

CORE - Creative Research into the Environment

Context

The Scottish based **CORE** project is seeking to extend knowledge on the basis of collaborative work concerned with environmental change and with the value of a creative presence to provide representations with a cross disciplinary concern. Visual art, literature, landscape architecture, architecture and anthropology have the capacity to provide significant insight into the dynamic nature of environments, making tangible and physical those aspects that are beyond perceptible grasp. The project network will bring together practitioners from these disciplines to work with science and scientists in articulating, tracing and exploring methods of expressing and communicating environmental change.

The Kyoto Protocol established that the problems of environmental change, in particular large-scale eco catastrophes such as climate change, stem from anthropogenic activity, often at accumulative local levels. This shows that global monitoring must also have its counterpoint in projects that allow us to see the human dimension. The recent COP10 event in Nagoya, Japan, had within its main agenda the issue of standardising monitoring systems and in particular the formal language of scientists exploring indicators of biodiversity. This stems from the necessity to create globally interlinked monitoring systems to enable clearer international indicators. While scientists provide indicators as measures of environmental performance, artists and other creative practitioners can compliment this data with their own perspectives, particularly in relation to the representation of measures and measuring. Along with anthropologists, creative practitioners can further this understanding by interpreting connections with social and environmental spheres.

Our network will evaluate the environment as a relational setting. Starting from an eco-centric position, the CORE project aims to explore the relationship between environment, society and the individual; appreciating the whole in order to understand and represent the particular. This is where creative practitioners can bring valuable intelligence to the work of scientists by providing perspective through presenting creative intersections.

Objectives

During discussions for this proposal, CORE investigators identified an evolving network of field-based researchers across the disciplinary areas of visual art and literature, science, anthropology, architecture and landscape architecture. These individuals are able to provide valuable insight into issues of representational methods through comparative ideas and reflective thinking.

Based at Edinburgh College of Art (eca), CORE [Creative Research into the Environment] has emerged from the common research interests of the Investigators Elizabeth Ogilvie, Anne Bevan and Ross McLean. It is the result of existing individual connections between partners and participants being involved in a variety of projects and exhibitions. Common ground has been

identified within the area of creative practice and environmental change, and specifically the role played by artists and creative practitioners in relation to scientific research and methodologies.

The network aims to promote awareness of climate change and therefore cultural change, inspiring the public to examine their relationship with the environment, with art as a central means of communication. Artists' work will support public understanding of natural processes, their role in tackling issues and influencing future ways of living.

Funding will allow us to consolidate and expand a network of institutions and individuals already working with projects that see the value of collaborative research and practice. At present this network forms a dispersed disciplinary endeavour that will benefit from a process of activity related to cross-disciplinary thinking, with the ultimate aim to form a sustained structure of collaborative opportunity through a new research centre.

The dynamic of this new centre will be initiated by the CORE investigators, with input from partners, and will form an inclusive basis that seeks to connect a broad range of collaborators within future projects. The collective concern relates to promoting the role of creative thinking, in particular visual and textual representation, as a means to explore, convey and present environmental issues.

We have identified particular strategic aims, which through network activities, will inform the structure of this new centre, set out as three interrelated aspects:

- An eco-philosophy - to provide a theoretical framework to our creative actions and how these relate to broader socio-cultural imperatives
- An agenda - to establish how this framing is put into practice within collaborative environmental projects.
- An online web resource centre - to collect, synthesise, and convey work and ideas that emerge through the network.

The web centre will act as a database of ideas and precedents on collaborative work, while providing a means of online communication that can facilitate involvement of international partners. The web centre will also be a resource for broader use, through a public access domain and abstracted in other formats for exhibition for target events. To achieve these aims we intend to invite discourse in two ways: 1) through a series of fora with a group of the Scottish and UK-based participants 2) to invite input from a broad range of international participants facilitated by the proposed web centre.

The value of network funding, relative to our objectives, can be summarised as:

- 1) The network funding will allow us to evolve and apply a web based system of communication, which in turn underpins and supports face-to-face fora and events, in order to facilitate discourse and create a database of precedents

that can be shared amongst our partners, and disseminated to the public as a resource on creative approaches to environmental change.

2) The network project will seek to explicate the nature of visual and textual representation and its value in engaging environmental projects by bringing together some of the most important investigators in the environmental change debate to synthesize their thinking with practitioners from the creative field bringing vision, original thinking and an inventive nature to enhance our understanding of how environmental change can be represented.

3) While our scientific network partners have significant project funds it is important for creative practitioners to bring funding to these collaborative ventures and promote an insightful perspective to reinforce our positive contribution.

4) A significant aspect of consolidating this network of localised Scottish based partners will be to facilitate movement of home-based and international practitioners to provide a reciprocal structure and means of discourse to our networks in the Arctic and Northern Europe, Japan, Australia and the US. This will be a process to promote the Scottish centre as a node of expertise, capable of working through networks on an international level.

Output and Dissemination

The aim is to ensure that CORE research will benefit users in Scotland, the UK and internationally during the initial two years and throughout the ensuing group activity. This project concerns the future and therefore requires a long-term research capability, enabling network concepts and interdisciplinary thinking to develop and intensify over years, creating significant impact on Scottish and international environmental research.

While the principal partners are Scottish based, the strongly international outlook of the research reflects a range of beneficiaries in academia profiting from knowledge transfer, linking concepts in the UK, Europe, Japan, US and Australia. Students will be involved at each stage through research/workshops/fora and exchanges, thus disseminating the project and its central ideas across student groups and disciplines.

As CORE's audience spans the international worlds of architecture, arts, science and anthropology, exposure will be extensive. During ongoing activity, online resources and publicity are crucial to the public interface, to ensure that a range of groups benefit from CORE's research:

- Ongoing staff/student exchange between ECA, partners, network. International host institutions provide infrastructure and communications
- Web centre acts as a database, providing an international hub,
- Charting CORE's progress, functioning as a resource for wider use through public access domain
- Video documentation and selected fora, interviews for web centre.

- Skype meetings and events
- Press/international writers' involvement/coverage
- Publishing: forum contribution, keynote lecture, invited papers, creative writing, video conference and publication
- Link with education authorities and school link (GLOW) to landmark events
- Documentary traveling exhibition plus accompanying publication, generated by CORE network and host institutions.

Communications/Engagement

The activity of the network will form a vital link in moving forward an agenda for the research centre. The structure of meetings and fora will be organised around key events, COP 10 and the Symposium of Antarctic Sciences, Edinburgh, 2011; this will focus activity encompassing distinct themes and will encourage targeted outcomes aimed at an international audience.

Meetings and seminars will take place in Scottish partner institutions – the Universities of Aberdeen, St Andrews, Edinburgh, ECA and the Pier Arts Centre, Stromness - which will be involved in circulating and disseminating information through respective institutions.

CORE network will work in conjunction with intermediary organisations to maximise local and international dimension of activities. During October 2010, ESALA¹ ran a European Masters in Landscape Architecture student workshop in Orkney. The network worked closely with the Pier Arts Centre to organise a seminar coinciding with this international event, thus sharing resources.

Other intermediary organisations in the network include the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh and Nozomi.² Connections in Japan include the University of Yamaguchi and Centre for Contemporary Art Osaka, Contemporary Art Space, Osaka, Aichi University of Fine Art/Music and Yamaguchi Centre for Art/Media.

The wider international network will be involved initially through the web centre, video conferencing and field studies related to existing projects, for example, in Ilulissat, Northern Greenland, as part of PI Elizabeth Ogilvie's Polar Project.³

Public outputs will take the form of web centre, documentary video, media coverage, documentation displays in public buildings and museums and final publication. This publication will chart the process, cross disciplinary thinking and research questions that have come to light during the network's first year

¹ ESALA – Edinburgh School of Architecture & Landscape Architecture:
<http://www.esala.ac.uk>

² NOZOMI – research group at eca involving interdisciplinary practice between Scotland/Japan: <http://www.nozomi.org.uk>

³ Polar Project: <http://www.elizabethogilvie.com>

and will be published by TOTeM,⁴ a funded research project led by fellow eca researcher Dr Chris Speed.⁵

For the culmination of the first year of network activities, CORE has been invited to participate in the International Symposium of Antarctic Sciences, to be held at Dynamic Earth, July 2011. This international event has been initiated by our partners in Geosciences at University of Edinburgh and will provide the opportunity to present the creative and research findings of the CORE project to a wider scientific and public community.

Exploitation/Application

The web centre, publications, exhibitions and conference papers will ensure that research is widely distributed in the public domain. As the long-term aim is to create a major funded research centre, this would further serve to uphold and advance the outputs of the network's research.

Project Management

The Investigators will work in consultation with an advisory group (from Edinburgh College of Art) and Partners, to ensure that CORE outputs represent the most effective visual and creative impact. Specialist help for print material and the web centre will be supported by creative practitioners at eca, in particular the TOTem research project.

The individuals within the Partnership and network have considerable experience and ability to ensure extensive access to their research outputs and significant media exposure. CORE's principal investigators and host institution advisors will form a well-conceived strategy to ensure that the collaborations, interdisciplinary projects and ensuing outcomes have maximum public benefit.

Jane Warrilow, Edinburgh based editor and curator will act as CORE's coordinator, editor and curator. She has already functioned in this capacity on several successful research projects emanating from ECA.

Detailed plan for the progress of the project over two years

Year 1

- Initial meetings Investigators, advisors from ECA and partners in Scottish institutions
- Web designer meetings/Start designing web centre/Part time film maker to document events/Ongoing web centre updates
- Skype meetings with network members/arrange events
- Coordinator/Investigators arrange workshop dates for Year 1 to be hosted in the partner institutions/Parallel student workshops
- Link with education authorities/meetings

⁵ TOTem Tales of things & electronic memory – project funded through EPSRC 'to explore social memory in emerging culture of the Internet of Things'. PI is Chris Speed, eca: <http://fields.eca.ac.uk/totem/>

- Seminar for investigators, partners and several CORE network members, students, Pier Art Centre Orkney, October 2010
- Public outputs during the network activity will take the form of the web centre, documentary video, media coverage, documentation displays in public buildings and art museums.
- The CORE publication will chart the process, cross disciplinary thinking and research questions which have come to light during the network's first year and will be published by TOTeM, eca.
- Coordinator/Investigators organise creative outputs/invited paper as part of The International Symposium of Antarctic Sciences, Dynamic Earth, July 2011

Year 2

- Forum marking start of Year 2 to be hosted by Edinburgh College of Art with invited speakers
- Further meetings/discussion with advisors
- Continue to update web centre
- Continuation of workshops, meetings in Scottish Universities /parallel student activity
- Further linking with schools/ workshops. Links with events [GLOW]
- Skype meetings with international network members
- Creative outputs to be exhibited in network centres
- A CORE publication at the end of year 2 will contain creative texts by the authors and poets, keynote lecture, invited paper and will be published jointly by the network institutions

Documentary exhibition to accompany the publication will travel between the various countries generated by the network and its host institutions

Long-term objectives

The CORE project very much concerns the future thus requiring a long-term research strategy. The aim is to establish CORE, a major new internationally relevant Research Centre, enabling network concepts and interdisciplinary thinking to develop and intensify over years, creating significant impact on the international research community well into the future.

In the longer term, world-class exploration, fieldwork and cross-disciplinary collaborations will lead to creative outputs and publications based in major art centres and museums. Outputs from research by CORE's creative practitioners have the ability to engage the public through informing, influencing their thinking, affecting them. Successful outputs will demonstrate that serious political and environmental issues can be communicated through art. This will encourage other artists, scientists, and environmentalists to enter into similar dialogues.

The UK government's environmental strategy is/will be based on research conducted by CORE scientists. Over time, prominent geoscientist partners will affect international policies based on funded benchmark research goals in Antarctica. Research by network institutions in Australia, on Heat, and in

Japan, on Biodiversity Loss, will also have impacts. Outcomes will provide policy-makers with valuable data to tackle issues in the long-term.

As CORE's audience spans the international worlds of architecture, arts, science and anthropology, exposure will be extensive, more so in the future as a result of the CORE centre's collaboration, ideas bank and motivating force. Venues and museums acting as locations for fora will host exhibitions in future by CORE artists whose international profile and the profound nature of the work will have the ability to attract large numbers of public. It is anticipated that textual work published by CORE in the future will reach further audiences.

While the principal network members are established leading practitioners, it is also CORE's aim to involve cutting-edge top young Scottish professionals in future activities.

For the development of the network the aim is to seek major funding to support the interdisciplinary research centre, CORE, to be based at Edinburgh College of Art with partners in University of Edinburgh, University of Aberdeen and the University of St Andrews. Other potential partners would be approached to expand the network, both in Scotland, the UK and internationally. Support for this would be applied for through the AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council), the Gulbenkian Foundation, the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland and further network funders.

INVESTIGATORS

- Elizabeth Ogilvie, Visual Artist, Hon. Senior Research Fellow, Lecturer School of Landscape Architecture, Edinburgh College of Art, PI.
- Anne Bevan, Visual Artist, Lecturer, School of Sculpture, Edinburgh College of Art,
- Ross McLean, Landscape Architect, Lecturer, Edinburgh College of Art.

PARTNERS

- Professor Martin Siegert, Head of School, Geosciences / Dr Neil Ross, University of Edinburgh.
- Professor Tim Ingold, Head of Department, Anthropology / Dr Jo Vergunst, University of Aberdeen.
- Professor Douglas Dunn OBE, FRSL, FRSE, Poet, author /Professor John Burnside, poet/author, Lecturer, School of English, University of St Andrews.

NETWORK PARTICIPANTS

- Professor Alan Johnston, Visual Artist, Writer, Research Professor, Edinburgh College of Art.
- Eelco Hoftman, Landscape Architect, Visiting Lecturer, Harvard University, US.
- Professor Hugh Raffles, Anthropologist, Author, New College, New York, US
- Dr Ute Skiba, Scientist, Centre for Ecology, Hydrology, NERC, Bush, University of Edinburgh.
- Dr Wendy Gunn, Anthropologist, Associate Professor, University of Southern Denmark.
- Professor Masayuki Yasuhara, Sound Artist, Musicologist, Lecturer, Aichi Prefectural University, Nagoya, Japan.

- Dr Laura Watts, Senior Research Associate, Anthropologist, Poet, University of Lancaster.
- Professor Kenneth White, Poet, held the Chair of XXth century Poetics at the Sorbonne from 1983 to 1996. Founded the International Institute of Geopoetics.
- Professor Tumi Magnusson, Visual Artist, Lecturer, Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen.
- Professor Karin Sander, Visual Artist, Lecturer, Architecture, Die Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich [ETH], Switzerland.
- Professor Dan Peterman, Visual Artist, University of Chicago, US.
- Assoc. Professor Linda Williams, Visual Artist, Lecturer, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia.
- Professor Richard Dunn, Visual Artist, Author, UNSW, Sydney, Australia.
- Professor Isao Suiz, Aichi Prefectural University, Nagoya, Japan.
- Suna Christensen, Anthropologist, University of Roskilde, Denmark.
- Jane Warrilow, Curator, Coordinator, Edinburgh.
- Annie Cattrell, Artist & Senior Research Fellow, de Montfort University, Leicester.
- Dr Kate Darling, Senior Lecturer, School of GeoSciences, University of Edinburgh.

CORE NETWORK GROUP

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<http://www.geos.ed.ac.uk/homes/msiegert>

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/~wap001/staff/details.php?id=tim.ingold>

www.st-andrews.ac.uk/english/people

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