

DEMOS

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AS 2022 DAWNS, WE ARE SURROUNDED BY UNCERTAINTY.

In the short term, we face not just another wave of the pandemic but another wave of fever in our politics. Long term uncertainties are deepening too, from the huge range of possible trajectories of climate change and technological innovation, to the shifting of power and people between countries and regions of the world. But despite all this uncertainty, at Demos we have become more certain over the last year of the role we need to play in British policy making. We must be a creative force, driving ideas to keep governance and democracy up to date with this era of fast and accelerating change.

Over the year, we have published a series of papers to frame the context for our work: on democracy, on digital technology, on public services, and on public participation in policy making.

We started the year publishing the conclusions of *Renew Normal*, our People's Commission on Life After Covid, in which more than 50,000 citizens took part. *Build Back Stronger*, the final report, made the case for a new model of national resilience: the best way to protect us against health, climate, or other shocks is to reduce inequality, build social capital, and improve the governance of our information systems.

That has led to a major programme of work on reforming public services, leveraging them to help strengthen society as well as meeting citizens' needs. We make the case that by building more relational public services, we can prevent more problems, build up individual and community capacity to respond, and so enable the state to keep up with what will otherwise be impossible levels of demand.

To help shift the relationship between citizens and the state, we have also driven innovation in

policy making practice - a key part of our work. We continue to build and deploy novel technology to enable mass participation in decision-making, and better understanding of lived experience and public opinion. In experiments with the Cabinet Office and other partners, we've shown there are far better ways to consult experts and citizens through the policy process, leveraging the collective intelligence of the crowd. And we've experimented with community decision-making through our Combined Choice voting tool.

Our technology hub, CASM has continued its pioneering work exploring how to govern the internet, hosting the Good Web Festival, leading the debate on online safety, and bringing to light the extraordinary levels of misogynistic abuse on the internet.

Finally, this autumn and winter I published a series of pamphlets under the banner *Making Democracy Work*. When we lurch from crisis to crisis in our politics, it can be difficult to stand back and ask what path we should be on. Part of Demos' role is to offer answers to the biggest questions, like whether our society is strong enough to navigate the extraordinary collective problems we face. I argue that we need to build a gravitational state, to help bring people together in an era of atomisation and polarisation. That ambition will form the cornerstone of Demos' work in the years to come.

If you'd like to work with Demos, as a partner, a thinker or as a supporter, please do get in touch.

POLLY MACKENZIE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE

IDEAS

“What’s wrong with us? Why are we struggling to live up to the challenges our age presents? This isn’t about the failure of one political party, it’s about fundamental flaws in our system of government that are holding us back.”

**POLLY MACKENZIE, MAKING DEMOCRACY
WORK**

This year we continued to be endlessly ambitious in our mission to bring new and creative ideas to the UK’s public policy landscape. Most importantly, we launched a series of papers that will guide Demos’ work over the next decade.

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK

“Some people measure the health of a democracy by the levels of public participation. I see it differently. I judge the health of a democracy by its ability to solve its collective problems. And on that measure we are failing.”

In her [Making Democracy Work](#) series, Polly Mackenzie sets out a compelling analysis of why democracy is struggling and how we renew it. The four papers, taken together, will guide the work of Demos over the coming years.

In them, she argues that our problems stem from the failure of our system of democracy to adapt to the times in which we live. In a period of fast, accelerating and unprecedented change, it is getting harder than ever to navigate the competing interests of citizens in a diverse society. Instead of making the attempt, most of our political leaders are adopting a divide and conquer approach that worsens division instead of challenging it. Populism, identity politics, tribalism of left and right, post-liberalism: the dominating theories of today's political life all gather strength from hyping up outrage about their enemies for short term political gain. But the outrage makes it harder and harder to persuade citizens to compromise in the common interest.

The series is an attempt to make the case for change in how we do politics. The first paper sets out why this matters: what gives democracy the potential to be a good system of government. The second, *Living in the Exponential Age*, sets out the technological, political and social trends that are pulling us apart. It looks at the nature of the problems we face as a society, borrowing the concept of an era of exponential change from author and futurist Azeem Azhar. It explains why the scale of social, economic and technological change is making it particularly difficult for a democracy like ours to cope, and considers the other side of the coin: the way our social capital is fragmenting.

The third paper, *The Humble Policy Maker* is about politics, and why it's failing. In it, Polly reflects on her own experiences as a policymaker, and on why she concludes that she's spent nearly twenty years thinking about public policy, and did it wrong for most of them. It makes the case for a new humility in policymaking.

Finally, the series concludes with a paper setting out the kind of state we need to manage in the face of this change: *The Gravitational State*. The problems we face today require collaboration, compromise and compassion within and between individuals, communities and societies. Building those skills should be the central role of the modern state. So it sets out a policy agenda designed to reconstruct a nation at peace with itself: a nation capable of resolving its differences, conquering its problems, electing good governments, and holding together through a period of extraordinary change and turmoil.

STATES, CORPORATIONS, INDIVIDUALS, MACHINES

“The democratic disempowerment of the average user online is one of the Internet’s greatest tragedies.”

In this [landmark paper](#), Alex Krasodonski-Jones sets out a new framework for understanding the politics of technology, that will underpin CASM’s work going forward..

He argued that without a principled vision for the web, our democratic traditions, values, government and society risk falling behind authoritarian states, technopolistic industry giants and autonomous technology in the race to reshape the most important international political, cultural and social space in existence.

At first, it was authoritarian regimes that were wary of the web. Now, the world over, governments are vying for change. The future of the open Internet is in doubt, and no cohesive settlement has been found.

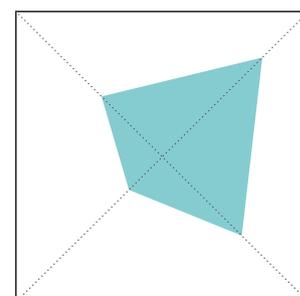
The balances of power between states and corporations, corporations and citizens, and the social contract between states and their citizens is in constant flux online. Powerful technologies – artificial intelligence and trustless technology – presents a

fourth pressure, with our lives governed by machine, not man.

The short paper, part of the Good Web Project, explored proposed settlements on the balance of power and what they mean for the future of the web. It highlights the ways state, corporate, individual and machine power might help or hinder the democratic project, and the balance of powers proposed by competing conceptions of government. The paper demands we reset our vision for liberal democracy in a digital age at this juncture, to win over our publics to a vision of something better, and to secure that vision in collaboration with our friends and partners.

AN EU INTERNET

CORPORATIONS STATES



AI & TRUSTLESS
TECHNOLOGY

INDIVIDUALS

THE SOCIAL STATE

“Relational public services can improve outcomes by giving citizens more control and confidence to resolve their problems. And relational public services can build communities that are able to mobilise and resolve problems by themselves, without relying heavily on the state.”

In 2021 we kicked off a major programme on relational public services, beginning with [The Social State](#), which outlined a provocative vision to shift public service provision away from the dominant transactional model.

The report included new research that found that people were less likely to make and build new relationships than they were during the first lockdown.

Using a nationally representative poll of 1,000 UK adults, we found that a third (32%) of people felt there were fewer opportunities to make new relationships with others than there were during the first lockdown, while only a quarter (23%) said there were more opportunities. This suggested that as we came out of the crisis mode of the pandemic, the British public could be finding it harder to make new connections, not easier.

The report, sponsored by Capita, also found that Brits want to hold relationships with the providers of public services and other service users. An overwhelming majority wanted to be able to get to know the people who provide their local services (71%) and other services users (64%).

In the paper, Polly Mackenzie argues that relational public services are the way to finally make the shift from treatment of problems to prevention. She further argues that now is the moment to rethink public services, and the relational model is the best opportunity for change. The problems are too acute, and the opportunities so enormous, that we cannot and should not wait. Public service can drag itself through the next decade, shattered and exhausted by the pandemic, or it can lead the social recovery, and be the front line of new hope for the future.

INNOVATION

New methods, technology and approaches continue to be central to the way we approach our work. In 2021, we created new ways of engaging the public, understanding the world we live in and opening up the policymaking process.

From informing the Government's flagship Levelling Up programme to working with Government departments to pilot new technology, Demos innovations have been key to securing impact across the year.

THE CLIMATE CONSENSUS

At a decisive point for climate action, this major [report](#) presented a viable path to meeting the UK's 2030 target, with the UK public united in support of a climate policy package.

Made possible by innovative new technology, the Climate Calculator, we outlined a package of policies that represent the commitments and trade-offs we as a country are prepared to make, based on the input from a nationally representative group of nearly 20,000 people. These measures, if taken together and taken soon, would result in a 42% reduction in emissions by 2030, exceeding the Government's existing target and setting the country on a clear path to net zero.

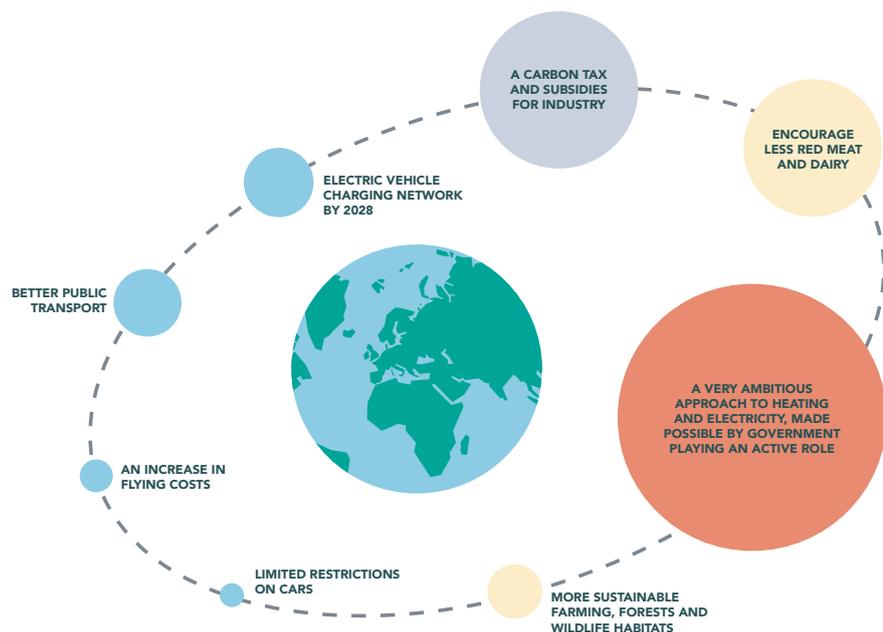
The Climate Calculator was built to create a step change in public engagement around climate policy, creating a new opportunity for people in the UK to determine a route to our 2030 climate target. The first of its kind, it allowed the public to weigh up the impact of individual policies on emissions as well as on household costs, jobs and health, enabling them to create a combination of measures to reach the target.

Participants explored six policy areas: electric cars, public transport and cycling, heating, flights, food and land use, and other things we buy (covering manufacturing and construction). In each, people were presented with a series of policy options, from those

maintaining the Government's current approach to those requiring significant government intervention. This gave people the power to concentrate changes in a few sectors or to make smaller changes across more areas, but either way it required them to reach the UK government's 2030 climate target of a 39% emissions reduction from a 2019 baseline.

The package that emerged is therefore more than just a list of popular policies: it is a measured set of choices, compromises and investments the public are prepared to make to tackle climate change.

The Climate Calculator is a joint initiative with WWF, the world's leading independent conservation organisation, sponsored by National Grid and Scottish Power.



EVERYDAY PLACES

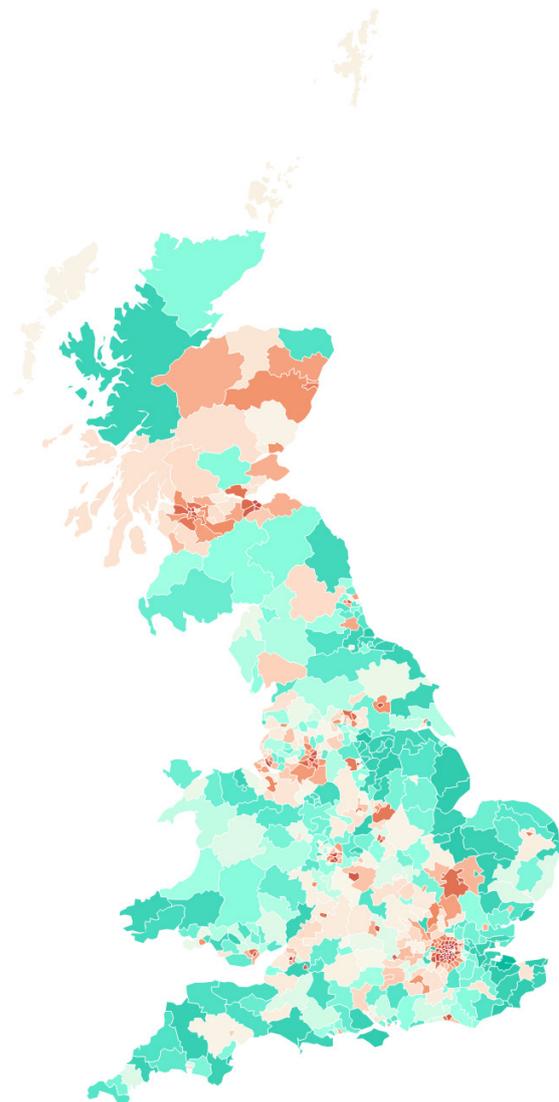
As tackling regional inequality rose to the top of the Government's priorities through its levelling up agenda, we launched the [Place Satisfaction Index](#), an innovative tool through which to explore public priorities.

The research, which drew on a nationally representative poll of 20,000 adults, captured how satisfied people are with their local areas by measuring people's priorities against how they rate actual provision, on issues linked to the practical necessities of daily life such as housing, transport, internet access and shopping.

The report, commissioned by Legal & General, found that places in London, Scotland, the West Midlands and the North of England rated the highest on the Index as having the country's most satisfied residents, while eastern coastal areas of England, and South West Wales, come out at the bottom.

Despite COVID-19 driving a stated desire for access to green space and nature, more built up commuter and 'affluent' towns still saw the highest Place Satisfaction, with 'good local shops' topping the list of local priorities. Rural areas, on the other hand, typically saw poorer satisfaction, with lack of quality transport a particular problem.

We recommended a number of measures that would help the Government regenerate local areas, including recognising the important role of shops in building a sense of 'place' and rethinking the role of suburbs for 21st century living. We are also calling on the Government to adopt a similar approach to measure people's satisfaction of the places they live, in order to inform future policymaking.



COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE NETWORKS

This year we worked with the UK government's Policy Lab to pilot new technology to enable better collaboration between people and policymakers, building a collective intelligence network using a modified version of open source software Polis.

Launched as part of Demos' suite of engagement tools last year, Polis allows participants to agree or disagree with short statements made by others, before submitting their own statements to the conversation. Those accepted by a moderation team are then added to the conversation for voting.

The experiment allowed policymakers to tap into diverse sources of expertise and lived experience within three groups – the government, academics and the UK public. For Government, the COIN (Collective Intelligence Network) platform provided an effective, anonymous space to encourage all levels and areas of the civil service to challenge received ideas and propose new approaches. For the public, the tool enables a kind of democratic praxis - by submitting statements voted on by others, participants gained experience forming, and deliberating, provocative ideas relevant to policy.

The pilot formed the basis of the newly launched Collective Intelligence Lab (CILab), which aims to develop the use of collective intelligence networks in government and radically improving policymaking so that it delivers better outcomes for citizens.

IMPACT

In 2021, our work was welcomed by Ministers, covered by the national and international press and formed the basis of countless civil society conversations.

Whether on the UK's national recovery after the pandemic, our online futures or fixing the housing system, Demos ideas got attention throughout the year.

RENEW NORMAL

“I hope that with all the problems and illness this has caused, people will realise that there is a much bigger lesson to be learnt. What lockdown has demonstrated is that we can make massive changes quickly and with one another we can make things better.”

bridging divides through a process of consultation, engagement, and collaboration.

2021 saw the publication of the project’s final report, [Build Back Stronger](#), drew on the contributions of 50,000 citizens, and formed a blueprint for a stronger, more resilient, and more united nation. It set out how we can rebuild consensus about Britain’s future with an aspirational agenda crowdsourced from the public themselves.

The report contains a number of sections, reporting on the consultations and research we have conducted, and drawing them together to form conclusions.

RENEW NORMAL CONTRIBUTOR

At the height of the first lockdown in 2020, we kicked off Renew Normal: the national conversation on how the United Kingdom should change in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our goal was to involve as many members of the public as possible in a programme to identify the ways in which the experience has changed our lives, and what that should mean for the future of our country. After years of political division over Brexit, Demos and the Renew Normal Commissioners believed that we needed to build consensus about the future,



2021 HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Findings.** This section reports on the conclusions of our consultations and research on the seven topics identified by the public as priority areas for change.
 - Low paid and key workers
 - Our approach to trade and resilience
 - The future of home working
 - Online life and misinformation
 - Communities and volunteering
 - Access to green space
 - Inequality
- 2. Lessons from Covid-19.** This section takes the findings and identifies five cross-cutting lessons from our experience over the last year.
 - There's consensus for change. Don't pretend this didn't happen.
 - Level up people, not just places.
 - Community makes us stronger, not just happier.
 - Remote working and online shopping are here to stay. We have to adapt.
 - We need to redesign the places where we live and work.
- 3. Build Back Stronger.** This section shows how pursuing the policy recommendations

identified in this process will help build up national resilience. It makes the case that this narrative - Build Back Stronger - has the best potential to unite the country behind a post-Covid renewal plan.

The report launch attracted national and regional press coverage, and led to us working closely with the House of Lords Covid-19 Committee.

While the pandemic feels far from over, as we move into 2022, there is all the more need to focus on a recovery based on public consensus. Demos will continue to promote these and other recommendations that place resilience at the heart of our national recovery.

THE COMMISSIONERS

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DIGITAL REGULATION

2021 began with a stark reminder of how our online spaces are being weaponised. On Jan 6, the US Capitol was stormed by a violent mob, mobilised by political disinformation and extremist content online. The following months were no less alarming - with anti-vaxx disinformation undermining the pandemic response, the revelations of the Facebook Files and racist abuse targeting Black England football players all making headlines.

As online spaces continue to be implicated in violence, extremism, exacerbating public health emergencies, as well as atrocities and human rights violations across the world, countries are scrambling to respond. The UK Government published their long-awaited draft Online Safety Bill in May.

Though regulation is long overdue, the risk of reactive regulation that seeks only to clamp down on threats is high: with fundamental freedoms and effective protection from harm for users both likely casualties. We worked throughout 2021 with civil society, industry and government to define, measure and advocate for an internet that is not only compatible with rights but actively empowers users in defending them.

Our priorities for 2021 have been to focus on defending rights online, combating violence and protecting information integrity online - three pillars that are essential to a democratic internet.

THE ONLINE SAFETY BILL

Our work has focused on key areas within the Bill, in particular, what it would mean for platforms' duties to take effective action to stop online abuse, and the need to protect people's rights to anonymity and privacy online.

PRIVACY AND ANONYMITY

With how to protect privacy a key area of debate and ambiguity surrounding the Bill, we brought together a group of experts from across industry, civil society and government, for a consensus-building workshop. Using the deliberative online tool Polis, we investigated where there is already agreement on protecting privacy and safety online, where there are key disagreements, and to use this to map out how solutions could be reached.

In November we gave evidence to the UK Parliament Petitions Committee on the topic of online abuse, highlighting how anonymity could be protected online and abuse could be tackled simultaneously. We worked with HOPE not hate on a joint op-ed in the Independent.

ONLINE ABUSE

We worked with BBC Panorama as part of their award-winning programme on online abuse, producing a report into how reality stars are discussed on social media, demonstrating that women are being disproportionately targeted by personal attacks online. The findings were reported in outlets from the Guardian to Grazia.

We also worked with 7 other civil society organisations in a joint briefing on why platform systems that increase the risk of harms associated with legal content should be within the scope of the Online Safety Bill.

We submitted evidence to the Joint Committee, which was quoted in their final report, and together with other civil society organisations welcomed the Committee's recommendations for tackling the amplification of online abuse and supported policy briefings for tech professionals on the Bill. We also

submitted evidence to the DCMS Subcommittee on Online Harms and Disinformation, looking into the Online Safety Bill.

INTERNATIONAL APPROACHES TO THE ONLINE ECOSYSTEM

We partnered with the Heinrich Boell institute in Brussels to host a public discussion event with two members of the European Parliament and civil society on how UK and EU regulation should respond to the threat of gendered disinformation. We also produced a policy briefing looking at how to identify and combat gendered disinformation online

in the UK and EU contexts, and the prospects of effective regulatory action..

We have joined with allies internationally in calling for better digital regulation in the EU, from better user redress mechanisms, greater action on disinformation and tackling gender-based violence.

We have also engaged regularly with the Internet Governance Forum Best Practice Forum on Gender and Digital Rights, and contributed to their report on gendered disinformation, with our definition of gendered disinformation forming the basis of their wider consultation.

PARTY CONFERENCES

Demos returned to Party Conferences in 2021, hosting four events across the Labour and Conservative fringes. Our first in-person panels in a year and a half, each was an opportunity for parliamentarians, civil society and party members to come together and discuss the country's most pressing political challenges.

OUR EVENTS

Labour

GROWTH FOR THE MANY: ENSURING LOCAL DEMOCRACY SURVIVES LEVELLING UP

Andy Burnham – Mayor of Greater Manchester
 Bridget Phillipson MP – Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury
 Charles Seaford – Research Fellow, Demos
 Jack Newman – University of Surrey
 Polly Mackenzie – Chief Executive, Demos

This event launched new research from the LIPSIT (Local Institutions, Productivity, Sustainability and Inclusivity Trade-offs) programme, which found that however much money is pumped into local industrial growth, regions across the UK will struggle to benefit without first strengthening the infrastructure they rely on, including devolving power to local institutions to invest based on their citizens' priorities. Panelists discussed the institutions needed, and how to ensure they and the people they represent play a meaningful role in determining the future of their areas.

Conservative

LEVELLING UP DRINKS RECEPTION

George Freeman MP – Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Science, Research and Innovation)



2021 HIGHLIGHTS

MOVE FAST AND BUILD THINGS: HOW CAN HOUSING LEVEL UP BRITAIN?

Supported by Pocket Living

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP – Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
Stephen Bush – Political Editor of the New Statesman
Marc Vlessing – Founder and CEO of Pocket Living
Jonathan Myers – Co-Founder, YIMBY Alliance
Polly Mackenzie – Chief Executive, Demos

Levelling Up constitutes this government's most ambitious domestic policy response. Yet for it to work, the UK's housing market needs to step up: providing not only the right homes in the right places to fuel the changes that are needed, but also to level up housing opportunity between those who already own their home and those who aspire to, by delivering homes that young people can actually afford to buy. This panel explored ambitious ideas and innovative solutions to create a fairer housing market that's open to everyone.

STRONGER TOGETHER: PUTTING VOLUNTEERING AT THE HEART OF BUILDING BACK BETTER

Supported by Shaping the Future with Volunteering

Danny Kruger MP
Matt Hyde – CEO, Scouts and co-chair of Shaping the Future with Volunteering
Catherine Johnstone – CEO, Royal Voluntary Service and co-chair of Shaping the Future with Volunteering
Polly Mackenzie – Chief Executive, Demos

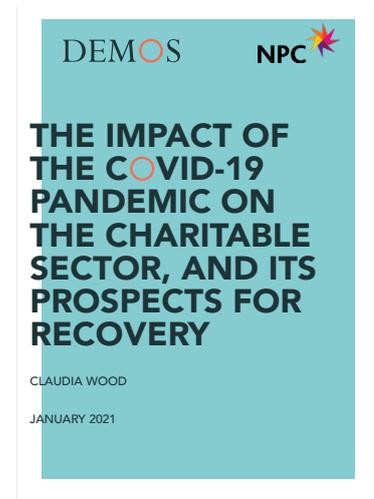
The stronger bonds we built with our communities were one of few silver linings of the pandemic, with many people volunteering for the first time, and many others realising the power of social action. Yet as we look to the future, how do we ensure the huge potential of volunteering is realised in our post-Covid society? This panel explored lessons from the pandemic and how we can embrace volunteering as a key part of our national recovery.



THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON THE CHARITABLE SECTOR

Major fundraising windfalls experienced by some charities – mostly supporting the NHS – obscure the dire situation faced by many others, which have been forced to cut back services despite rising demand, pause or cancel lifesaving research programmes, and make sweeping redundancies among their skilled staff.

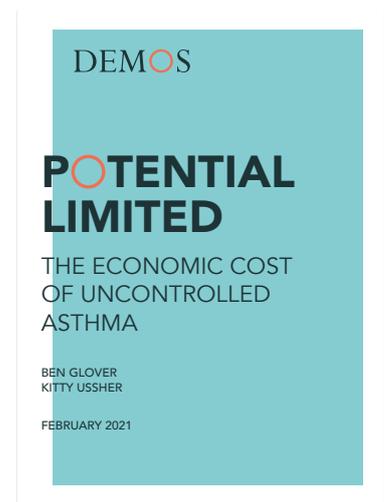
Our report with New Philanthropy Capital found that the Covid-19 crisis will decimate the charity sector in the UK unless the



POTENTIAL LIMITED

This report aimed to explore the economic impact on patients from being unable to control their asthma – in particular through lower earnings and more limited opportunities to work and study.

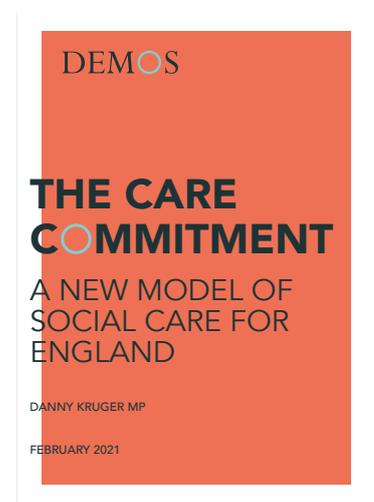
Our research, commissioned by Sanofi, found that people with uncontrolled asthma are on average financially worse off, earning around £3,000 less per year than the average adult. Beyond the personal impact, the report estimates that every year, the condition is linked to a massive £2bn loss to the UK economy due to lower pay.



THE CARE COMMITMENT

In a new pamphlet, Conservative MP Danny Kruger – former Political Secretary to Boris Johnson and the author of a recent government review of civil society – called for a bold new idea to help solve the social care crisis named the ‘Care Commitment’.

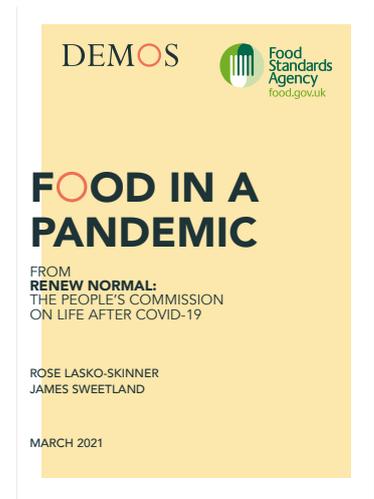
Danny proposed a shift to a more family and community-centred care system, suggesting that all personal care costs at home (domiciliary) for older people should be covered by public funds, on the condition that a joint commitment is made by the individual, their family, the local authority and the Government to each play their part. The paper was supported by the County Councils Network.



FOOD IN A PANDEMIC

Like the health impact of the virus, this report found that our experiences of food have diverged widely during the pandemic. While some have seen their eating habits improve, and potentially made lifelong improvements to their diets, others faced acute levels of food insecurity during the pandemic.

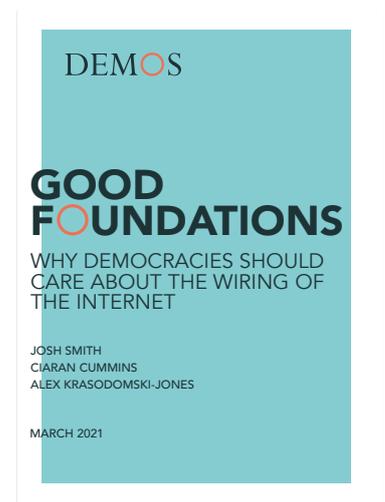
These extremely varied experiences have led to important questions for the future of food. As part of Renew Normal: The People's Commission on Life After Covid-19, we worked with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to focus on people's experiences with food during the pandemic – across multiple lockdowns – and the public's preferences for the future of the food system.



GOOD FOUNDATIONS

The design and policing of online spaces bears directly on many of the most important problems faced by democracies today. Many proposed solutions, however, barely skim the surface of the Internet as a technology.

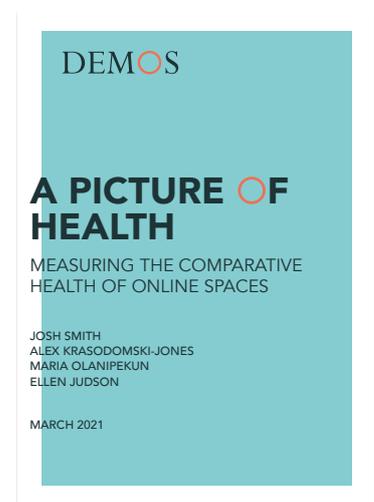
In this paper, we examined two examples of protocols which may represent the next evolution of the Internet: New IP, developed by China's Huawei, and DNS over HTTPS (or 'DoH'), developed and championed, among others, by the Mozilla Foundation and Cloudflare. For each, we discuss the significant effects which these changes could have on the human and social layers of the Internet. This paper is part of the Good Web Project, supported by GCHQ.



A PICTURE OF HEALTH

Using an algorithm to analyse discussions on the social media platform Reddit, we found that users in online spaces do not behave consistently across multiple forums, but adjust their negative behaviour to the rules of the platform they are using. The research suggests that the same user might behave well in a well designed space, and badly in another one.

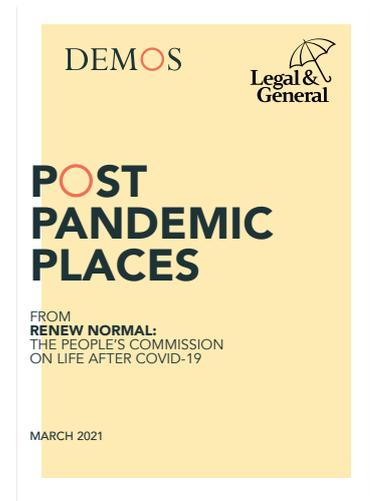
This report, as part of the Good Web Project and supported by GCHQ, explored online behaviour, and found that the design of online spaces fuels negative behaviour, including trolling.



POST PANDEMIC PLACES

The pandemic put 'local' in the spotlight. As our horizons have narrowed, we have a greater awareness, and appreciation of our local areas and communities.

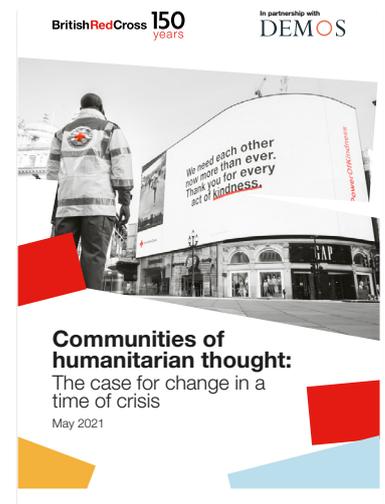
The report, commissioned by Legal & General, found that areas with more remote working are likely to see higher levels of local spending, suggesting that enabling remote working could be key to the Government's plans for regeneration after the pandemic.



COMMUNITIES OF HUMANITARIAN THOUGHT

Disasters and emergencies, health inequalities and displacement and migration are increasingly urgent humanitarian challenges facing the world. The question of how the UK should respond to these challenges at home and overseas has become even more pressing since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This essay collection brought together leading thinkers from political and civil society to mark the British Red Cross' 150th year and to outline a vision for the future.



RACE TO THE TOP

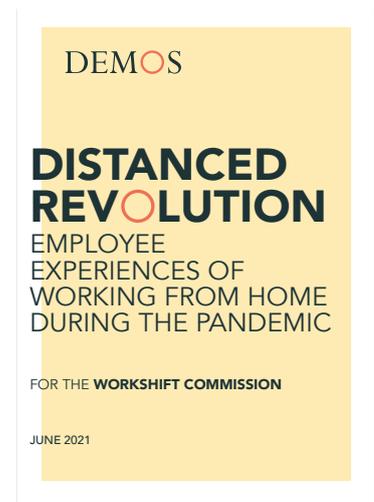
This report – drawing on 20 interviews with tax directors at large businesses with UK operations – found that large companies want a global simplification of the current corporate tax regime. Aligning strongly with President Biden's proposals for a global minimum corporation tax rate, which would provide an opportunity to reduce international tax competition. We found that the current system's complexity and unpredictability posed a challenge to businesses, and that many big businesses are largely accepting of higher corporation tax rates.



DISTANCED REVOLUTION

This report from the Workshift Commission sought to better understand employees' experiences of working from home during the pandemic – the benefits, challenges and future opportunities.

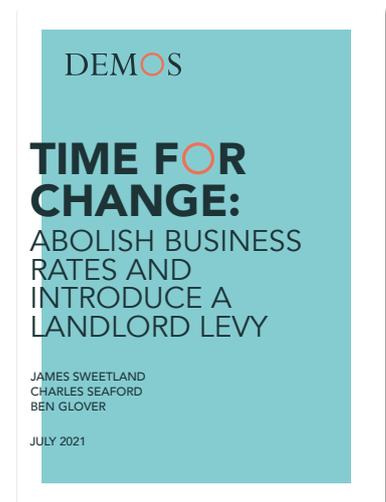
We found that many home workers have had a generally positive experience, linked to better eating habits and improved stress levels during the pandemic, indicating flexible working policies could help tackle obesity and improve public health. However, low income households have experienced the opposite, irrespective of whether they've worked from home, with the deterioration of eating habits and stress levels, building on the arguments that more needs to be done to improve the living standards of low earners in the UK if we are to 'build back better'.



TIME FOR CHANGE

Our report, supported by the Joffe Charitable Trust, found that the Government should provide a boost to retailers on the high street by shifting the burden of business rates from retailers to landlords.

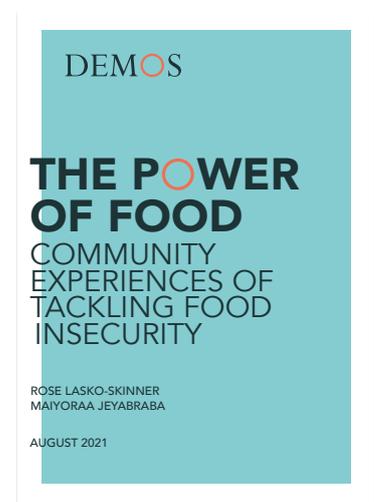
The research – drawing on 20 interviews with tax directors at large businesses with UK operations – found that a number of issues exist with the current business rates regime, including deterring investment in buildings. Only once these have been resolved can the Government consider increasing business taxes in a way that would minimise the backlash from companies.



THE POWER OF FOOD

This research found that people feel the Government support provided during the pandemic was insufficient, including Universal Credit not going far enough. A survey of people vulnerable to food insecurity found that a large majority (74%) don't feel the Government is doing very much to help.

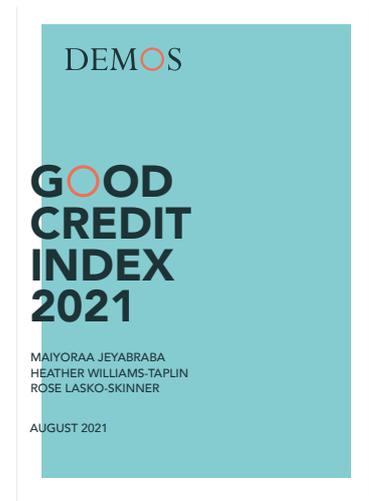
The report called for the Government to introduce funding to help tackle food insecurity by creating environments that improve social capital for those on low incomes. A Community Infrastructure Grant should be created to develop better social infrastructure locally, which is desperately needed to tackle food insecurity in the long-term. Supported by the British Poultry Council.



GOOD CREDIT INDEX 2021

The Good Credit Index 2021, supported by New Day, found that the financial support provided by the Government during the pandemic provided many households with a vital lifeline.

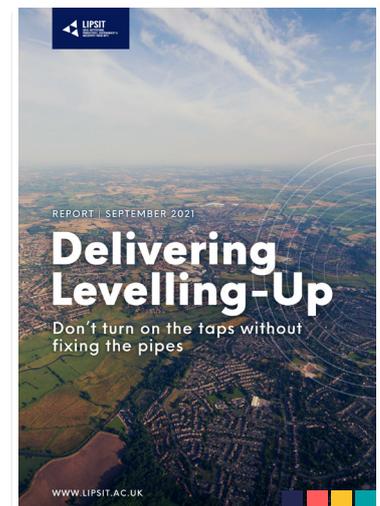
In the Index's third year, there was an average increase in access to credit in the UK, mostly due to effective government intervention to prevent a financial crisis. The job retention and job support schemes, eviction ban, payment deferrals and the £20 Universal Credit uplift have reduced the need for credit and stopped credit scores dropping off a cliff. However, it warned that if the Government pulled the plug on the remaining support in September, as was planned, many households faced financial crises.



DELIVERING LEVELLING UP

This second major report from the LIPSIT project drew together a wide range of evidence collected during our two-year investigation. The report mobilised the project's findings on regional institutions and regional economies in order to assess the potential for delivering 'levelling up' in the UK. It argued that if the UK government attempts to deliver levelling up without fixing the problems in subnational governance, it would be like turning on the taps without fixing the pipes, and watching vast resources leak away in a highly inefficient system.

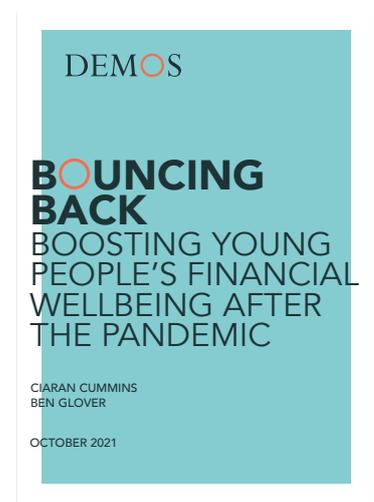
Local Institutions, Productivity, Sustainability and Inclusivity Trade-offs (LIPSIT) was an ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) funded collaborative project.



BOUNCING BACK

Despite their reported obsessions with coffee and avocados, our research found that young people are often doing the right things financially, and are more likely to be saving than any other age group. Yet almost half (47%) still have low financial resilience.

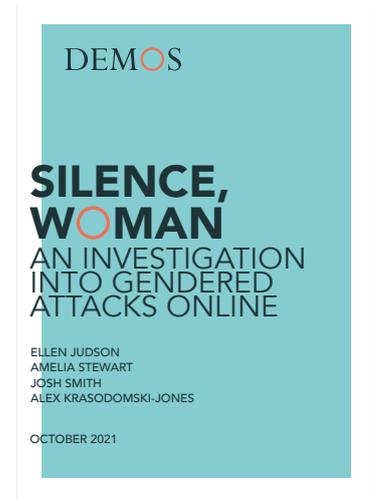
For policy makers to get to grips with what appears to be a cost of living crisis for young people, the report recommends that the Government makes tackling this issue an urgent priority. Supported by Yorkshire Building Society.



SILENCE, WOMAN

In partnership with BBC Panorama, we investigated the gendered abuse that contestants on reality shows Love Island and Married At First Sight UK faced online. We also investigated how women who were not in the public eye were being impacted by online gendered abuse through their reporting online of their own experiences.

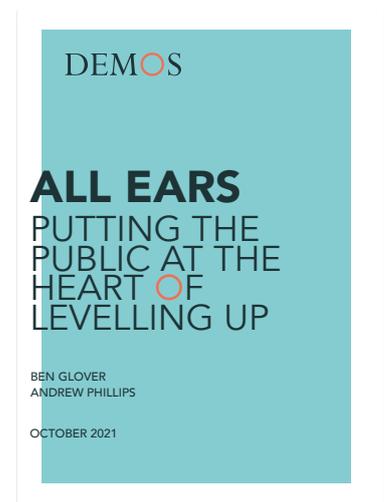
We found that Women online are being driven out of communities they value and subject to daily abuse, and that defining gendered abuse as a tight category of illegitimate speech is unlikely to be a successful mitigation strategy.



ALL EARS

This report, made possible by the Politics and Economics Research Trust, argued that the public must be put at the heart of levelling up, finding that the public wants to be involved. Nearly eight in ten – 77% of the general public and 79% of the former red wall – think that local people should be involved in decisions about how government money is used in their local area.

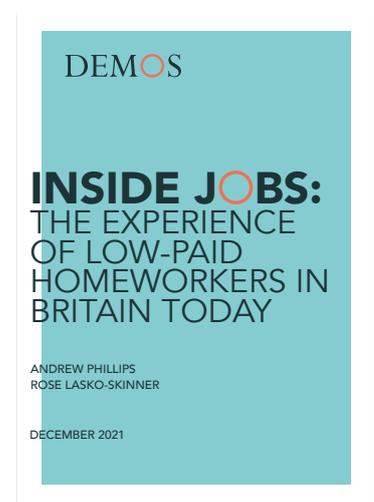
This preference is so strong that the public prioritise local control over funding. The public are more than twice as likely to want less money for their local area and more say for local people over how it is spent (55% of general public and 53% of former red wall), compared to more money and less say (21% of general public and 23% of former red wall).



INSIDE JOBS

For the first time, this report showed that low-paid workers report significant benefits as a result of working from home. These benefits range from more self-reported flexibility and autonomy at work and a better work-life balance, to stronger family relationships and improved health. Low-paid homeworkers are just as likely as high-paid homeworkers to want to continue working from home in the future.

If the government, employers and wider stakeholders want to support low-paid workers, they should seek to maintain homeworking as an option for them, improve the experience of homeworking, and expand access to homeworking where this is possible. Supported by Stonewater.



LOOKING TO 2022

2022 holds few certainties.
Yet we're clearer than ever
that our democracy needs
us.

Like the many years before, in 2022 Demos will continue our mission to renew democracy. We'll release new and impactful research, continuing our programme on public services and starting ambitious new projects, on inheritance, our digital selves and building on the progress we've made on local economies.

We'll continue to innovate, thinking of new and different ways to improve our country, and exploring the evolving potential of technology.

All this with renewed purpose: clarity around what the world needs from us and what we can bring to it.

Again, we're asking you to join us. If you'd like to be part of the Demos story in 2022, please do get in touch.

DEMOS

Demos is a champion of people, ideas and democracy. We bring people together. We bridge divides. We listen and we understand. We are practical about the problems we face, but endlessly optimistic and ambitious about our capacity, together, to overcome them.

At a crossroads in Britain's history, we need ideas for renewal, reconnection and the restoration of hope. Challenges from populism to climate change remain unsolved, and a technological revolution dawns, but the centre of politics has been intellectually paralysed. Demos will change that. We can counter the impossible promises of the political extremes, and challenge despair – by bringing to life an aspirational narrative about the future of Britain that is rooted in the hopes and ambitions of people from across our country.

Demos is an independent, educational charity, registered in England and Wales. (Charity Registration no. 1042046)

Find out more at www.demos.co.uk

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