**Notes of launch event “The Nature of Prosperity” of the Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity (CUSP)  
23 May 2016, Central Hall Westminster, London**

Milena Büchs

**CUSP Launch Event Programme**

14.30 Refreshments and Registration

15.00 Welcome and Introduction

15.10 Prosperity: what can social science contribute – Jane Elliot

15.25 Living well on a finite planet – Tim Jackson

in discussion with Karen Hamilton and Caroline Lucas

16.20 The Nature of Prosperity –

Rowan Williams in conversation with Satish Kumar

17.50 Prosperity in Performance - Streetwise Opera

18.15 Networking and Drinks Receptions

19.00 Close

Event podcast available from: <http://www.cusp.ac.uk/event/nature-of-prosperity/>

**Introduction – Tim Jackson**

CUSP’s Vision of sustainable prosperity “is one in which people everywhere have the capability to flourish as human beings – within the limits of a finite planet”.

CUSP aims to examine the economic, social, cultural and philosophical dimensions related to sustainable prosperity, and to “address the implications for households, firms, civil society and government”.

The CUSP Work Programme is organised along the following themes:

M: Meanings and Moral Framings

A: Art & Culture

P: Politics & Institutions

S: Societal Understandings

S: System Dynamics

**Prosperity – What can social science contribute – Jane Elliot, ESRC**

* Prosperity is not only about material growth. Culture and values are also important. Hartmut Rosa (University of Jena, Germany) stated that belief in progress peaked in the 1960s. We still need to identify suitable alternative narratives.
* Social science disciplines can contribute to thinking about sustainable prosperity through analysis not only at the individual, but also at the collective level.
* The ESRC now provides funding across the NEXUS themes food, water, energy, climate, which are complex, interlinked systems – CUSP fits in with this.
* This is also linked to the British Academy’s theme of “Prospering Wisely”, shaped, amongst others, by Lord Nicholas Stern <http://www.britac.ac.uk/about/prospering_wisely.cfm>

**Living well on a finite planet – Tim Jackson, CUSP Director**

* What motivates CUSP? New visions are needed because existing systems are not functional to solve current global challenges
* Presents CUSP’s vision of sustainable prosperity – related to capabilities and flourishing, not about accumulating more “stuff”, but about having “more fun”, about “richer, better lives”: this needs to be tested against public perceptions of sustainable prosperity. Does it resonate?
* “Before we run out of resources, we run out of planet” – Bill McKibben
* According to Robert Gordon, we may already have reached the peak of growth in industrialised world because productivity growth has been rapidly declining over the last few decades
* Then introduces CUSP work programmes and leads, see above and <http://www.cusp.ac.uk/themes/>

**Tim Jackson in conversation with Caroline Lucas, Green Party, and Karen Hamilton, Unilever**

* Caroline Lucas (CL) is now chairing the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Limits to Growth <http://limits2growth.org.uk/>
* CL’s colleagues advised her against naming the APPG “Limits to Growth”. However, it attracted a lot of interest at its launch event, a sign that there might be more public support for this than anticipated.
* CL: it is likely that more redistributive policies will be needed if we move to an era of new sustainable prosperity
* Karen Hamilton: Unilever has a strong sustainability agenda and is very interested in behaviour change initiatives, still runs those within Unilever

**Rowan Williams in conversation with Satish Kumar**

* To prioritise economic growth is perhaps linked to a deep-seated assumption that everything is up to our will, not accepting potential limits to growth (like not accepting we age and have to die one day)
* Why is money and the accumulation of money so central? RW: It’s because money has a symbolic meaning, it symbolises power. For it to serve wellbeing in an alternative sense its meaning as something that enables circulation, cooperation and sharing would need to become more important
* How can change come about, away from an emphasis on economic growth? RW: Education is very important here – education systems should allow for reflection on alternative economic models and life purposes, not just education to then be able to fit into “the system” and earn money, but for instance, to create wellbeing, sustain life, care, etc.
* Growth has not solved important problems such as poverty, war, etc., and governments focus on their national interest. How can this thinking that is based on divisions in our minds be overcome? RW – we are not addressing the root of the matter: the common, long term human interest. And this takes time and collaboration with institutions and persons who hold this bigger picture, and here it comes back to education – how can we shape the people who hold this bigger picture and are not hypnotised by the short term
* SK: We need all three, head, heart and hands. But in the existing economic system, the intellect is valued much more highly than the other two. RW: Education institutions should offer other forms of experience, e.g. the opportunity to take time out to work with your hands or heart (e.g. care work, charity work). There might be indications that many people would like to recover some of that meaning of working with their hands, e.g. look at the popularity of gardening and cooking programmes on TV
* RW Economic growth should not just be about monetary growth but about improving the economy in its fundamental meaning – the way we live and how we live together, including other species and nature. The current growth model is unsustainable