



Shape the Future: Virtual Workshop Series

Using social sciences, humanities and the arts to shape a positive future

The British Academy is launching a new initiative to bring together insights from across the humanities and social sciences on how to shape a positive post-pandemic future for people, the economy and the environment, exploring opportunities to rebuild society and culture in the light of the COVID-19 crisis.

Shape the Future will explore how we revitalise societal well-being, recreate an inclusive economy around purpose, and explore the cultures and histories of science, policy, and politics from which we can learn. We want to discuss issues that cannot be treated in policy silos and bring considerations of place, ethics and shared values together with a long view, a cross-cultural view, and interdisciplinary perspectives. Fellows, early career researchers and external stakeholders will all be invited to join us so that we can be as inclusive and creative as possible.

The first round of workshops is already underway. **Below you will see all the new workshops in the second round of this series. Please follow the links in the table for each workshop to sign up.** We welcome ideas and suggestions for additional topics and themes; please get in touch with the team at the email provided below.

You will also find at the bottom of the table a list of all the workshops in the series from the first round. We will shortly be launching a website and newsletter where we will be sharing the insights from these workshops and outlining our next steps in the initiative and how you can continue to participate.

If you have any questions, are interested in a previous session, or have difficulty registering, please contact Bronwen Butler at b.butler@thebritishacademy.ac.uk.

Workshop topic	Details
<p>When is there too much information?</p> <p>A policy discussion with Professor Cass R. Sunstein, Robert Walmsley University Professor, Harvard Law School; Chaired by Professor Nick Chater, Professor of Behavioural Science, Warwick Business School</p> <p>Immense amounts of information are now accessible to people, including information that bears on their past, present and future. This raises the question, how much information is too much? An important research challenge is to determine how people decide to seek or avoid information. People avoid information if they think it will make them sad (and seek information they think will make them happy).</p> <p>What we need is more clarity about what information is actually doing or achieving. Policymakers emphasize “the right to know,” but we might take a different perspective, arguing that the focus should be on human well-being and what information contributes to it. Can we develop a framework of information-seeking that aims to integrate the diverse motives that drive information-seeking and its avoidance? Such a framework might rest on the idea that information can alter people’s action, affect and cognition in both positive and negative ways. The suggestion is that people assess these influences and integrate them into a calculation of the value of information that leads to information-seeking or avoidance. In this session we will explore a theory that offers a framework for characterizing and quantifying individual differences in information-seeking, and how to consider biases that can lead to both insufficient and excessive information-seeking. In the current context of a global pandemic or other crises, could such a framework help policymakers to consider how much information is too much, or too little, and what difference will it make.</p>	<p><i>With Professor Cass R. Sunstein FBA and chaired by Professor Nick Chater FBA</i></p> <p>Friday 05 June 15.00-16.30</p> <p>Please register here</p>
<p>COVID-19 and the Value of (Quality Adjusted) Life (Expectancy)</p> <p>In recent years, many departments and agencies of government have used monetary values of health and safety impacts as part of their economic appraisals. Approaches and values vary from one policy context to another and it is still an open question as to whether there can/should be a unified framework applicable across all sectors.</p> <p>However, with respect to the health care sector, the Treasury’s ‘Green Book’ guidance is that an intervention which improves a benefitting individual’s life expectancy in full health, or otherwise generates an additional Quality Adjusted Life Year, is valued by the Department of Health and Social Care as being worth £60,000. So, for example, if some health care intervention were to cost £150,000 for each QALY it produced, it would, by this criterion, not normally be recommended for implementation.</p> <p>If this test were applied to the package of policy interventions to address the COVID-19 pandemic, would these policies pass the test? Arguably, the answer is no. But if the government’s strategy implies a much higher value than £60,000 per QALY, and if by</p>	<p><i>Led by Professor Graham Loomes FBA</i></p> <p>Thursday 11 June 14.00-15.30</p> <p>Please register here</p>

<p>some process we establish that UK society considers the costs of the government's measures to be acceptable, does that mean we should in future use a correspondingly higher value for QALYs when evaluating future health and social care interventions?</p>	
<p>Elections in the light of COVID-19</p> <p>The pandemic, and its effects, will pose challenges to the governance of nation states regardless of what system of governance has been adopted. For countries that use elections, these will represent a particular set of challenges that will require careful attention, as well as an important opportunity both to gauge the sentiment towards those in power and the policies they have pursued to tackle COVID-19 and its economic impacts to date, and to determine what impact, if any, the pandemic has had on both party politics and voter preferences.</p> <p>In respect of the more practical elements of an election, how can elections be effectively and fairly conducted during a pandemic? How do voters – and politicians - respond to measures brought in in the name of creating safe conditions to vote? How can elections be effectively monitored in light of the constraints imposed due to the pandemic? How can the mechanisms of voting be kept as 'neutral' as possible in order to avoid concerns around manipulation of the process?</p> <p>On the more substantive policy issues around holding an election in a COVID-19 and post COVID-19 era, how will the circumstances of the pandemic transform electoral politics? This question could explore the policy positions taken by parties, the manner in which – and extent to which – electoral campaigns are conducted, and the sentiment and behaviour of the electorate both to the election and its surrounding activities itself, and to those seeking to be elected. This could also encompass a discussion around what might be the longer-term impacts of the pandemic on voter behaviour – the issues that they prioritise, the policy positions that find favour and disfavour, and the types of politicians they vote, or do not vote, for.</p>	<p><i>Led by Professor Sarah Birch FBA, FRSE</i></p> <p>Monday 22 June 12.30-14.00</p> <p>Please register here</p>
<p>COVID-19, Peace & Security</p> <p>On 23 March the UN Secretary General issued a call for a global ceasefire in order to “focus together on the true fight of our lives”. Yet even in the face of a global crisis that recognises no borders, momentum around global peace and security proved difficult to create. Ongoing conflicts in Syria, Yemen and Libya have all seen some form of escalation over the course of the pandemic, to name a few, while diplomatically the deterioration of the US-China relationship is just one of the more obvious example of heightened international tensions.</p> <p>The relationship between conflict and crisis is a complicated one, with both the state and international actors often seen as serving one particular side in a conflict. Trust is crucial to the development of effective technical solutions, but how can this be achieved in deeply divided societies? Which actors are best placed to support the development of trust and subsequent implementation of solutions to the pandemic? What role can international organisations and states play in supporting</p>	<p><i>Led by Dr Kieran Mitton</i></p> <p>Wednesday 24 June 12.30-14.00</p> <p>Please register here</p>

<p>communities in conflict and mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on them? How can it be ensured that aid is reaching to those most at risk?</p> <p>While crisis response in places impacted by conflict poses a number of challenges, it could also present opportunities. How can these best be harnessed to promote peace in the longer term? Responses to the pandemic have already shown how important civil society can be in providing crucial support for local populations – can this be transformed into ongoing cooperation with those in power? Are there cases where the immediate necessity of responding to the pandemic, and its impacts, refocus attention away from conflict, as the UN hoped? How can these positive steps be best supported?</p> <p>A successful solution to the pandemic appears to rely both on effective local and national responses, and international collaboration. How can this be achieved? Are we already seeing changes to the existing global order in response to the pandemic? Are these changes an acceleration of movement that was happening already, or will the pandemic have changed the course of changes to the international order? Will multilateral organisations be able to demonstrate their value in bringing the international community together in response to COVID-19, or will it further expose weaknesses that threaten those institutions?</p>	
<p>Implications for Children and Young People</p> <p>The Covid-19 pandemic has led to profound changes to the lives of children and young people throughout the UK. In this workshop we will consider both the short and long term impacts on children and young people’s lives in different spaces: family, community, education, environment. Additionally, what are the impacts on young people who are transitioning into the labour market, further education, apprenticeships or higher education?</p> <p>The discussion will consider the implications for policy development, including through the lens of balancing ‘being a child’ and ‘becoming an adult’. Also, the extent to which children and young people’s voices have been heard during the pandemic – have their voices been heard (and acted upon)? Who has been representing their perspectives in the wider discussions on Covid-19?</p>	<p><i>Led by Professor Anna Vignoles CBE, FBA</i></p> <p>Wednesday 24 June 1.30-3.00pm</p> <p>Please register here</p>

Upcoming workshops, date and time to be confirmed

The following sessions are being arranged with a range of discussants and chairs, but full details were not able to be confirmed in time for this second round. Register interest for either being a discussion contributor or a participant at [BA PolicyDirectorate@thebritishacademy.ac.uk](mailto:BA_PolicyDirectorate@thebritishacademy.ac.uk).

What is the Future of the 'Public' in Public Culture?	Led by Professor Peter Mandler FBA
Implications for environmental sustainability	Led by Professor Harriet Bulkeley FBA
Societal responses to past crises and pandemics	Chair and discussants to be confirmed
Implications for the future skills-base for a resilient economy	Chair and discussants to be confirmed
Rethinking cultural and ethical foundations	Chair and discussants to be confirmed
How do we support a recovery from the pandemic that recognises the challenges of sustainability and inclusiveness?	Chair and discussants to be confirmed
Implications for (online) democracy and governance	Chair and discussants to be confirmed