



BRITISH
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for the humanities and social sciences



Sustainable Prosperity: New directions for social science research

A workshop summary written
by Martin Ince

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The meeting on 20 February 2014 was facilitated by knowinnovation Ltd (www.knowinnovation.com), and this summary was written by Martin Ince Communications Ltd (www.martinince.eu).

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About this
Document

This document serves as a summary of a meeting held on 20 February, 2014 which discussed the issues and questions that arise from today's growing interest in Sustainable Prosperity.

The workshop was held at the British Academy in London and involved 83 people from a range of backgrounds, including academics as well as practitioners from business, government, NGOs and other organisations. The day was structured to allow them to focus upon Sustainable Prosperity as a general concept, before discussing the demands it places on our present thinking, and the research questions that it might raise for a wide range of disciplines.

This document follows the structure of the day by looking first at the idea of Sustainable Prosperity, and then at some of the potential research issues which participants thought were raised by this agenda. By prior agreement, it has been written under the Chatham House rule.

It is a summary of the views expressed by the speakers and attendees at that event and does not represent the established position of either the ESRC or the British Academy. In particular, the extensive range of possible research issues that forms part of this Synthesis Document is intended to help shape the ESRC's research priorities in this area but it should not be interpreted as a list of formal research recommendations.

This document signals areas of interest which may be taken up more formally by the British Academy and ESRC through a variety of mechanisms.

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Executive
Summary

“There is no wealth but life.”

John Ruskin (1819–1900)

The human race is facing a series of linked challenges which threaten its healthy existence. While climate change is its most obvious symptom, it also involves potential crises in the availability of food and water; environmental damage, and threats to a wide range of species and habitats; and difficult choices over future technologies, especially energy supply.

At the same time, there is growing awareness around the world that our social and economic systems are unsuited to these challenges, or even to their prime purpose of assuring stable human prosperity. Fast-growing material consumption, the rise of a growing super-rich elite, the persistence of significant poverty in many nations, and the emerging problem of widening inequality at all scales in all countries, all attest to this reality.

This synthesis document for the Economic and Social Research Council and the British Academy has a specific remit. It is intended to encapsulate a discussion workshop held on February 20, 2014 by these two organisations on the research and knowledge demands that this Nexus of issues places upon the social sciences and the humanities.

The next phase of human development will require a full range of new knowledge, involving science, medicine, technology and other fields. The distinctive contribution of the social sciences is to illustrate the new values it will need to nurture, and the changing styles of governance and organisation that it will call for. They can also point to the many scales, from the personal to the global, on which changed moral frameworks, attitudes and behaviours are needed, and discuss the institutions that this new era will require.

Perhaps most importantly, research in these areas can point the way to a new enlightenment in which material wealth is a less important contributor to human identity, wellbeing and achievement than it is today, and show that the future can be a place for optimism, opportunity and human flourishing. Research-based evidence is one of the most powerful tools at our disposal in

the search for a future in which economic activity is sustainable, where human values are respected, where social justice is better achieved and where social systems are adaptable, resilient and fair.

03

Background

The concept of “green growth” has been discussed for some years, and there is much existing research in this area. The workshop held on 20 February was intended to explore a far broader and more synoptic view of routes towards economic and environmental sustainability in the light of contemporary challenges. Sustainable Prosperity is a relatively new term for the concept of equitable, long-term economic activity which meets the needs of the population fairly, and without the unviable use of natural resources. The meeting’s specific remit was to consider the issues and questions, mainly in the social sciences and the humanities, which this approach raises.

We are aware that this Nexus of issues at the junction of the social, natural and environmental sciences is already of growing interest. The 2013 World Social Science Report from UNESCO and the International Social Science Council is devoted to these problems on a global scale. In addition, social science organisations around the world are involved with their natural science counterparts in developing the Future Earth programme. ESRC has already commissioned a Social Science of the Nexus Network Plus (Nexus NW+) led by Sussex University designed to proactively engage the social science community with the social science challenges of the Nexus, in ways that link them to research users and build greater expertise in this area.

The meeting was organised by the British Academy and the Economic and Social Research Council. Both of these bodies have a strong interest in the issues raised by sustainable prosperity. The British Academy plays an important role in providing independent contributions to public policy development and regards sustainable prosperity as a fast-developing area of increasing policy interest. At the same time, ESRC is seeking to identify knowledge gaps and policy-relevant opportunities in this area, to help inform and shape potential future research investment.

04

Debating Sustainable
Prosperity

There was almost universal agreement at the meeting that sustainability in the environmental sense cannot be attained without firm social and economic foundations built upon equity and justice. At the same time, sustainability involves a wide range of resources questions, including climate change, food, water, energy, population, and environmental conservation. The sheer size of this challenge suggests that a wide range of approaches is called for. There could be a place for incremental reform, characterised at the meeting as “better business-as-usual,” as well as more radical change, such as a severe reduction in the developed world’s levels of consumption.

In addition, there was consensus that our current ideas of prosperity need to be revisited. There was an especially strong feeling that the global super-rich can pose severe problems for sustainability. Partly this is because of the sheer amount of resources they consume. But in addition, their powerful example to the rest of the world endorses mass consumerism among others. In addition, there is the social justice criticism that it is corrosive to human values for 85 rich people to control as many assets as the poorest 50 per cent of the human race, which they do today according to an Oxfam report of 2014.

The point was made strongly that social justice is a precondition for a sustainable world, and that profound inequality is inherently unsustainable. This in turn points to the importance of bodies such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the other social and economic machinery of global trading and governance.

Another common theme was that the remits and boundaries of the social sciences as we know them may change to reflect these new priorities. Economics was the subject of specific comment. It was described as being good at describing the present day, or minor variations on it, but less useful when it came to describing and imagining creative new possibilities that involved sustainable prosperity. Other participants thought that it was better suited to analysing the creation of new consumer desires than an emerging world of socially valuable production. Still others said that current neoliberal economics tends to stress flows and movement rather than stocks and stability, so that it is poorly adapted to imagining a “circular economy” which emphasises reuse rather than maximising material throughput.

There was also a call for research into novel ways of achieving sustainable prosperity, especially ways of describing it that make its advantages over today's way of life clear and attractive. The point was made that the current political system in the developed world seems to allow social change to happen by accident, but exerts little leadership power to actively promote change for the better. There is too little narrative vision about a better future and how we might get there.

The role of the public sector in ensuring sustainable prosperity was emphasised. In the UK, it has primary responsibility for health care, education and environmental protection, prime ingredients of a sustainably prosperous society.

One repeated concern for participants in the meeting was the range of scales on which change needs to occur. Much of the vocabulary in this area tends to stress personal change. But we know that people do not do things in isolation, but instead are influenced by the networks of which they form part. So we need to think about behavioural change on a group scale as well, and about the factors that militate against it. An obvious example is the rapid recent growth in cycling as a commuter choice in London and other major cities.

The point was made more than once at the meeting that many sustainability and resource issues might well be more tractable on the scale of a city than that of a whole nation.

However, those present at the meeting were clear that localism is not a solution to the problems we discussed. Instead, there is a correct scale, from the planetary to the local, for addressing each of the many issues that were raised. There are already some promising signs that different nations and regions of the UK are approaching these challenges in different ways.

This insight points to the need for a stronger society and less atomised individualism, another concern expressed throughout the day in a range of ways. Collective responsibility should be a stronger part of the UK's national narrative, driven by community involvement rather than centrally by the state. This suggests that empowerment, confidence and other forms of social capital need

to be emphasised more than they are today, and that justice, social transformation and economic transformation need to become more common elements of public debate and policy thinking.

It was stressed that human values are not fixed and are not necessarily an obstacle to progress. They change over time, and change can be positive – for example the decreasing acceptability of smoking, and the spread of Fairtrade shopping from the fringe to the mainstream. So it is not just a question of elite people telling other people how to live. Nor do positive changes have to be sweeping. Small changes in travel habits, diet or other forms of consumption can have a big effect if they are taken up widely and become starting points for linked behaviour change.

There is extensive discussion in this field of “lock-in,” the way in which established technologies and social practices make it difficult for people and organisations to change the way they do things. However, the meeting recognised that small changes can lead to major reform and that lock-in can be overcome.

While it focussed on what Sustainable Prosperity might look like in a UK context, the meeting naturally took a global view, and it was regarded as obvious that the UK cannot achieve sustainable prosperity on its own. Perhaps paradoxically, we are worrying about sustainability at a point in history when more people than ever live less sustainably. The surprisingly rapid process of expanding the world’s middle class from one to four billion people, mainly in Asia, is happening and will have a big effect on global resource use, especially of food and the land needed to produce it, because of growing demand for meat and grains. What social and technological innovation do we need to avoid this crunch? How can we encourage richer populations to decouple their affluence from growing resource use? Might they become less resource-intensive and perhaps more leisure oriented? Is this going to happen naturally, as it has elsewhere, for example in Japan, or do we need to plan for it and if so, how?

There was also lengthy discussion of the future of business in a world that places less emphasis on growth. Businesses, as well as organisations in the public and non-profit sectors, will operate increasingly in a world where globally responsible behaviour will

be rewarded in terms of reputation and acceptability, while less acceptable actors will be named and to some extent shamed.

Climate change

The session was held just as the UK's winter 2014 floods were starting to abate. More than one participant pointed out that these striking events might have strong signal value in effecting UK public opinion. They could lead to the issues of climate change and our management of it becoming more important to social, political and economic thinking. There is evidence that actual experience of flooding increases people's belief in climate change within the UK context, and in the need for action to mitigate it.

Climate change is the biggest signal of the unsustainability of current lifestyles. It cannot be solved in a profoundly inequitable world. However, the current lifestyles of the developed world require significant carbon emissions. Can we use people's sense of fairness to promote a paradigm change towards the more equitable and efficient use of resources?

05

Knowledge Gaps
and Possible Research
Directions

There was a general feeling at the session that the social sciences as we know them will need to change if these issues are to be researched in an informative way. The comments on economics, mentioned above, were especially striking.

In addition, the point was made repeatedly that these challenges are big ones that call for more ambition from the research community. All aspects of the Nexus, ranging from human identity and fulfilment to food, water, carbon and population, need to be addressed with high-quality research. This will mean new data and methods, more support for specific research aims, and perhaps new models for commissioning research that are mindful of its public as well as its scholarly importance.

Several participants at the session said that better research in these areas has to be more public, to counterbalance climate change denialism and other forms of belief that comfort damaging vested interests. Current levels of research engagement are simply inadequate. For example, why is the belief that renewables don't work so persistent when it is also false, and is contradicted by profoundly non-market patterns of energy pricing and production? This raises the broader question of who any new research agenda is for.

The complex nature of these issues demands many forms of research. Fully independent research chosen by peer review will be at the centre. More engaged research co-designed with business, government and community organisations can bring its own problems, but is an essential mechanism for developing and promoting new approaches. Inter- and multidisciplinary were referred to as obvious research necessities throughout if the challenges of the nexus were to be tackled. It was also stressed that future spending in these fields should be planned even more carefully and cooperatively than usual to produce the next generation of engaged researchers.

Finally, carrying out research in this emerging field will itself help to develop the capacity amongst the research community. This process learning should be regarded as an output just as much as the research results themselves.

Below are the day's more specific observations on knowledge gaps and possible new lines of inquiry, summarised in three broad categories. The first, on human attitudes and behaviour, is especially rich, and its size reflects this.

Human behaviour

The need for debate and persuasion

Knowledge gaps: public understanding: of wealth and prosperity, of social and behavioural change, and of social and economic equity.

How can we promote and shape public debate on these issues? Do we need a national deliberation on wellbeing and what would it look like?

How can we relate such a debate to the general anxiety for a return to growth and to consumer-led investment and employment?

How might people's sense of fairness and social justice be channelled to encourage more sustainable and equitable lifestyles?

How can we respect and involve people who lack expert knowledge but whose opinions are valid for all that? We know that even people who have not studied the matter deeply accept the need for new energy systems. What tangible and imaginable scenarios can we generate to make the future seem more real to people who don't spend all day thinking about it? What might past transitions in infrastructure and behaviour suggest about possible future directions?

How do people understand "prosperity," including their own? What is its material, psychological, ecological and personal attributes?

How good is our knowledge of the choices we can make? In the modern world, markets for information are as important as markets for things. How can we value information and information technologies that help people live more sustainably? How can information be supplemented by inspiration, and how do people change their lives?

How can we have parity of esteem for alternative and less impactful behaviours? At the moment, high-consumption ways of living are regarded as prestigious and tend to be celebrated, for example in advertising and the media more widely. How can we help the demand side to offer people more choices in their lives, and how can the system have more confidence in people? Might ideas like personal carbon budgets help people to see the future in a progressive way? Given the broader social costs of today's lifestyles (for example in terms of mental health), it should be possible to sell sustainable prosperity as a gain, not a sacrifice.

What might big data approaches tell us about consumerism, alternative lifestyles etc? Or is a more humanities-based approach preferable, building on individual examples?

Any lifestyle you can imagine is being lived somewhere, right now. How can we build debate about appropriate lifestyles for a more sustainable future into everyday discourse, and with it a stronger awareness of the future?

How can we cope with new scientific knowledge of the nexus, and avoid being accused of changing our minds as new knowledge emerges? Our awareness of the "perfect storm" of climate change and food and water resources is based on solid science and should become part of general social discourse, in the awareness that the details are certain to progress as our knowledge advances.

This leads on to the issue of 'future-proofing' mechanisms which might allow us to assess the intergenerational implications of policy decisions. The UK Climate Change Committee is charged with monitoring and promoting carbon targets. Can this approach be extended? What about ideas from elsewhere, such as an Ombudsman for Future Generations? This post already exists in several countries around the world.

How can these issues be built into the education system more effectively? Can the concept of the greater good and public benefit be more central to formal education?

The media

Knowledge gaps: how media influence works, and how it affects important decisions which people have to face. It also involves more normative thinking about the use of media to stress directions of change in society and for individuals.

DECC surveys suggest that people 'like' renewable energy, but large parts of the popular media tend to focus on stories about the alleged uselessness and ugliness of wind farms. Might new social media help moderate this bias?

How do new media help people make sense of climate change, consumerism, and other global concerns? How does their effect differ from the way people learn via traditional media?

More generally, is it true that inspiring stories change people's approach to life, or will they behave differently only if they have political, social and economic systems that help them to do so? The current model of the way we should live has enormous power that it is hard for counter-examples to overcome.

How do we target messages at specific people; at the right technical level; and at the right level of aggregation, maybe personal, group or society in general?

Possessions and consumerism

Knowledge gaps: why and how people come to want and buy all the things they do, and how these desires change. What about "peak stuff" (paper, car ownership, flying etc)?

Do we really need all that stuff? What about the rich world's de-cluttering and minimalist trends? Can they be the start of a less-is-more approach to possessions? Does this involve service consumption as well as tangible objects? What are the barriers to a revival in make-do and mend and thrift traditions? Alongside changes in social attitudes, what forms of education and re-skilling will be required for such changes of approach?

What do we really know about the rebound effect and approaches to limiting it?

And what do we know about nudges and incentives – for example tax incentives to adopt renewable energy, or to eat less obesogenic food?

Vocabulary

Knowledge gaps: how to talk about more desirable lifestyles.

How can we make sustainability the common wisdom of the 21st century, and make unsustainable lifestyles seem unusual and unacceptable? This will involve unlearning poor behaviour and moving beyond the narrative of prosperity as progress.

Is “sustainability” the right “mot juste”, or does it sound too difficult, or vague? We might look into alternative formulations such as “wellbeing” or “betterment” although the former could imply health rather than overall benefit. Many people probably associate “prosperity” with consumption. What about more nuanced understandings of personal or collective wealth?

One participant described work carried out in Chile with the rural poor. Conventional economic language, including such ideas as markets and demands, was banned in favour of a framework that used the language of “needs” and “satisfiers”. This has now been used as a framework for development studies to distinguish between real and pseudo satisfiers of needs. Need theory is now a lively research field.

Economics and business

The economy

Knowledge gaps: what might new economics and a new economy be like, how would they work, how would they reward people? The mix of incentives, regulations and markets that make up the current economic “nexus” may contain points of leverage which, if tweaked, could have particular influence.

Alternatives to GDP. We need better and more sophisticated metrics, but we also need them to have more prestige, including parity with, or superiority to, GDP itself. These more subtle, and in time perhaps more respected, metrics should promote the idea that the link between economic growth and human prosperity is an indirect one. Happiness, life expectancy, social connection etc are determinants of lifespan and thus of general wellbeing, while inequality is known to drive consumerist behaviour.

What about using lower work hours as a measure of quality for the economy?

What are the lessons for the rest of the world of Bhutan's experiment with Gross National Happiness?

What is the future role of the superrich? Is taxation the right approach, what role is there for philanthropy, and should there be barriers to wealth accumulation? What exact damage does their global influence create? Might a maximum wage add to human solidarity? Is there a case for locally financed charities to provide a pool for new forms of sustainable prosperity at the community level? Such charities could be reminiscent of their Victorian counterparts but supported by social media and by agreed levies on "non-sustainable" consumption. Is such a model viable in the emerging world of localism?

Work

Knowledge gaps: what is a green job?

Work is a key part of the human self-image, as well as being economically vital. This calls for research on the employment effects of green growth, including working fewer hours and attaching higher economic and social value to unpaid work. Shorter working lives should have a smaller ecological footprint, but we would need more research on their full economic consequences.

The green economy is often said to be a more labour-intensive one. Is this true? And does it mean more manual drudgery, or more enjoyable and creative work?

Business

Knowledge gaps: can we go beyond today's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) regime into a world of new business behaviour?

What incentive systems do we have in place for better business behaviour, and how can they be enhanced? Which parts of the economy are most tractable to pressure for change? At the moment, CSR is a must-have for big business, but there are wide variations in what it actually means. Non-profit bodies might be well-placed to set standards for more ethical business behaviour.

90 big firms have a disproportionate impact on the Earth and its people (in part through their carbon footprint). What might we do to measure and control their reach?

One important issue is the short-termism of financial markets. One possible way of encouraging longer-term thinking could be a regular audit of human, natural, infrastructural and other forms of capital, on a national scale and perhaps also more locally.

We also need research on the investment community. How can it be persuaded to see the value of a steady-state economy rather than a high-growth one? There are future trillion-dollar businesses out there. How can the opportunities be made more visible than the problems?

At the other extreme, how can we increase the risk premium for businesses that behave badly, in terms of a poor environmental record, low pay, or other undesirable outcomes?

Smaller and employee-owned businesses might seem greener and less alienating. Do we know enough about how SMEs work and how they influence society? How should they be regulated to incentivise such principles?

We need to understand more about how businesses of all kinds take decisions, and what sort of stability they need to invest positively. Too much of the debate regards them as part of the problem. How can it be made easier for business to do the right thing? Can shareholders be activated to demand more than just a

return on capital? There is already a large green and ethical investment movement. What can be learnt from it, and how can best practice which it may develop be brought to bear in the sector as a whole? There are also major players, such as the insurance and pensions industries, which have an exceptionally big influence on the economy, society and individuals.

What does a steady-state, no-growth business look like? (The answer may lie in Japan.)

Economics should not just be about tweaking prices. In future it might have a bigger emphasis on local “household” management of organisations for sustainability. Indeed, this approach might have been valuable in the banking industry prior to 2008.

How can we create a more “sustainable household” (in energy, carbon, water, waste, food, diet and exercise) that could be translated into a “sustainable street”

Regulation and transparency

Knowledge gaps: Ways to make regulation improve innovative behaviour rather than stifling it.

Regulation helps make responsible behaviour the norm, so it is an important driver of cultural and business change. In the current political climate, less regulation is regarded as an obvious good. How might this mindset be changed? On the other side of this coin, how can we ensure that changing regulations are not a risk for responsible investment? And can we make the whole system less ponderous and more instinctive?

Transparency is now regarded as an obvious social good. How can this trend be grown and used for sustainability? NESTA is working on tax incentives for transparency.

The green economy

Knowledge gaps: Many, mainly to do with the transition to new forms of economic activity, which is certain to involve many unexpected consequences.

We need to invest in climate change mitigation and adaptation. What is the correct balance between the two, and might it change over time?

How do we go beyond “redistribution,” which sounds confiscatory? Apart from polluters, plutocrats and oligarchs, who are the losers in the new world of sustainable prosperity? There are bound to be some.

Is a more equal society likely to consume more resources? What disciplines are best-placed to research this issue?

Are emerging energy technologies compatible with current markets, or might something more local and social work better for them?

What’s the future of long-distance supply chains in this new world?

The movement to value “ecosystem services” has been a positive one, but can we move beyond attaching a monetary value to nature in the context of Sustainable Prosperity?

The public sector is a substantial player in its own right. How might it adopt and spread greener behaviour in the economy more widely? How can its capacity for positive innovation be developed?

Likewise NGOs and community based organisations – what can we ask of them? What roles can they take on, and who are they answerable to?

Social and technological innovations are needed across the board. How can we make change more acceptable to ensure that positive overall innovations are taken up rapidly? This may require new forms of risk assessment in the context of changing societal values.

Policy and politics

Politics

Knowledge gaps: stability and change in democratic institutions when the world changes.

We tend to assume that democracy and green progress go together. Are things that simple? If this is true, why is progress not faster than it is? How can we grow leadership that can shape the future more decisively? Do we have institutions that mobilise public excitement about a more desirable future?

Do people feel they can rely on current British democratic institutions in times of crisis? In parallel to centralised organisation, might we be able to enhance local social cohesion to expand national resilience in the climate change era?

How can challenges to power become more effective and less intimidating? How can currently competing interests (people, states, businesses and non-profit bodies) become aligned in terms of their long-term aims?

Civil service systems involve frequent job-changing. Might we be able to establish a cadre of people with a career commitment to these issues? How can the civil service learn to reward stability and institutional learning? Does the rest of society have a deeper corporate memory, and how can it be used better?

Do the Treasury and Cabinet Office relative to other department hold too much power and influence?

Has UK devolution encouraged longer timescales for planning?

What can we learn from other nations' approaches? Maybe Germany or Scandinavia – not that they always get it right either? For example, Nordic nations are high-carbon but also high-equity.

What incentives might encourage better long-term thinking? Can we make being 'un-green' a vote-loser for politicians? Should we be asking more of our politicians at this critical point in human history?

Might there be more imaginative ways of making the electoral cycle an ally instead of complaining that it paralyses reform?

Might there be some simple legislation (comparable to the US Clean Air Act or the Montreal Protocol on the regulation of CFCs to protect the ozone layer) that would make a big difference? And are there counter-examples of legislation that looked good but did nothing?

Policy

Knowledge gaps: the correct style and scale for planning, and ways of dealing with things we cannot plan for.

Research questions arise in this area on every scale including individual behaviour; group behaviour; nations, businesses and other large organisations; cities and regions; and globally, because of the need to reduce inequality and grow sustainability on a world scale. However, the ability of the UK central government to drive the changes we now need remains vitally important, in practice and as a research issue.

What about issues (water, for example) that require multiple levels of planning and management?

Can we make it more likely that policy will be based in evidence in this area? We should aspire to positive outcomes such as the ban on smoking in public places, rather than a debate like that on drugs policy, where it is politically impossible for the facts to be used in policy-making. How can we ensure there is the right balance between evidence-based policymaking and democratic accountability?

Population growth estimates vary wildly; even for a defined system such as the UK. What research can help to improve these estimates, especially given the likely increase in climate change refugees, and what other forms of resilience and adaptation are required to cope with these uncertainties? And what might population growth mean for social equity, community cohesion and sustainable consumption?

Planning. Does the UK and its devolved administrations need an overall plan for sustainable prosperity, with an attached plan of action? Or is the regional or local scale more appropriate? In general, what planning system(s) do we need and at what scales?

We think we know the answers. What is the place for personal freedom, pluralism and diversity at this point in history? As one participant put it, how do we all live together in a world that is 4° warmer?

How can we plan for “Black Swan” events that might throw the journey to sustainability off course? Severe change always involves unforeseen and unintended effects that can be as big as the intended ones. How do we plan for them?

06

Conclusion

The event suggested that Sustainable Prosperity continues to be an important area, and that achieving it is likely to warrant new research knowledge in a range of fields, including politics and policy, human behaviour, economics, business, and social organisation. The research requirements of Sustainable Prosperity are likely to be multidisciplinary and global, and will involve findings and recommendations on scales from the worldwide to the local and personal.

In keeping with the mood of this Scoping Workshop meeting, this Synthesis Document does not aim to be directive. It has intended to report what was said and to lead into further debate as well as to inform potential future activities for the British Academy and ESRC. Both parties regard the workshop as the first stage in a productive and longer-term collaboration in this important area.

About the British Academy

The British Academy is the UK's independent national academy representing the humanities and social sciences. For over a century it has supported and celebrated the best in UK and international research and helped connect the expertise of those working in these disciplines with the wider public.

The Academy supports innovative research and outstanding people, influences policy and seeks to raise the level of public understanding of some of the biggest issues of our time, through policy reports, publications and public events.

The Academy represents the UK's research excellence worldwide in a fast changing global environment. It promotes UK research in international arenas, fosters a global approach across UK research, and provides leadership in developing global links and expertise.

About the ESRC

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funds research into the big social and economic questions facing us today. We also develop and train the UK's future social scientists.

Our research informs public policies and helps make businesses, voluntary bodies and other organisations more effective. Most important, it makes a real difference to all our lives.

The ESRC is an independent organisation, established by Royal Charter in 1965, and funded mainly by the Government.

This document is a summary of the views expressed by the speakers and attendees at the event and does not represent the established position of either the ESRC or the British Academy.



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