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## Pathways to understanding the changing climate: time and place in cultural learning about the environment

To what extent are people aware of processes of environmental change over time, and how are such changes observed and reflected upon? Do people draw upon a knowledge of past environments in thinking about future environmental scenarios, including those associated with the changing climate? This project will develop innovative methodologies for engaging with the active perception of the environment in particular localities. Mike Hulme, in 'Why We Disagree About Climate Change', has argued that variations in the perception of climate change arise from different cultural outlooks on our natural and social worlds and different levels of exposure to climate risk. This points us towards the pressing need to find ways of eliciting and recording these cultural outlooks, while also leading us to ask: to what extent do people connect their local environmental knowledge with global processes?

In order to relate environmental transformations to the perceptions of processes such as climate change, it is necessary to have a detailed knowledge of how environmental experiences are shaped and narrated. We will gather and build a database of narratives and images exploring and reflecting upon environmental pasts and futures in East Anglia, a region with a long history of landscape flux and, due to its flat and low-lying nature, a particular vulnerability to processes of climate change. Recognising, in keeping with the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change, that questions of intergenerational equity are central to our capacity to respond to the challenges of the changing environment, an integral part of our research will be the involvement of schools and schoolchildren.

By walking pathways in the Fen landscape and by experiencing places, objects and images children will engage with different narratives and forms of expertise about the environment they are living in (from natural features to spirits and legends of the place). Working with the Greater Fens Museum Partnership, who have extensive experience of community and school outreach, we will organise a series of activity days in which schoolchildren will draw upon the narratives collected for the database, and work with artists, environmental scientists, and museum staff to generate creative responses to their regional environmental history. This will culminate in an exhibition, hosted by the Greater Fens Museum Partnership and curated by the children. These will give a valuable insight into the routes by which children are able to perceive and engage with environmental history, and how this feeds into visions of the future in the context of climate change. Outcomes from the schools projects and the exhibitions will be added to the database.

Climate change is experienced by communities in particular localities, but can only be understood as a global process. For this reason, an important part of our research will be to foster cross-cultural links between schools and grassroots organisations exploring the ways in which different localities can find common ground. Drawing on existing networks in regions where the Division of Social Anthropology has strong working relationships, especially Alaska, Mongolia, and Vietnam (but open to future collaborations elsewhere), we will explore the extent to which methods we are developing in the UK are applicable in these different research contexts and what lessons can be learned. By establishing connections between schools and organisations in the East Anglia with their counterparts elsewhere in the world, we will not only be exploring how communities perceive environmental change in their own locality, but also how they receive and respond to the experience of change elsewhere in the world. In addition to establishing virtual links, we will invite educators and community organisers from these diverse settings to participate in the workshops providing opportunities for interaction and knowledge transfer around issues of environmental change.