

<b>Institution: Middlesex University (UKPRN: 10004351)</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 34 Art &amp; Design</b>
<b>Title of case study: 'Imagining Change': Articulating Tidal Protection</b>
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>

Simon Read is Senior Lecturer in Fine Art and a practising artist specifically engaged in the investigation of interdisciplinary approaches to environmental change, notably estuarine and coastal processes. His research (from which impacts have arisen over two decades) began with a tidal protection installation, explored further through the value of drawing as a tool for imagining change between researchers and coastal communities. This then led to greater involvement with other researchers, public sector bodies and water engineering companies in coastal/estuarine management and mediation, and to further art and design commissions, which together have led to impact on policy and practice via specific engagement with professionals, catchment communities and policymakers.

<b>2. Underpinning research</b>
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This research trajectory began in 1993 with an artist's residency on the Upper Thames supported by the Countryside Commission and Southern Arts, with the National Rivers Authority (now the Environment Agency), sponsored by Allied-Lyons. The research explored in depth how a river system works and how flood management measures are built into it. This was exhibited at Butler's Wharf, and the Design Museum as part of the launch of the Thames Path Public Art Strategy (Read, author), with talks by Read there and at the London Rivers Association. The report and exhibits are held in the Rivers and Rowing Museum archive, Henley.

Starting out with the brief to reflect upon the river and to explore ways of articulating the new Thames Path National Trail, the project came to focus specifically upon how an artist can be a bridge between scientific imperatives and community understanding. This led directly to a commissioned project for the Thames Barrier to coincide with the opening of the Thames Path: 'A Profile of the River Thames from Thames Head to Sea Reach' (1996). It was followed by work on the Poole Quay Flood Defences: 'Memory and the Tideline' (2001).

The research achieved greater reach as projects were developed with coastal scientists from 2002 onward, consistently exploring ways to establish the importance of a cultural dimension in the creation of acceptable coastal and estuarine strategies. This is a methodology that combines the established approach of artists working in local communities with exploratory research that can be taken up by environmental scientists and local government who need to develop public engagement and localism.

A series of research commissions, exhibitions, artistic and community interventions have accumulated over this period through which the research engagement, methods and impact pathways have evolved. This is being further extended through Read's inclusion in two recently funded major research consortia, *Hydrocitizenship* (AHRC *Connected Communities*, with Evans) and *Between the Tides* (NWO-AHRC, Netherlands-UK) in recognition of his expertise and impact on the artist-hydro-community discourse. The following table summarises the evolution of underpinning research over the past 5 years.

<b>Project</b>	<b>Outputs, dissemination</b>	<b>Collaborators/Funders*</b>
<b>Imagining Change</b>	Graphical/Map works: <b><i>Drawn Towards</i></b> , The New Cut Art Centre, Halesworth, Suffolk, March/April 2010 (800 visitors). <b><i>Plots and Plans</i></b> , Hothouse, 'Open House London' (19/9-2/10/10), (500 visitors). <b><i>Immersion, drawing for a purpose</i></b> , 11	Deben Estuary Partnership (DEP)*  Environment Agency (EA)

## Impact case study (REF3b)

	Spitalfields, London, Sept. 2011 (500 visitors).	
<b>Estuarine Strategy for the River Deben</b>	<b>Tidal Protection Barrier, Sutton Saltmarsh</b> , 2009 Site-based work - 90m timber structure: 62 screens mesh/ brushwood, absorbing tidal energy and silt deposits, reducing erosion, fostering saltmarsh vegetation. Supporting artworks widely exhibited/published/presented	DEP*; EA, Suffolk Coasts & Heaths*; River Deben Association*; Natural England; Coastal Studies Unit, Cambridge University; HMPrison Hollesley Bay; National Trust (landowner)
<b>AHRC Researching Environmental Change network</b> <i>Learning to Live with Water</i>	<b>Presentations</b> at Royal Geographical Society (London 2010) and American Assoc. of Geographers (Seattle 2011) conferences; chairman's plenary panel RGS (2011); AAG, New York (2012) <i>Intervention &amp; Embeddedness</i> session. AHRC <b>film</b> 'Imagining Change, Coastal Conversations' featuring Read/case study. Screening of 'Planet under Pressure' conference/panel discussion, Excel Centre, London Docklands, 3/12 (150 visitors).	AHRC*  Living with Environmental Change  Aberystwyth University
<b>Drawing of the Humber Estuary-South Ferriby to Burton upon Stather</b>	<b>Artwork, maps</b> Launch, 'Lincolnshire Landscapes', 16/4/13-University of Nottingham.	EA*  Halcrow  (*in kind)

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Research outputs have appeared in highly respected outlets, as journal articles, artefacts and exhibitions, following assessment by funders and peers. Research grants were competitively won from the AHRC and other funders with robust assessment criteria.

1. 'Standing Wave' (1994) [solo exhibition 10-14.8.2004] at 31 Shad Thames, Butler's Wharf and joint exhibition and launch at the Design Museum of Read's report: 'Thames Path Public Art Strategy' (pp.65). Commissioned by Artpoint Trust, with support of the Countryside Commission, Southern Arts, and sponsor Allied-Lyons plc. The Thames Path was the newest national trail to be created by the Countryside Commission and opened in 1996. On Read's work and contribution, the Countryside Commission wrote: 'the results were fantastic and generate(d) enormous enthusiasm for the River and the Project' (10.8.94).
2. 'Weirs Waves and Scour' (1994) [journal article] *POINT: Art & Design Journal*, 2, CHEAD. <http://www.point.ac.uk/abstracts/issue02.htm>. Commissioned by editor, Prof. Colin Painter
3. 'A Profile of the River Thames from Thames Head to Sea Reach' (1996) [artefact]. Permanent art work cut into the wall of Gallery Walkway beside the Thames Flood Barrier, commissioned by the Countryside Commission – a direct outcome of the Upper Thames residency. Project managed by Artpoint Trust with funding from Allied Domecq plc.
4. 'Beauty and the Bureaucrat' (pp.6-13) and 'Crumbling Assets' (pp.46-54) [articles in book publication]. Read, S., Coutts, N (eds) (2008) *Plot*. London: Confluens Fine Art Research Publications. 2,000 printed 1,900 sold/distributed.
5. 'Tidal Protection Barrier' (2009) [artefact], Sutton Saltmarsh, River Deben. (see REF2)
6. Jones, O., Read, S., Wylie, J. (2013) 'Unsettled & Unsettling Landscapes: Exchanges by Jones, Read & Wylie About Living with Rivers and Flooding, Watery Landscapes in an Era of Climate Change' [refereed article] *Journal of Arts & Communities*, 4(1-2). pp.76-100. *Waterscapes* theme issue edited by Prof Lindsay McEwen, director of the Centre for Floods, Communities and Resilience, UWE Bristol.

### Grants and awards

Southern/London Arts Boards (1993) £3,500; Allied-Lyons plc (1994) £2,500; Thames Path (1996) £15,000; Pool Quay (2001) £10,000; AHRC (2012) *Landscape & Environment* Programme £5,000 commission to produce a specific illustrative artwork towards Humber Shoreline

**4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

As a project in environmental arts research, this work has engagement with civil society and public discourse at its heart. These are the intended consequences of research of this nature, and fit with one of our broad aims to facilitate public engagement as a natural part of the work of our artist-researchers: 'Read's artistic representation of complex scientific issues and natural processes is already proving invaluable in alerting the wider public to the many changes occurring in the coastline' (GreenSpace Taskforce Commissioner). Here, public engagement starts at a local level and broadens to include professional bodies and policy-makers. Research practice has included the construction and intervention in the landscape, as well as the exploration of methods of community engagement with coastal management and flood defence projects undertaken by researchers and government agencies: 'Read brings another dimension to estuarine management...his contribution is unique...he helps scientists and other constituencies visualize the processes that effect the river' (Senior Coastal Officer, Suffolk CC). *Imagining Change* has been effective at stakeholder community level. Through a studio and an academic context, Read developed further use of drawing and mapping as a tool at the interface between coastal science and public understanding, that 'engage(s) the public and partners in a way that regular 'corporate' diagrams cannot...as an expression of the technical hydrodynamic issues that I understand in my work' (Senior Coastal Advisor, Environment Agency).

The approach to impact started from the premise that since our understanding of landscape and its value is essentially cultural (as a 'fourth pillar of sustainable development'), any attempt to drive management strategies purely on a technological basis risks generating acrimony at community consultation level: 'Read's Arts-based approach goes to the heart of the values we hold for the environment' (Chairman, CIWEM). Government agencies and their consultants are often poorly equipped to handle this engagement. The Tidal Protection Barrier was one such construction project that has provoked a shift in policy and practice towards the management of habitat by the Environment Agency (EA) and Natural England through the use of community partnerships with Read 'engaging communities in a far more fruitful way, generating practical outcomes that may prove more sustainable in every sense' (CIWEM). Although this project was locally funded, subsequent projects at Sutton Hoo Salt Marsh and Fakenham are now attracting national and regional funding from the EA, Suffolk County Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund (*Touching the Tide* £800,000). This is evidence of an agreement by national agencies to incorporate alternative approaches to intertidal habitat management: 'the EA put aside their previous practice of producing an Estuarine Strategy and undertook to work with Read and the DEP...a new and rewarding dimension was offered...his interpretation highlighted the fundamental issues and gave a different perspective which broadened the debate' (Chair, Deben Estuary Partnership - DEP).

Through the effort made by communities to become better organised, agencies now realise that they can no longer act in a paternalistic manner: 'Read has definitely impacted the ways in which estuarine management is conducted...without him the process could not have happened in the same way' (Suffolk, CC.). Consequently this project was more than a single community initiative – it represents a shift in the relationship between government agencies and the public: 'Read's work supports a difficult dialogue...about how things may need to change...he does it all with a humility and grace that I think we can all learn from' (EA).

As a consequence, through the DEP (a syndication of government and community interests), a further, more ambitious project commenced in 2011 to restore a substantial saltmarsh area severely depleted over the past twenty years. This is being carried out in collaboration with the National Trust and with funding from Suffolk County Council and EA. Here, Read's role has been to initiate a speculative approach to the estuary environment where this would not be deemed financially justifiable if carried out at an institutional level. The artist therefore works as creative consultant and in the first case, project manager in professional partnership with the EA and the local Council, as well as public advocate on behalf of local stakeholders (farming and rural communities): 'Read has made a significant contribution to the direction of our work and the vitality and forward-looking approach of the Partnership' (Chair, DEP).

**Environment template (REF5)**

Read's commission by the AHRC to produce a specific artwork in response to the Humber Shoreline Management Plan as part of an Impact Fellowship with Professor Pearson (Aberystwyth) (both of whom feature in the AHRC-commissioned film *Imagining Change: Coastal Conversations* – cost £25k) involved him working closely with the EA and water contractor Halcrow to source the appropriate data and to clarify technical site details. The impact has thus widened to include engineering professionals. Read was also invited to contribute to a 5 day EPSRC sandpit *Innovative Solutions to Flood Risk*, 2012. Produced with the purpose of gaining an insight into the dynamic of the natural systems at work at Alkborough, North Lincolnshire, the map explores the conditions that drove the decision to realign the 440ha. site as part of the Shoreline Management Plan. One of the largest flood storage schemes in Europe, Alkborough Flats is now managed to encourage biodiversity and the development of a variety of different habitats. The artwork is on permanent display en route to the Map Library in Nottingham University.

In summary, this research trajectory, with the artist-researcher also adopting many action research roles as project manager, designer-builder, community mediator, has led to sustained, ongoing and expanding impacts in the way policy-makers in the coastal/estuarine management and ecological systems perceive and deliver communication, consultation and responses (i.e. 'defend or retreat'): 'the combination of knowledge and creative thinking that Read brings to each project is attracting attention and winning local support - with more landowners interested in restoration and willing to put money into future work' (Chair, DEP). The most significant impact has been the acknowledgement and recognition given to the catalytic role and creativity of the artist in visualising complexity, conflict and scenarios, for a wide range of communities of interest. To quote CIWEM (12,000 members): 'The arts perspective can help environmentalists do their job better by fostering enabling conditions...artists have a better language' (CIWEM Chairman in *Activating the Gap*, Art & Design/Flood Hazard Research Centre Symposium (Read co-convenor), Middlesex University 24-26/6/13). (See corroborators for quotations.)

<b>5. Sources to corroborate the impact</b> (indicative maximum of 10 references)
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1. **Chartered Institute for Water and Environmental Management**, *Arts and Environment Network: Case studies and experiences of using the arts to address environmental issues in the UK and overseas*. <http://www.ciwem.org/knowledge-networks/networks/arts--the-environment/collaborative-examples.aspx> [Accessed 14/11/13].
2. Simon Read case study - **Sutton Saltmarsh Defence**, a low impact erosion control solution [www.ciwem.org/media/406870/ArtEnv\\_Sutton\\_Saltmarsh\\_Defence.pdf](http://www.ciwem.org/media/406870/ArtEnv_Sutton_Saltmarsh_Defence.pdf)
3. **Arts & Humanities Research Council** *Imagining Change: Coastal Conversations*, film commissioned under the Landscape and Environment programme <http://vimeo.com/39651591>; and 'Imagining coastal change: reflections on making a film', *Cultural Geographies in Practice* (2013) <http://cgj.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/09/30/1474474013503620.full.pdf> [Accessed 14/11/13].
4. **Suffolk Estuarine Strategies – Deben Estuary Mouth Workshop**: 4 October 2011 <http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/assets/Projects--Partnerships/DEP/Deben-Estuary-Plan/Estuary-Mouth-Workshop-Report-Final1.pdf> [Accessed 14/11/13] *Read featured in the report as one of the workshop contributors and participants. He presented and contributed to the overall process.*
5. **Deben Estuary Partnership**, Spring Newsletter 2011, "Sutton Hoo Saltmarsh Restoration Trial": [http://www.riverdeben.org/?page\\_id=103](http://www.riverdeben.org/?page_id=103); <http://www.riverdeben.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/sutton-flyer-sml1.pdf> [Accessed 14/11/13].
6. **Activating the Gap** proceedings of joint Middlesex Art & Design and Flood Hazard Centre academic, policy and practice symposium (convened by S. Read with Prof Sue Tapsell (Flood Hazard Centre) and Prof Chris Wainwright, University of the Arts London: <http://adri.mdx.ac.uk/contentcurator.net/activating-ws> [Accessed 14/11/13].