

## Soundwalking – A Creative and Meditative Art Practice Used to Foster a Sense of Stewardship for Local Waterways

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**ABSTRACT:** Citizens and tourists enjoy the beauty of fresh water resources, but when these bodies of water become endangered through the effects of climate change or pollution, these areas become less desirable, and therefore it is important to consider ways to increase perceptions of stewardship to protect them. My research focuses on my art practice termed “soundwalking”, a walk focused on listening to different features of a specific environment. Soundwalks that will be used in this research will be based on listening techniques, exercises, and methods of musical composition that were developed primarily through the study of acoustic ecology and Deep Listening. I connect these ideas with findings from fields like environmental psychology to argue that when we embody a certain area of the environment through a soundwalk, we can begin to understand its needs more. When we understand how we connect to our waterways we can become better caretakers of our waterways.

**KEYWORDS:** Soundwalks, acoustic ecology, Deep Listening, stewardship, meditation, waterways.

## 1. Introduction

There is often a sense of distance from broad environmental terms such as “climate change” or “water pollution” until there is a personal experience that connects us and our personal place: a drought that makes the grass yellow and crunchy in our favorite hiking spot, water conservation laws at home, having to use bottled water due to contaminated water, or beached sea creatures at our favorite seaside location. What is taking place between a person and their environment that forms a deeper connection that may encourage taking action? How do we strengthen our bond to the environment?

Not till we are completely lost, or turned round, – for a man needs only to be turned round once with his eyes shut in this world to be lost, – do we appreciate the vastness and strangeness of Nature...Not till we are lost, in other words, not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations. (Thoreau 2004, 166)

My art practice of soundwalking is based on getting lost in a once familiar place even though one is being guided through the space. It is like spinning oneself around and then just prioritizing listening to the environment instead of focusing on the visual environment that we have grown accustomed to relying upon in navigating from point A to point B. This act of getting lost from what we are used to turns one inward, while connecting one more to the outward environment at the same time as other senses open up. Listening is 360 degrees, so we slow down to hear what is all around us instead of just what lies ahead, even with a headphone-based soundwalk. We are present in the world around us. Sound is vibration, and we feel our other senses engage more intensely, such as touch and smell, and it becomes easier to embody another being or a certain area. When we embody a certain area of the environment, we begin to understand its needs more. We can become better caretakers of our environment from developing a sense of stewardship.

“Soundwalking: A Creative and Meditative Art Practice Used to Foster a Sense of Stewardship for Local Waterways” is an examination of how soundwalking can be a creative catalyst for change that highlights the importance of stewardship in regards to our natural resources and more specifically to water. I am defining soundwalks as walks based on listening as a participatory artistic event for interactivity and listening to the sonic environment. I use the term “stewardship” to describe how human beings re-envision themselves and their place in the natural world as part of a larger integrated system. I am defining stewardship in the manner that Professor of Philosophy and Environmental Studies and Faculty Fellow for Sustainability at Gonzaga University, Brian Henning, describes it in his article, “Stewardship and the Roots of the Ecological Crisis”. Henning states that nature

does not need fixing by a benevolent caretaker, but it has its own integral unity that if allowed to flourish, functions quite well. We are called to be stewards of ourselves, not of nature, so if we are to become good stewards it means to “devise ways of living that are in harmony with and respectful of the other beautiful forms of life on the planet.” (Henning 2015, 49) We are currently at a moment of urgency to embrace this holistic definition of stewardship, especially in the United States, a country that has had recent plans to pull back its involvement with the global and legally binding Paris Agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to limit global warming. As temperatures rise, our fresh water resources are affected.

In the last two years, I have created several projects that explore the importance of stewardship, and one project will be addressed in this paper. The *Troy Waterways Project* is an online resource that acts as a container for various stories and media experiences highlighting seven local waterways in Troy, NY. Included among the seven sites is the *Riverfront Park Soundwalk*, a site-specific, 20-minute artist audio tour of Troy, NY’s waterways taking place along the Hudson River. From the feedback from participants of the *Riverfront Park Soundwalk*, I attempt to draw conclusions from these research questions: *How does the artistic practice of soundwalking create a sense of connection for individuals to their waterways? What is taking place that allows a sense of stewardship to develop, a sense of connectedness to nature?*

## 2. Listening

My art practice of soundwalking consists of encouraging participants to experience a once familiar place in a new context primarily through listening. According to composer, Pauline Oliveros, “Listening has very little definition compared to hearing. Though the two words are often used interchangeably, their meanings are different.” (Oliveros 2005, xxii) “To hear is the physical means that enables perception. To listen is to give attention to what is perceived both acoustically and psychologically.” (Oliveros 2005, xxii) Deep Listening is a practice by Oliveros that is about “learning to expand the perception of sounds to include the whole space/time continuum of sound—encountering the vastness and complexities as much as possible.” (Oliveros 2005, xxiii) Though I originally developed my listening practice through the study of acoustic ecology<sup>1</sup>, it is also through the meditative practice of Deep Listening that I am often inspired to listen more attentively to the environment around me to create my artistic practice of soundwalking. Listening to all sounds everywhere can build an awareness that can engender “stewardship”. In my soundwalk practice, I provide an augmented consciousness of the environment, with stewardship implying a reaction to this deep listening and awareness of the conditions of one’s surroundings.

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1. Acoustic Ecology is an interdisciplinary field—founded by R. Murray Schafer, Hildegard Westerkamp and others at Simon Fraser University in the late 1960’s—that studies the relationship, mediated through sound, between human beings and their environment.

### 3. Water

In “Untapping Watershed Mind” in *Thinking With Water*, writer and video artist, Dorothy Christian states that:

When we allow our imagination to flow with the water, from its many perspectives we get a small glimpse into how profound a connector water is for all of us. It is a connecting force that defines some physical boundaries and some would say, defies all boundaries. We begin to see how each of us is related through water....some of the water that is in our bodies may have previously circulated in woolly mammoths millions of years ago, or swelled up in a plump, juicy salmonberry, or jostled around with fish in lakes and rivers, or been processed by our local sewage treatment plant. Water connects us to places, people, and creatures we have not seen, life that is far away from us, and life that came long before us. (Christian 2013, 240)

Water does not fit into the bright blue puddle boundaries of world maps so easily. Water is soil; water is sky. Water is us. It intermingles with everything. Yet, water crisis was the number one global risk based on impact to society (as a measure of devastation), as announced by the World Economic Forum in January 2015. (World Economic Forum 2015) The US is not without its water crises. Most recently Flint, Michigan, and St. Joseph, Louisiana, have been poisoning their inhabitants with lead in their drinking water. Their pipes that carry the drinking water are not safe, but the Safe Drinking Water Act, enacted back in 1986, required the Environmental Protection Agency to set standards for the concentration of lead in public pipes, with a push for “lead-free.” (Roussi 2016). Close to home, there is Hoosick Falls, NY where there is water contamination from perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA). “PFOA is a man-made chemical that is toxic and persistent in the environment. It is used as a surface-active agent and in a variety of products, such as fire-fighting foams, coating additives and cleaning products.” (United States Environmental Protection Agency 2017) Also, large corporations are privatizing water that can cut off local cities from their water reserves. In 2015, during the record-setting California drought when residents were asked to cut back their water use, Nestlé was still drawing millions of gallons of water to bottle and sell from a creek under a permit that had expired 25 years before. (Mohan 2015) The Dakota Pipeline protest by water protectors has been in the news consistently throughout 2016.

While these water issues may seem far removed to many of us, we are always immersed in nature as we are a part of nature. Taking a soundwalk can remind one of this fact through an embodied listening experience. Environmental psychology studies have shown that we are biologically and evolutionary still connected to our non-concrete environments. One

study has shown that human beings from all different types of environments and cultures are still genetically programmed to strongly prefer to inhabit the lush green coverage of savannah settings, a setting that 70,000 years ago would have increased our likelihood for survival. (Falk and Balling 2010, 479–493) Exposure to even just scenes of nature produces a host of beneficial effects in humans such as better health to improved neighborhood relationships. (Kaplan, Rachel and Stephen 1989, 1–5) However, it is when we have no alternative that we can find solace in simulations. For instance, when a real window is available, a screen-based substitute has only a minor effect on us. (Kahn 2011, 46–48)

What seems to be prevalent in literature on our connection to water specifically is similar to finding a relationship with a human being: we must first love or heal ourselves as individuals before we can love and heal the water issue. Senior Scientist with Environmental Defense, Dr. Rod Fujita, states in his book, *Heal the Ocean: Solutions for Saving Our Seas*, “To heal the ocean, we must heal ourselves.” (Fujita 2013, 198) In *Engaging with Climate Change: Psychoanalytic and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, in Chapter 9 on the love of nature and on human nature, psychoanalyst Sally Weintrobe speaks of restoring what she sees as split internal landscapes, “Loving nature is an ordinary and natural part of human nature, and I argue that capitalist culture, particularly in its recent neoliberal global phase, actively seeks to erode our loving feelings and to persuade us that we are apart from, not part of nature.” (Weintrobe 2013, 199) In his book, *Blue Mind*, marine biologist and conservationist Wallace J. Nichols traces our connections to water via scientific studies, real estate, economics, and simple pleasures and occupations of humans. He states that, “Each element is part of a vaster pattern, a pattern that connects and evolves by discernible principles. When we begin to see interconnection—a deeper relationship arises an institutional desire to protect what we love.” (Nichols 2014, 204) I believe that soundwalks can help one slow down to experience the interconnections and feel as though one is part of a pattern of nature through an embodied listening experience. My hope is that this naturally then leads to a sense of wanting to protect what is a part of us.

I believe that the strength of my art practice is that I am using the same technology—the mobile phone and computer generated sounds—that easily grabs our attention on a daily basis and takes our attention away from the natural environment to use it as a window to connect one’s attention more to the natural environment for one to experience the natural restorative effects that the natural setting has to offer. It is this restorative connection that may encourage more stewardship for the natural setting of waterways, and therefore a community may be more willing to protect their natural water supply instead of letting a large corporation privatize their water. During a soundwalk, a participant addresses a specific environmental issue at the site where it occurs, and while the experience can be enjoyable and educational, it can also promote an active imagination and critical thinking.

In my art practice, I am utilizing various technologies to create media art that creates an artistic frame for our waterways that allows participants to see the environment as if it was carefully framed in an art gallery, akin to a museum tour. We could be just as thoughtful and delicate about handling our polluted waterways as the care we imagine is put into the conservation of great master works of art in a museum. The archivist dons the white gloves to carefully handle the art piece so its lifespan continues for generations to come. Many American cities will spend millions of dollars to buy master art works, yet the same cities will let their rivers and drinking water remain polluted and undrinkable, perhaps not even safe for swimming or fishing. We copy and emulate our art, yet we take for granted our waterways. *What if we emulated and embodied our waterways through art, through soundwalks? What would this be like for participants?*

#### 4. Riverfront Park Soundwalk

Troy, NY, a small city of around 50,000 people, is located about two and half hours north of New York City along the Hudson River. It was founded on its use of water with its origins as a Hudson River port and an early center of industry. Even though today Troy does not use the waterways in the same way, they provide a sense of place, and they clearly are a part of the community. From 2014–2015, I collected stories from Troy residents and water experts from Riverkeeper and the New York State Museum on local waterways along with creating experiences highlighting seven local waterways: the Hudson River at Riverfront Park; the Postenkill Falls; Spring Avenue natural spring; Ingalls Avenue boat launch; the Burden Waterwheel; the Piscawenkill, a small creek in North Troy; and the nearby Cohoes Falls of the Mohawk River that flows into the Hudson River. This project was created to get a better understanding of people’s connection to water.



Figure 1. Riverfront Park Soundwalk map/flyer.



*Riverfront Park Soundwalk* is a site-specific, 20-minute artist audio tour of Troy's waterways located in downtown Troy. Participants use their mobile phones to access a map on my website with an option to play either a sequence of MP3 audio files, or participants can use the free Recho app to locate geocached sound files. The narrative of my voice guides them on a particular route with field recordings, musical elements, and interviews with the public and waterways experts that overlay the actual surroundings as they walk. If soundwalk participants use the Recho app, they also have the option of leaving their own 30-second story on their own connection to the Hudson River as part of the soundwalk.

- ▶ 01. Start at the Top of Stairs at River St. near Psychedelicatessen
- ▶ 02. At the Stairs
- ▶ 03. On Island in Parking Lot
- ▶ 04. At Railing
- ▶ 05. Walking Along Pathway
- ▶ 06. Towards the Concrete Bench
- ▶ 07. Concrete Bench Cont'd.
- ▶ 08. Continue Down Pathway
- ▶ 09. Pathway Near The Tree on the Left
- ▶ 10. Continue on Pathway
- ▶ 11. Continue on Pathway
- ▶ 12. Stop at Tree
- ▶ 13. Tree Cont'd.
- ▶ 14. Bench Across from Tree
- ▶ 15. Bench Cont'd.
- ▶ 16. Bench Cont'd.
- ▶ 17. Towards Stage Area
- ▶ 18. Stage Area Away from River - This one is only for those using the Recho App
- ▶ 19. Near Two Green Squares on Ground
- ▶ 20. Thank You

In the *Riverfront Park Soundwalk*, truth and fiction are sometimes blurred by local mythology. Stories told by residents reveal the beliefs held by the community that shape their connection to the waterways through generations. One interviewee's family goes back many generations in Troy to when his relatives came over from the Netherlands and married into the Native American Indian Mohawk tribe. He described a common myth told by locals on how the Iroquois Nation, or Iroquois Confederacy, was formed.<sup>2</sup> I was unable to find a historical reference to this common story told by locals of Troy that involved a Native American Indian surviving a leap from Cohoes Falls. However, it played a significant role in how locals connect with the Hudson River so the story became part of the soundwalk. I leave it to the participants to dig deeper into the website later to find out more about the stories and history embedded in the soundwalk.

I conducted six formal and recorded interviews with locals and water experts, but also I conversed with locals whenever I could about Troy's waterways. What stood out most was

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2. The Iroquois Confederacy, was a group of five (later six) related Indian tribes, who created the Iroquois constitution, properly termed the "Constitution of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy," to establish a common form of governance across a huge geographic area, bringing peace and prosperity to formerly warring tribes.  
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Iroquois-Confederacy>

that they wanted to be able to go swimming in the Hudson and also be able to go fishing and eat the fish. This is basically how the Hudson was when the Native American Indians lived here centuries ago. And this is what some scientists and advocacy groups are working on for the next 15 years. It may become a reality. However, there seems to be a misunderstanding by locals that the river cleans itself. That is not true. I took all of these things into consideration when I was creating the soundwalk. I perpetuated some local storytelling myths while dispelling others that I feel go against the advocacy for clean swimmable and drinkable water in Troy.

The *Riverfront Park Soundwalk* is comprised of a walking route that was mapped out in advance to include points of interest to attract the walkers' aural attention and serve as an informal cue for them to listen to the sound features. As it's laid out quite linearly, I created a timeline of history along the waterway. I utilized various onsite markers such as murals, the river itself, and the new concrete stage area that seems to have a controversial history with locals of Troy as many trees were cut down to create the stage and to make the area more safe with well-lit open space. There was an overall disconnect that I felt between Troy and the Hudson River, and to add to it, the city of Troy did not plow the snow in the winter along the River. Therefore, for many months and all the way into April, there were no walkable pathways along the Hudson River. Also, after a round of feedback from participants, the City then closed the one of the two stairway entrances to Riverfront Park indefinitely, and I had to restructure the first ten minutes of my soundwalk to work with the open stairwell entrance. When that version was complete, the city added hidden fountains in the ground that turn on as one steps across them. This added a more playful element to the end of the soundwalk, yet one that needed to be addressed with participants before they were surprised.

In the soundwalk, silences are included for one to listen to, allowing one to feel past the headphones to the actual environment. The guided narrative is not to replicate radio or NPR with many filler sound effects, but to allow one to have a greater connection in a more meditative way to the surrounding environment. At the end of the soundwalk, participants are encouraged to remove the headphones and just listen to their surroundings. Also, participants have a way to upload their own soundwalks and stories about the waterways via the Recho app. In the summer, the weather was quite hot and humid, and some participants chose to run through the fountains at the end, embracing the full immersion in water, the theme of the soundwalk.

The *Riverfront Park Soundwalk* was launched at the Rensselaer Historical Society in Troy, NY in the Summer 2016 with two group soundwalk experiences and an interactive kiosk onsite for about two months. Audio and video feedback was recorded after the two soundwalks. Also, prior to this launch, several groups and some individuals took the soundwalk to give me feedback.



## 5. Feedback

I am interested in how the artistic practice of soundwalking in mobile applications can be used as a methodology to awaken perceptions of stewardship in the participants. After participants complete the soundwalk, I ask them to fill out a form (certified by Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's Institutional Review Board): *1) Please describe your soundwalk experience and 2) Do you feel more connected to the environment around you due to the soundwalk experience? If so, how?*

The preliminary feedback that I have received from 13 participants told me that my artist audio tour soundwalks are creative art forms that connect locals who have lived in Troy for generations, new Troy residents, and commuters to Troy in a deeper way to the Hudson River. Soundwalks can encourage participants to connect more deeply to an environment that may already be familiar to them. Here are a few examples of writing from participants. I will keep their names anonymous unless otherwise noted. Living in North Troy since the 1980's, one participant let me know that he had visited the river more frequently to connect with nature before the trees that blocked the traffic noise had been cut down to make room for the concert stage area. However, he felt that the soundwalk opened up new ideas about the river that would keep him coming back to his usual spot: "Riverfront sound walk was like going to a museum that I have been at my whole life with the river as the main exhibit. I learned things I never knew in a new and engaging way. The experience was unique."<sup>3</sup> Another long-term resident of Troy also connected more deeply to the river from the soundwalk:

The soundwalk experience was focused. I have visited the Hudson River many times but the directions, music, and description allowed me to focus more on the water and the surroundings. I particularly liked the picture mural that has the viewer imagine what the site would have been like when the Mohawks lived there. The green landscape is much different than the mostly concrete walk ways and stand that is there today. The timing allowed one to explore and open up to the surrounding area. It wasn't rushed or too slow. The directions were clear, the voice giving directions and the story was also very audible and understandable. The interview was very interesting that linked the different water ways around the area: the Cohoes Falls, Pebble's Island and Mohawk River.<sup>4</sup>

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3. Interview with Troy, NY local, August 20th, 2015.

4. Interview with a Troy, NY local who works at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, March 15th, 2015.



Figure 3. Participant listening to Troy, NY's Native American history through the lens of a forgotten mural as part of the Riverfront Park Soundwalk (Winter 2015).

The final restructured version of the *Riverfront Park Soundwalk* also overall gave long-term residents who participated in the soundwalk a refreshed connection to the river: “Informative, ended at a perfect location—the water fountain—on a hot day. I enjoyed hearing some of the history and context of the river that I have walked along for the past ten years, and deeply moved by its native mythology.” This participant said “Yes” to feeling more connected to this particular environment due to the soundwalk, and the memory of the Native American tribes person jumping off of the falls will be remembered at every visit to the river.<sup>5</sup>



Figure 4. Participants listening to local mythology as they walk along the river as part of the *Riverfront Park Soundwalk* (Summer 2016).

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5. Interview with Troy, NY local, August 20th, 2015.

In the *Riverfront Park Soundwalk*, the participant is asked to connect the past, present, and future in a subjective way for themselves that personalizes the space around them hopefully into one of a place with meaning. I was pleased to hear that an RPI student who commutes in to Troy was encouraged by the soundwalk to become more engaged in the Troy community as she felt an interconnectedness. “I feel contemplative of my transient ‘home’ in Troy now. I am a commuter student, so I have been reluctant to really settle in to the area. But this soundwalk allowed me to connect with the socio-historical-political history of the area, and made me feel sad even, for the loss of the culture and connection to the land that we understand to have existed in Downtown Troy years ago. I appreciated the visioning toward the future, which allowed for the formation of an imaginary – the water taxis, etc. that allows sound-walkers to participate in an almost sci-fi storytelling process.”<sup>6</sup>

My initial intent was to have participants go beyond a sense of space, and create for themselves a sense of place that can have meaning to them by creating scenarios through storytelling and soundscape in powerful ways that engage the senses, not just sound. Through strong personal associations, memories are formed, and a place can have more meaning and value to a person. This sense of stewardship, or interconnectedness, is what I was aiming for in this soundwalk. In geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan’s book, *Space and Place*, he notes that, “Open space has no trodden paths and signposts. It has no fixed pattern of established human meaning; it is like a blank sheet on which meaning may be imposed.” (Tuan 1977, 54.) My concern was that I covered the canvas too much with museum-like audio, however, there seemed to be feedback that mostly indicated a deeper engagement with the surroundings and memories formed. At the very least, I was hoping to encourage a meditative slowing down. A new RPI student said, “The soundwalk experience was lovely! Typically, I would run through a park like this and the audio caused me to slow down and look around more.”<sup>7</sup>

To slow people down, I used a very calm voice and pacing along with making the route feel very safe and organized. Also, the participants are encouraged to think on their own with critical thinking about environmental issues. One participant wrote about the experience of the meditative instructions that I give for removing the headphones at the end of the sound walk to just listen to the environment, “The end of the walk focused on a listening exercise—even with the heavy winds today, and the cold, I found this to be an expansive moment in the project. Inviting the participant to engage and activate on their own.”<sup>8</sup>

Also, another participant commented on the meditative nature of the piece, “I do feel more connected to the environment. Closing off the other external sounds and listening to

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6. Interview with RPI Graduate Student, March 15, 2015.

7. Interview with new RPI student, August 20th, 2016.

8. Interview with RPI faculty member, March 15th, 2015.

the speaker talk about the river and its history allowed me to focus on the River. I liked the meditation piece to reflect about the site's past and present condition.”<sup>9</sup>

Pauline Oliveros' Deep Listening inspired these moments of meditative listening. In Deep Listening, not only does one expand the perception of sounds to include all sounds around oneself, but also simultaneously one “ought to be able to target a sound or sequence of sounds as a focus within the space/time continuum and to perceive the detail or trajectory of the sound or sequence of sounds. Such focus should always return to, or be within the whole of the space/time continuum.” (Oliveros 2005, xxiii) Oliveros also states “Animals are Deep Listeners. When you enter an environment where there are birds, insects or animals, they are listening to you completely. You are received. Your presence may be the difference between life and death for the creatures of the environment. Listening is survival!” (Oliveros 2005, xxv) In the Riverfront Park Soundwalk, my intent was to encourage one to feel their interconnectedness to all things, that their presence was important to the creatures of the Hudson River and that the River and those creatures are important to us.

I feel that the best summary of my soundwalk was written by artist, Rebecca Uliasz in “Embedded Narrative: Remembering through Soundwalking,” an article referring to my *Riverfront Park Soundwalk* and other soundwalks in the 2016 *Resonant Structures* exhibition catalogue:

Her walks encourage the participant to switch mental gears, away from the frenzied and over stimulated mindset through which we usually unconsciously experience our sensory environments, and towards one of mindful and deep consideration of ones surroundings, almost akin to a sort of meditation experience. Even the most mundane of urban settings, such as a busy city street, is transformed for the participant into an atmosphere ripe with information that allows for further reflection and connection. The walks often go beyond a neutral sensory experience, however, and morph into one in which Williams uses the intimate connections the participant has just made with their surroundings in order to address environmental concerns....The participant is at once presented with the setting and the facts in a way that aims to strike in them a greater sense of empathy towards the space, and bring to light the immanency of the various impacts that human activities have had on this environment. (Uliasz, 2016, 58–59)

Pauline Oliveros took the *Riverfront Park Soundwalk* in September 2016, and her initial response was, “I’m watching the kids enjoying the water. Interesting that they are enjoy-

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9. Interview with Troy, NY local, August 20th, 2016.

ing the water that is being pumped up into a kind of fountain for them, while the river is flowing over here. But they would be in danger if they were in the river, unfortunately.” Though she felt very connected to the Hudson River already, the soundwalk revealed to her the disconnect that many people may have to their local waterways.<sup>10</sup> This can be due to pollution, inaccessibility, or a general lack of education. It is my hope that the locals of Troy, my main audience for the soundwalk, will find personal and meaningful ways to bridge these disconnects to the local waterways. The soundwalks are to provide a sense of stewardship to inspire personal action.

## 6. Conclusions

My soundwalks place the viewer in an environment where they are encouraged to reconsider it in a new context, one in which they are a participant in the sonic atmosphere that surrounds them. The imaginative aspects of the soundwalk—the playfulness and leading one through the imagination process to engage in history and local mythology, mixing augmented audio over tangible reality—is a key way that I separate this project from a dry walking tour by a science and history museum or a radio show. Encouraging Deep Listening meditation and listening past the headphones can be a profound listening experience for even locals who already feel a connection to the river. The experience is one that is at once both intimately personal and collectively felt with a group, and it can encourage one to connect and understand their surrounding environment and their role within it on a deeper level. This interconnectedness I hope will assist with a sense of stewardship, that allows one to give value to oneself in the connected web of nature. Also, my hope is that this sense of stewardship will inspire one to create ways of living for themselves—not what society expects of them—that creates a sense of harmony and respect for the other beautiful forms of life on the planet. I plan to conduct follow-up interviews with several of the same participants to find out if their visits to the river have just as much feeling of connectedness now as it did when taking the soundwalk, and if they made any changes to their engagement with Troy waterways due to the soundwalk experience.

The *Riverfront Park Soundwalk* is part of the larger *Troy Waterways Project*, and it will continually have content added to the website as I edit the longer interviews with the public and water experts and post them. Also, there were some technical issues with the Recho app, and either they will fix them, or I will utilize a new geocaching app to re-record the soundwalk. I will be writing further about the feedback from the soundwalks in efforts to improve my practice of using soundwalks as a methodology for fostering a sense of stewardship for the waterways of Troy. With water crisis the number one global risk, I believe

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10. Interview with composer, Pauline Oliveros, September 13, 2016.

that it is imperative that we do something about it. There needs to be a fundamental shift in our relationship to nature and to ourselves. People need to learn to care for the environment and each other, but first one must care for oneself. The artistic practice of taking a soundwalk can provide the introspective, slowing down that is necessary to form a deeper connection to one's local waterways. I believe that there is something meaningful in addressing the "small" things through an intimate first-hand knowledge gained locally to then be able to grasp the larger "global" issues. We also can learn more about a holistic sense of "stewardship" from indigenous cultures who have had systematic strategies of living in harmony with their environment for generations. If we could borrow some of these strategies, we may be able to return the waterways to how they flourished when the Native American Indians lived along its edges. Many locals of the Troy, NY community desire a return to a healthy river in the future, one that is safe not only for swimming, but a river that can also sustain life.

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