

April 21st, 2025

Impact Statement: Performing City Resilience Research

Trepwise is a boutique strategic advisory firm that serves purpose driven organizations. Our mission is to help organizations unlock their potential by aligning people, process, and vision. Our 13-member team based in New Orleans, LA works with non-profit, for-profit, and public sector entities in the areas of: strategic + organizational culture planning, systems coordination, and solutions lab facilitation. Our firm initially learned of Performing City Resilience (PCR) through a friend and client who leads an impactful local arts organization. I met with Dr. Andrews and Dr. Duggan virtually several times. We spent these sessions in dialogue on the intersection of Trepwise's work and PCR's research, in particular their findings from the article *Performance Approaches to Whole Society Resilience*. As we continued to speak, we centered our exploration around what the PCR team refer to as "the performative interconnection of the spaces between projects" that address the deep rooted cultural and systemic forces that keep many of our region's economic and social challenges in place. This type of thinking is quite aligned with the emerging trajectory of our work as a firm as we grow our practice in systems change. After a few virtual discussions on the subject, Dr. Andrews and Dr. Duggan scheduled a time to facilitate a workshop with my team in New Orleans. The focus on the "spaces between" in cultural and social systems provided an excellent professional development opportunity for our team, as we have varying levels of exposure to systems thinking. We (Dr. Andrews, Dr. Duggan, and I) held a brief planning call to discuss an agenda and discussion content. Dr. Andrews and Dr. Duggan came to our space and hosted a 2-hour team workshop on Tuesday, March 18th, 2025.

After connecting with the PCR team, it became clear that much of their work relates to our projects and community engagement efforts in the cultural economy and beyond. As a city with a rich cultural heritage and many artists, makers, musicians, performers, culinary arts professionals, and so on, New Orleans has struggled to create a sustainable economy, and therefore positive quality of life, for its culture bearers. Many of our projects involve input from and co-creation with these culture bearers to co-design innovative solutions to the challenges they face in living and creating in the region. PCR's approach to systemic issues through the lens of performance was intriguing and wholly relevant to our region, our clients, and our teammates (as both consultants and residents). Andrews and Duggan's research has deeply analyzed the strategic and systemic issues that plague our city and our own work: living with water, government inefficiency, the effects of over-tourism, and more. They have positioned performance as a way to reconsider these challenges with creativity, innovation, and a fresh perspective. Our firm follows design thinking methodology, which challenges us to look at problems through different perspectives from our own. Therefore, considering the role of performance in alleviating these macro challenges remains incredibly appealing.

Andrews and Duggan's research has provided our 13-member team with a shared language and a deeper understanding of the connection between performance and the macro challenges communities face. Not only will these learnings apply in our hometown of New Orleans, but also as we continue work in other cities around the US, namely Houston, Atlanta, and more.

Our team greatly benefitted from the space to consider a broader and more meaningful definition of performance in our work. We came to several key conclusions from the session:

- Performance shows up in how we work (presentations, facilitated experiences, reports, engagement design) but also in designing solutions with our clients, for instance, a leader of a large nonprofit institution will need to accept their role in performing for their team to navigate ups and downs, such as current US federal funding cuts for nonprofits.
- The lessons and discussions on performance thinking translate to building experiences. This concept unlocks a number of possibilities with how we contextualize our work with the cultural community, as well as a variety of other stakeholders with whom we engage.
- We must continue to remain curious about the role of performance in our work and explore new ways to consider it as a tool for positive social change.

We are grateful to Dr. Andrews and Dr. Duggan for their time, agility, and thoughtful contributions to our team, and we look forward to keeping in touch.

Signature



Lauren Siegel

Managing Director

By signing this statement, I confirm that I have read and understood the following notice:

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