



THE LEARNED SOCIETY OF WALES
CYMDEITHAS DDYSGEDIG CYMRU

THE NATIONAL ACADEMY – CELEBRATING SCHOLARSHIP AND SERVING THE NATION
YR ACADEMI GENEDLAETHOL – YN DATHLU YSGOLHEICTOD A GWASANAETHU'R GENEDL

The LSW Cambridge Symposium

The Ethics of Sustainable Prosperity for All



President's Welcome

The Learned Society of Wales, Wales' national academy, exists to recognise the talent connected to Wales and to promote research and scholarship. To that end we have convened conferences on key issues. The Cambridge Symposium addressed some of the vital challenges facing governments and society globally. They are interrelated and complex and we have a duty to future generations to deliver sustainable responses. The Symposium proceedings shine a light on important factors which I hope will help policy makers. The Society is grateful to all those who contributed to and took part in the Symposium.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry,
President, Learned Society of Wales



Vice-President's Foreword

The Learned Society of Wales facilitates discussions of the highest order around issues that are of international concern, and to which a Welsh perspective adds value to the debates. The Symposium, which took place at Magdalene College, Cambridge – organised by the Learned Society of Wales with the assistance of the British Academy – aimed to bring together academics, government officials, NGOs and practitioners with an interest in inclusive participatory practices in addressing the problems of international poverty, climate change, health security and prosperity for future generations. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Learned Society or the British Academy, but they reflect the concerns of the participants and those they represent in passionately wishing to raise the profile of impending catastrophes, and offering timely warnings and practical solutions that may be taken up by the whole range of international actors in considering the ethical dimensions and responsibilities of their activities. It is estimated that if everyone in the world were to enjoy the standard of living that the West enjoys that we would need five planet Earths to sustain it. The ideas presented here contribute to different ways of thinking about prosperity, and alternative participatory practices that contribute towards possible ways forward to find solutions to the problems of gross global inequality.

We would like to thank The British Academy; Cardiff University; University of Wales Trinity Saint David; University of Johannesburg; and the University of Sydney for their generous sponsorship, and the Steering Committee, chaired by the Vice-President for Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, for conceiving and implementing their ideas, that constituted the panels which together were unified by the concept of 'The Ethics of Sustainable Prosperity for All'. Janice Gillian, supported by Sarah Morse and Martin Pollard, contributed significantly to the success of the event.

Professor David Boucher FLSW
Vice-President for Arts, Humanities &
Social Sciences, Learned Society of Wales







● Participants at the Symposium, 11-13 September 2018, Magdalene College, Cambridge



● Jane Davidson, one of the architects of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act

Introduction

In the year after the centenary of the end of the First World War, when we have been looking back at the contribution Wales has made to international peace and justice over the last century, it is also timely to look ahead at the role Wales can play in addressing the challenges of global environmental change and growing inequalities that confront our new century.

With the enactment of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Wales now has a new and distinctive platform on which civil society and public institutions in Wales can build to contribute to the United Nations' global agenda of creating a better future for both people and planet. Through our work in

Wales and with partners, we have a real opportunity to inform the understanding and development of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

To explore this opportunity, the Learned Society of Wales convened a three-day invited Symposium at Magdalene College, Cambridge on 11-13 September 2018, bringing together leading thinkers and practitioners from Wales and across the world on the theme of the ethics of sustainable prosperity for all. This paper reflects on these discussions, the nature of the challenges we face, the changes which are needed to address them and the role which Wales might play.

The Challenge of Sustainable Prosperity for All



● Dr Rowan Williams, Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, Dr Helen Taylor, Professor Lawrence Hamilton and Professor David Boucher outlining the ethical issues of sustainable prosperity for all

The world faces very major global and local challenges in achieving the ambition of sustainable prosperity for all. Many of these challenges are bound up in fundamental inequities of power, in gender and race, and in the long and continuing history of colonial and neo-colonial exploitation of people and natural resources.

Our 20th century assumption that this inequity can be addressed simply by extending the global North's systems of consumption and production to more people and across the planet is now leading in the 21st century to increasing disparities in wealth, disruption to ecosystems and the loss of biodiversity processes, alongside growing concerns about breaching planetary biophysical boundaries. This over-production and consumption is driving an environmental crisis which threatens our very

existence and whose immediate impacts are felt most severely by the poor and marginalised.

The period in which we live has recently been dubbed the 'Anthropocene' on the grounds that humankind now has a dominant role in influencing planetary systems of climate and ecology. Yet, we seem collectively and politically unable to take meaningful steps to address the global challenges amid pressures of short-term national politics. The necessary commitment to the wellbeing of others and of future generations can often appear very weak.

Environmentally, human action is causing massive degradation of the world's natural resources that urgently threatens the carrying capacity of the Earth. This includes the major threat of climate change as a result of energy use, deforestation from the reallocation of land use, and industrial and

agricultural emissions; the threat of mass extinction of all forms of biodiversity due to loss of or damage to traditional habitats and ecosystems; wastes that cannot be absorbed by the ecosystem, and excess demands for water. These effects are already being felt by those with least means to cope both within society and across nations.

In terms of **equity**, our economic and social systems are creating huge and, in recent years, growing disparities in wealth and power. 1% of people now have as much wealth as all the rest of the planet's population put together. Access to assets and basic facilities of life remain deeply uneven. If the whole world were to aspire to the consumption of the United States, for example, we would need five planet Earths to sustain it.

Our **political-economic system** is based on a 19th century paradigm of high-energy use supporting consumption- and development-led growth and competition that has now become the worldwide norm, embedded in international institutions and financial regulation. This is driving ever-increasing use of our natural resources for short-term financial profit with little regard to wider and long-term impacts. There is a reluctance to challenge the fundamental issue of the growth model on which our politics is based, with a focus instead on technological or financial instruments.

Populist politics worldwide is raising the threat of the 'other' – the immigrant or the foreigner. This politics is denying the deep-rooted impact of national policies in the global North on the lives and wellbeing opportunities of those in the global South; on the planetary environment, and on international stability. It opposes international collaboration and takes an isolationist stance, asserting that we can hide behind national borders and only engage with others where and in ways which serve immediate and narrow national interest.

Civil society institutions at global, regional and national levels, which could foster debates about causes and impacts of equity and the environment and provide evidence for action, appear fragile. The space for reflection on these global issues is not always available or the discussion is largely kept out of immediate public debate.

The global North and South are far apart. There is a lack of understanding in the North of how the South sees the world and little appreciation of the knowledge the South could bring to these challenges. Too often we continue to behave in the North as if we know best and others should listen – reinforcing a colonial tradition and reducing trust.



● Professor Chris Landsburg, University of Johannesburg, talking of the inequalities between the global North and South

What do we mean by sustainable prosperity for all?

The Symposium began by setting out how we could define sustainable prosperity for all.



● Sustainability Leadership – Jaipur Rugs Foundation www.jaipurrugs.org

Prosperity is used consciously as a term which is not necessarily or directly connected to high levels of material wealth. It is also not specifically tied to the growth model of the economy. Its roots are in the Latin *pro spera* – that to which one aspires. It can be thought of as having the means to self-respect/actualisation – the ability to do and to be – to flourish.

Sustainable prosperity means enabling people to live fulfilling, secure lives, while redressing the problems of planetary health and offering at least as good a prospect for future generations to be able to live as good, if not better, lives.

For all means that there is a just distribution of prosperity in terms of fair access to resources (described as distributive justice), to self-fulfilment (described as contributive justice) and to having voice

in society (described as epistemic justice), which may require historic readjustments (restorative justice).

Together, this presents both an inter- and intra-generational challenge of equity and goes beyond providing the mere means for existence. It aspires instead to providing the ability for societal fulfilment and security.

Why is it important?

In the connected, globalised 21st century, our well-being is increasingly interdependent and interlocking. In this context, prosperity for the few may be seen as prosperity for none.

In pragmatic terms, current growing inequalities are at the root of conflicts and political instabilities worldwide. These have impact on all of us through

crime, war and migration. Environmental crises are also a shared concern because they are threatening the planet's life support system.

Ethically, there is no clear justification for inequitable access to prosperity given our common humanity. It is difficult to rationalise and justify the massive variations in life chances and life expectancy that result from the happenstance of where one is born. There is a need to recognise our common humanity and connect our localism and universalism, seeing the stranger as neighbour, not as threat.



● Professor Ash Amin, Foreign Secretary, British Academy

What do we need to do?

The Symposium discussions proposed that prosperity for all needs to be based in reconnecting people with people and people with nature. Without this, we lose sight of our common humanity and that we are also part of and reliant upon nature. The organisation of modern life has disconnected us from the impacts of our actions, from one another and from the natural environment upon which we depend.

A recurring theme of the Symposium was the need to challenge the current normative language, values and practices that have created the crisis of sustainability. The destruction of the environment cannot be seen as the price of 'progress' and our concepts of growth need to be revisited to create sustainable prosperity. There was a call for new

narratives that prioritise ethical commerce and fulfilling work and lives. There is a need to foster wider ways of understanding the world than the dominant narrow economic lens, embracing the artistic and emotional not just the technical and expert. We also need to rethink the role of business, focusing on public value and positive social contributions. There was a potential for positive corporate action and of reconnecting business with the places and people on which it has impact.

Another recurring aspect of the symposium was the need for effective participative democracy – the involvement required under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This is democracy that engages the marginalised and voiceless, respects their knowledge and experience and gives them agency – a true form of populism. This is not easy to achieve: research into the experience of attempts to foster participative governance internationally revealed the barriers presented by power, resources and institutional and expert behaviours that often undermined its realisation. Participative approaches therefore need to be supported by a strong civic realm that promotes dialogue and space for reflection, together with confident, enabling institutions that can champion engagement. Participation can also draw on the power of the local and of place attachment to mobilise and connect people and issues, drawing on traditions of local activism.



● Professor Mererid Hopwood and Dr Rowan Williams signing the *Book of Peace*

“As planetary issues present the gravest threat to health, there is a clear case for shifting health care from an illness system to one that embraces planetary health as the ultimate determinant of health.”



What are the implications for education and health?



Reflecting on the work of UNESCO, there is a strong case for rethinking the purpose of education, moving away from economic utilitarianism and narrow teaching that is designed simply to equip people for the current economy. Instead we need to equip people to be responsible global citizens, with a focus on solidarity, empathy and the connectedness of issues, engaging with life in all its complexity. This has implications for the current fixation with league tables of exam performance. The Symposium explored the negative impact on students of South Korea's climb in the PISA tables, powerful examples of educational outreach, and Canada's long-term consensus on education which has prevented flip-flopping between economic utilitarian and citizenship models.

On health, the focus of discussion was on planetary health. As planetary issues present the gravest threat to health, there is a clear case for shifting health care from an illness system to one that embraces planetary health as the ultimate determinant of health. This One Health agenda takes health back to its Hippocratic roots of 'first do no harm' – *primum non nocere*. Instead of embracing planetary health, however, we are seeing the increasing political securitisation of health, with a militarisation of response to disease outbreaks that do not address the underlying socio-economic factors and shift resources away from chronic issues into tackling the immediate perceived threat. More women died from lack of perinatal care in Sierra Leone than died as a result of Ebola during the period of the 2014-16 outbreak.

What can Wales bring to this?

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is a unique attempt worldwide to provide a legislative basis for governance for sustainability. In setting out its seven goals and five ways of working the Act asks all the right questions of us... but we now need to work together to find the answers to those questions.

In this early stage of the implementation of the Act, there is a period of opportunity for new thinking. This period needs to be animated, supported and explored by civil society, politics and public servants before it risks lapsing into process and becoming a tick-box exercise.

The Act was founded in The Wales We Want public engagement exercise. Within Wales, the Symposium felt that we now need to revive this dialogue to build clear action and aspirations in the wider public and not leave the task simply to public bodies, and that the exercise might provide an exemplar globally for participatory dialogue and policy formation.

The Act provides an opportunity for experimentation. This means experimentation in places, through supporting community action and through improving well-being planning to connect the different challenges of sustainable prosperity and to find locally relevant solutions. Wales's love of place – bro, cynefin, milltir sgwar, hiraeth – as a country of small communities gives us strong foundation. We can also draw on the resilience of communities in deindustrialised areas of Wales, who sustained traditions of co-operation in health, culture and welfare through periods of economic hardship and political marginalisation. And it means experimenting in subject areas – in reimagining approaches to health, environment, education and the economy.

Through this we can create new stories of mutual prosperity and well-being and seek to give voice to all in society.

Wales's bilingualism offers a window on different understandings of the world. Words like *adnabod* (to know someone – 'acknowledge'), *dysgu* (to teach and to learn), *tangnefedd* (peace between people) and *Cymru* (our shared land) convey different meaning from their English near-equivalents.

With the work undertaken through the Wales for Africa programme and Wales's membership of international groups on sustainability and climate change, Wales has the opportunity to take an ambassadorial role, setting an example internationally of mutual learning, of walking the boundary between the global North and South, and of calling out and shaming examples of 'othering' of people from different places, lands, religions or traditions.

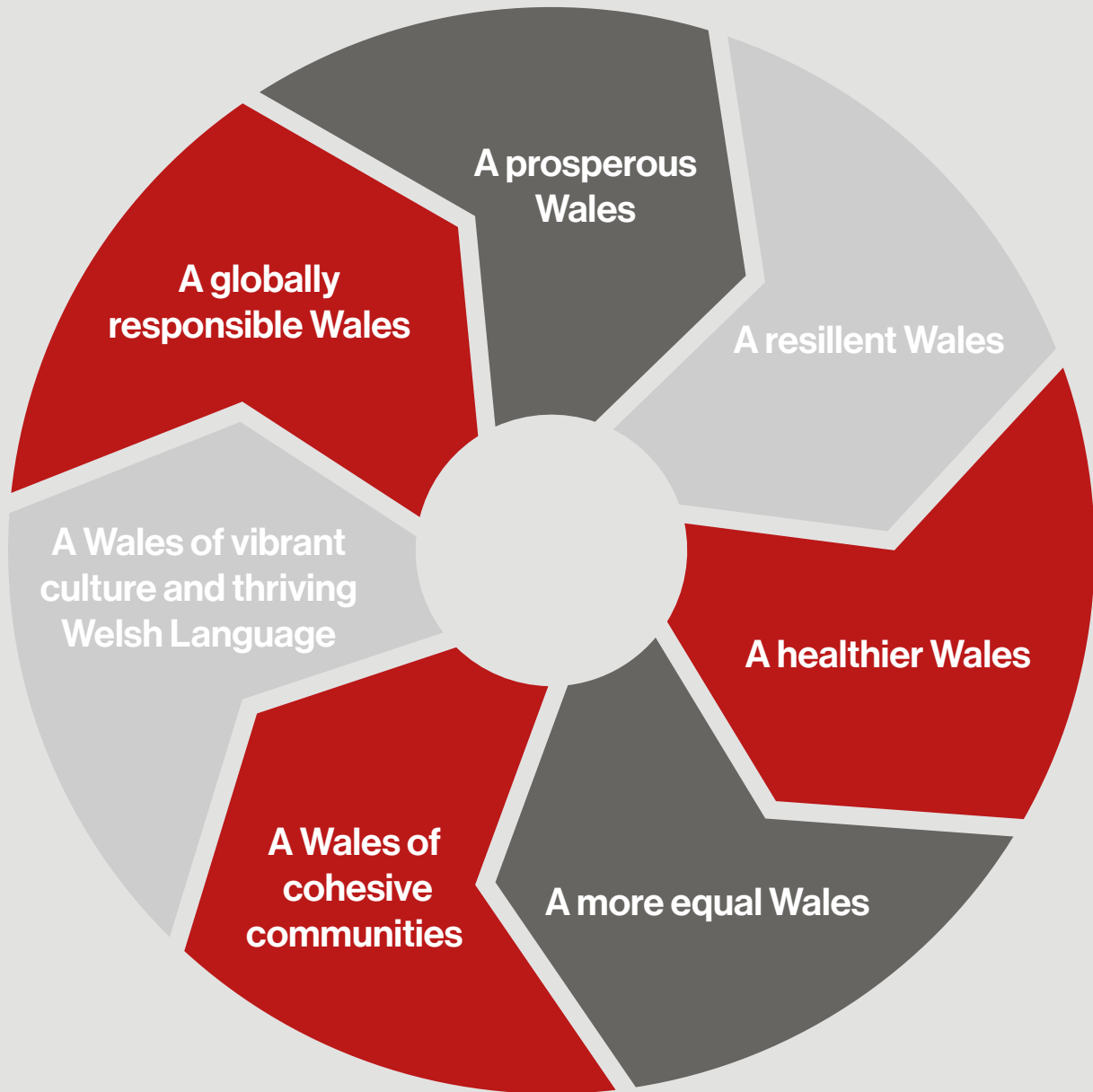
Wales also has businesses engaging positively and creatively with the global agenda. Businesses need to be part of the solution and we can engage with the many in Wales which wish to have ethical purpose and to find new models of trading and forms of profitability.



● Rita Singh from the NGO Size of Wales

Well-being Goals

What we are aiming for



Sustainable Development Principle
How we will deliver



Long Term



Prevention



Integration



Collaboration



Involvement

How can Welsh academia contribute?



● Delegates at the reception, Magdalen College

Sustainable prosperity for all requires new ways of measuring progress. In the spirit of our Well-being legislation, these need to link the different aspects of well-being rather than continuing the separation of economic, social, cultural and environmental goals. This needs thinking on new forms of measurement and evaluation.

Again, in the spirit of the Act, academia needs to move away from its disciplinary silos and pursue interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity, the latter bringing together different academic understandings with those of civil society. This was recognised, for example, by the World Health Organization in 2015 Ebola pandemic where not only medical expertise, but also historical and anthropological knowledge, informed responses to the crisis. We need both fundamental science and

applied knowledge that addresses challenges in the round and engages communities so that we can avoid a distant academia that considers abstract issues through narrow lenses.

We need to engage communities, in Wales and more widely, as partners in framing our research questions and in developing methodologies to address them. Awareness of the difficult history of extraction of knowledge and resources in colonized territories of the global South, and of the role of academics in this process is important. Consent and benefit sharing are key values wherever we work.

Academia can set a powerful example in its own approach to research and research ethics. Research should make a positive contribution to its direct subjects rather than simply extracting information

for publication. It should treat local and indigenous knowledge with respect, co-producing new knowledge with communities rather than imposing an 'expert' viewpoint.

Above all, perhaps, by engaging with and providing platforms for wider civil society dialogues, as demonstrated by the Learned Society of Wales Symposium, academia can contribute to its civic mission and demonstrate its public value. Academia is in a strong position to forge links between the global North and South and across different international worldviews. We need to work to provide the necessary international, national and local platforms for debate and action if we are to achieve sustainable prosperity for all.

The Organising Steering Group: David Boucher (Chair), Barry Morgan, Susan Baker, Marie Brousseau-Navarro, John Morgan, Matthew Quinn, Peter Sutch, John Wyn Owen, John Harrington, Tim O'Riordan.



● Rapporteur: Matthew Quinn



Our stories



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