



Michelle Fletcher Morass: Morass

Placed Based Narratives and Contemporary Social Representations of English Wetlands

WetlandLIFE project July 2017-2019

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Maxim Peter Griffin: Just before seven 4/10/18

Place Based Narratives (PBN)

To understand a 'sense of place' that is generated through diverse human relationships with wetland spaces

To interrogate the ways in which human health and wellbeing features within these narratives

To identify if mosquitoes impact on these human wetlands experiences

Working together with the CVM approach to enable a fine-grained depiction of viewpoints

To use these findings together with WetlandLIFE's ecological, entymological and economic work to support evidence based recommendations for wetland site managers



Vanessa Winship: she dances on Jackson

PBN Methodology

Three case study sites selected by the entire project team:

- ★ **Somerset Levels:** Westhay Moor and Shapwick Heath
- ★ **Bedfordshire:** Priory Country Park & Millennium Country Park
- ★ **North Lincolnshire:** Alkborough Flats

Qualitative, semi structured interviews, ten per site

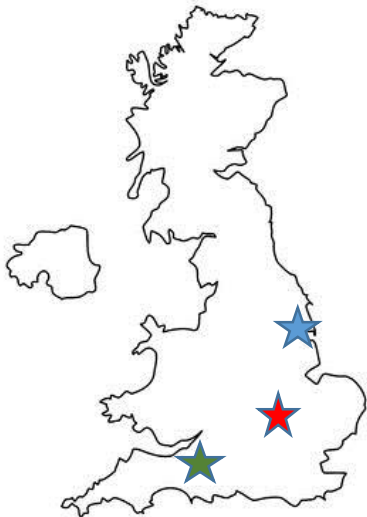
Working with specialist interest groups

To talk with those who use the wetlands and to access groups who could use these wetlands but choose not to

Preliminary focus groups held in Bedfordshire and Somerset to contextualise the range of issues impacting on the wetland sites

Work took place between January and September 2018

All interviews were recorded and have been transcribed





Margaret Micklewright: Shapwick Heath at dusk

Participant selection

Desk based survey analysing local media, social media including Twitter and Facebook, regional and local websites to make initial contacts with specialist interest groups (SIGs)

SIGs definition was wide ranging to try to include as many different types of wetland user as possible

Botanists, walkers, birders, artists, environmentalists, foragers, landowners, spiritual or religious practitioners, archaeologists, historians, educators, youth and community workers, health and wellbeing practitioners

Other groups were deselected for research ethics reasons: these would include minors, homeless campers, those involved in delinquent or illegal activity

Focus was placed on involving those who choose not to use local wetland spaces as well as those that do

e.g. Somerset: 84 exploratory phone recruitment calls and emails were undertaken. 17 respondents agreed to be interviewed. 11 joined the focus group, 10 were interviewed

Specialist Interest Group: SOMERSET	Key Narrative thematics	Example quote
Farmer	Wetlands privilege wildlife over humans; more space needed for floodwater; current water levels too high.	“Any farmer that knows what goes on, knows that this moor is a flood relief, in time of flood that’s where the water should go.”
Community worker	Landowners vs environmentalists, old land practices ignored, mummuration crowds.	“Westhay’s a slightly different landscape, I don’t like it when they graze things out there..I don’t want to walk in amongst a load of horses”.
Canoing club rep	Lack of physical and institutional access to the wetlands, health and wellbeing supported by canoeing.	“I’m the paddle-ability officer...which is about encouraging people with disabilities. So things like wetlands actually could be a really good environment if somebody’s got considerable visual impairment... hearing birdsong could be quite a benefit.”
Educator and volunteer bat group rep	Lack of access to sites for local people. Lack of amenities on site. Getting youth engaged with nature. Importance of bats for wetland ecosystems.	“Even in the daytime the biting midges can be a problem sometimes..it’s not necessarily the mosquitoes that come out at dusk..the horseflies are almost worse.”
Bat group rep	Funding of eNGOs, land management, biodiversity corridors, appreciates mosquitoes.	“Whatever trousers you’re wearing they bite through..and you’re sitting still because you’re counting bats.”
Environmental NGO	Adapting to climate change, intra-organisational work. Supporting wildlife and biodiversity. Planning resilience for the future.	“We never want to have millions of people turning up here because then it would destroy what we’re trying to protect.”
Local artist	Inspiration, solitude, cycling, changing weather and seasons.	“I like to come down little tracks, tracks like this, I’ve got my favourite spot, my contemplative spot.”
Scout leader	Sites help teach younger generation about natural spaces, biodiversity, impacts of climate change, develop skills.	“Westhay’s a good place to go for a treasure hunt or a map exercise or even just a hike.”
County arts co-ordinator	Funding cuts for local artists, drawn to the area by landscape, low property prices and other artist enclaves. Access of sites. Murmurations.	“...the starling murmurations and things like that, they’re really popular..I think because it’s an ageing population as well, (they’ve) got time.”
Ornithology group rep	Bird species not place determines site use; safety – personal and car thefts. Life after retirement.	“I prefer to come early in the mornings because, well, you sort of think the people who might break into cars aren’t there early.”



Susan Derges: Full moon rowans

Next steps with place based narratives

To work through the transcriptions to find thematic connections which are:

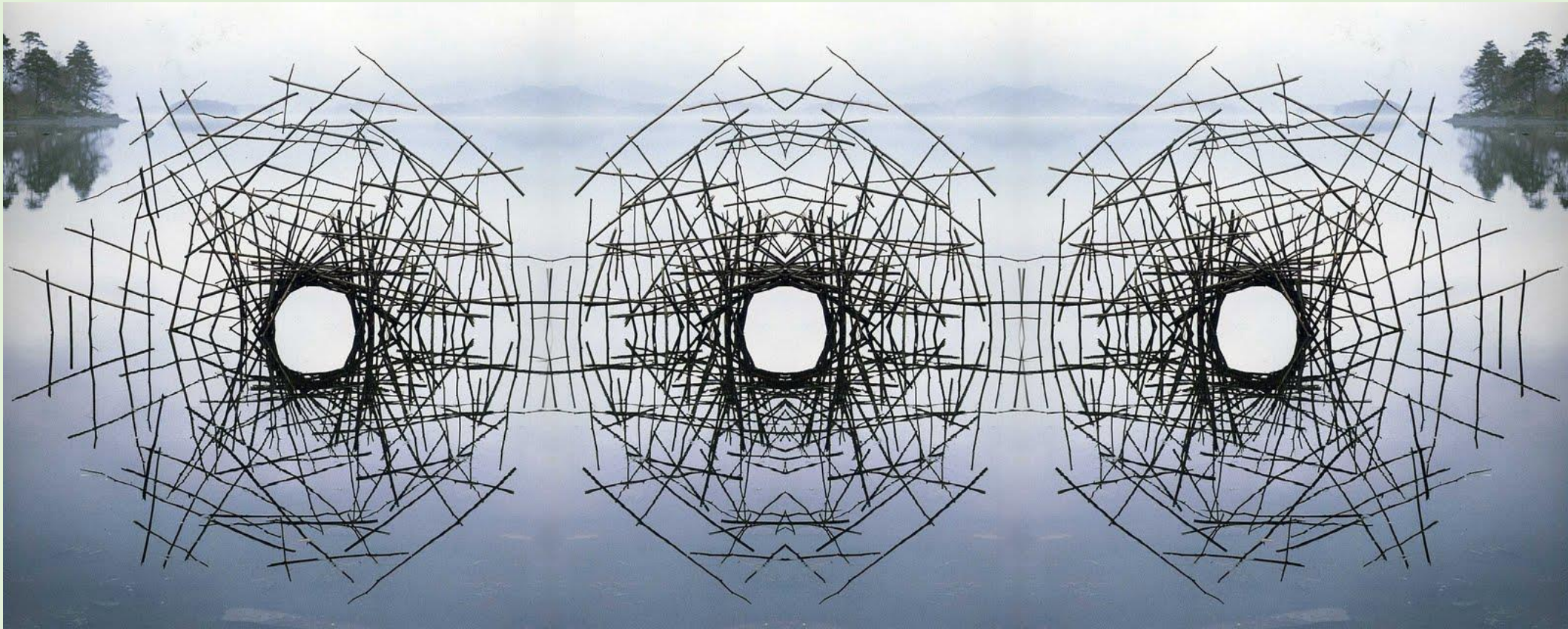
- Specific to place
- Specific to wetlands as particular landscapes
- Articulations of humans in nature

Leading thematics are:

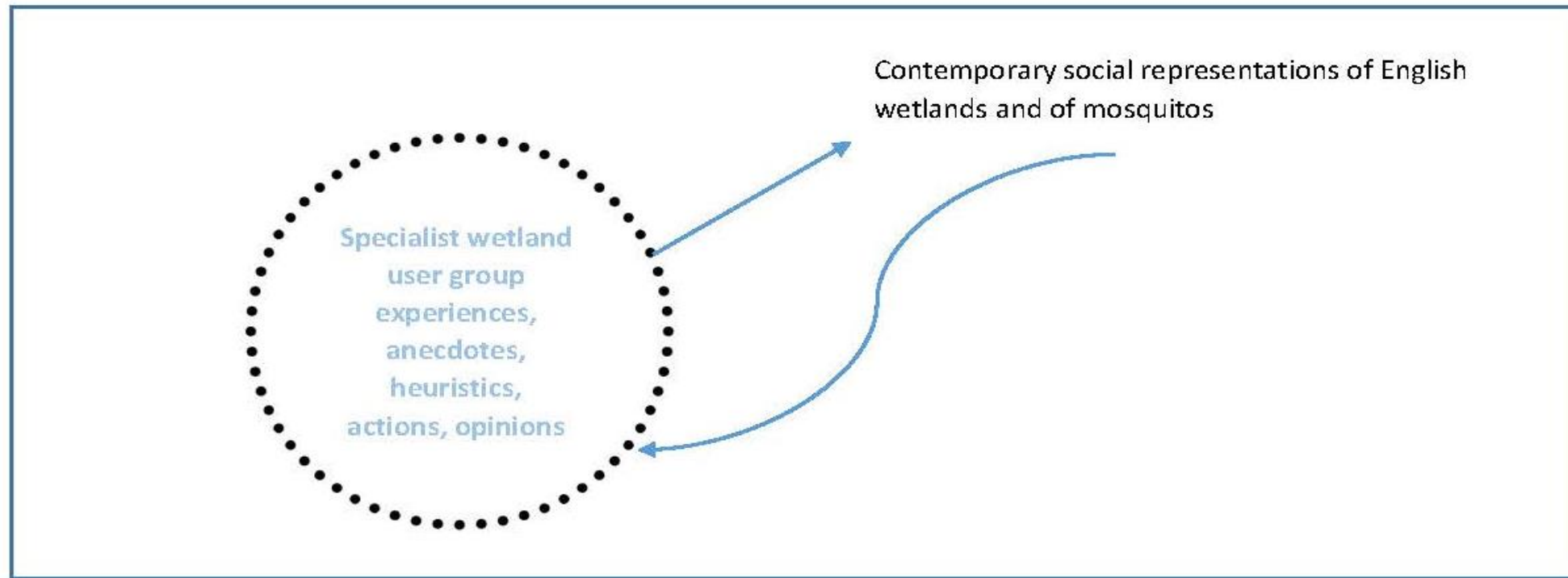
- Human health and wellbeing
- Impacts of mosquitoes on wetland use
- How these narratives inform our understanding of contemporary social representations of wetlands

Other thematics which are beginning to emerge:

- Access
- Safety and risk
- Wetlands as memorial spaces
- Differential use and value of space
- Delinquent activity on wetlands



Contemporary social representations (CSR): whose representations?



The relationship between the contemporary social representation analysis research and developing 'place based' narratives.

CSR Methodology

To understand the hierarchy of representations we must also determine the domain of knowledge they draw from

These domains of knowledge operate at the macro and micro scale

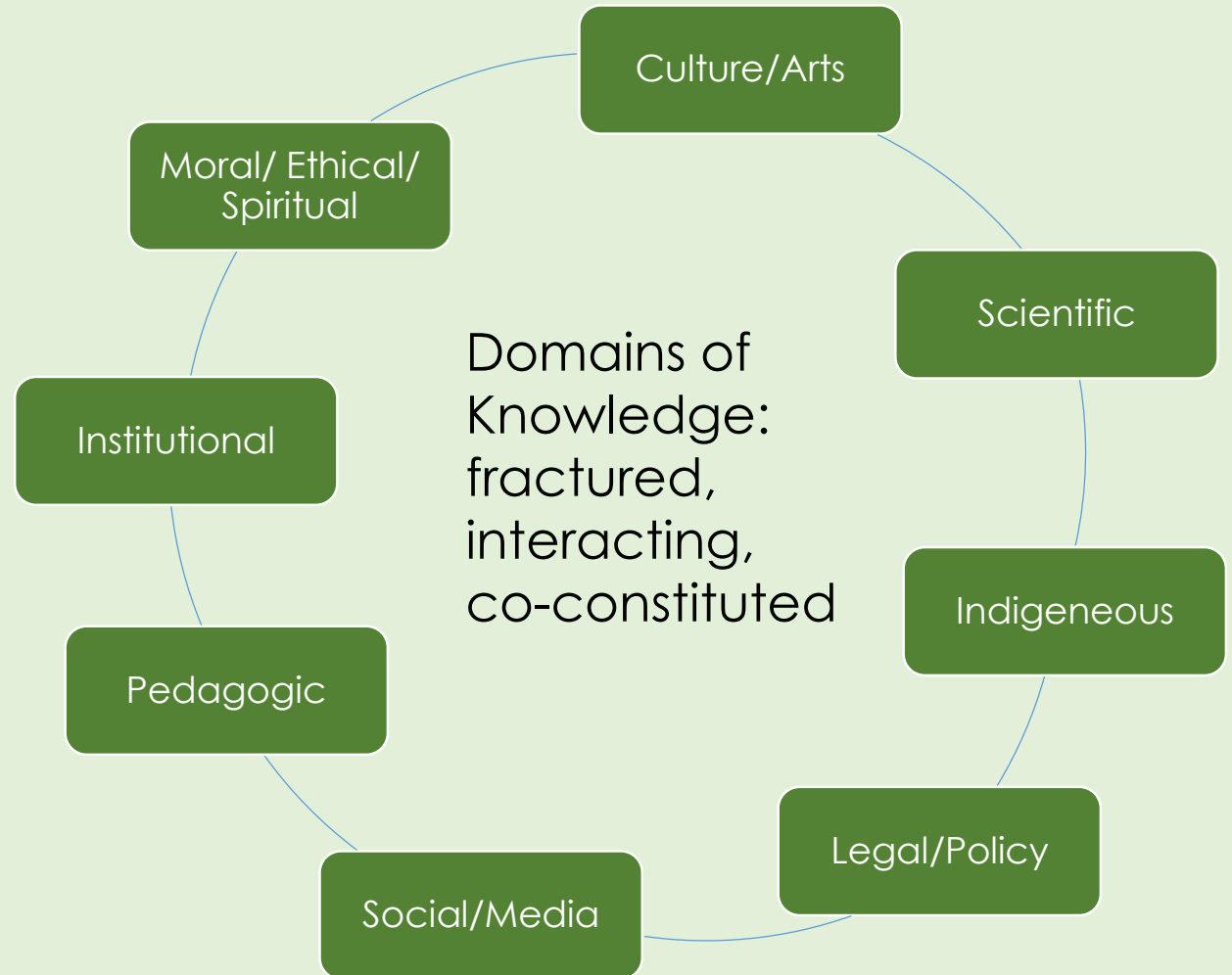
Desk based research is undertaken to identify how these domains enact change or maintain stasis - cognitive, affective or material - within the study sites with regards to CSR

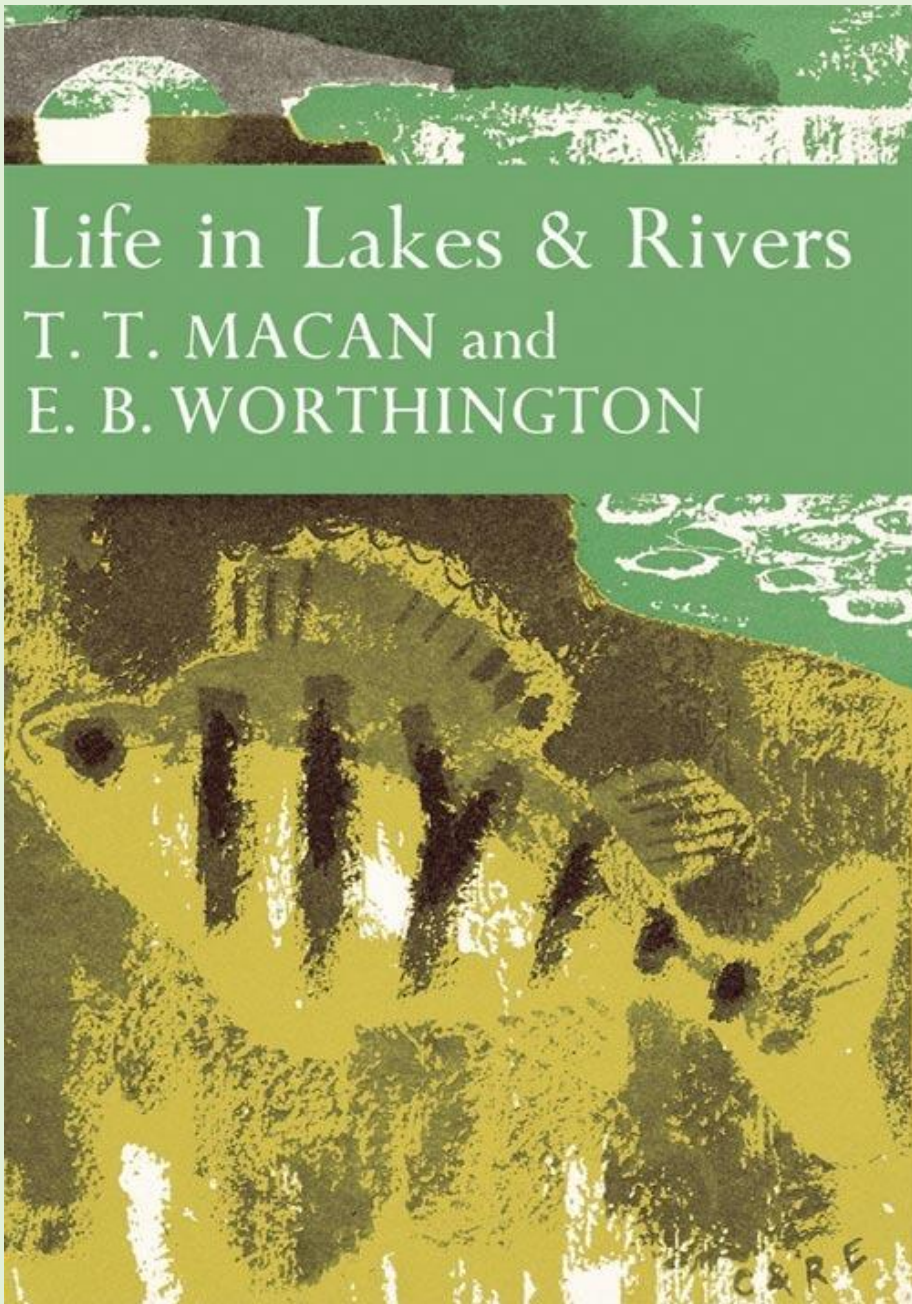
Examples

Post peat extraction land management /economy

Wetlands as post-political climate change barbicans

Murmuration events as social media spectacle





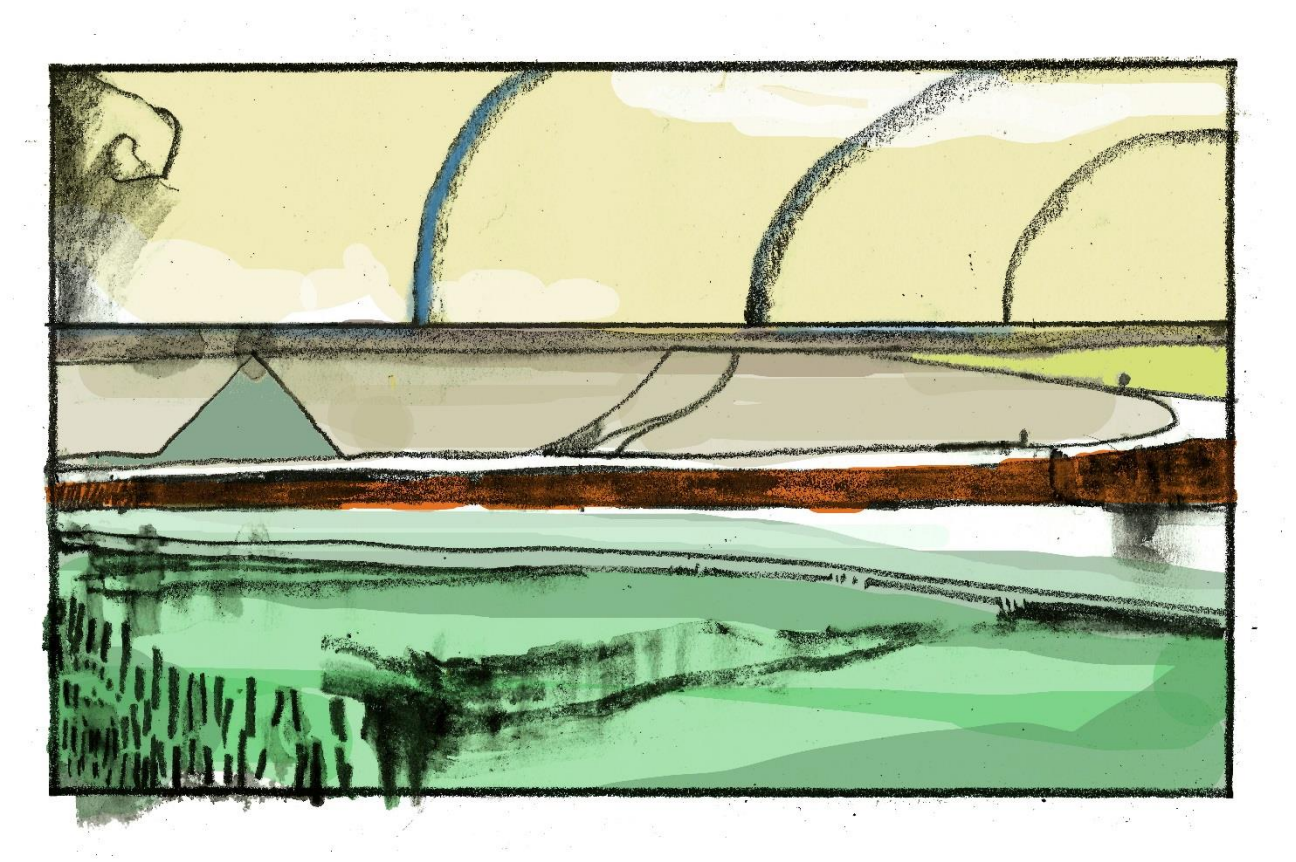
There is inevitably a co-related hierarchy amongst the social representations that shape our understanding of the world:

Hegemonic representations: macro, structured: e.g. government policy, scientific views, political parties, religious perspectives

Emancipated representations: subgroups that present an alternative to hegemonic perspectives: campaign groups, NGOs, alternative science, cultural and artistic movements

Polemic representations: social conflicts and antagonistic stances e.g. media stories, local tensions around issues/concerns, artists outside of a movement or genre.

These hierarchies are not static, but are in flux, both fast and slow.



Maxim Peter Griffin: Alkborough Flats

Next steps for the contemporary social representation work

Interrogating the place based narratives provide us with a snapshot of how wetlands are viewed by specialist user groups; and what they think shapes people's perceptions of these spaces

We now return to the macro perspective – looking at how the dominant domains of knowledge shape what is enabled, and disabled, on site

We will use this next stage of the project to work iteratively between the macro and micro perspectives

The data is already alluding to the positioning of wetlands as 'hero' spaces – which support floodwater storage, champion biodiversity and enable human health and wellbeing

Yet sub-narratives suggest they are also viewed as 'bland', populated by a white and ageing population



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