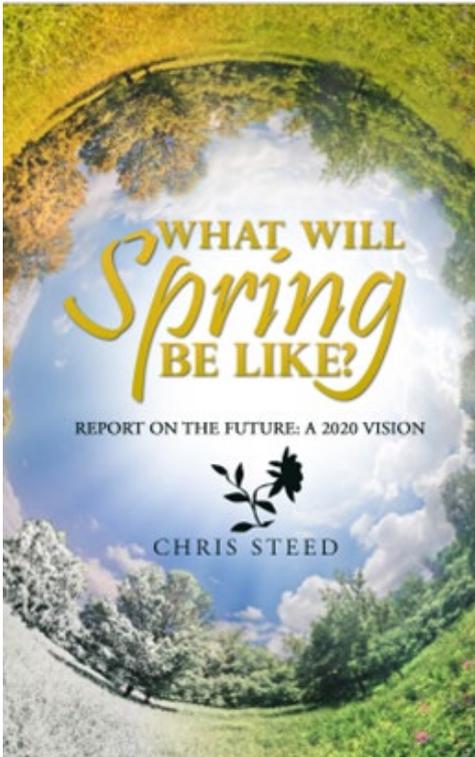


# What will Spring be like?

## A Beveridge for our time – responding to the crisis of value



The pandemic has been a master-class in system thinking on a global, national and community level. Social renewal is vital. This will seem but a utopian distraction from urgent tasks of nursing the social fabric back to health until you remember a fairly obvious point. Pandemics will recur!

Faced with pent up anger against racial injustice, glaring social inequalities exposed by the pandemic, growing global strain, the economy falling off a cliff and the crisis of nature that hadn't gone away, history didn't come much bigger than this.

As 2020 dawned, the inequality debate, climate concerns, a demand for racial justice and the impact of artificial intelligence were already reaching breaking point. The onset of the pandemic not only revealed these pre-existing and profound cracks in our lives but began to pave the way towards re-shaping our future world. *What will Spring be Like?* recognises that 2020 is a moment of profound possibility. This is a time for creative thinking and unified change so we emerge from this collective experience and trauma with a positive agenda.

Unless we learn nothing, a project to re-think and proof against the next shock must be concerned with nothing short of re-configuring of how humans live in the world. Modernity was an unparalleled 'age of extremes'. The scale of military conflict, vast numbers trapped in systems of totalitarian oppression, cumulative conditions of mass humanitarian disaster and entrenched poverty of 'mega-slums' leave us shocked and appalled by harms we inflict on one another. We created social conditions in which maintenance of an affluent lifestyle and pursuit of consumer aspiration in one half of the globe are structurally implicated in the intensification of distress at the other. All the while, the planet was trashed.

Momentum is mounting for deep reflection and transformative change. Let's shape a post-virus world that works better for everyone. Yet achieving a renewed sense of the co-ordination of each part of the national or international system is complex. The imperative is to address a number of

areas of social risk concurrently ranging from the growing blight of social isolation in our societies, societal and religious conflicts rooted in different ways of understanding the world, to inter-generational divides and the need for young people to nurture social intelligence for an automated future. Not to mention pandemic proofing.

What we have witnessed though is a colossal failure of leadership. All that so many young people have known is intense polarisation. They have rarely seen people coming together in wise ways. Instead of statesmanship, the need for colourful leadership rather than technocratic wood has been confused with a descent into angry division. In complex, turbulent times, human interaction at all levels becomes very 'shouty'. When faced with conflicted demands, participants scream at each other and potential for deadlock is high. Politics becomes a loyalty test and 'my country right or wrong' divides a political community into patriots or traitors; generating intolerance and paranoia. Political rituals are empty.

Without coalitions and campaigns based on shared interests, we head for societal conflict as its resolution mechanism. Internet-fuelled harmony in a new technological utopia sits alongside growing menace from eco-social fumes of noxious hatred. Where will it end?

And then a virus came along. It was a game-changer. But how do you change the game? Politicians have until now been finding it hard to contemplate radical changes to the status quo. Everything feels like it is now up for grabs. How we think about a pandemic affects this:

1. Pandemic is a nasty interruption to the way we organise society before normal business is resumed with no imperative 'ought' about changing things;
2. Pandemic alters fundamentally the way we see risks, politics, and the relationship between people and society. There can be no return- only a new normal.
3. Which of these lens we use depends how far we think things were wrong beforehand and therefore reform and re-set were urgent priorities.

An idea, a dream is where it starts

An energy is where hunger drives action

A politics is what can emerge based on a collective approach to global challenges. So ask:

- a. What are the ideas lying around (that might inspire system change)?

- b. What is the appetite and where is the energy for change?
- c. Where are surprising alliances whereby pressure from below meets pressure from above? Taking the ideas that are lying around, it is citizens coming together who give politicians courage to act so as to produce epoch-making leadership we badly need.

## **A crisis in value**

As I write these words (9<sup>th</sup> August 2020), it has been announced that surveys show over the past 25 years, enough ice has melted from Antarctica to fill the Grand Canyon!

Amidst fears of a second spike in Coronavirus, the number of jobs expecting to be cut this autumn is severe, representing carnage on Main Street and an economic slowdown that Time Magazine is likening to the effect of the Great Depression. There is mounting concern about the generation of children who may be harmed by the lockdown if not central to the recovery. After being stopped for no reason, a senior UK politician who is black calls for systemic change due to pernicious racial profiling. It is absolutely not enough to champion diversity and think we have ticked that box. The challenge is far more deep-seated.

If you are passionate about racial injustice, should you also be an advocate of environmental action? If yes, should you also be concerned that those on whom our way of life is so dependent should be properly valued? Would you also be in favour of genuine economic value that provides worthwhile jobs for worthwhile people? Would you also be concerned about the valuing of children on whose minds the virus wages war? Where does all that sit with social solidarity and the value of community we have re-discovered?

What these have in common is that they are different dimensions of value. They represent a crisis in the human spirit. This book tries to bring those different arenas together into an agenda for change.

Deep global transformations are needed. 'What will Spring be like?' articulates the social investments that are crucial to help ensure proofing against pandemics and the kind of 'spiritual stockpiling' that builds resilient communities.

How could we build on what came to the fore as vital to value (economic value, people's lives no matter the colour of their skin, the value of social solidarity and the value we place on the natural world that had given us such a sharp shock?)

*What will Spring be Like?* captures this period of opportunity to re-imagine the future and build a new social model that works for more people, protects nature and has greater capacity for resilience. It seeks to bring a combination of vision and realism to the task of reconstruction with both passion and seriousness. This book assembles the wide-ranging concerns across society into a framework, asking readers 'what sort of a world do they want to see?' and 'what will earth will be like for the younger generations who inherit it?' The back picture was painted by the author's six year old granddaughter when asked what kind of a world she would like to grow up in, to imagine Spring?

*"Make big plans...deep into the future*

*Aim high in hope and work.*

*Have faith, remembering that a*

*Noble plan, once recorded, will never die*

*But long after we are gone*

*Will still be a living thing." [Goethe]*