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### 'How Steep is Now' at ASCUS Exhibition

**Citation for published version:**

Adamson, L, Todd, G & Huxham, PM, 'How Steep is Now' at ASCUS Exhibition, 2012, Digital or Visual Products, Polarcap, Edinburgh.

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Early version, also known as pre-print

**Publisher Rights Statement:**

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# HOW STEEP IS NOW?



## **REF 2014**

This project is cross- disciplinary, originated by Liz Adamson, Graeme Todd, UoE and marine biologist Dr Mark Huxham, Napier University. It bridges the communication gap between science and the understanding of the general public concerning the subject of climate change. It uses local data from different communities across the world, gathered in the form of video interviews to build up a more global perspective that informs even the most sceptical viewer. The importance of this project lies in its inclusiveness and its mission to involve as many people across race, gender and social class, giving equal weight to all. The result is a work that is engaging, informative and effective.



In Spring 2010 Liz Adamson and Graeme Todd (Polarcap) invited artists, scientists, writers and environmentalists to participate in a 2 day art/eco lab as part of their Steep Trail project.

Over this period there emerged a concern from the scientists about the lack of effective communication and a dissatisfaction in the way scientific findings fail to reach and motivate the public.

Subsequently Polarcap addressed this problem in discussion with Dr Mark Huxham; the research possibilities were tangible to create new and meaningful methodologies that were mutually beneficial to the visual arts, science and the general public. The project How Steep is Now? started in the summer of 2010.

This project proposal won the ASCUS Art Science Collaborative award for visual art and science collaborations.



## REF 2014 How Steep is Now

The project primarily focused on tying together perspectives on climate change from two very different communities, one in Scotland and one in Kenya.

Liz Adamson, asked a cross section of the local community of Dunbar to participate, which led to a range of ages, occupations and gender being selected. She conducted the interviews and filming.

As a marine biologist Dr Huxham's fieldwork focuses on what controls the structure and functioning of marine ecosystems, including how carbon is cycled. He is looking at ways of using carbon credits to fund community-based restoration and conservation of the mangrove forests in Gazi Village, Kenya.

Dr James Kairo, Principal Research Officer, Kenya Marine and Fisheries asked for volunteers amongst the community of Gazi Village, who would be happy to talk about their environment. The words 'climate change' are new to Kenyans and until recently there was no direct Kiswahili translation. The project was filmed by Salim Kisasi. Chief coach of Gazi Youth football team and Caroline Wanjiru Project Secretary, East African Forum for Payment for Ecosystem Services asked the questions.



ascus  
art science collaborative

## human REF 2014 How Steep is Now?

The format that we used for the interviews was as straightforward as possible; one interviewer, one interviewee, one camera, one microphone, six questions and no editing. The questions were carefully formulated so as not to be leading or difficult to interpret and needed no special prior knowledge on the climate change debate: the more straightforward and simple the better.

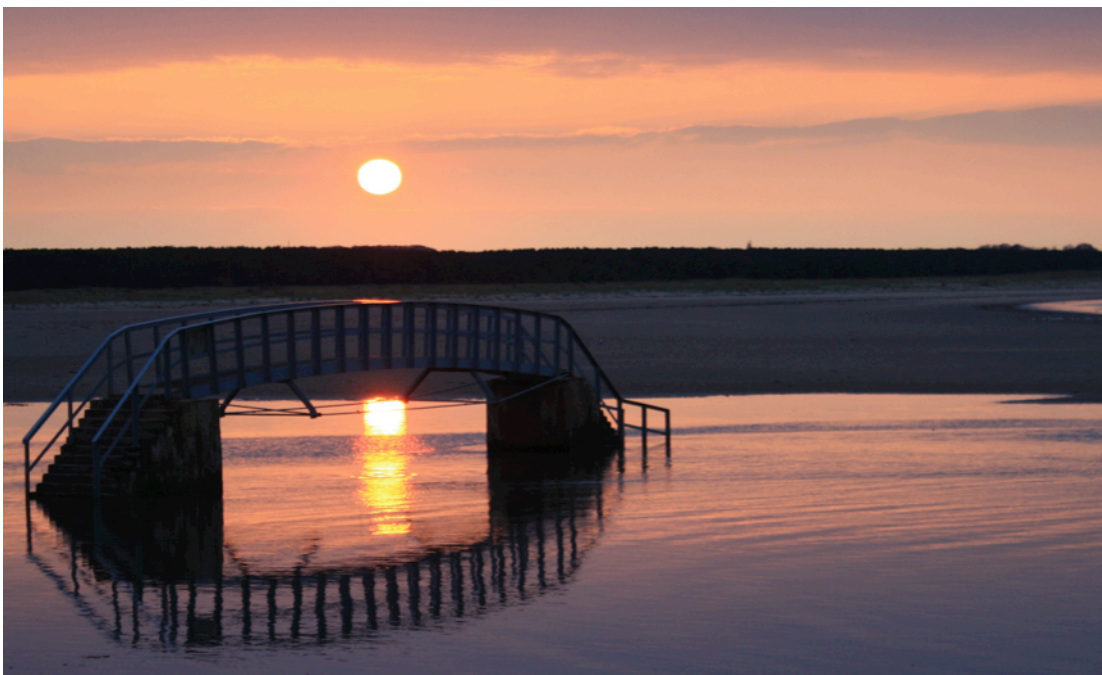
This was used so that the interviews would represent an 'open mic' for the interviewee to air their views on issues related to climate change and that the human presence of the interviewer would encourage the interviewee to give a straightforward and unmitigated answer.

The interviewee was asked to voice the questions so in the resulting film the interviewer would not be present.

The material results in a cross global question and answer dialogue where the participants both ask questions and provide answers to issues raised concerning climate change and how they personally respond to an ever changing environment of which they are an intrinsic and active part.

As academics, artists and curators Polarcap have developed a wide network of contacts particularly in Asia and Europe. This was a key element for the future potential to develop this project globally.

Climate change will mean different things in different parts of the world and we had the means at hand to represent opinion that ranged from the Northern European temperate zone to equatorial Africa with all the attendant social and economic factors that come with such distances.



Belhaven Bay, Dunbar

- How do you think the natural environment where you live will change over the next 20 years?
- How has the natural environment where you live changed during your lifetime?
- What do you understand by the term 'climate change'?
- Do you think climate change will bring any benefits to you or to local people
- What do you think are the main threats posed by climate change to your local environment and to local people?
- What would you tell the leaders of the world to do about climate change?





How do you think the natural environment where you live will change over the next 20 years?



*'Butterflies aren't laying any eggs under the leaves in my garden. Various micro species will diminish and people might not even notice'*

*'Over population will be a problem.'*



What do you think are the main threats posed by climate change to your local environment and to local people?

*'My worry is that we will do what we always do, and that is nothing'*

*'The main problem is a lack of awareness'*



Dec 2011 Dr Mark Huxham secures funding for Gazi Mangrove Project. He uses 'How Steep is Now?' in his presentation to Earthwatch at 30 St Mary Axe (The Gherkin)

"Working with artists has enabled me to find new ways to conceptualize and communicate the very abstract ideas of climate change" Dr Huxham



'How Steep is Now?' at Gallerie Weissraum, Kyoto 2011. The questions were produced in Japanese and visitors were able to respond via questionnaires.

Liz Adamson exhibited her black mirrors in conjunction with the How Steep is Now video. Black mirrors traditionally were known as scrying mirrors to divine the future.



Shown as part of her professional lecture at Kyoto Prefecture International Centre as part of the Edinburgh Exchange Programme 2011



This project (1 hour film) has been shown at Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation consortium (right) and also as part of Dr Huxham's Professorial Lecture at Edinburgh Napier University in February 2012. It is being used on ESPA website and Napier's own [www.eafpes.com](http://www.eafpes.com)



**HOW STEEP IS NOW?**  
Perspectives on Climate Change



ASCUS grant winners Liz Adamson, Graeme Todd (Polarcap/Edinburgh College of Art) and Mark Huxham (Health, Life and Social Sciences Edinburgh Napier University) will be introducing their recent work on climate change.

Join us  
**When: Thursday 09 February 2012**  
**Where: ASCUS Project Space @ The St. James Centre, Suite 34 & 35**  
**Time: 6pm - 7.30pm**

For updates on future events, talks and screenings related to the exhibition in the St. James Centre, please join our Facebook Group or follow us on Twitter @\_ascus.



ASCUS Project Space at St James Centre, 20th January-26th February.  
Outwith the standard gallery situation suited the project's aims of reaching an expanding audience.

9<sup>th</sup> February  
Gallery Talk by Liz Adamson, Graeme Todd and Dr Mark Huxham to members of ASCUS and the general public.

22<sup>nd</sup> March 2012 Exhibition wins Edinburgh Beltane Award for Art-Science Collaboration

'Pincushion' Polarcap exhibition at John Gray Centre, East Lothian.

7<sup>th</sup> July-30<sup>th</sup> September 2012  
Including 'How Steep is Now'

