

Institution: The University of Manchester		
Unit of Assessment: 33A (Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies)		
Title of case study: Multi-Story Water: Cultivating environmental citizenship in West Yorkshire through sited performance research		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2012-2017		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Stephen Scott-Bottoms	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Contemporary Theatre and Performance	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2012-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact Multi-Story Water (MSW) was a community-facing, practice-as-research project aimed at developing understanding and engagement between local communities and responsible agencies in flood-prone areas of Yorkshire's Aire valley. The project used site-responsive creative methods to stimulate community dialogue and capacity building, in an evolving, participatory process. Notable impacts for communities and stakeholders in Yorkshire include: catalysing the foundation of a housing estate residents' group which has since secured significant riverside landscape improvements; creating a stakeholder network group which has informed communication strategies in the water sector, with benefits for the Environment Agency, local councils and charities; and contributions to innovative public communications strategies highlighting major flood alleviation and river improvement schemes. Although much of the impact is geographically local, the research has had national reach, through the sharing of outcomes (performances, films, blog posts) among senior professionals.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research Multi-Story Water was supported by the AHRC in two distinct phases: MSW Phase 1 - Multi-Story Water (2012-13): PI Bottoms initiated project at the University of Leeds but moved to The University of Manchester after three months of 12. The Phase 1 project [Grant G1; see section 3] responded to an initial question from the Environment Agency's national stakeholder engagement manager, as to whether site-based performance might be employed as a tool to explore flood risk awareness in two 'hard-to-reach' urban communities (Eastville in Bristol, and Shipley, Bradford). The performance outcomes responded to the differing contexts [1], but common findings across both sites included: (i) urban communities are not necessarily 'disconnected' from the environment in the manner assumed by responsible agencies; rather, they may simply lack community cohesion and/or their views have remained unvoiced/unheard; (ii) involving residents with their local rivers demands more than single-issue flood messaging: flood awareness is entangled with many other issues related to water environments (biodiversity, community identity, heritage narratives, etc.) which can be recognised and utilised for dialogue and engagement; (iii) river-sited performances can reflect and enhance communities' 'sense of place' and catalyse unanticipated grassroots action [2].</p> <p>MSW Phase 2 - Towards Hydro-Citizenship (THC) (2014-17): As reported in <i>The Guardian</i> [A.i; see section 5], Phase 1 findings directly informed the framing of research questions for this extended, interdisciplinary project conducted in four project areas and involving eight HEIs (GBP1,500,000 total grant; PI Owain Jones, Bath Spa) [G2]. THC sought to: (i) examine communities' relationships with their distinct water environments; (ii) use context-appropriate arts methods to reflect and share findings within and beyond those communities; (iii) fold these creative interventions back into further strengthening of community relations, as a means to build collective capacity toward proactive engagement with the water environment ('hydro-citizenship'). This impact case study focuses on impacts from the West Yorkshire area project, where Bottoms (Co-I) was case study leader, supported by Lyze Dudley (RA, 0.5). The 'Multi-Story Water' name and blogsite [3] were retained for these activities, to maintain public continuity from Phase 1.</p> <p>In Shipley, research was conducted in collaboration with the Kirkgate Centre (third sector organisation with community development remit), in contrasting waterside neighbourhoods with multiple deprivation indices. Residents were invited to participate in a dialogue and creative activities, with a focus on water features (river, canal, flood plain) as potential assets in a collective capacity-building process [4]. Selected creative outcomes were also shared with the wider public,</p>		

as a means to give voice/identity to these communities. These were typically staged outdoors, free of charge, at local festivals – to capitalise on increased footfall [5]. Performance methods included short plays, walking tours, films and participatory installations. Each piece constituted a Practice-as-Research outcome in its own right (PaR), by deploying research findings in context-specific formats that sought to be both aesthetically original and widely accessible (attracting audiences of varying ages and backgrounds).

A distinctive feature of the Yorkshire project area was the further cultivation of relationships initiated during MSW Phase 1 with stakeholders in the professional water sector. These partners were approached less as ‘experts’ (in hierarchical relationship with ‘locals’) than as a community of hydro-citizens who might also benefit from collaborative dialogues, particularly around questions of public communication [6]. Researchers developed an informal professional network in Leeds with further PaR outcomes arising from this engagement process. The project’s emphasis on devising modestly-scaled performances as catalysts for ongoing dialogue enabled flexibility in response to changing circumstances: e.g. major floods at Christmas 2015 prompted the making of *After the Flood* (Leeds) and *Too Much of Water* (Shipley). Subsequent published outputs articulated the key finding that both communities and professional partners welcomed the improvisatory creative process as one they could actively take ownership of and learn from. Acts of hydro-citizenship have thus been stimulated and sustained beyond the life of the project itself.

3. References to the research

1. **Bottoms, S.** and McEwen, L. (2014). *Multi-Story Water: Sited Performance in Urban River Communities* (AHRC/University of Manchester). Project report at https://issuu.com/martinharriscentre/docs/drama_multi-story_water_report
2. **Bottoms, S.** (2017). ‘The Agency of Environment: Artificial Hells and Multi-Story Water’. In Harpin, A. and Nicholson, H. (Eds) *Performance and Participation: Practices, Audiences, Politics* (London: Palgrave), pp. 167-188. [PDF copy can be supplied by HEI on request.]
3. ‘Multi-Story Water’ website at www.multi-story-shipley.co.uk includes full documentation of Practice-as-Research outputs, including performance scripts, films and audio/visual material. Work-in-progress blog posts document the evolution of both project phases in detail. The site was designed to be community-facing and is thus informal in tone.
4. Roe, M. and **Scott-Bottoms, S.** (2020). ‘Improvisation as Method: Engaging “hearts and minds” in the landscape through creative practice.’ *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening* 47, 126547. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ufug.2019.126547>
5. **Scott-Bottoms, S.** (2019). ‘The Rise and Fall of Modern Water: From Staging Abstraction to Performing Place.’ *Theatre Journal* 71.4 (December), pp.415-435. <https://doi.org/10.1353/tj.2019.0092>
6. **Scott-Bottoms, S.** and Roe, M. (2020). ‘Who is a hydrocitizen? The use of dialogic arts methods as a research tool among water professionals in West Yorkshire, UK.’ *Local Environment* 25.4, pp.273-89. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2020.1732897>

Evidence of quality: The research was funded through two awards from AHRC: **G1** AH/K502789/2 “Before the Flood”: Interweaving situated performance and flood narratives for resilience building in hard-to-reach flood risk communities’, UoM awarded GBP69,177, 2012-2013, PI Scott-Bottoms; **G2** AH/L008165/1 ‘Towards Hydrocitizenship. Connecting communities with and through responses to interdependent, multiple water issues’, UoM awarded GBP210,293, 2014-2017, Co-I Scott-Bottoms. Publications 4-6 appeared in international, peer-reviewed journals.

4. Details of the impact

Context: The significance and reach of this project’s impact is demonstrated through the benefits arising for: communities in flood-prone areas; water sector stakeholders; public audiences. The research developed in the context of increased focus in UK policymaking on ‘distributed responsibility’ for flood risk management, as enshrined in the 2010 Flood and Water Management Act. This means that responsibility for flood risk mitigation is now shared among communities, businesses and homeowners, as well as national and local government organisations. The policy shift highlighted a need for new approaches to community engagement with the water environment, to enable capacity-building rather than simply ‘passing the buck’. MSW’s action-research approach thus sought to model alternative communication approaches between and among communities and professional stakeholders. Countering the tendency of water-sector

agencies to use only one-way messaging, dialogue-based methods were used to identify environmental issues of concern to participants, and sited public performances to highlight and extend awareness of these concerns. Coverage of MSW's work included regional press [A.i, A.ii] and appearances on BBC Radio Leeds [B] and BCB radio (Bradford Community Broadcasting).

Benefits for communities in flood-prone areas of Yorkshire: Engagement with residents of Shipley's **Higher Coach Road** estate (approximately 250 homes), initiated in 2012, developed further between 2014 and 2017. Relationships built through research-led conversations informed a series of site-based creative interventions on the stretch of flood plain between the river and houses [4]. These helped residents of a marginalised council estate to identify this under-utilised landscape feature as a space to exercise collective agency. The Higher Coach Road Residents' Group (HCRRG) was founded in 2015 to develop and articulate a shared identity for the estate, rooted in their riverside location. *"The Multi-Story Water project was a key factor in our deciding to establish the Residents Group,"* their Secretary confirms: *"the passion, energy and ebullience [of the researchers] helped us to see that establishing a clear community identity was within the realms of possibility"* [C.iv]. Desired landscape improvements, initially articulated by residents through dialogue with the researchers, have now been successfully implemented by the group with funding secured from external agencies (Bradford Council, Baildon Town Council, Pocket Parks Plus). These include: a permanent riverside footpath (600 m), with connecting paths to houses; a wildflower meadow; nature trail signage; and a children's football pitch [D.i]. MSW's environment-based arts activities prompted HCRRG to request weekly, outdoor art workshops for children/young people. These began in 2016, with MSW seed-funding, and continue to date with local council funding of approximately GBP2,000 per year since 2018. Parents identify sustained educational and wellbeing benefits, as the young people have built confidence in themselves. Several are now members of Baildon Youth Council, where they advocate for their peers: *"these teenagers are amazing and some of them would have been very different people if the Multi-Story Water project hadn't given us that initial support to get started"* [C.iv]. HCRRG continues to work for improved amenities and greater social cohesion (e.g. coordinating visits to isolated older people), and has been identified nationally by the Labour Party as an exemplary grassroots organisation [D.ii]. Its Facebook group has more than 800 followers.

A parallel engagement process with residents of the canalside **Crosley Wood** estate (three high-rise towers) highlighted particularly severe problems with deprivation and poor housing conditions. The researchers concluded that awareness of these environmental issues needed to be raised in the wider community. Thus, the short film **High Rise Damp** (2016) was co-created with residents, with water as a connecting theme. First screened at Kirkgate Centre's AGM, then online, the film sparked a local campaign to hold the social housing provider accountable for living conditions. *"The film that Stephen put together really hit home the issues residents were having to endure living in these poorly maintained blocks,"* writes the Bingley Town Councillor who orchestrated the campaign: *"From that point onwards I started to work with them and raise their complaints formally as a local representative."* [C.v]. As he further explains, the campaign made active use of both the film and posts on our MSW blog. The housing provider had declared the tower blocks fit for purpose in 2016. Yet campaigners eventually secured a commitment to the rehoming all residents in 2018, prior to the blocks' demolition, and to a new build on the canalside site that would still prioritise social housing alongside private rental.

Benefits for professional water-sector stakeholders in West Yorkshire: In Leeds, engagement with water-sector professionals led to the establishment of 'Friends of Fred' (FoF) as an informal network group, from January 2015. Chaired and facilitated by Bottoms, FoF met monthly for over 3 years, at the request of participants: *"For me, this was a 'must attend' meeting"* [C.iii]. Representatives from the Environment Agency (EA), Leeds City Council (LCC), Aire Rivers Trust (ART), Bradford Council, Yorkshire Water and the Canal and River Trust developed an improvisatory, agenda-free dialogue practice, guided by Scott-Bottoms' background in collaborative devising processes [6]. During a period of significant flux in the sector, FoF was welcomed as a 'safe space' to rehearse innovative ideas around public engagement and partnership working. These discussions informed local and regional policy-making approaches. FoF's identifiable impacts include: **(1)** *"The group was instrumental in the development of the Aire Catchment Network"* [C.i]. FoF's non-hierarchical dialogue methods directly influenced LCC's

Flood Risk Manager to pursue a similarly inclusive approach during planning for Phase 2 (GBP60,000,000) of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme (FAS). Traditionally, large flood schemes are designed by engineers before being opened out for consultation, but in this case the consultation informed the design stages: *“I opted to create a network of people rather than a partnership or traditional project group, bringing in a much wider range of people than we would normally consider”* [C.ii]. The resulting network is now the Defra-supported Catchment Partnership; **(2)** FoF *“undoubtedly influenced the perspectives and approaches of participants towards the Leeds Waterfront.”* [C.iii] This prompted a push within the city for a full-time co-ordinator of the annual Waterfront Festival, to help stimulate greater public engagement with the river: *“a post has now been fully funded by Leeds CC”* [C.iii]. Describing the cumulative benefits of FoF for participating stakeholders, a senior EA manager describes Scott-Bottoms’s facilitating role as that of a *“business change manager”* influencing approaches to public engagement within the water sector: *“That debate has really shifted, and for me, that is largely a result of the Hydro-Citizenship research”* [C.i]; *“FoF was invaluable in developing deep relationships between participants that have...enabled challenging conversations beyond the corporate constraints so often evident”* (Chairman, ART [C.iii]).

Leeds-based social enterprise **Canal Connections** (CC) was founded in 2012, using the fee paid to its Director by MSW (for community engagement work) as seed-corn funding. CC became a key partner in the MSW2 research, supporting and benefiting from development of the FoF network, and learning from participation in creative research. *“In a very real sense,”* the Director writes, *“MSW gave us the leg-up we needed to develop our initial aspirations as a social enterprise”* [C.vi]. CC uses canal boats to engage disadvantaged participants with sited arts/heritage activities. It currently runs two Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) projects which develop contacts and ideas developed during MSW2: ‘Float Your Boat’ (2018-21) brings together older, isolated men in collaborative projects; ‘Ignite Yorkshire’ (2018-22) works with young people including Shipley’s Cactus Crew (which evolved from the HCR young artists’ group).

Impact of public performances, in West Yorkshire and nationally: PaR performances developed during MSW2 enabled research with communities to create impact in professional stakeholder contexts, and vice versa.

In response to the 2015 Boxing Day floods, **After the Flood** (2016) dramatised professional flood alleviation strategies as a mobile theatre event for Leeds Waterfront Festival. Audience feedback called it *“a brilliant experience”*; *“very informative and eye-opening”*; *“it made me think of the city differently”* [E.i]. A film version was solicited by curators at Leeds City Museums, who screened it on a loop for six months as part of their ‘Flood Response’ exhibition between December 2016 and May 2017.

Too Much of Water (2016), a solo storytelling piece based on interviews with Shipley residents affected by the Boxing Day flood, was commissioned for Shipley’s Saltaire Festival, to share these stories within the local community. The piece’s affective emphasis on the human impacts of flooding proved transferable to many other contexts, particularly for professionals who deal with flooding. LCC’s Flood Risk Officer, who requested a performance for his team, noted that *TMoW* is *“an excellent way to build a vital skill and understanding in flood risk professionals . . . that every story, every person is different and equally significant”* [C.ii]. Scott-Bottoms had begun working on training workshops for this LCC team, to build confidence in public communications, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced suspension. For ART’s Chairman, *TMoW* crystallised MSW2’s wider impact: *“I have myself come to a deeper and wider understanding of the effects of flooding on people, as compared to the technical understanding”* [C.iii]. *TMoW* has been performed over 25 times, by invitation, at locations nationally including: Insurance Institute of Leeds (twice), Mytholmroyd Festival (Calderdale), and three West Yorkshire primary schools (full list at [3]). A performance at the 7th International Conference on Flood Management (Leeds, 2017) prompted an invitation from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineering, to present *TMoW* at its 2018 flood conference in Indianapolis (rescinded after the Trump administration forbade funding to overseas speakers). At a 2018 Manchester performance (134 attendees), 74% of 72 questionnaire respondents gave the piece a 5 out of 5 rating [E.ii]. An EA colleague adds: *“The Too Much Water show was very powerful and I still signpost partners and colleagues to [the film of] this work online, including our [national EA] Chair [...], who was impressed and taken with the people-focussed emphasis”* [C.i].

The success of these flood-focused pieces prompted Leeds FAS partners to invite MSW collaboration on public dissemination of its Phase 1 installation, in 2017 [5]. The research team worked directly with engineering contractors BAM Nuttall to present **Weir Science** as a showcase for the city's new GBP30,000,000 collapsible weirs. Audience feedback, rendered onsite as a graphic mural, was installed in FAS site HQ [E.iii]. *"This event constituted a step-change for us, in terms of the extent and quality of public interest that was generated in the flood alleviation works—far more so than in more standard public consultation processes"* [C.i]. Subsequently, FAS partners funded MSW researchers to contribute creative elements to first-stage public consultations on the Phase 2 scheme (October 2017). Environment Agency colleagues also invited Scott-Bottoms to devise the script for an information video on internal communication strategies, which was circulated nationally within the EA [F].

In 2019, ART requested a revival of **This Island's Mine**, an interactive play originally developed in 2017 for/about the Dockfield neighbourhood of Shipley, as part of the HLF-funded DNAire project (ART/EA). DNAire focuses on 'restoring the natural heritage' of the Aire, by building fish passes on former industrial weirs to allow salmon, eels etc. to access the river's upper reaches. *This Island's Mine* was revived as a pilot initiative, touring selected venues in the upper Aire valley, to stimulate dialogue around people's sense of place/heritage in relation to the river. Scott-Bottoms's report on this successful pilot outlined engagement proposals for the full DNAire project phase (2020-23), and was incorporated wholesale into a successful funding bid (total value GBP2,300,000) [G]. HLF feedback specifically commended the pilot report [C.iii].

Summary: Statements from stakeholders were gathered in 2020, almost three years after the funded research ended. *"I am impressed with the longevity of [these] interventions,"* notes the Chairman of Aire Rivers Trust: *"As we went around communities as part of our research for DNAire, the mention of [this] work opened doors much more quickly than would otherwise be the case"* [C.iii]. Leeds's chief Flood Manager states that the research *"has had a tangible impact on the way I engage with people"* [C.ii]. A senior manager at EA Yorkshire concurs that MSW *"has fundamentally shaped how I work with others,"* because the research brought into focus the fact *"that it is fundamental to think about how we tell the story of our work in places and communities. It's not an add-on or a nicety. It's about how we reach out to a wider public to involve them in the environmental challenges we all face."* [C.i].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- A. Press: (i) 'Corporate sustainability messaging isn't working: it's time to look to the arts', *The Guardian*, 15.1.14: <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/corporate-messaging-art-provoke-response>; (ii) 'Boxing Day flood stories lead walkers on trail of discovery', *Yorkshire Post*, 23.6.16; (iii) 'Walking on Water', *Yorkshire Life*, October 2016.
- B. BBC Radio interviews: Richard Stead Show (Radio Leeds, August 2016); Paul Hudson Weather Show (all Yorkshire stations, 23.9.17). Recordings on MSW website: http://multi-story-shipley.co.uk/?page_id=2916.
- C. Statements from: (i) Environment Agency Yorkshire's Environment Planning & Engagement Manager (30 April 2020); (ii) Leeds City Council's Flood Risk Officer (3 February 2020); (iii) Chairman, Aire Rivers Trust (8 March 2020); (iv) Secretary, Higher Coach Road Residents' Group (29 February 2020); (v) Bingley Town Councillor (6 March 2020); (vi) Director, Canal Connections (10 April 2020).
- D. Reports from *Bradford Telegraph & Argus* on (i) HCRRG's flood plain improvements (12 March 2019): <https://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/news/17493022.residents-group-helps-secure-new-pathway-and-wildflower-meadow/>; and (ii) Labour Party endorsement (23 March 2019): <https://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/news/17522935.shadow-transport-secretary-andy-mcdonald-backs-baildon-bus-campaign/>.
- E. Audience feedback: (i) Visitors' Book collecting audience feedback for *After the Flood*, 2016; (ii) Feedback data on *Too Much of Water*, gathered by Insurance Institute of Leeds (qualitative) and Green Impact Awards team, University of Manchester (quantitative); (iii) Photos of wall mural by graphic harvester Jon Dorsett, collating feedback on *Weir Science*, 2017.
- F. EA Knowledge Management video, 2016: https://youtu.be/nh_EFqH5E3g
- G. Audience feedback and impact analysis for *This Island's Mine* is contained in 'Report on Pilot Engagement for DNAire Project', prepared for Aire Rivers Trust/HLF.