

Towards ‘Strategy as Performance’ in Hazard Mitigation: Reflections on Performing City Resilience in New Orleans

Abstract

Performing City Resilience is a collaborative research project that investigates interrelations between theories, practices and strategies of city resilience, and those of performance. In this essay, the authors explore ways performance might conceive of and contribute to practices of hazard mitigation strategy to better understand how these might lead to a resilient city. They focus on their research in New Orleans, working with the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness during its development of the 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan. They discuss their interventions, initial impact, and consider performance of strategy as a critical form of ‘strategy as practice’ (Golsorkhi et al.,2015).

Keywords

Performance; city resilience; hazard mitigation; emergency preparedness; strategy

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We are standing on the banks of the Mississippi, down river from New Orleans’ iconic Crescent City Connection bridge where the waterway bends sharply south-east. The river is swollen and fast, it bullies the boats attempting to navigate its bends, and on occasion it looks as though they may smash into the bank as each has to turn 90 degrees to round the bend of the river side on. We chat to another onlooker; a tugboat captain who has worked the Mississippi for 20 years, albeit further upstream. He says he’s never seen the river this fierce. It’s a stark reminder of the resilience challenges – constructed and natural – that this city faces.

Performing City Resilience is a collaborative research project that investigates interrelations between theories, practices and strategies of city resilience, and those of performance. Initially, we developed this project in conversation with key stakeholders at Bristol and Belfast city councils (UK), and with 100 Resilient Cities, a project funded by the Rockefeller Foundation that generated a network of Chief Resilience Officers, each of whom developed a city-specific resilience strategy. In 2018, we undertook a research ‘survey’ visit to New Orleans, meeting artists, arts organisation directors and the Hazard Mitigation Administrator for the city, surveying arts venues, seeing performance and arts practice, and convening a symposium on performance and resilience at the Contemporary Art Centre. In attending to performance and resilience practices in the city, we became aware of local practices, strategies, knowledge and understandings that had not been part of the emerging body of research on hazard mitigation, resilience or disaster recovery in New Orleans. In

2019, we returned to the city to run bespoke workshops with specific organisations. While we intended these as extensions of our emerging conversations in the city, the New Orleans Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (NOHSEP), invited us to include our workshop in their process of developing the city's new five-year Hazard Mitigation Plan.

In this essay, we explore the ways in which performance analysis might help understand and speak to the changing field of city hazard mitigation, specifically the practice of generating a new hazard mitigation strategy, a process that rethinks the ways a city might be understood as being 'resilient.' While performance studies scholarship has attended to cognate areas of thinking, notably in relation to war games and to the Cold War (see, for example, Davis 2007), there is little work that brings performance and resilience together at the level of strategic city thinking and practice. In drawing these fields, and practitioners from them, into conversation, we seek to rethink the kind of 'resilient city' that might emerge as a result and consider the politics and productiveness of 'resilience' as a key idea in a given local context.¹

Our workshop (2019) with the Music and Culture Coalition of New Orleans (MaCCNO), informally included as part of their development of a Cultural Masterplan, revealed profound unease with the term 'resilience' among local cultural stakeholders. As participants articulated, the city's inhabitants, particularly those from poorer black backgrounds and from the cultural sector, have been told repeatedly that they are resilient, with the implication they are able to face profound issues of inequality, racism, environmental change and poverty with little support. As we discuss later, this neoliberal understanding of resilience problematically puts the onus of responsibility to address

¹ Similarly, there has been much scholarship on performance in/and New Orleans that has attended to areas related to questions of resilience, even if not framed as such, but it has not attempted to face city strategy development (notably a special section of *TDR* 57:1, 'New Orleans After the Flood', edited by Jan Gilbert, Kevin McCaffrey and Richard Schechner).

challenges on individuals or groups of people rather than the state. While our interest in Performing City Resilience focuses on strategic understandings of resilience, and exploring the means by which performance can intervene in the development of strategy, the ‘problem’ of resilience in this work is not lost on us. Indeed, as the MaCCNO workshop clearly revealed, simply naming the term can be read as a loaded, emotive and potentially subjugating act, insofar as the term and any ideological reading of it can be seen to be participating in systems and structures of oppression and division. Nevertheless, it was also clear from the end of the MaCCNO workshop, where participants encouraged us to keep working to integrate the arts into resilience thinking in the city, that there is a desire for strategic practices to engage with and ‘read in’ understandings of place that emerge from local artistic and cultural practices.

In attempting to think beyond ‘resilience’, we here focus on three points of contact with hazard mitigation staff and practices in and of New Orleans. We begin by reflecting on our initial meeting with Ryan Mast, then the Hazard Mitigation Administrator for New Orleans, as a means of establishing existing understandings of hazard mitigation practice, specifically in New Orleans. As part of this, we focus on the scenographic framing of this work in the offices of Homeland Security, as a means of attending to that meeting and informing interventions we made in our later workshop at NOHSEP. In addressing that workshop, attended by senior staff from across City Hall, we reflect on key events and critical issues that emerged in the workshop, and individual performances within it, to think through how performance analysis can explore ideas of multi-jurisdictional thinking – a key aspect of emerging hazard mitigation practice. Finally, we consider a site-based workshop we ran for key arts and hazard mitigation stakeholders in the city, drawing connections between our study of the performance of hazard mitigation and the strategic importance of performances of arts and culture in the city. Reflecting on these three events as

performances that operate both aesthetically (framed as discrete events in time, with clear audiences) and socially (unfolding organically, engaging with activity happening in the moment of their delivery), we draw out elements from these events to understand the development of city strategy as a critical performance in and of a city.

City hazard mitigation and resilience

For planning scholar David R. Godschalk, the ‘overriding goal’ of hazard mitigation practice ‘should be to develop resilient cities’ (2003, p.136). For Godschalk, this is a response to research that revealed the considerable social and economic costs of disasters. As such, and perhaps inevitably, much writing on city hazard mitigation and resilience addresses disaster mitigation and recovery. James R. G. Morris and Paul Kadetz reflect that ‘[c]ulture has seldom been portrayed as an integral factor in the recovery and community rebuilding efforts of disasters.’ (2017, p. 251) They recognise the ‘emphasis in the recovery literature has been predominantly on the rebuilding of physical infrastructure’. (ibid.) In contrast, they point to the potential of cultural practices to contribute to ‘individual and community resilience in the aftermath of disaster’ (ibid., p.234). Where they consider how culture might make people or a community ‘resilient’, we are concerned to understand the fundamental usefulness of creative work at the level of strategy and systems thinking, which may involve rethinking resilience. In pushing for an integrated approach to strategy development, and in deploying methodologies of praxis from performance studies in hazard mitigation contexts, our research seeks to go further than the important work of highlighting the power of cultural production to community and individual resilience, to place it front and centre in the development of city level strategy.

Thus, there is work to be done to explore and articulate the ways in which the arts can inform understandings and practices of strategising for mitigation, preparedness and prevention before or between disasters. This is timely, in that, as Damon Golsorkhi et al. note, since the beginning of the century, there has been increasing interest in ‘strategy as practice’ (SAP), part of a broader ‘practice turn’ in the social sciences. As they identify, SAP is an,

alternative to the mainstream strategy research via its attempt to shift attention away from a ‘mere’ focus on the effects of strategies on performance alone to a more comprehensive, in-depth analysis of what actually takes place in strategy formulation, planning and implementation and other activities that deal with the thinking and doing of strategy. (2015, p.1).

In attending to hazard mitigation strategy in New Orleans, we are interested in thinking through how performance might productively engage with and contribute to emerging understandings of ‘strategy as practice’ as it relates to hazard mitigation in particular urban contexts. There is already a degree of intersection between practices of hazard mitigation, theatre and performance: table-top and live city enactments provide training opportunities and allow for strategies, methods and practices to be refined or revised. In this project, distinctively, we are concerned with the ways in which performance thinking can reveal, shape and inform the development of strategy, rather than test its implementation.

Rethinking city resilience

In addressing hazard mitigation, we seek to rethink the foundations from which a resilient city might be constructed, and future development of this work may well begin to reveal

alternate and perhaps more productive understandings of city resilience. This said, in this issue of *RiDE* which is precisely concerned with resilience, it is important to situate our work in relation to existing definitions of the term, including those that reach beyond the remit of cities. In this, we begin with the sociologist Kathleen Tierney who argues, drawing on David Chandler (2013), that a pervasive problem with resilience discourses in a neoliberal context is that they ‘shift the burden of providing security from the state to the individual.’ (2015, 1333). As such, responding to work by Julian Reid (2013), Tierney finds the choices one makes reveal one’s capacity to accept and adapt in order to tolerate ‘suffering’ in the face of external challenges (Tierney 2015, 1333).

More worrying still, this leads to a framework in which vulnerable subjects become positioned as the cause of social problems rather than exposing the place of structural inequities in causing those problems (cf. Chandler and Reid 2016, pp121-144). Such an understanding of resilience leads to a deployment of the term and concept in deeply problematic and oppressive ways. In New Orleans, this has played out in very particular forms of environmental racism, notably as the Lower Ninth Ward is essentially cut off from the rest of the city (cf. xxxx 2019) and in political messaging that the city and its people are ‘resilient’ in the face of environmental and social challenges that are profound in their implications and systemic in their construction (cf., for example, Kang 2018). In this context, it is vital that we try to nuance or amend the processes and structures by which ‘resilience’ is developed at city level to account for individual and community perspectives without apportioning individual responsibility for the delivery of that resilience. In our work, we are particularly concerned to recognise the contribution of arts and cultural communities to such city-level thinking. Our argument here is that performance might provide a means through which the practice of strategy development can be understood, augmented and nuanced, and that, if such work is deployed in hazard mitigation contexts, it can lead to a performance of

city resilience that attempts to move past the neoliberal apportioning of responsibility onto the individual.

In New Orleans, the predominant narrative around resilience has been precisely that those who are and have been most vulnerable are and need to continue to be resilient, and our workshop with MaCCNO indicated that little policy or structural change had challenged this narrative of seemingly inherent resilience. Our work begins to redress that imbalance by investigating the possibility that locally situated artistic performances, and performance analysis of wider cultural and social performances in New Orleans, might reveal how to understand, live and work in a place that faces particular structural resilience challenges (environmental, political, social). This is to rethink strategy and architecture scholar Melanie Dodd's argument that city-level policy operates 'at the level of the meta-narrative' and lacks the precision needed to take account of the 'small-scale, disruptive but necessary differences between different spaces, cultures and areas' (2015, 40). For while Dodd excitingly points to the need to value the 'diversity, complexity and difference... [the] barely balanced chaos and flux' of cities, we propose that thinking from performance to resilience, by way of hazard mitigation, enables a reconsideration of the strategic policy decisions and structures that shape people's lived experience of a place (ibid). In this, we recognise UNESCO and the World Bank's 'CURE Framework' that identifies culture and cultural production as essential to city resilience at formal levels in planning for and implementing city strategy concerning hazard mitigation (UNESCO and World Bank, 2018). If, as our work in New Orleans has, we take seriously the intellectual thinking of cultural practice in terms of how to live with and think through a city's resilience challenges, then it is possible to put local cultural practices into productive conversation with the development of city level strategy and policy.

Performing Hazard Mitigation Strategy in New Orleans

City Hall, New Orleans, 2 April 2018

As you might expect, one of the things about the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness is that it is, well, secure. We have arranged to meet with Ryan Mast, then Hazard Mitigation Administrator for the City, whose office is located within Homeland Security. The outer door to the offices, which occupies one side of the top floor of City Hall, is protected with a fingerprint scanner and video intercom. It is not an entrance protocol with which we are familiar and the scenography feels more film set than real life. We experience a certain degree of anxiety in trying to access such a formally structured space and we read it in sharp relief to our experience, a day or two prior, standing in the Music Box Village, an open air performance venue, watching a dance performance surrounded by architecture created from found and reclaimed materials, open to the elements, informally configured.

Performance scholar Rachel Hann has argued, via Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja, that '[s]cenographies have the potential to reveal and expose how ideologies of space are ordered' (2018, 23), and as a result, the scenography of a space can signify and enact power relations in the moment of embodied encounter with that space. The formality and security of entering NOHSEP is, in part, practical - the space includes, we will discover, one of three 'situation rooms' from which the city is 'run' during crises or city-wide events. In this moment of encounter, our embodied experience is of a highly codified space that signifies and marks power structures that speak to the importance of the work conducted here. This is, ultimately, a scenography of power that propagates particular, familiar hierarchies and modes of working. The activity beyond this door is marked out as being separate, 'other' from the rest of City Hall and the city for which it works.

We are acutely aware of feeling out of place. Yet, in seeking a meeting here, we are interested in understanding how our work might operate in unfamiliar spaces, how it might ‘fit’ and how we might build connections and collaborations here. In being offered a meeting, we are aware that there may be similar interest in such collaboration from those who work within this space.

Mast greets us, welcomes us to an open office and we sit together at a round table. We talk, awkwardly at first, introducing our project and work in the city to date. We explain we have prepared a series of questions and ask if Mast is happy for us to record the conversation. Listening back, our sense of being out of place is far less evident on the recording than it appeared, to us at least, in the room. This may be because, for the most part, we are asking Mast about his work, and we speak relatively little. As we listen, we hear ourselves begin to slip free from the scenography, locating points of connection despite our sense, in the room, of significant differences in our working practices, institutions and fields.

In this, our first project visit to the city (2018), we hold a series of meetings with stakeholders in the arts and with Mast at City Hall, to identify critical areas for further investigation.² In this meeting, Mast responds in some depth to our questions, readily identifying challenges and issues in the work of hazard mitigation. He recognises, particularly, the whiteness of those engaged in hazard mitigation and talks of innovations to address this. He speaks of the importance of equity in hazard mitigation, of the need to think of those who are most vulnerable. This is critical in New Orleans as, for American Studies scholar Lynnell L. Thomas, in post-Katrina New Orleans, ‘many neighbourhoods [continue]

² We held fourteen face-to-face interviews with artists, leaders of arts organisations, journalists etc..

to languish from an incomplete and uneven recovery' (2014, 170).³ As Mast puts it, 'not everybody's come a long way' (Mast 2018a).

For Mast, the arts have been a part of NOHSEP's resilience practice, but, to date, that work has focused on 'messaging' (ibid.). As he reflects, a key aspect of his work is to generate 'preparedness' and the Office has used the arts for this purpose, in graphic design for public-facing publications, and in the installation of 'Evacuteers' (ibid.). These steel structures, placed at key points in the city, depict a human figure with one arm raised, as if hailing a taxi, or summoning help. The Evacuteers mark evacuation points, in ways that avoid more conventional signage.

Writing on hazard mitigation messaging from New Orleans, Kevin Fox Gotham et al. recognise that,

It is critical for residents and communities to be aware of flood risks and to be prepared for the next major storm [...] risk communicators should consider developing risk messages that are salient, resonant, understandable, and directly related to lived circumstances of target audiences. (2018, 354)

While recognising the importance of appropriate messaging, we are intrigued by the potential to understand the ways in which the arts, and performance more specifically, might be valuable to the thinking and practice of hazard mitigation. This speaks to Mast's concern with finding ways of living in a city that extend beyond post-crisis survival. As he notes,

³ Hurricane Katrina (August 2005) flooded eighty percent of the city, with significant loss of life and damage to property and infrastructure.

there is no certainty that a major incident of the future will follow patterns set by those in the past. The work, he suggests, is,

an effort to, not just make sure that we can bounce back after a major disaster, but we can actually thrive in an environment that's risk prone from the beginning. (Mast, 2018a).

For Mast, this creates new requirements for hazard mitigation, and he recognises the arts offer the potential to help think through practices of thriving in a risk-prone city. As he reflects,

I would think that New Orleanians as a whole consider themselves a pretty resilient people... And they're not wrong, we are. But what does it mean to continue to build upon that, to go beyond what just being able to survive means? That's the space that we're trying to get to. And, I don't know exactly where art and culture can play a part but I think it's probably going to be significant (Mast, 2018a).

Our questions continue a little further, we end amicably and walk back into the light of the day, but we find ourselves drawn back to this comment over the days, weeks and months to come. Over email and by video call, we reflect on ways to investigate the potential for arts and culture to contribute to hazard mitigation. Indeed, this interest is mutual. Mast comments in successive emails not only to be 'intrigued by your initial findings and next steps' (2018b) and that he 'appreciate[d] the [performance] angle/context' of our approach

to analysing his and his colleagues' work, but that it had 'been a point of discussion with a few different groups' across City Hall (Mast 2018c). He identifies two responses that reveal ways that performance can directly shape hazard mitigation strategy, implementation and practice. Firstly, in its Request for Proposals to develop the city's first Comprehensive Recovery Plan (CRP), NOHSEP included the following specifications,

- (Under recommended experience) Experience integrating art and culture into the planning process;

- (Under project scope) Creative Partnerships. Recognizing that arts and cultural production are critical to the social and economic resilience of New Orleans, successful proposals will demonstrate strategies for meaningfully integrating artists and culture workers into both the development of the CRP and its implementation. Such strategies could include, but are not limited to: artist-led engagement programs, arts and culture as a pathway to skills development, arts and culture-focused workforce development, and associated space and placemaking activities. (Mast 2019a, point markers in original)

Mast invited the Arts Council of New Orleans, with whom we met separately, to be involved in reviewing the CRP process, establishing a new line of communication between City Hall and the Council, focused on strategic review of new practices addressing the arts and hazard mitigation (Mast 2019b).

Secondly, NOHSEP acted as sponsoring agency for a successful National Endowment for the Arts grant, on a collaborative project with Antenna, an organisation that develops programmes led by artists and writers in New Orleans. In *20/20: Reflections on Water*, artists and hazard mitigation practitioners would collaborate to ‘examine the city’s relationship with water’ (Mast 2019a). While the project engages in messaging by seeking ‘city-wide awareness and stewardship’, it also seeks to,

involve residents in shaping policy and practices, cultivate regional and international leadership around water management, and amplify the voices of underrepresented communities in these processes. (ibid.)

As Mast reflected in our meeting at City Hall, to address hazard mitigation challenges in a city, ‘you start with what you’ve got’, with ‘examples we can begin to grow’ (Mast, 2018a). As these two developments indicate, practising hazard mitigation through performance can involve opening up definitions of ‘what we’ve got’ to engage with existing city arts practitioners and practices, particularly those that are already addressing city challenges.

City Hall Workshop, 6 June 2019

We arrive early, weighed down with bags for the morning ahead, aware of but less affected by security systems. We are here to run a workshop for senior staff in key departments involved in the development of the city’s new Hazard Mitigation Plan.⁴ These include

⁴ The plan will be submitted to the Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (Louisiana) and to FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency).

architecture, fire, police, the Mayor's office, NOHSEP, planning, coastal management and, slightly anomalously for us, IT. This is the city's first multi-jurisdictional plan, which requires a new process for NOHSEP, City Hall and for many participating staff and departments. Our workshop is one of a series of events designed to rethink strategy development for hazard mitigation in the city.

We meet Mast and NOHSEP staff, who invite us into the meeting room where we'll hold the workshop. The room is rectangular, with a U-shape of tables and chairs. Cautiously at first, we move tables and chairs to create small group spaces, while opening up the room to move between these. Lunch is delivered and we thank the staff as they lay this out along one wall. Mast tells us about the kitchen, the staff and the menus: Liberty's Kitchen is the organisation from which Mast's team order food for such events, a social enterprise offering disadvantaged young people a chance for employment and education in the city. Food, we remember, is important in this city and it feels reassuring to have this in place at the beginning of the session.⁵

As participants arrive, we welcome and invite them to sit at the tables, acutely aware that many will know the room in its standard layout. This is a key site to co-ordinate cross-department response to events and incidents, and the room appears in media reports of live situations. Our rearranging of the room is a deliberate performative engagement with the space to resist any normative and hegemonic conceptions. We hope to loosen the order of the room, to position participants in ways that disrupt familiar hierarchies and invite open participation. 'This'll be different', we hear one participant reflect to another as they enter. Mast welcomes participants and thanks them for attending. He introduces us and reflects that

⁵ A year previously, we ran a public symposium at the Contemporary Arts Centre in New Orleans, and had sourced funds for drinks, but not food. The then Centre Director explained that food was essential and generously provided this. We have subsequently sourced food, although in this instance NOHSEP funded lunch.

our conversation has stimulated new thinking in NOSHEP, which led to this event being included in the development of the new Hazard Mitigation Plan.

As we begin, we acknowledge that it may seem odd for performance academics from the UK to be contributing to this process. We outline our plan, to lead participants through activities to think about the city and ways the arts might make sense of the city in the context of hazard mitigation. We begin by asking participants to reflect on, and share, ways a city artwork has influenced their experience of New Orleans. We're struck by the breadth of responses: formal performance events, art and public sculpture, and social performances that seem fundamental to life in the city. We move on, asking participants to reflect on their work at City Hall, ways their experience of the arts in the city has helped inform their professional thinking and practice. Here, the reading of the arts is narrower. We recall our initial conversation with Mast and work done around messaging. Perhaps, we suggest, given the breadth of participants' collective experiences of arts practice in the city, there are other ways. To help illustrate this, we discuss practices in which artists have engaged with cities as a means of taking account of those cities. We recall Mierle Laderman Ukeles' *Touch Sanitation Performance* (1979 – 1980) and Stephen Hodge's *Where to Build the Walls that Protect Us* (2013 – 2014); which seem to resonate.

Through the remainder of the session, we invite participants to identify ways in which arts practice might have helped them think through professional work on specific city challenges. Through this process, participants make quite different responses. One participant recalls their work on long, difficult shifts following Katrina. They describe seeing, daily, a mural of a whale (*The Blue Whales*, Robert Wyland, 1997), painted on the side of the New Orleans Hilton Riverside Hotel, and how that artwork (re)called something brighter, better than the context of their immediate working environment and the struggling city. In some cases, the connections between the participant's role and arts practice are clear, in others

these take time to find. From here, we turn to social performances in the city, to the ways that these everyday performances in the city are useful for rethinking one's work in the city.

Through careful steps, we invited individuals to become familiar with discussing their experience of artistic and social performance in relation to their professional work, and with a language that spoke to each of these practices. This work slowed the process of developing a hazard mitigation strategy, re-situating participants in the city, addressing lived understandings of the city before looking to develop a strategy to protect that city. It drew attention to the risks of misperceptions of the arts when viewed from a professional perspective beyond the arts. It recognised the difficulties of thinking through arts practice, but also the opportunities such thinking enables for recasting one's sense of one's work in and for a city.

In part, the workshop fits an established mode of strategy as practice. As strategic management scholar Paula Jarzabkowski reflects, strategy as practice involves a series of specific modes of working, notably administrative and discursive practices. Alongside these, she observes a need for 'practices that create opportunities for and organize the interaction between practitioners in doing strategy, such as meetings, workshops and away days.' (2005, 9). We read the workshop in these terms, as an event in which we introduced those engaged in strategy-development to a new ways of thinking about the city and about participants' individual role in that planning process. Yet, at the same time, our work sat well outside familiar processes of 'doing' hazard mitigation strategy: for the participants, it was indeed the 'different' that one participant had anticipated. While our re-ordering of the room and process of reflection on arts and strategy were relatively small steps, they enabled us to address substantial questions of the city, of means of mitigation, and of the ways in which people in critical roles might collaborate on a multi-jurisdictional strategy.

In that we were rethinking familiar processes, we might understand the workshop as opening up the ‘discursive’ practices of hazard mitigation (ibid.). Jarzabkowski suggests there is particular benefit in finding new means of thinking through modes of strategy-generation that evade the familiar terms of a field. She finds that, ‘strategy is mediated by the language that strategists use, with this language in part created by the academic concepts, tools and techniques that populate strategy classes, textbooks and popular media.’ (ibid.) While Jarzabkowski recognises this area is under-researched, she finds that ‘the limited body of empirical research shows that they have consequential effects for the practice of strategy’ (ibid., noting work by Hodgkinson and Wright, 2002). To enquire into the terms of debate, alongside modes and forms of co-creation is to reveal new terms, places, principles and practices as critical elements in a performance of strategy-development.

Site Visit Workshop, 10th June, 2019

We are standing in the foyer of The Seignouret-Brulatour House, a recently renovated building and part of The Historic New Orleans Collection (THNOC) on Royal Street in the French Quarter. It is still early in the day, but already the heat is building and it is a relief to be in the cool of the foyer. We are here with Mast (NOHSEP), Heidi Schmalbach, then Executive Director for the Arts Council of New Orleans (currently Executive Advisor), and Jenny Windstrup, Director of Grants and Strategic Partnerships at The Southern Rep Theatre. We have planned a day of site visits. In our invitation to colleagues, we explain that,

We are going to engage with art objects, art places and art practices of the city.

Through these, we hope to discover new ways of understanding the city. We’ll be asking you to reflect on the workshops we led with you/your organisation as we work

through the day. (Performing City Resilience 2019).

We conceive of this day as an extension to work in performance and related practices that reveals new ways to approach familiar places, attend to places that may be unfamiliar and/or might otherwise pass unnoticed, and to discover new means of making connections between places and practices. Much of this work emerges from artists' responses to cities, such as Kaiwan Mehta's architectural response in Mumbai, and UK walking artist-researcher collective Wrights and Sites.

Alongside our workshop with NOHSEP, we ran workshops with arts organisations in the city, including MaCCNO, the New Orleans Arts Council and the Southern Rep Theatre. In this final event of our visit, we bring stakeholders together for an extended engagement with the city through walking performance practices and embodied engagements with arts sites in the city. Although time-limited, not least because of the heat, we visit sites that allow us to reflect on being situated in specific places in the city and in relation to art objects, performances and venues. We build the day around three sites: THNOC, in the French Quarter; Music Box Village, an open-air performance venue below the waterline of the Industrial Canal in the Bywater area; and Buffa's Bar and Restaurant, a music venue on Esplanade Avenue at the edge of the French Quarter. While colleagues from MaCCNO are unable to attend the walking workshop, they had recommended Buffa's, not least because a participant from the MaCCNO workshop will be performing in the evening.

At THNOC, we are met by Daniel Hammer, President and CEO, and by Jan Gilbert, who curated the exhibition we are here to see, *Art of the City: Postmodern to Post-Katrina*. Hammer introduces the Museum and Gilbert leads us up to the exhibition. On our way, Hammer points out a glass-covered water well in the courtyard, it was discovered during

renovations of the building and reveals the water table of the area just under a meter below our feet; a stark reminder of New Orleans' ongoing challenge with water. A ground floor gallery documents large scale and public art projects in the city, while upper floor spaces display individual artworks. We invite our participants to explore the exhibition, to notice and share their discoveries about exhibits and the exhibition as a whole. We discuss depictions of places in the city, the ways Katrina is represented and the exhibition's broader reflection on the city through art. The group are quiet in their explorations and we have to find spaces between the main exhibition galleries, a corridor-cum-elevator-foyer, an internal balcony overlooking the courtyard, before people feel comfortable talking at length and with any kind of volume.

Later that morning, Delaney Martin, Co-Founder and Artistic Director of New Orleans Airlift, welcomes us and introduces to the Music Box Village. The 'village' comprises a series of 'percussive homes' that can be played as instruments, each having been designed and built by artists. We look around, exploring the homes, finding varying ways to play. We are tentative to begin with, hesitant, it seems, to 'play' too vigorously. As if sensing this, a staff member emerges from the workshop and plays one of the percussive homes for us for a few minutes. The demonstration releases our playfulness, we explore and interact with the space more fully. Afterwards, we walk up the bank of the Industrial Canal, its waterline high above the surrounding land. This, the site of extensive flooding after Katrina, is a quite different space to that of the French Quarter. We take our bearings and reflect on looking back *down* at the Music Box Village.

Mast isn't able to continue to Buffa's but we're joined by Alphonse Smith, then Deputy Director of the Arts Council before taking over as Executive Director from Oct 2019. We sit in the narrow bar, reflecting on the day, on shifts that have taken place for each organisation as a result of our work, wondering about possible next steps for this project in

the city. The informality of the setting and the exploratory nature of the day allows colleagues an opportunity to test ideas and thinking that have been emerging. It is in this space that we first learn how The Southern Rep Theatre and the Arts Council have recalibrated their own organisational strategies as a result of engagement with our work, particularly in understanding their place within and responsibility to the city. As they later reported formally, the Rep found our project was,

materially significant in shaping our approach to programming in the new venue [...] at the institutional and civic levels [...] it significantly broadened our strategy [...] with a particular emphasis on anchoring ourselves not only within our artistic community (a given throughout our planning processes), but also within the City of New Orleans. [This] represents a fundamental shift in our own understanding of the role of the arts in our city's fabric [...] and] helped us raise our gaze and think seriously about how our programming fosters resilience more broadly, and how it fits into a city-wide cultural infrastructure [...] This is not an inconsequential movement in our thinking. (Hayes 2019).

While for the Arts Council, engagement with our research revealed,

new ways of working and new areas of practice with established and emerging partners in New Orleans [...] it created a particular sense of opportunity, urgency and a new call to action [...] especially [in] rethinking arts practice, strategy in the context of resilience and the arts, and the Arts Council's work as a critical component of the city's resilience work [...] and so] enhancing our strategic relationship with City Hall

and, thereby, the city as a whole [...] [XXX's and XXX's] model of thinking has helped us recognize the importance of arts and cultural spaces as sites in which individuals and communities develop and share their specific understandings of New Orleans. (Smith 2019)

Strategy as Performance

Writing on strategy as practice, Ann Langley and Maria Lusiani suggest that,

a full understanding of strategic planning as a social practice requires a consideration of both the nature of strategy texts themselves and the processes associated with their production and consumption. (2015, 548).

Recent interest in the practice of strategic planning recognises the importance of process, rather than simply any eventual published document. This is particularly valuable in hazard mitigation, which is necessarily a multi-disciplinary practice, drawing in colleagues in and beyond the confines of civic, city-level leadership. Indeed, our work in New Orleans reveals that a multi-jurisdictional plan can be a critical means of ensuring that voices beyond those normally associated with such processes become essential in the development of hazard mitigation strategy. Further, given the growth and significance of hazard mitigation in cities internationally, and in the context of such significant contemporary challenges as climate change and COVID-19, this is a particularly pertinent time to reflect on the practice of strategy development.

In our two phases of work in New Orleans, we have identified compelling interest in performance as a mode of understanding hazard mitigation and resilience in the city, by both arts and city stakeholders. Necessarily, this research was grounded in a close survey of arts and resilience practices in the city, and critical enquiry into conceptions, and difficulties, of resilience in the city. By analysing performances in and of the city, and through conversation and workshops with key stakeholders, we generated a model of strategy development as performance, which can operate in arts practice/management and in city hazard mitigation. Through this, we identified such aspects as terminology, form, place, principles for engagement, the importance of individuals and the rethinking of familiar practices as vital elements in investigating and informing the performance of strategy. Critically, as NOHSEP's invitation to the Arts Council to join its Comprehensive Recovery Plan evidences, in bringing thinking and practice in arts and hazard mitigation into close alignment, we created a context that enabled stakeholder-generated collaboration.

The research we have outlined above led to a formal recognition that arts and culture needed to be 'appropriately represented in critical planning and policy development' within NOSHEP's work; as a result that Office is now on 'a long-term path of embedding arts and cultural practices in [their] strategic planning and are working with groups and stakeholders from the arts 'not typically included in [their] planning and project activities'. As they report, our research 'has and will continue to provide great benefits to [NOSHEP's work] create[ing] a more resilient city. (Mast 2019c). These changes, alongside those identified by arts organisations in the city, indicate that our work has shifted strategic understandings, practices and performances of city resilience strategy for and between arts and resilience stakeholders in New Orleans. Beyond the context of that city, however, in understanding hazard mitigation strategy development processes as and through performance, we can attend to such processes as we might to a performance, thereby revealing, analysing and informing the practices and

the interconnections between practices that emerge from different disciplines to secure a specific city.

The work ahead is to further test key aspects of this model in other cities, in relation to similar and different challenges, while also remaining in active dialogue with stakeholders in New Orleans. We are particularly interested in charting outcomes from this work that reveal the emergence of new thinking, and new innovations, and the ways in which stakeholders are drawing new ideas into their daily working practice, which lead to shifts and reimaginings of the arts and hazard mitigation. By analysing the ways in which councils, companies and organisations perform strategy, and by reflecting on, responding to and intervening in these performances, we can enable strategists to understand, rethink and refocus their performances with renewed understanding of their particular knowledge, experience, practice of and contribution to a place. As COVID-19 and climate change are revealing all too starkly, the growth in complexity of hazard mitigation practice, the pressure of competing demands on mitigation staff, and the need for collaborative response to complex, sustained challenges makes such thinking every more critical.

By focusing on the practices of resilience professionals in New Orleans alongside those of arts professionals in the city, we draw attention to acts of performing the city; these performances, artistic and resilience, are part of the city, ways of making it a place to live and work. It is by now commonplace to understand that artists in a city are part of the fabric of city life (cf. xxxx and xxxx 2019; Harvie 2009). However, it is exciting to conceive, with colleagues in allied fields, of such work as strategically important in understandings, plans and practices of city resilience and to see how this can challenge understandings of performance as always already subsumed into the role of messaging strategies developed away from the arts and cultural practices of a given city. This work is, then, about discovering the ways in which performances of city hazard mitigation strategy might enhance

conceptions of performance, hazard mitigation, what a resilient city might be, and from there what we understand by 'city resilience' more broadly.

Our research in New Orleans, and the impact it has had on hazard mitigation practice, begins to suggest a productive commonality between key stakeholders in the arts and resilience in a given city. This extends beyond a mere passion for a place, or for preserving a place. Rather, arts and resilience practitioners are engaged in understanding and reflecting both on the risks and vulnerabilities of the fabric of a city and on the people and practices that are also at risk and vulnerable in that city. It is possible that these related practices of resilience - incorporating acts including attention, analysis, reflection, and response - do already come together at particular times and places, whether by chance or design. However, our research suggests both that this is rare and that there is clear and sustained interest in creating safe and secure contexts in which to think through means of practising city resilience between arts and hazard mitigation practitioners for mutual benefit, both now and for the long term.

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