



**EUROPEAN
SOCIETY FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL
HISTORY**

The Bristol-Bern Prize in Public Environmental History

Title of the project:	Risky Cities: Living with Water in an Uncertain Future Climate
Location: [city, country, digital, transnational, etc.]	Kingston Upon Hull, UK
Timeline: [dates]	July 2020 – July 2023
Host institution: [all kinds of institutions]	University of Hull
Team: [names of people involved]	PI: Professor Briony McDonagh CIs: Professor Thomas Coulthard, Dr Stewart Mottram, Dr Gill Hughes, Dr Amy Skinner, Dr Stuart McLelland, Dr Chris Skinner. PDRAs & creative producers: Dr Ed Brookes, Dr Kate Smith, Dr Hannah Worthen, Jack Chamberlain, Sarah Penney
Non-academic partners/public: [if the project involved non-academic partners; or the public was involved]	Project Funders: Arts and Humanities Research Council National Environment Research Council UK Climate Resilience Programme University of Hull Commissioned Artists and Workshop Facilitators: Lisa Coates and Graziana Presicce Emma Garness Layla Jabbari Sarah Johns, Martin Lewsley and Jay Moy Dave Windass Louis Dorton/Ground The Broken Orchestra Life and Loom Thread and Press Limbic Cinema, Vicky Foster, Joe Acheson Davy & Kirsten McGuire Vent Media Creative writing workshops by Maureen Lennon

	<p>Photography by Anete Sooda Video by FlyGirl</p> <p>Community partners: Timebank The Freedom Centre Child Dynamix at The Hut Hull City Council Living With Water Absolutely Cultured Hull Minster Yorkshire's Maritime City National Youth Theatre Trinity House Academy HU4 Community Hub Freedom Festival Cottingham Civic Hall Audio Description by Minds Eye BSL Interpretation by Dave Wycherly</p>
<p>Goals: [list the main goals of the project]</p>	<p>The overarching goal of the Risky Cities project is to research and develop 'learning histories' for flood-prone cities – and utilize these stories and experiences in community-based arts and heritage interventions which help communities learn from the past to build climate awareness and flood resilience today and for the future. Our initial case study was Kingston Upon Hull, UK, and we are now expanding our work to other UK and international cities.</p> <p>Underpinning this overarching goal are five key objectives:</p> <p>1. Risky Cities uses interdisciplinary approaches (utilizing archival, cartographic, archaeological and flood modelling) to recover histories of environmental risk and resilience in the 800 years between a major flood of 1253 and today. Particular attention is paid to how communities experienced, responded to and learned to live with water and flood in a risky estuarine city, how water was managed and governed, and the adaptations and knowledge systems which helped or hindered community flood resilience. The project also addresses how communities have narrated and explained their experiences of environmental change, including flooding and coastal erosion – for example, in terms of catastrophe, abandonment, loss, or even hope – and the ways we best make sense of uncertainty within these accounts.</p>

2. Risky Cities explores flood mentalities, narratives and fictions recorded in a range of sources – including poetry, prose, drama and more recent news media – across the eight centuries of the city’s existence. The project examines what these narratives tell us about community and artistic responses to both seasonal and extraordinary flooding and to perceived threats of disorderly change, and whether they help communities better live with water. Relatedly, we explore the opportunities to create new pre-cautionary narratives, tales of disasters averted and of communities who overcome environmental and water challenges.

3. The project works with arts practitioners and community groups to deliver arts and heritage interventions that use the project’s learning histories to tell meaningful stories about the past and engage with communities in building climate change awareness and future flood resilience. This will be achieved via an ambitious programme of interventions across the city, working with community venues in ‘at risk’ wards to a high impact city centre arts installation, community textile exhibition and public arts performances. This is supported by Absolutely Cultured – the arts company which delivered Hull’s City of Culture 2017 – and the National Youth Theatre. Concluding the project’s engagement programme will be a co-created Flood Resilience Zine, which will be distributed across the city. It will provide a space for community members to reflect on the project and will disseminate national flood advice, including a flood plan that can be completed by recipients.

4. We interrogate the effectiveness of these arts and heritage interventions using a combination of social science methodologies and participatory tools for arts evaluation co-designed with community and youth groups. We assess the varying potential of our arts interventions and engagement activities to raise climate awareness and deliver an uptake in practical resilience actions.

5. We share best practice – via academic articles in high impact, interdisciplinary journals, a policy report, and specially commissioned short film – with relevant local communities, arts practitioners, policy-makers and wider academic audiences. In doing so, our project and its outcomes increase research capacity within regional agencies responsible for water management as well as amongst policy makers at a

	<p>national and international level, thereby enhancing resilience in other risky estuarine and coastal cities across the world.</p>
<p>Innovative practices/languages/tools: [list the innovative practices, for instance: podcast, video, games etc.]</p>	<p>The project's innovative practices revolve around its use of place-based, historically-informed and arts-led approaches to drive public engagement flood, water and climate issues – and ultimately to drive water and climate action, and build flood resilience.</p> <p>This has been achieved across a number of interventions co-created with community groups and project partners, including:</p> <p>1. Floodlights consisted of three large-scale light-and-sound installations (Sirens, Sinuous City and Overflow) commissioned in collaboration with project partners, Absolutely Cultured.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Each installation was co-created between academics, artists and local communities through a number of development workshops including working with the Trinity House Academy School. - All of the installations were free and open for the general public to explore during a four-day weekend in October 2021. An estimated 11,000 visitors attended. - The three installations explored living with water in the city's past, present and future and utilized the histories and stories of water and flooding in order to raise flood and climate awareness. This included images of the city's maritime history, projections of mermaids swimming in Princes Quay Dock and an immersive flood experience. https://www.absolutelycultured.co.uk/whats-on/past-projects/floodlights/ - Evaluation data (including 457 responses to our audience survey) demonstrates that large-scale public art like FloodLights impacts audience thinking about climate, water and flood issues, driving cognitive shifts and behavioural change. Risky Cities offers one of the first large-scale evaluations of climate art interventions to be able to robustly show the scale and significance of these impacts, and to highlight the crucial importance of local stories, experiences and landmarks in making big narratives about global climate change meaningful at the local scale – and hence actionable. <p>2. 'On the Edge' by the National Youth Theatre and</p>

	<p>University of Hull was a co-created 90-minute performance in the Green Zone at COP26 in Glasgow. It explored young people's experiences and anxieties about living with climate change in coastal and estuarine zones.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Devising the performance was facilitated by a process of co-creative knowledge exchange between academics and young performers, who spent several weeks intensively working together sharing the historical and environmental research from the project as well as their own experiences, anxiety and knowledge of living with flooding and climate change.- Reflective journals kept by participants – including the academic researchers – chart the cognitive, bodily, and emotional experiences of those involved which ultimately challenged our collective expectations about young people's experiences of the climate crisis.- A small audience survey (n = 27) showed that 97% of respondents rated their experience of <i>On the Edge</i> good or very good, with audience members reporting a range of emotional responses to the performance from frustration at a sense of time running out, sadness, resignation and rage through to joy, amusement, hope and a feeling of being motivated to action. More than two-thirds of the audience identified specific ways that their thinking in relation to young people, flooding and climate change had been changed: for example, by underlining our collective vulnerability in the face of climate change, by highlighting the depth and complexity of young people's responses to the climate crisis, and by spotlighting issues of class, race and the difficulties of activism as a priority in everyday life. Several respondents referred to the local as a mechanism for underlining the urgency of the climate crises, noting that the play 'makes [flooding] more local – makes it more real' and 'brought it home even more'. Crucially, 88 per cent of respondents also reported that as a result of watching <i>On the Edge</i>, they planned to change their own advocacy or actions in relation to young people, flooding and climate change.- In summary then, much like FloodLights, <i>On the Edge</i> drove cognitive shifts amongst its audience, empowering individuals to engage in climate and water action. More than 3,500 people watched the livestream events including the UK Climate Resilience showcase in Hull in October 2022, where the audience was visibly moved to tears.- Watch the live performance at
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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5rqFiLAF9s&ab_channel=COP26

3. 'Follow the Thread' (FTT) Textile Exhibition and Workshops

- This exhibition was developed via community textile workshops with groups two city wards who were invited to learn how to weave and sew in order to produce textiles as a way of exploring experiences of living with water and flood in the city. The textile workshops were informed by the project's archival research and Hull's history as a watery city, including historic maps of the city and newspaper cuttings which acted as a conduit through which people could creatively engage with their own experiences of flooding and living with water.
- Our historically-informed participatory and creative practice functioned as a way of making complex issues surrounding water management and environmental change relatable and tangible at the local level, while also acting as a mechanism to promote a dialogue around difficult and traumatic subjects including personal loss and memories of flooding.
- The final exhibition launched at the Hull Freedom Festival at the end of August 2022 and then toured the city including; The Deep; Cottingham Civic Hall; Hull Minster and the University of Hull Brynmor Jones Library – with over 600 visitors coming to see it.
<https://riskycities.hull.ac.uk/sharing-flood-memories-stories-and-histories-through-follow-the-thread/>

4. 'Flow of Words' (FOW) Creative Writing Workshops and Public Art Sharings

- Throughout August 2022, we ran creative writing workshops with community and youth groups around Preston Road with writer Maureen Lennon. Inspired by the histories of flooding in Hull, the workshops explored how these stories can build resilience for the future. The Risky Cities team then commissioned five local artists to respond to the community's creative writing and Hull's history of living with water; transforming the words written in the workshops into poetry, live music, visual arts and projections in two sharing events featuring artists, communities and the Risky Cities team – attracting over 150 attendees. In doing so, we facilitated a discussion and dialogue between different community groups who were able to visualize their writing and reimagine their

	<p>relationship to flooding and the city. https://riskycities.hull.ac.uk/risky-cities-is-proud-to-announce-our-five-commissioned-artists-for-our-flow-of-words-sharing-events/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our evaluations of FTT and FOW establish that innovative place-based and historically-informed art-led methods like these are powerful and effective tools for helping people understand, adapt and respond to environmental change. <p>5. ‘Wet Feet, Warm Hearts, Strong Places’ Flood Resilience Zine.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The flood resilience zine emphasizes how we can learn from Hull’s past history and become more resilient in the present and future, providing advice on what to do in a flood and a flood plan which recipients can fill in for themselves. This has also been developed through a number of creative workshops working with community groups who took part in the textile workshops. - One of its central features involves a timeline of flood events throughout the city from the 13th century to the present day, which has been illustrated by community members. - Currently the Zine is in final stages of design, with a release scheduled for late April or May 2023, when it will be distributed to 6000 households across the city with support from Hull City Council and The Living with Water Partnership. Evaluation will follow.
link:	https://riskycities.hull.ac.uk/
Abstract: [describe the project in up to 500 words]	<p>Estuarine and coastal cities are acutely vulnerable in the face of climate uncertainty. More than 30% of the world’s population lives within 100km of the sea and coastal populations are directly at risk from rising sea levels and the combined effects of storm surges, fluvial flood risk and increased rainfall. Society needs greater resilience at the local, national and global scale: estuarine communities and businesses must learn to ‘live with water’ in an uncertain future. Yet engaging diverse communities with water challenges is a significant problem for agencies and governments, with the most vulnerable in societies often the least well informed about resilience actions. Here we bring innovative arts and heritage solutions to bear on the problem of engaging these communities with flood risk and building resilience in one flood-prone city, Kingston upon Hull, UK.</p>

Hull is recognised globally for its vulnerability to flooding in the face of rising sea levels. It is one of five global cities selected to participate in the Rockefeller Foundation's and Arup's City Water Resilience Framework development programme. Yet international awareness of Hull's future flood risk finds little reflection in local communities. And this despite serious flood events in 2007, 2013 and 2015, as well as an 800-year history of living with water challenges in the city. Hull's excellent archival records and literary and dramatic works – combined with the University's expertise in flood science and modelling, environmental histories and literature, community engagement and cultural sector evaluation – offer unrivalled opportunities to explore histories of risk and resilience in the city and surrounding area.

In this project, we develop research-informed 'learning histories' to build resilience for the future, with the ambition of leveraging a year-on-year improvement in resilience to flood risks and uptake of resilience actions in and around Hull. Working alongside arts partners and practitioners, flood agencies, young people and local communities – who will contribute to the co-production of research agendas as well as academic and policy-relevant outputs – we employ these learning histories in community-based arts and heritage interventions and large-scale productions by national arts organisations including Absolutely Cultured and the National Youth Theatre (NYT). Supported by arts practitioners, community groups and our project partners, the research outcomes both inform and are in turn shaped by the creative community activities. Using a combination of social science methodologies and participatory tools for arts evaluation co-designed with community and youth groups, we interrogate the effectiveness of place-based, historically-informed and arts-led approaches to raise climate awareness and deliver an uptake in practical resilience actions, evaluating models for engagement and developing best practice that can be applied nationally and globally. In doing so, we will improve climate change awareness, water action and flood resilience in other risky cities in the UK and beyond.

Images:

FloodLights



FloodLights - Sinuous City Installation – Briony McDonagh 2021

On the Edge



National Youth Theatre 'On the Edge' Rehearsals – Ali Wright 2021

Follow the Thread – Workshops and Exhibition:



Risky Cities Textile Workshop at Cottingham – Anete Sooda 2022



Risky Cities Textile Exhibition at the Freedom Festival – Anete Sooda 2022

Flow of Words – Workshops and Sharing

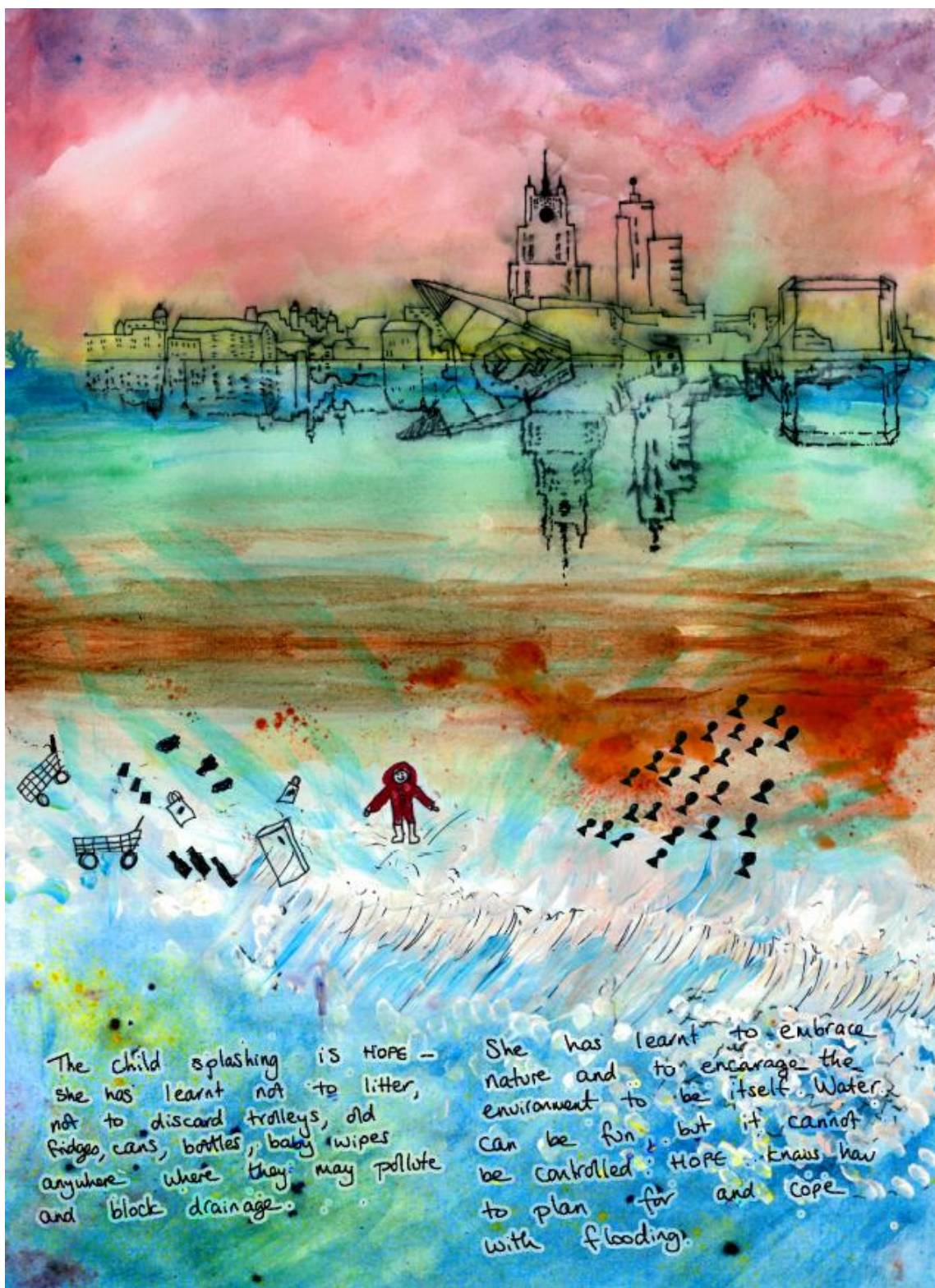


Risky Cities Poetry Workshop at Timebank – Anete Sooda 2022



Risky Cities Flow Of Words Sharing at the University of Hull – Anete Sooda 2022

We Feet, Warm Hearts, Strong Places - Zine



Page from the Wet Feet, Warm Hearts, Strong Places Zine with poetry and artwork from the local community – Anete Sooda 2022