

# THE GREAT RE\_\_SET

RESHAPING  
THE MARKETING  
COMMUNICATIONS  
INDUSTRY TO  
SERVE PEOPLE  
AND PLANET



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## A NOTE FROM THE AUTHORS

# HELLO,

A little bit about us before we begin. Strategy is our day job. We have a combined 16 years' experience in and around the advertising industry. We work with brands such as Unilever, Sainsbury's, Pernod Ricard, MINI, innocent and Heineken.

Our introduction to Purpose Disruptors came through the creators of Reclaiming Agency, a pioneering purpose-driven leadership programme. Through this, and many other personal experiences, we have faced into the unsettling reality of our chosen careers. Our industry has been complicit in environmental destruction. All of us have been complicit.

Yet we also acknowledge huge potential in our industry. Potential to model a new normal,

to prompt different behaviours, encourage regenerative practices. Potential to nudge what's at the core of our operating systems.

In this understanding we have choices to make and a responsibility to act. We want to make choices that will make us better ancestors to future generations. And we want to align with a way of living more lightly on our planet. That means giving more than we take.

Like many in our industry, we have experimented. We have pushed to demonstrate the effectiveness of sustainable brands. We've hosted climate summits for clients. We've planned purposeful campaigns. We've even picked up a few awards for these experiments.

**But now is the time to mobilise.**

This paper is for those who want to engage in meaningful conversation and action at this crucial moment. We wanted to write something for people who are, like us, ready to make a personal choice at a moment when we have a beautiful opportunity for change. This choice will require clarity, courage and commitment.

This is our invitation to a Great Reset. It can happen if we want it to. As Leonard Cohen put it:

*"There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in".*

**Ally & Laura**

ABOUT

# THE GREAT RESET

RESHAPING THE MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY TO SERVE PEOPLE & PLANET

The Great Reset is a movement within the creative industry to keep hold of the positive environmental shifts that have happened during lockdown and embed these in society as the new normal.

Right now we have a small window of opportunity to shape the future we want for our industry and society – because as we emerge, the pressure to go back to Business As Usual will intensify.

We believe that people in our industry have power and influence, but we need people – lots of people – to choose to use it. We need them to grab this opportunity to help shape a society that puts mankind and our planet's needs first and join The Great Reset.



DISASTER SHOCKS US  
OUT OF SLUMBER BUT  
ONLY SKILFUL EFFORT  
CAN KEEP US AWAKE.

REBECCA SOLNIT, AUTHOR

# INTRODUCTION

**“Reset” means “to set again or differently”. Out of this experience we have the opportunity to “set again” on a grand scale – not because we were forced to, but because we chose to.**

The world we once knew is never coming back. Covid-19 broke the world open, exposing parts of our collective reality that needed healing, beyond the pandemic emergency. The result is the realisation of a historic tipping point.

The experience has been one of acceleration, where the trends and conversations just below the surface have emerged loudly. In responding to this health crisis, organisations and industries at large have adopted new habits and behaviours of resilience. Many of these changes can now be seen as critical tools to regenerate industries, economies and societies for the better in the coming weeks, months and years.

This moment is widely regarded as a time for new perspectives and actions. A time for recalibration, imagination and reinvention. This paper will highlight the most helpful “green shoots” of change that have emerged in people and in the advertising industry, enabling The Great Reset to happen. It will articulate the opportunity for continued positive change and momentum in relation to the industry’s current and future direction of travel. Finally, it will set out the pathways for leaders to approach this potential with intent to realise The Great Reset that the world so needs.

The pandemic is our immediate “in your face” reality, pressing upon us and presenting an opportunity for change. But simultaneously, we are vividly aware that we are in a climate and ecological emergency. Collaborative, urgent action for climate justice is needed and is long overdue.

## It’s now or never:<sup>1</sup>

- The world has warmed by 1.1°C since pre-industrial times. The past five years – between 2015 and 2019 – was the hottest five-year **period on record**.<sup>2</sup>
- The Arctic Circle hit its **highest ever recorded temperature** this year.<sup>3</sup> This is the kind of weather we would have expected by **2100** if temperatures were allowed to rise at current rates unchecked.
- Humanity has wiped out 60% of animal populations **since 1970**.<sup>4</sup> Now we are on the road to our own mass extinction.

1. ‘World has six months to avert climate crisis, says energy expert’, Fiona Harvey, The Guardian, 18 June

2. Global Climate in 2015-2019, World Meteorological Organization

3. ‘Arctic Circle sees highest ever recorded temperatures’, BBC, 22 June 2020

4. ‘Humanity has wiped out 60% of animals since 1970, report finds’, Damien Carrington, The Guardian, 30 October 2018

**As authors, we have witnessed brands and marketing comms slowly beginning to act:**

- There is a desire for (corporate) change and action – to take responsibility and avert extinction (see accompanying timeline).
- Moral neutrality is no longer competitive. Brands and businesses that operate with a deeper purpose (in terms of sustainability and values aligned with a habitable world) **are proving more successful**.<sup>5</sup> According to **Kantar research**,<sup>6</sup> brands seen as having a high positive impact on people’s lives have seen brand value grow 2.5 times more than those with low perceived impact. Globally, more than 60% of “consumers” under 30 prefer brands that “have a point of view and stand for something”.
- Brands and businesses have a responsibility beyond profit and shareholders – to stakeholders – for their own impact on society and also to fill relevant gaps where governments cannot or do not.

And yet, despite these early moves, we are aware of the bare facts. The advertising and marketing industry is a key player in driving consumption

(**60% of greenhouse gas emissions**<sup>7</sup> are driven by household consumption) and as such it bears great weight and responsibility when it comes to the eradication of destructive habits and practices.

The need for the industry to take responsibility for its actions is revealed through exclusive research with the UK population conducted for The Great Reset through OnePulse. 77% of people think it is the creative industry’s responsibility to encourage people to behave more sustainability, as we have during lockdown. Only 23% of the population believe post-lockdown advertising should encourage people to consume, shop and fly like before.<sup>8</sup>

A motivation to write this paper is to offer The Great Reset as a means to help address this context. That what we are learning during the lockdown, the new ways of working and relationships we have been inhabiting, can be seen not just as temporary clothes to wear, but rather a new suit that is needed to address our climate emergency.

We will show that this moment can be viewed as both an accelerant of trends that were already happening, which pioneering leaders can harness for business advantage, AND that the events

“The strongest bond you can create with your customers is a shared sense of value.”

**CHRISTOPHER MILLER, GLOBAL HEAD OF ACTIVISM, BEN & JERRY'S**

of the past four months, we have unknowingly prepared ourselves for the next challenge. To meaningfully start to address our climate emergency. We want to show that we are already the climate leaders we have been waiting for. A key goal of this paper is to shift our collective awareness to understand this.

**To return to Business As Usual is not just to return to the past.**

**To return to Business as Usual is to deliberately reject an open opportunity for our industry to fight the climate crisis.**

**Who would want to do that?**

5. Consumers and Sustainability, Sustainable Living Brands, Unilever  
 6. The Journey Towards Purpose Led Growth, Purpose 2020, Kantar  
 7. ‘Environmental Impact Assessment of Household Consumption’, Diana Ivanova et al, 20 December 2015  
 8. Survey conducted through the OnePulse platform - 1,000 respondents – representative sample of UK public aged 16+

# SYSTEMIC TRANSFORMATION AND ADVERTISING AS AN AMPLIFIER

**We humans often feel paralysed by the issue of climate change. There is logic in that. Climate change is a "wicked problem": the thorniest, most multi-dimensional type of challenge to solve.**

Because it is so deeply enmeshed with how we live, it requires structures of community, industry and government to rethink their central operating principles from the ground up. To quote the climate justice slogan, "System change, not climate change!"

The Covid-19 pandemic demanded a similarly framed emergency response. It forced communities, industries and governments – entire systems – to swiftly reorientate themselves around safety and public health to survive. If we see the pandemic as

the prequel to our next wicked problem, we need to learn from this. So, with the help of "Complexity Tinkerer" Dr. Orit Gal, we have chosen to address these themes through the lens of systems change and complexity.

Systems are complex beasts. Systemic transformation requires deep shifts within multiple patterns – mindsets, flows of resources, networks of collaborations and micro-behaviours. In essence, this means disrupting old self-replicating patterns and encouraging new ones, both hard to actively achieve. Yet, the tragic crisis of Covid-19 has inadvertently disrupted many seemingly stable patterns across our society, our economy and our politics. Some will never regenerate, while new ones will inevitably emerge.



"Green shoots are micro shifts in behaviours, social and material interactions that signal potential systemic change. They must be cultivated in order to fully develop and thrive."

**DR. ORIT GAL, COMPLEXITY TINKERER,  
REGENT'S UNIVERSITY LONDON**



This temporary systemic state of recalibration provides a rare opportunity for purposefully encouraging certain patterns over others.

Our future system hangs in the balance. In this window of possibility, we see all the shapes it could take. We can't actively engineer the one we want, but we can strategically increase its probability by supporting already emerging potential: "green shoots" of change. These green shoots are small scale and fragmented; some may mature into strong patterns, others may wither away. Their fate will be determined within the context of the system's upcoming challenges.

Our mission now is to shine a light on these green shoots, so we can more actively support their growth.

"A Systemic Amplifier is an agent or a structure which filters information signals flowing through a system's network. Signals that pass through its filtering mechanism are echoed back into the environment in an ever-magnifying feedback loop, thereby amplifying their relative impact."

**DR. ORIT GAL, COMPLEXITY TINKERER, REGENT'S UNIVERSITY LONDON**

### THAT'S WHERE THE ADVERTISING INDUSTRY COMES IN.

One of the great psychic tensions of the advertising industry is knowing we have huge power – and yet having no control about where to direct it.

There's a reason for that. We are what academics call a "systemic amplifier". In other words, we assemble the values, priorities and status symbols of our system; we patchwork them into stories and those stories will resonate throughout society as a whole. Those that we do not (whether intentionally or unintentionally), will not.

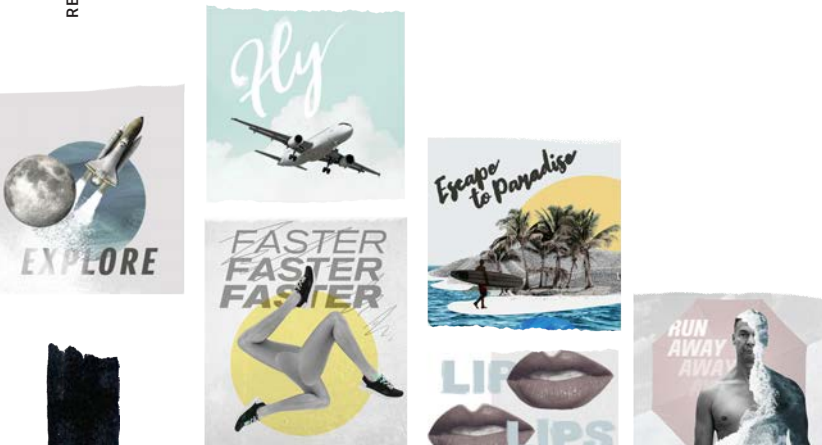
There is nothing deliberate or conscious about this process. The stories of advertising are more of an organic ecology, grown from the

imaginings of thousands of different creatives, working on hundreds of different campaigns. At present, they aren't directed towards anything in particular. No thought goes into deciding the values, attitudes or behaviours we want to amplify in society. And yet, in the UK alone, £21 billion is spent on advertising annually. The average person sees an average of 6,000 ads per day. We have immense power.

**But what if?**

**What if we could intentionally direct ourselves towards something?**

**The opportunity is ripe to do just that.**



*THE FUTURE MUST  
ENTER INTO YOU A  
LONG TIME BEFORE  
IT HAPPENS.*

**RAINER MARIA RILKE**

FINDING

# GREEN SHOOTS OF CHANGE

In April 2020, Purpose Disruptors assembled 70+ advertising industry professionals to identify and catalogue “green shoots” in the system. Many will not survive; others may become the root-stock of our more sustainable, more equitable future. We did this knowing creative communications have power to keep these green shoots alive.

**These were our key findings.**



WE AS

# PEOPLE

**For many within the industry, the crisis has completely changed professional and personal routines.**

It has required them to learn new skills and take on new daily tasks; it has created new personal encounters with individuals and groups with which they were less familiar; as well as providing a pause to reappraise what's important. While many have significant professional and personal worries, the positive "green shoots" of change can be grouped into three themes:

1

A discovered sense of wellbeing connecting to family, community and the local environment – more than half of the **UK (56%)**<sup>9</sup> value "togetherness" more and **71% of** Europeans are now in favour of a universal basic income.<sup>10</sup>

2

Increased degrees of freedom at work, whether in terms of working patterns, teams or decision-making processes.

3

Small opportunities for feeling helpful, effective and valued that further highlight any sense of contradiction between personal and professional identities.

Although sometimes uncomfortable, these green shoots have been welcome.

Only **9% of Britons** want life to return to "normal" after the coronavirus outbreak is over.

"We have discovered that when faced with adversity, people are willing to let go of indulgences to focus on what is truly valuable to them. And that people are prepared to sacrifice their own comfort for the safety of others."

**GABI KAY, CO-FOUNDER,  
GIGANTIC FUCKING SOLUTIONS**

9. 'Values Overtake Valuables During Covid Crisis in Consumer Shift', LLB Online, June 2020 (ref: Wunderman Thompson study)

10. 'In pandemic crisis 71% of Europeans support universal basic income', University of Oxford, 7 May 2020

WE AS

# BUSINESS

RESHAPING THE MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY TO SERVE PEOPLE & PLANET

**No business has escaped a Covid-19 shake-up. The crisis forced brands to react at pace, requiring uncharacteristic transparency and exposing their true values and priorities.**

Underneath the brand bluster, the true heroes and villains of business were laid bare. We observed in dismay the callousness of brands such as Amazon, Sports Direct and JD Wetherspoon, who deprioritised workers' rights and public safety; we heralded the ingenuity of business like the LVMH luxury perfume houses and global drinks giant Pernod Ricard, who were quick to pivot their operations to make hand sanitiser. Public reactions to these responses provided important new signals in the system, revealing shifts in customer expectations and what it takes to build admired brands.

The pandemic accelerated an emerging understanding of business as responsible for human and planetary,

as well as financial, wellbeing. In 2019, 181 CEOs declared at the Business Roundtable that *"the purpose of corporations is to promote an economy that serves all"*; a radical shift from the *"growth-at-all-costs"* logic. The pandemic was a chance for businesses to put their money where their mouth is.

In a moment of chaos, the public needed brands and businesses to help. This wasn't about CSR or brand purpose; it was about stepping into a responsibility to truly serve and be useful to people, at a core business level. We've seen shining examples of businesses taking on this new mantle; correspondingly, many agencies have deftly helped brands find their footing and exercise their civic duty. Even Adland's furloughed workers assembled to put their skills to good use supporting struggling SMEs.<sup>11</sup>

Not only that, but we've stewarded this shift in most unusual working circumstances. Remote working has proved possible, increasing trust and making space for bottom-up creative direction.

"55% of consumers believe brands play a more important role than governments to create a better future."

**HAVAS MEANINGFUL BRANDS STUDY 2019**

"'Justice' is finally entering the business lexicon."

**SOLITAIRE TOWNSEND,  
CO-FOUNDER, FUTERRA**

Narrowed roles and job descriptions were thrown out of the window as people and businesses rallied together to survive.

11. 'How adland's furloughed workers are trying to use their skills for good', Jennifer Faull, The Drum, 24 April 2020

WE AS

# SOCIETY



**At this level, “green shoots” of change become the most visible. Systematically speaking, pandemics have an unusual effect on us.**

Unlike an economic crisis or a war, which are bound in complex cause-effect logics and structural histories, pandemics are chaotic. They operate more like random extinction events, simultaneously devastating many different links within our dense social ecologies.

**Generally speaking, these can be divided into four themes:**

1

A renewed sense of community spirit, so desperately sought after – especially in bigger cities – but never having the excuse to emerge.

2

A disruption in old patterns of social status symbols, who is valued, what they’re valued for and the diversity of their backgrounds.

3

A heightened awareness of global interdependence as both competition and collaboration are witnessed playing out in real time to different effects.

4

A renewed trust in scientific knowledge, risks, modelling and the possibility for implementable adaptations.

This pandemic highlights the unignorable proof of our fragile interdependence as a species. In confronting the reality of viral spread, we confront the limitations of our individualist, competitive value systems.

“Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.”

**ARUNDHATI ROY, FINANCIAL TIMES, APRIL 2020 ‘THE PANDEMIC IS A PORTAL.’**

THE TOP ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROBLEMS ARE  
**SELFISHNESS,  
GREED AND APATHY.**

GUS SPETH, ENVIRONMENTAL  
LAWYER AND ADVOCATE

THE PANDEMIC HAS

# EXPANDED OUR VALUES

In cataloguing the “green shoots” of change over the pandemic, we saw changes at a micro level. But beneath the surface, these green shoots grow on bigger tectonic shifts. These are the shifts of our core values. Underlying our business, societal and personal conduct, our values act as the operating system for our lives.

Crises have a strange capacity for shifting our values. Around the world, we’ve seen Covid-19 transform hyper-competitive, individualist cultures into collaborative communities of citizens. Caring for vulnerable neighbours, making PPE at home, volunteering, observing new regulations for a greater good: these are perhaps not the kinds of behaviours we thought we had in us.

What we’re observing is a broadening of the range of values exhibited in society. We’ve been revealed to have aspirations, hopes and anxieties that now feel restricted and reduced by the word “consumer”. We see we are more multidimensional than the consumerist logic would have us believe.

We are coming to see that we have been living in one small corner of the Values Map.

RESHAPING THE MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY TO SERVE PEOPLE & PLANET





## VALUES MAP

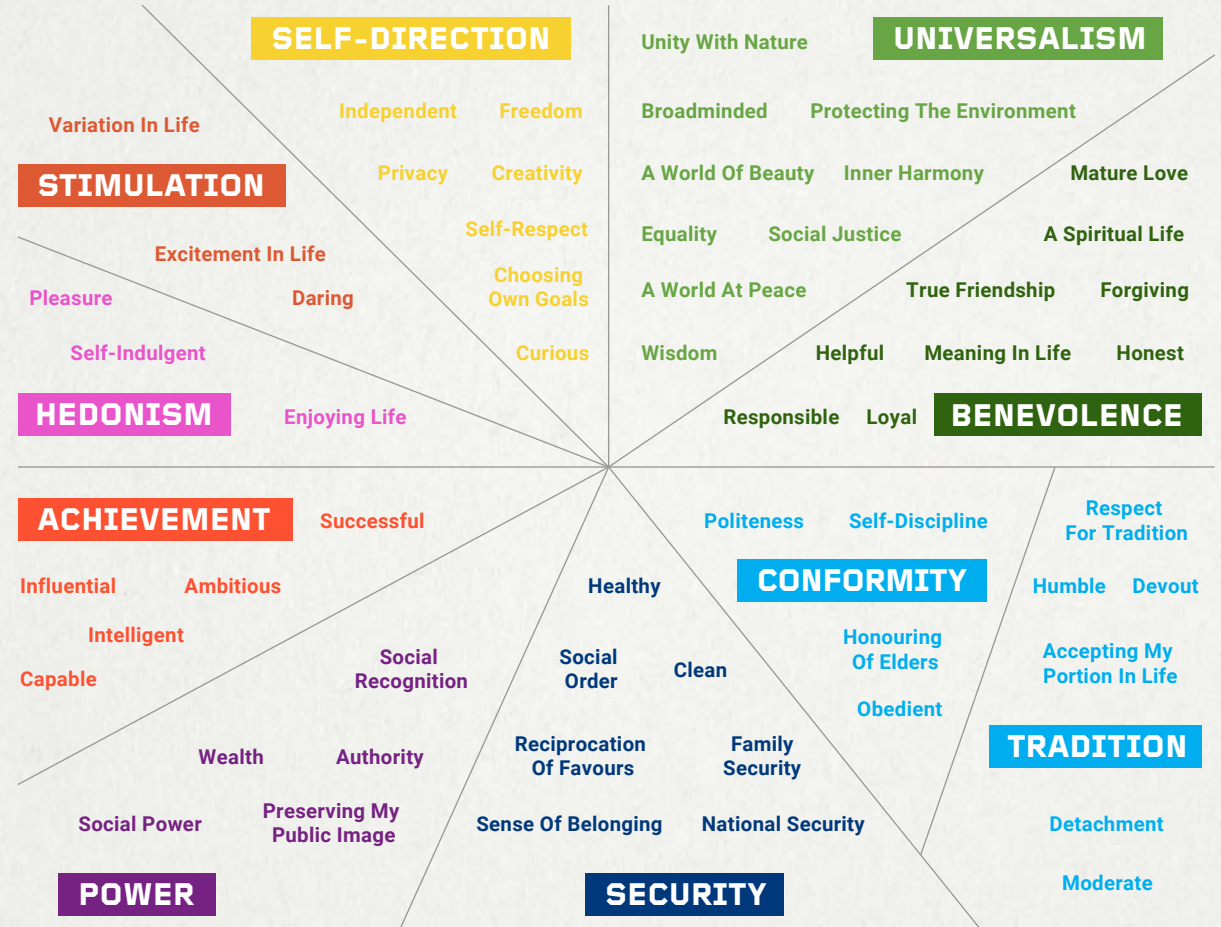
All of the values we see on the map are available to us as humans. Our social context will determine which are engaged.

You're a 13th-century Benedictine monk? Then your culture engages values in the bottom right – obedience, moderation and accepting my portion in life.

Living through the Summer of Love in the 1960s? You're in a social milieu engaging the top left – broadminded, freedom, curious and daring.

Advertising loves to activate feelings of success, strong public image, wealth and getting ahead: that means we're engaging values in the bottom left. A problem is that a seesaw effect occurs.

To engage one part of the values map results in the area directly opposite being disengaged. You don't get "Free Love" in a monastery. By engaging the individualistic values in the bottom left, it means that the advertising industry reduces the possibility of the flourishing of values in the top right – concern for the environment, social justice and equality. The sheer volume of advertising in our society makes it doubly hard.



In breaking open our established patterns, the pandemic has widened the lens on our value system. Suddenly we see the whole map. And we're particularly drawn to our opposite corner: **see Helpful** (helping neighbours), **Self-Discipline** (respecting rules), **Equality** ("we're all in this together").

It is as if our natural tendencies have been allowed to bubble up and express themselves, unencumbered by the systemic desire to treat us as consumers – the primary idea promoted by advertising.

The advertising industry, as an amplifier of what's already in the system, has jumped to reflect these values of Universalism & Benevolence in pandemic comms. But as the system recalibrates, now is the time to act with intention.

Do we really want to swing, pendulum-like, back to our old corner? To treat people as individualistic consumers again? If we amplify, for example, Boris Johnson's call for shopping and spending, we are doing just that. Is it the best we can do?

### WHAT IF...

**We encouraged people to see themselves as citizens, instead of consumers?**

**We nurtured the values that are aligned with a kinder, habitable world?**



THE PANDEMIC IS

# A LOOKING GLASS

The pandemic has jolted us back into our humanity. Almost unanimously this recentring of our humanity has provoked reappraisal of what matters. We are digging deep. Trade press articles now have titles like *"The world has changed forever. Are you ready?"* and *"What the fuck am I doing?"*

Crucially, the pandemic has given us permission to sit with the cognitive dissonance many have felt at a personal level about working in the advertising industry. We may have to admit that we find growing shrubbery more interesting than growing shareholder value. The increasing personal will to contribute to human and planetary health, previously suppressed or laid dormant by the industry's growth imperative, now finds its voice. Without the trappings of offices, meetings, pitches and parties, the structures of our industry feel smaller, less essential, less immovable.

The Black Lives Matter protests have also laid bare the inadequacy of these structures in engaging with societal ills or injustice- be it racial, social or climate injustice. As we observe more clearly the links between centuries-old exploitative political, social and commercial structures and energy plundering systems, the need to dismantle or reimagine them becomes clearer.



## WHAT IF...

**We decided, as an industry, to have a mature conversation about the cognitive dissonance we feel and use our creativity to resolve it?**

**We helped more people make the link between climate justice and social justice?**

THE PANDEMIC IS

# A PREQUEL

In less volatile times, systemic shifts happened incrementally. However strong the case for change, bigger shifts threaten disruption and incur “costs of transition” – a price most decision-makers are unwilling to pay. The stable system is not welcoming to a major transition from, for example, fossil fuels to renewables, or fast fashion to a sustainable and circular garment sector. In a stable system, the language of incremental change is most palatable. **“Sustainability”**. **“Diversity”**. **“Inclusivity”**. Gentle shifts, long-term goals, measurable progress.

One of the weirder side-effects of the pandemic is its distortion of time. We feel like our lives are on pause, while our systems shift at triple-fast-forward speed. In a matter of months, we have seen unimagined human adaptability, nimble innovations, unusual partnerships, accelerated new ways of working. As the world locked down, uptake of technology, decrease in travel and a

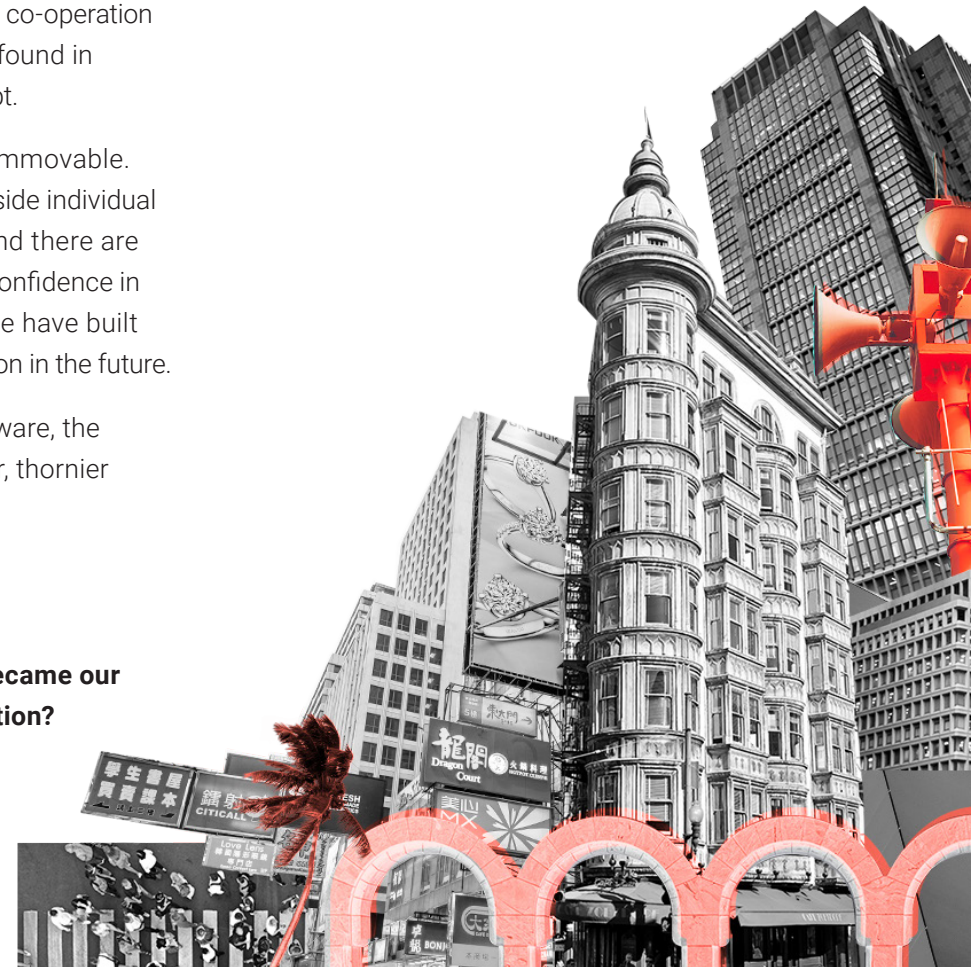
drop in greenhouse gas emissions happened instantly. We saw that bold government action was possible. That efficient transnational co-operation was possible. And in this, we have found in ourselves an untold capacity to adapt.

We see now our systems are not immovable. Change is not beyond us. Putting aside individual critiques of Covid-19 handling – and there are many – this is still a major vote of confidence in our human capacities. Crucially, we have built some muscle memory we can lean on in the future.

And we will need it. As we are all aware, the pandemic is a prequel to the bigger, thornier story of climate change.

## WHAT IF...

**The global pandemic response became our blueprint for systemic climate action?**



WE HAVE BECOME THE

# CLIMATE LEADERS WE HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR

RESHAPING THE MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY TO SERVE PEOPLE & PLANET

**What if we come to understand that our experience of Covid-19 was the necessary, painful impetus to jolt us into action on climate?**

In 2019, the UN stated that we need to reduce our carbon emissions by 7.6% year-on-year for the next decade to avert climate catastrophe and keep global warming below 1.5°C. What would it take for that to happen?

Imagine that you are dedicated to wanting to tackle our climate emergency and to playing your part in hitting the necessary target. What would you have to do? What changes in your behaviour would it take? What changes in society would be needed? The pandemic and subsequent lockdown experience has enabled us to see (and live) much of what is needed. It just so happens that, because of Covid-19, the likely global reduction in carbon emissions in 2020 will be between 7% and 8%.

**WE ARE ON TRACK TO HIT OUR TARGET.**

How has that happened? In the UK, we have seen changes in high-carbon behaviours. We are travelling less (65% reduction in volume of road traffic, 90% reduction in flights), wasting less food (48% of people claim they are throwing away less) and buying less (22% reduction on retail sales in April, compared to April 2019, which takes us back to 2005 levels of spending). We have changed our behaviour.



Sentiment has also changed. **70% of Brits**<sup>12</sup> believe that we should respond to climate change with the same urgency as we have to coronavirus. This is reflected in findings from **Climate Assembly UK** in June 2020: nearly eight in 10 of members said the measures taken by the government to help the economic recovery from Covid-19 should be designed to help reach net zero. An even bigger proportion – 93% – said that, as the lockdown eased, the government and employers should encourage lifestyle changes to cut emissions.

**Additional proof points include:**

- According to **Google Trends** in April 2020, search interest in “How to live a sustainable lifestyle” increased by more than 4,550% (over the previous 90 days).
  - **A third of people in the UK** say they value material possessions less vs. before the lockdown – there has been a notable shift of focus on values over valuables.
  - Davos 2021 is to be held under the theme of The Great Reset “to improve the state of the world” in the context of human dignity, social justice and societal progress.
  - Ethical investments are now hitting the mainstream as many outperform traditional ones across the board.
  - Carbon-intensive businesses are likely to reduce. Oil companies are saying they may be forced to leave some fossil-fuel discoveries in the ground after forecasts found the Covid-19 pandemic may affect the world’s oil demand for the next 30 years.
- This idea of using this moment as an inflection point of radical change – a Great Reset – has infiltrated the very soul of the established systems.**
- The Financial Times called for a “reset” of capitalism with a clear statement that businesses must serve a purpose (in addition to driving profit).



We can see that the pandemic has inadvertently enabled us to become the climate leaders the world needs. Transformative action has been taken. Behaviours have changed. Sentiment has altered. Can we as an industry exhibit the courageous leadership required to intentionally maintain the changes we have experienced during lockdown?

More than this, can we use our creative talents to help – not only to maintain the changes, but embed them in all that we do and help transition society to become more sustainable over the coming years? To be the climate leaders we have been waiting for?

12. Futerra, April 2020, n= 104

THE CLIMATE CRISIS IS ALSO  
A CRISIS OF CULTURE, AND THUS  
OF THE IMAGINATION.

AMITAV GHOSH





We've observed green shoots of change at a personal, organisational and societal level. And under the surface, **we've seen three distinct shifts take effect:**

1

**The pandemic has expanded our values.**

We are now aware that we occupy a small corner of a wider map of possible values.

2

**The pandemic is a looking glass.**

We have seen ourselves and our humanity reflected back at us. We have reappraised our personal power and that of our structures.

3

**The pandemic is a prequel.**

We have built the muscle memory to enact radical change. We understand this is possible and necessary in the context of the climate crisis.

These three shifts have been an initiation for us. Now, The Great Reset requires nothing more than the will and courage to act from this new understanding. Your Great Reset team already exists.

**WHAT DO WE MEAN BY THAT?**

By returning to a more human way of seeing the world and observing what real change looks like, we have already done the hard work of stepping up.

In living the events of the past four months, we have unknowingly prepared ourselves for the next challenge.

Rising to this occasion doesn't mean going beyond ourselves. It means tapping into what we've already reconnected to. As we transition into "recovery" mode, the space between what you feel needs to happen and what actually needs to happen is smaller than you think.



RESISTING THE CALL

# FOR “BACK TO NORMAL”

**Today, we stand in the best possible stead to enact The Great Reset. But right now, our green shoots of possibility are still exposed.**

There will be great pressure to reboot unsustainable behaviours and retrench old ways. Recession and government debt may pave the way for stringency and austerity: a sense that nothing can be afforded. Already we are seeing the “*grow at all costs*” mentality, to compensate for lost earnings and tackle the recession.

In advertising, the voices of “*back to normal*” are loud. Marketing heavyweight Mark Ritson has said the best thing marketers can do in this time is “*make money for their companies*”, “*extract money*” and “*use that money to drive revenue*”. This kind of language is still reverberating across most corporate boardrooms. It is the crabby old industry

logic fighting for airspace. And it is designed to make the pursuit of planetary wellbeing sound naive, ideological or idealistic.

Remember: there is no “*back to normal*” – this experience doesn’t come to an end, it continues – we progress. The only way out is through. As the, now exposed, industry faces a period of predicted turmoil and vulnerability, a state of play where competition and a “*survival of the fittest*” (most adaptable) mindset may define those organisations and agencies that do survive the coming months and years. We have always had a gift for pushing forward and realising emerging trends. Embracing and adopting our learnings



from the Covid-19 period is a competitive, strategic opportunity to proactively invite the future into the present – a future that urgently requires our creativity and expertise.

“The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.”

**SOCRATES**

AS FOR GLOBALISERS, THEY SEEM TO  
HAVE A VERY CLEAR IDEA WHAT THEY  
WANT TO SEE COMING BACK POST-CRISIS:  
THE SAME BUT WORSE, FOSSIL FUEL  
INDUSTRIES AND GIANT CRUISE SHIPS  
AS A BONUS. IT IS UP TO US TO CONFRONT  
THEM WITH A COUNTER-INVENTORY.

WHAT PROTECTIVE MEASURES CAN YOU  
THINK OF SO WE DON'T GO BACK TO  
THE PRE-CRISIS PRODUCTION MODEL?

BRUNO LATOUR,  
PHILOSOPHER AND SOCIAL SCIENTIST

MARKETING IN MY MIND SHOULD BE THE ONE CORNER OF COMMERCE PROACTIVELY SUPPORTING AND COACHING THROUGH EXPERIMENTATION RATHER THAN CHASTISING IT. IF YOU WORK IN MARKETING, YOU ARE IN THE BUSINESS OF DESIGNING CHANGE IN SOME FORM OR ANOTHER AND OUR VERY METHODOLOGY IS ANCHORED IN ENVISIONING ALTERNATIVE FUTURES. THIS IS THE ONE MOMENT IN OUR CAREERS WHEN WE SHOULD OPEN OURSELVES UP TO THE 'PORNOGRAPHY OF CHANGE'.

**TIM WHIRLEDGE,  
HEAD OF STRATEGY, MCCANN MANCHESTER**

# THE BUSINESS ADVANTAGE

**We have not been explicit about the business advantage so far. But pioneering leaders may well have spotted it.**

In corporate sustainability matters, our industry has lived downstream. With its emphasis on technical expertise, net zero and carbon emissions, sustainability has thus far been a matter for the head, not the heart. A quick online search for corporate net zero communications shows just how creatively under-attended this world is.

But the pandemic has radically expanded what it means to live sustainably. This is no longer the net zero small print; it's birds, clean air and liveable streets. It's cycling, building community,

buying locally. The world of a low-carbon future has been fleshed out for us to live and breathe. This is now a matter of the heart, of the imagination. Technical expertise will always be critical in getting us there. But creativity needs a seat at the table.

In the wake of the pandemic, our best clients are not just tweaking their carbon commitments. They're reimagining on a different scale. The pandemic, combined with the racial awakening of Black Lives Matter, has prompted unignorable soul-searching en masse. These have been the result of the first few months of chaos in our complex systems – more uncertainty lies on the horizon.

**Navigating this chaos requires creativity.**

The Great Reset is more than a movement. It is also an opportunity for our creative industry to reassert itself as a critical partner in the recovery. We evidenced value by helping clients pivot during the pandemic. Now we need to reassert the centrality of creativity, and of imagination, in weathering further shifts. As a sustainable future comes into view, we have never been more vital.



CONCLUSION:

# AT THE THRESHOLD

**We are living at a time of extraordinary possibility. Decisions made now will alter the course of our lifetimes – and those of our descendants.**

The gravity of this truth may feel burdensome. It need not. Without knowing it, in the past few months we have become Climate Leaders. And now, as we stand at the threshold, we've never been more prepared.

The Great Reset provides an opportunity, individually and collectively, to reboot in the right way and enrich lives. To hold humanity and our planet at our centre.

To identify and choose to maintain some of the life-affirming behaviours and values that have flourished during Covid-19. To step into our power as a systemic amplifier, shaping the stories that need to resonate in society. And to reassert our creative expertise as a critical function in the new regenerative economy.

**The green shoots are there.  
It's time to help them grow.**

“The future can't be predicted, but it can be envisioned and brought lovingly into being.”

**DONELLA MEADOWS,  
ENVIRONMENTALIST AND SYSTEMS THINKER,  
'DANCING WITH SYSTEMS'**



OUR SOCIETY TODAY IS CRYING OUT FOR AN  
ALTERNATIVE FUTURE; WE ARE LIVING THROUGH  
A GLOBAL ECONOMY IN FREEFALL, A PANDEMIC  
KILLING OUR MOST VVNERABLE, A WAR ON TERROR  
NO ONE KNOWS WHO IS WINNING, A CLIMATE  
CRISIS DECIMATING WHOLE ECOSYSTEMS,  
OPPORTUNITIES QUASHED BY A RIGGED AND  
UNEQUAL SOCIETY.

TIM WHIRLEDGE,  
HEAD OF STRATEGY, MCCANN MANCHESTER

IN TIMES OF CRISIS, OUR COLLECTIVE SENSES  
ARE HEIGHTENED TO WHAT A BETTER SOCIETY,  
INDUSTRY OR COMPANY COULD LOOK LIKE.

THIS MASSIVE SOCIAL AND COMMERCIAL  
EXPERIMENT TELLS US THAT THE CONDITIONS  
FOR REINVENTION ARE THERE.

WE ARE NOW IN THE UNIQUE SITUATION OF HAVING  
TWO ALTERNATE REALITIES TO PICK AND CHOOSE OUR  
FUTURES FROM. WE NOW KNOW THAT WE DO HAVE  
A CHOICE. AND THIS AWARENESS IS UNIVERSAL.

FOR THOSE WHO WORK IN COMMUNICATIONS,  
CREATIVITY AND BUSINESS, THIS IS OUR CHANCE  
TO ACTIVELY CHOOSE WHICH GREEN SHOOTS  
WE WANT TO EMERGE.

**LET'S SEIZE THAT CHANCE.**

**BEN ESSEN,  
CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER, IRIS**



NEVER DOUBT THAT A SMALL GROUP  
OF THOUGHTFUL, COMMITTED CITIZENS  
CAN CHANGE THE WORLD; INDEED, IT'S  
THE ONLY THING THAT EVER HAS.

MARGARET MEAD,  
CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGIST

THE DESIRE TO TAKE PART IN THE HEALING OF OUR WORLD SEEMS TO BE JUST BELOW THE SURFACE, WAITING FOR AN OPPORTUNITY AND OUTLET FOR EXPRESSION. WHENEVER WE BRING THE DESIRE FOR THE WORLD'S HEALING OUT INTO THE OPEN, WHETHER THROUGH OUR INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS OR THROUGH GROUPS WE ARE PART OF, WE HELP OTHERS TO DO THIS TOO. THE POWER OF EXAMPLE IS CONTAGIOUS. THIS IS HOW CULTURES CHANGE.

JOANNA MACY AND CHRIS JOHNSTONE,  
ACTIVE HOPE

INDUSTRY EXPOSED:

# FLYING

RESHAPING THE MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY TO SERVE PEOPLE & PLANET

**Commercial airlines represented 2.4% of all global emissions in 2018, a rise of 32% from 2013.**

A return flight to Australia equates to all of your recycling for 20 years. Electric planes will not be commonplace for 20 years and, as stated by the UN, we need to halve our global carbon emissions in 10 years to hit net zero emissions by 2050. Heightened awareness of the carbon footprint of flying had already sparked a movement called “flygskam” or “flight shame” in Sweden pre-Covid-19. This campaign, started by Swedish singer Staffan Lindberg, is seen as being responsible for a 4% reduction in passengers through Swedish airports in 2019. In addition, the UK government has committed the UK to being net zero by 2050. Plans for a third runway at Heathrow were ruled illegal in February 2020, because they did not take into account the government’s commitments to tackle the climate emergency. In the same month, the expansion of Bristol airport was cancelled.

In terms of creative work, we were seeing the seeds of awareness coming through with KLM’s Responsible Flying work.

During lockdown flights were reduced by 90%. We demonstrated that we are capable of not flying. As we come out of lockdown, we can see that progressive agencies can take steps to continue limiting their flights, all of which accelerate trends that exist in the market.

Yet flying to shoot an ad is part of the culture of the industry (and a major part of the carbon footprint of agencies). “We open on a beach in... (INSERT LUXURY LOCATION).” So starts the clichéd script. Yet, there have been no flights for shoots during lockdown and thousands of films and photo shoots happened.



A wave of incredible ads and campaigns were celebrated for being created at a responsible distance – it sparked our creativity. The industry has proven it doesn’t need to fly to film. Agencies wishing to reset their impact can continue not flying and make a big dent in their carbon footprint.

Before lockdown, decisions were being made for the UK to flatten the curve on aviation emissions. Post-lockdown, the government will be under great pressure to instigate a Green Recovery Plan, part of which will be to refuse to bail out the airlines (e.g. Virgin Atlantic). Airlines will likely need “green strings” as we have seen in France, where any recovery deal will require airlines to limit short-haul flights.

Given that a primary purpose of advertising is to drive demand, creativity that encourages us to fly will have a disproportionate effect in enabling airlines to recover, therefore increasing emissions again. To do this would ensure we have participated in returning to Business As Usual. From a short to medium term perspective, this may be unwise. Significant spending clients such as Sky and BT have openly stated they are committed to net zero emissions and enabling those they work with in their supply chain and customer base to do the same. As airlines are fundamentally unable to reach net zero, agencies, who are working with them are likely to be excluded from pitching for clients, such as Sky and BT. As more clients follow suit on their own journey to achieve net zero, as per the government’s commitment, airline and other high carbon clients will become a liability rather than a benefit.



“A question is this: if you are an agency who claims to be serious about addressing our climate emergency and you have an airline or other high carbon client, should you work with them? It is an act of leadership to ask that question.”

**JONATHAN WISE, CO-FOUNDER, PURPOSE DISRUPTORS**

# PART 2

## THE GREAT RESET: A GUIDE TO TAKING ACTION

THE PLAIN FACT IS THAT THE PLANET DOES NOT  
NEED MORE SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE. BUT IT DOES  
DESPERATELY NEED MORE PEACEMAKERS, HEALERS,  
RESTORERS, STORYTELLERS AND LOVERS OF EVERY KIND.

IT NEEDS PEOPLE WHO LIVE WELL IN THEIR PLACES.  
IT NEEDS PEOPLE OF MORAL COURAGE WILLING TO  
JOIN THE FIGHT TO MAKE THE WORLD HABITABLE  
AND HUMANE. AND THESE QUALITIES HAVE LITTLE  
TO DO WITH SUCCESS AS WE HAVE DEFINED IT.

DAVID ORR,  
ECOLOGICAL LITERACY

YOU'RE IN?

# HERE'S HOW YOU CAN TAKE ACTION

**If you are behind this mission, you are already part of The Great Reset. How you bring it about is up to you – but we've put together some ideas that can help get the creative wheels turning.**

For creative industries at large to best use their power to reset towards a more equitable society and sustainable planet, we need to:

- 1 RESET HOW WE WORK**
- 2 RESET WHAT WE CREATE**
- 3 RESET OUR IMPACT**

Working with political scientist Dr Orit Gal, and with the help of more than 50 UK advertising professionals, we have identified three areas that can offer you and your business a start point.

For each area we make suggestions for change. With each suggestion, we share a question to ask yourself and of your colleagues. Why? We believe in the power of questions to open up the conversations that need to be had. They invite reflection, debate and can change hearts and minds. The beauty of a question is that anyone can ask them. Junior or senior. All you need is the courage to ask them.

For those who want to join The Great Reset, we also offer a series of opportunities, resources and practical tools.



1. RESET

# HOW WE WORK

This starts with us. We must reset how we see ourselves. Not as passive recipients of a client brief, but as active agents of change.

## 1

### Reset what we support.

We must find our voice. If we believe a brief or project is not in the best interest of humankind and/or the planet, we must speak up. We have a voice. We have influence. Let's use it.

**What would you not want to use your creative powers to work on? If you were asked to work on something you were not happy about, how would you express this to your colleagues in a way that invites meaningful debate?**

## 2

### Reset how we work.

Lockdown has enabled us to experience and experiment with new working practices. We have found creative alternatives to flying to shoots and embraced working from home. Use these experiments to help decide which of these behaviours to maintain and build from.

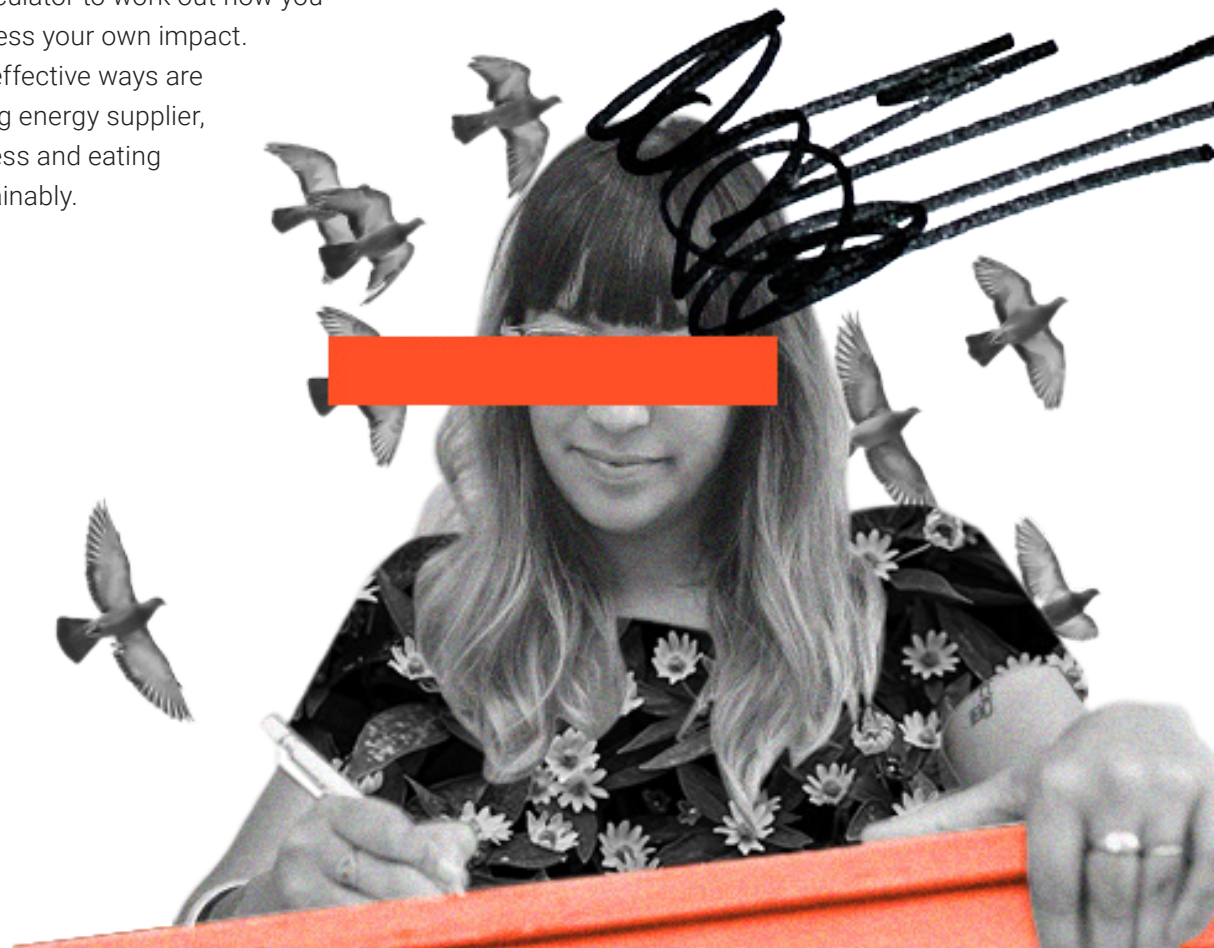
**What are the ways of working that have been beneficial during lockdown? How can you encourage your workplace to maintain them?**





## OPPORTUNITIES, RESOURCES AND PRACTICAL TOOLS

- Come to one of our 90-minute Great Reset Gatherings, where you'll find lots of like-minded people. Together, you can explore more about The Great Reset, what it means to you and the support and actions available.
- Pledge to support this summer's Great Reset Campaign. You can find out more at Great Reset Gatherings.
- Actively advocate The Great Reset through writing blog posts, supporting in conversations and on your platforms.
- Share this thought piece with others you feel will be actively interested. Notice how they respond. Share this thought piece with others you feel will be dismissive of this thought piece. Notice how they respond.
- Sign up to AdGreen and ensure you track and reduce the carbon footprint of shoots.
- Push your employer to be more ambitious with their sustainability targets
- Promote the idea that employees get an extra day's holiday if they travel by train, rather than flying.
- Understand whether people would prefer to work from home. Act on this.
- Reset your personal impact - use an online carbon calculator to work out how you could address your own impact. The most effective ways are by changing energy supplier, travelling less and eating more sustainably.



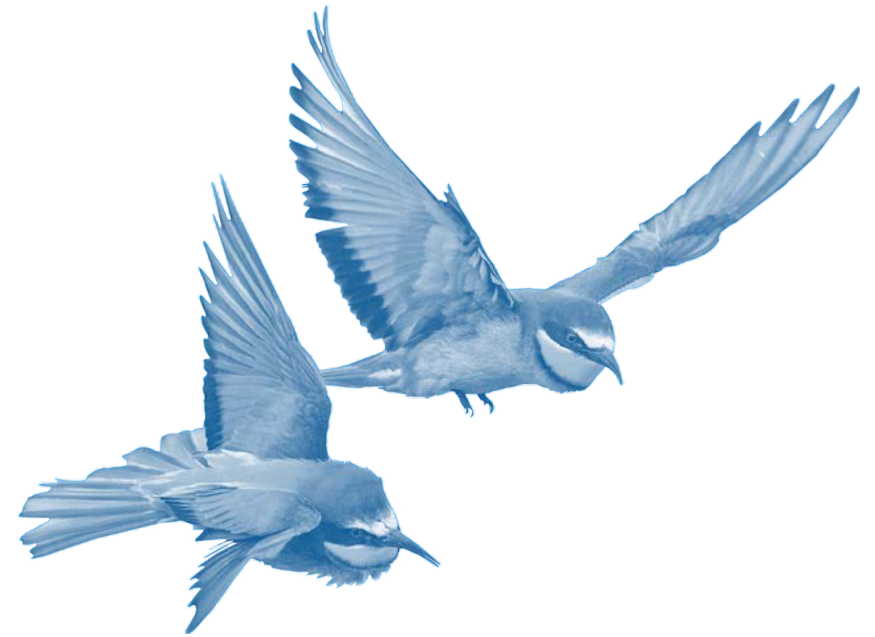
2. RESET

# WHAT WE CREATE

**We have to accept that we are accountable for what we create  
– and for the behaviours we encourage in the public.**

**We must push to create work that maintains the sustainable values,  
attitudes and behaviours experienced during lockdown:**

- Reset how we travel: promote low-carbon travel (up to a 65% reduction in the volume of road traffic. 90% reduction in flights).
- Reset what we buy: more responsible consumption (22% reduction in retail sales in April 2020, compared to April 2019).
- Reset what we eat: promote a largely plant-based, healthy diet (during lockdown 44% of people are enjoying cooking more and 43% are buying fewer takeaways).
- Reset how we use energy: promote energy efficiency and renewable energy.
- Reset our attitude to waste: promote reuse / recycle / reduce (48% of people claim they are throwing away less food).
- Reset our connection to nature: inspire greater awareness and appreciation of the natural world.



How can you enable your organisation only to promote sustainable values, attitudes and behaviours through your work? How can you use your creativity to introduce exciting new ideas that make sustainable behaviours attractive and aspirational? If you anticipate challenging conversations around this, how can you introduce these conversations with honesty and creativity?

## OPPORTUNITIES, RESOURCES AND PRACTICAL TOOLS

- Promote and celebrate the positive behaviours that emerged during lockdown by participating in The Great Reset Campaign. You can pledge support on the website, [greatreset.com](https://greatreset.com)
- Use the [#changethebrief](#) toolkit, to enable you to respond to client briefs in a way that promotes more sustainable values, attitudes and behaviours in clients' audiences. Developed by Mindshare as the starting resource for an industry wide alliance that together contributes to creating what will become the world's most extensive library of case studies, expertise and research on sustainable attitudes, lifestyles and behaviours. The Alliance convened by the Purpose Disruptors is seeking agencies (whether design, PR, experience, media, creative or any other) to join for a launch event hosted by Mindshare and in collaboration with the United Nations Environmental Programme, in November 2020.
- Find out more at [Great Reset Gatherings](#).



## 3. RESET

# OUR IMPACT

**Our impact on society is largely defined by the outcomes created by the clients and projects we choose to work on. We should reset how we consider what we define and measure as “good work”.**

## 1

**Reset how we decide:**

prioritise working on projects and for clients that are geared to enable a sustainable world, help those that are seriously trying to get there and have the difficult conversations about whether we should work with those that are not.

**How can you create the means to assess and decide which clients your organisation works on?**

**How can you do this in a way that involves a Reset mentality?**

## 2

**Reset what we measure:**

we should take full responsibility for our creative work by always measuring its impact on society and the planet. Specifically we must always report the net impact of the advertising we create on the GHG emissions of its target audiences.

**How could you introduce the idea of your organisation taking full responsibility for its output, including the impact of the consumption it promotes? How could you ensure your effectiveness reporting measures the full impact of your work? Could you share the lessons you learn with the rest of the industry to create a sustainable effectiveness culture?**

## 3

**Reset how we define value:**

we should maintain and accelerate the pattern we saw in lockdown of brands taking responsibility for societal and environmental wellbeing. This can start with brands shifting how they define value, from shareholder value to stakeholder value. According to the Future-Fit Foundation, businesses should pursue ‘system value’, ‘where business serves society and where both are contained within, are dependent on, and help to protect and regenerate the wider natural environment’.<sup>13</sup>

**When we always strive to prove the effectiveness of our work, how could you introduce to your agency and clients the idea that we must measure the societal and environmental impact of the work too?**

13. Green Swans’ John Elkington, 2020.

## OPPORTUNITIES, RESOURCES AND PRACTICAL TOOLS

- Discuss what you should and shouldn't work on, being aware of the consequences. Use these conversation starters.
- Use the **Moral Compass**. This is an app that democratises decision-making across a company. Everyone gets a say on which briefs and pitches the company should work on.
- Use a wider definition of Effectiveness to measure your work - focused on stakeholder gains, not just shareholder value. A good place to start is using the UN Sustainable Development Goals as a guide.
- Inspire others – share what you're doing to create **#TheGreatReset** at your place of work.

Social virtue cannot be something that just helps us feel better about the work we do - it has to translate into a reimagining of our work and the messages that we push. The Great Reset must shift our psychology and our output.

By starting to reset how we work, the work we create and the impact we have, we can reset our industry. We change the output of the industry and we make our contribution to helping reset society. Let's work toward a collective legacy to be proud of.

"I want future generations to look back on us and say 'look how hard they tried', not 'look how blind they were'."

**JACQUELINE NOVOGRATZ,  
FOUNDER AND CEO, ACUMEN**



# WHO WE ARE

Purpose Disruptors is a network of advertising insiders whose goal is to create a visible, large-scale, bottom-up movement within the industry that will act in solidarity to meaningfully tackle climate change. It is for those who are wondering: How can the industry respond to climate change? How can I influence client work to be more socially and environmentally responsible? How can I do more good from where I stand? What does leadership look like?

Since 2018 we have been building a community of like-minded people who want to create change in our industry and beyond. Our network includes some incredible high-profile and up and coming creative talent, brilliant strategists, awesome account people and producers along with academics, scientists and artists.

[www.purposedisruptors.org](http://www.purposedisruptors.org)

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**THE  
GREAT  
RE\_\_SET**