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LSE GROUPS takes place during the final fortnight of the summer term. Undergraduate students are placed in small groups; these are cross-year, interdisciplinary, and group members do not know one another in advance. Each group must then devise its own research question, and carry out all stages of a small-scale research project in less than two weeks.

The overall theme of LSE GROUPS 2019 was *The Future of Work*.

This paper was submitted on the final Thursday afternoon of the project. (Students then presented their work at a conference, on the closing Friday.)

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THE LONDON SCHOOL  
OF ECONOMICS AND  
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

## **Work hard – Play hard:**

The meritocratic narrative amongst London undergraduates

LSE GROUPS Research 2019

Group 4

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## **Abstract**

Students make up an important part of the future workforce. Research on the future of work has tended to focus primarily on individual (including student) perceptions of their own prospects or has examined broader patterns or tropes around work in society. In this paper, we intend to explore individual student perceptions *within* a broader societal context. To this end, we conducted a focus group with eight undergraduate students of different disciplines at three London universities. Through thematic analysis we found that discourses of the future are framed in neoliberal, economic terms. This is used to think about the general future of the students' work, in which they encounter ethical tensions. Students negotiate their roles as future members of the labour force - and in opportunities such as internships - along a meritocratic system of values. This system of values is used in planning their work-life-balance by assuming diligent work ethic and delayed gratification outside of work. These findings may have implications for thinking about change, and policy intervention that is aligned with the values and expectation of today's students, eliminating the need for moral compromise and negative connotations of work.

**Key Words:** Meritocracy, neoliberalism, students, work ethic, diligence, work-life-balance

## Introduction

This research paper explores London undergraduate students' perceptions on the future of work . Existing research on this area has explored subjective student experiences separately from general societal ideals. Since students of this generation will make up an important part of the future workforce, their perceptions will undoubtedly shape and impact the narratives on work. This research project is an exploratory study into individual student perceptions *within* a broader societal context. The question that we aim to answer is: *how do undergraduate students at three leading universities evaluate the future of work?* These findings may furthermore have a positive influence on thoughts about change, employment expectations and possible policy interventions that coincide with the values of this generation.

By conducting a focus group, we aimed to achieve a more diverse range of opinions and perceptions about the future of work in general as well as subjective work experiences. This research then wants to bridge the gap between the societal and individual aspects of work. The first main theme that emerged is how students framed their arguments about the future in neoliberal terms and how they ethically navigate paradoxes along their career progression while aiming for meritocracy. The second important theme is the traditional system of values that the students held, consisting of work ethic, diligence and delayed gratification.

The first part of the paper consists of an overview of current literature on how society conceptualizes the future of work. This is followed by an elaboration of the methodology used to conduct the qualitative research. Then, the next section discusses the findings and general themes that emerged from the focus group. We conclude by suggesting how this research may have potentially wider positive impacts for different stakeholders.

## **Literature Review**

Current literature has mainly focused on either students' perceptions of their own prospects or general societal beliefs about work by means of mainly quantitative methods. Emphasis was placed on the theme of individualization and how young people proceed towards narrating their own 'biographies' (Vinken, 2007). Research on general societal beliefs emphasized on neoliberal-a political and economic paradigm whereby only a few private interests have a major impact on social life (Livingston, 2007) representations of work in policy-driven contexts. Meritocracy in this paper refers to " a social system society or organization in which people get success of power because of their abilities, not because of their money or social position." (Cambridge dictionary)

Studies have also depicted how factors such as gender, course of study, age and class affect people's expectations of their future work without identifying any common themes. For instance, Easterling and Smith (2008) found out that men would choose jobs according to job opportunity and pay while women according to aptitude. Likewise, Holmes et al (2018) concluded that students having a parent in STEM were more likely to choose a STEM career. Furthermore, the literature reveals certain stereotypes about millennials. Most suggest that millennials "want it all" and "want it now" (Ng et al, 2010) in relation to pay, career progression, work-life balance, challenging work experiences and contributing to a greater cause in society. Current literature also demonstrates how connections are increasingly becoming important for social mobility but create inequalities (Montacute, 2018).

## Methodology

We carried out a focus group with eight undergraduate students from three London universities, and used thematic analysis to generate our findings. Focus group is an interview where a moderator asks questions, participants exchange ideas and comment on each other's views. It helped us to understand what, how and why participants think as they do (Robinson, 1999). We conducted an exploratory basic research about individual student perceptions within a broader societal context thus, focus groups were the most fitting approach.

### Method of Data Collection: Focus group

As mentioned in the literature review, many factors can influence students' perception on the future of work. Therefore, we balanced the gender and course of study to diversify our focus group and improve the representativeness. The following table shows some basic information about our participants.

Pseudonym (Bold if also real name)	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Year of study	Subject of study	Type of Subject	Uni
<b>Tilly</b>	26	Female	White	2	Social Anthropology	Social science	SOAS
Toni	19	Male	White European	1	Social Anthropology	Social Science	LSE
Kai	19	Female	Chinese	1	Law	Social Sciences	SOAS
<b>Mikael</b>	20	Male	Caucasian	1	Economics BSc	Social Science	LSE
Andrew	19	Male	Chinese	1	Management	Social Science	LSE
<b>Karl</b>	19	Male	White British	1	Politics Philosophy and Economics	Social Sciences	LSE
O A Cich	19	Female	White (Polish)	1	Natural Sciences	STEM	UCL
Sonya	19	Female	Indian	1	Natural Sciences	STEM	UCL

We filled out the ethics form to evaluate the potential ethical risks in the focus group and solutions to address them. We also sent out consent form and participant information sheets prior to the focus group and we used anonymous names to guarantee anonymity. Moreover, we used both video and audio recording for

transcribing and analysing the data. The moderator started the focus group with an icebreaker followed by an emphasis that respectfulness of other's opinions should govern the following discussion. Preparing questions beforehand acted as a guideline to ensure a smooth discussion that fulfilled our research aims. The moderator was flexible in the questions, encouraged all to talk and brought the participants back to the topic if they were to digress. Effective group interaction was achieved.

The table which shows a comparison between the questions we designed and the questions that were asked in the focus group is found in Appendix Six.

Unlike surveys and questionnaires, the focus group allowed participants to express in their own words instead of having constrained categories to choose from. Additionally, the focus group fetched more critical comments and eased the interaction flow amongst participants as compared to an interview approach. However, we found it difficult to balance the discussion at times. For example, students from similar disciplines may have wanted to discuss about particular topics, which deviated from the main subject. Constrained by time, we only managed to ask 12 questions and the limitation included a sample size of 8 that is not representative for all undergraduates. We recruited the participants by using snowball technique. For a similar research in the future, the moderator needs to improve processing skills to prompt more diversified, spontaneous yet relevant responses from participants. We would also advise future studies not to use the snowball technique as we cannot account for established themes being prevalent in peer groups instead of the student body.

### Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is the process for encoding qualitative data (Boyatzis, 1998). We used this analytical method because it builds a link between theory and reality, assisting us in establishing themes based on the data gathered from the focus group. Firstly, we highlighted similar patterns which were observed from the transcript. Secondly, we categorized these patterns and tried to incorporate all the data into the patterns. Finally, we generated codes and themes after understanding the mechanisms behind those patterns.

## Findings and Discussion

### Theme 1: The System

We found that our participants' understandings of the future of work were heavily shaped by neoliberal discourses as they tended to think in economic terms and considered their own positions within institutions such as the university and internships along a meritocratic system of values. However, this appeared to cause tensions and produced feelings of guilt when discussing whether or not this system is 'ethical' or fair.

When discussing the future of work and how to address potential problems such as climate change, participants structured their responses in reference to the economic system. For example, when asked how the labour market will develop, Karl stated that “...*at the moment, it is still profitable to like get oil out of the ground and burn it and that is going to like carry on happening.*” Most participants voiced their concerns that companies will not tackle climate change if the issue is considered to be non-profitable. This was disputed only in terms of other sources of energy being more profitable. This pattern of thought was replicated when Toni voiced the potential of theorizing alternatives to the current economic system. He showed confidence in a general appetite for change. His proposal was met by an immediate question of what those alternatives would be. For example, Mikael asked the group, “...changing from capitalism to...?” to which Toni replied “Just changing the way capitalism works”. Essentially replicating the neoliberal mantra that “there is *No Alternative*” (Bockman, 2013, emphasis added).

Participants' responses appeared to mirror the neoliberal tropes, value systems and modes of thinking as established by Livingston (2007) regarding the future and how respondents evaluated their possible futures in work. For example, participants expected work to (ideally) be self-improving,



“I feel the need to learn, I feel the need to develop whilst at work” (Mikael).

Furthermore, they considered that work should be meritocratic, evident when Mikael spoke of the Swedish educational system as one in which “As long as you work hard, that will be fine [...] No matter how rich you are it’s just your grades.”

Yet, participant’s ideal expectations were met with real, negative expectations of the future. For example, the future (or their futures) of work was also seen as mentally demanding.

“All the work I have done thus far is like something that is meant to be challenging.” (O. A. Cich).

As well as fast-paced and versatile,

“We are going in a stage in life where everything requires more adaptivity. [...] It’s like quick-pacing, where we just need to keep picking up just go with it, it requires a lot more.” (Tilly).

Their criticism ranged over a multitude of topics, from capitalism, especially the British neoliberal system, inadequacy in addressing climate change (see above), to increasing inequality in wealth and opportunity and heightened insecurity. This was particularly voiced when the participants discussed the pressures they faced in securing internships. Seven of the eight participants were in agreement that the internship system is unfair and that it does not reward the hard work of individuals. While being essential to their careers, internship allocation was seen to be based on personal networks and relied on the financial ability of the individual. They verbalised this in terms of societal trends and their own personal experience.

“I worked hard, but like really hard in high school, and I did one and a half years of uni whilst in high school, and I read 60-70% more courses than I needed to graduate [...]. And then as I

said before I have met challenges and I just applied to internships thinking that ‘ok, my CV is relatively stacked, I should be able to get something.’ I got nothing” (Mikael).

“Also the internships, they’re so... problematic. A lot of people can’t afford to take unpaid work, yeah so it perpetuates the gap in society. [...] If you can’t fund yourself, you can’t do it so it is a lack of opportunity at so many levels.” (Tilly).

Whilst acknowledging the unfairness of obtaining internships, our participants were aware of speaking from a position of privilege both in terms of their class and in having the necessary networks. This resulted in ethical tensions, as the pressure to be successful by obtaining internships using personal contacts conflicts with their meritocratic values.

“This makes me feel guilty [...] [On applying to internships] I was like ‘I am not going to use contacts, I am not going to use that because it’s not fair.’ I want to feel like I earned a work experience so that I feel that I have shown my potential” (Sonya).

Four participants had gained internship positions through nepotism in the past. The only person not to accept an offer of an internship did so out of financial reasons. When discussing this experience, participants repeatedly mentioned being “disappointed”, “demotivated” “disillusioned” and feeling “really, really guilty”. Working hard and having made the effort to obtain internships through official routes were talked about in this context. This did however, appear to function as justifications to alleviate feelings of guilt.

## **Theme 2: Work ethics and work life**

In the following section we shall explore how the meritocratic values, and the need for just reward and worthiness are integrated into the attitudes of our participant work-life planning. To this end, we initially outline their general perceptions of work.

A major element amongst all respondents was the idea of working hard as a means to achieve certain ends in their lives. The high value attributed to work when imagining life is articulated in multiple ways. Toni stated that when thinking about work “purpose is what comes to mind.” Mikael stresses that

“Work is life [...] you will be spending a third of your life roughly, at least, on your workplace, so at least make it something you can bear to have spent a third of your life on” (Mikael).

However, the common element was the need to “push yourself”.

“We all require some form of stimulation in terms of work satisfaction” (Tilly).

In addition, Sonya said that she initially refused using personal connections in her internship applications, because she wanted to “feel like I earned a work experience, so that I feel that I have shown my potential”. Thus, there seems a need for genuine challenge and reward. This pattern of ‘work hard- play hard’ is called “delayed gratification” (Weber, 2002). This further underlined by participant expectations of their future work lives. We observed two patterns. On the one hand, participants imagined working hard early in life and committing to enjoyment in later years. For instance, Andrew imagined “working in some high-pressure industry for like a few years [...] and then after that like getting into or working for like an NGO and yeah maybe then like travel around the world, make like a positive impact to the society.” On the other hand, others imagined having challenging but unfulfilling jobs. They then were confident in finding fulfilment in hobbies and activities outside work. Oliva explicitly states, “I’ve got a lot of interest [...]and so I think that even if I’m not necessarily happy with my work there are a lot of things that I would be able to do alongside my work that would make me happy.”

Moreover, respondents shared a common conception of ‘happiness as goal-setting’. The specific goals differed amongst respondents. It was however evident that participant aligned their lives along intermediate goals e.g. earning a “good salary”, getting a good “position”, “make an [...] impact in

society” to the common higher end goal of happiness. Hence discourse on happiness reflects ‘work hard-play hard’, first suffering then happiness, dichotomy. This finding stands in contradiction to the initial high value attributed to work discussed earlier. Karl explicitly states “I just don’t think the opportunities are necessarily good enough to think that I will actually get a job that I really find purposeful, so it becomes more like I do a job for the sake of earning money in order to do the stuff that I actually want to do.” Our participants were aware of this contradiction in term of values that they intended to represent and how these could be in conflict with their future jobs. The pessimism expressed by O. A. Cich was recurrent. “I just hope that I won’t have to make the trade-off between my profit and um yeah company being environmentally friendly” O. A. Cich.

## **Discussion**

From these finding we can extrapolate that our participants viewed future solutions, their future work lives and their immediate work experience through a neoliberal lens in multiple ways. On the one hand, they critiqued the real-life effects of neoliberalism, which they identified as profit orientated, private sector driven, fast-paced and versatile. Furthermore, they perceived that the system of internship allocation exacerbated inequality. On the other hand, the significant presence of neoliberal tropes in their own criticism leaves the participants stunted in discussing change, ambivalent on the potential future of their work and torn between their meritocratic ideals and taking advantage of the nepotistic internship system. The discourse seemed to have generally established that merit and having a strong work ethic allows participants to personally deal with the sense of unfairness.

These findings were replicated when participants talked about their ideal and realistic expectations of their own future work lives. Their high evaluation of work contrasts with their pessimistic expectation of their work being fulfilling. Hence, our participants resorted to reluctantly dividing their work lives from their personal enjoyment and values. Their optimistic expectations of reward and happiness however remained consistent.

## **Conclusion**

This study has enabled us to contribute to the existing literature on imagining the future. We found that students imagine the future in neoliberal and economic terms. This is reflected in their diligent work ethic that seeks earned delayed gratification. This initially seems to align directly with our literature review, which establishes that young people think in individualistic terms (Vinken, 2007) and that they seek individual reward (Ng et al, 2010). Our findings complicated this by showing that students have a strong moral compass which they attempt to combine as far as possible with their imagined future work realities, not only towards improving themselves but also society. Their ultimate conclusion is that there is no alternative to the current mode of working, be it of society or within society. Further studies could address a more representative sample and reach a more nuanced conclusion as to how to student negotiate their future work lives.

This paper raises awareness about student's attitude to work. Universities and Career-Offices could help students become aware of these attitudes and provide them with better opportunities to find employment that is meaningful in itself, and not just a means to an end. Policy makers and future studies that wish to theorize opportunities of change, could tap into the feelings of unfairness and channel them towards the improvement of our society.

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# Appendix



## Appendix One: Full Transcript (uncoded)

Moderator (0:00): As you already know, it is all about the future of work. And... then we will get to the questions about the future of work, as you already know. We will start a bit more on the personal level, what do you think individually about your own careers, and where they would lead and from that we will move on to looking at society and how society will develop and change in terms of the future of work. I hope this is rather obvious but I will just repeat it: please be respectful to each other. Yes there will be disagreements. We would like to see these disagreements. So be respectful to each other and respect each others personal opinion. Please don't talk over people and let them finish speaking and yes, I'll be moderating it, but if you start getting off topic a bit I'm going to bring us back in. So, we will hear about your opinions and perceptions, so please don't be too different in that sense. So we are going to divide our sample into groups of 4, or actually no let's do it like that because you two know each other. Just in order not to have the people that know each other in one group. To warm up your talking and make each other more comfortable, if you could come up with 5 things that you all have in common in your group that don't relate to a) being a human or b) being a student. You have 5 minutes to do that...[group chat]

[Language, Subject of study (science, economics vs natural science), videogames, nerdy, would like good work? countries visited, instrument, clothes]

Moderator (5:47): Ok guys, we are going to start it in a minute, you have 4 though? Ok we are good. So then, maybe, now we can move on. So just to start up a bit, what do you... how do you think about work? What is work for you?

Silence/ laughter

Kai (6:10): Money is the first thing that comes onto my mind.

Moderator (6:15): Interesting, so you can also like so we can get the discussion going, even though say personally, money is my favourite thing, and you argue that you say ...laughter..., but in terms of like money is what I think of when I think about work, and I would say work for me means more labour and stress.

Toni (6:37): I think to me purpose is what comes to my mind.

Tilly (6:41): Yeah, I would probably agree, its... the future, what is in store for you like in terms of drive.

Karl (6:52): Yeah, I see that but also I just don't think the opportunities are necessarily good enough to think that I'll actually get a job that I really find purposeful, so it becomes more like I do a job for the sake of earning money in order to do the stuff that I actually want to do.

Sonya (6:14): Yeah, I agree, I think that as you work and come to uni and study, the goals that you had in mind don't necessarily reflect the opportunities that are out there and it'll be hard to find a job that you love and also happy to work for and happy to go through that stress and yeah.. it is very hard to find that balance.

Moderator (7:40): we don't have to go around the circle. Just like naturally...

Kai (7:47): Just after coming to the UK I realised that it was quite difficult to find a job if you are not a local. Like there is this kind of ...like difference between locals and people that come from abroad but at the same time it is a good experience to understand what people are really looking for when they are hiring people, but it is very stressful.

Mikael (8:25): Yeah no for me, work is kind of life, I am some kind of a workaholic and I just found life at LSE to be hard because the school doesn't really allow you to do what you want. It does not really allow you to work more, for example. This is just slightly off scale but its related to work – its related to work motivation, because the LSE doesn't allow you to take extra courses. It doesn't really help you in any way. For like... even when I studied at a Swedish university [name of university], they were all about me, just work! And the same thing is quite important for me at work. I want to be able to push. I want to be able to work hard. And so obviously, work is about earning money, living your life, but it's still... I feel the need to learn, I feel the need to develop whilst at work, or well whilst I'm at work, so its like ...“work is life”, work is not just... you will be spending a third of your life roughly, at least, at your workplace, so at least make it something you can bear to have spent a third of your life on.

O.A. Cich (9:30): Well, everything has pretty much been said! [laughter]

Moderator (9:33): What would your personal opinion be on this? What would you agree with?

O.A. Cich (9:38): Ehhm.. I don't know, I think for me, personally, like all the work I have done thus far is like something that is meant to be challenging...yeah [nodding and raising shoulders]

Tilly (9:50): I would...can I just jump on that? I would say that that's like... I think why we all require some form of stimulation in terms of work satisfaction, and I agree with [Mikael] as well that ...jumping on what [Toni was] saying about purpose, it needs something to fuel that...ehm yeah.

Andrew(10:14): For me like what I want to do for work... the first thing would be to earn enough money for my living and secondly, it's like push myself, so I don't mind work into some high pressure industry like finance or management consulting, but just for me personally like at a later stage of my career, I just want to make an actual impact in society, that's what I want.

Moderator (10:46): Ehm so, we have already touched upon this but considering that this is what you expect of work, what you really kind of want of work is fulfilment, push and also a good salary, how do you think that you integrate that now into how you plan your future or how you see you future, if you are not .... at all, or do you think it might lead to just blocking out a bit. How do you go about in more real terms, I mean I know you are all students...

Tilly (11:10): Well... so I took like 6 gap years before going to university, and so I was in the adult world and living... like I had a good job, I had a good salary, and I had like no job satisfaction, so this is not what I wanted to do. So I went to university... sorry this is a quite personal example but ehmm... I went to university at SOAS and this is like a very different environment in terms of like... they try to motivate you not to think about money or not to think about these capitalist ideas not feeding into the ways society currently works. And so my views of work have shifted and now I think that I had no idea of what I wanted to do before I went to uni and now ... sorry, I knew what I wanted to do before I went to uni, and now I have come to uni in which you are supposed to be doing some kind of purpose or an idea of where you are going, and now I have no idea of what I want to do, and I have no idea how to go about it, and so I feel like there is a massive shift but that might just be the environment in which I'm in, compared to some of the others.

Sonya (12:15): I actually agree, ... gap year ... we all had that experience. Before coming to uni, I had a set idea of kind of roughly what I wanted to do and where I wanted to be and coming to uni, and I don't know whether it is just because seeing my professors have not shown the motivation that I expected or that I saw at school meant that I had no idea what I wanted to do whereas I don't want to be like you because you look like you're not enjoying it, so now I have no idea of what I want to do and I am really lost. So I am just like at this point- and I am just like in first year so it is still early- but at this point I am just going to power through uni and see what happens with my life, because I have no idea where its taking me.

Karl (13:05): I mean, practically for me like coming to uni just seeing that people get internships and things I have realised ... how much it is just based on who you know. Like that impact that connections make is like ridiculous like you can be really bright and hard-working, but you won't necessarily get the thing you want, so I've sort of lost quite a lot of faith in the system because of that really.

Kai (13:42): I postulated to the same question, no like I...I asked for internships at law firms and I asked like a lot, 7 or 8 law firms, I got refused by all of them, and actually I had good grades at high school and I don't really understand why they say no and then I have a friend, like, she doesn't have as good grades as I had at high school, but she got like at least 6 firms that said yes, because like she had connections. I was quite like disappointed by myself but also by my expectations that I had, like they were so high. I was like "yeah I'm gonna get this cause I have good grades" but actually not really.

Toni (14:29): Yes, I just did a week internship in a film production house, and I got in there through a friend of a professor at LSE, and he was just like "yeah just come by for a week of work" and there I literally didn't meet one person who didn't get in there through somebody they knew. And this was... I expected it but didn't realise that every single person you find in like 200 people, and you ask them "how did you get the job?", everybody was like taken on by some friend who already worked there, who is taken on by some other friend, so that is quite disappointing.

Mikael (15:00): Yeah no, its really... I worked hard, but like really hard in high school, and I did one and a half years of uni whilst in high school, and I read 60-70% more courses than I needed to graduate, just, among other things, so that I could get to a place like this [LSE]. And then as I said before I have met challenges and I just applied to internships thinking that "ok, my CV is relatively stacked, I should be able to get something." I got nothing. But then, and I got something now just because I used some contacts, and that's like I just felt

so extremely demotivated by this when it comes to studying, doing anything of value whatsoever, I don't like people, I just don't think that my life should be defined by who I know. And then it has come to the point that I am considering just dropping economics because I don't want to live a [struggles to say disillusioned, others help, everybody laughs] disillusioned life. Yeah, so I'm presumably becoming a doctor in Sweden instead because Medicine is much more based on your competence. If you are smarter than the head physician or head doctor, you will eventually get that position just based on the fact that you can save lives. So I am so tired of the bullshit that I've seen.

Sonya (16:35): So this really makes me feel guilty anyway like... so this was when I did work experience at school, I applied to so many of my own call I was like "I am not going to use contacts, I am not going to use that because it is not fair. I want to feel like I earned a work experience, so that I feel that I have shown my potential rather than shown that like "oh I know you" that way of getting it. And I did get one in the end, ehm because they had managed to have a vacancy, but then I got another one through a friend, and that I felt awful going to because I was like "there is someone probably cleverer than me that needs it all, but I'm getting it because I know this person. So it made me feel really really guilty. I don't think that that's fair, and this comes back to like opportunities, when we talked about the lack of opportunities available. What if you are in a situation where you don't know people in high positions in a workplace that can give you the opportunity of a work experience or internships. They are very important to progress.

Tilly (17:46): Also the internships there is so ...problematic, a lot of people can't afford to take unpaid work, yeah so it perpetuates the gap in society and so like as an example, the UN, they don't pay their interns, and a lot of the internships for a year or two years are unpaid. I've got an internship with them in the summer and it was through nepotism, like it wasn't ... like I knew someone there and I didn't have to go through the normal process which other people have to to get it. But you have to fund yourself, and if you can't fund yourself you can't do it so it is lack of opportunity at so many different levels: Well I don't have this opportunity as a student because of no jobs. I also don't have this opportunity because I can't afford to fund myself in order to get the experience in order to get the job. So it is all like this massive cycle of demotivation.

Karl (18:40): I think like desperation... like often to get these internships and things and just the limited number, means that like work places can effectively turn into free labour. It shouldn't be like you are going to the place to effectively... ok you are learning something, but you are also working for someone for like a month, maybe 2 months possibly, and like you are actually working for them and you usually expect to be paid for labour. But because people are so desperate they can just afford not to pay you. I think it is kind of messed up.

Mikael (19:13): In the US there is- and I am not American but I have some grip of American law- and there you are not technically allowed to take an intern on a position that should be held by someone working. So it's ok- legal- if you take in a person to train them, but its not legal to take in just rotate around 50 people each year to do a persons work. And the thing is, you have to think of costs too. There is no "sane" reason for a business to take on a person if they just.. if they actually have a spot to fill, it would be more efficient for them to just take in a person, to train them and constantly have them there if they are not allowed to turn around individuals as with the spaces. So, realistically, if we go down the American way... well even though it is not enforced in the US, that would mean fewer places. So then it is just: "Are we ok with being exploited, or are we not?". In this sense it is then ehm... I don't remember who said it but ehm... "workers are always being exploited, but the worse thing to happen to you is not to be exploited. The worst thing is not having a job." So then you have to weight the two.

Kai (20:41): I was just thinking that like in Chinese society... well Andrew knows... but a lot of internships are made by... like for example my dad, he knows someone, I can give this job, and they don't pay me, but my dad will pay the person to get me this job. So it is not only not having a salary as an intern, it is my dad who is paying this person to hire me as an intern. I am just giving you an example, because this happens a lot in china, and actually they don't say "pay the person" but rather "giving gifts" to the person so that he will help you to get the position.

Andrew (21:25): It is more like a reciprocal... its like I give you a job and you give something back to me. But I think that Chinese society has a pretty heavy relationship focus.

Kai (21:30): Yeah exactly.

Andrew (21:32): But I think it's like people really focus on their relationships, so they are willing to sacrifice some rules or laws in order to maintain relationships, so that you can help me later with my new business or with my career.

Moderator (21:58): You think that like in the future, the society is going to be like more and more pressured to be like this? That it will become more and more in terms of your connections? Or do you think it will be less so or the same? If you picture this in the future, what comes to your mind?

Karl (22:15): My understanding is that a number of jobs will be subject to automation. I think like basically people massively underestimate it, and I think it means like basically like a massively shrinking middle class because... you know, we'll have robots being doctors, like, our lecturers ... , you know, so many positions, perhaps just everything... gone. Wiped out. And so I think that's going to lead to great inequality especially at the top because those technologies are sort of owned by like a minority, and it's also when it takes ... , let's say you create a new technology, the person that takes the technology has total monopoly over the market, because it is the cheapest thing, and its like, you know, Bill Gates, or something like, he created new technology. He is now like one of the richest people in the world, and I think that's probably going to get just worse. I mean, realistically for me, it is a question of how many will actually be in work in 30 years because much of what a human does, a robot can do much better and for much less money.

Andrew (23:27): I think it also depends on the industry as well. I think that some industries like finance, law, and like management and consulting, I think they especially focus on relationship. It's like I give a sign to my company and they do a deal with me later. I think like for example like industries that require a lot of expertise like doctors, like relationship doesn't work that much. You need to have actual skills to be like a good doctor.

Mikael (23:57): Something that's from economist point of view, I read a number of papers basically discussing what jobs will be gone, how fast they will go and what kind of tests that can be hard-wired. For example, they are pretty close to enable AI to complete simple tasks, or singular tasks, like obviously driving or I don't know, cooking, or flipping a pancake, or whatever it went. Or just learning from those patterns

whereas doctors, you need to know a lot of things, they need to react to a lot of differences. And it takes about eight years, six to eight years, something like that. So basically, I think I've talked to a Nobel laureate who said that "relationship- oriented work was safe". Management is safe, if you are working on the front desk in finance, you are safe. However, if you are just saying an accountant, likely to be much less utility in the future, because that hasn't to deal with people, and that's something a computer can do. The way of making future career for yourself is to be extroverted, good relations, work in science or computer science, because you can at least make those computers whichever takes jobs, or work in extremely high skills professions, that's take at least a bit longer until they are automated.

Tilly (25:36): Yeah there is an interesting article I read in the winter, I think it was published in April, they wrote about the future of work, I don't know why I read it. But it's exactly that, uh, high skills labour and everything is accordance to the relationship and that's all we need to consider in our roles.

Mikael (26:00): Is that the one with four possible futures?

Tilly (26: 02): Yeah yeah, that one.

\*\*\*laughs\*\*\*

Moderator (26: 07): So coming back to you personally then, how does this relate to your vision of future where we talk about your potential future you guys are like uh... STEM student, I don't really know about what I'm doing perhaps but it's definitely there somewhere, or do you think we can have somebody else to talk to kind of like go round? Okay, I'm really gonna need that internship because relationships count so much, or do you think you will be more self-centred- just general idea?

O.A.Cich (26: 38): When I applied for work experiences in secondary school, I was applying for law, I only found a place that, uh, yeah, I found a place through my dad who knew the company. I applied for many places but I didn't get any of them, and then for this place it was more like volunteer firm. I personally just think it was terrifying that everything is just automated, it's like a lot of research right now. I feel like by the time you will get to the level to the people that are now, and I don't really know how we can get the level that the researches are now, and still be able to develop on that in our life time. I felt like the research is growing so fast by the time we..., cause I am studying Physics and Chemistry, so by the time I found what I want to go into and I get to the level that people are now that would have moved on so much and I need to work on that.

Moderator (27: 54): So you think everything are just so fast paced that building upon that will...

O.A.Cich (28:01): Yeah, I found that it's pretty much impossible.

Moderator (28: 05): Is that feeling shared or is that...

Tilly (28:10): I think we are going in a stage of life that everything requires more adaptivity, and whatever you are going to you are getting in a sense, that disable or quantifiable. If you look at the statistics that people in work, people get a job out from uni, or maybe not going to uni and get a job in their thirty or forty years in the same company working throughout. Now, our age group or my age group, people till their twenty-five, they don't stay a job from one or two years. So it's like click pacing where we just need to keep picking up, just go with it, it requires a lot of more, like a lot of companies called CPD, continuous professional development, which is on the job training, get the most up-to-date training whether that's in PR, whether that's in say my field marketing, you are continuously students in whatever we did.

Kai (29:10): You may also want to think about the Brexit, cause I am studying law and obviously the Brexit will influence the constitutions of UK. I am quite afraid that what I studied this year won't be the same as what I will use in a few years. So for example, the Public Law, it's like the UK non-existential constitution and administrative so if what I have learnt this year would be different as the Brexit, I would be quite worried about the time I spent in uni to learn these and every night to revise these would be like... uh, I am just worried about the political influences to country itself.

Karl (30:10): For me, it's much less about going off to one potential job but more just taking on a variety of experiences to like know a fairly large pool of people from different industries, like one of the things I'm interested in is the civil sector but basically the best option as to the fast-screen system that they have but it's quite hard to get on to. So I've basically told myself I'm not gonna lead myself to a particular sort of job path it's like my whole life in one basket and it's going to be an increasingly risky thing to do, like in the past you could just pick one thing and go for it but now we are just at a high turnover, with more automation, it's much more risky to do that.

Tilly (31:03): I think everything now requires more strength to deal both, to get into good universities in UK, it's not good enough to just have good grades now, whereas before if you are in the top class it is probably guarantees you to get into LSE or Kings. Whereas now you have to have, okay, what are they doing outside of that, are they volunteering, why are they doing this? This constant thing of like we need more and this accumulation of ideas of, I don't know, I don't know how to articulate it, but essentially we are getting to the rate of what is enough, and I think that's why we increasing such a speed. But what is the end goal? And I think that's the problem of AI, yeah, that's great, these things are coming out, developing these new ideas and new approaches to work. But what's the outcome? What happen to us?

Toni (32:01): I was wondering relating to the economic system, like obviously it will link to the capitalism. But for example, nepotism is rather a disfunctioning liberal market I am not an economic student, like completely neo-liberal market should not allow for connections to play such roles. How could changing our economic system influence the two concerns that we have now nepotism, insecurity and high turnover.

Mikael (32:30): Changing from capitalism to?

Toni (32: 33): I don't know, just changing the way that capitalism works or like?

Mikael (32:37): Well, there are different versions of capitalism out there, as a Swedish I have my own experience. I do feel it's less relationship based than things are here. For example, our school system. (Laughter) Basically, right now, I am considering switching back, but the thing is, when we applied for uni, the only thing that matters is our grades. So basically, when we were in high school, we have 20 -25 subjects, we get grades for each one of them and then we get points. These points then add up and then you just apply to wherever you are eligible to go, and then no matter what you have done outside the school, it just when you get the points and if you have enough than the less year third spaces, you get better than the person who get third spot, you are in[explanation of Swedish education system]. While in order to get here, I need to volunteer, I had to do a lot of extra work that nobody in Sweden is ever willing to do unless you are coming here since there is no need and a lot other different stuff. It's just like I feels so strange looking at how things go here, I feels like there's more upper mobility in Sweden a lot more... If you do well in here, and you can do well just on the resources that state and everyone gives you, you will be fine. Like as long as you work hard, that would be fine. Whereas here, it's more like, if you end up, if you grew up in a shitty neighbourhood, and your school is shitty, because basically, all from one.. what I call private universities or private schools, places like Eton. You basically just drilled in Oxbridge, drilled in Russell Group. For e.g I had barely any clue on how to apply to those places or to here, whereas they are basically spoon-fed to hardwork. And there is nothing wrong, you still need to work hard, even if you go to those school in order to get in, but it's just like it's much easier to have tools in those places. Whereas in Sweden, there might be a little difference like you might have slightly more private tuition , but it more like, there's no such things as a uhhh, a paid for upper-tier school group everyone, or all schools u have to in order to go to a specific high school that is determined by your grade from primary school, so no matter how rich you are, it's just your grades.

Moderator (35:30): so huh, do you think then education plays such a pivotal role that uhh u needs to be shifted to a certain extent in order to re-foster this ideal real man I'm like I'm just trying to quote, like this real meritocracy and that would be a possible solution to force the society in a better way.

Toni (35:55): I think that like even like Swedish system we shouldn't underestimate like educational backgrounds and stuff.

Tilly (35:58): Yeah that's what I was about to jump in to say, in terms like, yes it's about grade but you also have to take account into someone's like social backgrounds

Mikael (36:04): Oh of course.

Tilly (36:04): Their parents may work in 3 jobs, they might be not present, they might not able to go through the reading at night , they might not able to sit down and doing with u the homework, like u have to consider those elements as well so I know u saying think its based on merit, it's based on what this kid puts in but this kid might not be given the same attention as what other kids were be given

Mikael (36:27): Uhhh what I'm basically saying is that, we give our kids, even the poorest kids much greater opportunities this as so I am very well aware of that for example I went to basically one of the hardest place to get in in Sweden, and there were definitely a lot more middle job class children, and I'm basically upper working class or lower middle class, so it was different experience, the thing is, it's not that different and it's still possible as long as you work hard to get in, so it's not like as.... I don't feel like the gap is as big as here



is, although I do realize that obviously that social background turn... for example, our teacher, we were very statistics-driven, our teacher actually called us that uhhh he could tell our grades by how much or if he could just ask one question to determine which grades we were, he would ask how much money do your parents make.

Karl (37:33): Yeah I mean, they found out that the biggest fact that how much a student or a worker earned in the future is how much like their parents currently earned. uhhh, so basically, so uhhh your parents earn like 5 millions, it's more likely that you will earn 5 million, if your parents earn minimum wage it's much more likely that you will earn minimum wage and that was the biggest determining factor, is your parents income

Tilly (37:59): Is that just in terms of like, accessibility

Karl (38:02): I mean I don't know how that mechanism works, but you know it might be ancestors it might be because your parents spend more time with you or other but that is like through that mechanism that is like the main cause

Moderator (38:19): So what I'm gathering here as well of the future discussion on uhhh as you mentioned the automation and changes in society and what you can see is more inequalities more precarity, we going down a really bad slope (group laughter) is that what you also think about your career I mean we are all at quite elite universities and our career is also going to be shaped in that way or do you think it will just uhhh slightly well off, jumping from job to job in a certain company.

Karl (38:55): I mean, I don't know that much but I know there are people like Roland Ladnerlygard he wrote a book, recently, enlightenment (book name) Or something like that, and he's basically saying that we were all being far too negative about future, basically if you look like historically data, you know, standards of well-being has been better, like there's better health care, less people in poverty, like in China four hundred million people have been pulled out of poverty in like past twenty years kind of things uhhh so maybe for us or the west, sort of the middle class, things may not be quite like relatively as good as they were in the past, but basically for like the poorest people in the world, things are just become getting better so uhhh yeah I mean I speaking with one of my friends, and he's like yeah I'm graduating from LSE so I should be fairly safe. And I think it's probably true. Yeah um I'm uncertain.

Toni (40:07): Yeah just social anthropologists I think have some, (Tilly laughing) problem with the political dimension of say poverty standards all the stuff that comes like with poverty, like the measurements are really specific and can be used really politically to kind of say that actually capitalism is good for everybody and like I just think that it's, yeah I think it's really

Tilly (40:27)(whispering): It's bullshit

\*\*\*laughs\*\*\*

Toni (40:32): just that like I think I would put it that plainly that people statistically have better health and they are not considered like poor in some UN report then the worlds actually better. Just think that it's like

Tilly (40:45): Also there is like statistics, like in terms of measurements what we would have measured 50 years ago in terms of like access to education, or do they have this do they have that. There is so much more that is kind of needed in order to succeed now. So like do they have access to the internet and access to this. And some kids don't have that. That's that's a reality and that not just outside of the west. In the west, in the UK kids still don't have access to things umm and so I would be wary about those statistics because I don't think it's an accurate comparison between what was needed then and what was needed now.

Karl (41:27): Yeah sure I'm not saying that statistics tell you everything but I think they so still give some kind of a picture I mean if you just look at the impact that like charities have in terms of like disease eradication umm like there is success there within things like polio soo umm... I'm like sure there are problems like with GDP measure. There are lots of problems with GDP but I still think umm like if like let's say you take the extreme. If you back to like the 15th

century. And we are sort of going like of train slightly. If you go back to like the 15th century there literally wasn't enough food on the planet to feed everybody. We now have enough food on the planet to feed everybody just a problem of distribution and a third of the food that gets wasted. Umm... That being said yeah I mean my picture is still that things are getting better. Just in terms of well-being for the poorest people. And I think, you know, with things like access to food, access to health care, with that comes sort of, you know better job prospects basically like if you are a kid in school and your hungry the whole time or your ill, it's much harder to focus on your education and to actually have like some kind of job in the future. Um yeah.

Toni (42:58): I just think that, the things that get better really need to be waged against the kind of power structures that you know still push people down. And they might, things might get like better on some things. And think like we have to strike a balance between you know, I don't know the book you are taking about but it's like you can I think like paint, with a lot of data a very positive image of the world and you can also paint a negative image of the future. I think you kind of have to find a balance and you know, maybe also social anthropologists are also very negative (Tilly laughs) and I'm not generally against what your are saying and also I don't think things won't get better it is just that ...

Karl (43:33): I mean yeah... Steven Pinker received like a huge amount of criticism for the book umm but he was just sort of I think that there is a lot of scaremongering "Oh My God its all a complete disaster" And with things like climate change it is probably another thing that we should be worried about in terms of job prospects, like just poverty for all of us not enough food kind of thing (Toni yeah) umm.

Moderator (43:58): Do you think that will also, cause we have already said like "Oh relational jobs will be like much more important, they are safe, care-labour is safe, machines can't really care for people, umm but then we have climate change which should like it is quite a STEMy thing to work with in term of technology to advance that. Do you think that the labour market will be shaped in those terms or are you preoccupied about that?

Karl (44:24): I think in terms of climate change you can't, I say this mumble, you can't like... economically, there is not necessarily anything profitable about researching you know various factors of climate change. So umm until they find away necessarily to make money of researching, you know. I am not saying, I know you are about to say there are (Mikael) there are obviously come mechanisms where it is, there is an advantage into looking into like doing research into climate change but that being said at the moment it is still profitable to like get oil out of the ground and burn it and that is going to like carry on happening. So the number of jobs that you know, we will get from trying to tackle climate change, I am a bit dubious about that. Because I don't think that is what capitalism is about.

Mikael (45:14): Okay then it's my turn to shine in. Essentially, I do disagree with you on a number of points. Essentially, there are – just to think of it on a market perspective... first off, governments are heavily subsidizing research and so on so forth such as to make it viable to both private business and of course they run their own research. Secondly, there's a very green market in the sense that people tend to – is it's a niche that people tend to be willing to pay a higher premium for things that are related to being environmentally positive and so on so forth. So, they are already mechanisms to support this. Thirdly, when it comes to for example, energy production and research – what u said \*referring to Karl\* ... yes, it is profitable to pump out oil but the cheapest energy source is actually wind and water power now. We have eclipsed point where uh, environmentally friendly uh energy resources are cheaper per kilowatt hour.

Karl (46:23): can I just come into that point actually – the cheapest energy resource would be nuclear fusion. Nuclear fusion has always been \*\* interrupted by Mikael\*\* Karl continues: about 20 years ago over way would be the cheapest, but once I read an article in Marxist today that basically said research into nuclear fusion isn't happening because if we figured out how to do nuclear fusion basically energy to fuel like whatever will become free and then there's no money to be made there anymore.

Mikael (46:50): I highly dispute that claim because if that was the claim... if that was the case, If we were so sure that we could uh... I take physics and I know, I've read a bit about it and I have a friend who I've discussed this subject with and it's really hard... fusion is not necessarily an impossible thing to do- what u really want do is cold fusion and I've been to cold fusion lab. The difference is that it is very very hard to get a process working in that sense. My government (Sweden) has spent a lot of money working on this. Every government for decades have been spending a lot of money to do this

Moderator (47:32): Although this is very interesting, we are kinda shifting out of topic and I would like to get it back on board fro the purpose of the focus group. Please feel free to carry on discussing afterwards.

\*\*\*laughs\*\*\*

Moderator (47:51): to get back to our stem students. Do u think that will have an impact on jobs in any way \*referring to O. A. Cich \* in terms of research done in that area, is that something that's on your mind or u think is that all future?

O. A. Cich (48:09): No I think it's pretty fascinating like I revised it for A-level and they were talking about nuclear fusion and how they've managed to sustain a nuclear fusion reaction... it was like probably less than a second, like 0 point I can't really remember the number, but it was something ridiculous, but I think it's just a massive you know there's a definitely a future in there and I have considered looking into nuclear sources of power.

Sonya(48:38): Uhm yeah, I agree. I was talking to someone about climate change in general because it has been a massive topic of discussion recently and uhm thinking about xxx(our year 5 A-level )xxxx biology we did a lot of work on climate change and like uhm the impact that we have on the environment and how we can work to sustain the environment like research, go into that and I think that as global climate change is becoming a bigger concern, there's definitely more openings in stem particularly because there needs to be research on how we can find sustainable energy sources and how we can save the planet and that's definitely something that has become a much bigger opening and a much more desirable thing because its more available for people just coming out of university that just has done stem so for job prospects we definitely want that a stem graduate stem to go for

Tilly (50:02): I don't know if anyone read the article today about climate change.. there were saying that we have 30 years. Terrifying. The clock's ticking

Toni (50:14): 30 years till what?

Tilly (50:15): to save the planet

\*\*\*laughs\*\*\*

Toni (50:18): I thought it was less actually

\*\* laughs\*\*\*

Tilly (50:25): I didn't read the whole article it was a pop-up, but it said we got 30 years essentially to try and save and that's again back to this future idea like what is the end goal? Where are we going? We don't know, we're living in a time of uncertainty in everything we are doing, in employment, in politics, the whole planet in which we live in, there is nothing that is structured or stable.

Toni (50:53): Can I also say that my perception of the future is that not that negative on one hand yeah that shit really is getting messed up, we all notice. But then I also think that there is a lot of things happening and I don't know much about the Swedish system but I think there are alternative kind of ways of more away from neo-liberal capitalism that are kind of explored and u know when technology takes over most of the job its gone very necessary because, you know people are not just going to starve because they don't have work. I think, there is also, in all this uncertainty, there are a lot of potential for a system change and lots of

motivation I mean especially for young people who make extinction rebellion \*someone says yeah\* and all kinds of stuff going on.

Moderator (51:37): Do u think that there is an appetite for change as in more generally I'm asking now like what do u .... in terms because we just discussed in the start that we will have more precarious jobs it's gonna be much more important to you but then how do u think this potential does have a – that there is this actual I mean extinction rebellion is a good point but then there's also different people saying different things but they just seem — is that a general theme in mind or not really?

Karl (52:08): Yeah, I think the appetite might be there but that doesn't mean the money is necessarily there uhm \*Tilly interrupts n says: u mean in terms of motivation to actually change this?\* yeah in terms of employing people – I still don't see... like surely u have the government having an impact, but government planning is not what defines the larger share of the GDP in a lot of cases and it is not necessarily true \*\*\*people giggle\*\*\* but basically the impact of the private sector ... okay so even if there were research into let say renewables, I still don't think that lots of things that we want to do is necessarily a lot of money is being made okay let's say u want to work in the charity center, actually getting a job in the charity center is really really hard and that's because there's just not enough money to employ like people in that area so..

Andrew (53:20): I mean like sometimes it's more about money, well I did business and there's thing called public imaging. So, like there's so many big corporations that pour more and more money into this thing called sustainability. It's like where you go to Zara and u buy clothes and the bag is like 100% recyclable. I mean I got an internship at coca cola and they have a whole department about sustainability, and I think that's more about....

Karl (53:54): Yeah sure I get that, but the problem there is looking at the work like if u look at who's producing and who will be producing the most carbon - it's not going to be like Europe in the future basically, it'll be China and India and at the moment they are just telling people to eat more meat because that's associated with a more luxurious, wealthy like lifestyle and so I don't think its necessarily about how uhm whilst it has a huge role to play but I think if u look at which country is developing the fastest now uhm it's about how they behave at the moment in China & India - two countries that will be in pass by while some stuff is happening like, actually a lot of research is happening in china into renewables they're still -- as a country, China is not that concerned about carbon its footprint and company and people that just aren't aware as they are here. I'm not saying people in the West are interested in being sustainable but actually that's

quite a middle-class sort of you know perspective. I work in a bar, in the evening and one of the security guys there who works there. He said I don't understand why you don't just use plastic cups every night to throw them way and then you don't have to wash them. This bar you know serves about a thousand people on one night, that would be several thousand

plastic cups per night. And he has no concern about that it didn't even cross his mind. But I was like what the hell you can't do that. And so, I think it's not about perspective that a minority

type of being sustainable, its' about what those becoming rich in like the working class think

about sustainable lifestyle and how much they're actually preoccupied by those thoughts.

Moderator (55:40): I think a lot of us here are middle class.

Tilly (55:42): We're all speaking for a place of privilege.

Moderator (55:45): Yes, but leading up on that- you in your jobs to what extent do you think you'd put value on for example being in a firm that has the sustainability department or make sure that the workers have like a proper holiday... to what extent do you think you would make yourself accountable for offering your labour to a firm and their ethical standards. Also so it's quite a personal question now.

Tilly (56:12): Repeat the question please

Moderator(56:14): Uhm to the what extent would you be willing to offer your labour to a firm just because uhm yeah wait and accounting thereby for the ethical standards so for example I may go with marketing but I may not want to work I mean this is really arbitrary something with Unilever because they have microplastic in their toothpaste but I would work for Lush because they use natural stuff.

Toni (56:47): Publicity

Moderator (56:42): Uh, to what extent would you make that part of your working lives from your perspective now...

Toni (56:47): Definitely make a huge part I think and I would try, at least, I mean it very much depends on the industry you're working in if there's no how you can raise the standards but I would definitely do what I can to work somewhere where they are actively responsibly and then also use how that I have whatever that might be in the institution and push towards mainly environment just as about social justice of this thing.

Kai (57:18): Actually, I think that the structure of the firm of like, I'm putting more importance on this for example: if it's a low firm like a standard low firm it's quite a hierarchy, it's quite bureaucratic, to be honest and if you wanna progress in that structure like you spend a lot of time and recently I've been to the Renova conference w LSE with Alex Santos Arnoud and he explained it was a flat hierarchy in his company which really attracted me and I think this kind of very new for new form of working with your boss is very attracting to me and puts a lot of input inside.

Mikael (58:13): I would say that I would like to think that I would prioritize ecological things ahead of personal life, but in practice I don't think I would. I don't think I would take a pay cut. Let's say I could earn a hundred thousand in one place or 50 thousand in another place, that's really environmentally friendly. I'll probably take the hundred thousand. That's also because I, as an economist, there is always, you always have to think of opportunity cost. Do you know? I think that if it would provide, if, if, let's just say that I have spent all of those 50 thousand on environmental stuff and trying to help the environment in that way, then I would probably, that would probably be more efficient than me just choosing the uhh other job. So to speak. For

example one of the things that annoys me the most are teenagers or 14 15 year olds who go to let's say for example, I don't know, let's say Jordan, who ...not like in that case, or uhh no not Jordan, Nigeria who want to build a home uhh for example build a home for Africans. They have no training in uhhh construction. They have no clues what to do. It's just something they put on their CV and they feel good about it. Whereas that money that you spend on flying there, living there and so and so forth could have just been donated and uhhh you could have built a lot more houses a lot more quickly and helped the locals so on and so forth. Soo uhh it's just like using money efficiently is something that's very important and it's not for me personally, it not necessarily uhh just clear that that will be the case from each choosing an environmentally friendly company.

Karl (60:08): There is a movement called the effective altruism movement and in factually looks at getting jobs where its more like focusing your career on how you can have the biggest impact, so some of the things they advocate for are like in certain cases but not always they say if people are suited to it go into like investment banking or something and then give a massive share of what you earn to charities, that are very effective. And there is sort of quite a good logic behind that. Seems sort of intuitive to some extent, but I think the problem with that say one of your examples was you know going to an African country and building a hut: Will those people actually otherwise give the money? It's probably better to go there and build the hut than do nothing. Sure, you would rather take the job for 100.000 than 50.000 and give your money but will you actually you know give that other 50.000 to like a charity that you know, tries to impact climate change: probably not. I mean, that's not you. In general, most people, I think, won't necessarily do that, so... I am a bit dubious about that sort of ...thinking about these trade-offs.

Till (61:18): Are you, well like: Was the question framed at just the environment or are you taking about other...

Moderator (61:23): No, not just the environment, more in general

Tilly (61:27): Well personally, I couldn't, I couldn't work for an organization that has specific values in terms of kind of, I don't know, like well they don't support that LGTBQ community or there's a lack of diversity, like I don't think that I could tolerate it and I don't think that I could stand for it in terms of a work place umm. There is a women called Eric Hart who talk about this a lot she umm a sex educator umm non-binary, fem, and she talks about how like um white people have a responsibility to speak out against certain things, we are in a position of privilege that other people do not have and I personally think that we should be using that privilege to speak out in all of the different ways that we can and that is not just about the environment. It's about a number of different things umm and I think that if you aren't doing that then, what are you doing? Sarcastic laughter That me, but I don't know, that me.

Moderator (62:27): Maybe from this side of the room?

O.A. Cich (62:29): I would like to think that in the future, when I am um trying to enter um work that I won't have to make the trade-off between earning more money and trying to find a company that focuses on the environment. Cause I feel like particularly in STEM, a lot of the industries, they require fossil fuels currently, so I think that they like they are going to be focusing on sustainability. So um yeah, I just hope that I won't have to make the trade-off between my profit and um yeh company being environmentally friendly.

Kai (63:05): Sorry I just like the word environment means the environment of the word or the environment of work?

Moderator (63:10): It means environment of the world but um environment of work is also fine, I mean, it's a focus group, we don't need to be...

Kai (63:15): Umm okay

Sonya (63:19): So I um agree with what you said in that I think the ethics of a company is very important to like... as a deciding factor to whether I would want to work there, because, I don't, there are lots of values that I hold that I don't think I would want to be a part of a company that doesn't share those values or express those values. For example, like diversity umm I would want to hope that I would be in a workplace that's very diverse and very culturally diverse, because it's nice to like learn about all these other cultures. And experience and like learn from other people about their experiences in different cultures. And like as a woman I think it is also very important to find a workplace that's very supportive of women and men equally. And that's like in the future, it's progressing to a better place (heightened intonation ) hopefully (laughter from others) where women and men are treated equally and that there is equal opportunities because like I know from like my family back in India in like previous generations, like my grandma, she didn't have a job as a grown up because it wasn't like natural for a women to have a job. And so, for me, as a women to be at a university, studying and then looking at prospects of a job, like I definitely like think that that's very important. And I want to be able to find a workplace that supports me in enough so it's not just for nothing.

Moderator (65:04): Do you think that that will be case in future that, I mean, even now we have like companies who are all about getting you these yoga sessions and making sure your mental health is alright, all the counselling and so on, I mean we see it even at LSE as well and you think that will be a dominant trend, you think that will be for the better in terms of how we work and for our work-life balance? Maybe we can hear from the management student? If you've got anything to say on that

Andrew (65:32): I can't like remember the knowledge from that part of the year.

Moderator (65:36): I mean also just what you think about it now.

Andrew (65:39): I mean I think like it definitely helps. Like the work environment and the performance of the employees are definitely positively correlated with like the environment that the employee has. Like the higher the employee's commitment to the company, the higher the performance.

Moderator (65:58): Do you think that in the future this will be stressed? I mean companies seem to be wanting to kick us out as well so?



Andrew (66:04): I don't think that companies want to be kicking us out. Like from like what I see a lot of like big companies put like a lot of emphasis on like the welfare of their employees.

Karl (66:14): If you look at... I think in the silicon valley now there's, I think its apple, they've built this massive new complex. It's like a huge building. It has everything in it. You can sleep there, shop there. Like you so everything at your workplace. And then you notably ask: what are you know apple motives here, what are they, do they really care that much about how happy their people, their employees are, or do they just care how happy their employees are because if there're happy and they are at their workplace 24 h a day 7 days a week they're going to work more and basically my intuition is the that you know if don't leave the building where they work and they sleep there and they eat there and they do everything there, then they are going to be working more. So I think quite often when companies claim to like care about their well-being, It's about getting like you know the greatest efficiency out of their labour, whereas I don't think they have the interest of the workers and their wellbeing per se like at hearts.

Tilly (67:20): Indistinguishable

Mikael (67:23): From my perspective: Does it matter why they are doing it?

Toni (67:27): Yes yes yes!

Tilly (67:28): Of course it does.

Mikael (67:29): For me, I'd see green washing as a good thing. In the sense that I don't really, I'm very much ummm the "results justify the means" kind of person, so if companies implicitly are incentivising to do certain things that are good for workers, the environment and everything, I'm fine with that. As long as it's actually helping.

Toni (67:54): Okay, can I say something about umm so I think first that this trend is really an appropriation of the private life of capitalism which basically just gives people less space also to think about change which is one problem and think it absolutely matters why the companies do it because for instance the state, we have a really strong welfare state: the state does it, so the people are happy and they get elected again basically. So basically they're for the good of the people. If you have private companies, I just wouldn't trust them cause they do it as long as it brings them profit. And at the point where they got the machines that can actually do the job, they are going to kick out the people and they don't really care. And this is the difference, if they really care or if they do it as long as it brings them profit.

Tilly (68:32): A prime example of this is current conversations of pride. It's that so many companies are jumping on the band wagon and in terms of getting pride, putting the flag on everything and capitalising on it but what are they doing to actually feed back into that community. What are they doing? Are they even pro trans or are they pro non-binary people?

Toni (68:40): or if there is a general trend going back to becoming homophobic again they wouldn't stand very long because they don't really care about pride

Tilly (68:57): Yeah exactly.

Toni (68:59): they just really fake it. So I think it is just really instable and you can't just trust the private sector with capitalising the well-being of people.

Moderator (69:05): we are going to have to wrap up soon, so I have one last question for you all, I would like to do one round. Um Will you be happy?

Toni (69:13): In life?

Moderator (69: 17): Will you be happy with your future with your future work life balance? With your family if you want to have one? With whatever? Do you think you'll be happy? I'll give you two minutes to think and then I'll like to hear one round on whether you think you'll be happy. Preferably why as well but...

Laughter

Moderator (69:47): Ready? Do you want to make a start?

Tilly (70:00): yes because I think that my motivation isn't essentially to feed into the current system and my motivation is to kind of push away from how we are currently working towards something that's more satisfactory for everyone not just the individual and so yeah that me.

Moderator (70:21): If you're not ready we can move on

Karl (70:24): yeah I think I'll pass

Andrew (70:28): I think if everything goes according to my future plan, I will be happy.

Moderator (70:33): Your future plan is?

Andrew (70:34): Ahh like I expect to be working in some high pressure industry for like a few years and then getting like a master's degree and then after that like getting into or working for like an NGO and yeah maybe

then like travel around the world, make like a positive impact to the society. Because I wouldn't really care about money, but much more important, I can actually focus on what I really want to do so yeah. If I can do that yeah I will be happy.

Mikael (71:11): I probably will be happy. I'll, even, no matter choose to become a doctor or work in or if I work in economics or whatever I feel that I'll probably or with whatever degree I get I'll probably be able to get a decent job if I work hard and I learn to adapt myself to the work place, I feel that I could go pretty far so even if umm other thing might go to shit, (laughter) I feel that I personally won't, be doing relatively fine, and I can always move back to Sweden where I know I will be happy.

\*\*\*laugh\*\*\*

Kai (71:49): I probably will be happy because I'm happy studying Law right now and I think that maybe after a few years working in a law firm I'll get a masters in biology or stuff like this because I used to be a natural science student and uhh yeah um and just to answer I want to lead a chill life after so I really want to do like scholar stuff like study into science and medicine and natural sciences like a lot of stuff and I don't know, I just want to get enough money before and then just continue what I really want to do anyway.

Sonya (72:33): I'd like to hope that I'd be happy. (laughter) Um yeah no I mean I don't have a set plan of where I'm going now but like with the degree that I'm hoping to complete I'm sure that there will be good opportunities or fairly good opportunities for me to do and like even if umm like even if I don't um find my work or whatever like job I go into like 100% like amazing then I'm sure I can make up for that in my social life or hobbies or like I really want to go traveling at some point and that's like a massive thing for me so I'm sure I can like pick up those things. And Find happiness.

Karl (73:24): Yeah I mean I don't, I don't think that a workplace likely in the future or in my view from what I've heard there's a sort of too much idealism in the group so far that like future plans will happen or like I'll fight the system whereas look at the reality of what your parents do I mean: Are they fighting the system? Did everything they do sort of go to plan? Um and I'm not saying that you won't have happiness because of that, I just think that happiness will probably come from elsewhere. I mean how many people are really satisfied with their jobs vs. how many people are happy because they have family that they like or you know the place they live or they like you know their pets or whatever. If people are happy its because of reasons outside of work.

Toni (74:23): I also think that I am going to be happy. I think that or if I want to kind of like work in the system I have rather good dispositions to kind of find my way into a place where I want to be. For me that would probably be like film industry. And otherwise I think I would probably also try to fight the system. Or like, Maybe not try to fight the system but like live in some kind of borderland and try to find kind of alternatives. But I think or I am going to struggle and fight or I am going to be fine, or I think I might just try to kind of avoid a bit insecurity and competition yeah.

O.A.Cich (75:10): yeah I think at UCL they put a lot of pressure on STEM students to consider research after university. And that don't know if that will necessarily make me happy but there are a lot of things, I've got a lot of interests, I like sports, music, and so I think that even if I'm not necessarily happy with my work there are a lot of things that I would be able to do alongside my work that would make me happy. You know like I can always play the piano if I want to. I can always go for a swim or yeah.

Moderator (75:38): It's nice to see that everyone can see a certain level of hope, thank god. Thinking about the future of work hasn't made you go crazy. We made you sign a consent form and a risk assessment form. Was there a risk assessment form? I can't remember, anyway.

\*\*\*laughs\*\*\*

Toni (75:52): we just signed it!

Karl (75:54): I won't become depressed...

Moderator (75:57): Thank you very, very much it has been a pleasure. I think there is a lot that we can get in to and I'm definitely looking forward to going through that. I appreciated so much that you've come. Please help yourselves to some more food and we will let you know what our final research paper looks like! It shall be finished by Friday, It must be finished by Friday so...

Tilly (76:24): Wait...

Moderator (76:25): next Friday

Tilly (76:26): Ohhh okay!

\*\*\*laughs\*\*\*

Karl (76:30): I was like, good luck

Tilly (76:32): great!!

Moderator (76:33): If you would just like to stay, I'm going to stop this.

## Appendix Two: Full Transcript (coded)

### Codes Procedure

Theme 1: The system --- red, yellow

Code 1--- constant image, no alternative

Code 2--- meritocratic system/working hard

Theme 2: Work ethics and work life --- blue, green, purple

Code 3--- lack of opportunities

Code 4--- purpose and fulfilment

Code 5--- Earning a living

Moderator (0:00): As you already know, it is all about the future of work. And... then we will get to the questions about the future of work, as you already know. We will start a bit more on the personal level, what do you think individually about your own careers, and where they would lead and from that we will move on to looking at society and how society will develop and change in terms of the future of work. I hope this is rather obvious but I will just repeat it: please be respectful to each other. Yes there will be disagreements. We would like to see these disagreements. So be respectful to each other and respect each others personal opinion. Please don't talk over people and let them finish speaking and yes, I'll be moderating it, but if you start getting off topic a bit I'm going to bring us back in. So, we will hear about your opinions and perceptions, so please don't be too different in that sense. So we are going to divide our sample into groups of 4, or actually no let's do it like that because you two know each other. Just in order not to have the people that know each other in one group. To warm up your talking and make each other more comfortable, if you could come up with 5 thigs that you all have in common in your group that don't relate to a) being a human or b) being a student. You have 5 minutes to do that...[group chat]

[Language, Subject of study (science, economics vs natural science), videogames, nerdy, would like good work? countries visited, instrument, clothes]

Moderator (5:47): Ok guys, we are going to start it in a minute, you have 4 though? Ok we are good. So then, maybe, now we can move on. So just to start up a bit, what do you... how do you think about work? What is work for you?

Silence/ laughter

Kai (6:10): Money is the first thing that comes onto my mind.

Moderator (6:15): Interesting, so you can also like so we can get the discussion going, even though say personally, money is my favourite thing, and you argue that you say ...laughter..., but in terms of like money is what I think of when I think about work, and I would say work for me means more labour and stress.

Toni (6:37): I think to me purpose is what comes to my mind.

Tilly (6:41): Yeah, I would probably agree, its... the future, what is in store for you like in terms of drive.

Karl (6:52): Yeah, I see that but also I just don't think the opportunities are necessarily good enough to think that I'll actually get a job that I really find purposeful, so it becomes more like I do a job for the sake of earning money in order to do the stuff that I actually want to do.

Sonya (6:14): Yeah, I agree, I think that as you work and come to uni and study, the goals that you had in mind don't necessarily reflect the opportunities that are out there and it'll be hard to find a job that you love and also happy to work for and happy to go through that stress and yeah.. it is very hard to find that balance.

Moderator (7:40): we don't have to go around the circle. Just like naturally...

Kai (7:47): Just after coming to the UK I realised that it was quite difficult to find a job if you are not a local. Like there is this kind of ...like difference between locals and people that come from abroad but at the same time it is a good experience to understand what people are really looking for when they are hiring people, but it is very stressful.

Mikael (8:25): Yeah no for me, work is kind of life, I am some kind of a workaholic and I just found life at LSE to be hard because the school doesn't really allow you to do what you want. It does not really allow you to work more, for example. This is just slightly off scale but its related to work – its related to work motivation, because the LSE doesn't allow you to take extra courses. It doesn't really help you in any way. For like... even when I studied at a Swedish university [name of university], they were all about me, just work! And the same thing is quite important for me at work. I want to be able to push. I want to be able to work hard. And so obviously, work is about earning money, living your life, but it's still... I feel the need to learn, I feel the need to develop whilst at work, or well whilst I'm at work, so its like ... "work is life", work is not just... you will be spending a third of your life roughly, at least, at your workplace, so at least make it something you can bear to have spent a third of your life on.

O.A. Cich (9:30): Well, everything has pretty much been said! [laughter]

Moderator (9:33): What would your personal opinion be on this? What would you agree with?

O.A. Cich (9:38): Ehm.. I don't know, I think for me, personally, like all the work I have done thus far is like something that is meant to be challenging...yeah [nodding and raising shoulders]

Tilly (9:50): I would...can I just jump on that? I would say that that's like... I think why we all require some form of stimulation in terms of work satisfaction, and I agree with [Mikael] as well that ...jumping on what [Toni was] saying about purpose, it needs something to fuel that...ehm yeah.

Andrew(10:14): For me like what I want to do for work... the first thing would be to earn enough money for my living and secondly, it's like push myself, so I don't mind work into some high pressure industry like finance or management consulting, but just for me personally like at a later stage of my career, I just want to make an actual impact in society, that's what I want.

Moderator (10:46): Ehm so, we have already touched upon this but considering that this is what you expect of work, what you really kind of want of work is fulfilment, push and also a good salary, how do you think that you integrate that now into how you plan your future or how you see you future, if you are not .... at all, or do you think it might lead to just blocking out a bit. How do you go about in more real terms, I mean I know you are all students...

Tilly (11:10): Well... so I took like 6 gap years before going to university, and so I was in the adult world and living... like I had a good job, I had a good salary, and I had like no job satisfaction, so this is not what I wanted to do. So I went to university... sorry this is a quite personal example but ehmm... I went to university at SOAS and this is like a very different environment in terms of like... they try to motivate you not to think about money or not to think about these capitalist ideas not feeding into the ways society currently works. And so my views of work have shifted and now I think that I had no idea of what I wanted to do before I went to uni and now ... sorry, I knew what I wanted to do before I went to uni, and now I have come to uni in which you are supposed to be doing some kind of purpose or an idea of where you are going, and now I have no idea of what I want to do, and I have no idea how to go about it, and so I feel like there is a massive shift but that might just be the environment in which I'm in, compared to some of the others.

Sonya (12:15): I actually agree, ... gap year ... we all had that experience. Before coming to uni, I had a set idea of kind of roughly what I wanted to do and where I wanted to be and coming to uni, and I don't know whether it is just because seeing my professors have not shown the motivation that I expected or that I saw at school meant that I had no idea what I wanted to do whereas I don't want to be like you because you look like you're not enjoying it, so now I have no idea of what I want to do and I am really lost. So I am just like at this point- and I am just like in first year so it is still early- but at this point I am just going to power through uni and see what happens with my life, because I have no idea where its taking me.

Karl (13:05): I mean, practically for me like coming to uni just seeing that people get internships and things I have realised ... how much it is just based on who you know. Like that impact that connections make is like ridiculous like you can be really bright and hard-working, but you won't necessarily get the thing you want, so I've sort of lost quite a lot of faith in the system because of that really.

Kai (13:42): I postulated to the same question, no like I...I asked for internships at law firms and I asked like a lot, 7 or 8 law firms, I got refused by all of them, and actually I had good grades at high school and I don't really understand why they say no and then I have a friend, like, she doesn't have as good grades as I had at high school, but she got like at least 6 firms that said yes, because like she had connections. I was quite like **disappointed** by myself but also by my expectations that I had, like they were so high. I was like "yeah I'm gonna get this cause I have good grades" but actually not really.

Toni (14:29): Yes, I just did a week internship in a film production house, and I got in there through a friend of a professor at LSE, and he was just like "yeah just come by for a week of work" and there I literally didn't meet one person who didn't get in there through somebody they knew. And this was... I expected it but didn't realise that every single person you find in like 200 people, and you ask them "how did you get the job?", everybody was like taken on by some friend who already worked there, who is taken on by some other friend, so that is quite **disappointing**.

Mikael (15:00): Yeah no, its really... **I worked hard, but like really hard in high school, and I did one and a half years of uni whilst in high school, and I read 60-70% more courses than I needed to graduate, just, among other things, so that I could get to a place like this [LSE]. And then as I said before I have met challenges and I just applied to internships thinking that "ok, my CV is relatively stacked, I should be able to get something."** I got nothing. But then, and I got something now just because I used some contacts, and that's like I just felt so extremely **demotivated** by this when it comes to studying, doing anything of value whatsoever, I don't like people, I just don't think that my life should be defined by who I know. And then it has come to the point that I am considering just dropping economics because I don't want to live a [struggles to say disillusioned, others help, everybody laughs] **disillusioned** life. Yeah, so I'm presumably becoming a doctor in Sweden instead because Medicine is much more based on your competence. If you are smarter than the head physician or head doctor, you will eventually **get that position** just based on the fact that you can save lives. So I am so tired of the bullshit that I've seen.

Sonya (16:35): **So this makes me feel guilty anyway like... so this was when I did work experience at school, I applied to so many of my own call I was like "I am not going to use contacts, I am not going to use that because it is not fair. I want to feel like I earned a work experience, so that I feel that I have shown my potential** rather than shown that like "oh I know you" that way of getting it. And I did get one in the end, ehm because they had managed to have a vacancy, but then I got another one through a friend, and that I felt awful going to because I was like "there is someone probably cleverer than me that needs it all, but I'm getting it because I know this person. So it made me feel **really really guilty**. I don't think that that's fair, and this comes back to like opportunities, when we talked about the lack of opportunities available. What if you are in a situation where you don't know people in high positions in a workplace that can give you the opportunity of a work experience or internships. They are very important to progress.

Tilly (17:46): **Also the internships there is so ...problematic, a lot of people can't afford to take unpaid work,** yeah so it perpetuates the gap in society and so like as an example, the UN, they don't pay their interns, and a lot of the internships for a year or two years are unpaid. I've got an internship with them in the summer and it was through nepotism, like it wasn't ... like I knew someone there and I didn't have to go through the normal process which other people have to to get it. **But you have to fund yourself, and if you can't fund yourself you can't do it so it is lack of opportunity at so many different levels:** Well I don't have this opportunity as a student because of no jobs. I also don't have this opportunity because I can't afford to fund myself in order to get the experience in order to get the job. So it is all like this massive cycle of demotivation.



Karl (18:40): I think like desperation... like often to get these internships and things and just the limited number, means that like work places can effectively turn into free labour. It shouldn't be like you are going to the place to effectively... ok you are learning something, but you are also working for someone for like a month, maybe 2 months possibly, and like you are actually working for them and you usually expect to be paid for labour. But because people are so desperate they can just afford not to pay you. I think it is kind of messed up.

Mikael (19:13): In the US there is- and I am not American but I have some grip of American law- and there you are not technically allowed to take an intern on a position that should be held by someone working. So it's ok- legal- if you take in a person to train them, but its not legal to take in just rotate around 50 people each year to do a persons work. And the thing is, you have to think of costs too. There is no "sane" reason for a business to take on a person if they just.. if they actually have a spot to fill, it would be more efficient for them to just take in a person, to train them and constantly have them there if they are not allowed to turn around individuals as with the spaces. So, realistically, if we go down the American way... well even though it is not enforced in the US, that would mean fewer places. So then it is just: "Are we ok with being exploited, or are we not?". In this sense it is then ehm... I don't remember who said it but ehm... "workers are always being exploited, but the worse thing to happen to you is not to be exploited. The worst thing is not having a job." So then you have to weight the two.

Kai (20:41): I was just thinking that like in Chinese society... well Andrew knows... but a lot of internships are made by... like for example my dad, he knows someone, I can give this job, and they don't pay me, but my dad will pay the person to get me this job. So it is not only not having a salary as an intern, it is my dad who is paying this person to hire me as an intern. I am just giving you an example, because this happens a lot in china, and actually they don't say "pay the person" but rather "giving gifts" to the person so that he will help you to get the position.

Andrew (21:25): It is more like a reciprocal... its like I give you a job and you give something back to me. But I think that Chinese society has a pretty heavy relationship focus.

Kai (21:30): Yeah exactly.

Andrew (21:32): But I think it's like people really focus on their relationships, so they are willing to sacrifice some rules or laws in order to maintain relationships, so that you can help me later with my new business or with my career.

Moderator (21:58): You think that like in the future, the society is going to be like more and more pressured to be like this? That it will become more and more in terms of your connections? Or do you think it will be less so or the same? If you picture this in the future, what comes to your mind?

Karl (22:15): My understanding is that **a number of jobs will be subject to automation**. I think like basically people massively underestimate it, and I think it means like basically like a massively shrinking middle class

because... you know, we'll have robots being doctors, like, our lecturers ... , you know, so many positions, perhaps just everything... gone. Wiped out. And so I think that's going to lead to great inequality especially at the top because those technologies are sort of owned by like a minority, and it's also when it takes ... , let's say you create a new technology, the person that takes the technology has total monopoly over the market, because it is the cheapest thing, and its like, you know, Bill Gates, or something like, he created new technology. He is now like one of the richest people in the world, and I think that's probably going to get just worse. I mean, realistically for me, it is a question of how many will actually be in work in 30 years because much of what a human does, a robot can do much better and for much less money.

Andrew (23:27): I think it also depends on the industry as well. I think that some industries like finance, law, and like management and consulting, I think they especially focus on relationship. It's like I give a sign to my company and they do a deal with me later. I think like for example like industries that require a lot of expertise like doctors, like relationship doesn't work that much. You need to have actual skills to be like a good doctor.

Mikael (23:57): Something that's from economist point of view, I read a number of papers basically discussing what jobs will be gone, how fast they will go and what kind of tests that can be hard-wired. For example, **they are pretty close to enable AI to complete simple tasks, or singular tasks**, like obviously driving or I don't know, cooking, or flipping a pancake, or whatever it went. Or just learning from those patterns whereas doctors, you need to know a lot of things, they need to react to a lot of differences. And it takes about eight years, six to eight years, something like that. So basically, I think I've talked to a Nobel laureate who said that "**relationship- oriented work was safe**". Management is safe, if you are working on the front desk in finance, you are safe. However, if you are just saying an accountant, likely to be much less utility in the future, because that hasn't to deal with people, and that's something a computer can do. The way of making future career for yourself is to be extroverted, good relations, work in science or computer science, because you can at least make those computers whichever takes jobs, or work in extremely high skills professions, that's take at least a bit longer until they are automated.

Tilly (25:36): Yeah there is an interesting article I read in the winter, I think it was published in April, they wrote about the future of work, I don't know why I read it. But it's exactly that, uh, high skills labour and everything is accordance to the relationship and that's all we need to consider in our roles.

Mikael (26:00): Is that the one with four possible futures?

Tilly (26: 02): Yeah yeah, that one.

\*\*\*laughs\*\*\*

Moderator (26: 07): So coming back to you personally then, how does this relate to your vision of future where we talk about your potential future you guys are like uh... STEM student, I don't really know about what I'm doing perhaps but it's definitely there somewhere, or do you think we can have somebody else to talk to kind of like go round? Okay, I'm really gonna need that internship because relationships count so much, or do you think you will be more self-centred- just general idea?

O.A.Cich (26: 38): When I applied for work experiences in secondary school, I was applying for law, I only found a place that, uh, yeah, I found a place through my dad who knew the company. I applied for many places but I didn't get any of them, and then for this place it was more like volunteer firm. I personally just think it was terrifying that everything is just automated, it's like a lot of research right now. I feel like by the time you will get to the level to the people that are now, and I don't really know how we can get the level that the researches are now, and still be able to develop on that in our life time. I felt like the research is growing so fast by the time we..., cause I am studying Physics and Chemistry, so by the time I found what I want to go into and I get to the level that people are now that would have moved on so much and I need to work on that.

Moderator (27: 54): So you think everything are just so fast paced that building upon that will...

O.A.Cich (28:01): Yeah, I found that it's pretty much impossible.

Moderator (28: 05): Is that feeling shared or is that...

Tilly (28:10): I think we are going in a stage of life that everything requires more adaptivity, and whatever you are going to you are getting in a sense, that disable or quantifiable. If you look at the statistics that people in work, people get a job out from uni, or maybe not going to uni and get a job in their thirty or forty years in the same company working throughout. Now, our age group or my age group, people till their twenty-five, they don't stay a job from one or two years. So it's like click pacing where we just need to keep picking up, just go with it, it requires a lot of more, like a lot of companies called CPD, continuous professional development, which is on the job training, get the most up- to-date training whether that's in PR, whether that's in say my field marketing, you are continuously students in whatever we did.

Kai (29:10): You may also want to think about the Brexit, cause I am studying law and obviously the Brexit will influence the constitutions of UK. I am quite afraid that what I studied this year won't be the same as what I will use in a few years. So for example, the Public Law, it's like the UK non-existential constitution and administrative so if what I have learnt this year would be different as the Brexit, I would be quite worried about the time I spent in uni to learn these and every night to revise these would be like... uh, I am just worried about the political influences to country itself.

Karl (30:10): For me, it's much less about going off to one potential job but more just taking on a variety of experiences to like know a fairly large pool of people from different industries, like one of the things I'm interested in is the civil sector but basically the best option as to the fast-screen system that they have but it's quite hard to get on to. So I've basically told myself I'm not gonna lead myself to a particular sort of job path it's like my whole life in one basket and it's going to be an increasingly risky thing to do, like in the past you could just pick one thing and go for it but now we are just at a high turnover, with more automation, it's much more risky to do that.

Tilly (31:03): I think everything now requires more strength to deal both, to get into good universities in UK, it's not good enough to just have good grades now, whereas before if you are in the top class it is probably guarantees you to get into LSE or Kings. Whereas now you have to have, okay, what are they doing outside of that, are they volunteering, why are they doing this? This constant thing of like we need more and this accumulation of ideas of, I don't know, I don't know how to articulate it, but essentially we are getting to the rate of what is enough, and I think that's why we increasing such a speed. **But what is the end goal?** And I think that's the problem of AI, yeah, that's great, these things are coming out, developing these new ideas and new approaches to work. But what's the outcome? What happen to us?

Toni (32:01): **I was wondering relating to the economic system, like obviously it will link to the capitalism.** But for example, nepotism is rather a disfunctioning liberal market I am not an economic student, like completely neo-liberal market should not allow for connections to play such roles. How could changing our economic system influence the two concerns that we have now nepotism, insecurity and high turnover.

Mikael (32:30): **Changing from capitalism to?**

Toni (32: 33): **I don't know, just changing the way that capitalism works or like?**

Mikael (32:37): Well, there are different versions of capitalism out there, as a Swedish I have my own experience. I do feel it's less relationship based than things are here. For example, our school system. (Laughter) Basically, right now, I am considering switching back, but the thing is, when we applied for uni, the only thing that matters is our grades. So basically, when we were in high school, we have 20 -25 subjects, we get grades for each one of them and then we get points. These points then add up and then you just apply to wherever you are eligible to go, and then no matter what you have done outside the school, it just when you get the points and if you have enough than the less year third spaces, you get better than the person who get third spot, you are in[explanation of Swedish education system]. While in order to get here, I need to volunteer, I had to do a lot of extra work that nobody in Sweden is ever willing to do unless you are coming here since there is no need and a lot other different stuff. It's just like I feels so strange looking at how things go here, I feels like there's more upper mobility in Sweden a lot more... If you do well in here, and you can do well just on the resources that state and everyone gives you, you will be fine. **Like as long as you work hard, that would be fine.** Whereas here, it's more like, if you end up, if you grew up in a shitty neighbourhood, and your school is shitty, because basically, all from one.. what I call private universities or private schools, places like Eton. You basically just drilled in Oxbridge, drilled in Russell Group. For e.g I had barely any clue on how to apply to those places or to here, whereas they are basically **spoon-fed to hardwork**. And there is nothing wrong, you still need to work hard, even if you go to those school in order to get in, but it's just like it's much easier to have tools in those places. Whereas in Sweden, there might be a little difference like you might have slightly more private tuition , but it more like, there's no such things as a uhhh, a paid for upper-tier school group everyone, or all schools u have to in order to go to a specific high school that is determined by your grade from primary school, **so no matter how rich you are, it's just your grades.**

Moderator (35:30): so huh, do you think then education plays such a pivotal role that uhh u needs to be shifted to a certain extent in order to re-foster this ideal real man I'm like I'm just trying to quote, like this real meritocracy and that would be a possible solution to force the society in a better way.

Toni (35:55): I think that like even like Swedish system we shouldn't underestimate like educational backgrounds and stuff.

Tilly (35:58): Yeah that's what I was about to jump in to say, in terms like, yes it's about grade but you also have to take account into someone's like social backgrounds

Mikael (36:04): Oh of course.

Tilly (36:04): Their parents may work in 3 jobs, they might be not present, they might not able to go through the reading at night, they might not able to sit down and doing with u the homework, like u have to consider those elements as well so I know u saying think its based on merit, it's based on what this kid puts in but this kid might not be given the same attention as what other kids were be given

Mikael (36:27): Uhhh what I'm basically saying is that, we give our kids, even the poorest kids **much greater opportunities** this as so I am very well aware of that for example I went to basically one of the **hardest place to get in in Sweden**, and there were definitely a lot more middle job class children, and I'm basically upper working class or lower middle class, so it was different experience, the thing is, it's not that different and it's still possible as long as you **work hard** to get in, so it's not like as.... I don't feel like the gap is as big as here is, although I do realize that obviously that social background turn... for example, our teacher, we were very statistics-driven, our teacher actually called us that uhhh he could tell our grades by how much or if he could just us ask one question to determine which grades we were, he would ask how much money do your parents make.

Karl (37:33): Yeah I mean, they found out that the biggest fact that how much a student or a worker earned in the future is how much like their parents currently earned. uhhh, so basically, so uhhh your parents earn like 5 millions, it's more likely that you will earn 5 million, if your parents earn minimum wage it's much more likely that u will earn minimum wage and that was the biggest determining factor, is your parents income

Tilly (37:59): Is that just in terms of like, accessibility

Karl (38:02): I mean I don't know how that mechanisms works, but you know it might be ancestors it might be because your parents spend more time with u or other but that is like through that mechanism that is like the main cause

Moderator (38:19): So what I'm gathering here as well of the future discussion on uhhh as u mentioned the automation and changes in society and what you can see is more inequalities more precarity, we going down a really bad slope (group laughter) is that what u also think about ur career I mean we are all at quite elite universities and our career is also going to be shaped in that way or do you think it will just uhhh slightly well off, jumping from job to job in a certain company.

Karl (38:55): I mean, I don't know that much but I know there are people like Roland Ladnerlygard he wrote a book, recently, enlightenment (book name) Or something like that, and he's basically saying that we were all being far too negative about future, basically if u look like historically data, you know , standards of well-being has been better, like there's better health care, less people in poverty, like in China four hundred million people have been pulled out of poverty in like past twenty years kind of things uhhh so maybe for us or the west, sort of the middle class, things may not be quiet like relatively as good as they were in the past, but basically for like the poorest people in the world, things are just become getting better so uhhh yeah I mean I speaking with one of my friends, and he's like yeah I'm graduating from LSE so I should be fairly safe. And I think it's probably true. Yeah um I'm uncertain.

Toni (40:07): Yeah just social anthropologists I think have some, (tilly laughing) problem with the political dimension of say poverty standards all the stuff that comes like with poverty, like the measurements are really specific and can be used really politically to kind of say that actually **capitalism is good for everybody and like I just think that it's, yeah I think it's really.**

Tilly (40:27)(whispering): It's bullshit

\*\*\*laughs\*\*\*

Toni (40:32): just that like I think I would put it that plainly that people statistically have better health and they are not considered like poor in some UN report then the worlds actually better. Just think that it's like

Tilly (40:45): Also there is like statistics, like in terms of measurements what we would have measured 50 years ago in terms of like access to education, or do they have this do they have that. There is so much more that is kind of needed in order to succeed now. So like do they have access to the internet and access to this. And some kids don't have that. That's that's a reality and that not just outside of the west. In the west, in the UK kids still don't have access to things umm and so I would be wary about those statistics because I don't think it's an accurate comparison between what was needed then and what was needed now.

Karl (41:27): Yeah sure I'm not saying that statistics tell you everything but I think they so still give some kind of a picture I mean if you just look at the impact that like charities have in terms of like disease eradication umm like there is success there within things like polio soo umm... I'm like sure there are problems like with GDP measure. There are lots of problems with GDP but I still think umm like if like let's say you take the extreme. If you back to like the 15th century. And we are sort of going like of train slightly. If you go back to like the 15th century there literally wasn't enough food on the planet to feed everybody. We now have enough food on the planet to feed everybody just a problem of distribution and a third of the food that gets wasted. Umm... That being said yeah I mean my picture is still that things are getting better. Just in terms of well-being for the poorest people. And I think, you know, with things like access to food, access to health care, with that comes sort of, you know better job prospects basically like if you are a kid in school and your hungry the whole time or your ill, it's much harder to focus on your education and to actually have like some kind of job in the future. Um yeah.



Toni (42:58): I just think that, the things that get better really need to be waged against the kind of power structures that you know still push people down. And they might, things might get like better on some things. And think like we have to strike a balance between you know, I don't know the book you are taking about but it's like you can I think like paint, with a lot of data a very positive image of the world and you can also paint a negative image of the future. I think you kind of have to find a balance and you know, maybe also social anthropologists are also very negative (Tilly laughs) and I'm not generally against what your are saying and also I don't think things won't get better it is just that ...

Karl (43:33): I mean yeah...Steven Pinker received like a huge amount of criticism for the book umm but he was just sort of I think that there is a lot of scaremongering "Oh My God its all a complete disaster" And with things like climate change it is probably another thing that we should be worried about in terms of job prospects, like just poverty for all of us not enough food kind of thing (Toni yeah) umm.

Moderator (43:58): Do you think that will also, cause we have already said like "Oh relational jobs will be like much more important, they are safe, care-labour is safe, machines can't really care for people, umm but then we have climate change which should like it is quite a STEMy thing to work with in term of technology to advance that. Do you think that the labour market will be shaped in those terms or are you preoccupied about that?

Karl (44:24): I think in terms of climate change you can't, I say this mumble, you can't like... economically, there is not necessarily anything profitable about researching you know various factors of climate change. Soo umm until they find away necessarily to make money of researching, you know. I am not saying, I know you are about to say there are (Mikael) there are obviously come mechanisms where it is, there is an advantage into looking into like doing research into climate change but that being said **at the moment, it is still profitable to like get oil out of the ground and burn it and that is going to like carry on happening**. So the number of jobs that you know, we will get from trying to tackle climate change, I am a bit dubious about that. Because I don't think that is what capitalism is about.

Mikael (45:14): Okay then it's my turn to shine in. Essentially, I do disagree with you on a number of points. Essentially, there are – just to think of it on a market perspective... first off, governments are heavily subsidizing research and so on so forth such as to make it viable to both private business and of course they run their own research. Secondly, there's a very green market in the sense that people tend to – is it's a niche that people tend to be willing to pay a higher premium for things that are related to being environmentally positive and so on so forth. So, they are already mechanisms to support this. Thirdly, when it comes to for example, energy production and research – what u said \*referring to Karl\* ... yes, it is profitable to pump out oil but the cheapest energy source is actually wind and water power now. We have eclipsed point where uh, environmentally friendly uh energy resources are cheaper per kilowatt hour.

Karl (46:23): can I just come into that point actually – the cheapest energy resource would be nuclear fusion. Nuclear fusion has always been \*\* interrupted by Mikael\*\* Karl continues: about 20 years ago over way would be the cheapest, but once I read an article in Marxist today that basically said research into nuclear fusion isn't happening because if we figured out how to do nuclear fusion basically energy to fuel like whatever will become free and then there's no money to be made there anymore.

Mikael (46:50): I highly dispute that claim because if that was the claim... if that was the case, If we were so sure that we could uh... I take physics and I know, I've read a bit about it and I have a friend who I've discussed this subject with and it's really hard... fusion is not necessarily an impossible thing to do- what u really want do is cold fusion and I've been to cold fusion lab. The difference is that it is very very hard to get a process working in that sense. My government (Sweden) has spent a lot of money working on this. Every government for decades have been spending a lot of money to do this

Moderator (47:32): Although this is very interesting, we are kinda shifting out of topic and I would like to get it back on board fro the purpose of the focus group. Please feel free to carry on discussing afterwards.

\*\*\*laughs\*\*\*

Moderator (47:51): to get back to our stem students. Do u think that will have an impact on jobs in any way \*referring to O. A. Cich \* in terms of research done in that area, is that something that's on your mind or u think is that all future?

O. A. Cich (48:09): No I think it's pretty fascinating like I revised it for A-level and they were talking about nuclear fusion and how they've managed to sustain a nuclear fusion reaction... it was like probably less than a second, like 0 point I can't really remember the number, but it was something ridiculous, but I think it's just a massive you know there's a definitely a future in there and I have considered looking into nuclear sources of power.

Sonya(48:38): Uhm yeah, I agree. I was talking to someone about climate change in general because it has been a massive topic of discussion recently and uhm thinking about xxx(our year 5 A-level )xxxx biology we did a lot of work on climate change and like uhm the impact that we have on the environment and how we can work to sustain the environment like research, go into that and I think that as global climate change is becoming a bigger concern, there's definitely more openings in stem particularly because there needs to be research on how we can find sustainable energy sources and how we can save the planet and that's definitely something that has become a much bigger opening and a much more desirable thing because its more available for people just coming out of university that just has done stem so for job prospects we definitely be want that a stem graduate stem to go for

Tilly (50:02): I don't know if anyone read the article today about climate change.. there were saying that we have 30 years. Terrifying. The clock's ticking

Toni (50:14): 30 years till what?

Tilly (50:15): to save the planet

\*\*\*laughs\*\*\*



Toni (50:18): I thought it was less actually

\*\* laughs\*\*\*

Tilly (50:25): I didn't read the whole article it was a pop-up, but it said we got 30 years essentially to try and save and that's again back to this future idea like what is the end goal? Where are we going? We don't know, we're living in a time of uncertainty in everything we are doing, in employment, in politics, the whole planet in which we live in, there is nothing that is structured or stable.

Toni (50:53): Can I also say that my perception of the future is that not that negative on one hand yeah that shit really is getting messed up, we all notice. But then I also think that there is a lot of things happening and I don't know much about the Swedish system but I think **there are alternative kind of ways of more away from neo-liberal capitalism** that are kind of explored and u know when technology takes over most of the job its gone very necessary because, you know people are not just going to starve because they don't have work. I think, there is also, in all this uncertainty, there are a lot of potential for a system change and lots of motivation I mean especially for young people who make extinction rebellion \*someone says yeah\* and all kinds of stuff going on.

Moderator (51:37): Do u think that there is an appetite for change as in more generally I'm asking now like what do u .... in terms because we just discussed in the start that we will have more precarious jobs it's gonna be much more important to you but then how do u think this potential does have a – that there is this actual I mean extinction rebellion is a good point but then there's also different people saying different things but they just seem — is that a general theme in mind or not really?

Karl (52:08): Yeah, I think the appetite might be there but that doesn't **mean the money** is necessarily there uhm \*Tilly interrupts n says: u mean in terms of motivation to actually change this?\* yeah in terms of employing people – I still don't see... like surely u have the government having an impact, but government planning is not what defines the larger share of the GDP in a lot of cases and it is not necessarily true \*\*\*people giggle\*\*\* but basically the impact of the private sector ... okay so even if there were research into let say renewables, I still don't think that lots of things that we want to do is necessarily **a lot of money** is being made okay let's say u want to work in the charity center, actually getting a job in the **charity center** is really really hard and that's because there's just not enough money to employ like people in that area so..

Andrew (53:20): I mean like sometimes it's **more about money**, well I did business and there's thing called public imaging. So, like there's so many big corporations that pour more and more money into this thing called sustainability. It's like where you go to Zara and u buy clothes and the bag is like 100% recyclable. I mean I got an internship at coca cola and they have a whole department about **sustainability**, and I think that's more about....

Karl (53:54): Yeah sure I get that, but the problem there is looking at the work like if u look at who's producing and who will be producing the most carbon - it's not going to be like Europe in the future

basically, it'll be China and India and at the moment they are just telling people to eat more meat because that's associated with a more luxurious, wealthy like lifestyle and so I don't think its necessarily about how uhm whilst it has a huge role to play but I think if u look at which country is developing the fastest now uhm it's about how they behave at the moment in China & India - two countries that will be in pass by while some stuff is happening like, actually a lot of research is happening in china into renewables they're still -- as a country, China is not that concerned about carbon its footprint and company and people that just aren't aware as they are here. I'm not saying people in the West are interested in being sustainable but actually that's quite a middle-class sort of you know perspective. I work in a bar, in the evening and one of the security guys there who works there. He said I don't understand why you don't just use plastic cups every night to throw them way and then you don't have to wash them. This bar you know serves about a thousand people on one night, that would be several thousand plastic cups per night. And he has no concern about that it didn't even cross his mind. But I was like what the hell you can't do that. And so, I think it's not about perspective that a minority type of being sustainable, its' about what those becoming rich in like the working class think about sustainable lifestyle and how much they're actually preoccupied by those thoughts.

Moderator (55:40): I think a lot of us here are middle class.

Tilly (55:42): We're all speaking for a place of privilege.

Moderator (55:45): Yes, but leading up on that- you in your jobs to what extent do you think you'd put value on for example being in a firm that has the sustainability department or make sure that the workers have like a proper holiday... to what extent do you think you would make yourself accountable for offering your labour to a firm and their ethical standards. Aso so its quite a personal question now.

Tilly (56:12): Repeat the question please

Moderator(56:14): Uhm to the what extent would you be willing to offer your labour to a firm just because uhm yeah wait and accounting thereby for the ethical standards so for example I may go with marketing but I may not want to work I mean this is really arbitrary something with Unilever because they have microplastic in their toothpaste but I would work for lush because they use natural stuff.

Toni (56:47): Publicity

Moderator (56:42): Uh, to what extent would you make that part of your working lives from your perspective now...

Toni (56:47): Definitely make a huge part I think and I would try, at least, I mean it very much depends on the industry you're working if there's no how you can raise the standards but I would definitely do what I can to work somewhere wher they are actively responsibly and then also use how that I have whatever that might be in the institution and push towards mainly environment just as about social justice of this thing.

Kai (57:18): Actually, I think that the structure of the firm of like, I'm putting more importance on this for example: if it's a low firm like a standard low firm its quite a hierarchy, it's quite bureaucratic, to be honest and if you wanna progress in that structure like you spend a lot of time and recently I've been to the Renova conference w LSE with Alex Santos Around and he explained it was a flat hierarchy in his company which really attracted me and I think this kind of very new for new form of working with your boss is very attracting to me and puts a lot of input inside.

Mikael (58:13): I would say that I would like to think that I would prioritize ecological things ahead of personal life, but in practice I don't think I would. I don't think I would take a pay cut. Let's say I could earn a hundred thousand in one place or 50 thousand in another place, that's really environmentally friendly. I'll probably take the hundred thousand. That's also because I, as an economist, there is always, you always have to think of opportunity cost. Do you know? I think that if it would provide, if, if, let's just say that I have spent all of those 50 thousand on environmental stuff and trying to help the environment in that way, then I would probably, that would probably be more efficient than me just choosing the uhh other job. So to speak. For example one of the things that annoys me the most are teenagers or 14 15 year olds who go to let's say for example, I don't know, let's say Jordan, who ...not like in that case, or uhh no not Jordan, Nigeria who want to build a home uhh for example build a home for Africans. They have no training in uhhh construction. They have no clues what to do. It's just something they put on their CV and they feel good about it. Whereas that money that you spend on flying there, living there and so and so forth could have just been donated and uhhh you could have built a lot more houses a lot more quickly and helped the locals so on and so forth. Soo uhh it's just like using money efficiently is something that's very important and it's not for me personally, it not necessarily uhh just clear that that will be the case from each choosing an environmentally friendly company.

Karl (60:08): There is a movement called the effective altruism movement and in factually looks at getting jobs where its more like focusing your career on how you can have the biggest impact, so some of the things they advocate for are like in certain cases but not always they say if people are suited to it go into like investment banking or something and then give a massive share of what you earn to charities, that are very effective. And there is sort of quite a good logic behind that. Seems sort of intuitive to some extent, but I think the problem with that say one of your examples was you know going to an African country and building a hut: Will those people actually otherwise give the money? **It's probably better to go there and build the hut than do nothing. Sure, you would rather take the job for 100.000 than 50.000 and give your money but will you actually you know give that other 50.000 to like a charity that you know**, tries to impact climate change: probably not. I mean, that's not you. In general, most people, I think, won't necessarily do that, so... I am a bit dubious about that sort of ...thinking about these trade-offs.

Till (61:18): Are you, well like: Was the question framed at just the environment or are you taking about other...

Moderator (61:23): No, not just the environment, more in general

Tilly (61:27): Well personally, I couldn't, I couldn't work for an organization that has specific **values** in terms of kind of, I don't know, like well they don't support that LGBTQ community or there's a lack of diversity, like I don't think that I could tolerate it and I don't think that I could stand for it in terms of a work place umm. There is a women called Eric Hart who talk about this a lot she umm a sex educator umm non-binary,

fem, and she talks about how like um white people have a responsibility to speak out against certain things, we are in a position of privilege that other people do not have and I personally think that we should be using that privilege to speak out in all of the different ways that we can and that is not just about the environment. It's about a number of different things umm and I think that if you aren't doing that then, what are you doing? Sarcastic laughter That me, but I don't know, that me.

Moderator (62:27): Maybe from this side of the room?

O.A. Cich (62:29): I would like to think that in the future, when I am um trying to enter um work that I won't have to make the trade-off between earning more money and trying to find a company that focuses on the environment. Cause I feel like particularly in STEM, a lot of the industries, they require fossil fuels currently, so I think that they like they are going to be focusing on sustainability. So um yeah, I just hope that I won't have to make the trade-off between my profit and um yeh company being environmentally friendly.

Kai (63:05): Sorry I just like the word environment means the environment of the word or the environment of work?

Moderator (63:10): It means environment of the world but um environment of work is also fine, I mean, it's a focus group, we don't need to be...

Kai (63:15): Umm okay

Sonya (63:19): So I um agree with what you said in that I think the ethics of a company is very important to like... as a deciding factor to whether I would want to work there, because, I don't, there are lots of values that I hold that I don't think I would want to be a part of a company that doesn't share those values or express those values. For example, like diversity umm I would want to hope that I would be in a workplace that's very diverse and very culturally diverse, because it's nice to like learn about all these other cultures. And experience and like learn from other people about their experiences in different cultures. And like as a woman I think it is also very important to find a workplace that's very supportive of women and men equally. And that's like in the future, it's progressing to a better place (heightened intonation) hopefully (laughter from others) where women and men are treated equally and that there is equal opportunities because like I know from like my family back in India in like previous generations, like my grandma, she didn't have a job as a grown up because it wasn't like natural for a women to have a job. And so, for me, as a women to be at a university, studying and then looking at prospects of a job, like I definitely like think that that's very important. And I want to be able to find a workplace that supports me in enough so it's not just for nothing.

Moderator (65:04): Do you think that that will be case in future that, I mean, even now we have like companies who are all about getting you these yoga sessions and making sure your mental health is alright, all the counselling and so on, I mean we see it even at LSE as well and you think that will be a dominant trend, you think that will be for the better in terms of how we work and for our work-life balance? Maybe we can hear from the management student? If you've got anything to say on that

Andrew (65:32): I can't like remember the knowledge from that part of the year.

Moderator (65:36): I mean also just what you think about it now.

Andrew (65:39): I mean I think like it definitely helps. Like the work environment and the performance of the employees are definitely positively correlated with like the environment that the employee has. Like the higher the employee's commitment to the company, the higher the performance.

Moderator (65:58): Do you think that in the future this will be stressed? I mean companies seem to be wanting to kick us out as well so?

Andrew (66:04): I don't think that companies want to be kicking us out. Like from like what I see a lot of like big companies put like a lot of emphasis on like the welfare of their employees.

Karl (66:14): If you look at... I think in the silicon valley now there's, I think its apple, they've built this massive new complex. It's like a huge building. It has everything in it. You can sleep there, shop there. Like you so everything at your workplace. And then you notably ask: what are you know apple motives here, what are they, do they really care that much about how happy their people, their employees are, or do they just care how happy their employees are because if there're happy and they are at their workplace 24 h a day 7 days a week they're going to work more and basically my intuition is the that you know if don't leave the building where they work and they sleep there and they eat there and they do everything there, then they are going to be working more. So I think quite often when companies claim to like care about their well-being, It's about getting like you know the greatest efficiency out of their labour, whereas I don't think they have the interest of the workers and their wellbeing per se like at hearts.

Tilly (67:20): Indistinguishable

Mikael (67:23): From my perspective: Does it matter why they are doing it?

Toni (67:27): Yes yes yes!

Tilly (67:28): Of course it does.

Mikael (67:29): For me, I'd see green washing as a good thing. In the sense that I don't really, I'm very much ummm the "results justify the means" kind of person, so if companies implicitly are incentivising to do certain things that are good for workers, the environment and everything, I'm fine with that. As long as it's actually helping.

Toni (67:54): Okay, can I say something about umm so I think first that this trend is really an appropriation of the **private life of capitalism** which basically just gives people less space also to think about change which is one problem and think it absolutely matters why the companies do it because for instance the state, we have a really strong welfare state: the state does it, so the people are happy and they get elected again basically. So basically they're for the good of the people. If you have private companies, I just wouldn't trust them cause they do it as long as it brings them profit. And at the point where they got the machines that can actually do the job, they are going to kick out the people and they don't really care. And this is the difference, if they really care or if they do it as long as it brings them profit.

Tilly (68:32): A prime example of this is current conversations of pride. It's that so many companies are jumping on the band wagon and in terms of getting pride, putting the flag on everything and capitalising on it but what are they doing to actually feed back into that community. What are they doing? Are they even pro trans or are they pro non-binary people?

Toni (68:40): or if there is a general trend going back to becoming homophobic again they wouldn't stand very long because they don't really care about pride

Tilly (68:57): Yeah exactly.

Toni (68:59): they just really fake it. So I think it is just really instable and you can't just trust the private sector with capitalising the well-being of people.

Moderator (69:05): we are going to have to wrap up soon, so I have one last question for you all, I would like to do one round. Um Will you be happy?

Toni (69:13): In life?

Moderator (69: 17): Will you be happy with your future with your future work life balance? With your family if you want to have one? With whatever? Do you think you'll be happy? I'll give you two minutes to think and then I'll like to hear one round on whether you think you'll be happy. Preferably why as well but...

Laughter

Moderator (69:47): Ready? Do you want to make a start?

Tilly (70:00): yes because I think that my motivation isn't essentially to feed into the current system and my motivation is to kind of push away from how we are currently working towards something that's more satisfactory for everyone not just the individual and so yeah that me.

Moderator (70:21): If you're not ready we can move on

Karl (70:24): yeah I think I'll pass

Andrew (70:28): I think if everything goes according to my future plan, I will be happy.

Moderator (70:33): Your future plan is?

Andrew (70:34): Ahh like I expect to be working in some high pressure industry for like a few years and then getting like a master's degree and then after that like getting into or working for like an NGO and yeah maybe then like travel around the world, make like a positive impact to the society. Because I wouldn't really care about money, but much more important, I can actually focus on what I really want to do so yeah. If I can do that yeah I will be happy.

Mikael (71:11): I probably will be happy. I'll, even, no matter choose to become a doctor or work in or if I work in economics or whatever I feel that I'll probably or with whatever degree I get I'll probably be able to get a decent job if I work hard and I learn to adapt myself to the work place, I feel that I could go pretty far so even if umm other thing might go to shit, (laughter) I feel that I personally won't, be doing relatively fine, and I can always move back to Sweden where I know I will be happy.

\*\*\*laugh\*\*\*

Kai (71:49): I probably will be happy because I'm happy studying Law right now and I think that maybe after a few years working in a law firm I'll get a masters in biology or stuff like this because I used to be a natural science student and uhh yeah um and just to answer I want to lead a chill life after so I really want to do like scholar stuff like study into science and medicine and natural sciences like a lot of stuff and I don't know, I just want to get enough money before and then just continue what I really want to do anyway.

Sonya (72:33): I'd like to hope that I'd be happy. (laughter) Um yeah no I mean I don't have a set plan of where I'm going now but like with the degree that I'm hoping to complete I'm sure that there will be good opportunities or fairly good opportunities for me to do and like even if umm like even if I don't um find my work or whatever like job I go into like 100% like amazing then I'm sure I can make up for that in my social life or hobbies or like I really want to go traveling at some point and that's like a massive thing for me so I'm sure I can like pick up those things. And Find happiness.

Karl (73:24): Yeah I mean I don't, I don't think that a workplace likely in the future or in my view from what I've heard there's a sort of too much idealism in the group so far that like future plans will happen or like I'll fight the system whereas look at the reality of what your parents do I mean: Are they fighting the system? Did everything they do sort of go to plan? Um and I'm not saying that you won't have happiness because of that, I

just think that happiness will probably come from elsewhere. I mean how many people are really satisfied with their jobs vs. how many people are happy because they have family that they like or you know the place they live or they like you know their pets or whatever. If people are happy its because of reasons outside of work.

Toni (74:23): I also think that I am going to be happy. I think that or if I want to kind of like work in the system I have rather good dispositions to kind of find my way into a place where I want to be. For me that would probably be like film industry. And otherwise I think I would probably also try to fight the system. Or like, Maybe not try to fight the system but like live in some kind of borderland and try to find kind of alternatives. But I think or I am going to struggle and fight or I am going to be fine, or I think I might just try to kind of avoid a bit insecurity and competition yeah.

O.A.Cich (75:10): yeah I think at UCL they put a lot of pressure on STEM students to consider research after university. And that don't know if that will necessarily make me happy but there are a lot of things. I've got a lot of interests, I like sports, music, and so I think that even if I'm not necessarily happy with my work there are a lot of things that I would be able to do alongside my work that would make me happy.hap You know like I can always play the piano if I want to. I can always go for a swim or yeah.

Moderator (75:38): It's nice to see that everyone can see a certain level of hope, thank god. Thinking about the future of work hasn't made you go crazy. We made you sign a consent form and a risk assessment from. Was there a risk assessment form? I can't remember, anyway.

\*\*\*laughs\*\*\*

Toni (75:52): we just signed it!

Karl (75:54): I won't become depressed...

Moderator (75:57): Thank you very, very much it has been a pleasure. I think there is a lot that we can get in to and I'm definitely looking forward to going through that. I appreciated so much that you've come. Please help yourselves to some more food and we will let you know what our final research paper looks like! It shall be finished by Friday, It must be finished by Friday so...

Tilly (76:24): Wait...

Moderator (76:25): next Friday

Tilly (76:26): Ohhh okay!



\*\*\*laughs\*\*\*

Karl (76:30): I was like, good luck

Tilly (76:32): great!!

Moderator (76:33): If you would just like to stay, I'm going to stop this.

## Appendix Three: Consent Form



THE LONDON SCHOOL  
OF ECONOMICS AND  
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

### CONSENT FORM

**Full title of Project:** “Work hard – Play hard” - the meritocratic narrative amongst London undergraduates

**Name, position and contact address of Researcher:**

Giulia Annaliene Paxton

Anthropology Undergraduate Student at LSE

Email: g.a.paxton@lse.ac.uk

*Please tick as appropriate*

	YES	NO
1. I have read and understand the project information sheet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I agree to take part in the above study.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I understand this will involve participating in a focus group.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I understand I will not be identified at any part of the research project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I understand the information I give will be used for the purposes of this study Only.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I agree to the focus group being recorded.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. I understand that I may be quoted in the research project.

9. I would like my quotes to be anonymised.

 

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Name of Participant

Signature

Date

## Appendix Four: Participant Information Sheet



### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

We are a group of students from the London School of Economics and Political Science and we are undertaking a research project as part of LSE Groups. As part of this undergraduate collaborative project, we are conducting some qualitative research.

The title of our qualitative research project is “Work hard – Play hard” - the meritocratic narrative amongst London undergraduates.

*By means of focus groups, we intend to find out how students in London universities think about their future work and the future of work in general. The focus groups shall indicate what general themes and ideas preoccupy students concerning the future of work. We shall observe student of different courses of study and of different heteronormative gender expectations in order to broaden the range of possible perceptions. We hope that by studying the future perceptions of work as held by the future workforce that is, students, we can add to general theoretical advancements on how the realities of the future of work will be shaped. All research shall be undertaken on the LSE campus.*

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to participate in a focus group on your future perceptions of work in general as well as your ideas about your future work.

The focus group will last for approximately one hour.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation in our study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time. You do not have to give a reason and no pressure will be out on you to try and change your mind.

If I agree to take part what happens to what I say?

All the information you give us will be confidential and used for the purposes of this study only. Data will be securely stored on a password protected laptop. It will be destroyed after the completion of the study.

The research project will be presented to university staff and students during a conference on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June 2019 and a research paper will also be submitted.

To ensure anonymity, you will not be identified at any point in the study, unless you give your explicit consent.

If anything you said in the focus group is quoted, it will be identified only by a pseudonym.

What do I do now?

If you agree to take part, please complete and sign the consent form.

If you have any further questions, or you would like to know more about this study, please contact Giulia Annaliese Paxton at [g.a.paxton@lse.ac.uk](mailto:g.a.paxton@lse.ac.uk).

What if I have more questions or there is a problem?

If you have any problems, concerns or questions about this study, you should first speak to the researcher or the supervisor of this project.

Contact details of supervisor:

Jessica Simpson

Email: [J.Simpson3@lse.ac.uk](mailto:J.Simpson3@lse.ac.uk)

What if there is a problem?

If you remain unhappy or want to make a complaint, you may contact Dr Ellis Saxey who is the head of LSE Groups 2019. Her email address is [e.saxey@lse.ac.uk](mailto:e.saxey@lse.ac.uk) and her contact address is:

Ellis Saxey

Academic Developer

20 Kingsway Room 5.05

London School of Economics and Political Science

Houghton Street

London

WC2A 2AE

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been approved by the LSE Groups research team, at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

## Appendix Five: Ethics Form

### LSE GROUPS Research Project

### Risk and Ethics checklist

Based on the [LSE Research Ethics Review form](#)

<b>Group number</b>
<b>Draft research question</b>

What ways do student at different London universities perceive the future of work?

**Brief description of research project**

*(approx. 100-200 words. This should outline in non-technical language the purpose of the research and the methods that will be used.)*

*By means of focus groups, interviews and surveys we intend to establish how students in London universities think about their future work and the future of work in general. The focus groups shall indicate what general themes and ideas preoccupy students concerning the future of work. In order to achieve the most broad ranging compendium of possible perceptions of the future of work, we shall observe student of different courses of study and of different heteronormative gender expectations. We subsequently shall delve into student's perceptions of their personal work lives. This shall enable us to analyse the general themes underlying the intricacies of the future of work. The following surveys shall be modelled after these findings and will thereby refine their precision. We hope that by studying the future perceptions of work as held by the future workforce i.e. students, we can add to general theoretical advancements on how the realities of the future of work will be shaped. All research shall be undertaken on the LSE campus.*

**Ethics Checklist**

*Before you use this checklist, work through the prompt questions on the ethical engagement sheet.*

**This checklist is intended for any groups working with live subjects** (e.g. human participants), in person or online. If you are working solely with other materials (e.g. existing datasets, texts or images) please discuss with your supervisors which parts (if any) of this checklist are necessary.

**This checklist must be completed before potential participants are approached to take part in any research.**

	<i>Please mark an X in the appropriate right-hand column/box</i>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Not certain</b>
<b>8. Consent</b>				
i	<p>Are your participants people who might have difficulty giving meaningful consent? This might be because they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not able to understand information about your research</li> <li>Not able to access (read/hear) information about your research</li> <li>Not able to give meaningful consent (perhaps because they are children)</li> <li>Not able to communicate meaningful consent</li> </ul>		x	
ii	<p>Will your research involve deception?</p> <p>Will your research involve observing people without their knowledge?</p>		x	

iii	Will written or oral information about the survey be provided in an appropriate way for your participants to understand it?	x		
iv	Will your participants be asked to give written consent?	x		
v	Will potential participants be asked to give informed consent in writing? If not, how will their consent be given, and recorded?			
	They will be asked to be sign a pre-prepared consent form that they shall be sent in advance.			
vi	If the research takes place within an online community, how will informed consent be obtained? What arrangements are in place for ensuring that participants do not include vulnerable groups or children?			
	Not applicable			
vii	How can participants raise queries and problems during the course of the study?			
	Verbally on the day and via email in advance			
<b>9. Research Design / Methodology</b>				
i	Will your participants be deceived at any point? ( <a href="#">See Note 1</a> )		x	
ii	What issues will you discuss? Some issues need to be carefully thought about. Will your research include: Very private information? Deeply personal experiences? Study anything that your participants regard as sacred? Studying deviance or social control? Any coercion or domination?			x
	Have the ethical dimensions of the process of collecting, analyzing and storing the data been addressed? What risks might your participants encounter? How will you protect them?	x		
	The Data Protection Act 1998 will apply to any data-processing activities entailed by this research. Is there any cause for uncertainty as to whether the research will fully comply with the requirements of the Act? ( <a href="#">See Note 7</a> )	x		

How will data be collected and analysed during the project?				
Data resulting from the focus groups shall be collected by means of digital recording (film and audio) with the consent of the participants concerned. It shall subsequently be transcribed. All of this data shall be kept digitally on hardware and explicitly not in any cloud. The surveys shall be collect through an online platform (Survey Monkey). The analysis and storage shall be conducted in hardware format.				
Focus groups: Video, audio, written notes? Surveys				
<b>10. Financial Incentives</b>				
i	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?		x	
ii	Will this have any effects on the objectivity of your research?		x	
<b>11. Research Subjects</b>				
i	Could the study induce unacceptable psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?  Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?		x	
ii	Will the study involve discussion of sensitive topics? For example (but not limited to): sexual activity, illegal behaviour, experience of violence or abuse, drug use, etc.).		x	
<b>12. Confidentiality</b>				
i	Is the information/data you are collecting already publicly available?		x	
ii	Will the research use methods that may enable your participants to be identified, potentially pose an issue regarding confidentiality and anonymity?		x	
What arrangements will preserve confidentiality for the participants or those potentially affected?				
The focus groups and interviews will be conducted using self-chosen pseudonymous thereby retaining the anonymity of the participant. In line with Survey Monkey the surveys are created anonymously before we are able to collect the findings.				



<b>14. Dissemination &amp; Public Engagement</b>			
	Will ANYONE be harmed by you sharing and making public your findings?		x
	Will your work might align with the interests or concerns of your research subjects?		x
<p>How will you find out?</p> <p>The focus groups and interviews that we shall conduct are specifically concerned with the perceptions of the students and therefore touch upon their concerns concerning future labour. When such topics are considered, we shall know more about their specific interests.</p>			
<p>How can you communicate your findings to your research participants in particular? How will you make this accessible?</p> <p>We will make our results available in written form as soon as published, and in different format upon request.</p>			
<b>15. Risk to researchers</b>			
	<p>What are the risks to your wellbeing while you carry out this research?</p> <p>How will you reduce and attempt to avoid these risks?</p>		
	<p>The group has communally decided to be sensitive and respectful towards the needs of others in course of the research project. The current state of communication is one of mature, healthy discourse. We intend to maintain and actively upkeep the atmosphere of mutual help.</p>		

<b>Analysis of risks</b> To be completed for any activity taking place off LSE property
Brief description of activity:
List particular hazards associated with the activity:

*List only hazards which you could reasonably expect to result in harm to you or others under the conditions in which you are working.*

List groups of people at risk from the significant hazards identified:

*No need to list individuals by name - just the groups of people who may be affected. Pay particular attention to the more vulnerable.*

Are the risks adequately controlled? List the controls and any precautions you are taking:

*Can the risk be removed? Is there a less risky alternative? Can the risk be reorganised to reduce the hazard? Can protection be provided?*

*List the precautions you have already taken against the risks from the hazards you have identified, or make a note where this information may be found.*

Please note any capacity to deal with emergencies which may be relevant (e.g. first aid training or supplies).

I have read and understood the questions in the checklists above and confirm:

**A** that no significant ethical issues or risks are raised by the research, or

**B** that adequate safeguards in relation to such issues and risks can and will be put in place

**For B, please complete the box below**

**Summary of any ethical issues or risks identified, and safeguards to be taken:**

--	--

Student signatures:		Date:	05.06.2019
Ziwen Lei		Date:	05.06.2019
Giulia Annaliese Paxton		Date:	05.06.2019
Preetima Moteea		Date:	05.06.2019
David Winkler		Date:	05.06.2019
Trisyia Jamaludin		Date:	05.06.2019
Supervisor signature:		Date:	05.06.2019
GROUPS lead:		Date:	05.06.2019

By signing here the supervisor confirms that the student has been advised in relation to any ethical issues raised by her/his research; these have to the best of the supervisor's understanding been adequately addressed in the research design; and the student has been made aware of her/his responsibilities for the ethical conduct of her/his research.

## NOTES

1. Deception can occur at a variety of levels: for example, at one level, experimental methods may depend on participants being deliberately misled as to the true nature or purpose of the research in which they are taking part; at another, covert participant observation may entail an implicit deception as to the true identity and role

of the researcher. Deception may be a legitimate and necessary feature of social scientific research, but its use must always be properly justified.

2. LSE guidance on handling the Data Protection aspects of research data:  
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/policies/pdfs/school/datProRes.pdf>

## Appendix Six: A Comparison Between Original Question and Actual Question Asked by The Moderator

Original Question	Actual Question
1. Could you come up with 5 things that you all have in common in your group that don't relate to a) being a human or b) being a student. ( <i>icebreaker</i> )	1. Could you come up with 5 things that you all have in common in your group that don't relate to a) being a human or b) being a student. ( <i>icebreaker</i> )
2. What does work mean for you? What do you want to achieve with your work? Is it laborious, is it only something that you dread, is it fulfilling, does it represent chances, freedom autonomy, is it a part of life?	2. How do you think about work? What is work for you?
3. What aspects do you value about work? <i>Follow-up questions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social responsibility of the company/ alignment of your values with the company's values</li> <li>• Work environment (good people to work with)</li> <li>• Work life balance</li> </ul> <i>How do you value work?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Materially and instrumentally, for achieving a goal or for financial reasons, holidays, less stress</li> <li>• Expressive work values: opportunity to develop the self, to be independent, have say in decisions, interesting responsible challenging work</li> <li>• Mixture of both → reflection in current times</li> <li>• What do you expect of work</li> </ul>	3. What you expect of work, what you really kind of want of work is it fulfillment, push and also a good salary? how do you think that you integrate that now into how you plan your future or how you see your future, how do you go about in more real terms? 4. How does this relate to your vision of future where we talk about your potential future? 5. Do you think then that education plays such a pivotal role, like meritocracy and that there would be a possible solution to improve the society in a better way?
4. What do you strive for: an ideal "employer for life" or several different jobs during your lifetime? 5. How will climate change take impact?	6. What do you think about your career I mean we are all at quite elite universities and our career is also going to be shaped in that way or do you think it will be just slightly well off, jumping from job to job in a certain company?
6. Do you think a lot about the future? How do you feel about the future and why? Optimistic, pessimistic? How secure do you see your prospective area of employment? What are your fears about the future? 7. What types of jobs can/cannot be substituted by automatization?	7. Do you think that will also, cause we have already said like "Oh relational jobs will be like much more important, they are safe, care-labour is safe, machines can't really care for people, umm but then we have climate change which should like it is quite a STEM thing to work with in term of technology to advance that. Do you think that the labour market will be shaped in those terms or are you preoccupied about that?
8. What do you think the future will look like with regards to family, personal relationships, social contacts, health, independence, inner peace, financial situation, achievements, hobbies (if they differ from work) hopes and fears? 9. Do you think that you will adjust your aspirations to fit the circumstances or vice versa? 10. How clearly can you foresee your future career developments?	8. Do you think that there is an appetite for change as in more generally I'm asking now like what do you .... in terms because we just discussed in the start that we will have more precarious jobs it's gonna be much more important to you but then how do you think this potential does have a – that there is this actual I mean extinction rebellion is a good point but then there's also different people saying different things but they just seem – is that a general theme in mind or not really?
11. How do you expect the labour market to change in the next 10 years? 12. What will be shaping factors in the future of work? Will they be more interested in their peers? Will people be more or less concerned with themselves?	9. Do you think that that will be a case in future that, I mean, even now we have like companies who are all about getting you these yoga sessions and making sure your mental health is alright, all the counselling and so on, I mean we see it even at LSE as well and you think that will be a dominant trend, you think that will be for the better in

	terms of how we work and for our work-life balance? Maybe we can hear from the management student?
13.What trend do you expect for the average hours worked weekly? What will people do with their free time?	10.Do you think that in the future this will be stressed? I mean companies seem to be wanting to kick us out as well so?
	11.Will you be happy?