

**GROUP 1: ETHICS, TIME AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE**

RESPONDING EFFECTIVELY TO THE ISSUE OF HUMAN-INDUCED CLIMATE CHANGE CALLS FOR US TO BRING SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL PROCESSES INTO THE SAME TIME-FRAME. HOWEVER, AS TOUCHED ON IN THE FIRST SEMINAR AND THE INTERVENING POSTGRADUATE SEMINAR, THE POSSIBILITY OF ABRUPT CLIMATE SHIFTS RAISES THE PROSPECT OF PHYSICAL CHANGES THAT COULD DRASTICALLY OUTSTRIP SCIENTIFIC, POLITICAL OR CULTURAL RESPONSES. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS ALSO LIKELY THAT THERE WILL BE SIGNIFICANT LAGS IN THE WAY SOME PHYSICAL SYSTEMS RESPOND TO HUMAN FORCING, RAISING THE POSSIBILITY OF VAST DELAYS BETWEEN THE TIMING OF CAUSES AND THE TIMING OF EFFECTS. HOW MIGHT WE BEGIN TO THINK AND ACT ACROSS SUCH DISJUNCTURES OF TIME? WHAT CHALLENGES DO THEY POSE FOR OUR ETHICAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUES? HOW MIGHT RESEARCHERS HELP PREPARE THE GROUND FOR RESPONSES AND RESPONSIBILITIES THAT BRIDGE RADICALLY DIFFERENT TEMPORALITIES?

GROUP 2 FROM ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE TO ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS

THE SCIENCE OF GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE HAS DEVELOPED ENORMOUS POWER TO SUMMARISE CURRENT ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE AND TO EXPRESS POSSIBLE GLOBAL FUTURES. BUT A STRONG UNDERLYING TOPIC IN THE FIRST MEETING CENTRED ON THE RESPONSES THAT ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCHERS HAVE TO THEIR WORK THAT GO BEYOND 'CURIOSITY' (AND OBJECTIVITY PERHAPS?). WHEN DOES PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENT TO DOING SCIENCE SHIFT INTO A RESPONSIBILITY TO GET OTHERS TO ACT ON THAT KNOWLEDGE? HOW DOES ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE INTERSECT WITH POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT? AND WHAT HAPPENS WHEN RESEARCHERS FIND THEMSELVES HAVING TO SPEAK IN TERMS OF COMPLEXITIES AND UNCERTAINTIES THAT SEEM TO COMPROMISE CLEAR STORY-TELLING OR IMPEDE POLITICAL DECISIVENESS?



THOUGHT EXPERIMENT 1

MANY OF US COMMIT OURSELVES TO CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION STRATEGIES KNOWING WE SHARE A PROPORTION OF BLAME. ON THE OTHER HAND, A GREAT MANY PEOPLE GAVE GENEROUSLY AFTER THE 2004 INDIAN OCEAN TSUNAMI IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THE TRIGGER EVENT WAS EMPHATICALLY NON-HUMAN. WHAT MIGHT THIS SAY ABOUT ETHICAL MOTIVATION? IS A SENSE OF IMPLICATION AND GUILT A STRONGER MOTIVATING FORCE THAN 'PURE' CARE OR COMPASSION? ARE THESE MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE FORMS OF RESPONSIBILITY? IN THIS EXERCISE WE ASK YOU TO CONSIDER WHAT KINDS OF OBLIGATION AND RESPONSIBILITY MIGHT COALESCE AROUND FUTURE CLIMATE EVENTS (DESERTIFICATION, EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS, EL NINO EFFECTS...) IN WHICH CAUSALITY IS LIKELY TO BE A COMPLEX BLEND OF ANTHROPOGENIC AND NATURAL FACTORS. HOW MIGHT WE FRAME, NARRATE AND ENGAGE WITH SUCH EVENTS? SHOULD WE ALWAYS ATTEMPT TO DISENTANGLE HUMAN FROM NON-HUMAN FORCINGS? OR ARE THERE OTHER WAYS OF ADDRESSING CAUSALITY AND CHANGE THAT MIGHT ALSO INFORM AND INSPIRE ETHICAL RESPONSES?

THOUGHT EXPERIMENT 2

IT IS 2057. DESPITE INTENSIVE EFFORTS AT MITIGATION THERE HAS BEEN A GRADUAL WARMING OF GLOBAL CLIMATE AND CORRESPONDING RISES IN SEA LEVELS. THERE HAS ALSO BEEN AT LEAST ONE MAJOR CATASTROPHIC SHIFT IN CLIMATIC OR EARTH PROCESSES. WITHOUT KNOWING THE EXACT NATURE OR TIMING OF THIS 'SURPRISE', YOUR TASK IS TO RETROFIT THE INTERVENING HALF CENTURY WITH IDEAS, ATTITUDES AND STRATEGIES WHICH WILL MAXIMISE PREPAREDNESS FOR SUCH AN EVENT (YOU SHOULD ALSO KEEP IN MIND WHAT INCREASED ATTENTION TO THE 'CATASTROPHIC' OR 'UNPREDICTABLE' EVENT MEANS FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH MORE PREDICTABLE OR ENDEMIC ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS)