

Community, Politics, and Water

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Hello my name is Katrinka Somdahl-Sands. I'd like to thank the organizers for inviting me here to talk to you today. I'm here to talk to you about something slightly different from many of my colleagues. I'm here to talk to you about dance and how it can effectively create affective relationships that can be used not only for environmental education but reframing of potential conflict. When discussing transboundary water conflicts, scholars often focus at the level of the state because that is generally the scale of decision-making. However as a political geographer I have always been interested in the frames used to understand and form attachments to resources, which can happen at much lower scales.

Even though I'm housed in a Political Science department, I'm a geographer, and as such I look at the relationship of people to their places. Sometimes those relationships are primarily biological (am I warm enough, is there enough food, how likely is it that that volcano will explode), but more often than not our relationships to the places we inhabit are personal, affective, and mutually constitutive. We make our places and they in turn make us. I bring this up because we make political boundaries, we make 'water resources', WE make conflicts over water.

Water as a political idea is often treated as an icon: a symbol for the nation, for beauty, for commerce, even for life itself. Icons are interesting things. They are primarily associated with religious practice but do not have to be. They are "hybrid creations of organic and inorganic material" that are often imbued with the ability to feel, to suffer or rejoice, to dictate their 'will', and to be the cause of contention. Icons tell stories and are the repositories of untold stories (past and future). Icons are intended to make "the intangible tangible, the invisible visible". I prefer the term icon to symbol because icon is more concrete, a thing with materiality and form. Discussing water as an icon also makes it easier to see how art and performance are able to use attachments, our emotive

connections, to create rituals and reverence that can change the frame used to explain the power of water and thus (hopefully) generate political action (of a more cooperative sort).

Assumptions

Before I continue I should be clear about some of the assumptions that I'm making regarding water and water resources. I'm assuming that increased water usage will lead to the possibility of greater competition and conflict over those resources. I also assume governments generally need some level of 'buy in' from their populations to undertake major projects/conflicts, including water projects/conflicts.

Also, most people don't care very much about water until their access is curtailed in some way. The positive side of this last remark is that agreements about water can often happen under the radar, allowing for confidence building amongst countries that don't get along terribly well. But it can be bad in that governments may avoid dealing with their water conflict until it is a crisis point because of a lack of pressure from the population. It must always be remembered that the conflicts over resources are still at their heart *political*.

There is a need to educate populations on the importance of water without falling into Nationalist appeals or a random booth at an Earth Day festival.

I'm going to argue that art can do just that – build an affective relationship to the local water sources, which could then be leveraged into political action. The question we ask ourselves should change from “what will water scarcity mean for ecological and social systems” to “what does it mean to be human in a world of water scarcity?” To ask what does it mean to be human in an age of water scarcity is to acknowledge that we need to look differently on the world, and not just by taking shorter showers. We need to break down the binaries of human/nonhuman and subject/object. Reliance on these binaries creates conscious acting humans and unconscious or passive others. But it's more complicated than that.

The deconstructionists are very good at breaking down binaries but they may not be the best at building connections and an affective sense of interdependence. We need a project

that actively connects with the more than human, rather than simply seeing the connection. This would create a shared identity that is more substantive, not just symbolic.

Socially engaged art practices can put “politics in motion.” Arts practices are engaged in commenting on and connecting to collectivity and democracy. This binds art and politics in active and eventful ways. These relational practices make space for “creativity and aesthetics within ontological politics of possibility”. Performance practices can actually be ways of living and modes of action within the real. Performances can revision the landscape and re-theorize the horizon of revolution from strategy and tactics to affect and energetics.

In particular I’m going to talk about three different performances by Marylee Hardenbergh, and three different ways to understand the kinds of responses to her work.

Marylee Hardenbergh is a dance therapist by training and thus consciously “use[s] the healing power of movement to foster within the participants a meaningful sense of place, of belonging and of joy” (7). The dance company founded by her, Global Site Performance, describes itself as:

us[ing] dance to transform the environment so that people experience it with renewed eyes and heart. [Hardenbergh] believes that the power of dance -- with its moving colors and harmonious rhythms -- deepens the audience's sense of place and how we humans fit into the landscape. (8).

In fact, these performances are actively intended to create beauty in a particular site “by drawing attention to the beauty that exists in that place ... even though it may be an overlooked, forgotten, or dirty site.

Global Water Dances

The first piece I’m going to discuss is the one we danced yesterday, Global Water Dances.

The dance itself is a biennial event called Global Water Dance. This project is the brainchild of Ms Hardenbergh, choreographer and Artistic Director of Global Water Dances, which is a one-day event that illuminates water issues through the art of dance around the world, on six continents in over 60 cities. Global Water Dances began in 2011 and again this year, over 60 cities are participating. Every city produces its own local dance, and then joins in a dance with the other locations, connecting all the world together as it brings awareness to water issues.

The purpose of the dances is to highlight the importance of water and hold it up as a gift to be cherished and appreciated by all of humanity. Each water dance highlights the water issues in each local community and in the end is performed by all, including the audience. “Studies have shown that the quickest way to make people feel connected to have them move together to the same rhythm”, explains Hardenbergh. The water dances create connections on two levels, locally to connect to our communities, and to how our community is a part of the global community.

The performances take place over a 24 hour period on June 20th, and are all broadcast online. The performances begin in the Pacific Rim and roll westward with the sun. Sidney, Savar Bangladesh, Tel Aviv, Cairo, Athens, Gburma in Ghana, Warsaw, Berlin, Buenos Aires, New York, Bogotá, Lima and Mexico City are just a few of the cities participating in the the 2015 event. Each Global Water Dance has its own local professional choreographer who selects the unique performance site. These local choreographers produce a three-part site specific performance. The first part reflects the importance of water to that local community, combining movement and music for that outdoor location. The second part involves all of the performers worldwide performing a set score to the same short piece of music. The dance concludes with the local audience joining the dancers to perform the same simple movement phrase based on the water cycle. Most events around the world take approximately 30 to 60 minutes.

With that brief introduction let’s look at a little video from last year’s performance.

<http://globalwaterdances.org/past-gwd-events/>

The most important thing to recognize about all of Ms Hardenbergh's pieces is that they are site-specific. Site-specific dances take a particular place as the inspiration and setting for the performance. Through reading a site, physically, sensually, intellectually, and emotionally, the choreographer is "able to provide a performative translation of place that heightens our awareness of our surroundings" (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 2). The goal is a physical exchange between the audience and the place where the audience is sensitized to local contexts; to "replace indifference with interest... [and even] compel us to experience space in novel ways" (Ibid., 3). Site-specific work does not give easy answers to what a site means. Kloetzel and Pavlik (2010, 6-7) describe how site-specific dances share a focus on "attending to place" which includes two aspects: attention and tending. Attention to place is about drawing the attention *to* the place, so that both the audience and performers are more cognizant of exactly where they are. The second aspect of "attending to place" is creating a connection *with* the place, which implies a kind of stewardship or "tending" of that place. Attending to a place in their schema is also active, attending requires a focus on the process of working with people and place over time and not just looking at the final product. Site-specific dance performances articulate the properties, qualities and meanings produced at the nexus between the event and its location.

There has been a move within geography at least to start trying to take the things that are difficult to represent more seriously. Recent discussions in human geography around non-representational theory ...have foregrounded affective and embodied (non-verbal, precognitive) knowledges, insisting that they can be channeled for political purposes. Writing about the politics of affect, Thrift (2004) argues that the discovery of new means of channeling and using affect is also the discovery of new means of manipulation by the powerful. By contrast, he argues, the conscious engineering of affect does not have to be abusive as affect may also be worked on to brew new collectivities which are potentially progressive (Thrift 2004). As such, non-representational theories of affect might encourage us to experiment with alternative approaches to empowerment and change.

“Sharp et al. (2000) pointed to the creative potential that exists within this ongoing process of creating and maintaining “truths”, “norms” and social relationships. They go on to explain that this process contains a sense of agency and political will, given that power is conceptualized as a:

thoroughly entangled bundle of exchanges dispersed ‘everywhere’ through society, as comprising a ‘micro-physical’ or ‘capillary’ geography of linkages, intensities and frictions, and as thereby not being straightforwardly in the ‘service’ of any one set of peoples, institutions or movements. (Sharp et al 2000:19)”

This definition of power allows us to conceive a realm of political subjectivity and mobilization outside discursive modes of interaction... to affective ties in and through moments of proximity or contact between human and non-human bodies.

Performance includes BOTH representation and action, and although they are often constructed and understood as opposites they are actually mutually determined because the representation can only be understood in relation to the specific space/time in which it is encountered. Affect is what happens in the space of reflection between the representation of an act and the act itself, in the third-space between performer and viewer at that particular time in that particular space. The definition of affect is that it “arises in the midst of in-between-ness” (Seigworth and Gregg 2010: 1). Affect is “the name we give to those forces – visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion – that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension...” (Seigworth and Gregg 2010: 1).

Affect is the medium through which the communication of the performance occurs; though it is not necessarily tangible, affect is real. Affect is what creates the ability to differentiate between things, to see or feel something new, to see something ‘old’ in a ‘new’ way that is the foundation of the radical potential of alienation in performance. “Intensively experienced affect is what signals movement across knowledge worlds” (King 2011: 15).

“Affective relations have the capacity momentarily to mobilize people together to forge a collective... have forced a rethinking of political subjectivity as not being reducible to, or the product of, particular individuals or groups consciously representing or contesting place. The way in which political agendas comes to be *viscerally experienced*, and thus activate or deactivate participants, is not conceptualized as a simple mapping of conscious action on to subjects. Instead, attention is given to bodily registers, the assemblages involved, and the capacity of co-present bodies to affect and be affected.”

One of the reasons performance is so successful in its role of transforming “spaces into places, the public into people” (Miles 1997: 10), is that performance is a direct form of experience. The experience of art is sensuous, qualitative, active-receptive, immediate, intuitive, and non-cognitive (Berleant 1970). It is a “direct qualitative experience that is characteristically non-discursive and hence non-rational.” (ibid.: 119) Performance is thus able to express meanings not usually accessible through words. “Dance is not aimed at describing events (that is, it is not representational) but at evolving a semblance of a world within which specific questions take their meaning” (Radley 1995:12). Dance uses the physicality of the body to articulate complex thoughts and feelings that can not be easily put into words.

“Studies have shown that the quickest way to make people feel connected is to have them move together to the same rhythm,” explains Hardenbergh. I think those who joined me yesterday could attest to this.

“[R]hythm is a way of transmitting a description of experience, in such a way that the experience is re-created in the person receiving it, not merely as an ‘abstraction’ or an emotion but as a physical effect on the organism – on the blood, on the breathing, on the physical patterns of the brain ... it is more than a metaphor; it is a physical experience as real as any other” (Williams 1961; quoted by Mattern 1999: 66-69). Dance uses rhythm, bodies, and movement to create a kinesthetic response in the audience “without recourse to language” (Dewey 1934: 57). Performance *affects* us. Dance critic Marcia Siegel writes that the experience of observing dance is:

fundamentally intuitive, visceral, and preverbal. Only later do we bring words,

categories, systems to rationalize what we've experienced. If a dance doesn't suggest meaning by its performance, no amount of intellectualizing can put meaning into it (Siegel 1988: 30).

Dance's relationship to language is thus different than traditional theatrical experiences (Foster 1995). Dance is experienced by both performers and spectators through the body and through the senses. We watch the dancers' bodies move, listen to their breath, and can sometimes even feel the vibrations as they roll to the floor. We use our senses, under the aegis and direction of the mind, to give us our understanding of the world. Some senses can be labeled "proximate" while others are "distant." The proximate senses yield the world closest to us, including our own bodies. The position and movements of our bodies produce proprioception or kinesthesia, somatic awareness of the basic dimensions of space. The other proximate senses are touch, sensitivity to changes in temperature, taste, and smell. Hearing and sight are the senses that make the world "out there"; they are the distant senses. Since the distance between the performance and audience is essential to the aesthetic experience, it is not surprising that the aesthetic potential of the proximate senses has often been overlooked or undervalued (Siegel 1988:35-36). Yet despite being initially experienced through the distant senses of hearing and sight, dance triggers responses in our proximate senses.

This relationship between our senses mirrors the relationship of the perceiver to the performance. It is argued that the perceiver rather than being separated from the performance actually actively participates in the experience of artistic perception. Even when audience members passively watch a dance performance, they are translating this distant experience into an internal kinesthetic response. This is a reminder that art is, "an experience that is active, a process of doing something that involves knowledge and skill, and an activity that is social at heart" (Berleant 1970: 65).

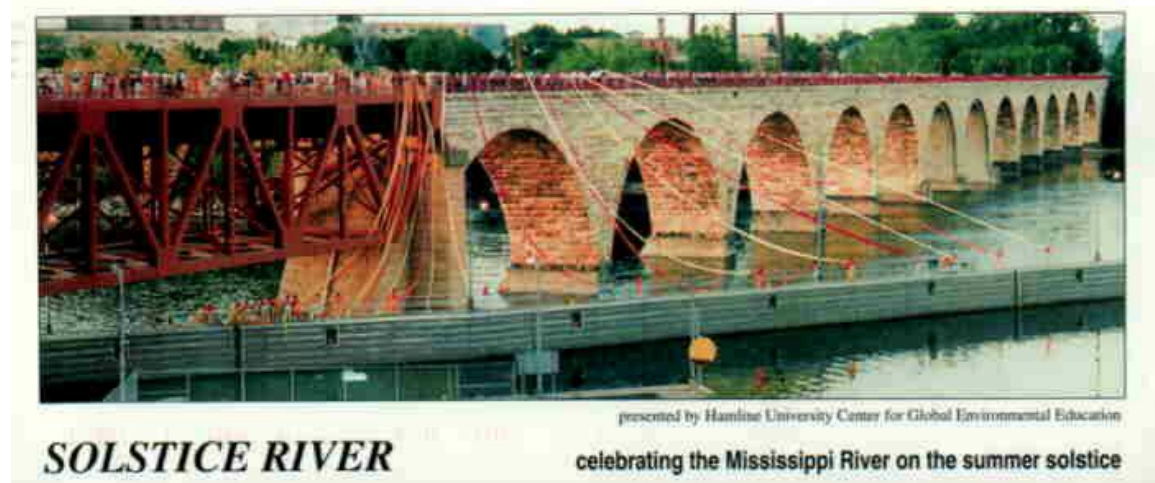
Hardenbergh, the primary choreographer overseeing the entire project explained, "my performances use a great deal of audience participation. My intention is to create a strong, interactive bond between the site and the hearts of the audience members..... Dancing outside brings dance out to the public, most of whom do not attend dance performances (p. 160).... For the most part, my overarching intention is to create beauty,

joy, and a sense of community” (162). The intent is to create a rooted, empathetic experience of a place (Sobel, 1996).

Solstice River

Lets look at another performance where this happened – and I actually have data on the ability of the dance to connect people to the Mississippi River.

Every year, on or near the 21st of June, over 4,000 people tune into a local radio station to listen to commissioned music while watching a free outdoor performance in the historic Mill District near downtown Minneapolis, Minnesota. *Solstice River* is an annual site-specific performance by Marylee Hardenbergh, which is an educational event about water quality intended to honor the Mississippi River. The dance was designed to highlight the relationships between the riparian communities and the Mississippi River, thereby creating a movement within the audience that would lead them to take action to protect the River.



To understand the power of the *Solstice River* performance to influence its audience, you have to imagine the scene. It’s a warm June evening, and you are standing on the historic Stone Arch Bridge. You can see the Saint Anthony Falls on one side of the bridge and the flowing Mississippi continuing on its way south on the other. Despite

being in downtown Minneapolis, the dominant sounds are the water, the seagulls, and the other audience members' voices. Everyone across the bridge is clustering around radios; either their own or those distributed by the choreographer, Ms Hardenbergh. This 'stage' surrounds you 360 degrees; there are dancers on the locks, dikes and staircases, on mooring cells, throughout the nearby Mill Ruins Park, on the surrounding rooftops and balconies, in and on boats in the river, and if the river is quiet, kayakers join the fray, paddling and rolling in time to the music. As an audience member, you stand over the moving water while watching the whole basin come to life with color. You are exposed to the elements and can see how the wind or rain changes the dancers' movements and costumes. You are engulfed in a spectacle that weaves seamlessly the human and the natural.

Ms. Hardenbergh's work is explicitly informed by the relationships between natural wonders and human history. *Solstice River* was inspired by the grandness of the Mississippi River and St. Anthony Falls amidst the man-made structures designed to control and harness this force. Audience participation and environmental education are the tools she uses to orient her audiences to the cyclic patterns of nature.

The performance of *Solstice River* created political community in a public space that was specifically designed to highlight the relationships between the riparian communities and the Mississippi River and build a connection that leads the audience to take action to protect the River.

The Mississippi River, like many rivers, is polluted from runoff coming from farming, logging and municipal uses. This is crucial information for residents of the Mississippi River basin, since the river supplies the drinking water for many of these residents including the city of St. Paul and over a million residents of Minneapolis and seven of its suburbs (Meersman, 1999a). Currently the primary challenge to Mississippi River water quality lies in the sediment run-off from rural areas and in urban non-point sources of pollution. The key to reducing these forms of pollution are changing the attitudes and behaviors of residents living near the River (Meersman, 1999a; Meersman, 1999b). Ms. Hardenbergh uses her performance as an opportunity to educate her audiences about

urban non-point pollution. The performance itself is a celebration of the river, to which she adds a detailed and scientific program, interactive poster displays on what non-point sources of pollution are, and information how one can stop adding to the problem. By performing on the River in the historic Mill District of Minneapolis, she is also targeting the residents who need most to know this information.

In addition to the performance, program and poster displays, a walking map of the Mississippi River is created along the length of the Stone Arch Bridge. The length of the bridge is divided into segments where one foot of bridge length equals one mile of the river. The audience members can thus “walk the length of the River” as they walk the Stone Arch Bridge, starting at the source of the Mississippi at Lake Itasca to its meeting with the Gulf of Mexico. Along the way various placards are posted allowing audience members to visit communities along the Mississippi’s route learning about the water quality issues in those areas.

I was directly involved in the performance of *Solstice River* for three years. I was an audience member in 2002, a dancer/researcher in 2003, and a researcher alone in 2004. After examining the findings from the surveys administered after the *Solstice River* performances, I was intrigued to find that approximately 30% of the respondents from the 2003 survey had no knowledge of the performance prior to the event. This population of attendees was particularly important because they were not involved with either the arts or environmental communities and thus for the first time, had the potential to be reached with information on how to protect the Mississippi River. Consequently, I wrote a follow-up survey for the 2004 performance, which was administered six months after the performance, to determine if there had been long term learning about the river.

When I looked at the surveys there were a number of intriguing things. For instance, 20 percent of the 86 surveys returned mentioned that the sense of connection and awareness of the river was what they liked best about the performance, while another 15 percent liked the feeling of a shared sense of community best. Even though the question was asked in a manner that was intended to elicit a fairly narrow interpretation (Marylee wanted to know if people were drawn to the music, flags, ribbons etc), 35 percent of the

respondents pinpointed a sense of connection as what they liked best about the performance.

This sense of connection was reinforced when asked directly if the performance affected the audience member's feeling of connection with the Mississippi River. Over a third (27) of the respondents indicated that the performance had positively affected their feeling of connection to the river. Another 20 percent (15) stated that they already felt a close connection to the river and that this feeling of previous connection was reinforced by the performance. Many respondents did not answer this question directly, rather stating things like "I was honored to be living so close to the river" or "the vast, open, free mixing of elements at the site created quite a giddy feeling in me."

When asked, "what helped make that connection?," the most common answer related to the location of the performance being on the bridge, at sunset, or along the Mississippi River. Other audience members mentioned the information they had learned. These responses included reference to the program, the walking map, and talking with people along the bridge about river pollution. Related to this last statement was the common thread that the connection was made through the creation of a sense of community. For some audience members this was a generic "community," while for others it was defined as a "community of people who value the river."

I was surprised that this sense of community was brought up repeatedly even when the audience members were asked about how their attitudes about water quality were changed by the performance. While it must be noted that the largest group (27 respondents) indicated that their attitudes were not likely to change, it is interesting that this is the same percentage of respondents who above stated that the performance had created a positive connection to the river. Another 18 percent said that their positive behaviors were reinforced and the importance of those behaviors were emphasized by the event. Approximately 14 percent believed that they would be more aware of their daily actions and what goes into the watershed. Another 14 percent were more aware of waste disposal issues than they were before the event. One audience member stated that s/he would be "more assertive when I see pollution." Amongst those who reported a change in

attitude the most common reason given, even though it was not specifically asked for, was that sense of community. Audience members stated they “understood the river better,” “appreciated their part” in pollution control and were “ready to go clean it up!”

The educational elements were effective, but many of the audience members were already committed to water quality and accordingly they acquired very little new information from the event. I believe this potential negative was offset by sense of community the event created in the audience members. Even those audience members with strongly held environmental views prior to the performance stated that the importance of continuing their positive actions towards the river was reinforced by the performance. Amongst these individuals there was a very clear sense of being with likeminded individuals, those who care about the river. While it may be argued that this is “preaching to the converted,” there is evidence within psychology that reinforcing positive behaviors is beneficial to creating positive outcomes (Weigand and Geller 2004; Daniels 2000; Geller 1995). People need praise and when they get it they are much more likely to continue those behaviors (Shushok and Hulme 2006; Hannon 2004). While it would be good to bring the environmental message of this performance to an entirely new audience, there are also advantages in reinforcing the sense of belonging among those who already act to take care of the river regularly.

This was borne out in the follow up survey I did (133—68—10 responses). The most interesting answers to me were the ones that supported the 2003 results, particularly that audience members reported changes in behavior even when previously they had felt “informed” on ways to protect the Mississippi River from urban pollution.

Over half of the respondents to the follow up survey explicitly remembered information that they learned during the performance, on the program or from the displays. Three respondents reported specific changes in their behavior they attributed to viewing the performance, including talking with friends and neighbors about their water use behaviors, washing their car on the lawn and making an effort to sweep grass and leaves off the street and sidewalk and onto their lawn. Of the four respondents who said they did not change their behaviors after seeing the performance, two of these individuals

reported that they had previously been making an effort to conserve water and consequently believed they had no behaviors that fell into the questionable categories.

What is so interesting about this data is that although most respondents felt a connection with the river prior to the performance (8 of 10), six of these respondents to the second survey did view the river and, more importantly, their behavior towards the river, differently afterwards. And half of those individuals reported that the changes in their behavior were directly related to the performance. This is a striking difference from the assumption that the performance, or environmentally focused education, only “preaches to the already converted.” The program and displays were effective in supporting the ‘learning potential’ of the performance. In fact one respondent actually responded to the question if they remembered information from the performance, program and displays with “Yeah! What a neat learning device. ☺” It was only in a follow up effort that the actual changes could be teased out. In the 2003 survey, the sense of community was the strongest element noted by the respondents, yet the follow up survey in 2004 documented how this sense of community was actualized into changed behaviors in at least a few audience members. The sample size in the follow up survey was small and should not be overstated; yet even those who were familiar with water quality issues learned new things and took action on this knowledge.

This paper concludes that intervening in the landscape in a ritualized manner allowed a community to form and did indeed lead to a self-reporting of altered behaviors. One unique feature of the *Solstice River* performance was its blend of beauty and an overt intellectual underpinning. In fact, *Solstice River* incorporated components of entertainment, healing and education into a single performance. This integration allowed for the connections desired by Ms. Hardenbergh to take place and remain meaningful to the audience.

One audience member noted the “spaciousness of the setting, seeing the sun set, and watching the river flow through the city.” Another felt that the most important aspect was the “interweaving of art, nature and the world of people.” Others mentioned the “creativity and innovation” in the performance; or that the “dance, music, river, and people [were] not crowded or commercialized... very cool.”

In the performance of *Solstice River*, healing and education were closely aligned. To begin the healing of the Mississippi River, Ms. Hardenbergh needed to educate her audience about pollution in the river and the individual actions that can be taken to ameliorate the problem. Audience members noted that because of the performance they were “reminded not to dump in the storm drains”... and to “think more about cleaning products; try to use less toxic products and less water.” Others “became more aware of daily connection to the river” or how important it is to “raise awareness of the importance of the river to history, community and people’s lives.” One particularly interesting answer focused on not only education, but also how a true healing of the river could occur. This audience member wanted to bring even more children to the performance because, “start with the kids – make it lifelong – an ongoing and comprehensive education [beyond] just the schools. Make people feel it is their river – the cities need to help people [see this].”

Many audience members expressed a similar desire for deep-seated change. Actions that were mentioned specifically to bring about a change in the river included: stronger regulations and more aggressive enforcement of anti-pollution laws, creating more opportunities for people to “experience the river,” forcing politicians to swim in the river, including the “cost of degradation” into the concept of “the cost of production,” and demonstrations that include river clean-ups. The actual reported changes made by audience members showed the power of place based environmental education.

Ms. Hardenbergh wanted her audience to “feel more connected to the site and each other.” She did not give them a simple answer of how to do this however, but instead allowed the audience to experience both the challenges facing the river and the hope for possible remedies through a re-envisioning of the Stone Arch Bridge. She used the power of information and alternative visions to build a desire for action amongst her audience. *Solstice River* made its audience aware of the fact they are a part of urban, communal, and natural patterns and rhythms, connected by the river. The audience’s perception of the site and the river were reinterpreted to conform to the new information they received. The audience became more conscious of their multilayered relationships to the Mississippi River and this led to an awareness of the possibility for change. The sense of

place on the Stone Arch Bridge was altered by the performance of *Solstice River* and thus the audience desired change on both a personal and communal level.

So what happens when this connection and learning doesn't happen? Or not in the way you expect? This brings me to my third case: **Dance of the Waves**

Habitus, Everyday Orientalism, and the *Dance of the Waves*

Performance has the ability to both reinforce and disrupt societal conventions of who and what is appropriate to be seen in public space. This study uses a site-specific performance in Acre, Israel (5/2010), also choreographed by the American Marylee Hardenbergh along with a colleague, Jennifer Moore, to examine why a dance intended to reveal the beauty of the walls of Acre's Old City has been interpreted as 'taking sides' in the ongoing conflict between Jewish and Arab residents of the city. Overall the study found that dance was being politicized because of its particular context on the 'border' between the two communities. The political power of the *Dance of the Waves* performance was based in its lack of overtly political content. Thus analyzing this dance aids our understanding of how a performance's context can radically reshape the meaning attributed to the work by detailing how everyday assumptions about who belongs in public space (and in what ways) leads to spatial and discursive silences that reinforce and create contested spaces. This section is composed of three main parts, (1) a description of the dance, (2) a discussion of how Bourdieu's *habitus* reinforced an "everyday Orientalism," and (3) comments from the Arab performers and audience members that could disrupt the common *habitus* of many of the Jewish inhabitants of Acre. This study suggests that using art can help identify Orientalist assumptions built into the *habitus* (the 'common sense understandings') of a community, which could also provide a fruitful venue for intervention and creating greater understanding between conflicting groups.

The site in Acre was chosen because of its incredible physical beauty and the fact that Acre is a city with a mixed population of both Jews and Arabs. The overall vision was to create a dance in a location that was inclusive of both the Jewish and Arab communities. Hardenbergh is committed to using performers who live near the site rather than bringing

in dancers from outside. At this site this desire immediately sensitized her, and consequently her audience, to the local context as an engagement with a politicized place. A confrontational performance was not the goal of Moore or Hardenbergh, in fact they hoped to “have a peace dance” with both Jewish and Arab performers. Their goal was not to meditate on the question of whose history of this place is accurate, but to use movement as means to build a shared moment of communication and connection to place.

In Israel there is a clear spatial and mental segregation between Arabs and Jews, even when both communities are citizens of the state. Of the approximately 46,000 inhabitants of Acre, a third are Arab and the inhabitants living within the walls of the Old City are “exclusively Arab” (23). Even so, on the surface, the wall of Acre’s Old City is a good site to realize the choreographers’ big vision of a meeting point between the two communities. Overall, for a city in Israel, Acre has a remarkably mixed population, in that there are actually mixed neighborhoods, including one next to the Old City. (4). Therefore the wall surrounding the Old City is a border between a mixed neighborhood and an Arab area of the city.

Despite being citizens from the founding of the state of Israel (unlike much of the Arab population of Jerusalem for instance) the two communities have had their share of communal tension (and a contested history too long to discuss for the moment). The tensions boiled over into riots in October of 2008. This violence was a draw to the choreographers who felt this site was in need of healing. Consequently, the performance of Dance of the Waves took place in May of 2010, two years after the riots.

The performance happened on a beautiful evening. There were 40 performers total, of whom 38 were Arab (both Christian and Muslim) who lived in the Old and new city as well as a Jewish girl in the children’s choir and Jenny Moore as one of the Wise Women. The performance brought out 1,200 audience members, according to the Acre police force (who threatened to cancel the performance due to concerns about the electrical cord used for the sound system). The performance began with three men moving with flags on

top of the wall, and then to pull the audience's attention toward the beach three fishing boats appeared around the bend with women dancing on the bows.



As the boats moved in synchronized patterns, the children's choir came onto the beach running and spinning and waving their handkerchiefs until they surrounded a single young girl symbolizing a white egret. The children ran off the beach while the wise women came slowly onto the beach. These women were dressed in all white and used long white drapes of fabric to weave in and out of each other. In the next section of the dance a group of young women each had a cape of brightly colored fabric. These women were the only performers who had any formal dance training and their movement patterns were more complex than any of the other performers. When these women finished, all of the performers return, including the boats, and streamers anchored at the top of the wall are lowered to the beach as the finale of unison movement takes place. The dance was timed so that the last note of the music ended right as the sun set behind the horizon. As one performer told me:

the expressions [in the dance] come from the feeling of a thought ... inside of us. Dancing is the art of expressing your thoughts and your feelings without words, and makes you feel good about yourself.... The dance brought joy and a deep sense of pride - for this beautiful site, for the performing abilities of the local dancers, and for the depth of community spirit (W1 personal communication May 2010).

I was struck as I watched the piece multiple times in rehearsal and performance that it did not include any overtly political material. It was simply a pretty piece of public art. Accordingly, I believe Hardenbergh and Moore succeeded in their goal to make a beautiful dance in a beautiful site that was “owned” by the local participants, in this case the inhabitants of the Old City of Acre. Unfortunately, as can be seen in my survey data, the Jewish residents of the city did not attend the performances. Therefore, if the goal was to foster community and a *shared* understanding of, and connection to, the site between the Jewish and Arab citizens of Acre, it was not successful.

Theoretically, outdoor dance “transforms these locations and spaces in ways worth investigating” (McCormack Dance in Paul p. 103). Dance lies at the intersection of bodies, space, society and emotions. The experience is filtered “in order to make it do something *for* you, rather than it being something that just does something *to* you” (JD Dewsberry Witnessing space p. 1918). We respond kinesthetically, even viscerally, to bodies moving in space. Site-specific dance manipulates the above elements to show us things about the way society interacts politically by making community visible in public space. Practices of differentiation occur when bodies are seen, are ‘recognized’ as similar and/or strange. This situated corporeal encounter with an/Other is experienced, and only then can we attach meaning to our responses. Simonsen describes this potential ‘othering’ as a form of Orientalism. However, usually when an academic refers to Orientalism or the creation of ‘Otherness’, s/he is alluding to how the after-effects of colonialism at the national or geopolitical scale influence the geographic imagination of various power brokers.

According to Simonsen:

While this ‘exterior’ approach to the construction of otherness is extremely important, it is equally important to understand how it occurs in everyday life, how everyday experiences and bodily encounters at the same time respond to and produce otherness.

Social categories, like race, or ethnicity, or citizenship, are enacted and given meaning in particular contexts, in this case the context was a dance next to a wall. Dance is an

embodied practice that has a certain expressive quality that eludes attempts to confine it a politics of representation (Thrift, still point). How a site-specific dance is interpreted is founded on both the conscious and less conscious practices (the bodily doings and sayings) surrounding these social categories in place. Consequently to understand the politicalization of this dance it is necessary to examine the less-than-conscious assumptions and actions.

Bourdieu's concept of habitus is a particularly useful lens for examining how a multitude of human activities interact with embodied expressions and social structures to generate the richness of everyday social life. One interesting aspect of the habitus as defined by Bourdieu is that it is *both* the product and the generator of divisions within society, particularly class, gender and ethnicity. A particular habitus is generally shared by people of similar social status, but varies across different social groups. "Habitus is thus a sense of one's (and others') place and role in the world of one's lived environment... habitus is an embodied, as well as cognitive, sense of place." Thus, habitus mediates the positions that individuals occupy. Social categories influence the pre-reflexive understanding of the public space and who/what is acceptable in public space.

Habitus is often expressed as a fear of others who are seen as a threat to "all that is familiar and homely, all that we have grown up with and take for granted, including the socio-spatial knowledge of our neighborhoods." This fear is then institutionalized through planning, spatial segregation and even containment. It must be noted that spatialized fear is inherently unstable; it is reified through life-pattern structures within society. As society changes, these structures follow suit. However too often, these social and cultural relations are not reflected upon, they are just 'lived' as if the way it *has been* is just the way it *is*. Thus, the role of habitus is to facilitate a kind of everyday Orientalism.

The value of considering the role of habitus, and everyday Orientalism, in the interpretation of a dance resides in the actuality of its enactment. Whatever the past actions of a given habitus' history, or its subsequent fate in future actions, habitus is something we each continually *put into action* in the present. We put the habitus in action

through concrete bodily movements in space, and those actions are the ‘products’ of habitus. A particular manifestation of an Israeli habitus helps explain the spatial logic of separation, articulating through planning structures the specific assemblages of a collective desire, which actively produces the effective *incremental disappearance of the Other.*”

It is in the everyday lives of ordinary people that the entanglements of domination and resistance are played out. Hardenbergh and Moore, just by having the dance be so visible on the landscape, were resisting an oppressive habitus of denial. Denial of the Arab community, denial of their imprint of the land, and especially denial of their ability to show themselves in public the way that they see themselves rather than the manner ascribed to them by many of their Jewish Israeli neighbors. Just having a dance on the border, utilizing primarily Arab performers was an innovative act of “political resistance;” it breached the symbolic order. What’s so important to understand is that this piece *was not* explicitly political. In this dance, the simple act of bringing visibility to the Palestinian population became a political act. By employing inhabitants of the Old City of Acre, local (Arab) performers and local (Arab) composers, they disrupted the taken-for-granted Jewish sense of place in that site. I would argue that Hardenbergh and Moore were putting on display the habitus of the Arab population of Acre- in essence making the invisible visible.

The basic idea is that *Dance of the Waves* was not explicitly ‘being political’ or ‘taking sides.’ The dance itself was more or less a pretty piece of outdoor public art. It was not ‘political art.’ What I’ve come to realize is that very *lack* of overt political-ness is what was so disturbing to many who see Israel (and everyone in it) through a Zionist-Israeli lens. Were this political art, many could ignore it outright – it could have been put in a box and thus not need to address the message within the art. However because the intent of the art was to highlight the beauty of the landscape of the Old City and its inhabitants (which happen to be 1948 Arabs) it was difficult to ignore; that is, it disrupted taken-for-granted assumptions and thus led to Hardenbergh’s estrangement from friends and strangers alike. There is a prevailing habitus among many pro-Israel individuals that the Arab inhabitants of the country are out of place in the public realm. Just by making the

Arab population of Acre so visible, and beautiful, the dance exposed the fallacy of that belief. *Dance of the Waves* showed a reality that countered the taken-for-granted Jewish one. This was expressed in the comments by the dancers and the Arab audience members who expressed how proud the community was to be a part of the dance. Moreover, almost unanimously the Arab spectators commended the choreographers for ‘knowing Akka’ by showing the beauty of the performers, sea and city walls. This was a dance that spoke to very different communities and thus had very different interpretations.

Conclusion: Pulling it together

The purpose of this series of snapshots, was to give you (the philosophers in the room) a sense of how I, as a social scientist with a humanities bent, have approached the question of community, politics, and water through a single choreographer.

The first, *Global Water Dances*, I described in a phenomenological manner – emphasizing the aspects that are more-than-representational, that are sensual, visceral and even non-rational.

The second piece, *Solstice River*, was approached as a site of environmental education, looking to see if there was evidence of change in the attitudes and/or behaviors of audience members due to the intervention of a public art performance.

The last piece, *Dance of the Waves*, was centered on the creation (and denial) of identities in place and used social theory as the foundation for engagement.

Each approach has its own genealogy and literature, but for me they are all tied together by a deep and complex understanding of the place – not only its physical and built environment, but the social structures of economy, affinity, and power.