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Leadership Week Live Notetaking

New Zealand Alternative

Aotearoa as a Progressive Voice in the International Community? (Public Lecture)

Linsell (VUW): All right, I think we might just get going! Kia ora koutou nau mai haere mai ki tenei Leadership Week session here at VUW. I'm pleased to welcome you to this first public session. We are delighted to have with us 2 representatives from NZ Alternative, DR. Evelyn Masters and Greater Wellington Regional Councilor Thomas Nash. We're in Wan Solwara, the Pasifika space in the library at VUW. Thank you for both for being with us. I'm Linsell Richards, I run the Wellington International Leadership Program at Victoria University. This week has come together as a collaboration from many people; VUWSA, the Wellington International Leadership Programme, the Wellington Plus Programme, the Disability Support Service, student representatives, and the Brian Picot Chair of Ethical Leadership. Before I get started, I will share my screen and do some housekeeping with you guys.

This is a Zoom webinar. The audience can't share their screen and you can't unmute yourself unless you put your hand up. If you want to ask a question, there is a box at the bottom saying Q/A where you can write your question and upvote others. If there's a question you like and want answered, upvote it. Otherwise, raise your hand and we'll unmute you. We're recording this session and will post it on our website soon. We do have an Electronic Live Transcriber for this event; if you want to follow up and see written, paraphrased notes, you can access it in the Google doc link in the chat. If you have any technical questions, pop them in the chat. So, over to you Thomas and Evelyn!

Thomas: My name's Thomas Nash. I'm pleased to be here. Thanks to Lin for inviting me. I'll introduce myself, then hand over to Evelyn, then go through a few points about NZ Alternative. My background is as a campaigner on humanitarian and disarmament issues around the world; I spent 16 years doing that, worked on the Landmines Campaign, various other bits of work. I came back to NZ about 3.5 years ago and have been working on more social and environmental topics and themes, and this work in relation to the role of Aotearoa NZ in the world. As Lin said I'm an elected council member for the Greater Wellington Regional Council.

Evelyn: I'm coming to you from Tāmaki Makaurau. I'm New Zealand born and have had a very mobile life. I'm an independent research specialist; I do work in the Pacific on social justice and development projects. Before that I've had different types of academic roles. For 5 years I was living in Berlin with my family where I was part of a political website and blog. I have a strong background in research and communication. When I heard about NZ Alternative it was around the same time I landed back in NZ and it was a perfect entry to thinking about how I can be international and global in my perspectives while being rooted in NZ. It's been an amazing process. I hope we can share our thoughts on how to lead an organization like that that's on the cusp of progressive thinking. Feel free to ask questions;

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we're usually in person and it's more interactive. If this is awkward, that's why. If you engage with us, it's more cozy for us.

Thomas: I'll talk about the organization, how we got going, who we are, and a little bit of the context of where we find ourselves. I might just share my screen. Let's see if I can. There we go; this is our beautiful website that you can visit if you like. NZ Alternative dot org. Who are we? We're a group of NZers who have diverse backgrounds and have been working on different topics in different parts of the world, with a common interest in the role our country plays in the world. A group of us got together the beginning of 2018 to start thinking about how we can put some kind of organizational structure around these ideas. We went ahead and set up this organization. We've been ticking along steadily since then. We have Max Harris in London, an author, PHD student, doing a range of topics. Nina Hall, who is based in Bologna in Italy, mostly in Berlin now. She's an author and academic and has a book coming out soon. Myself, Evelyn. Arama Rata, a research fellow at Waikato. And our 2 newest people, Erin Matariki Carr and Phoebe Carr who have taken on the role as co-manager of the organization. They're twin sisters. Erin is a lawyer based in Tāneatua, and Phoebe is a teacher in Sweden. That's who we are. The origins of the organization were a desire to have more conversations as a country about our role in the world, and a desire to democratize access to foreign policy discourse, which is normally dominated by a narrow band of people in society. That was the impetus. Since the pandemic hit, we've been thinking that New Zealand has probably a really remarkably significant role to play in the world. We've had this response that allows us to do things that we're able to do. We've had a lot of scrutiny; we're getting a lot of attention. What we do now has a disproportionate impact. That's a responsibility and an opportunity.

For example; migrant workers and migrants have been hit hard by the pandemic and have been the worst hit in many countries. They have less access to public services. That's to an extent been true in NZ as well. That's an area we think we should do better at home and advocate for other countries. The second area is just transitions; there's been a lot of discussion about restructuring or resetting our economies after the pandemic in a way that is compatible with a safe climate. In doing that there's a role for us as a country to lead by example in structuring our recovery, our renewal from COVID that bears in mind worker's rights and a need for a just transition. The third area is international debt. Many countries suffering already have billions of dollars of debt over decades. There's a role for New Zealand to advocate for that debt to be forgiven. That's an introduction into why we came about as an organization, who we are, and our current context. Evelyn. Should I keep sharing and move you to a different part of the site, Evelyn?

Evelyn: Sounds good. Take us to "our work". Good. I think what I want to talk about briefly is you've met us in terms of who we are in the organization but I think what's important to say is that with NZ Alternative we have purposefully worked in a way that has a flat hierarchy. We work in true collaboration which is why you'll notice things such as Thomas and I being co-directors. We have 2 co-managers, and we have a steering group we're all part of to drive our work and our ideas forward into action and impact. The idea behind that is that over time in different situations there was a frustration of how slow some structures can be to work and how slow some social organizations can have in terms of making impact. What we wanted to do with a very small budget and a lot of energy was to make real impact and to enter work

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collaboratively and together. Somehow, rather organically, we have this amazing group of people where we come together. It's warm, there's trust, we value each other's perspective even if they're not the same. We rely on each other for expertise but have a space that is often for discussion when we don't all agree. I thought it was important to understand how we work.

For those interested, it's important to understand that in this new environment we can work in agile and remote ways. None of us live near each other. We get together on different platforms, Zoom, Slack, Email. We keep up momentum in that way facilitated by technology. Because we're all in different places we bring in current orientations to the work depending on where we live and who our communities are. Thomas? No? Ok.

What we do: the conversation about foreign policy is often a very dense type of discourse. It's difficult to engage. Most people in the kitchen table don't talk about it. What we want to do is to reignite and empower people to start talking about New Zealand's role in the world in a way that resonates with people and comes from a position of understanding and caring. What we've decided to do is to start conversations in all these different places, around our role in the world and particular events we have a role in. A lot of us have expertise in writing. There's a range of writing projects that happen; policy briefs, short media articles, or edited books. What that writing does is it gets out a different perspective, a unique look out, on the NZ government's role in the world and how they approach foreign policies at the time. At the moment, NZ Alternative is the only organization actively doing this. It's an important role for the NZ community and overseas. We hold the government to account and make solid recommendations. The writing is good in that way because it can reach the general public and it has clear policy recommendations, so we can use it as a lobbying device with the government.

The other mode of working is the hui. New Zealand has a strong tradition in bringing people together and having discussions about issues. We wanted to reignite that format of conversation with foreign policy being on the agenda. The idea is that often it's Thomas and I. Hopefully we have more hui in person with Arama and Erin, and to travel around the country and talk about foreign policy and NZ's role in the world from a position of plain English using concrete examples to help people understand their role in foreign policy as a New Zealander. Thomas and I have had a series of these around the country. As you can imagine, people's perspectives change depending on where you are, what the demographics are. At times our conversations are with those very youthful, those educated in the foreign policy world, and in others it's from the very beginning about what foreign policy is. Those are our two main angles of work. We feel they've been effective.

The third one is the more formal presentations like this one and other events we've put on in collaboration with others, such as circular economies and donor economics. Maybe it'd be good to look at other examples of what we've done. Thomas?

Thomas: Ok, some examples. We'll go read->reports. Here's a couple of things we did. This one here was the first one we did; it's quite a long report. It's 50-60 pages. It analyzes the role that we could play as a country in conflict prevention and peace mediation and produces some recommendations on how to do that, including setting up a conflict prevention unit. I'll

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talk about that as an idea. We wanted to, when we established the organization, come into the world with an idea that shows what we mean by a progressive role in the world for us. We chose this topic as an example we believe our country could do in the world. We looked around, consulted for topics, and we chose this conflict prevention one. Part of the reason is that this country has a strong and rich history of peace and of conflict prevention. That's not to say we are a peaceful country; we've got a militarist history too, and a founding national story or myth of Gallipoli, which is militarist in nature. We also have great icons of our history; Te Whiti o Rongomai at Parihaka, Kate Shepherd herself, Peter Fraser who helped negotiate the UN Charter in 1945, these people are all stalwarts of a strong thread of commitment to peace and conflict prevention in our country. We also looked at research history; the work that the Government did in Bougainville in the 1990s to facilitate discussions towards peace in the civil war in Papua New Guinea in the 1990s. We interviewed foreign ambassadors, activists, academics, to talk about how best we could play a role as a country in promoting peace. That's a detailed research document with chunky recommendations we costed out. That's one example of a piece of work we've done. We haven't done anything quite so detailed since.

This is another one we did more recently, last year. This is a different document; it's shorter, more narrow in focus, and more contemporary. It's looking at the idea of the way in which we could prevent more civilian casualties from the operation of our defence force overseas. That relates to the Operation Burnham inquiry recently completed, looking into some incidents in 2010 in which the Special Forces were involved in the deaths of civilians in Afghanistan. That proposes some detailed recommendations about what the NZ Defense Force and government could do to help prevent any civilian deaths from operations involving the Defence Force in the future.

We also write short opinion pieces. We're quite opinionated. We've written some around making the election a contest of ideas, how we use our newfound international attention after beating the coronavirus, how about we ban fossil fuels. Any thoughts on that, post it in the discussion. Wellbeing budget. I was looking at this earlier and thought wow, this looks impressive. We've done a lot of stuff. If you want to have a look at that you can have a dive in and a dig around. There's some examples of things we're doing. Maybe I'll kick it back to you, Evelyn.

Evelyn: I was going to talk a bit around what's coming up in the very short term which is a book that's been edited by one of our members, Dr. Nina Hall. It features contributions from a few of our steering group members; Thomas has done the conclusion and Max Harris has a piece in there as well. I'm just going to read off what it has written on the BWB website. It says: "New Zealand looks out to a turbulent world. Longstanding alliances are fracturing, nationalism is emerging, and sea levels are rising... These are far from conventional times. These contributors ask that we fundamentally rethink Aoteroa's role in the world and offer progressive values grounded in evidence." It's edited by someone with fantastic networks and a great mind for bringing together a range of different topics and perspectives. Nina's done an amazing job. If you wanted to read something and dive into a range of foreign policy issues and try to think through how they may be connected, Chinese-Aoteroa relationships, climate change, migration displacement. And different types of economic theories and how we can do better. It's worth checking out online or on paper. Nina will be doing a live event

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from Bologna and will be available to ask questions around the process of editing the book. An apology; I have a new puppy. He's outside my door. Hopefully the whānau will take him inside in a minute. That's what's coming out in the short term; the book next August. One of the other big pieces of work we're doing at the moment is rethinking our whole strategic direction so that we are more aligned and more appropriately positioned to discuss constitutional transformation in Aotearoa. This has been an interesting process for myself as tauiwi, I'm not tangata whenua. We have incredible wāhine toa joining our group. Under their guidance we have started to reconsider our position on foreign policy in terms of not really being able to consider what NZ's role in the world is until we have a solid, just, and fair constitution that underpins our legal system in New Zealand and our government. We've started to think more along the lines of how New Zealand's role in the world can align with a better understanding and recognition that in the Treaty it's been recognized that Māori did not cede sovereignty to the Crown. Therefore if that relationship is not upheld and thought through, and Māori are not repositioned into a position of power in Aotearoa New Zealand, how can we begin to think about NZ's role in the world? This has been unraveling for me and I've had to think about my view of foreign policy. One of our key missions is to never have a singular voice on what that's like. If you dive into any of the thinking on constitutional transformation you'll find Moana Jackson and others have brought to the fore that any changes to the constitution have to involve diverse voices. It's an amazing, inspiring movement to join up with and be a part of. In the future we're looking to pivot our conversations and the communities hui around New Zealand's role in the world and what that means under a reimagined constitution with reimagined power relationships within Māori, the Crown, and migrant communities in Aotearoa.

We also think that substantively considering our position on constitutional transformation will allow us to be better leaders in the world for other independence and sovereignty movements. We have an opportunity to consider New Zealand and show leadership in allowing sovereignty to be gained for indigenous people, and helping other communities restart this conversation as well - well, amplify.

Thomas: I got a spine-tingling feeling when you talked about the constitution stuff. It's big. If we did one thing that'd make a difference in the world it'd be to show that it is possible in this early 21st century to give power back to indigenous people in the context of white settler colonial governments. That's where we are. I might say a few words now about how you can get involved if you want to, then use the last little bit of the session to have a Q&A. I'm looking at my producer; he's not giving me any feedback around that, but we can have one, can't we? Yeah, we could.

What I'll do is show you a little bit about how you can - this is where you can get involved. Fill in that form, pretty simple. If you have ideas about things you'd like to write or create with us that relate to the role of our country in the world, we'd like to hear from you through this form. If you think any of your friends or whanau or any groups you'd like to host a community hui, we'd like to hear from you. With Zoom, it's easy. Please do get in touch. We're very relaxed and open. It might take us a few days to get back to you.

I'll close the video sharing and see if we're prone for more discussion. If not, we have premade material to fill in.

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Evelyn: We have a pretty good Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. If you want to keep up to date with what we're doing, that's a good place to head to. We also have a newsletter coming out. I want to echo what Thomas said about partnering with a whanau or organizations to hold hui. We do want to get out and talk to as many people as we can. As Thomas said, they're always informal and interesting. Please get in touch.

Thomas: Anyone feeling brave enough to ask a question or make a comment? [Question]: Concrete next steps for constitutional transformation? Good one. Eve? I would say that one concrete step is to get the Crown to respond, or to institute some kind of process to respond, to the recommendations in the 2016 Matike Mai report which was done by Margaret Mutu and Moana Jackson on behalf of the Iwi Chairs Forum. That report has a lot of concrete material that needs to be engaged with by the Crown. In terms of what we're going to do, we're going to have more conversations. That process of Matike Mai was a process of a huge number of conversations, hundreds, around the country in different forums. We want to contribute to building on that, and in particular building on that with tauwi and pākehā audiences, not just that and those people, but to bring those audiences in to do some of that mahi, which is going to be important. I'd be reluctant to present an opinion on what the concrete steps should be for transformation as it obviously has to come from a process. But the Matike Mai report does have some brilliant ideas on where to go next. Eve?

Evelyn: For us, it's about thinking about different types of metaphors we can use to start the conversation about constitutional transformation; to include diverse voices (and this comes back to what Thomas was saying before about who we are and how we came together), we have to find diverse ways of talking about it. If you say it, people glaze over and think they don't know what it is, they don't Google it. It's about getting to the core of what constitutional transformation is; shifting power. The power balance isn't cool. It's not fair. It's had lots of ramifications in terms of ongoing inequality for tangata whenua. From our perspective, we need to find a way to talk about constitutional transformation, and bring people into the conversation, so that they feel included, and so tangata whenua are included in the conversation. We have people on the team who are plugged into different types of art, music, theatre and weaving networks - we want to use those different mediums to really discuss what's central to constitutional transformation, which is power. And gifting that power back. Well one, recognising that the power balance exists and then two, shifting the power – is essentially what we want to do. We're lucky we just spent a few days in Tāneatua in Tuhoe. It was really significant for us as we were able to really feel the wairua of a place that is really significant in terms of sovereignty movements in Aotearoa, and we spent time with Tame Iti who gave us some amazing guidance on what it means to be young activists and how we take care of each other and how we can engage with different communities. The advice there was; quietly and simply. And that's what we want to do. We're definitely at a "watch this space" moment in the organization. We've grown rapidly over the last 6 months. We need to rethink our foundation. Once that is settled and we've come to find a platform from which to launch ourselves into this conversation there will be more out there. Another reason to sign up to the newsletter.

Thomas: If you were thinking about getting more questions in there, feel free to drop something in the chat or raise your hand we can put you on the screen. I was thinking - one

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thing we could imagine is that perhaps there could be a more direct relationships between Iwi organizations like Tuhoe and other countries, other indigenous peoples, in a similar way or complimentary way to the way that the Crown, on our behalf, has foreign relations with other countries through embassies and high commissions. That's one concrete idea that that relates to constitutional change and foreign policy that certainly would be worth exploring. I think there's a lot to be gained from having more well-resourced and formalized relationships between and amongst indigenous peoples. We could have a strong role to play there as a country. Any thoughts or questions? We don't know what this format is usually like so we're often in a context with a lot of highly opinionated people. We can't see you all! That's fine.

Evelyn: A relevant example in terms of constitutional transformation and COVID: in Aotearoa we saw different hapu and iwi really take responsibility for their communities wellbeing. They secured that power and they asserted that power to keep their communities safe. This is something indigenous communities around the world have been looking to. As indigenous communities have not had a good history of disease and pandemics. Seeing that exercise of power demonstrates there is a shift, a movement. Constitutional transformation can look like communities taking responsibility for their health and wellbeing in their culturally appropriate way. I think it's through sharing those examples and making those linkages between what's going on today and what we're trying to work towards – that's where the impact and the change will come. Not sure where to go from here. We could have a break?

Thomas: We could, but I cannot believe we haven't said anything that hasn't provoked some thinking. But that's okay. What do you think, producer?

Linsell: Are there any countries out there that you think are succeeding in implementing some of the values you are discussing into their foreign policy as it stands? Any exemplars.

Thomas: Interesting. Wow. Eve? Shall I go?

Eve: You can go. We have a sweeping menu of our values. Not sure any country is going to get the composition exactly right. To be honest I have more of a lookout on the countries that do it badly. Thomas, you have insights with Scandinavian countries. It's also important to say Aotearoa New Zealand does get it right sometimes! More recently we have seen values underpin our foreign policy with empathy as one that's come forward. Altruism and generosity come through quite a lot as well with our foreign policy. I'll let Thomas take that.

Thomas: It's a good question. I don't think there is any country in the world that is approaching foreign policy in the way we suggest NZ should. There's an issue here which cuts to the heart of traditional foreign policy discourse which is the question of competing national interests. Traditionally, you're supposed to balance your competing national interests with the idea of some form of coherent international cooperation. That's why after WW2 we developed collectively a whole set of structures, the rules-based order as we often hear about, to allow us to cooperate. United Nations, trade organization, world bank, international monetary fund, the suite of legal instruments and treaties that help us to cooperate in this multilateral system. There are some countries are good at using it for many positive ends. I'd say NZ is one of those. Norway is another that's very good. Ireland. Mexico. South Africa. But many of these countries have their own problems too. We can

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celebrate Norway for its multilateralism, but can criticize them for their massive reliance on fossil fuel exports and its role in the arms trade and whaling. It's hard to get a clear sense that one country is doing everything right. Some countries have pockets of excellence in certain areas. But in terms of a country doing everything right, there isn't one. To finish off on this question; what I would like us to do as a country is to work more closely with other small and medium sized countries that are interested in how to solve some of these challenges and to discuss how we can do that. Not to say we are so great, but to go into a collective problem-solving mode. To say - hey we're all facing these issues of planetary boundaries, climate, pollution, consumerist extractive economies, and we're trying to think of something new, and maybe we could exchange views on that. Countries like Ireland, Chile, Norway, there are others, who would be keen to have those discussions with us. Our neighbours in the Pacific too.

Commentor: How is self interest (certain groups maintaining power) an issue for constitutional transformation and how do we keep things neutral? (removing personal biases for fairness)

Thomas: Yeah, that cuts right at heart of it. That's the main barrier to having even having a discussion, let alone having some concrete responses to constitutional transformation. It's incredibly threatening as a discussion for most entrenched groups with power in our society. Most people just do not want to talk about it. That makes it hard to start talking about it. How do we keep things neutral? Yeah, I don't know. That's hard. We need to be really thoughtful in our communications and listen generously, and have different groups that are willing to do the work to talk to different groups. So, people like me... I have lots of privilege, so maybe I should be on the frontlines of talking to others with lots of privilege as that can be hard work in some ways. Evelyn, can you see these questions too?

Evelyn: I'll respond to Cynthia's question.

Cynthia: I'm in the process of establishing a Start-up that collaborated with Pacific Island nations including Samoa and Fiji. How do I find out what foreign policies have an effect on effective collaboration?

Evelyn: Any policies to do with the Pacific from Aoteroa NZ you will find with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, but you also need to look at the foreign policies for the Pacific countries you are looking to work with. I'm not sure what this organization is, and feel free to reach out to me personally. It may be that the foreign policies just provide you with an understanding of the political landscape in which to anchor your mahi, your work, and these relationships. It's always a good idea to check in and see what the landscape is and the permission space for you to start your work and to check in with some of the key players there as well, to get support. If you're an activist, then if it's an activist organization, then the role of the foreign policy is to understand what you want to come up against and what you want to challenge. The foreign policies then have a different role to play. So it is really worth while looking into those foreign policies and trying to understand what your group's position will be in relation to those policies. That's tricky in the Pacific; there's a lot to have a look at. You also have to think a bit more broadly around the role of other countries in the Pacific in terms of Australia, the US, Taiwan, China, as well. And the EU funds a lot of work around

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the Pacific too. Beyond just Aoteroa and the Pacific there's a lot of other actors which need to be thought through and included, as well as the role of other big non-Government organizations; so the likes of the World Bank, the Asia Development Bank, the WHO, the UN, the EU. Happy to have this korero at a later stage. I'm

Evelyn@newzealandalternative.org.

Thomas: Also; the Pacific Islands Forum, there are a lot of resources around that. It happens every year. Pacific Island states can come and talk about issues of common concern. There's a secretariat with a lot of documents that have a resource base for foreign policy issues being discussed.

Evelyn: It's very theme-based though. It often identifies/addresses hot-topics That's one thing to think about.

Question: How can we showcase NZ as an example for value based leadership and inclusion in the world,... and as we still have much work to do here in NZ, are we credible role models now?

What sort of models or frameworks can we promote/provide that really translate to other countries and cultural contexts, and do you work on these kind of 'tools'? Thanks!

Thomas: We haven't worked on any of the tools, as such, yet. But that's a good idea actually to think about how there could be models or frameworks. I think this tension that you point to between what we say and do is a fundamental tension, in any of this work, for us. That's why, as Evelyn said, we've come to the point of understanding that before we go further in terms of promoting what we think Aotearoa NZ should be doing in the world, we need to rethink our work in constitutional transformation. As that's really the starting point, and when we do that we can truly be credible as a role model. Having said that though, you don't want to leave it until we've reached some kind of idealised point of perfection in our domestic arrangements, before having a view on the rest of world. As then we couldn't provide any input. And I think people around the world are desperate for input; I see people around the world say they wish they had our Prime Minister and all that. So there's a role for us to play. The PM is doing a decent job. We'd like to see more resourcing around initiatives and genuine leadership that is open about how much we still need to do at home, but that also wants to open up communication and cooperation with other countries that are facing the same challenges.

Questioner: On the idea of cross-national collaboration and discussion, what would that actually look like do you think? Who would be at the discussion table (ministers or other groups like yours?) and how would you try to ensure action is taken seeing as, especially outside of government, cross-national legislation might be tricky?

Nathan: We don't have a fixed view. I'm used to, in my professional career discussions between diplomats and NGOs, and that kind of cooperation is useful. But as we said in the outset, we're interested in widening that out more broadly - that could be cross-cultural cooperation between artists and musicians and those involved in industry and other parts of society. Legislation and international treaties is one thing but we can do a lot before we get to that stage. Even just conversations and forums – for instance we're going to be hosting

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APEC next year/end of this year on a virtual platform. That's the first time APEC will have been held virtually. That's a good opportunity for us as a country to start to think about how could we maybe model some new forms of multilateral multistate discussions on a virtual basis that would probably enable even greater access and participation.

Thank you all very much for coming and engaging. We'll see some of you in the next session which will be for students and which Lin will introduce now.

[End transcription]