IV. Narrative: Substance and Context

*Imagining American Cities through Twenty-first Century Performance*

The objective of the proposed research is to examine the ways different performative genres and practices imagine and reconfigure specific twenty-first-century cities in the Americas. We have established three broad areas of inquiry to achieve this objective: 1) How do conventionally staged theater and urban intervention illuminate the mutually constitutive relationship between urban topography and memory politics? 2) To what extent can performance establish sites of resistance to the spatialized conflicts, divisions, and inequalities that manifest the effects of neoliberal processes on the city? 3) How do site-specific performances and interventions in city space create communities of spectatorship that transcend local or national frameworks, and to what extent can imagining global spectatorship provide a model for a shared sense of empathy beyond place?

Our theoretical approach fuses performance and urban studies and proposes the polemical “global city” as a central concept in our investigation of the imagination of contemporary cities through performance. The scope of our research includes performance spanning cities across North and South America. Our objective here is to unsettle longstanding binaries, stereotypes and identity tropes that have traditionally imposed disciplinary and ideational borders between the North and South. In this regard our project builds upon the interdisciplinary, hemispheric approach to engaging performance and politics in the Americas, innovated in large part by NYU’s Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics.¹ Moreover, focusing on performance in cities across the Americas encourages the destabilization of conventional cultural, linguistic, racial, and geographical divides, and thus responds forcefully to the aims put forth by NEH’s new

¹ http://hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/
**Bridging Cultures** initiative. In adapting this hemispheric lens and proposing a joint approach based on cutting-edge research in the areas of performance theory and urban studies, our project forges novel interdisciplinary paths and lays the foundations for important intellectual work that will be of value to scholars and students across the arts and the humanities.

By focusing on performance, our project participates in the disciplinary shift, pioneered by performance scholar Diana Taylor, to destabilize the primacy of the written text as a form of cultural expression and to emphasize, rather, the significance of embodied forms of transmission of meaning and knowledge through temporally and spatially framed “scenarios.” Further, we agree with D.J. Hopkins, Shelley Orr, and Kim Solga’s assertion that the city is more than “a 'text' to be read and (re)written” and that “textuality and performativity must be understood as linked cultural practices” in imagining the city and structuring its social encounters. Thus, our project privileges the optic of performance studies to engage the city but never loses sight of the dynamic interplay between text, image, and embodiment in conceptualizing the city and its diverse textual and textural manifestations.

According to Neil Brenner and Roger Keil, global cities are urban centers that in recent decades have transcended “their respective national city systems and have come to articulate localized economic, demographic and sociocultural processes to a broader, globalized configuration of capitalism.” The term “global city” was at first greeted with resistance from scholars who saw in the term the reinforcement of historical relationships of imperial dominance, financial dependency, and social polarization imposed by the financial centers of global capitalism such as New York, Chicago, London, and Tokyo. More recently, however, global city researchers have argued that the global city concept contributes crucially to refuting the

---

6 John Friedmann’s essay “The World City Hypothesis” (1986) is an important precursor to the development of the global city paradigm, later the centerpiece for Saskia Sassen’s book *The Global City* (1991).
homogenizing vision of globalization as an abstract signifier detached from site-specific practices and operations.⁷

This latest phase of global cities research offers a refined lens for our examination of performance and cities because it reasserts the politics of place in contemporary debates about globalization.⁸ In doing so it points toward novel ways of understanding relationships between urban spaces and globalization without resuscitating the already exhausted binary between the local and the global. Moreover, the concept of the global city captures new and emerging processes that are reconfiguring cities as dominant, supranational signifiers of social, political, legal, and economic identity. This project investigates the ways theater and performance intervene in urban space to re-imagine the city while capturing these processes and the tensions between national, transnational, and global paradigms. Against the destabilization of the nation-state, the emergence of the global city ushers in a host of novel aesthetic practices designed to capture this reconfiguration of identity, place, and power.

Concrete examples of these kinds of novel twenty-first-century performative practices that are of central interest to this project include works by The Builders Association, a performance and media company based in New York City; Emilio García Wehbi, a creator of object theater and urban intervention from Buenos Aires; and Mapa Teatro, an interdisciplinary theater and performance group based in Bogotá. The Builders Association’s two recent projects, *Invisible Cities* (2005-2007) and *Continuous City* (2007-present)⁹ explore the impact digital technologies have on subjectivity, family relationships, and the ways individuals and groups from diverse socioeconomic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds access, experience, and engage cities and create urban imaginaries. García Wehbi’s urban intervention, *Philoctetes Project* (2002-

---

⁹ [http://www.thebuildersassociation.org/prod_invisible_info.html]
2007) employs life-like dolls placed strategically in urban space to turn the city into a forum for examining the responses of urban bystanders to homelessness. Though originally conceptualized in the context of the neoliberal nineties in Argentina, subsequent stagings in Vienna (2002), Berlin (2004), and Prague (2007) provide rich material for examining the potential for interurban dialogue and comparative analysis of the effect of global neoliberalism on cities in the twenty-first century. Mapa Teatro’s multimedia installation/performance of *Witness to the Ruins* (2001-2005) documents the demolition of one of Bogotá’s most traditional neighborhoods—Santa Inés-El Cartucho—and the eviction of its inhabitants, many of whom had found refuge in the neighborhood after fleeing the violence of the Colombian countryside. Demolished in order to create a city space evocatively called “Third Millennium Park,” *Witness to the Ruins* lays bare the complicated politics of conflicting claims to the city and attempts to reconcile what should constitute the vision and practices of the city of Bogotá at the dawn of the new millennium.

The theorization of the concept of the global city has typically been employed to explain a critical relationship between capitalism, urban space, and geography. As such, it follows a long line of work from Georg Simmel to Henri Lefebvre, Manuel Castells, and David Harvey as the latest incarnation of urban studies research to link capitalism to urban processes. However, this project expands the definition, disciplinary scope and application of the concept of the global city to move beyond the economic dimension and explore the aesthetic, political, and social expression of the global city.

In addition to traditional global cities like New York, and other major urban centers of commerce and capital flow, such as Buenos Aires, Chicago, Los Angeles, Mexico City, and São Paulo, our project directs attention to cities that do not meet conventional criteria for being labeled as global cities, such as Montevideo, Juárez, Havana, New Orleans, and Bogotá, but

---

12 http://www.mapateatro.org/testigoDeLasRuinas/index.html
13 El Parque Tercer Milenio.
which nonetheless have generated performative practices that create and reflect site-specific urban identities that resonate globally. Our research echoes Andreas Huyssen’s objective, expressed in his book *Other Cities, Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age*, to lend critical insight to the “imaginative geographies of alternative or different modern ties that are usually sidelined by the still-dominant focus on the northern transatlantic in much of the Western academy.”¹⁵ In reference to Latin America, in particular, this project contributes to the body of scholarship that strives to question and complicate the legacy of what Ángel Rama famously identified as the lettered city in Latin America, or the literary invention of the city by Latin American colonial elites to consolidate power and impose administrative and religious order.¹⁶ In broadening our field to include a region underrepresented in global urban studies, our project unsettles this legacy and exposes the productive synergies between performance and Latin American cities in the twenty-first century.

Scholars from fields as diverse as literature, sociology, geography, theater, architecture, and urban studies have long been captivated by the relationship between the lived and the imagined city. Néstor García Canclini refers to the “heterogeneous fantasies” that fill the city and give it density as a jointly inhabited and imagined place.¹⁷ He writes, “The city, programmed to function, and designed in a grid, exceeds its boundaries and multiplies itself through individual as well as collective fictions” (43). Andreas Huyssen invokes an urban imaginary comprised of both cognitive and somatic images, Edward Soja invents a “third space” to encompass a “simultaneously real-and-imagined, actual-and-virtual” space, and Ileana Diéguez juxtaposes the real/everyday to the poetic/fictional experience of the city.¹⁸ Of primary interest to our project is the specific contribution performance studies makes to investigating what the geographer Doreen Massey calls “a global sense of place” at the intersection between the lived and imagined city.

---

We propose three sections of interrelated questions to approach the imagination of twenty-first century American cities through performance.

**Biographical maps, city space, and global memory**

Performance intervenes in the city to sustain or contain conflict, to enact sites of commemoration and remembrance, and to exploit the tensions between site-specific memories, officially sanctioned national memories, and decontextualized memory tropes that are adapted and circulated globally. Alison Landsberg’s theory of prosthetic memory is useful for understanding the notion of decontextualized memory tropes. She introduces the term prosthetic memory to refer to the “interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theater or museum.” This kind of memory, disembodied and transportable, allows individuals to make contact with other narratives and subsequently enter into a broader history that shapes their subjectivity and politics. We are interested in examining how performance draws attention to the protagonists who occupy this space of fluid engagement between the experiential site of the city and memory. How do individuals and groups document their lives and memories as city dwellers through theatrical scripts, performative practices, and everyday behavior? What does the biographical nature of many of these performative interactions with the city reveal about the anxieties of self, place, and identity in twenty-first century cities in the Americas?

Walter Benjamin, Michel De Certeau, and Pierre Nora’s work linking memory and place is foundational for our examination of urban topography and memory politics in twenty-first century American cities. Also significant in shaping the parameters of our project is contemporary scholarship on the discourse of ruins, presented compellingly in Idelber Avelar’s

---

work on allegory and Latin American postdictatorial fiction in *The Untimely Present: Postdictatorial Latin American Fiction and the Task of Mourning*, and more recently in Michael Lazzara and Vicky Unruh’s *The Telling Ruins in Latin America*. Avelar’s work resonates strongly with Sharon Zukin’s argument that cities embody the “division of place between landscapes of consumption and devastation.”\(^{21}\) Both Avelar and Zukin draw attention to the force of global capitalism in constructing sites and metaphors of ruin and consumption in cities, while Lazzara and Unruh signal the heightened importance of reevaluating the discourse of ruins at the twenty-first century millennial juncture and identifying in ruins the “material embodiment of change.”\(^{22}\)

Our project establishes dialogue with this valuable work but initiates a conscious departure from identifying the discourse of ruins exclusively with Latin America. We propose that each city’s engagement with memory and discourses of ruins, renewal, consumption, utopia and dystopia is unique and resists the conflation of urban social and artistic formations with national or even North/South identity paradigms.

The global cities concept provides a critical dimension for understanding both site-specific urban performances of memory (commemoration, memorialization, protest) and the circulation of discursive memory tropes in twenty-first century cities in the Americas. To conceptualize the interface between these different kinds of memories, we borrow from Huyssen’s notion of cities as “palimpsests of real and diverse experiences and memories” and Paul Adams, Steven Hoelscher, and Karen Till’s emphasis on the “texture” of place to invoke a sense of surface, as they note, “where subject and object merge.”\(^{23}\) This merging between object and subject--or built environment and biographical experience--generates urban modes of expression that shape the contours of memory and the identity of cities. We aim to investigate the central role playwrights, actors, directors, and artist-activists occupy as agents of these urban modes of expression. Further, we ask how performances of testimony and biographical accounts

---


\(^{22}\) Lazzara and Unruh, *The Telling Ruins*, 1.

shape and/or reimagine the city and we examine the ways in which these performances exploit the tensions between site-specific and decontextualized, global memories.

Our project borrows from Michael Rothberg’s term “multidirectional memory” to conceptualize these dynamic tensions and to approach the interactions between different historical memories produced across contexts and eras.\textsuperscript{24} Rothberg urges a shift away from notions of competitive, or hierarchical memories to advocate instead for the creation of new comparative memory paradigms, which “draw attention to the dynamic transfers that take place between diverse places and times during the act of remembrance,” and “traverse sacrosanct borders of ethnicity and era” (11, 17). This project investigates the role of performance in mediating between memories as they intersect topographically and discursively in cities of the Americas. Moreover, we join Rothberg in privileging a comparative framework for approaching distinct memories in order to rethink the ethical and political dimensions of memory and its relationship to place in the context of our conceptual rendering of the global city.

\textit{Global neoliberalism and grassroots intervention}

Ideas, technologies, information, and capital flow freely in and out of cities while changes in urban topography often provide the most explicit manifestation of the effects of neoliberal globalization on cities. In recent literature criticizing the social polarization and structural income disparities in cities as a consequence of these effects, scholars have identified the “dual city,” a city which, as Simon Parker explains, “consists of highly paid executives, professionals and technocrats who work (but do not reside) alongside a low paid, low skilled and generally ethnically diverse service class.”\textsuperscript{25} Related concepts such as the edge city, the “revanchist city”;\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{24} Rothberg, \textit{Multidirectional Memory}, 3.
\textsuperscript{26} Urban geographer Neil Smith coins the term “revanchist city” in his book, \textit{The New Urban
gentrification, and ghettoization all describe to a certain extent the ways neoliberalism respatializes cities and accentuates social, political, ethnic, gender, and economic divisions. As a remedy to the spatialized hierarchies envisioned in the “dual city,” researchers like Michael Peter Smith have advocated for “an agency-oriented theoretical perspective that concretely connects macro-economic and geopolitical transformations to the micro-networks of social action that people create, move in, and act upon in their daily lives.” Following Smith, this part of our project explores this agency-oriented perspective through an examination of theater and performance at the grassroots level. This project takes as its point of departure that both formal and informal performances, as spatially defined practices, are ideally suited to addressing the spatialization of conflict and division in cities that result from neoliberalism. We interrogate the forms and strategies these interventions take on and the ways in which they constitute and enact political resistance and opposition at the neighborhood, city, national, and global level.

This part of the project strives to evaluate how actors of resistance and opposition have evolved in their engagement with metropolitan culture specifically through theater and performative practices in twenty-first century cities in the Americas. Taking our cue from Michael Peter Smith, we emphasize grassroots strategies here to distinguish our approach from dominant trends in urban theorizing, which, according to Smith, “have equated the ‘global’ with the space of top-down political-economic power.” Smith advocates for a redirection of focus on “the impact of ordinary women and men—their consciousness, intentionality, everyday practices, and collective action—on the social construction of urban life” (6). Though this statement reflects the vision of our project to an extent, we are wary of the homogenizing potential to be found in citing the “ordinary” or “everyday” to describe individuals engaged in oppositional practices. As Ben Highmore observes, “To invoke the everyday can often be a sleight of hand that

*Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*, in which he describes the way neoliberal economic policy altered urban politics in New York City in the nineties to favor gentrification and discriminate against communities of minorities, the working class, and immigrants.


28 Ibid.
normalises and universalises particular values, specific world-views.” Our project consciously avoids universalizing the everyday and oppositional practices through identification of the individual actors and groups involved in those practices, their particular reasons and forms of resistance to specific aspects of global neoliberalism, and analysis of the distinct historical circumstances, contexts, and objectives illustrated through each performance.

Our project includes cities across the Americas whose social structure and topographical organization reflect the polarizing divisions captured by the “dual city,” a concept that describes the ways the experience of the city is largely determined by access to basic rights such as education, freedom from racial, gender, and linguistic discrimination, and citizenship. This part of our project strives to demonstrate how theater pieces, performances, and other artistic interventions address themes of immigration, border crossing, citizenship, and human rights and their intersection with global neoliberal processes in the transnational spaces that American cities have become. In doing we illuminate these distinct grassroots modes of practice and show how they deploy strategies for transcending the limitations posed by the dual city, a concept which, though relevant, cannot pretend to encompass the nuance and complexity of rapidly changing configurations of global neoliberalism, urban space, and the vast and diverse range of subjective experiences of cities in the twenty-first century. Here we revisit Henri Lefebvre’s book *The Right to the City*, in which he envisions this right to refer not only to participation in consumer society, but, more significantly, to participation in the *oeuvre* or aesthetic life of the city. We revitalize Lefebvre’s notion of the right to the city and emphasize its relevance to our investigation of theater and performative practices as alternative identities and modes of expression that respond critically to global neoliberalism.

**Imagination, Reception, and Circulation of the Twenty-first Century City**

Traditionally, street performance has aimed to intervene in city space and engage passersby as spectators. Brecht’s street scene reminds us that city dwellers may be called on at any moment to act as witnesses to a city’s accidents and improvised events. Boal’s invisible theater enacts social justice scenarios in public spaces to encourage self-reflection and awareness among unsuspecting bystanders. In focusing on the production, reception, and circulation of twenty-first century city imaginaries in the Americas, this section echoes Lefebvre’s assertion that “each epoch produces its own spaces.”\(^{31}\) We extend this argument to question and analyze the modes of spectatorship our current twenty-first century epoch creates. Our interest lies in examining an ethics of spectatorship generated by urban performance and more traditional forms of theater to explore what Doreen Massey has identified as “the idea of responsibility beyond place.”\(^{32}\) How might this “responsibility beyond place” help us to imagine the ways site-specific performance practices generate a shared sense of empathy and responsibility—or conversely, detachment and distance—that resonates beyond national borders? How does urban performance reterritorialize and politicize city space to express alternative identities and newly formed communities to an audience? And what is the role of the performance in mediating the relationships between cities and shifting cultures of responsibility and communities of spectatorship?

Underlying Benedict Anderson’s famous *Imagined Communities* is the tension that exists between the social and symbolic construction of national identity and the spatial and temporal dimensions of this construction.\(^{33}\) This tension reveals the anxiety of place in a globalizing era defined by the concepts of time-space compression,\(^{34}\) space of flows,\(^{35}\) and the spatial turn.\(^{36}\) Arjun Appadurai asks poignantly, “What can locality mean in a world where spatial localization,

\(^{31}\) Qtd. in Parker, *Urban Theory and the Urban Experience*, 22.

\(^{32}\) Massey, *World City*, 15.


quotidian interaction, and social scale are not always isomorphic?"\textsuperscript{37} This anxiety of place has permeated across disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences and has prompted theater scholars such as Elinor Fuchs and Una Chaudhuri to engage critical dialogue on “the idea of space and place conscious performance.”\textsuperscript{38} They write, “In recent decades, a vigorous inquiry into the role of spatial experience in constructing cultural meaning has been under way in many fields, resulting in renewed interest in topography, geography, and mapping, as well as new attention to the specificity of place ” (6). Gestures toward more global, less spatially anchored interpretations of performance provide a productive complement—and sometimes contradiction—to this heightened scrutiny of place. Theater scholar Marvin Carlson remarks, “We are now at least equally likely to look at the theatre experience in a more global way, as a sociocultural event whose meanings and interpretations are not to be sought exclusively in the text being performed but in the experience of the audience assembled to share in the creation of the total event.”\textsuperscript{39}

Our project proposes the lens of performance to investigate the tensions between this heightened attention to place and the global reconfiguration of reception as they intersect in twenty-first century cities of the Americas. Three driving questions guide this third section of our investigation. First, we analyze theatrical works that imagine cities in a global framework and highlight the role of the city as an emerging signifier of identity and community that transcends the paradigm of nation. Second, we consider theatrical performances that travel from city to city and the range of identificatory processes these transurban performances evoke in audiences in different cities across the globe. Third, we examine the phenomenon of synchronicity in performances that are staged and perceived simultaneously, made possible largely through live streaming and other forms of multimedia and technological strategies. In all three areas, our overriding objective is to illuminate the ways these performances participate in the

\textsuperscript{37} Appadurai, \textit{Modernity at Large}, 179.
\textsuperscript{38} Fuchs and Chaudhuri, \textit{Land/Scape/Theater}, 4.
reconfiguration of paradigms of spectatorship and gesture toward a shared sense of empathy and understanding that ultimately transcends place.

IV. Narrative: History and Duration of Project

Preliminary research for this project can be traced to a series of workshops and seminars Brenda Werth and Paola Hernández co-designed and facilitated at different conference venues from 2008-2010. In August 2009, Werth and Hernández conducted a five-day work group titled “The World and the Stage: Revisiting Paradigms, Envisioning Rights,” held at the ten-day conference Staging Citizenship: Performance and Politics of Cultural Rights, sponsored by NYU’s Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics in Bogotá, Colombia. The group’s
objectives were to revisit key twentieth-century theatrical paradigms in an emerging global framework characterized by the adoption of multilateral legal, cultural, and social networks, the establishment of international recognition and jurisdiction of human rights, the revision of physical and virtual borders, and changing notions of citizenship. Werth and Hernández proposed and carried out subsequent versions of the work group with colleagues Kerry Bystrom (University of Connecticut, Storrs) and Florian Becker (Bard College) at the conferences Theater, Performance, DestiNation, sponsored by The American Society for Theatre Research, held in San Juan, Puerto Rico in November 2009, and at Creoles, Diasporas, Cosmopolitanisms, sponsored by The American Comparative Literature Association, held in New Orleans in April 2010.

Inspired by the intellectual exchange these conferences fostered on theater and human rights, Werth, Hernández, and Becker designed a co-edited volume called Worlds, Stages, Publics: Imagining Twenty-first Century Theatre, presently under review at the Studies on International Performance Series at Palgrave Macmillan. The project proposed here builds on Worlds, Stages, Publics by continuing to focus on the examination of critical relationships between global neoliberalism, ethics, and spectatorship in twenty-first century performance and theater, but shifts attention crucially to the analysis of the politics of place through an urban lens and develops an original interdisciplinary framework linking urban and performance studies, in which to investigate the performative imagination of cities in the Americas.

Core researchers Werth, Hernández, Ana Puga, and Fernando Rosenberg have also attended and participated actively in the last two Encuentros or ten-day scholarly conferences and performance festivals organized by NYU’s Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, held in Buenos Aires and in Bogotá in 2009. The current project adapts and furthers the hemispheric approach to understanding performance and politics across the Americas and will continue to benefit from and contribute to past and ongoing intellectual engagement with the Institute.
Directed by Eric Hershberg, immediate Past President of the Latin American Studies Association, and recently inaugurated in 2010, The Center for Latin American and Latino Studies at American University in Washington DC (CLALS) will play a central role in fostering the implementation of proposed research activities. Specifically, the Center will assist in generating the website for presentation and public dissemination of the project as well as providing the space and facilities for the proposed scholarly meetings. The Center’s joint focus on Latino and Latin American Studies reflects the efforts to rethink cultural, political, racial, economic, and intellectual relationships along new lines that probe and unsettle the traditional border lines that have historically reinforced divides between North and South. In this sense, CLALS is the ideal venue for hosting our project and for promoting the objectives out forth by NEH’s “Bridging Cultures” initiative.

IV. Narrative: Staff

The project working group consists of seven core collaborators. The Principal Investigator will be Brenda Werth, Assistant Professor of Latin American Studies at American University. Dr. Werth’s research until now has focused on contemporary Latin American theater and the role of performance in negotiating post-conflict memory politics and human rights discourse. She is author of Theater, Performance, and Memory Politics in Argentina (Palgrave 2010), which examines the intervention of theater and performance in the memory politics surrounding Argentina’s return to democracy and in the context of the growing influence of global economic, legal, and cultural systems in the nineties onward. She is also co-editor, with
Paola Hernández and Florian Becker, of *Worlds, Stages, Publics. Imagining Global Rights in Twenty-first-Century Theater*, currently under review at Palgrave, which analyzes the effects shifting global paradigms have on theater’s engagement with human rights and proposes a critical reassessment of spectatorship, empathy, and accountability for the twenty-first century.

**Paola Hernández** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Her area of specialization is Latin American Theater and performance and her research interests include documentary theater, globalization theory, memory studies, and audience reception. Her most recent book is titled *El teatro de Argentina y Chile. Globalización, resistencia y desencanto* (*Argentine and Chilean Theater: Globalization, Resistance, and Disillusionment*, Corregidor, Buenos Aires, 2009). Her current research considers documentary theater from Lima, Buenos Aires, Bogotá, and Santiago to examine the diverse ways the genre intersects with the urban to engage discourses of truth, memory, and historical revisionism onstage in the twenty-first century. Dr. Hernández is also the Book Review editor for *Latin American Theatre Review*.

A scholar, theater practitioner, and translator, **Ana Puga** is Assistant Professor at Ohio State University where she holds a joint appointment in the Department of Theatre and the Department of Spanish and Portuguese. She is currently a fellow at the Stanford University Center for Latin American Studies. Besides literature and criticism, her interests include dramaturgy, translation, and performance. She is author of *Allegory, Memory, and Testimony: Upstaging Dictatorship*, a study of five South American playwrights who tried to resist dictatorship. She has also published an anthology of translations of plays by Chilean writer Juan Radrigán, *Finished from the Start and Other Plays* (*Northwestern UP, 2008*). Dr. Puga is currently interested in exploring how both US Latino and Latin American performances by and about urban migrant diasporas create transnational spaces that connect one city to another across physical distance and despite various types of barriers (physical and legal) created by nation-states.
Marcy Schwartz is Associate Professor of Spanish and Portuguese at Rutgers University. She specializes in twentieth-century Latin American literature and culture, with particular emphasis on urban studies, exile, and photography. Dr. Schwartz is author of Writing Paris: Urban Topographies of Desire in Contemporary Latin American Fiction (SUNY Press, 1999), Invenciones urbanas: ficción y ciudad latinoamericanas (Urban Interventions: Fiction and Latin American Cities, Buenos Aires, Corregidor, 2010), and she co-edited the books Photography and Writing in Latin America: Double Exposures (U of New Mexico P, 2006), with Mary Beth Tierney-Tello, and Voice-Overs: Translation and Latin American Literature (SUNY Press, 2002), with Daniel Balderston. Her current research concerns the intersection of narrative, visual media and urban space in twentieth and twenty-first-century Latin America.

Salvador Vidal-Ortiz is Assistant Professor of Sociology at American University. His academic interests include U.S. race and ethnic studies, Puerto Rican/Latino studies, and sex/gender/sexuality scholarship, as well as transgender/transsexual studies and Queer Theory. Dr. Vidal-Ortiz’s grassroots-based experience includes HIV/AIDS prevention/services/community research, Latino queer organizing, progressive philanthropy, and program and organizational development. His current book project is titled, “An Instrument of the Orishas:” Racialized Sexual Minorities in Santería, and he co-edited Lionel Cantú’s The Sexuality of Migration: Border Crossings and Mexican Immigrant Men, with Nancy Naples (NYU Press). Dr. Vidal-Ortiz plays an active role on several committees of the American Sociological Association and currently serves as acting Chair of a new section called Sociology of the Body and Embodiment. Dr. Vidal-Ortiz had an instrumental role in conceptualizing and promoting the vision and design of the Center for Latin American and Latino Studies at American University. He received a Fulbright fellowship to conduct research and teach at the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Bogotá, Colombia in Spring Semester of 2011. Trained as a sociologist in a number of qualitative methods, Vidal-Ortiz provides a vital link in enhancing understanding of our project for audiences in the social sciences.
Ana Serra is Associate Professor of Latin American Studies at American University. Dr Serra's research and teaching examine the intersection between state discourse and cultural products in Latin America, particularly during the revolutionary era that started with the Cuban Revolution. She is interested in the rhetorical devices employed in literary works, testimonials and film to support, subvert or sometimes explode radical ideologies, as well as explain their origins and possibilities. She is author of The New Man in Cuba: Culture and Identity in the Revolution (University of Florida Presses, 2007). Dr. Serra’s recent research focuses on cinematic representations of the city of Havana in the aftermath of the Special Period, which expose the paradox between the ruins of a decaying city and its recovery as a spectacular location in a political and artistic sense. Her next book project will focus on key moments of the symbolic relationship between Cuba and Spain, and their on representations of the city of Havana on Cuban films produced in the island and the diaspora. Dr. Serra also serves as Director of the MA program in Spanish and Latin American Studies at American University.

Fernando J. Rosenberg is Associate Professor of Hispanic Studies and Comparative Literature at Brandeis University. His research interests include critical and post-colonial theory, modernism and modernity, art and performance, and legal topics in the arts. Dr. Rosenberg is author of The Avant-garde and Geopolitics in Latin America (Pittsburgh UP, 2006). In 2006 Rosenberg co-edited an issue of the e-misférica, the journal of the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, with Jill Lane titled “Performance and the Law.” He has written an essay on tango in film. His current book project analyzes the post-human rights construction of justice in Latin American documentaries, art exhibits, and literary narratives.

IV. Narrative: Methods
Our project includes five main components, each of which contributes significantly to the investigation, intellectual exchange, and dissemination of products and outcomes related to the central research questions outlined in this proposal:

1) **Research Workshop**: This workshop, scheduled at the beginning of the grant period (December 2011), will bring the seven core research collaborators together for one day at the Center for Latin American and Latino Studies at American University in Washington DC. The objective of this workshop is to create a forum for the core collaborators to present their research inquiries on performance and cities and to describe their disciplinary approaches to the central questions of the proposal. At the workshop, researchers will also design the structure and content of the edited volume, to be completed and submitted to publishers at the end of the grant period in June 2013. Researchers will also make final arrangements for the international research conference on cities and performance in the Americas, to be held in September 2012.

2) **Field Research**: Between December 2011 and September 2012, each core collaborator will carry out field research in two cities in the Americas (see appendix for detailed description of fieldwork). In each city, researchers will attend and (if possible) film performances, interview artists and spectators, visit and photograph the performance space, attend rehearsals, visit the relevant archives at libraries, research institutes, compile reviews of performances, meet with scholars of performance and urban studies, and present research at local academic venues. Having researchers work with “twin” cities will facilitate a comparative framework in which to compare and contrast urban performative practices while conceptualizing the ways the interaction across and between cities helps constitute alternative, supranational communities. This approach to “twinning” cities also furthers the objectives of NEH’s “Bridging Cultures” initiative and enlarging understanding of other places, perspectives, and intellectual traditions through detailed analysis of the continuities that link and influence different cities across North and South America. This comparative framework will inform the introductions to each of the three sections of the edited volume (see below).
3) **International Conference on Performance and Cities**: In September 2012, The Center for Latin American and Latino Studies in Washington DC will host a two-day international conference on performance and cities in the Americas. The speakers will include the seven core grant researchers and eighteen invited speakers from North and South America, who are experts in performance and/or urban studies, or whose work establishes significant dialogue with paradigms and currents that intersect meaningfully with our project, such as global neoliberalism, memory, citizenship, and transnational resistance. The twenty-four speakers (see appendix) will be divided into six panels of four to be held over the course of two days (three panels per day). At the end of each day, there will be a roundtable session to summarize main ideas, identify central themes, reassess debates, draw conclusions, and propose new research questions for future research. From the papers presented at this conference, eight will be chosen to be included in the edited volume.

4) **Edited Volume**: The edited volume will include fifteen essays contributed by the seven core grant researchers and eight additional scholars who present their work at the International Conference on Performance and Cities. Essays will be grouped in three sections of five, corresponding to the three sections established in the proposal narrative: 1) *Biographical maps, city space, and global memory*; 2) *Global neoliberalism and grassroots intervention*; 3) *Imagination, Reception, and Circulation of the Twenty-first Century City*. Essays written in Spanish or Portuguese will be translated professionally to English. The edited volume will be completed and ready for submission to publishers by June 2012.

5) **Web Component**: Over the course of the one and a half grant year period, The Center for Latin American and Latino Studies at American University will build a website dedicated to featuring the research being conducted in different cities in the Americas. Available to the public, the site will include an archive including photographs and videos of performances, interviews with artists, and critical essays. Jointly, core researchers will collaborate with NYU’s Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics to help develop a thematic module on performance and cities.
V. Narrative: Final Products and Dissemination

The final products of this research project will be disseminated publicly through diverse modes and technologies, in both print and electronic form, for a broad international and interdisciplinary audience consisting of scholars, students, artists, and individuals, in general, who are interested in performance and urban culture.

1) International Conference on Performance and Cities: Hosted by the Center for Latin American and Latino Studies at American University in September 2012, this conference will bring scholars together from cities across the Americas who are interested in establishing critical bridges between the disciplines of urban studies and performance, as well as producing and disseminating intellectual work fostered by the conference in their home universities and institutions. All core researchers are bilingual or fluent in both Spanish and English (several are also proficient in Portuguese), which will ensure that essays presented are translated and that communication is smooth, clear, and productive. The conference program, links to abstracts and select essays, and podcasts of roundtable sessions will be made available on the website for the Center for Latin American and Latino Studies: http://www.american.edu/clals/index.cfm

2). Edited Volume: The research findings and outcomes will be collected in a co-edited, scholarly volume, to be distributed internationally in academic libraries and research institutes. The essays will feature the research findings based on the fieldwork carried out by the seven core collaborators, as well as eight additional essays selected from the presentations given at the International Conference on Performance and Cities. The co-edited volume will be the first joint scholarly publication to represent the project on performance and cities in the Americas. It will provide a solid foundation for the development of future projects that grow from its publication and dissemination.

3) Scholarly Collaboration in Cities: Core researchers will collaborate actively with artists, scholars, and audiences in the cities where they undertake their research. This collaboration (and dissemination of research) may take the form of public talks, presentations at academic
conferences, lectures to students, participation in workgroups, and interviews, depending on the circumstances of each research site.

4) Websites: Ongoing research and findings on performance and cities will be made available to the public on websites sponsored by the Center for Latin American and Latino Studies at American University and The Hemispheric Institute for Performance and Politics at NYU.

5) Other International Conferences: Core researchers will organize panels, workgroups, or seminars to discuss the outcomes and engage other scholars and students in dialogue on research on performance and cities at several interdisciplinary conferences such as the Latin American Studies Association, The Association of Theatre Research, The Annual Meeting for the American Sociological Association, and the biennial academic conference/performance festival, or Encuentros, hosted by the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics.

VI. Narrative: Work Plan

December 1, 2011- May 31, 2012:

- Hold one-day workshop at the Center for Latin American and Latino Studies at American University (December 3, 2011) to convene core collaborators in order to discuss research objectives and proposed fieldwork, and to plan the edited volume and the International Conference on Performance and Cities. Participants include the Director of the Center, Eric Hershberg, and core collaborators Brenda Werth, Paola Hernández, Ana Puga, Marcy Schwartz, Salvador Vidal-Ortiz, Ana Serra, and Fernando Rosenberg. Administrative support will be provided by CLALS staff.

- Core researchers prepare and undertake field research in cities (see appendix):
  Brenda Werth: New York / Montevideo
Paola Hernández: Lima / Mexico City
Ana Puga: Havana / Miami
Salvador Vidal-Ortiz: Bogotá / San Juan
Marcy Schwartz: Santiago / Buenos Aires
Ana Serra: Havana / Miami
Fernando Rosenberg: New York / Buenos Aires

June 1 – November 31, 2012:

- Organize and host International Conference on Performance and Cities, to be held at the Center for Latin American and Latino Studies at American University (September 14-16, 2012) (see appendix for participants).
- Write and compile introduction and essays for edited volume.
- Design and add content to websites.
- Propose and lead panels, seminars, and workgroups at international conferences LASA (San Francisco, May 2012), ASTR, ASA, NYU Hemimispheric Institute Encuentros (Mexico City, March 2012).

December 1, 2012 – May 31, 2013

- Complete and submit finished edited volume to publishers by May 31, 2013
- Propose and lead panels, seminars, and workgroups at international conferences (LASA, ASTR, ASA, Hemi Encuentros).
- Add final information to websites.