

Institution: Middlesex University London		
Unit of Assessment: 32 Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory		
Title of case study: The Process and the Product: Discreet Partnerships and the Cultural Dimension in Effective Landscape Governance		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2008-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Simon Read	Associate Professor of Fine Art	5 February 1996 - ongoing
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Read's research deploys his visual arts experience to promote understanding of coastal and estuarine environments as dynamic and interconnected systems. This has generated an integrated approach to landscape decision making for stakeholder communities which had an impact on: (1) Policy, resulting in a new way of managing the Deben Estuary, Suffolk, based on the principle of a whole estuary system, balancing cultural and emotional attachment to landscape and the economic stability of communities, with the need for flood risk management and habitat protection; (2) Coastal landscape, through sustainable engineered interventions originally intended as a way to encourage community engagement, resulting in the protection and restoration of the area's saltmarsh habitat and additionally bringing benefit to marine industry.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Read has channelled his fine art practice-led research to focus upon the cultural value of coastal and estuarine landscapes, the bonds that tie communities to place, and to facilitate their participation in the landscape policy decision-making process. Although our cultural stereotypes for landscape remain embedded in 19th Century concepts of the sublime and picturesque, this no longer equips us to manage the complexity of environmental change, which makes increasing demands upon communities to become more actively engaged. Commenting on Read's practice developed at the intersection between visual art, academia, and coordination of estuarine and coastal management plans, Dr Iain Biggs suggested that Read has developed 'an alternative strategy that holds multiple commitments normally viewed as distinct in a creatively intermeshed tension. His aim, then, using all the various skills and insights at his disposal, remains to balance the continually shifting dynamics of that tension in an ensemble practice' (Biggs 2020, p. 273). The impetus for Read to work towards a greater engagement by the arts in landscape policy was driven by observations within his own Deben Estuary community, that decision-making processes were dominated by a logistical and linear problem-solving approach, which paid scant attention to the cultural and emotional attachment a community might have to its own landscape. However, the expectation by communities that landscapes are managed on their behalf by a benign authority is embedded, and the task of promoting a sense of public responsibility for estuarine and coastal environments and fostering partnerships between stakeholders is challenging. To address this Read developed two strands of enquiry that utilise art practice-led research within collaborative interdisciplinary partnerships to contribute to the efficacy of environmental policy and community uptake.</p> <p>The first examines flood risk management policy through mapping exercises rendering combinations of data often inaccessible outside of the scientific community as a rich and accessible experience, equipping local communities to participate more effectively in understanding the governance process. These works strengthen Read's grasp of coastal and estuarine systems, supporting his contributions to environmental debate, and bridging the gap between coastal science and the community. In 1999 Read began working on a 1:10,000 <i>Map of the River Deben</i>, a work-in-progress completed in 2009 [3.1]; its purpose was to inform himself and others of the dynamics of the Deben Estuary system to enable fuller participation in the public consultation over the Estuary Strategy. Prior to this there was no other large-scale visualisation of the estuary as an integrated system. Read used a wide range of reference material to create the map, including admiralty charts, OS maps, Environment Agency Indicative Flood Plain Maps, and</p>		

aerial surveys. It was updated to record changes and management initiatives on the estuary until 2009, when it reached the limit of its capacity to absorb further information. Similar intentions informed a series of drawings under the collective heading of *Imagining Change* [3.2], through which Read reflected upon potential and predictable change on the Suffolk Coast according to the Suffolk Shoreline Management Plan of 2010. These include *This much I know, the rest I shall guess* (2010) a 1:25,000 map of the Suffolk Coast between Lowestoft and Felixstowe that examined predictions for coastal change; and *The Suffolk Coast between Aldeburgh and Shingle Street* (2010) 1:12500, which speculated upon the precarity of the narrow stretch of coastline joining Aldeburgh to Orfordness. Read is currently Principal Investigator on a collaboration with coastal scientist Dr Helene Burningham (UCL) and the Deben Estuary Partnership: *Imagining the Measure of Change: Art, Science and the Estuary Community* (2020-2022). This project aims to broaden the range of community engagement in the estuary management process informed by *Deben Soundings*, a new map of the estuary. Beyond Suffolk, the map *The Humber Estuary from South Ferriby to Burton Stather* (2012) reflected on the Alkborough Flats tidal mitigation scheme as part of the AHRC Landscape and the Environment programme [3.3].

The second strand develops soft engineered landscape interventions for degraded saltmarsh sites, using sustainable resources and voluntary community labour and skills. *The Sutton Saltmarsh Tidal Attenuation Barrier* (2009) [3.4] on the Deben Estuary is a 90 metres long timber and brushwood structure built to attenuate wave and tidal energy, reduce erosion and encourage siltation. In 2011 the owner of 22ha of saltmarsh at Falkenham on the River Deben approached the Deben Estuary Partnership (DEP) - formed in 2008 to create a community led estuary management plan (Simon Read is a founding member) - with a proposal to carry out remediation works. *The Falkenham Saltmarsh Tidal Management Scheme* was designed by Read and completed in 2014; attracting an investment of £20,000 funded by Lottery Heritage Fund, and support from stakeholders including the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Natural Outstanding Beauty (AONB) Unit, Suffolk County Council, and the Environment Agency, Natural England, East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board, with Dr Keiran O'Mahoney (Cardiff University), as project manager. This design took the form of three low brushwood structures inserted into the main drain channels to lower the impact of tidal flow into the marsh, reduce erosion, raise sediment levels, as a precondition to the recolonization of saltmarsh vegetation and its restoration [3.4]. Together these projects not only proposed a sustainable approach to the maintenance of intertidal habitat and raised awareness of saltmarsh as a vital part of our estuary landscape, but also served as a focus for community engagement through work parties from the AONB volunteers.

Read's experience of the relationship between communities, water and landscape was further articulated in his publication *Cinderella River: the evolving narrative of the River Lee* (2017), which resulted from his work as consultant artist for the *Towards Hydrocitizenship* project, within AHRC's Connected Communities programme. *Cinderella River* reviewed this complex watercourse according to the range of frequently conflicting functions that it must perform, including the significant emotional and cultural value accorded to it by visiting and resident communities [3.5]. Between 2017-2020, Read was the sole artist and Co-investigator on the interdisciplinary research project *CoastWEB* within the NERC/AHRC Valuing Nature programme. Here he aligned scientific modelling processes with cultural memory and values accorded to specific coastal landscapes. Outcomes included *What we know offers clues to what we must guess*, a large-scale drawing of the Three Rivers Estuary in Carmarthenshire, to explore the evolution of the Pendine Dune Barrier and social adjustment to a transitional landscape [3.6].

3. References to the research

3.1 Read, S. (2009). [Artefact]. *A Map of the River Deben*. Available Middlesex on request. Featured in the film *Imagining Change: Coastal Conversations* (2012), dir. Prof. Stephen Daniels and Dr Lucy Veale, within AHRC's Landscape and the Environment Programme. Available at: <http://www.landscape.ac.uk/impactfellowship/imagining-change/planetunderpressure.aspx> [Accessed 01/11/2020]; featured in the documentary, *Life on the Deben* (2017), dir. Tim Curtis, excerpts available at: <https://vimeo.com/495535712>; <https://www.simonread.info/an-attempt-with-mccarthy-to-reach-the-tidal-limit-of-the-estuary> [Accessed 01/11/2020].

3.2 Read, S. (2010). *Imagining Change* [Artefact]. Series of drawings including: *This much I know, the rest I shall guess* (2010); *The Suffolk Coast between Aldeburgh and Shingle Street* (2010). Available Middlesex on request.

3.3 Read, S. (2012). [Artefact]. *The Humber Estuary from South Ferriby to Burton Stather*. Available Middlesex on request.

3.4 Read, S. (2009). [Artefact]. *A Tidal Protection Barrier for Sutton Saltmarsh*; and Read, S. (2014). [Artefact]. *Falkenham Saltmarsh Tidal Management Scheme*. Available Middlesex on request.

3.5 Read, S. (2017). [Authored book]. *Cinderella River: the evolving narrative of the River Lee*. Published within *Towards Hydrocitizenship*, a research project funded by AHRC. Reviewed in: Biggs, I. (2017). *Simon Read's Cinderella River, 'notitia' and the art of both/and*. Available at: <http://www.iainbiggs.co.uk/2017/12/simon-reads-cinderella-river-knottier-and-the-art-of-bothand/> [Accessed 15/10/2020].

3.6 Read, S. (2020). [Artefact]. *What we know offers clues to what we must guess: a drawing of the Three Rivers Estuary*. Exhibition Guide for *Reclaiming Wetland Values: Marsh, Mud and Wonder*. Valuing Nature, NERC 2020. Listed in REF2: *Mapping as a Tool for Imagining Landscapes in Transition*, practice as research output.

Grants:

- *Imagining the Measure of Change: Art, Science and the Estuary Community* (PI on AHRC/UKRI £34,346 award, Ref: AH/T006161/1, to Middlesex University). January 2020 – June 2022.
- *Towards Hydrocitizenship*. (Consultant on AHRC £1,190,036 award, Ref: AH/L008165/1, to Bath Spa University). May 2014 - October 2017.
- *CoastWeb*. (Co-I on NERC/UKRI £1,077,208 award, Ref: NE/N013573/1, to Plymouth Marine Laboratory, Plymouth Marine Lab). August 2016 – February 2020.
- *Touching the Tide* (National Lottery Heritage Fund £ 806,200 award (90% of total eligible project costs), Ref: LP-10-04929, to Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB/Suffolk County Council. Read's *Saltmarsh Restoration* was one of 33 projects funded). May 2013 – July 2016.

Research outputs have appeared in respected outlets from catalogue entries, book chapters, independent publications, artefacts and exhibitions. Research grants were competitively won from AHRC, NERC and other funders with robust assessment criteria. A further indicator of research quality of Read's overall body of work is given by its inclusion as case study in Biggs, I. (2020). 'Ensemble Practices.' In: Cartiere C. and Tan L. (eds.) *Routledge Companion to Art in the Public Realm*. Routledge, pp. 269-278. ISBN 9781138325302.

4. Details of the impact

Due to its soft sedimentary geology and low elevation, the Suffolk coast is particularly vulnerable to change. A shift in weather patterns in tandem with a rise in mean sea level has accelerated the loss of property through coastal erosion and increased the frequency of flooding due to surge tide events. This has necessitated an urgent need to reconfigure the local community's relationship with their landscape. Read's maps and landscape interventions provide a way for himself and others to visualise, engage with, and understand estuarine and coastal systems and the implications of environmental change. From this has developed an inclusive, multi-disciplinary approach to estuarine and coastal management, which brings together the cultural, scientific and policy communities. As Trazar Astley-Reid (Suffolk Coasts and Heaths AONB), summarises: 'This approach has allowed people locally to understand that they can get up and take action and look after what they have got. You need to visually understand what the landscape is, and the broader picture of that landscape and I think Simon's work encapsulates that beautifully' **[5.1]**. This has led to a more integrated way of developing landscape policy for the Deben Estuary in Suffolk, including the protection and restoration of the county's saltmarsh of which the Deben Estuary holds 40%.

(1) Impact on policy resulting in a more inclusive approach to landscape policy development and better management of the Deben Estuary system. Read's grasp of the complex issues arising from environmental change has contributed to a more holistic approach to

estuary management. In 2008, together with other stakeholders (landowners, parish councils, riparian businesses, local authority, statutory agencies and non-statutory organisations), Read co-created the DEP to pioneer a grassroots approach to estuary management and take an integrated view of key interests including agriculture, fisheries, tourism, leisure boating, residential mooring, ecology, water quality and flood protection. Drawing on his research concerning the relationship between communities, water and landscape, and of the complexity of estuarine systems, Read wrote *A Portrait of the River Deben* (2012) to set out a vision aligning cultural attachment to the estuary with awareness of its systems. This was adopted as the guiding principle for the development of the Deben Estuary Plan (2015) [5.2a], co-authored by Read, for which an advisory team of key advocates and organisations was established including the Environment Agency (EA), Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Unit and the local authority. The task was to identify essential aspects of the estuary including habitat, water quality, landscape integrity and flood defence; and seek alignment between parallel activities such as fishing and farming, and resolution where there may be competing demands.

In 2015, The Deben Estuary Plan was endorsed by EA and adopted by the Suffolk Coastal District Council as 'material consideration in relevant planning decisions, informing all other relevant decisions in the plan area' and is the principal policy document for managing the estuary, including flood risk, terrestrial and marine planning and habitat management [5.2a]. The plan aspires to integrate community interests with care for the ecological system, striving for balance between flood risk management and sustainable tourism, or marine playground and the need to ensure minimum disturbance to wildlife and to the peace and tranquillity cherished by local inhabitants and visitors. Read's key role in the development of the Deben Estuary Plan is evidenced in his authorship of the introduction and by supporting statements provided for the purposes of this case study from the DEP and the EA. The Chair of the DEP highlights Read's key role 'in establishing the overall philosophy for what became a ground-breaking approach to an estuarine plan. Initiating work towards the Plan with a consultative document – Portrait of the River – he ensured an inclusive and integrated approach which responded to the identity of the estuary as a whole [...] His ability to synthesize ideas and concepts from a range of disciplines is valued by all those he works with' [5.2b]. The EA describes how Read 'sees the bigger picture. He understands the importance of the Deben Estuary both in a national context and within an international, north European framework that are often missing in local groups' and is 'able to articulate the wider situation and the academic context in a way that is easily understood by the layman [...] His work has been essential to the success of the community approach to estuary management' [5.3]. The actions set out in the current management plan are either accomplished or near completion, including the construction of flood defences in the estuary to withstand a 1:75 year surge tide event, a major infrastructure project to store and re-use freshwater run-off for the Felixstowe Peninsula, and initiatives to manage local saltmarsh and increase national awareness of its importance as habitat, carbon sink and primary flood defence [5.4a; 5.4b].

(2) Interventions in the landscape resulting in restoration and protection of saltmarsh and benefitting marine industry. Although the programme of saltmarsh restoration projects began as a means of introducing the local community to the workings of a tidal estuary, it evolved into a positive contribution to the condition of the intertidal zone. Due to climate change impacts such as sea level rise and increased storminess, saltmarsh landscapes are under pressure; and the obligation to conserve them is enshrined by the European Habitats Directive of 1992. Encouraged by the success of *The Sutton Saltmarsh Tidal Attenuation Barrier* in 2009, Read started work on *The Falkenham Saltmarsh Tidal Management Scheme* on the Deben Estuary in September 2013, completed in March 2014 [5.5a; 5.5.b]. The EA explains that Read's 'impressive knowledge of saltmarsh restoration and his work on the Deben have been recognised within the Environment Agency. This is a subject which fosters passionate discussion and debate, particularly on the Deben estuary' and that he 'uses his skills and his knowledge to bring practitioners together rather than to divide them, to bring consensus and a sense of direction' [5.3]. Read, and the Falkenham scheme, featured in the documentary *Life on the Deben* (2017) directed by Tim Curtis and written by John McCarthy. The film describes the saltmarsh as the 'lungs of the river' and in it Read outlines the stress these crucial habitats are under and the benefits they bring in relation to flood defence. Additionally, the film features *A Map of the Deben* and highlights the role of the DEP in

securing a sustainable future for the estuary [5.6a]. The DVD has sold 6000 copies and has been seen by over 15,000+ cinema and festival goers [5.6b].

From 2014 to present, following an initiative from EA, Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB and Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Read has worked with Suffolk Yacht Harbour (SYH), East Coast's largest marina on the River Orwell, on a scheme to retain spoil from its annual dredging operation and recycle it as recharge material for two adjacent degraded saltmarsh sites [5.7]. Echoing landscape interventions at Sutton and Falkenham, Read designed coir and brushwood structures to retain the dredged material. The scheme not only facilitates restoration of saltmarsh, but also fulfils SYH's statutory obligation to sequester dredging spoil and prevent it returning to the estuary system. Each year 15,000 – 20,000 m³ of silt is dredged and deposited, delivering 'positive results, with good recovery of the saltmarsh habitat and soil accretion over significant areas' [5.8a]; this has 'been fundamental in creating the correct build-up of beneficial sediment and subsequent foliage regeneration' [5.8b]. In February 2015, BBC One's Countryfile profiled this project, noting 'what is bad for boats does wonders for wildlife.' The report highlighted the importance of this saltmarsh habitat and its vulnerability and gave an account of the operation and a demonstration of the use of coir logs to retain sediment [5.8c]. In an article in the East Anglian Daily Times Jonathan Dyke, the harbour's managing director, highlights this work as a positive example of how a business could work to the benefit of the environment: 'These sort of schemes, which can maintain and, where possible, improve upon the natural environment, are absolutely fundamental in keeping Suffolk a beautiful place to live and visit. [...] marinas have a great opportunity to put that silt back from whence it came and rebuild the inter-tidal wetland to support wildlife' [5.8d]. These projects (Sutton, Falkenham and SYH) have also had influence at regional and national level, leading to an invitation by DEFRA for Read to participate in the Suffolk Marine Pioneer project in 2017, by designing a saltmarsh management project to protect sea walls from wave damage as a case study for Kyson Point on the Deben Estuary [5.9a; 5.9b].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 Trazar Astley-Reid, Suffolk Coasts and Heath AONB. Quote at min. 2:10:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6iTo3HnCSrE>

5.2 Deben Estuary Partnership: (a) *Deben Estuary Plan* (2015). Introduction by Simon Read.

Quote included in 4.3.10, p. 90: <https://debenestuarypartnership.wordpress.com/deben-estuary-plan/> (b) Statement from Chair of the Deben Estuary Partnership.

5.3 Statement from Senior Team Leader, Coastal Partnership & Strategic Overview Team, Environment Agency (EA).

5.4 Deben Estuary Plan reviews: (a) DEP's *Review of the Deben Estuary Plan* (2020):

<https://debenestuarypartnership.wordpress.com/2020/07/07/a-review-of-the-deben-estuary-plan>

(b) *East Anglian Daily Times* (EADT) article about the Felixstowe Hydrocycle Project, 2 Feb.

2021: <https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/business/felixstowe-hydrocycle-scheme-launched-7299902>

5.5 Articles relating to saltmarsh restoration at Falkenham: (a) *Touching the Tide*, 'Saltmarsh Restoration:' <http://www.touchingthetide.org.uk/our-projects/saltmarsh-restoration/> (b) EADT article, 'The Art of Coastal Collaboration,' 18 Jan. 2014 [Print Edition].

5.6 *Life on the Deben* (2017) (a) Statement from the producer of film (b) Film website, giving data on sales and audiences: <https://www.lifeonthedeben.com/>

5.7 Report on the dredging project for Suffolk Yacht Harbour (2014/2015) prepared by Read with support from Trazar Askey Reid (as above) and Karen Thomas (EA).

5.8 Saltmarsh restoration at SYH: (a) Suffolk Wildlife Trust News article, 20 Nov. 2020:

<https://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/blog/reserves-team/weekly-wild-news-our-reserves-20-november> (b) Statement from SYH concerning Read's contribution; (c) BBC Countryfile review,

22 Feb. 2015: <https://vimeo.com/125243085> Quote at min. 2:35; (d) EADT article about dredging campaign, 27 Oct. 2013: <https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/levington-dredged-silt-from-suffolk-yacht-harbour-to-aid-saltmarsh-2106326>

5.9 Marine Pioneer Project: (a) Kyson Point, Natural Flood Risk Management Project, feasibility study submitted to Environment Agency in 2017 (b) Endorsement Letter from the Marine Management Organisation.