all politicians and all political parties now. The reason, now more than ever, is that the concept of TINA—there is no alternative—has been blown wide open. The analogy I would use is that we were all on a conveyor belt that was going far too fast, and you simply do not have time to think about anything else than keeping on that conveyor belt. All of a sudden, that conveyor belt has virtually stopped. People have been left on it looking about and thinking

about other things that they want to do, and that things are possible that they did not think were possible, from government intervention through to more time with their families.

Even though we have a government that is rapidly trying to get us back on to that escalator and ramping up the speed, people have now seen that it is possible to slow that escalator down. It is possible for other things to happen. You cannot put that genie back in the box. There are trends that will accelerate, but I also think you are right and that it is not an option for politicians who want to go back to how things were. While we will see some things go back to normal, I think there will be a number of others now where the public perception has been significantly changed over a very short period of time. Politicians and political parties will need to be wary of that. I think you are right about the 1945 moment. That is a good example.

Polly Mackenzie: I heard Eric's question as trying to identify the changes that have not been the acceleration of trends but the reversal of trends. I want to give quite a specific answer on that.

Inequality was not getting worse. It is quite a controversial thing to say, but I think it is evidenced and true, especially with education. Ten years of progress—narrowing the gap between rich kids and poor kids—was obliterated in 10 weeks, and it is potentially going to get worse. There was a whole range of inequalities. They were not getting better fast enough—that is a perfectly reasonable point—but they were not getting worse, and now they are.

On this question of national resilience and anti-globalisation, it is debatable what trend we are going to head towards. We were moving globally towards more block-based interactions and less pure liberal globalisation. I think we will see a huge shift in how international institutions and organisations adapt. It is not a clear reversal of a trend.

On the positive side, personal hygiene and handwashing were not going up. At best it was static, but it has been transformed. Again, there will be a regression once this is over, we can assume, but there are potentially huge gains on communicable disease if people take personal hygiene differently. Will we become a mask-wearing society more widely? Will everybody wash their hands when they go to school or to the office? There are potential real gains there and we should be excited about that. Around a whole range of personal health behaviours, whether it is exercise, diet or well-being, where the trends were going in the wrong direction—slowly—we have not seen a big shift to the positive, but we have seen a big shift in the positive among a group of people.

Personal behaviours, as anyone who has ever tried to go on a diet knows, are very hard to change. Something extraordinarily disruptive happened here, which meant that for a proportion of the population—especially young people—they were able to change personal behaviours that are incredibly sticky. While we should not ignore those for whom those experiences got worse during the pandemic, there is a real reversal of a

trend there and a real opportunity for public policy initiative to build on. We should not forget about that.

Q4 **Baroness Jay of Paddington:** My questions, which are interrelated, are both to Polly and Clive. We could debate for ever this point about whether or not this is a 1945 moment. The fascinating thing to me has been that everything that everybody has said this morning has seemed to suggest that the role of government in the future will be very substantial, and probably more substantial than many people have thought over the last two decades, with the impact of mixed economies and the involvement of the private sector in a great number of the areas of policy that are now seen, from what has been said by the witnesses, to be things that people understand to be the responsibility of government. In that respect I would say that this is a 1945 moment, but I would like a comment from both Polly and Clive on that.

Adding into that, Polly raised the question—and she referred to it again in her last answer—about the substantial survival on our own that people want to see. I think you mentioned food security and so on, Polly, in your first answer, but does it also involve more of the kind of nationalism that was heard about in the previous discussion with Anthony and the sense of fortress Britain, which would run very much counter to some of the illustrations and points that Clive raised about the green future and the way in which many of the people responded to some of the points that his research proved about the need for collective multilateral, multinational action? That is a slightly double question, but if both Polly and Clive could respond I would be grateful. Thank you very much to all of you.

Clive Lewis MP: The people whom we spoke to no longer believe in the status quo. That was something that came out from the conversations. Listening to the other participants taking part in this, and obviously bearing in mind who I am, who Caroline Lucas is and who the MPs are who are involved with this—and being part of the Green New Deal group—I can probably feel some eyes rolling: "Well, you would get that answer".

I am quite confident in the methodology that we used to try to get as broad a range of people as possible and that we did not try to lead on the questions. We asked people to imagine. We guided but we did not try to give them the answers. We did not come with a set of answers. I think we tried to be as fair as possible from a social and scientific perspective.

I definitely feel that we have got back from this that people believe that government can and should act to make life fairer. The crisis seems to have opened up a new conceptual space about where and what the Government can do on everything from rent controls to job guarantees, in tackling inequality and making society fairer.

I do not think the full ramifications or implications of this Covid-19 crisis, the lockdown and all that has gone on with it are known. I think it will be up to history to look back and see the full implications of this. I definitely

feel that people saw for the first time that it was possible to do things differently. We have had 40 years where we have been told that government should not interfere or intervene and that there is no such thing as society. I know that is a controversial statement and there is a lot more to that statement than just those few words, but there was definitely a sense that, as a society, people felt that they were all in this together for the first time. They really felt they were all in it together. People were coming out to clap. There was a sense of community and a sense that things could be different.

One of the things that we will take from this as the Green New Deal group and as a Reset group is that there was a definitive sense that government can and should act to make a difference to collective well-being. That has always been there among sections of the population, but we have seen now this concept and idea grow out across all social categories and social demographics. From our perspective, that was one of the key things that came out.

Polly Mackenzie: I am sure that Lord Pickles is a better historian than I, but Brad articulated this really beautifully. It is that sense that, post 1945, we saw a huge step forward in the role of the state to achieve solidarity and risk pooling through social insurance and the NHS.

Obviously, there are lots of corollaries with the situation now. Only wars load this amount of debt on a society. There is that sense of a simple break, and the fact that our economy will have a huge impact and people will have to shift from one job to another. The scale of potential change is of course huge.

I guess what I meant when I said that this did not feel like 1945 is that I slightly disagree with Clive in the sense that there is a universal, overwhelming view that we should take that leap forward in terms of solidarity and risk sharing.

There is one strand that has not come up. When we think about community or solidarity, it has to come with a lot of responsibility as well as rights. We had 12,000 survey respondents to our first survey. What surprised me as a soggy-minded liberal was the visceral anger towards other people. One that sticks in my mind is a woman who wrote probably 400 words about somebody who had carried on using the gym equipment in Inverleith Park. She was filled with rage. A lot of that is to do with Dominic Cummings, I am afraid, but it goes beyond that. It was the sense of other people not doing what they were told.

There is a sense of community and solidarity, although the ONS polling suggests that has deteriorated quite substantially since July and over the summer. There is also a sense of what the price for solidarity is. You have to apply the rules. We need to be cautious—certainly those on the left or those who are perhaps of a more liberal perspective—to recognise that this does not mean, "Let's all be nice, and sunshine and rainbows, and the Government will pay for everything". People might want more solidarity at a price in terms of compliance with a set of societal rules. It

becomes controversial when it comes to questions about benefit sanctions, for example, where the left has, quite legitimately in my view, taken exception to that idea of compliance by rules set by the state.

I think we need to be really careful about what solidarity might mean in terms of compliance and responsibility as well as rights and the removal of personal choice.

Q5 **Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen:** I am carrying on from where Margaret was talking. Both Polly and Brad mentioned globalisation in their introductions. Polly mentioned that they had found that people were talking about becoming more independent here and less reliant on globalisation, whereas Brad mentioned that in his surveys it came back that they were worried about the breakdown in globalisation. Was that due to age? Was Brad mainly talking to young people? With Polly, perhaps the demographics were older. Could you comment on that?

Polly Mackenzie: I am certainly sure that our demographics are older than Brad's, who had focused particularly on young people. I am worried about the breakdown of the world order and the post-war settlement even—the Bretton Woods institutions. I am worried about it. What I wanted to report to the Committee was a sense that there appears to be at least a marked shift in the desire for more independence. We should not underestimate the visceral emotional impact of food shortages, even if they are only limited to not getting pasta but, hey, you can get rice. There is something about empty shelves that is so out of the common experience for generations that it is lasting. It does obviously move into PPE and pharmaceutical supplies.

There is the question about who is going to invent the vaccine and who is going to let other people have it. We have seen the hyper-nationalist approach from President Trump, talking about how he is just going to get the vaccine for himself and not worry about anybody else. I worry about that, but I think the more it happens, it is totally self-reinforcing. If other countries are trying to act in their own domestic interest, not thinking about global solidarity, it becomes rational for other countries to follow suit. Of course, the problem is that this is a global pandemic and we cannot eliminate it anywhere until we have eliminated it everywhere. It is self-defeating, and yet public demand is toward the anti-globalisation movement as a result of this.

Q6 **Lord Harris of Haringey:** I thank all the witnesses for a very interesting series of presentations. I detect essentially a conflict between those of you who are saying that there is appetite for change and those who are saying that that appetite is not there; indeed, people's reactions to those things that have been accelerated as a result of the last few months are militating against further change.

I wanted to throw in another thing and get comments from the panel. How is this affected by faith, confidence and trust in government institutions? It seems to me that you are more likely to be happy with a series of changes if you have confidence and trust in those who are going

to carry them out. I wonder whether any of you have picked up a feeling that some of this has been quite shambolic and we are therefore less confident; therefore, we will have to be more self-reliant as a consequence.

Could you then speculate as to how government—big and small "g"—can restore trust and confidence, and therefore a sense in which it can move forward?

The Chair: Anthony, you talked a bit about trust. Do you want to start with Lord Harris's question?

Anthony Painter: In the societies that we looked at, having a high trust quotient was of benefit in encouraging a solidaristic community response. We particularly saw that in South Korea and Taiwan. They are, interestingly, two places that have had democratic revolutions over the last few years, as well as previous experience of SARS and MERS.

There was trust in the Governments there that they were taking decisions based on experience and that asked for sacrifice. Some of the measures in South Korea we might be very uncomfortable with. There is a degree of intrusion to ensure quarantine after contact with potential coronavirus cases and so on. We may not be comfortable with that level of invasion of privacy, but, having had the bedrock of trust, they are able to build on that. I think it is essential.

In terms of the current situation, there is a risk now that we get into a stop-go style of government as local lockdowns spread and hit large conurbations and others. That might engender a lack of trust as it is perceived as a lack of consistency over time.

It might be worth taking a step back and trying to slow some of the changes, and develop a more open and engaging rhetoric, rather than saying, "Everything will be fine and we will march forward". There just needs to be a bit more humility in some of the public comms, and a bit more clarity about how we move forward over time and manage the risk.

Very briefly, can I touch on the other discussion, because it is related to this? We have presented globalisation and nationalism as sharp and stark alternatives. In reality, it is a bit fuzzier than that. If there is a sense that is coming out of it, there will be a willingness and encouragement for more active government in a series of different arenas, not least in supporting the development of health and social care. There is an opportunity here for interventionist and active government, which I do not think necessarily contradicts engagement with the international economy but does encourage reshoring local economic development, community wealth building, investment in small firms, agile manufacturing and reskilling, which can speak to the green agenda that Clive has talked about, but also the levelling-up agenda that the Government are very keen on. It can be done in a way that does not require a radical stepping away from the global economy. I throw the caveat of Brexit into that analysis just to mark it.

Clive Lewis MP: You will never hear me say this, but, on Lord Harris's question as to whether trust and competence from the Government came into the feedback, I do not have that information from those workshops to be able to comment. I am sure I could comment myself, but I do not have that information so I would not be able to give you that answer. I want to be able to give you answers that we have got back rather than my personal opinion.

Do I personally think that how the Government handled the pandemic in terms of trust and competence had an impact on people's perceptions of this situation we are discussing today? Yes, I do, but I do not have any evidence from the feedback sessions, the workshops and the surveys that we took to talk that up.

In terms of the opportunities for government to move forward and what they should or should not be doing, we know that there are existential threats facing us. We know that climate change is an existential threat. We know that ecological collapse is an existential threat. We know that AI data and biogenetics are existential threats. Future pandemics are existential threats. There is an opportunity here. I think we have a window of opportunity whereby the crisis has made people realise that something should and could change. That is the opportunity now for politicians to lead and to say to people, "You understand that things could be different and need to be different. We want to move forward in a consensual way to try to make some of those changes".

Obviously, that is the optimistic viewpoint. The cynical viewpoint is that politicians will use this as an opportunity to push through the agenda they always had and that they always wanted to push through. That is possible and plausible. We could see that, but I am trying to be optimistic here. There is an opportunity to tackle some of the big problems confronting not just this country but our planet. I think politicians would be silly, and it would be devastating, if we walked away from this leadership opportunity to make those changes. That, I think, has clearly come out from the malleability of the situation where public opinion is in a more open and engaging situation than it has been for a long time.

Polly Mackenzie: I wanted to resist being painted into a corner of being the person who thinks there is no appetite for change. I think there is appetite for change. There is a danger from the Build Back Better movement or from youth movements to imagine that that means there is automatic appetite for something very similar to the 2019 Corbyn manifesto. We need to be really cautious and evidence based about what we think the appetite for change is. The Government absolutely need to lean into identifying that with the public through dialogue with this Committee's findings and move forward on a consensual basis.

In our evidence in those 12,000 responses, it is a minority kind of person who wants to talk about systems of government, but those who did just have contempt for national government and huge support for local government and local community responses. I think there is the potential there. We know that government is thinking about local government

reform. There are huge opportunities when we think about how the public health response has differed there. There definitely is appetite for change. Let us not delude ourselves that it is necessarily the change that we want to see. I think Clive has been very disciplined about separating out his own personal views, as I have tried to, from what I, as a campaigner, think should happen and from where the public have shifted their views.

The Chair: I would just remind Members and our witnesses that our particular focus is on the long-term implications. Much as I am sure everyone here would like to do more dissection of where we are at now in the shorter term, I am really keen we keep our focus a couple of years out, or we will be replicative and unhelpful.

Q7 **Baroness Young of Hornsey:** Thank you to all the participants in this fascinating dialogue. One of the things that comes out for me is the reiteration of just how complex this all is and how difficult it is to make any kind of generalisation about where we are at. Having said that, I am going to ask you to make a generalisation about where we are at.

One of the things I am thinking about, particularly with quite different sets of views coming through these different pieces of work—I should declare an interest having worked with Brad on several different occasions and most recently on this competition for young people to say what they thought about the future post Covid—are the so-called shifts, where they are at and what they might be telling us about what will happen.

Is there a plan to repeat this exercise across different timeframes, and to what extent will there be a different point of view later down the line, depending on what developments there have been around the pandemic?

The other question relates to what Tony was saying about trust. If we want to engage or encourage public dialogue, what kinds of processes will fuel or drive that? How will they be developed? Should they be the province of civil society, since I would suspect—I might be entirely wrong—that trust in government and government mechanisms may not be at the level that really encourages people to participate in a dialogue or a discussion, especially if they cannot see that what comes out of that will be taken up?

Finally, if I can slide this in here, I would ask about digital inclusion. I did not hear too much about that from the participants. Maybe different people can take different aspects of what I have asked there.

Brad Blitz: First of all, I would express my gratitude to Baroness Young, who was one of our champion judges. We are most grateful for her time reviewing the finalists' work. It was most helpful.

I want to pick up on a couple of points, both with regard to what Baroness Young has just raised and what we heard before with respect to the discussion about trust. Trust is a social measure. I am reminded of a hashtag that has been trending recently by Bonnie Greer and circulating. Real change takes time. When I think about where countries have moved

forward, such as South Korea, it moved forward only after substantial reform. That is why trust has been so high in South Korea in its handling of this pandemic. It is because it got the governance of SARS a few years ago badly wrong, and this was then followed by massive investment in its health system.

To address issues of trust people are turning to government. They expect that there will be some substantive reform, which will hopefully feature about issues of education and health in particular. There are critical areas about human capital development.

Coming round to the issue of globalisation, certainly the digital sphere is everywhere. People, and especially young people, understand globalisation differently. If you look at their music choices, they are increasingly global. If you look at their food choices, they are global. There is no real thought given to the supply chains behind this, but none the less they are tied into a global economy and a belief in globalisation as a mode of existence as central to their own existence.

Finally, would we like to repeat this? Absolutely. We would love to get more information, and perhaps try different art forms and different ways of investigating and probing young people for their answers to see how this might have changed. The big message here is that people are still looking to government to help drive things forward. Right now the real heroes are the scientists. I am sorry to say that they are not the policymakers in government. It is time to bring them on board too.

Anthony Painter: Baroness Young made the key point about the messenger in all this, and civil society is one of the messengers that I think has an enormous role to play in building the dialogue that can build trust. We are very interested in forms of deliberative democracy. When they have been used in Ireland and elsewhere, they have left some major social, political and legal changes in the case of gay marriage in Ireland.

I think those techniques can be used increasingly deftly to generate genuine conversation, engagement with the evidence and authenticity of voice by involving citizens, citizens' assemblies and citizens' juries, and a whole variety of actors in thinking through the future. I do not doubt that people are looking to government to come up with the answers, but that is the easy route. It is difficult for the Government to come up with the answers when they are facing these complex challenges. The issues that come to mind are: housing; work; skills and the digital divide, which has just come up; how that relates to education and inequalities in education; social security and the future of health and social care; and what it means to have interventionist local economies and democratic reforms.

There is a whole plethora of areas facing the existential challenges on occasion that Clive was talking about. We cannot realistically expect government to come up with the answers and make it all right for us. Civil society and citizens will have to be brought into the process. My encouragement to the Government, Parliament and others in senior policy-making roles is to let go of it, open out a bit and share some of the

burden. That, in itself, will help generate trust if it is done in an authentic and independent fashion.

Q8 **Lord Alderdice:** Thank you for these presentations. I find them extremely interesting. I was also encouraged that you made something of a difference between the evidence that you accumulated and your interpretations of the evidence and what it meant. I think that is really very important.

I want to try to stick with this question of the evidence that you accumulated. I have three specific questions to ask you about whether or not you got answers on these issues.

The first refers to a point that was made by Brad, but also by others, that we are not in a post-Covid world or anything like it; we are only very much part-way through. Up until now there may have been quite a lot of focus on key workers, but what will happen, for example, when huge numbers of people become unemployed at the end of the furlough period? That could well change attitudes. Many people stuck with social distancing until the last few weeks, and that has now melted, particularly with young people.

The question I want to ask is: when you were doing your investigating, were there people who said, "I really cannot give you an answer to that because we are not at the end of Covid, and we do not know what will happen with Covid"? That is the first question. Did people realise that we are only on our way through this and not post Covid?

The second question refers to other changes that are taking place. 1945 was mentioned, but actually the last pandemic of this kind was 1918 to 1920. There were huge changes in society, but almost nobody who wrote about the changes in the 1920s and 1930s referred to the pandemic. Almost everybody referred to the war and to the breakdown of empire, and all sorts of other changes. Almost nobody, other than those who wrote specifically about the pandemic, referred to that.

My question is: were there people who, when you asked about the impact of Covid, said, "Well, Covid may or may not have an impact, but the key question is other things that are already having an impact such as AI and its impact on politics or its impact on the world of work, nanotechnology and the ethics of genetic medicine"? Major things were taking place prior to Covid. Covid may accelerate them, but actually they are the big thing and not Covid. Were there many people who picked up on that and said, "It's about other major changes. Covid is only an accelerator"?

The third thing is that there has been talk about the breakdown of the multilateral system and things of that kind. I have not yet heard anybody talking about the possibility of a major war, either in cyberspace or indeed the potential for nuclear conflict, which it seems to me is increased. Did people raise that as a potential outcome of the next number of years, whether to do with Covid or not?

The Chair: I will gently remind Members that we have about 20 or 25 minutes left. I am going to be mean and pick on Polly and Clive to

respond as briefly and effectively as they can to Lord Alderdice's questions, and then we will move to the last sets of questions from Members. I am sorry to rush people, but we are limited on time.

Polly Mackenzie: I am happy to write to Lord Alderdice and the Committee once I have had a look through the 12,000. Those wide issues certainly did not come up as a dominant theme, although people will have raised them. What trends have been accelerated and which are new ones are also relevant to the previous question.

The school exam results have shifted the forward trajectory of the use of algorithmic decision-making in public policy-making. Because it shifted how policymakers and people understand things, it has probably created some prejudice. You are certainly right that there will be a whole number of trends where, for slightly obscure reasons, coronavirus has come and hit it from the side, and shifted it in a different direction. I think that is a really important area of inquiry for the Committee. I will be happy to look at our data to see if we have any further insights that might be of use on that.

People definitely understand that we are only part-way through this. Our 12,000 survey was open for about eight weeks, and there is an emotional shift over that period as lockdown starts to ease. People do understand and recognise that. As Baroness Lane-Fox said at the outset, it is often quite hard for people to get outside their own immediate personal experience and think about the long-term effectiveness. One of the skills for those who support deliberative engagement and public participation in policy-making is to help engage with people's ideas, issues and experiences, and help them translate that into policy-making. In general, if you just have a public competition to say, "Who has a policy idea?", you do not get the richness of impact. That is one of the reasons why this kind of engagement and research is so vital.

Clive Lewis MP: I will simply say that I do not have that kind of detail on those kinds of responses, Lord Alderdice. What I have are trends. I will go back and speak to the various researchers we have used, and try to dig it out for you. We will send it in a written response, if we can.

The Chair: Thank you. That is much appreciated.

Q9 **Baroness Morgan of Cotes:** Thank you to our witnesses. As Polly has said, I am involved in the Demos commission, so I should just declare that as an interest.

I have a couple of quick questions. The first is to Polly. You mentioned that feeling had dissipated and changed since the lockdown to where things are now. Does that mean we should be cautious about using some of the feelings people expressed earlier in all this as a basis for change?

Your example about the education algorithm is a good segue into whether there is a real appetite for change or whether there are certain things that have happened, such as the use of an algorithm, which have highlighted a shift that means that things do not work and they need to

be looked at again.

My question is: is there a real appetite for change? Should we be careful about that appetite being fixed for a period of time a couple of months ago?

Secondly, for Clive, and perhaps for Anthony as well, is there any breakdown in gender in your responses on working from home? Is it that women want as much flexibility as men do, or a different kind of flexibility?

Anthony, you talked about working from home not having been culturally sanctioned pre-pandemic. I think many women's rights campaigners would disagree with that. People have been calling for flexibility in working for many years. I wondered if you had any views on that from a gender perspective.

Polly Mackenzie: Absolutely, we should listen, but we should always be cautious. The intensity of emotions always shifts over time. You are completely right, as Clive mentioned a few moments ago, that people want to save high streets. Yet if you tell them that they are also quite keen to enjoy the benefits of having done more shopping online, they have found that to be largely welcome. We have seen more people being digitally included, and yet the sense that something they value might be lost is also of concern. It is absolutely not simple: "Oh, everyone wants everything to change". You have to look in granular detail at really specific things.

Then we will have to find ways to engage the public in understanding and debating the trade-offs between the things they want and the consequences they might have. As Lord Hain mentioned, people would like key workers to be paid a bit more, but do they want their postal or grocery shopping to be more expensive? The jury is out.

Clive Lewis MP: I will have to write back to you on gender breakdown, but in terms of age profile and work flexibility there was a definitive difference between those who tended to be older, from their early 40s through to retirement age. They were far more interested in flexible working, possibly because they had families and a work/life balance that they needed. The younger cohort who responded wanted flexible working but were not as concerned about the need to work from home.

My understanding of that was twofold. First, younger people often have a greater association with their social life attachment to work. Going out after work plays a part in their outside-of-work activities and the things they get involved with.

In terms of it being linked in to housing, the younger you are the more chance there is that you are living in shared accommodation or a bedsit, where working from home simply is not as viable as it may be for someone who has an office at the bottom of their garden or a separate room for an office. Having to come down to the front room to work with four or five other people, or in your bedroom sat on your double or probably single bed, probably is not as enticing. Therefore, they were not

less enthusiastic—they wanted the flexibility—but they were not as keen to be working from home as those who were slightly older. There was an age breakdown, but I will try to get back to you on the gender breakdown as well.

Anthony Painter: Very briefly on the cultural sanction, what I had in mind there was, in effect, the default that a lot of employers would deploy in this setting. Absolutely, this is a long debate about work/life balance, care and responsibilities, and the gender division of labour in the home and indeed the workplace.

This is speculation, but the burden of proof may have shifted from the individual to the organisation. Instead of it being on the individual to make the case for why they should be allowed to work from home, I suspect it will be more incumbent on employers than it was previously to make the case for why they should not be allowed to work from home. There are different sections of the workforce and it cuts across different ages. There does not seem to have been a productivity hit from working at home for a section of the workforce. In fact, if anything, there may have been a productivity benefit.

One group of workers that is critical—and I may need to write to you about this—is the essential workers. I will need to dig down into our essential workers poll that we published a couple of weeks ago. I will need to get a better sense of whether the stresses and mental health consequences of being a key or essential worker over the past few months has a gender division. It could be interesting in thinking about the different toll that the current situation has taken on men and women.

The Chair: Thank you. I am obviously in a category of one where productivity has declined dramatically during lockdown.

Q10 **Baroness Benjamin:** Thank you to all the witnesses for your excellent presentations this morning. It is good to hear that your consultations included those from diverse backgrounds. I hope that Travellers were also included there.

Thinking of how to engage with the public, do you think that we should have a Minister for Tolerance, especially for those who feel that they are not heard or valued, to promote consideration, contentment and that trust that Toby talked about first of all, and fairness and equality? Do you think we need something like that?

Talking about risks, I do not think any of you have mentioned this, but something that troubles me is that young people are contracting the virus but showing few symptoms and not becoming very ill. Should we be more concerned about this and worry about the long-term effects on the body? For example, if a woman gets it, what will happen to her baby? Will the virus affect the baby from the woman's body and from the man's sperm? Should we set up a long-term monitoring plan to keep an eye on this? Should government be considering this more carefully long term?

The Chair: Thank you for your question, Floella. I remind the witnesses

that we are trying to focus on the longer term. We understand if you do not feel you have medical qualifications to be able to answer the question effectively.

Clive Lewis MP: I come back very quickly to the idea of a Minister for Tolerance. I am tempted to say yes, but so many of the issues that have come out of this research and that have manifested themselves over the last four to six months are structural issues. While having a Minister for Tolerance as part of a wider package of reform and change could be helpful, this has to go across government and society into the fundamental underpinnings of the economy.

One of the things I think about Covid-19 is that, while it is not, for example, a racist disease, it highlights perfectly the disease of racism, inequality, poverty and a lack of opportunity. It exacerbates those things. It is like a blue dye that goes through you; it shows in the body politic exactly those things that are not working within your society or your economy.

I would steer away from a simple ministerial post unless there was a more concerted effort for structural change on these issues.

Polly Mackenzie: On the health consequences, there was a paper this morning from Public Health England, I believe, on long-term Covid and the health consequences. I certainly agree with the Baroness that it is an area of medical inquiry that should be pursued, although not by me.

Brad Blitz: Beyond the medical effects, which we know will endure, certainly the degree to which there can be more town hall meetings, information gathering and exercises that can help us to learn more about this virus and its lingering effects across a range of factors would be extremely useful.

One thing that we have talked about a bit are the long-term effects on children's schooling and what this will mean in terms of transition from school to work, ultimately livelihoods and the rest. There are many ways in which governmental committees can help to start thinking about ways of reducing those inequalities, which are really coming down the tracks now.

The Chair: I think we all hope we can contribute to the debate. Thank you for those answers. Our final questions are from Lord Hain and Lord Elder.

Q11 **Lord Hain:** Polly mentioned contempt for national government and rather more sympathy for local government. Is there any sense from any of you that the governance of the UK needs to change, taking, for example, people's view of the Mayor of Manchester's reaction to the Government's policies on lifting lockdown and then that having to be reversed, or the different approaches that have been adopted in Scotland or Wales and, for that matter, Northern Ireland?

Polly Mackenzie: In our evidence from a minority of people, yes. There certainly is nobody who talks about the governance of the UK who thinks it should stay as it is. For the Committee, the long-term consequences of the trend towards divergence in public policy-making between the four home nations will be very important. It has shifted the perspectives of lots of members of the public in the four nations about how things should be.

The strength particularly around the health devolution that went on in Manchester over the last decade has enabled Greater Manchester to be so forthright in its political demands about the Government that in the end, when Manchester said jump, the Government jumped. That moment of local government rebellion against national government is potentially a sign of a different trajectory for us in terms of where power really lies in the UK.

We should be very cautious about saying this is the beginning of a true localist era or the beginning of the rebirth of nineteenth century municipalism, because localism has been foretold certainly throughout my political life in Westminster. I remember David Miliband and double devolution, and I did not really see it happening. I think there is certainly more potential now for a shift in understanding. Lots of people have perceived—and this is more of a policy-making than a public thing—that the assumption that central government and a homogeneous system will be more efficient has turned out not to be accurate, certainly not in all cases. If local government can demonstrate that it is more efficient as well as more responsive locally, and all of that, then it is possible that even the people in the Treasury might change their mind about devolution, but I would not hold out too much hope.

Anthony Painter: Clearly, the First Minister of Scotland has enjoyed significant approval. I do not know whether that is because she is the First Minister of Scotland or just because of her personal style and connects. More broadly, again Covid reveals the structure of inequality, which is one thing, but the weakness in governance is absolutely critical. We talked about the South Korean and Taiwan example.

What was emblematic of the approach is the degree of deep co-ordination and connection there was between the national and the local. Yes, the local can respond, but that degree of co-ordination is critical. As we go forward, there are the sorts of substantive challenges rather than procedural challenges that we are talking about. How do you recapitalise local economies? How do you invest in reskilling and upskilling? How do you ensure you have responsive public health and care services and so on? It is very difficult to see all this being managed from the centre. Indeed, I think the experience of the past few months has shown that that is impossible to do, either with the centre operating directly or contracting-out services. There will have to be a rethink. If we practically want to lean in to some of the substantive challenges, how do we ensure that the power, resources and authority are there at the local level connected to national policy?

Clive Lewis MP: I am very tempted to put in my own perspective here, but for the sake of my own credibility, and speaking on behalf of Reset, I will not. What I will say is that in our report there was a section called "Relocalisation", which found that, because people were spending more time at home, consumption of local media, for example, went through the roof. That meant that the people who were leading the stories were local councillors, local public health officials and NHS advisers. People were consuming national news but a lot more local news, which meant that the profile of local government and local institutions went through the roof, quite frankly. That has been an eye-opener for many people. That is raised in the "Relocalisation" section in our report, which we will obviously forward on to you.

I cannot make any bigger assessments about whether the break-up of the United Kingdom is now inevitable as a result of the lockdown or whether it has driven that. I have my own views, but they would not be appropriate.

The Chair: I am impressed by your restraint, Clive.

Q12 **Lord Elder:** I want to ask a little about the appetite for change. We have had four witnesses who, I suspect, are very keen on change anyway. This is a splendid peg on which to hang that. The reason I ask is because we are at the absolute cusp of this crisis. It happened about six months ago. We are still in a slight panic about it, although some groups are already moving on from it, it seems to me.

There is a parlour view about something that has already been mentioned; the Spanish flu of 100 years ago. From memory, a quarter of a million people in the UK died of Spanish flu. It was a tremendous shock. There is still a very large number of people who die every year from flu, but we have a vaccine and we have learned to live with it.

How certain are the witnesses that, if we have a vaccine in the next months, the appetite for change that we have identified over the last six months will continue for the next couple of decades?

Brad Blitz: I might start by saying that what is interesting now, as opposed to earlier times, is this counter-belief in the efficacy of vaccines. It may be a small minority of people who have put forward this view, but they tend, interestingly, to be among the better educated. There is one challenge that a vaccine will clearly have, and that is whether it will be taken up by sufficient numbers of people, in part as a result of these ideological concerns.

If you look at some of the data emerging from the United States, the numbers of people who reject vaccination are truly alarming. In a globalised world this is a real worry. I do not think we can really rely on a belief in modernisation and that vaccination will take us forward into a period of greater certainty until we are actually at a point where we can address some of the destabilising ideologies that are presenting themselves. That is one real concern that I have.

Anthony Painter: It will be interesting in the public engagement work that Polly, Brad, Clive and we will be doing to investigate the degree to which there are non-negotiables that have emerged in this period of time. There are justice scores to be settled, and I would imagine investment in health and social care is certainly one of those.

By the way, Brad's point about conspiracy theories and attitudes about vaccines is worrying, but in terms of future investment there will be a sense that something will have changed there. Some of us have had a different experience in our working lives. Some of that will stick. What are the non-negotiables and what requires an extra injection of energy in order to carry a reform agenda forward? If people do believe in change, those are the critical questions we will have to explore.

Clive Lewis MP: I would only say that there are two issues that come to mind, although nothing that has come from our report. One is over the effectiveness of a vaccine. The jury is still out on how effective any vaccine will be. The jury is still out on whether this will be used politically by some as a kind of shaking fist to "get back to your desks", whether or not it is effective and there is public trust in that vaccine.

Secondly, there is the danger of vaccine nationalism. Clearly this is now an international pandemic. There is no point in having a vaccine and then reopening vast levels of international trade and travel if this is still rampant in vast parts of the world, because it defeats the whole point and the object. Those are two key things that will need to be looked at or discussed. We have not looked at this specifically in our report, although I will refer to it when I feed back to the researchers afterwards.

Polly Mackenzie: I started my evidence with five areas where I felt there was the strongest appetite for change or long-term consequences. They were: inequality; living more online; working practices—it is huge in terms of the consequences of economic flows; green space; and strategic national resilience, which I think Anthony articulated better than I did in terms of economic localism.

If I was going to add to that, I would add community connection, volunteering and localism, which spreads up to more powerful local government, and a sense of, yes, a better deal needed for health and social care. We could go on, because there will be further shifts that are only just statistically significant.

The key thing for those who want change—advocates and public policymakers who are hyper-overrepresented within Westminster, because why do you work in these spheres unless you want things to change in some way or another?—is that the door for those changes is mostly open a little. It will be easier now to campaign for a settlement for social care than it would have been had this not happened. But that does not mean it is suddenly easy or that the change you want is inevitable. I think that will be really important for all that we want, whether it is more solidarity in our health and social care system, a more generous welfare system or more ability for the state to collect our personal data and

monitor our compliance with law. Whatever you want, if a change is available to us now, it does not make it inevitable. That is the message, I guess. The politics has not gone away.

Q13 **The Chair:** We cannot expect Covid to work complete miracles. Politics has not gone away. We are running out of time, so I just want to end by asking one last question of you all.

Polly helpfully pulled out her five themes. I was much struck by acceleration and not innovation. That is something I have been thinking a lot about as well. There was Polly's phrase, "change is not inevitable", coupled with Anthony's points about how trust and system change need to happen.

I am interested in your final views on our work. If you were us as Committee members, where are the gaps in the work that you have been doing that you think it would be most useful for us to plug? Are there any themes that we have not discussed that you would like to make sure resonate with us? I would ask you all briefly to respond to that.

Clive Lewis MP: It is more a philosophical question and one that I will definitely be feeding back into our own assessment, analysis and research. It is asking why the lockdown actually happened. History has shown us that in 1957, when there was a viral infection, round about a million people died, and in 1968 with the Hong Kong flu, as it was called, another million or so people died globally. There was not any sense that global economies would shut down. Yes, the global economy was in a different situation, but it was not even contemplated—and this is in the post-war period; I am not even talking about 1918—that we would shut down our economies and put people and vast swathes of the economy on life support costing billions or possibly trillions globally.

My question is: why has this happened now? That is a really interesting question that would open up a number of very revealing changes that are taking place within our society, both here nationally and internationally. Let us not forget that the people in power, whether in this country or in the United States, the Philippines or parts of Europe, are not what I would call wishy-washy liberals. Yet it seemed almost inevitable that this lockdown took place, against the will of some Governments—for example in Brazil.

That opens up a vast range of questions about why it has happened now and what has changed within our societies, both nationally and internationally, that we felt this had to happen. Why could we not take a million or so global deaths, as we did in 1968 and 1957? That, for me, is a very interesting question and it would be quite revealing if we could get some answers to it. I do not think there is a right or a wrong answer. I just think it is quite a profound question that has come up in the last few weeks, and it is something that I have been pondering.

The Chair: Thank you, Clive. Thank you for your evidence today. Brad?

Brad Blitz: Thank you very much. That is an excellent question. It is not that there are themes that have been missed but just recognising that the virus has had all sorts of differentiated effects, many of which we have discussed today. Therefore, in terms of trying to remedy some of these effects it is clearly important to speak to many different types of stakeholders. The degree to which the Committee can reach out, that it can perhaps even commission some life histories to gather more evidence from as many different groups as possible and types of people—people in different occupations—so that we can get a much clearer picture of how this is playing out, would be tremendously important.

Anthony Painter: Going back to the beginning and how change happens, one of the questions we have touched on today is various system hacks that you can undertake in order to get some more engaged and longer-term thinking within policy and political decision-making. It would be interesting to see the Committee's views on how you can create some safe spaces that can take some of these critical challenges and decisions away from the day-to-day political battle and help tilt the system just a bit towards longer-term thinking.

One of the obvious areas that has not been resolved is the future of funding, structure and policy in relation to social care. The Covid situation has highlighted how catastrophic, in many ways, the failure to deal with that set of challenges for decades has been. How can you create that safe space? The Welsh Government have created the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. There is some institutional architecture around that which might or might not be the right way to go. It would be useful to hear the Committee's views on things that can bias a system more towards long-term and public engagement and deliberation.

The Chair: That emphasis on long-term thinking is something I have found very interesting and how hard it is to find people who have thought about a two-year horizon. It is easier to think of a year in the current crisis management.

Polly, finally, we have a couple of minutes. Thank you for keeping it brief and thank you also for your evidence today.

Polly Mackenzie: A key question for the Committee is whether you are asking what the long-term consequences of Covid will be, in which case there are many things that we have not really talked about. We have not talked about a global recession or huge unemployment. We have not talked in detail about the long-term educational inequalities.

The question we have been more focused on today is a slightly different one, which is: what do we want the long-term consequences to be—not we, the people present here, but we, the nation? That is certainly what we have been trying to explore. If this is a fulcrum or a pivot point for public policy on a whole realm of different things, where do we want to lean? How do we push things forward? To simply say what the consequences will be in a do-nothing scenario denies the agency of a political system and the agency of the Committee, although up to a point

one will not want just to allow people's individual views to dominate the findings.

It is vital to focus on the changes we want to see, because that is fundamentally what politics and democracy are for. It is not simply to try and analyse in that blanker way. We can see harms arising. What do we do to prevent them? In a way, almost to reduce some of the long-term consequences of coronavirus seems to me an important area of inquiry and recommendation for the Committee to make.

The Chair: Thank you. We are bang on time—well timed. Thank you so much, Brad, Polly, Clive and Anthony. We really appreciate your thoughts. We look forward to working more with you in the future. Thank you, everybody.