A fluid landscape (upper key stage 2)

What the photos say
These photographs\(^1\) might provoke a discussion about ‘young people’s geographies’ – i.e. geographies that draw on their own experiences: ‘We want students to realise that geography can be “about them”, growing up in the world, and we want teachers to build on this idea. We should try to catch young people’s interest, but also find ways to challenge and excite them with content that might be beyond their immediate horizon’ (GA, 2009). The aim is to link the everyday and mundane – disintegrating road surfaces and flooding, for example – to the majestic physical geography in these photos.

Lesson idea
This lesson introduces the idea of change around us. There are man-made, obvious changes in our environment (a new building, road or car park). And there are slower, sometimes less perceptible, ‘natural’ changes (physical processes).

Other resources
- class set of the two photos printed out on A5. Cut each photo into six pieces and place in an envelope, so the children have to reassemble the photo.

Suggested activities
Discuss new shops, buildings, roads locally and changes in the school grounds – do they remember what they used to be like? Discuss man-made and natural changes. Which do you notice the most? Which can

\(^1\) West Vigne Glacier, Baltistan District, Northern Areas, Pakistan, (altitude: 5000m+) taken in August 2006; and the contours of the canyon walls, Lower Antelope Canyon, Arizona, October 2005.
be sudden? (e.g. floods, fire, erosion or other relevant local changes). Reassemble photos. Can children work out the right way up? What are they?

**Glacier**
Is it a road? Is it a field? Why is it so flat? Get the children to stick the photo pieces on a mini whiteboard and write an adjective for each piece. Where in the world could it be? What can they see? Use whiteboards/paired working to collect responses.

**Canyon**
What can the children see? What colours are they? How are they different? What do they think it is? Repeat activity as for glacier picture. Give the name of the canyon picture. What is a canyon? Does it show change? What could have caused this change? Explain that both the canyon and the glacier are caused by the action of water – frozen water (glaciers) and running water (the Navajo Indian word for canyon means ‘the place where water runs through rocks’). Is there any evidence in the local environment of change caused by water? Have we had/seen floods? Has anyone got a leaky roof? Is the road surface disintegrating? What happens after snow or ice?

**Curriculum opportunities**

**Global dimension:** Change is happening all around us, both slowly and quickly, because of human and natural processes.

**Sustainable development:** A plenary, or follow-up lesson, could focus on how our actions can change the environment.

**Reference**

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2 A *canyon*, or *gorge*, is a deep valley between cliffs often carved from the landscape by a river. Most canyons were formed by a process of long-time erosion from a plateau level. The cliffs form because harder rock strata that are resistant to erosion and weathering remain exposed on the valley walls. Canyons are much more common in arid areas than in wetter areas because weathering has a greater effect in arid zones. Canyon walls are often formed of resistant sandstones or granite. Submarine canyons are those which form underwater, generally at the mouths of rivers. The word *canyon* is Spanish in origin (*cañón*). The word *canyon* is generally used in the United States, while the word *gorge* is more common in Europe and Oceania, though it is also used in some parts of the United States and Canada. ([Wikipedia, February 2009](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canyon))