

**Performing fluidity in watery places** Alys Longley and Rebecca Wood (New Zealand)/Jiayun Zhuang (USA)/Rachel Sweeney (UK)/ Chair: Clare Finburgh

***Liquid Perception in a Fluid City*** Alys Longley and Rebecca Wood, The University of Auckland (New Zealand)

The *fluid city* project was an arts science collaboration that culminated in an audio walk through Auckland City, a mobile architectural installation/ performance that toured throughout different urban locations in Auckland and a series of workshops in schools. The aim of this project (for which the author of this presentation collaborated as dramaturg and educational researcher) was to evoke the curiosity of the wider public of Auckland about diverse meanings, values and potential issues related to water. This presentation will discuss how the *fluid city* project evoked a sense of liquid perception (Deleuze, 1986) resistant of majoritarian, static or resource-based definitions of water to evoke a sense of the city and its fluids as multiple, mobile and ever changing in both material and ontological aspects. Research in sustainability studies emphasises the role that imagination plays in prompting city dwellers to consider ecological imperatives in their daily actions. This paper will present tactics of site-based performance in provoking liquid perception in the urban imagination of Auckland City.

***River! River! River!, in the Flow of Modernization*** Jiayun Zhuang, UNC-Chapel Hill (USA)

River! River! River! (Jianghe Xing in Chinese, literally, “Walking along the River”) is a multimedia theatre piece created in conjunction with the volunteer-led Decade River Project. Since its 2008 premier, the piece has toured universities, festivals, and theatres throughout China. Taking River! River! River! as a departure point, this paper examines three eco-theatre productions and discusses theatre’s increasing engagement with ecological and environmental issues in contemporary China.

River! River! River! came into being following a trip to southwestern China taken by director Zang Ningbei and playwrights Zhang Jun and Xu Nan. This trip was part of the Decade River Project – a program launched by the Green Earth Volunteers in 2006, which investigated environmental disturbances, such as southwestern China’s drought and the massive extinction of fish from the Min River. The theatre team documented their encounters walking near the river, conducted one-on-one interviews to capture the daily realities of villagers living along the rivers, and created critical dialogues among the volunteers, scientists, and villagers. Taking the “wounded” rivers as its central character, River! River! River! aimed to address the primary facets of the environmental crisis in a theatre-setting and public forum.

Zang, the director, deliberately created River! River! River! as a combination of eco-theatre and environmental theatre (a concept introduced by Richard Schechner). The multimedia theatre piece aimed to present issues of river degradation, environmental pollution, and exhaustion of resources, while simultaneously rousing public, audience-oriented debates on the paradoxes of China’s paramount narrative of modernization, and the ecologically and socially destructive capacities of global capitalism. Specific topics of debate revolved around questions such as Can we place animals and humans in a “proper” hierarchy when taking human cultures, social and environmental justice, and animal ethics into consideration?, How should the government handle and organize the relocation of people affected by the construction of massive hydropower stations?, and How might we practice environmental preservation and sustainable consumption at the very basic level?

This paper examines the ways in which the eco-theatre pieces raised environmental awareness while providing a public debating forum on the possibilities of “harmonizing” ecology and economy.

***Fluid Motions: capturing performance in post flood landscapes*** Rachel Sweeney, Liverpool Hope University (UK)

This paper will introduce dance ecologist Rachel Sweeney's latest land water project, *Sandskin / Bloodwater*, developed in the Gascoyne region of Western Australia, that responds to themes of climate change through engaging in collective sustainable practices formed during recent widespread flooding. Working along the front line of rural land management, *Sandskin / Bloodwater* aims to generate cross disciplinary dialogue surrounding flood management by promoting sensate exchange between the languages of contemporary choreography, physical geography, ecology and environmentalism.

This illustrated lecture will explore the temporal dynamisms of land through contemporary choreographic design, reflecting on pre-existing models of site based contemporary performance practice, and will consider how the performance research practices surrounding *Sandskin / Bloodwater* are interwoven between embodied response, domiciled histories of place and immersive movement practices. Informing a relationship of body, place and memory, the terms *topographic movement*, *choreography as cartographic process* and *physical synaesthesia* will stimulate further debate on the role of the senses in developing movement responses to flooded environments.

Using stills/video projections and journal extracts, this presentation focuses on Sweeney's ongoing transnational terrain inquiry between the UK and Australia, considering the exchange between place and body, exploring the relationship between sense, perception and memory in tracing simultaneous site exchanges between sites of extreme biodiversity and post trauma environments in Australia and the UK.

Following along recent transnational themes, *Sandskin / Bloodwater* compares certain domiciled narratives surrounding flood histories in WA with recent events in Gloucester and Pakistan, where emergent collective responses to water might present their own critique of map making (in particular established cartographic languages based on land/earth based vernacular). In particular, questions surrounding efficacy, stewardship, and spectatorship in environmental performance practice will be addressed, illustrated using collated stories, photographic documentation and other environmental materials.

Finally, this paper considers how the body in contemporary site based dance performance might operate as a shifting site reflecting current cultural and ecological concerns, by directly engaging with matters surrounding sustainability based on its ability to articulate physically a critical response to interior (anatomical) and exterior (environmental) states.  
([www.sandskinbloodwater.blogspot.com](http://www.sandskinbloodwater.blogspot.com))