

**Title:** Performing arts activism: Conceptualising an eco artistic, intercultural choreographic practice and performance called "*Siku Aappoq/Melting Ice*" for addressing climate change.

**Authors:** Pamela Burnard, Peter Cook, Susanne Jasilek and Birgitte Bauer-Nilsen

**Abstract:** In this article we argue that the power and politics of the arts is a way of raising awareness and responding to the globally shared problem of climate change. The impact of climate change is addressed here in the connection between an intercultural dance performance called "*Siku Aappoq/Melting Ice*" and the performative locus, which exists, politically, culturally and geographically inscribed. The approach to choreographic practice sees the body as a site from which comes forward the story of climate change as processes happening in nature to an iceberg and performance as the radical harmony or solubility of the body in all that we do not call the body. This is the context for deepening our connection to the viscosity of the living earth. The perceived impact of a choreographic practice seems to manifest itself primarily when looking back at how the dancers were becoming and being icebergs, and, in the act of labelling the choreographic practice of dance-making, the process gives rise to activism.

**[Film excerpt and full length filmed performance see <http://bibacc.org/performative-project/>]**

**Keywords:** climate change, arts activism, intercultural choreographic practice

## INTRODUCTION

We know that climate change is a physical phenomenon that affects humanity within contemporary society, politics, economies, and culture. We also know that climate change is forcing us to revise and redefine our global roles, positions, thoughts and behaviours. The diverse effects of the melting ice means that people are socially and culturally confronted with conflicts and contestations connected to the 'facts' of climate change.



Figure 1: Sea ice in The Arctic Ocean Viewed from a satellite in 1980 and 2012. Ice disappearance is accelerating. Source: DMI: Martin Breum, *Når isen forsvinder* page 17, Gyldendal 2013.

We know that ice in the Greenland has reduced dramatically from 1980 to 2012 (Martin Breum, 2013). This has a big influence world-wide because the rise of the water and air temperatures affects climate around the world. Drought has been documented in Brazil, and floods and heavy storms have been observed in other parts of the world. Our climate and our world are changing rapidly. It is incumbent on us as global citizens to find new solutions to new challenges, and decide what

our own roles will be in the shifting landscape of our interconnected lives. Some people see their task to be the understanding of Nature, so that they may take their place somewhere in her great design. Breum (2013) argues that melting of the ice makes it possible to travel by ship both through the northwest passage and northeastern passage of Greenland to Canada and Russia. While this means that it is easier to travel with goods, it also has a profound effect on the political situation of the counties around Greenland because they believe they own a part of the sea.

The diverse effects of the melting ice means that people are socially and culturally confronted with conflicts and contestations connected to the 'facts' of climate change. We are facing an anthropogenic degradation – melting ice ("*Siku Aappoq*") on the one hand and increased regions of drought which will increase food prices, because harvests will fail, and humans will lose their neighbours and houses in heavy storms and floods. These phenomena can create famine, instability in political relations and wars. Therefore our age of climate change can also be an era of civil and international conflict. Furthermore it can lead to the decline of many species and be regarded as violence against them (Rebekka Solnit, *The Guardian*, April 7th 2014).

We think the power and politics of the arts is a way of raising awareness and responding to this globally shared problem. In this article the impact of climate change is addressed in an intercultural performance called "Melting Ice". This is the Greenlanders and Scandinavians approach to climate change. The approach

to choreographic practice and performance is the radical harmony or solubility of the body in all that we do not call the body.

Environmental art offers a means of expression, communicative exchange, public engagement and insight into one another's interpretation of issues. Environmental artists offer artistic form to “doing democracy” in the creation of spaces where, among other things, myths are uncovered and broken down. In their work on the political uses of popular culture, Inghorn and Street (2013) argue that popular culture plays three roles in art as activism or activist arts: representing the wider world, forming collective identities and mobilizing action. Increasingly new and important artistic communities, practices and forms of art activism, are being used to influence public engagement with, and even drive, current debate on climate change. We are even, at times, seeing arts and popular culture indirectly shape future policy initiatives. Mattern and Love (2013:39) emphasize that in the newly emerging arts-based environmental education ‘many neighbourhoods, cities, states and even nations are turning to the arts and culture as a stimulus for community development by bringing public attention to community needs’. This means that politics is an important factor in the perception of the challenges associated with climate change.

Historically, a turning point was reached in the 1980s, when we saw the genesis of what Mantere (1992) terms the ‘new environmental education through art’. In 1992, a little more than twenty years after the landmark 1971 InSEA conference in Helsinki, the Earth Summit took place in Rio de Janeiro – the big UN Conference on Environment and Development. It was at this time that Mantere

articulated, in her seminal article “Ecology, Environmental Education and Art Teaching”, that, in her view, ecological thinking and action should be regarded as a guiding principle of *all* education. Art education and the arts specifically could play an important role in the development of new forms of Environmental Education. For Mantere, a genuine appreciation of nature and motivation to act for the good of the environment are based, above all, on positive and valued experiences and these are often of an aesthetic nature. Such experiences can be generated by open and immediate contact with the phenomena of nature and the new and fresh view of these phenomena that art provides. The key point here is that to perceive “better” is the necessary starting point to creative change in personal and collective decision making, lifestyles and public awareness (Mantere, 1995).

Participation in arts activism is a method used for increasing sensitivity and raising awareness of the environment. The categories that Jokela (1995) offers, which work towards achieving or accomplishing this purposive orientation, include:

1. Exercises on focusing your observations and perceiving them more sensitively;
2. Exercises which bring forward the processes happening in nature and help in perceiving them more sensitively: growth and decay, the flow of water, the turning of day and night, etc;
3. Exercises which aim to alter set ways of viewing the environment; and
4. Exercises which test the scale of the environment and human ‘limits’.

How choreographic practice and performance becomes an (inter)-cultural convention, value and signifier that is inscribed on the body and performed through the body, requires performativity associated with “response-ability” to the embodied, ethical, material, affective and discursive dimensions (Mackinlay, 2016:18) of expressive movement. An intrinsic component of the overt and active engagement of people in choreographic practice involves how eco-artistic art-activist performance operates as intercultural dialogue within and between the bodies to enlarge and enrich human expression. But also, in this case, it involves human understanding of and orientation of attention to climate change (French and Loxley, 2015).

This involves being more than merely a receptive being repeating static dance patterns but rather an active participant, acting upon a dynamic quality of transformation associated with public issues and change at a personal, social, cultural and political level. So, how do we assign meaning to the body with intercultural experiences? How does “being-in-relation” form both part of nature and standing outside of it and dancing it? Here, we draw upon Helen Cixous intercultural definition of “to live the orange” to dismantle the split between the mind and the body, the masculine and feminine, the creative and the analytic, that enables cultures to become as one.

We conclude this section with a restatement of the argument that choreographic practices embody meanings / communicate activism and have transformative potential. Choreographic practices, as an interactive communal embodiment,

afford the means for synchronizing the deployment of a participant's experience of moving with that of other participants, facilitating the individual and the collective (intersubjective) focus on specific moments and sequential patterns in the temporal unfolding of the dance performance.

As Gatens (1996:67) argues:

Emphasis on the practice allows one to consider not simply how discourses and practices create ideologically appropriate subjects but also how these practices construct certain sorts of body with particular kinds of power and capacity; that is, how bodies are turned into individuals of various kinds.

## **THE RESEARCH**

Drawing from the literatures and themes overviewed earlier, we posed the overarching, umbrella research question: What can we learn about climate change and arts activism from participants involved in “Melting Ice” – a performative intercultural installation. The questions we were particularly concerned with were: (i) How does the choreographic practice and filmed performance assign meaning to climate change? (ii) How does the choreographic practice embody arts activism? (iii) How does the choreographic practice (and film) perform interculturality?

The first thing to point out about this research is that it is thoroughly qualitative. Following Denzin and Lincoln (1994), we took qualitative research to be inherently multi-method in focus. Viewed as *bricolage*, we pieced together close-

knit elements of the choreographic practice knowing the emergent construction may change in time and take new forms as different tools, methods and techniques are added to the puzzle. In developing an artistic research approach to dance research we draw on Van Manen (1990), for whom phenomenological research is a 'poetizing activity'. It involves a use of language that 'authentically speaks the world, rather than abstractly speaking of it'. As such, it is a language that, as Merleau-Ponty (1968) said, 'sings the world'.

The main touchstone in this research project is one particular form of phenomenological research, namely the relatively recent practice of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), as it was advanced by Smith, Flowers and Larking (2009). Characteristically, IPA studies usually have a small number of participants and aim to reveal something of the experience each of them had. Usually data are collected in the form of in-depth interviews which typically allow the researcher considerable flexibility in probing interesting areas which emerge in the conversation. We also engaged in analysis of the filmed dance performance. The primary research foci of thematic factors were used to focus *in vivo* observations of the footage during creation of the summarised written accounts. Following this process, transcribed qualitative data, along with research notes from dialogues with participants during and after the twelve interview sessions with individual participants, were read repeatedly to ensure familiarity and enhance trustworthiness.

Observations relevant to the research questions were coded; these codes were combined, split or refined as analyses proceeded in an iterative fashion

(Saldana, 2013). Themes and sub-themes relating to the main theoretical constructs were created through a consolidation and mapping process of codes identified through holistic, in vivo, descriptive and pattern techniques. There is a subtle difference between analysis and interpretation. Where the former involves working to uncover patterns in the data, the latter entails explaining those patterns, translating them, stating and making sense of them in one's own words. IPA is committed to moving from the particular to the shared and from the descriptive to the interpretative (Smith, et al, 2009). This process of analysis can be viewed as an iterative and inductive cycle that draws upon a repertoire of strategies that involve: (i) identifying emergent patterns; (ii) mapping of interrelationships – connections for the whole group and our own experiences; and (iii) concluding with interpretation.

### **Introducing "Melting Ice": a self-narrative account of the choreographic practice**

The choreographer's *self-narrative* that follows offers insights into experience with embodied illustrations in the reconstitution of identity, of engagement with cultural codes and expectations. The storying of the choreographic practice, as told here, occurred over a series of 3 one-hour interviews during a weekend where, together, we reviewed again and again the filmed performance, critically reflecting upon a deeper understanding, with others, of the ways in which the project "Melting Ice" came into being.

*As an environmental artist, I use art activism as a point of departure for the artistic process. Therefore, I create performative*

*installations in a devising collaboration with artists from different parts of the world who have experienced climate change based on their cultural and geographical origin. The choreographic process with the artists is a dialogue, and the scenes are to be developed in an exchange between movement, music and installation. The close dialogue causes divergent artistic developments that complement each other and help create a dynamic transformation, both artistically and socially, with consequences for both contributors and the public. The different artistic elements are equal in the process. The method involves fundamental and mutual respect between the artistic expressions. This exchange and communication between the participants causes everyone to become familiar with and gain insight into each other's interpretation of the concept and it can create the open space where, among other things, myths are uncovered and broken down.*

***It is my ambition and goal*** that the interdisciplinary/intercultural dialogues in the creation process, through the physical presence, lead to cross-border and innovative dialogues and new artistic communities and hybrids about the current debate on climate change – depicted by Art Activism.

*In addition **intercultural collaboration** is an invaluable factor in the artistic process, because the different cultures each have their bodily, musical and visual expressions. It turns out in corporeality,*

*movements, sounds and materials. The indigenous people in this performance “The Inuit” understanding and depiction of climate change inspire me. This means that the dialogue between the participants also becomes a dialogue about the artistic expressions of the different cultures. This leads to the development of a further contradiction between cultures in both artistic and social understanding of climate change.*

*Through dance, music and visual expression, **there is a dialogue about climate change** in a critical approach to Western civilization and scientific approach to nature and humanity. Similarly, climate change can be seen as part of the civilization's understanding of dance, which has followed the approach of philosophy and science to nature as something we can control and put into system which not always the best for the body. The dancers will appear abstract, such as icebergs and/or people, where it is possible for the viewer to decide whether they are the natural phenomenon of ice or humans. It shows how immersion and listening to nature is important for human and they are soluble related. The completed performative installation “Melting Ice” is a metamorphosis, a sensual, abstract depiction of a melting ice transformation in man where survival or drowning death is being put at risk.*

*In describing my own choreographic practice and the process of developing “Melting Ice”*

***I begin the process** with the idea to make a performative intercultural installation about the melting ice in Greenland and its effect in Scandinavia in relation to the climate change.*

***I select the dance artists** by their artistic skills and by asking them whether they want to participate in a devising process to develop a performative installation. It requires that they have to participate in making the concept by using and displaying their knowledge and experience in climate change [connection]. They must agree on this work as well as their artistic participation in intercultural collaboration. Then I interview the dancers, the installation artist, the composer and the light designer about their experience, opinion of the melting ice and climate change both artistically and socially.*

***My meeting with the dance artists:** Alexander Montgomery-Andersen, the dancer from Greenland, talks about his thoughts regarding the climate change and that the ice is no longer in the harbour 6 months of the year but has melted, which means it is possible to go fishing nearly the whole the year around. They have also access to groceries and other things because the ships can enter the port. This means that the living costs are less expensive because they don't have to have polar dogs to go fishing and groceries are cheaper. Thomas Johansen, the dancer from Norway, tells that he is inspired by the imbalance in man that appears as stress and disease because man has attempted to take power over*

*the nature without listening to the consequence it has had to the nature and man. The singer and musician Aviaja Lumholdt from Greenland says; Her inspiration is from the shamanism in Greenland which says that the nature has a soul, like the mountains the sea etc. and that the shaman can talk with the nature and get advice. The light designer Jesper Kongshaug has been in Greenland many times and he talks about the rising water in the harbour and the light in Greenland. In addition, in the culture, there is a different understanding of time, which is associated with the nature, and the kind of challenge it gives [connection].*

*I used these concerns in my development of the first draft to a synopsis of “Siku Aappoq/Melting Ice” and continuing further discussion with the artists. I want to show the melting ice and its development in a meditative, slowness with the sudden calving, how ice flakes and melting ice become into water and I want to use time in the performance. Time is very essential when we start to listen to the ice; Nature has its own time frame. The imbalance in man and nature is also an element of the concept and it is showed by a metaphor that the ice can be interpreted and understood as an ice or man in an abstract way [representation].*

*During the process of creating the performance, I wish to create an intercultural dialogue [embodiment] by a devising process during the development of the process for the composer, musician, the*

*installation artist, the light designer, the choreographer and the dancers, I get these inputs:*

**Composer and musician:** *Carsten Dahl wants to use dripping water and the sound of ice besides demonstrating the opposition to the high tempo and sophisticated jazz-music from New York to symbolize society's high speed and the greed to want more. He also uses the missionary music in Greenland. The singer Aviaja Lumholdt decides to talk to the iceberg and use songs and rhythms from the shaman's songs.*

**Installation artist** *Marianne Grønnow wants to make a transparent blanket/a crystal in organza material to symbolize an iceberg. The dancers to go under, be upon and move the iceberg can use this crystal. The dancers are mystic characters with white paint on their bodies a small clothe around their hips.*

**Light designer** *Jesper Kongshaug wants to create an atmosphere for the light in Greenland and its different reflection on the installation/ the crystal and the dancer's skin.*

*After I have received the music and the installation/crystal blanket is in process of being created, I make the first movement material that is qualitative, dynamic and essential movements for each scene. I want to use this material in the rehearsal with the dancers.*

***The final synopsis is made by me and is given to the artists.***

*Bodily experience and knowledge [embodiment] are leading elements in the process of creating choreography. Work items for the dancers include:*

- *To practice improvisations tasks*
- *To experience different movements quality*
- *To experience different music forms*
- *To experience the installation*

***On the first day** of rehearsal, I tell the dancers my intention with the movement material in connection with space, dynamics, installation, music and light design. In addition, I tell the dancers about the character to be an iceberg and a human being and here I also introduce the costume.*

***Then we begin** the rehearsal by improvising the movement material in connection with the synopsis and my inputs and the dancers interpretation of the inputs and their further development of the movement material. The dancers work a lot to master melting ice both its different formation and the organic relationship with man. The dancers make research about the movements of the iceberg and the water [embodiment].*

*Furthermore we work with the dance and music from Inuit's. Alexander, the Greenlandic dancer. is a great informant for the development of the dance.*

*We have the music from the first day of rehearsal as well as the installation/the crystal blanket. This means that the dancers experience the movement material associated to these elements, which is very helpful.*

*Everybody meets in the studio and there are open dialogues with the participants – the composer, installations artist, light designer and dancers about how they think the movement's material goes together with the installation, music and light design. The final adjustment and inputs are made.*

Perhaps the most important element in this narrative is *connection*: connection between selves, others, sociocultural and political context, and the language of dance used to articulate/represent those connections; it involves **connections** between personal experience and larger activist issues concerning the interrelations and negotiations between selves and others. Like many artists with an expertise in choreography, the *performing body*, a body which moves while it thinks, feels while it imagines and senses as it understands, dialectically becomes **the representation as empowered agent of climate change** which is inherently and necessarily embodied. **Embodiment**, as argued by Tami Spry (2011:62) reveals the inherency, the seamlessness, the materiality of the personal and political, in a manner where we cannot tell where one ends and the other begins. The choreographic practice that inheres in “Melting Ice” concentrates on the body as a site from which comes forward the story of climate change, and the processes happening in nature (i.e. the iceberg) which is

generated by turning the internally somatic (the body's interaction with culture) into the externally semantic (language, a telling). Embodiment, then, is a critical, reflective and analytical interweave of meaning, signification and representation. In this choreographic practice, the body becomes an active and performative locus of agency which exists politically, culturally and geographically inscribed and hence engages dialogically and ideologically.

Integral to Birgitte's choreographic practice is her view of the '**performance**' of politics as expressly and instrumentally political. She embraces 'performance' as a method of '**artistic rebellion**'. And when the performance is less overtly directed at government and instrumental political actions, it still carries out, in public spaces, a discourse about authorship of a collective embodiment of decisions, as the following conversation with Birgitte suggests.

*I let my dancers' creativity be part of the **performance** ... it is as well their participatory discourse, their motivations, and as such, it's about inclusion, resilience, **connection** and shared views ... and all these things create a kind of artistic rebellion ... it is in their expression of an inner space and of their inputs. They are equal voices with me .... We do a lot of talking ... conceptualizing and creating the performance together including visions of society in which difference and opposition to power are continually expressed and reinforced. I get all their inputs ... through embodiment of cultural meaning ... Their **improvisations** function as inputs into the performance... they become so attuned to nature.*

The dialogue that the choreographer refers to between herself and the dancers is echoed in the narrative of the dance itself, where the characters speak with their environment through embodied meta-language, and the environment responds through production elements: the sound, the set, the lighting and the atmosphere. The materiality of the set is ever changing and as the “ice melts” the movement has little choice but to acquiesce. The seamless devolution of the ice demonstrates for an audience that it is a deliberate act that has led to the demise of this environment and holds the humans accountable for the atrocities of choice. Central to the activism is the use of sound that floats between being atmospheric into a purposeful role of activism, a call to arms. The metaphors are too powerful to ignore. The schism between cultural (mis)understandings are portrayed through the actions of the characters but are reinforced by sound and set.

Irrespective of prior politic beliefs entering into this climate change educative experience, the choreographic work acts to bind the audience, the dancers and the choreographer through their intent. This in-turn forms the collective identity described by Cutcher (2015). The work takes a localised issue and demonstrates the global significance using the choreographic devices to achieve empathy. The test of the effectiveness of the message and intent being clear will result in the mobilization of action.

These are critical reflections about, through and with performance as a lens that illuminates the constructed creative, contingent, collaborative dimensions of arts activism; a form of human communication through performance. Performance of

dance fulfils the functions of arts activism through embodiment and participatory understanding. We hear more about the methodological processes of the performance and the meaning making process from the dancers' perspective next.

### **What do we learn from the participating dancers: Interview with Alexander**

Alexander speaks of the ephemerality of nature and the transience of dance performance which seems importantly different. In many ways the most fragile and ephemeral of the dancers, there exists a fundamental perceptual and cultural **belonging** in terms of his identity as a Greenlandic dancer and the continual process of **becoming** a vehicle with which to increase the political and public engagement with issues of climate change.

*For me, it is the performance process which continually forms the theme, the nature, the soul of the project which is "Melting Ice" ... I was always interested and intrigued to see how Greenlandic people see it or experience it, or maybe how they have a lack of really noticing it. And then also how foreigners or people from other countries, ... how they choose to see it or see the importance of it or the significance of it and I really think it's quite interesting, this contrast in **ways of seeing** things. I think often when you're coming from the outside you have a more intellectual approach. 'Oh I've read this or that' or 'I hear this is happening' where when you're living in Greenland you have this experience of **belonging**; it's because you've lived here*

*10 or 15 years ago as well, when nobody was talking about it. And you also live here today and you can really see the changes. As Greenlandic people, we are constantly adapting ... this year the ocean will freeze to ice, and that means you can't get ships with food for several months. But then, because of the ice melting quicker, there are some places where before they have maybe 5-6 months where they couldn't get new resources, now they can almost have resources the whole year round. And for a lot of Greenlandic people that's a really nice thing. All of a sudden you can have fresh fruit and vegetables all year round. You don't have to have canned potatoes. And then there are other sides of it like the hunting – the things that are connected to nature – hunting, fishing. But now the ice isn't thick enough or it won't carry the dog sleds. It's really something you notice a lot in Greenland because we don't have that big an island, everything is on the coast. We have a very big inland but that's the polar ice cap and it's ... nothing lives there. So everything is happening on the coast.*

Alexander says a lot that demystifies the ubiquity and magnitude of cultural **belonging and ways of being** as a Greenlandic person rooted in local knowledge and social commitment. He lives an Icelandic experience directly but reflects on it as a dance performance. The embodiment of cultural knowledge is embodied and present as he tries to articulate the emergence of ideas as a dancer.

*Everything we did started from improvisation. Like everything was taken from improvisation. Like the choreography was developed through improvisation and of course Birgitte's guidelines ... she had a very detailed synopsis about the energy..., it's kind of like a ping-pong between choreographer and dancer. Birgitte also begins noticing what she's looking for through our movement when I mimic icebergs and ice in water. As a Greenlander, I know water, it's liquid it's flow, it has no sharp edges, but then iceberg is like the opposite. It's hard, and it has edges and it's clean cut ... so this thing of mimicking ice in water is very interesting anatomically as well.*

*And sometimes its literally trying to mimic like the ice; to show ice, you know. And sometimes it's the feeling, it's the feeling of maybe the enormousness of these icebergs, how massive and important they are to nature or in just these feelings or the icebergs, what's it called, when they break off.*

*I think that balance between being something massive. Being still. Moving. Being still. Then there is the flowing in or around the iceberg, and the cracking, the noises. It's like it really is something that is alive.*

Alexander lives in his body, learns about self, others and culture through his own analysis of his own performance of **embodied knowledge as an Icelandic**. The choreographic practice and embodied performance process continually forms and reforms the performative body and the text of his body. Here we see the performance as a heuristic tool in the process of embodying intercultural and

cultural meanings. In doing so, there is much to consider about the somatic engagement with, and performance of, arts activism.

In further considering the lived experience of embodied performance, we turn now to the second dancer, Thomas. Here we learn just how much the performing body is at once a pool of data, a collector, interpreter and creator of data and the interpreter of data in knowledge creation, in the process of and engagement as **an agent of embodied knowledge**. Thomas's description of performative embodiment provides focus:

*For me, the experience of dancing "Melting Ice" was a kind of liberation involving openness and integration ... You come into a place. It opens up to you and you open up to it, so much so that you get vulnerable then things feel a little bit exposed. Then things get aligned between all of us – and we learn how to reopen. You take on and do movements, angles ... angular and stiff, robotic, two-dimensional ... you have to research things that happen in performance ... when something flows there is always some kind of movement. You can feel that. Even when you're completely still in the water, there's always a tiny movement. It has a roundness to it; you're dancing side to side, up and down and we had to bring that into the angle...where I live in my body and no longer imitate something. I can see I am different to Alexander who is Greenlandic. ... Even in rehearsals, I look for my natural input, and I ask where's my creativity. Just to shift awareness a little bit; just being aware of*

*myself and my body, and then moving together makes it a heartfelt composition ... that is deeply rooted in being present and feeling each other's presence. There is the physical phase of just letting go and I feel my presence... It's like a meditation...every piece has its own space of risk, of uncomfortability ... you know. It takes time to step into this space without feeling a bit uncertain.... it can feel ethereal. There is space for exploration where you need to make it not be about the mental work... that's where **you need to let go of the control**, of the outcome, **you need to feel** what's going on – you need to be in touch with that. That's an exploration. When we arrived in Greenland I had a direct experience of standing on that ground, the intensity. There's no trees. There's wind, it's different, it smells differently, and the temperature and everything is different. And then the people, how they are, how they walk – all these elements coming together help us, expose us, identify us for its power as political interventions.*


Moving from the earlier discussion of embodiment, we see Thomas articulate his relationship to performance as embodiment. He identifies and calls into question the collaborative dimensions of selves and others communicating and performing as a way of knowing. Openness and vulnerability of how the body must move through the space and time of another; the mental and physical work become integrated, to feel and experience himself as a dancer, as the feeling/sensing home of his being and becoming. It is the manifestation of the body as the

methodological nexus upon which the personal/political implications of experiences of the arts becomes a way of raising awareness and responding to one of our globally shared problems such as climate change.

**How does the choreographic practice and filmed performance of “Melting Ice” assign meaning to climate change, to embody arts activism and interculturality?**

The following tabulated overview (see Table 1) offers a detailed mapping of the performance choices of movement, aligned with the choreographic narrative, production elements and intent of the work, including scene location and music qualities.

**Table 1: “Melting Ice”: Choreographic practice elements interpreted<sup>1</sup>**

SCENE	TIME	MUSIC	MOVEMENT	CHOREOGRAPHIC Practice
 <p><b>Scene 1</b></p>				
<b>Scene 1: Listening to the iceberg</b>	Sec. 0:00	Aviaja says: <i>The ice is melting. Why is the ice melting?</i> Light: Atmospher e inspiration from Greenland .	Alexander stands inside the iceberg - it moves slowly. Thomas is situated upon the iceberg and listens to the iceberg with an outstretched arm and legs in the feed position. – No dance.	The initial image that an audience receives is responsive to the schism that occurs between the forces of the ice and the water, the cultural understandings. The first dancer (A) lies on their side, arm outstretched relaxed and almost slumber-like. They are at rest and comfortable on top of the fabric representational of the ice. A is unchallenged on a low level asymmetric shape, A small distance behind A stands the second dancer (B). They are shrouded in netted fabric almost still, and almost moving. Such subtle movement provides the stimulus for the audience to reflect on ‘B’, the indigenous dancer being a part of the ice, at one with their nature. The fabric over ‘B’ delineates the space between the two dancers and replicates the shape of the iceberg.

<sup>1</sup> For extended table with detailed analysis along with filmed performance see

<http://bibacc.org/performative-project/>



**Scene 2**

<b>Scene 2: Humanity and iceberg is one</b>	Sec. 5:40	Piano	Thomas: resonance from the iceberg with the toes / toe dip and a seesaw back and forth on the spot like a wave, but with little angular motion (ice block).	The down cast eyes are significant within indigenous dance as it demonstrates respect and humility but also a connection with the earth on which they travel. There is an interplay between the drop of the head, happening with a sense of abandon and then as a recovery as the body pulls itself onto the centre. Throughout this sequence the movement is secured through a lowered centre of gravity.
---	--------------	-------	--	--




Scene 3

<b>Scene 3: Turmoil in iceberg Glacier</b>	Sec. 11:23	Complaint – song.	The iceberg melts	As the soundscape intensifies the movement under the net is harder to identify. There appears to be similar balances and ground shifting from foot to foot. Arms are outstretched adding to the chiseled, jiggered quality of the shape, responsive to the harsh timbre of the music.
--	---------------	----------------------	----------------------	---



Scene 7

<b>Scene 7: The ice flows and ice thins</b>	Sec. 24:00	The music is dynamic upward - strings sounds.	The dancers accelerate in hip hop and balancing / jumping from ice floe to ice floe after another – some acrobatics, there	A stark lighting change to red side lighting highlights a significant change in the atmosphere. The electronic sounds also escalate in intensity, as does the Dance. ..Leaps in all directions are contrasted by the wriggling balances that whilst technically secure provide an image of 'out of control'. The movement becomes more erratic looking – like
---	---------------	---	--	---

			may be a contradiction between the dancers, where Thomas is experiencing anxiety and Alexander a positive force.	balance, which was once easy to achieve is now problematic, and the shift is unexpected. There is a reliance on one hand and both feet being stuck, leaving only one free arm. This entire section is sharp and sporadic in the movement selections. Eventually they are flung together, pushing each other back and forth. They release and move in unison.
 <p><b>Scene 9</b></p>				
<b>Scene 9: Loss</b>	<b>Sec. 29:47</b>	Ringing tone – symbiosis.	The dancers recede seated and rotate backward somersaults - their body is melted and they have no arms, they move closer in a pas de deux - contact improv - Thomas drowns and Alexander floats "maybe" in joy.	The soundscape eerily floats with the dancers maintaining the focus on loss of environment, selfish but aware. The dancers wilt towards the limited remaining ice. As the dancers also melt they appear powerless against the forces acting upon them. They float away from the ice and slowly move, fluidly and without personal force.

## CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

This article is an attempt to bring an embodied understanding to the concepts of,

and encounter with, climate change, through the performance of arts activism and interculturality in choreographic practice, dance and performance. The characterisation and nature of the intertercultural choreographic practice, as discussed before, appears to be way more open-ended and dynamic allowing for imagined realities as the audience emphasises with all they sense. Connecting dance and the natural environment performance as arts activism helps one to see / perceive issues of climate change differently; that is, as Denzin and Lincoln (1994) argues, as 'a moral discourse', meaning that we engage our deeply held values and beliefs. Dance performance is not innocent. Dance performance is not apolitical. Much is potentially at stake in a performative body that does not simply observe but bears the responsibility of witnessing and embodying a deeply felt collective embodiment through a non-judgemental lens

Experiencing the natural environment through dance and thinking with one's body: discovering one's body in a new way, the choreographer creates a space for a 'performance of possibilities' (see Madison, 2005) where through performance, the public realise a multitude of possibilities and achieve intercultural understanding, conceptualising 'performance' as a process of possibilities, engaging, embodying, and enacting ways of being that flesh out climate change issues. This is how we conceptualised arts activism here. We experience the performative body as embodied, eco-artistry, as an instrument / pathway to understanding the changing climate, the environment and need for social change and response-ability.

Intercultural collaboration is an invaluable factor in the artistic process, because the different cultures each have their bodily, musical and visual expressions. This manifests itself in corporeality, movements, sounds and materials. It leads to the development of further understanding between cultures in both the artistic and social aspects of climate change through harmonic movement patterning and melding of backgrounds. The impact of climate change is addressed in a metaphoric and performative intercultural performance of “Melting Ice”. In this performative intercultural installation, it is the Greenlanders’ and Scandinavians’ intercultural perspective on climate change that offers a specific kind of steering and purposefulness to inducing a culture shift towards water sustainability and equity. The contribution choreographic practice and the performance of body and nature is the radical harmony or solubility of the body. This is the context for deepening our connection to the viscosity of the living earth.

The power and politics of the arts offer a way of raising awareness and responding to globally shared problems such as water conservation that is inspired by a powerful set of values and messages that lies at the heart of the language of place. Landscapes hold knowledge. Humans embody knowledge. Choreographic practices hold knowledge and implement communication at a preverbal, unconscious level, thereby creating connections to worlds that are unavailable to sight alone through physicalized provocations and active audience response-ability. Through the process of choreographic practice, “Melting Ice” revealed and raised awareness of recognised patterns in nature and unveiled the intertwining of our body with the more-than-human world, as expressed by

Woolery (2006, pp.5-6):

As we return to our senses, we gradually discover our sensory perceptions to be simply our part of a vast, interpenetrating webwork of perceptions and sensations borne by countless other [performative] bodies supported – that is, not just by ourselves, but by icy streams tumbling down granite slopes.

Through the choreographic practice and dance performance of “Melting Ice” we come to an understanding that cannot be known through the scientific paradigm of logic and reason about climate change. The performance’s aim is to stimulate emotive responses and to unsettle the dormant inaction, suggesting a movement from passive to active. Alternative realities that cannot be defined through our culture’s language, a kind of internal knowing of that which is invisible, becomes a danced image that can then perhaps be considered a tangible awareness of climate change. The dance or art-making thus becomes more than art: it becomes activism; a way that allows for raising awareness; a way to retrieve, express and communicate an embodiment of climate change, an embodied knowing of place. We focus our attention on shape, form, flow and motion, colour, line, light and dark, value and pattern. This allows us to travel through multiple spatial dimensions of the landscape and to take a frame of the earth’s process, noticing details that we otherwise would not see.

Our relationship with this place, of the knowledge held in the melting ice, is in full view before us. We enter the spirit of the place and, when listening to and watching what the iceberg had to say, we surrender to the unknown and invite

the unforeseen. We are permitted and encouraged to experience sensorially that which we may normally fear. Here, the intensification of the sensorial perception of climate change through dance demonstrates in practice a way in which natural science can open up for art activist approaches. The unanticipated impact of a choreographic practice seems to manifest itself primarily when looking back at how the dancers were learning; becoming and being icebergs, and, in the act of labelling the choreographic practice of dance-making, the process gives rise to activism through the art to the possibility of change.

**For filmed performance see <http://bibacc.org/performative-project/>**

## REFERENCES

- Breum, M. (2013) Monthly archives July <http://www.martinbreum.dk/2013/07/>
- Cixous, H. (1994) To live the orange. In S. Sellers (Ed.) *The Helene Cixous Reader* (pp. 81-92). London: Routledge.
- Cutcher, A. J. (2015) Displacement, Identity and Belonging: An Arts-based, Auto/Biographical Portrayal of Ethnicity and Experience. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: SensePublishers.
- Denzin, N.K., and Lincoln, Y. (Eds.) (1994) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- French, B. and Loxley, A. (2015). *Civic Actions: Artists' Practices Beyond the Museum*. Parramatta, NSW: MCA Australia.

Gatens, M. (1996:67) *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality*. Psychology Press.

Jokela, T. (1995) From environmental art to environmental education. In M. H. Mantere (Ed.), *Image of the Earth: Writings on Art-based Environmental Education* (pp.18-28). Helsinki: University of Art and Design.

Mackinlay, E. (2016) *Teaching and Learning Like a Feminist*. Rotterdam: SensePublishers.

Madison, D. Soyini. (2005) *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mantere, M. H. (1992) Ecology, environmental education and art teaching. In L. Piironen (Ed.) *Power of Images*. Helsinki: InSEA-Finland.

Mantere, M. H. (1995) Tracking a course in the landscape of environmental education. In M. H. Mantere (Ed.) *Image of the Earth: Writings on Art-based Environmental Education* (pp. 3-17). Helsinki: University of Art and Design.

Mattern, M. and Love, N. (2013) *Activist arts, community development and democracy. Activist Art and Cultural Politics*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968) *The Visible and the Invisible*. (A. Lingis, Trans.). Evanston: Northwestern University Press. (Original work published 1964).

Saldana, J. (2013) *Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. London, UK: SAGE.

Spry, T. (2011) *Body, Paper, Stage: Writing and Performing Autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Smith, J.A., Flowers, P., and Larkin, M. (2009), *Interpretative Phenomenological*

*Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*. London: Sage.

Inghorn, S. and Street, J. (2013) 'You're an American rapper, so what do you know?': The political uses of British and U.S. popular culture by first-time voters in the United Kingdom. In N. Love and M. Mattern. *Doing Democracy: Activist Art and Cultural Politics*. (pp.177-201), Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Van Manen, M. (1990) *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. New York, NY: SUNY Press.

Woolery, L. A. (2006) *Art-based perceptual ecology as a way of knowing the language of place*. Dissertation. Antioch University of New England

## **Bionotes**

Pamela Burnard, PhD is a Professor of Arts, Creativities and Education at the University of Cambridge. She specializes in advancing creativities research, interculturality, arts practice and arts-based methodologies. Peter Cook, is an Arts Lecturer at Southern Cross University, Queensland Australia specializing in Dance education, with particular emphasis on choreographic practice. Peter is interested in the power of choreography as an embodied vehicle for education on all levels. Susanne Jasilek, is an artist, video film-maker, graphic designer and artist educator. She is a founding member of the experimental video art group called NEUF. Birgitte Bauer-Nilsen, PhD is an Associate Professor In the Department of Music and Dance at the University of Stavanger, Norway. She is a choreographer for Yggdrasil Dance, an intercultural dance ensemble which is creating a trilogy about climate change.