

Climate Politics Beyond the Predictive Paradigm: A Symposium with Mike Hulme

Organised by the Centre for the Study of Environmental Change (Sociology) and Atmospheric Science (Lancaster Environment Centre)

Thursday 2 June 2011, 15.00-18.00

Cavendish Colloquium Room (upstairs in the Faraday Complex)

Over the last half-century, computer models have come to play a number of crucial roles in the politics of global environmental change. Most recently, for example, general circulation models (GCMs) have been used to help establish the role of human activity in climate change, to guide adaptation strategies by making regional predictions of changes in sea level, temperature and precipitation, and to establish targets for emissions reductions. They are also increasingly being used to evaluate different geoengineering proposals, by simulating the effects on climate systems of deliberate technological interventions such as cloud brightening or stratospheric sulphate aerosols. However, despite their obvious usefulness there are concerns about the uncertainties inherent in climate models, and about the wisdom of a style of climate politics which depends crucially on the ability of such models accurately to predict future climates.

Do we need an approach to climate change that takes up a different relation with the future? Is it time to start to imagine new forms of climate politics that recognise the intrinsic indeterminacy of climate processes and the limitations of the predictive powers of humans and machines? What resources do we have – technical, cultural, political, ethical – out of which we can build such a politics? In this interdisciplinary symposium, organised around the visit of Professor Mike Hulme to Lancaster, we will explore such questions.

After the symposium there will be a free buffet dinner and reception for participants. If you want to attend this, please contact Bronislaw Szerszynski (bron@lancaster.ac.uk).

Speakers:

Bronislaw Szerszynski (CSEC, Lancaster University) 'The strange love of GCMs, or: how we might learn to stop predicting and embrace uncertainty'

Andrew Jarvis (LEC, Lancaster University) 'The real-time climate agenda'

Mike Hulme (School of Environmental Sciences, University of East Anglia) 'An enquiry into the state of climate change knowledge: expertise, institutions and representation'

Mike Hulme is professor of climate change in the School of Environmental Sciences at the University of East Anglia. Between 2000 and 2007 he was the founding director of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research. His work explores the idea of climate change using historical, cultural, and scientific analyses, seeking to illuminate the numerous ways in which climate change is deployed in public and political discourse. He is the author of *Why We Disagree about Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction and Opportunity* (2009) and, with Henry Neufeldt, co-author of *Making Climate Change Work for Us* (2010).