

# Enduring Connections: What Does Eco-engagement Look (and Sound) Like?

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I will produce two films based on footage that I have already filmed in Kiribati and the Marshall Islands, as part of two international research projects funded by two research councils in the UK (AHRC and ESRC). Both films have distinct but connected themes, and have the potential to engage and influence diverse international audiences. Each of these low-lying island nations is vulnerable to rising seas, and the films will acknowledge this, as well as other environmental challenges, whilst also celebrating the rich cultural heritage of each site. They will reject the dominant narratives in global media, which render these countries as ahistorical and homogenous.

## 1) Kiribati-based film:

This experimental film, with ethnographic elements, will have important characteristics, in direct response to the opinions and ideas of research partners in Kiribati:

- I collaborated with a local cultural heritage specialist, Natan Itonga, who has previously spent eight years on a cultural-mapping exercise of Kiribati. As I edit this footage, I will work to facilitate *his* ideas for how to represent Kiribati through the medium of film.
- Itonga has been/will be encouraged to celebrate the non-homogenous cultural heritage across the widely dispersed nation, and to offer a counterpoint to the ideas of Kiribati as a powerless and doomed “drowning nation.” This narrative will incorporate geographer Caitlin DeSilvey’s idea of “giving time” back to places, by acknowledging past (as well as future) change.
- The film—like the broader research project, [Enduring Connections](#)—strives to achieve and disseminate a more nuanced and environmentally attuned portrait of a specific place. With an emphasis on the importance of sound and listening, it seeks to reframe Kiribati as both a site of historic survival *and* one that is severely threatened by climate change—something that *should* disturb the conscience of the most polluting, richer nations.

## 2) Republic of the Marshall Islands material:

I will be working with audiovisual material that I have filmed or documented on the project “[Forced Displacement](#)” led by Dr Michelle Kewon, Edinburgh University). This film will explore the displacement caused in the RMI by American nuclear testing during the Cold War, with ongoing repercussions. This has already involved listening to a range of voices, including artists, children, filmmaker Jack Niedenthal, and the prominent indigenous poet Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner.

- The history and legacy of the nuclear testing will be considered alongside the issue of current and projected displacement due to climate change.
- The film will view past and current challenges through an arts and humanities lens, which is a culturally attuned perspective. This will be a way to consider the particular specific and local implications of global challenges in the Marshall Islands.

Both films will consider issues of forced and voluntary transformation, and the ways that other factors come into play: socioeconomic stressors, urbanization, globalization, domestic policy, gender equity, international development agendas, and so on. The film will evoke a complex, multifaceted representation of the challenges that these nations face. Perhaps most significantly for the field of environmental communication, I will experiment with various film forms (self-reflexive styles/auto-ethnographic/traditional documentary/film essay/experimental film, etc.) to test the limit and potential of different storytelling approaches. This will be part of a greater effort to push boundaries in creating a new kind of ecofeminist language in film. In my view, environmental documentaries are often only environmental in terms of thematic content, but unadventurous in their use of various film and media forms to enact different ways of seeing—and being in—the world.

During my time in the Rachel Carson Centre, I will utilize existing collaborations and networks, and also create new relationships, in order to disseminate this creative material in innovative ways.