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## Dance in Public Space

Rachel Cruzan

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# Dance in Public Space

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## **Abstract**

Dance is a universal cultural phenomenon that provides physical, emotional, and social benefits. Public Space, when well-utilized, provides people with opportunities to meet various needs. In this way, Dance and Public Space have the potential for a mutually beneficial relationship, Public Space providing a way for people to meet certain needs through Dance, while Dance improves the quality of Public Space. This relationship is already in existence worldwide. This paper explores seven case studies globally where Dance occurs in Public Space. Written research is combined with diagrams developed to study key aspects of these spaces. The diagrams study Dance and its effects on the Space, the physical qualities of the Space, and the Social Context of the Space. This provides indications of why the Space is useful for Dance, and how Dance impacts the Space and its users. Ultimately, this study is designed to provide better understanding of the relationship between Dance and Public Space, as well as tools to study this intersection.

## Introduction

In this capstone I will explore the intersection of dance and public space. Dance has been an important aspect of my life for as long as I can remember. I have taken classes in ballet, tap, jazz, hip-hop, swing, and modern dance, with formal training for fifteen years. It is a fun way for me to get exercise and express myself. I find my ability to dance limited by simply not having access to spaces where it can occur. In this capstone I will look at public space as space where dance can, and often does, occur.

Two principal factors contribute to how “danceable” a public space is. The first is the physical characteristics in a space that may encourage dance. The second is the context of adjacent activities that bring people into a space and make them want to use it for dance. In this project I will use a combination of qualitative and quantitative research, focused on a selection of case studies. The physical characteristics of each case study will be quantitatively and qualitatively defined and the qualities of the cultural context and surrounding activity will be analyzed.

I will use the characteristics of physical and social context to analyze seven case studies of public spaces where dance occurs. I will diagram each quality as well as providing a written analysis of its applicability to motivating dance in public space. I will study the dance, the scenario in which it occurs, the physical space used, and the place, or social setting, of each case study. I will then draw conclusions about how dance, physical space, and social environment, relate and support each other in each respective case study. This capstone is designed as a sample survey of public dance spaces. The analysis and conclusions are meant to educate makers and users of public space on the importance of dance and how public space can provide for this need.

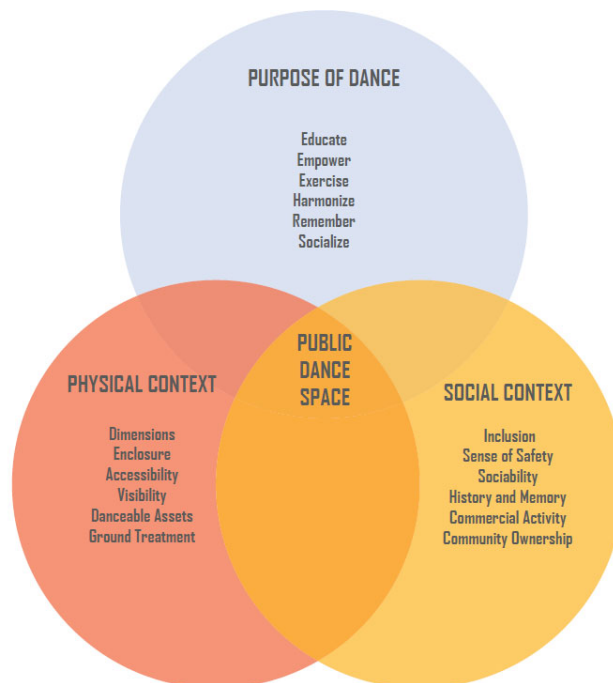


Figure 1 – Public Dance Space as a function of Dance, Physical Context, and Social Context

## Personal Prologue

I took dance classes from the age of three until I graduated from high school. My experience of dance through these classes was a weekly schedule of time in a local dance studio with dance floors, ballet barres, and mirrors. When I got into high school, I signed up for my first hip-hop class, which was held in the same space as my other dance classes, such as ballet and tap. We wore street shoes for this class, as opposed to special canvas slippers or tap shoes. That October, we learned the iconic choreography to “Thriller” by Michael Jackson. Although we learned the choreography in the dance studio, our purpose was to perform in a “flash mob,” a sudden, spontaneous dance, at a nearby ice cream shop on Halloween. The shop had an ample outdoor space for people to eat and play, which gave us plenty of space to perform. We donned our zombie costumes and makeup in the dance studio and then walked as a horde to the ice cream shop to perform. It was fun for us, a group of adolescent girls, to show off our skills outside of our annual dance recital. It was entertaining for the patrons of the ice cream shop too, and even the workers there were entertained. This experience proved to me that dance is not just for the stage or the studio. Dance can be enjoyed anywhere, by all people.



The site of my first experience of dance in public space

## Background

The question that I will set out to answer in this capstone is: How can a public space encourage people to dance? Dance is stylized movement of the body, often in rhythm or set to music. Space is a location in which an activity can occur. Public in this capstone is something concerning people as a whole or done in open view of people. In this capstone I will explore the intersection of dance, space, and the public.

Dance is a fundamental aspect of the human experience. The form of dance may vary by culture but is found in every culture.<sup>1</sup> It has been with us from before civilization, as evidenced by prehistoric depictions of dance in rock paintings.<sup>2</sup> This demonstrates that dance is intrinsic to human behavior and carries enough cultural significance to be recorded in such a way. Dance was also important in early civilizations all over the world.<sup>3</sup> As cultures evolve, dance remains fundamental. The basic actions of stylized movement carry on to contemporary times, even as the specific movements evolve in cultures and eras.

Dance can be significant to both individuals and groups, fulfilling multiple physical, emotional, and social needs. Firstly, dance provides for the physical need to exercise, to engage in physical activity to sustain or improve fitness. Dance provides for the emotional needs to celebrate, to recall one's personal and cultural past, to learn, and to engage with music. Celebration acknowledges a significant event with an enjoyable activity. The tradition of Carnival is an example of this, with dance as one aspect of the larger celebration.<sup>4</sup> On the opposite end of the emotional spectrum, dance can be used as a means of remembrance. This is seen in Jamaican *myal* dance.<sup>5</sup> This was a way for African slaves in Jamaica to connect with their heritage through adapting a traditional dance. It is also seen in the Native American Dream Dance and Ghost Dance groups.<sup>6</sup> These dances were ways of reconnecting with the spirits of the dead tribespeople. All of these examples are done in public groups.

Dance demonstrates the human ability to learn through imitation. The movements of dance invite and encourage similar movements in observers.<sup>7</sup> Dance is a way to harmonize, to physically engage with music. We are able to express enjoyment of rhythmic music through physical, sometimes involuntary, response.<sup>8</sup> This response often relates to the imitative learning of dance.

Dance fulfills the social functions of gathering and empowerment. Public space has often been a part of this, acting as a place for public demonstration and gatherings. Dance evolved in human society as a means of binding larger groups together.<sup>9</sup> These groups, made up of individuals from different tribes, gathered for the enjoyable activity of dance. Dance is "the biotechnology of group formation".<sup>10</sup> It allows people to forget or overcome rivalries and disagreements through a collective enjoyable activity. Dance empowers its participants, making them stronger and more confident, more able to control their life and claim their rights. Dance is a leveler of social hierarchy.<sup>11</sup> It removes facades of distinction with a recognition that the same state of emotion can be reached by any person dancing. Dance has also been used as a tool of revolt. This was seen in Romans in 1580, when rebels took to the streets dancing with weapons as part of their uprising.<sup>12</sup> However, dance as performance can empower the performers over the audience. Aristocratic dance, such as ballet, is one example of this.<sup>13</sup> In this case, the dance creates a distinct hierarchy between dancers and the audience. No matter what the specific purpose, dance is always a means of meeting human needs.

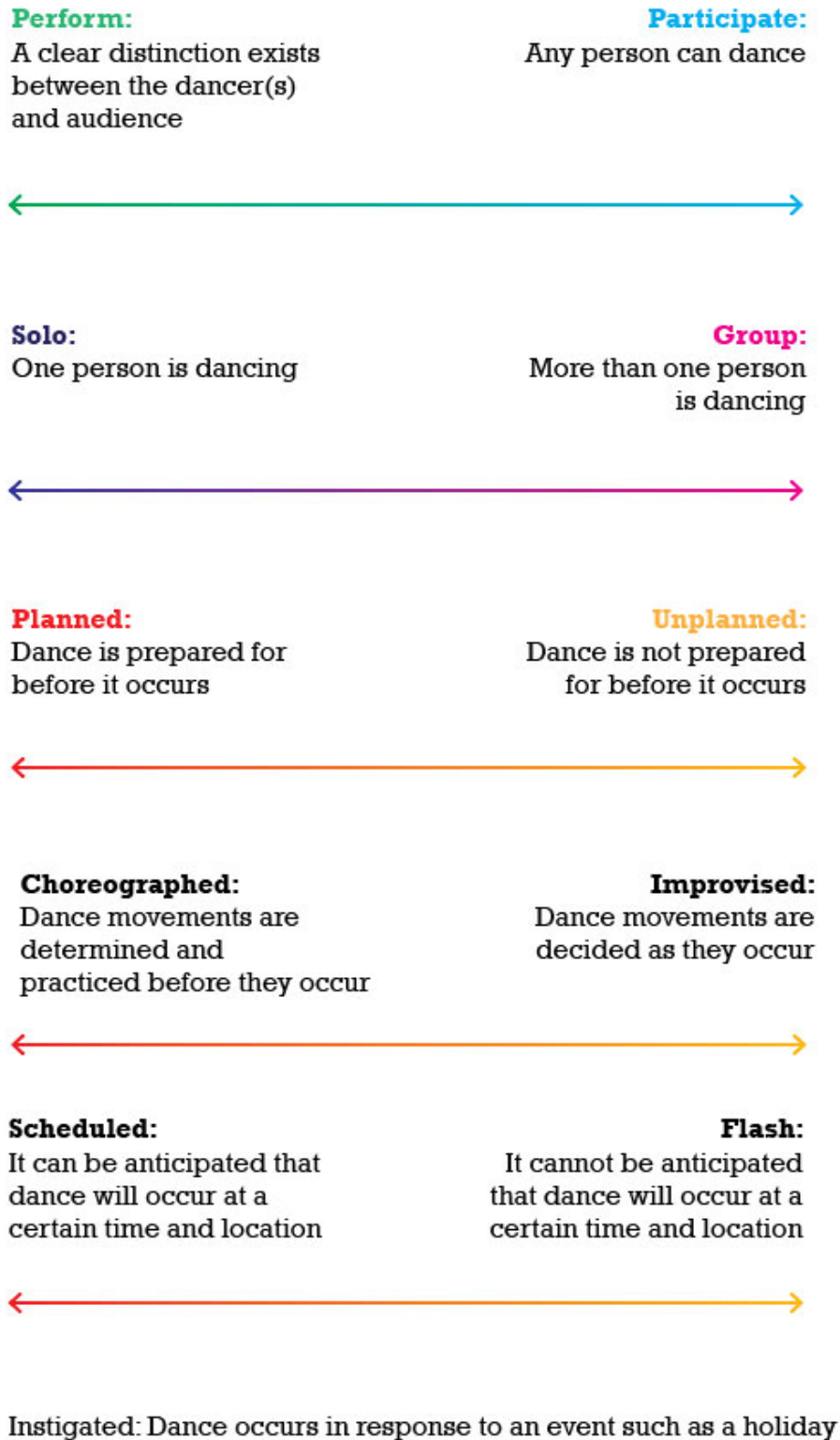


Figure 2 – Spectrums of scenarios in which dance can occur



Dance can occur in a variety of scenarios (fig. 1). There are spectrums of planned to unplanned dances, performative dances to participatory dances, and solos to any number of people in a group. A planned dance is prepared for before it occurs, while an unplanned dance is not. Subspectrums of this spectrum include choreographed to improvised dances and scheduled to flash dances. In choreographed dances, movements are decided and practiced before they occur, while in improvised dances, movements are decided as they occur. In a scheduled dance, it can be expected by the general public that a dance will occur at a certain time and location. A special example of this would be an instigated dance, which occurs in response to an event such as a holiday. A flash dance is a surprise to the public, unanticipated by all except the dancers until the moment it happens. In a performative dance, there is a clear distinction between the dancer(s) and the audience which remains in place throughout the dance. Alternatively, in a participatory dance, any person can join the dance. Finally, a dance may involve any number of people, from a single dancer to a large group. All of these scenarios exist along spectrums, rather than being binary.

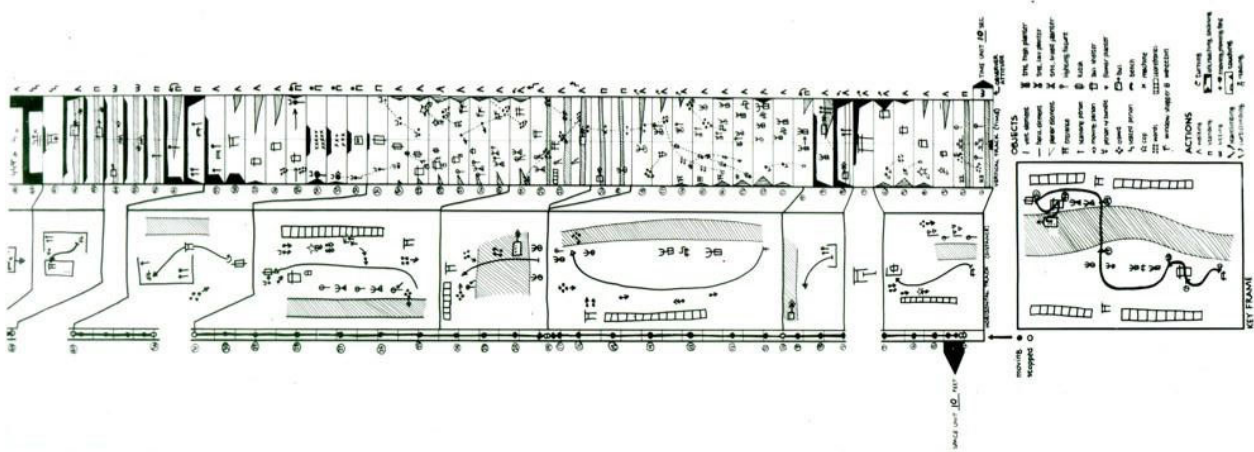


Figure 3 – A motation drawing by Lawrence Halprin

Dance requires a physical context in which to perform it: a space. Landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, husband of influential dancer Anna Halprin, designed public space with performance in mind\*. He thought of space in terms of motion, recognizing that movement through a space was a fundamental part of its experience. As a landscape architect, Halprin worked on a variety of project types, including civic spaces, estate design, and campus, urban, and highway planning.<sup>14</sup> In his varied career, he recognized that the built environment is essentially a stage for activity to take place. His work was characterized by design processes that captured motion of the users and led to “movement-derived form”.<sup>15</sup> Halprin valued experience in space above the space itself. One idea firmly held by both Lawrence and Anna was that dance and performance were not limited to the theater, even creating a “dance deck” in the woods outside of their own home.<sup>16</sup> Dancing outdoors was an entirely different experience than within a studio or theater.<sup>17</sup> Public, outdoor space has unique impacts on dance experience and performance.

\*As his design theories are the source of inspiration for my analysis, “Halprin” will refer to Lawrence Halprin unless stated otherwise, with the recognition that Anna Halprin had an indispensable influence on his design thinking.

Anna Halprin pioneered work in experimental dance and performance art. Her work in dance touched many of the needs discussed above. She used dance for herself and others as a way to process illnesses such as cancer and AIDS.<sup>18</sup> Anna Halprin also saw dance as a means to heal from societal disruption and to communicate across cultures. After the Watts riots, her dance company used a dance workshop in the community as a vehicle for processing the violence and confronting racism.<sup>19</sup> Her work also took a strong stance on public space. She and her Dancers Workshop danced in the streets of San Francisco.<sup>20</sup> In this way, she asserted that public space is dance space.

In turn, Halprin designed spaces such as Lovejoy Plaza that intentionally invited dance.<sup>21</sup> He thought of himself as a “design choreographer,” recognizing the power that design had to shape and influence motion through spaces.<sup>22</sup> He developed the term and method “motation”, based on dance notation, labanotation, to design physical space in terms of motion (fig. 2).<sup>23</sup> Motation was a tool for both observation and design, and operated in support of his RSVP Cycle design process.<sup>24</sup> The RSVP Cycles married the idea of motion and space. This acronym stood for Resources, Score, Performance, and Valuation (fig. 3).<sup>25</sup> It was a tool for design, ideation, and exploration of both physical space and dance choreography.<sup>26</sup> It was also a tool for collaboration, dismantling the notion of top-down creativity.<sup>27</sup> Lawrence and Anna used the RSVP Cycles in the design of dance and public space.

In the RSVP Cycles, Resources describes existing conditions of a space, both physical and intangible.<sup>28</sup> In terms of a dance space, this would be the physical dimensions and characteristics of the space as well as its history. Score is the process leading to a Performance.<sup>29</sup> This describes how the space is activated. For a dance space, this would describe the kinds of dance possible in the space, as well as any other activities in the space or its immediate surroundings. Performance is the outcome of the Score.<sup>30</sup> This would be the dance itself as it resulted from its environmental conditions. Valuation was how Halprin refined the Score.<sup>31</sup> This is a process-based step. As a dance space is used, Valuation would be a way to alter it to make it more suitable for dance or to change the types of movement available. To use a mathematical analogy, if Resources are the input, Score is the function that leads to the output of Performance. Valuation is the set of variables within the Score function which can be adjusted to change the output of the Performance.

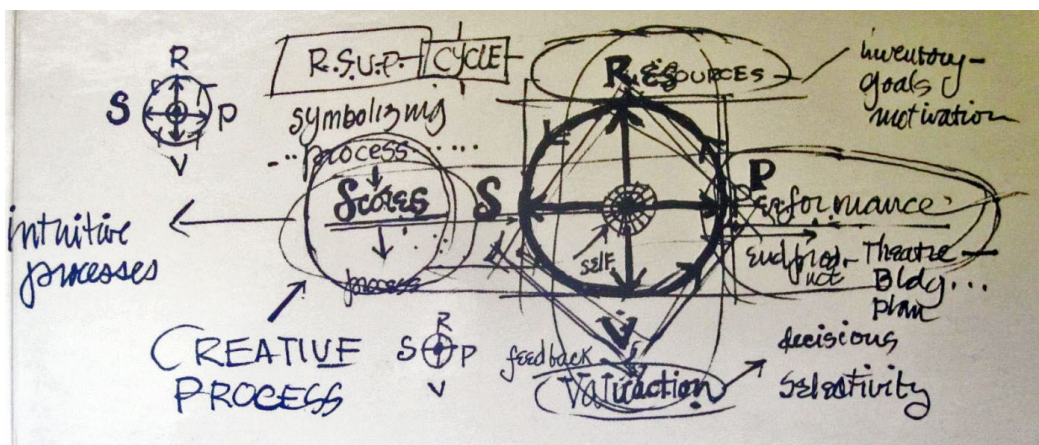


Figure 4 – A diagram of the RSVP cycles by Lawrence Halprin

A description of public dance space must also account for the qualities and characteristics of a public space. To be public, a space must provide access, freedom of action, claim, change, ownership and disposition to the users.<sup>32</sup> A public space must provide access, the ability to physically enter the space.<sup>33</sup> Freedom of action is “[...] the ability to carry out the activities that one desires, to use a place as one wishes but with the recognition that a public space is a shared space.”<sup>34</sup> In a public dance space, this would mean that the user is free to dance in the space, with no rules or norms preventing it. A user of a public space must also be able to claim, or assert control over a space.<sup>35</sup> In a public dance space, this would mean that the user or group is free to claim a certain area to dance in. Change is the ability of a space to evolve over time.<sup>36</sup> This may mean that a public space is used for a variety of purposes, dance being just one among them, dependent on time.

Ownership and disposition of a space describe who has the right to decide what activities can occur there.<sup>37</sup> Some public spaces are privately owned, but still accessible, and allow various degrees of freedom of action, claim, and change. For example, privately owned public spaces must allow the public to access them, but conditions on when they can be accessed and what behaviors are allowed are decided by the management or owners. Even public spaces can have limitations. While New York City subways are run by the New York City Transit Authority, a public authority, dance is illegal there as it is considered reckless endangerment. However, dance does occur in these spaces anyway. A public dance space is therefore not dependent on ownership and disposition, but ideally dance would be allowed and potentially encouraged by the owners or managers of the space.

Dance in public spaces can meet needs that people have in those spaces. As described by Carr et. al, people in public spaces need comfort, relaxation, passive engagement with their environment, active engagement with their environment, and the opportunity for discovery.<sup>38</sup> Dance can fulfill the last three of these needs. Passive engagement is the enjoyment of observing one’s environment.<sup>39</sup> This is commonly accomplished through people watching. For a performative dance, this is essentially the role of the audience. Active engagement is direct activity within a place and interaction with the people in it.<sup>40</sup> The space is used by people for activities and meetings. This need can be fulfilled with dance as an act of socialization, celebration, exercise, or empowerment. Discovery satisfies the human need for new experiences.<sup>41</sup> This could be discovering a new space, an unexplored area within a space, or a new activity that can be done. Learning a new dance by either observation or participation can satisfy this need. Changing physical qualities can create this sense of discovery in a place, but changing human activity can do the same just as effectively.<sup>42</sup> Dance as part of the activity of a public place can make it more dynamic and therefore more satisfying to human needs.

The Project for Public Spaces defines a successful public place as being accessible, active, comfortable, and sociable (fig. 4).<sup>43</sup> This metric is based off of the Project’s extensive body of research on the topic. The Social Context of a public space can be understood through these dynamics. A place is accessible if it is convenient to get to.<sup>44</sup> Some means of access include walking, biking, and public transit. Visual access is also important in creating a sense of safety.<sup>45</sup> An accessible place is more likely to have people come to it to use it as a dance space, or to watch a dance performance. Comfort also contributes to a place’s success. Measures of comfort include safety, cleanliness, and places to sit.<sup>46</sup> If people do not feel comfortable or safe, it is unlikely that they will use a place to perform or participate in dance. Lack of seating would limit the

opportunity to have an audience. Sociability is another important aspect of a good public place. Social places are where people meet, talk, and gather.<sup>47</sup> Such a place would invite inherently social activities such as dance. In addition, dance could also serve as a catalyst for such meetings and gatherings. Activity is the most important quality of a public place.<sup>48</sup> Activities such as dance create vitality and purpose in a place. Furthermore, adjacent activities can inspire and influence dance performance in a place.

## What Makes a Great Place?

**Project  
for Public  
Spaces**

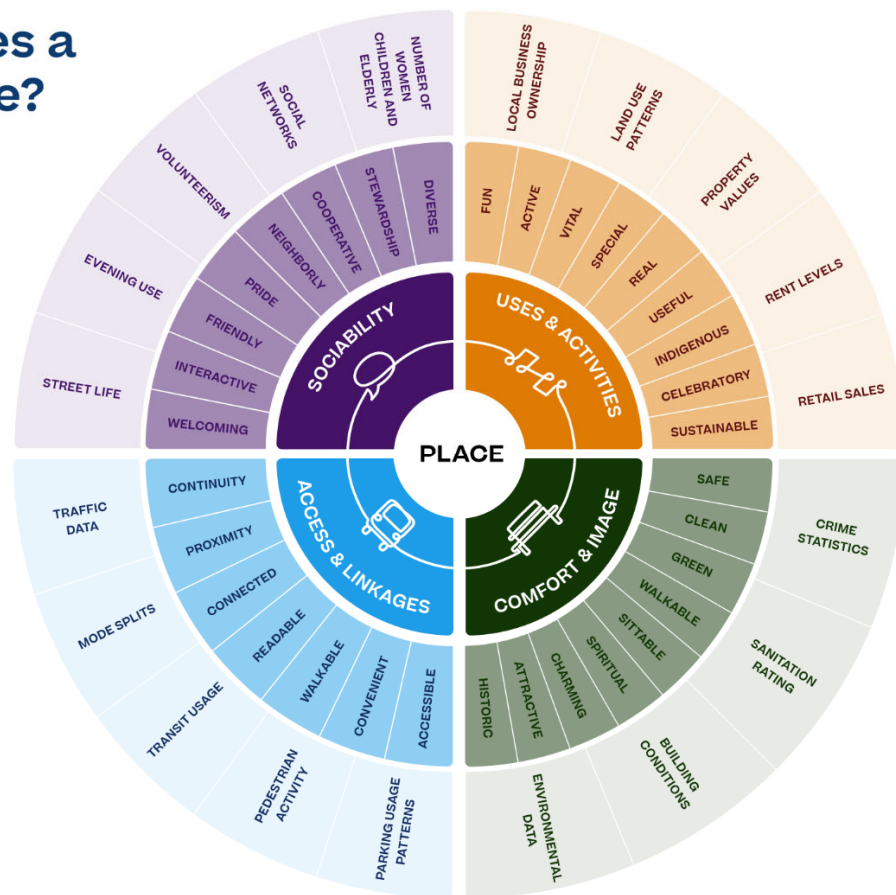


Figure 5 – Project for Public Spaces Great Space Diagram

Dance and public space can have a reciprocal relationship. Public space can provide a space where dance can occur. Dance can activate public space and meet the needs of its users for something to watch, something to do, and something to learn. On both ends, people benefit by having more opportunities to meet their needs in the public space. In this capstone I will look at spaces where this relationship is already occurring and seek to determine what qualities of space facilitate this.

## Method

This capstone is based on the theories of dance, public space design especially informed by the theories of Lawrence Halprin, and needs in public spaces. This project analyzes seven case studies following selected criteria. The case studies selected are be publicly accessible outdoor spaces used for dance. They fall along the spectrums of planned/unplanned, choreographed/spontaneous, scheduled/flash, performative/participatory, and solo/group, as discussed above. The selected case studies are spaces regularly used for dance. Regularly used is defined as with predictability (for example, a yearly event, dances held on the same day every week or month) and/or with frequency (for example, dance will be a common occurrence in warm weather). I selected case studies where I could access data regarding physical qualities, use, and surrounding context available through traditional research methods. Video of dance performance (such as can be obtained from sites such as YouTube) is also used in this research.

### PROJECT LOCATIONS

#### DANCE AROUND THE WORLD



Figure 6 – Map of Case Study Locations

Case studies will include:

1. The Morro Do Adeus Favela, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
2. Front Street, Hamilton, Bermuda
3. Brilliance Shimao International Plaza, Shanghai, China
4. Dance-O-Mat, Christchurch, New Zealand
5. The Zócalo, Mexico City, Mexico
6. Rosa Parks Circle, Grand Rapids, Michigan
7. Lovejoy Fountain Park, Portland, Oregon

My analysis is based in diagramming and categorizing the selected spaces. This capstone project explores the intersection of Dance and its Physical and Social Context. For the purpose of this project, I focus on Dance in Public Space. Below, I define the specific criteria of Dance, Physical Context, and Social Context that I diagram and describe for each case study. These criteria are based off of the research on Dance and on Public Space in the Background section of this document.

### *Dance*

As discussed in the Background section of this paper, Dance fulfills fundamental human needs in all cultures. One need is to Educate, to learn a new skill through imitation. Another is to Exercise, to engage in physical activity to sustain or improve fitness. Dance also fulfills the need to Empower, to become stronger and more confident, more able to control one's life and claim one's rights. Dance enables us to Harmonize, to physically engage with music or space. It also gives us an opportunity to Socialize, to gather people together for a common purpose. Finally, dance lets people Remember, to recall one's personal and cultural past.



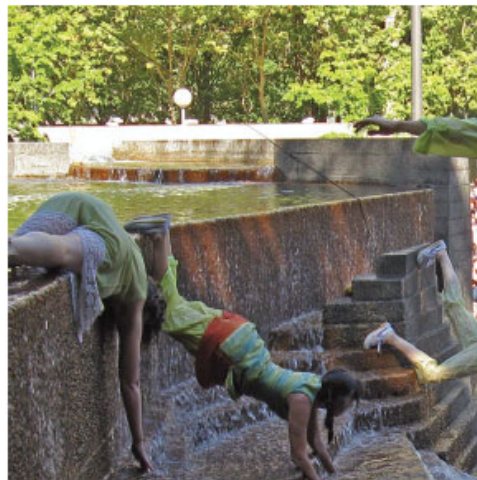
**EDUCATE:** to learn a new skill through imitation



**EXERCISE:** to engage in physical activity to sustain or improve fitness



**EMPOWER:** to become stronger and more confident, more able to control one's life and claim one's rights



**HARMONIZE:** to physically engage with music or space



**SOCIALIZE:** to gather people together for a common purpose



**REMEMBER:** to recall one's personal and cultural past

## *Physical Context*

One physical characteristic of a dance space is its dimensions. This includes its size in plan, as well as its shape. It also includes the space's relationship to the buildings around it, such as the height of buildings and the size of blocks.

Degree of enclosure is another factor in dance spaces. This can be understood by the number of sides that are open to the street, as well as number of access points and their locations. A covered space can also increase the sense of enclosure.

Accessibility measures how a space is accessed, and by whom. It is more than being accessible by disabled people, though that is a factor. Accessibility analyzes where and how a space is entered and exited. It also looks at whether the space can be passed through as part of a path or is a stopping point. Access also looks at where users come from and how they arrive.

Visibility is very important in dance spaces. Low visibility provides privacy, while high visibility provides an audience. It analyzes who can look in from the outside, and what one sees on the inside of a space. It also looks at whether there is continuous visual access or if the activities of the space can only be seen from certain points.

Ground Treatment looks at the dance surface to analyze how possible dance is in a location. It factors in topography, if there is a flat surface provided for dance and if not how people can interact with the topography. It also looks at the surface material, such as its levels of hardness and smoothness to determine what kinds of dance moves can be performed.

Danceable Assets are any factors that promote dance, whether they are specifically designed to do so or simply promote it serendipitously. The ability to play music is one such factor, as well as having a dedicated performance space, a space for the audience, and seating to rest. It also looks at the surrounding context as the "backdrop" of the performance.

## *Social Context*

Inclusion analyzes what groups are not only allowed but welcomed into and have free use of their rights in the space. This metric looks closely at minorities, women, the elderly, children, and the disabled. The presence of these groups indicates a public space's success. It indicates that the public space is welcoming and safe.

A Sense of Safety is important in a dance space. People will not use a public space if they are not comfortable there, and safety is the most basic metric of comfort. This metric looks beyond crime statistics which may be accurate to how safe a space actually is, to the indicators of people's feelings of safety. This includes building conditions, use at night, and use by women, children, and the elderly.

Sociability indicates how the space is used for gathering. The space may be used primarily for celebrations and other fun gatherings. It may serve a vital community role as being a place where citizens meet to make decisions or serve other civic functions. It could also be a place where people meet in passing.



The roles of History and Memory cannot be overlooked in the vitality of a public dance space. The space could be on the site of an important historic event. The space itself or the surrounding buildings could have great historic value that draws people to the place. Dance can be a way of calling attention to these factors and telling the story of a space, creating a reciprocal relationship between space, dance, and memory.

Commercial Activity, either in or near a public space, can be a strong catalyst for activity. People may come to shop, but if there is a pleasant public space nearby, they could turn a utilitarian trip into a memorable day enjoying their city. Workers can also spend their breaks in these spaces. Similarly, a good public space can stimulate local business. Food vendors can turn a public space into an outdoor dining experience with minimal effort.

Community Ownership indicates the sense of ownership the users of the space have in the space, whether or not they legally own it. This is indicated by community involvement, such as the organization of activities. It is also indicated by how the space is maintained and/or altered by the users. Even seemingly unpromising spaces can become highly active due to community involvement. A space may be supported by just one group, or by many.

### *Dance + Space*

Halprin's RSVP cycles were used as a foundation for my own categories of Dance, Scenario, Space, and Place. I adapted the RSVP cycles to these new categories as the RSVP cycles are meant to design space iteratively, while my study focuses on existing spaces. I use images and videos to understand Dance in each case study. Each case study looks at a different dance form so they cannot be directly compared. I analyze Scenario according to the dance scenario spectrum discussed above. I diagrammed Space focusing on the space itself, its physical context, and any "Danceable Assets." I evaluate Place according to the criteria defined in the Project for Public Spaces Great Space Diagram described above. I then synthesize this information into a conclusion about how dance is impacted by physical and social context, and how it influences the physical and social environment, in each case study.

### *Limitations of Research*

This capstone project is limited in scope and applicability to what could be accomplished by one undergraduate student in a semester-long, three credit-hour independent study. This limited the number of case studies to seven. Many more case studies defined by the above criteria can be studied using the method I have laid out. In addition, different types of dance are performed in each case study, so what may be an appropriate physical or social environment for one may not be for another. Further, in some case studies, the dance space used is the only public space available, and therefore not necessarily an "ideal" dance space. I was also unable to conduct on-site observation or interviews of users. Therefore, my analysis is based off of the information about each site I was able to find online, including news articles, journal entries, site websites, and video.

Empowering Enclosure

Morro do Adeus Favela, Rio De Janeiro, Brazil



Projeto Na Ponta Dos Pés (“On Tiptoes”) is a ballet school founded and run by Brazilian dancer Tuany Nascimento. The school is located in the Morro Do Adeus Favela in Rio, Brazil. This neighborhood, Nascimento’s hometown, is stricken by poverty and gang violence. These conditions make life for young women in the favela very difficult, limiting many opportunities. The ballet school is a way to provide these women with physical and mental outlets, empowering them to have greater agency in their lives. The dance classes originally took place on a basketball court at the local community center. In 2020 the girls constructed their own indoor ballet studio, but this study will analyze the use of the basketball court before it was constructed.<sup>49</sup>

### Physical Context

The basketball court where the dance classes take place is a 25 by 30 foot rectangle. The surrounding buildings are about 50 feet tall. Due to the hilly terrain and the informal nature of the favela, there are no regular blocks in the surrounding area. This space is enclosed by a chain-link fence on three sides and the wall of the community center on the other. Even the permeable fence gives a sense of enclosure and safety to the dancers. The roof over the court further increases this sense of being enclosed. Nascimento’s dance school is located on the street R. Régio. The dancers get to the community center by walking. They often walk in groups for safety through the streets of the favela. The space is entered through a door in the fence or through the community center. The transparency of the fence allows children and community members to watch the dance classes. This makes the dance classes a part of the larger community, even while being somewhat isolated from the community violence. Non-dancers are also welcomed inside of the space.<sup>50</sup> The dancers can also see outside of their space to maintain vigilance in case violence breaks out. The surface of the dance space in the Morro Do Adeus Favela is a smooth, polished blue floor, presumably polished concrete. The smoothness enables the dancers to more easily perform moves that involve spinning or sliding. This is also vital because a rough surface would more quickly wear out their ballet slippers, which could not be easily replaced. The basketball court used for the Na Ponta Dos Pés dance classes is danceable because it provides a flat, smooth dance surface and a sense of enclosure. The enclosure isolates the dancers, at least psychologically, from the violence around them, and the proximity to the community center gives them a refuge in case actual violence occurs.

### Cultural Context

Being able to use the basketball court as a dance studio enables women and children to take part in their public space. Many of the girls in the class feel unsafe leaving their homes, and the dance classes are a way for them to safely go out into public space. It empowers them to be women and children in a public space, but also minorities in a dance space. As minorities do not fit the typical picture of a ballerina, having this space empowers the girls to take part in dance. Overall, the Morro Do Adeus Favela is an unsafe place. The women and girls especially feel unsafe even leaving their homes. However, the fact that they are willing to regularly meet at the community center indicates that it provides at least a relative sense of safety. The classes occur during the day and are canceled if there is too much violence in the area. The Community Center where the dance classes are held is likely a social space, due to the nature of its purpose. It is used for recreation, as evidenced by the basketball courts and dance classes. Adults and children from the community come to watch the classes, even if they do not join in. The favela is filled with unfortunate histories of

violence. This includes recent violence, as well as historic violence. Black people continue to be pushed to the periphery in Rio, and make up a disproportionately higher percentage of favela residents. The Community Center seems to be located in a primarily residential area, there is no evidence of nearby commercial activity. Projeto Na Ponta Dos Pés indicates a high level of community ownership. Nascimento takes it upon herself to organize the dance lessons for the girls of her neighborhood. She also raised the funds to build an indoor dance space for her classes, showing investment in her community.

## Dance

At her dance school Na Ponta Dos Pés, Tuany Nascimento teaches the girls in her neighborhood ballet. This dance form is European, originating in Italy and popularized in France during the Renaissance. Since then ballet has become popular worldwide and a powerful symbol of culture. Unfortunately, people from poor neighborhoods such as the Morro Do Adeus Favela are not exposed to this art form and certainly do not get the opportunity to learn it. This is even worse for minorities who do not fit the typical European image of the ballerina.<sup>51</sup> Schools such as Nascimento's seek to provide opportunities to these communities and change the standard image of who can be a ballet dancer.

## Scenario

Dance in the Morro do Adeus favela is participatory. Dancers come to learn new skills and improve their technique. Other children of the favela come to watch classes without participating. These classes are a group activity. The instructor teaches girls of all ages at the same time. More advanced students demonstrate for others. Classes are held regularly. Unfortunately, violence in the neighborhood often interrupts or prevents classes from occurring.

## Space

The dance space is a basketball court which is part of the local community center. It is a 20' x 25' rectangle. It is outdoors but semi-enclosed by a roof and a fence. Due to regular violent confrontations in the Favela, having this public space enclosed enables the dancers to learn in greater safety. Even though the fence cannot physically protect the dancers, it provides a mental sense of security. Its attachment to the community center also gives the dancers a place of refuge if a shootout occurs. After a few years of using this space, fundraising enabled Nascimento to build an indoor, enclosed dance school so the girls could learn in greater safety.

## Place

This public space is challenged by being located in an impoverished area torn apart by crime. In the Complexo do Alemão, a collection of favelas that includes the Morro do Adeus favela, there is a shootout every 30 hours.<sup>52</sup> The area is hotly contested between drug gangs and occupying police militia forces. While young men in the favela are often swept into the violence, either becoming involved in the drug trade or simply caught in the crossfire, women are left marginalized and voiceless. They are trapped in cycles of poverty and violence. However, because of Nascimento's instruction, women and children have a place in this public space, making it more sociable, even if it is not comfortable or safe. Because of the informal nature of the favela, it is difficult to get precise statistics on property values and commercial activity. The

density of the neighborhood makes access to transit irrelevant to the study in terms of members of the community being able to get to the public space.

Enclosure is empowering to the dancers in Morro Do Adeus because the girls can claim the space as their own. The dancers in the favela are in a situation where their personal agency has been compromised. This is due to the violence in the favela within drug gangs and between drug gangs and police, which stems from a long history of the poor, especially minorities, being oppressed by those in power and pushed to the periphery. The women in the favela are not free to leave their homes due to the violence, and teenage pregnancy also hampers their opportunities. They grow up seeing cycles of poverty and violence, many experiencing death in their own families from a young age. Ballet classes are more than just exercise or a fun activity, though they do provide those things. The ballet classes offer a life outside of violence and poverty. They show the girls that there are opportunities for them. Even if the women do not decide to pursue dance or are unable to pursue it as a career, they learn to work hard for the things they are passionate about. It motivates them to work harder in school and gives them dreams of a bigger world than the neighborhood they grew up in. Even though the area is unsafe, the women claim their rights within their neighborhood by using the space together for the purpose of dance.

## Memory Parade

*Front Street, Hamilton, Bermuda*



The city of Hamilton, Bermuda hosts Harbor Nights every Wednesday night during the summer.<sup>53</sup> These weekly festivals take place on Front Street, which faces Hamilton Harbor. They are an opportunity for people, especially tourists, to interact with local culture.

### Physical Context

Front Street in Hamilton, Bermuda, is a 4,200 foot long paved street fronting Hamilton Harbor. The surrounding buildings are two to five stories tall with porches and balconies facing the street. The blocks along the street are approximately 200 by 600 feet. Front Street is open on the Hamilton Harbor side, and permeable on the inland side. One can enter from the east or west ends, but also from the buildings or side streets that face Front Street. Overall, the space has an open feeling with a permeable edge defined by lines of porches and balconies. Front Street is very accessible. It is a central hub of travel in Bermuda. Hamilton Harbor is the departure point for all ferries on the island.<sup>54</sup> The bus system hub for Bermuda is just over a five-minute walk away. This makes it very accessible for both locals and tourists. Front Street is an urban stage. From the porches and balconies facing the street, one can look down on all of the action below. Because there are only buildings on one side of the street, there is high visibility all the way down its length. Because it is on a harbor, the street can also be seen from the boats on the water. Front Street is an asphalt street with curbs and sidewalks on either side. The flat pavement of the street offers a level surface to dance on. Street vendors during Harbor Nights bring people to Front Street.<sup>55</sup> This increases an already generally large audience of locals and tourists that are attracted to the area. The festival atmosphere makes the Gombey dance, performed parade-like, moving down the street, a welcome and enlivening activity. The stage-like qualities of the street, with porches acting as the “seats” for the audience, also play an important role in making Front Street a dance space. The ocean acts as a backdrop to this performance.

### Cultural Context

Harbor Nights is meant to attract both locals and tourists to Front Street, so it is receptive to all ages and nationalities. Gombey dance is rooted in African and Caribbean cultures, so it is especially powerful to people sharing that heritage.<sup>56</sup> It is a traditionally male-only dance form, but the audience is inclusive of females. Harbor Nights enliven Front Street at night, making it feel safe due to the large number of people and festival atmosphere. The buildings are also well-maintained, adding to this sense of well-being. Front Street serves many social purposes. During the day, it is a hub of commercial activity, with shops, restaurants, and businesses. It is also a transportation node, acting as a street and a hub for ferry travel. In the evenings, and especially on Harbor Nights, it is a celebratory place, meant to show off the best of Bermudan art and culture. Gombey dance is a way of preserving and celebrating the heritage of enslaved Bermudans. Originating from African, Caribbean, and British dance and music traditions, it was a way for slaves to communicate, to celebrate, and to preserve their culture and identity. Their stories were repressed for generations, and Gombey dance is the primary survivor of their legacy.<sup>57</sup> Dance is a way to pass on their stories. Front Street is lined with shops, businesses, and restaurants, attracting both locals and tourists. Harbor Nights increase this activity by closing down the street to vehicular traffic and allowing vendors to set up their shops there. These vendors may sell food but may also be local artists selling their work. This activity brings people in who may not otherwise have an opportunity to see Gombey dance. Harbor Nights bring together multiple citizen groups. Artists, restaurants, and food vendors come to sell their products. Gombey dancers have the

opportunity to perform in front of a new crowd every week. The Bermuda Chamber of Commerce is in charge of this event.

## Dance

Gombey dance is unique to Bermuda, stemming from a blend of African, Caribbean, and British traditions. It uses African drums and rhythms and the dancers wear highly decorative costumes and masks. It was created by enslaved people and for many years derided and even outlawed by authorities who feared what the dancers could do while hiding behind their masks. However, it has since become accepted and celebrated as a powerful part of Bermudan culture. The significance of Gombey to Bermudan culture and history cannot be understated. According to Bermuda historian Ruth Thomas, “We don’t have any language from the slaves who were here; we don’t have their arts. We have very little about where we’ve come from, so thank goodness that we have the Gombey tradition.”<sup>58</sup>

## Scenario

The Harbor Nights Gombey dances are performed by trained dancers. People attending the weekly festival can be entertained by the dancers while shopping and eating, but do not join in the dances. The Gombey dances are performed by a group of dancers of all ages but is traditionally a male-only dance form. These dances are planned and scheduled to take place weekly at the Harbor Nights festivals.

## Space

Harbor Nights are held on Wednesday evenings during the summer in Hamilton, the capital of Bermuda. These evenings are used to introduce visitors to the culture of Bermuda and boost the local economy. Gombey dancers are a regular part of this entertainment, with local food and products being sold along the street. The celebration runs along Front Street, which is 4,200 feet long, 40 feet wide, and faces Hamilton Harbor. This street hosts restaurants and retail as well as offices. The festival nature of the Harbor Nights draw people, including many tourists, to Front Street. Instead of passing by a static dance group, the dancers pass by the people. This means that even if someone comes to the Harbor Nights for food or shopping they will also become the audience of this dance parade. The porches and balconies on the buildings that front the street also act as “seats” where the audience can watch the dancers perform on the urban “stage” of Front Street, with Hamilton Harbor as the backdrop.

## Place

Weekly Harbor Nights in Hamilton give tourists a chance to engage in local culture while promoting local businesses. Scenic Hamilton harbor is activated by the festive atmosphere of street merchants and Gombey dance. People living or staying in Hamilton may arrive by foot, but the island is small and well-connected by public transit so anyone in the country can easily attend. The central terminal for the bus system is located in Hamilton, less than one thousand feet from Front Street. The Ferry Terminal is located on Front Street, so all of the ferries on the island leave and return there.

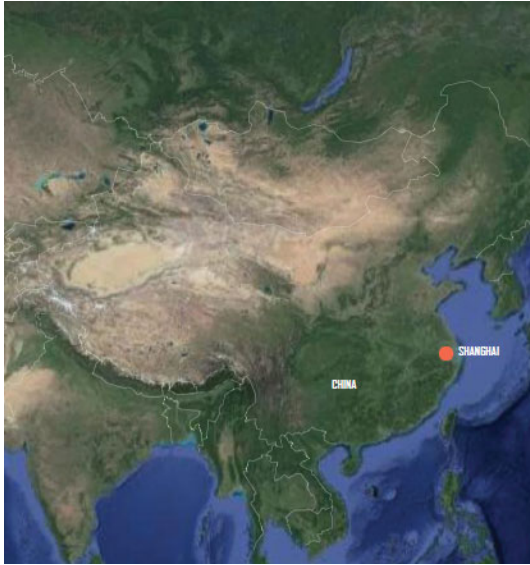
The Gombey dancers at the Hamilton Harbor Nights turn Front Street in Bermuda into a Memory Parade. The Harbor Nights intentionally bring a festival atmosphere to Hamilton Harbor. Street food, local



artists, and music are a way to stimulate the local economy, especially bringing in money from the tourists. The Gombey dancers, while part of the spectacle, bring something more to the evenings. This is a way for native Bermudans, especially those of African and Caribbean descent, to share their unique culture. Because there were no indigenous people groups in Bermuda when it was first settled, its culture is a unique blend of English from those who colonized the land and their African and Caribbean slaves and indentured servants. This naturally created a tension in the culture where the enslaved peoples' cultures were repressed as much as possible for centuries. Gombey dance was how these people celebrated and remembered their culture, and also how they protested their unfair treatment. The Gombey dance is all that survives of their stories and art. Being able to perform on Front Street, with locals and tourists looking on from balconies and porches, preserves and celebrates the memories of the Bermudians that came before.

## Community Squares

*Brilliance Shimao International Plaza, Shanghai, China*



Throughout China, Guang Chang Wu is a popular pastime among the elderly, especially women. Guang Chang Wu translates to square dancing, which for those who practice it means dancing in a public square.<sup>59</sup> This dance form is an inexpensive pastime, allowing the elderly to exercise and form social connections. The Brilliance Shimao International Plaza in Shanghai, China, is one of many public spaces used for Guang Chang Wu.

### Physical Context

The Brilliance Shimao International Plaza is a 60 by 70 foot square located in the densely built heart of Shanghai, China. While the surroundings are very densely built with tall buildings, the Shimao Plaza and other public squares in the People's Park of Shanghai provide relief from the density. The Plaza is enclosed on all sides, entered and exited by a pedestrian street that runs along its longer axis. The building also extends over the Plaza, creating a well-defined urban "room." This "room" becomes a stage for the dancers to perform, protected from rain and distractions of city life such as traffic. The pedestrian street acts as a counterpoint to this sense of enclosure, creating a space that is welcoming, visible, and accessible. In this way, the space provides both prospect and refuge. The Brilliance Shimao Plaza is a very accessible place, located just off of a pedestrian street in an area with plenty of public transit options. This means that one does not need to own a car to use this space, which especially positive for the elderly who may not feel safe driving but still need access to opportunities to socialize and exercise. There is no curb between the pedestrian path and the Plaza, removing yet another access barrier for elderly people who may have a higher risk of tripping. This space is a node along a pedestrian path, where people can stop to rest or simply move through. This is a highly visible space. Once one enters the Plaza from the pedestrian road, the entire space is clearly visible. This gives the dancers plenty of opportunity to have an audience, or even to have more participants join in. Square pavement tiles act as the floor surface of the Brilliance Shimao Plaza. They appear to be textured similar to a sidewalk and about two feet by two feet in size. The rougher texture would allow people in various types of shoes to move without slipping. This would be especially important to the elderly. The flat surface and lack of curbs also increase safety, while also providing fewer barriers to dance. The enclosed but accessible nature of this space makes it a good dance space. The enclosure gives the dancers a well-defined space where they will not be interfered with in their activities, while the pedestrian street gives the dancers the opportunity to have an audience.

### Social Context

The Guang Chang Wu dancers are very inclusive. The majority of the dancers are older women. This means that this dance in public space gives greater ownership of public space to both the elderly and women, two groups that can often feel unsafe in public spaces. The groups themselves are very welcoming, including men, women, old, young, singles, couples, natives, and foreigners. Anyone who wants to join is welcome. The Brilliance Shimao International Plaza gives a sense of safety. The enclosed nature of the space means that one has both prospect and refuge. The users can see who comes in and out by the pedestrian street, increasing a sense of safety. The location near a large shopping center also gives a sense of purpose to those using the space, rather than loitering. The shopping center would also be monitoring the space, giving users an extra sense of protection. The buildings are well-kept and the space is used by women,

children, and the elderly, both day and night. Located just off of a pedestrian road, the Brilliance Shimao International Plaza is an ideal location for casual gatherings and meet ups. The Guang Chang Wu dances are slightly more formalized in that they are planned ahead, but passers-by can casually watch or join in. The Brilliance Shimao International Plaza Building is full of stores and is itself located in a shopping district. This ensures plenty of daily activity with both local and international people. The regular commercial activity makes the place lively, gives an increased sense of safety, and offers varied audiences for the dancers. The Guang Chang Wu dancers feel ownership of the public space, but also a duty to share the space with other users. This is due to a highly communal mentality about ownership in China. The elderly Guang Chang Wu dancers grew up during the height of Communism in China. Growing up, they participated in public marches and other collective activities. Therefore, they still thrive in group activities, and social isolation would be especially damaging.

## Dance

Guang Chang Wu, called Chinese Square Dance because it is practiced in public squares, is a collective dance form especially popular among the elderly in China. Rather than having a specific dance vocabulary, this dance form is distinguished by its collective aspect. The dancers may incorporate traditional dances or western-style partner dances, but most often dance to pop music. The dance provides the elderly with two needs often unmet for their demographic: exercise and social connection.

## Scenario

Chinese Square Dancing, or Guang Chang Wu, is highly participatory. It is a way for the elderly, especially elderly women, to exercise and socialize. These groups are welcoming to all ages, genders, and cultures. Guang Chang Wu is always done in groups. Sometimes the groups will do western-style partner dances or the dancers will freestyle on their own, but the social group element is essential to Guang Chang Wu. These dance groups often meet at regular times and locations. Due to noise complaints, the dancers are only allowed to dance and play music during certain hours.

## Space

The Brilliance Shimao International Plaza is just one of many locations within the People's Park in Shanghai where Guang Chang Wu takes place. It is 60 feet by 70 feet, enclosed on the sides, sheltering the dancers within a defined space. Yet it also fronts a wide pedestrian street so it is very accessible. This gives more people the opportunity to join in the dance as they pass by. It also gives the dancers a large casual audience. As people walk by, they can pause to watch without a large commitment or simply have something interesting to see on their way to their destination.

## Place

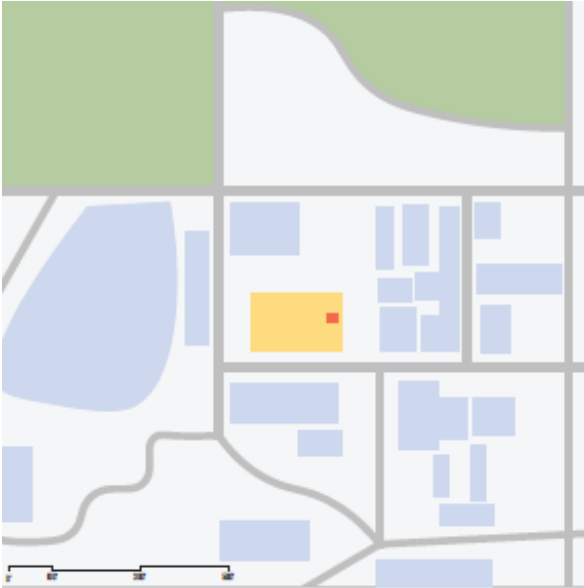
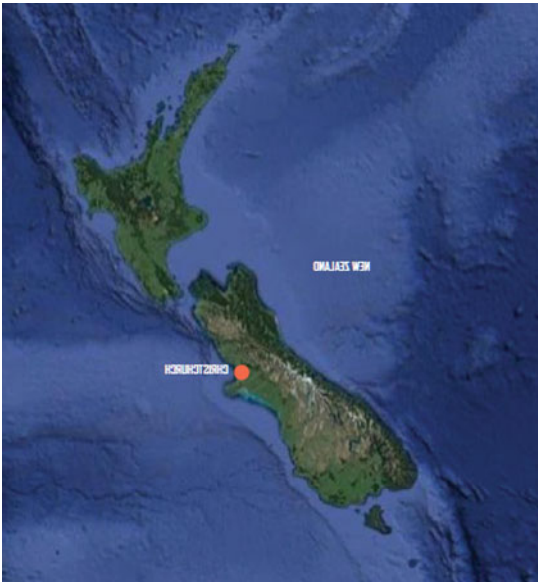
Chinese Square Dance is an inexpensive form of exercise, especially popular among elderly women. Many of these women were raised during the height of Communism in China and thrive on collective activities. Being able to gather in a public place also combats the isolation often suffered by elderly populations worldwide. The Brilliance Shimao Plaza is a good place for these women to gather. There is

plenty of public transit and the Plaza is walkable to the nearby residential districts. The highly commercialized zone is active with shoppers and workers who may pass by and see the dance.

All over China, studied specifically here in the Brilliance Shimao Plaza in Shanghai, elderly women build community through dance in public squares. Guang Chang Wu, literally translated to “square dancing,” is a means for the elderly to exercise and build community for little to no money. Exercise and community are necessities that elderly populations often lack worldwide. For this generation of Chinese people, the need for community is especially felt as they grew up during the height of Communism, participating in many group activities such as marches and relying on their community as they often left rural homes for large cities. These “dancing grannies,” as they are sometimes called, take these needs into their own hands by organizing dances in the public spaces already available to them. These groups can be very open, where anyone can join in regardless of age, gender, or nationality, as seen at the Shimao Plaza. This particular space is well-trafficked so it gives many more people the opportunity to join in the dancing. By choosing a space to dance that is public and accessible, the women give themselves and others the opportunity for much-needed exercise and socialization.

**Musical Infill**

*Dance-O-Mat, Christchurch, New Zealand*



The Dance-O-Mat is a public space intervention by Gapfiller located in Christchurch, New Zealand.<sup>60</sup> After the 2011 earthquake left much of the city devastated, with open spaces in the city fabric a painful reminder of what had been lost. The project is a dance surface and a laundry machine that has been turned into a jukebox inserted into one of these empty lots. This turns a space of loss into a space of celebration and gathering.

### Physical Context

The Dance-O-Mat is located in an open 215 by 115 foot lot cleared by the Christchurch earthquake. The dance space itself is a 20 by 30 foot rectangle. The area is defined by large, irregularly shaped blocks and large open spaces. The surrounding buildings are between 60 and 210 feet tall. This area of dance space is very open due to the destruction of the earthquake. The space itself has no walls. There is a building next to the dance space which is the only space defining vertical plane. The Dance-O-Mat is fairly accessible. There is ample parking in the area, as well as a few bus stops. It is a one-minute walk from the Te Pae Christchurch Convention and Exhibition Centre and the Turanga Library. It is also located just off of a sidewalk. As there are no walls, the Dance-O-Mat in Christchurch, New Zealand, is highly visible. It is just off of a road and sidewalk. It is also in clear view of both the convention center and the library. The dance surface is a custom-made sprung dance floor. The sprung dance floor makes it easier and more comfortable to jump higher. The sprung dance floor makes the space great for dancing. The Dance-O-Mat also features a coin-operated washing machine that has been turned into a jukebox. One can connect their own music to the washing machine, which is connected to four speakers. The four speakers are in the corners of the dance space.

### Social Context

Dance at the Dance-O-Mat is informal and unscheduled. This makes the space open to anyone who wants to use it. In the early days after the earthquake, it was used by dance schools with no place to teach their students. The space is lit so it can be used at night. It is used by both men and women, as well as children. The proximity to important public buildings, such as the convention center and library, gives an increased sense of safety. The Dance-O-Mat is specifically designed to be a space for the people of Christchurch to gather to dance. Some dance groups plan to meet regularly, but other people can meet casually to dance. The Dance-O-Mat is a way for the people of Christchurch to heal from the trauma of the Christchurch earthquake. The Dance-O-Mat heals the urban space by turning a vacant lot into a public space. This healing of the urban space is healing for the people of Christchurch as well, so that instead of seeing the scars of destruction, they see their own resilience and growth as new things come to be. While the area surrounding the Dance-O-Mat is not necessarily a commercial district, there are a few restaurants and stores that can generate activity which would bring people to the dance space. The Dance-O-Mat was designed and initiated by Gap Filler. "Gap Filler is a creative placemaking agency operating at the crossroads of community development, urban design, art and public intervention."<sup>61</sup> Their client and sponsor is the Christchurch City Council. Multiple organizations came together to offer supplies and labor. The project has had numerous volunteers over the years. The Dance-O-Mat is clearly a beloved civic project that allows people to engage with and give back to their community.

## Dance

The Dance-O-Mat lends itself to all types and styles of dance. The simplicity of a smooth surface and the ability to play any music from one's own device gives users the freedom to perform how they like. It gives everyone the opportunity to harmonize with music. It is also healing for the city to be able to fill and animate an area that had been destroyed.

## Scenario

This dance space is fully participatory. The Dance-O-Mat allows anyone to connect their music and dance however they want. Any number of people can use the space, from individuals and pairs to entire dance troupes.

## Space

The Dance-O-Mat by Gapfiller shows that very minimal interventions can be made to allow and encourage people to dance in a public space. A 30 foot by 20 foot sprung dance floor gives people a flat surface to dance on outside of the surrounding gravel. Four speakers hooked up to a laundry machine-turned-jukebox allow people to play whatever music they would like. In this era of portable speakers, the dance floor and the jukebox themselves act as message just as much as functional parts of an animated public space. Simply giving people music and a dance floor is enough to make a dance space.

## Place

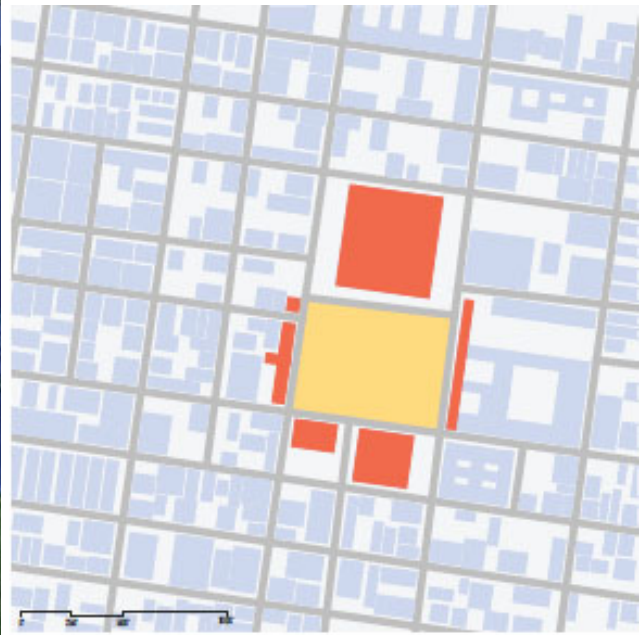
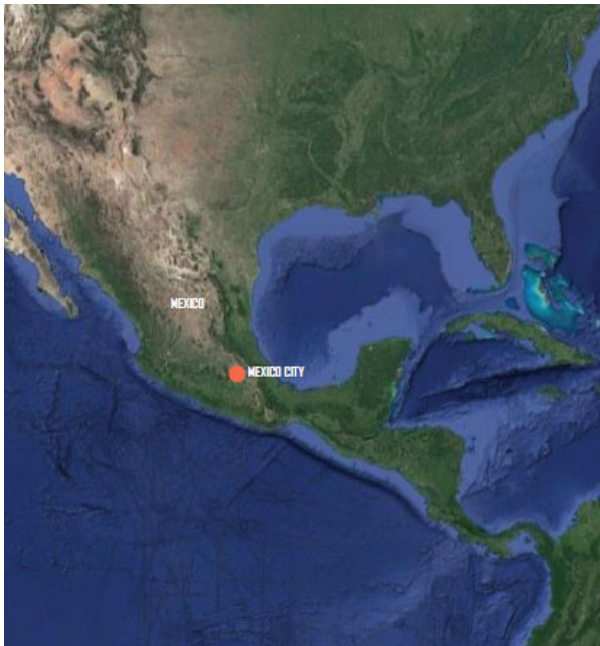
The construction of the Dance-O-Mat was a reaction to the destruction left by the 2011 earthquake. It was not constructed out of a need for public space; there are plenty of nice parks nearby. Its purpose is to activate the open space it occupies through music. Simply giving people the opportunity to dance here changed it from the site of a tragedy to a fun location.

In the wake of the 2011 Christchurch Earthquake, the decision by Gapfiller and the Christchurch City Council to turn an empty lot into a dance space demonstrates the importance of dance to healing. The intervention into the physical space is minimal. Its main components are a purpose-built dance floor, a sound system based out of a coin-operated laundry machine, and some lighting. While the materials are minimal, the message and impact are great. The message of this dance space is that it is alright to dance, to celebrate, to find joy, even in the wake of pain. The underlying message of this is that dance is important, it is needed. The impact of the space was healing to the city. The Dance-O-Mat did not use dance to heal people physically as Anna Halprin had demonstrated. Instead, it healed the fabric of the city itself, while also helping people recover mentally from the event.



## Remembering Square

*Zócalo, Mexico City, Mexico*



The Zócalo is located at the physical, cultural, and historical heart of Mexico City, Mexico. Now the location of the Plaza de la Constitución, it was originally the ceremonial center of the Aztec empire.<sup>62</sup> This connection with Mexico's indigenous past makes it the perfect stage for Conchero dance. This Aztec dance form is a way for people to connect with their ancestry and the ceremonial legacy of the Aztec empire.

### Physical Context

The Zócalo takes up a full city block in Mexico City, Mexico. It is a 615 by 730 foot square. It is surrounded by buildings around 70 to 100 feet tall creating an enclosed-feeling space. This historic plaza is surrounded by buildings on all sides. The tall buildings, including the Metropolitan Cathedral and the National Palace, create a well defined boundary. This boundary can be understood as an urban "room," where the streets that interrupt its "walls" act as "doors." Vehicular streets buffer the space between the Zócalo and the surrounding buildings, bringing people and cars into this strongly defined urban "room." The edges of the plaza itself are also defined by tall lamp posts. The Zócalo is surrounded by multi-lane streets, so it is not very comfortable to walk to. However, there are large crosswalks as well as pedestrian paths at two of the corners, so the issue is not insurmountable. Users of the space can also enter through the Zócalo/Tenochtitlan subway station located underground on the site. As it is located just off of a few major transportation nodes, the space is both a point of pause and a destination in itself. Dancers in the Zócalo are highly visible. The open space of the plaza is very large, putting anyone using the space on display. The volume of traffic also means that multiple new viewers can come and go in a matter of minutes. The ground of the Zócalo is flat and slightly raised above the street level. It is paved in large concrete squares. The rough surface gives the dancers needed traction for kicks, spins, and other dance steps. Physically, the enclosure of the Zócalo, the background of prominent buildings such as the Cathedral and Palace, and the flat ground surface makes it an ideal urban stage set. However, it is the power of memory that draws the Conchero dancers to this location. The embedded memory of the site as an indigenous seat of power resonates to this day as dancers gather to remember their heritage.

### Social Context

This site was appropriated from the indigenous Aztec people by Spanish colonizers, becoming the site of seats of power such as the Cathedral and Palace. However, it is now a place where all groups can gather, and those with Aztec heritage can reconnect to their roots. The Zócalo is a highly visible space located adjacent to two important cultural buildings. It is used at night, both for dance and for community events such as ice skating. The surrounding buildings are well illuminated. This is an important civic space, given its proximity to significant cultural buildings and its own power as a public space. The Zócalo is large enough to be used for all kinds of community events. However, when it is not specifically programmed, it is a good spot to gather informally. History and Memory are vital to understanding the Zócalo. Historically the ceremonial center of the Aztec empire, later appropriated by the Spanish as the center of their power in Mexico, it highlights how place can carry memory far outlasting its owners and users. The Conchero dancers gather in this spot to commemorate their heritage. They are not simply remembering the past but continuing their legacy. There is not much permanent commercial activity in the immediate area of the Zócalo. However, the open space of the site lends itself to various temporary vendors setting up shop within the space. The Zócalo is not only a place to gather, but also a place where citizens can make their voices heard. It is the site of both national celebrations and national protests.

## Dance

The Conchero dance is an Aztec dance which originated around the time of the colonization of Mexico. It was and continues to be a way for indigenous people to pass down ancient cultural knowledge and meanings.<sup>63</sup> The ritual dance is believed to purify its audience. In 2021, a ceremony was held in the Zócalo to commemorate the 696th anniversary of the founding of Tenochtitlan.

## Scenario

Conchero dance has been passed down through the generations. Once forbidden for outsiders to watch, it is now performed by those who have been trained in it. It is generally seen being performed in groups. These dances can be performed any time but are especially practiced during days of religious and historical significance. For example, in 2021 thousands of dancers gathered to celebrate the 696th anniversary of the founding of Tenochtitlan.<sup>64</sup>

## Space

The Zócalo is the common name of the Plaza de la Constitución in Mexico City, Mexico. It is a 615 by 730 foot space in the heart of the city. In the pre-Colonial period it was the ceremonial center of the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan. Today it is surrounded by the Cathedral, the Supreme Court Building, the National Palace, and other government offices and museums. Dancers gather in this space to perform the Aztec Conchero dance. The buildings surrounding the Zócalo give it a complete sense of enclosure, making it like an “outdoor room.” However, the streets that surround the Zócalo make the walls of that “room” porous, enabling both motorists and pedestrians to easily join in or pass by the space.

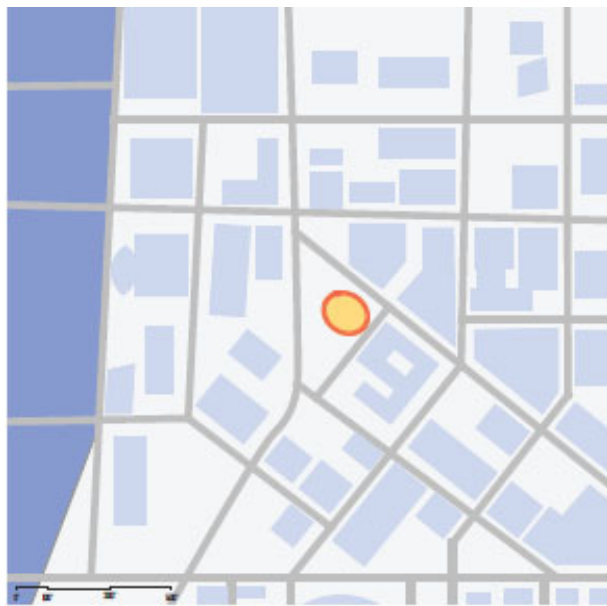
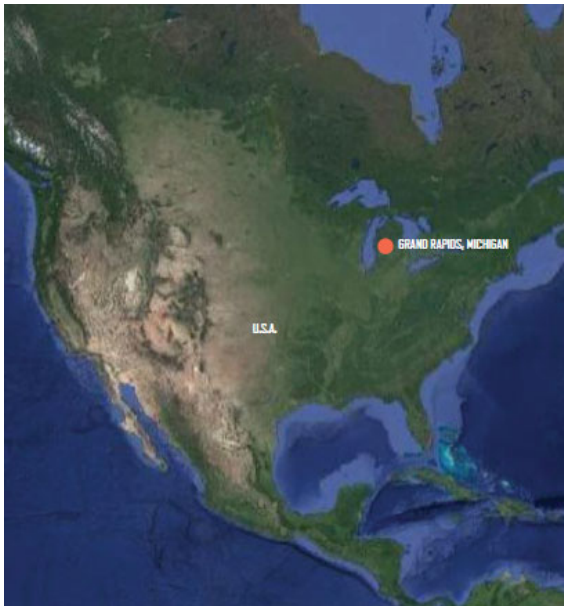
## Place

The Zócalo is located in a prominent spot in Mexico city. It is surrounded by important civic buildings, as well as being a historically important location in its own right. The plaza is very accessible. It is ringed by roads for both drivers and pedestrians to enter or pass by. The Zócalo/Tenochtitlan subway station is also located below the surface of the plaza. This gives any dancers reliable access to an audience. However, the most significant force making this a space for dance is memory. The history of the Zócalo as the center of the Aztec culture, appropriated by colonizers, makes this space an important site for indigenous people.<sup>65</sup> The dance is a way to remember and pass on their culture, and there is no better place to do so than in the heart of the city.

The Conchero dancers of the Zócalo highlight the powerful ability of place to hold memory. The Zócalo was a site of power for the Aztec people, a ceremonial space very near what they considered to be the center of the universe. When the Spanish colonized Mexico, they appropriated this site as their center of religion and government, constructing the Cathedral and National Palace. The purpose of the space remained the same though power had shifted hands. This was the time when the indigenous Aztec people developed the Conchero dance. This was a way for them to preserve their culture, their ceremonies, religion, and rituals. Continuing to dance in the Zócalo is a way of remembering and reasserting this indigenous culture. By connecting dance to place, the Conchero dancers reclaim their sacred space.

## Pairs in a Circle

*Rosa Parks Circle, Grand Rapids, Michigan*



Rosa Parks Circle in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is the host to weekly swing dance classes throughout the year. These events are organized by the Grand Rapids Original Swing Society. These free lessons expose community members to swing dance who otherwise may not have the space to dance, the money to afford lessons, or a community to dance with.

### Physical Context

Rosa Parks Circle is an ellipse sunken two feet into the ground from the level of the surrounding street by a series of shallow steps and ramps. The 170 foot long by 130 wide ellipse sits in a triangular site off of Monroe Center Street, which cuts and orients the surrounding blocks on a diagonal. The nearby buildings range from forty feet to over two hundred feet above the street level. Rosa Parks Circle is surrounded by buildings of various heights on all sides. There are also trees planted on the perimeter of the ellipse in various densities. This creates a gradient of enclosure, with the park more open on the Monroe Center Street side. With full views of surrounding buildings and streets, Rosa Parks Circle is clearly connected to the city, while also offering an open space for the citizens to use. Even though it is sunken into the ground, ramps allow disabled people to use Rosa Parks Circle freely. There are also several bus stops around the Park, including one right on the park itself. There is also a public parking lot across the street, as well as some on-street parking. This gives users a few options of how to access the space. Rosa Parks Circle is especially visible from Monroe Center Street, a one-way, pedestrian-oriented street. Grassy berms planted with trees make it less visible on the Monroe Avenue side, which is a vehicular-oriented street. This means that people driving by might not see the dance classes, but pedestrians could easily see the dancers' activities, and also easily join in. The ground at Rosa Parks Circle is smooth concrete. It is a flat surface with no joints in it for the dancers to trip on. The hardness of the surface would not inhibit swing dancing too much, as jumps are more advanced moves done for effect and not as essential as other gliding, turning, or walking steps. The bandstand provides the space with a place to play music from or for instructors to demonstrate dance steps. The steps surrounding the circle provide a place for an audience to watch, or for people to rest in between dances.

### Social Context

The Grand Rapids Original Swing Society offers lessons to all ages and experience levels, free of charge. This can bring many different demographics into the space, all with the common interest of learning to swing dance. Being located on a pedestrian-oriented street increases the sense of safety of the Park because people on the street can see what is going on inside of the Park. It is used at night and by families. Rosa Parks Circle is used for many types of gatherings. In addition to being a regular meeting spot for swing dance classes, it is also an ice skating rink in the wintertime. The space is used for other civic functions as well, like festivals and art shows. The site of Rosa Parks Circle has been used as a public space in Grand Rapids long before its current design. In the 1970's it was redesigned as a pedestrian mall, but this proved unsuccessful and the design was altered to its current state in 2000.<sup>66</sup> It was named for Rosa Parks, a Michigan Resident, in 2001. Monroe Center Street hosts a few restaurants, otherwise there is little commercial activity in the immediate area. This does create opportunities for people to dance after dinner, or to watch the dancers from patio seating at the restaurants. This space is strongly supported by the Grand Rapids Community. The Grand Rapids Swing Dance Society's classes are sponsored by the Michigan

Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the City of Grand Rapids. The city also sponsors other programming of the space, such as art shows and the ice skating rink.

## Dance

The Grand Rapids Original Swing Society hosts weekly swing dancing classes in Rosa Parks Circle. The lessons are free, welcoming to all ages and abilities, and require no special dress code. Hundreds of people attend each week, so it is not required to bring a dance partner. On August 7, 2012, the Grand Rapids Original Swing Society organized 756 people to swing dance at Rosa Parks Circle, landing a Guinness world record for largest number of people swing dancing in unison.

## Scenario

Dance at Rosa Parks Circle is highly welcoming and participatory. The local swing dance society gives free lessons to dancers of all ages and experience levels.<sup>67</sup> No partner is required. Swing dancing is performed in pairs, often with many pairs dancing simultaneously, creating a larger group. This event is planned and regularly scheduled. Lessons are on Tuesday nights from 7:00-9:30pm throughout the year.

## Space

Designed by Maya Lin in 2000, Rosa Parks Circle is a beloved public space in Grand Rapids, Michigan.<sup>68</sup> It is a sunken ellipse reached by steps and ramps of various sizes. These steps make good seats, in addition to outdoor tables and chairs often located on the periphery of the ellipse. A bandstand located on the edge of the ellipse is an ideal location for live performances, more seating for an elevated vantage point, or demonstrating dance moves. Besides hosting regular dance classes, Rosa Parks Circle also hosts concerts and functions as an ice-skating rink in the wintertime.

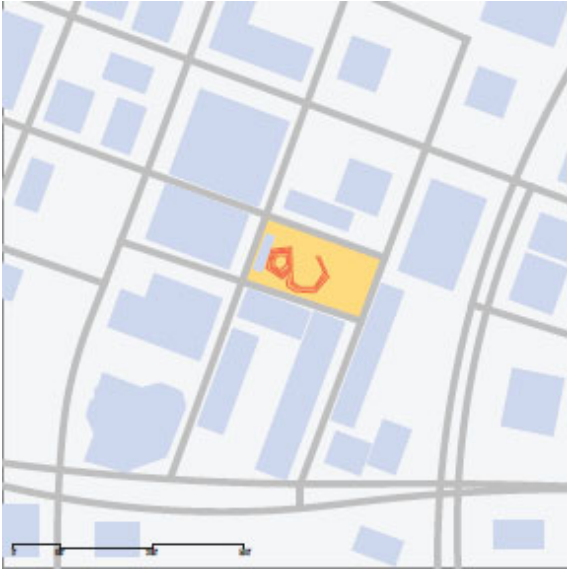
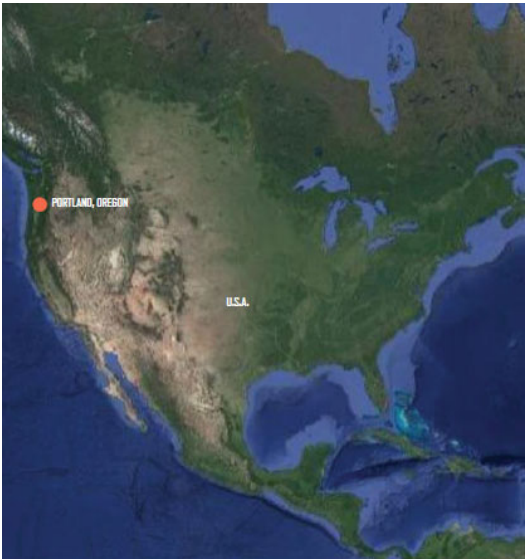
## Place

Rosa Parks Circle is a highly sociable place, used for both art and recreation. The activities of the Grand Rapids Original Swing Society activate the space, making it more inclusive, a lively and safe evening location, and building social networks. The Swing Dance Society is a non-profit organization, sponsored by the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the City of Grand Rapids.<sup>69</sup>

The Swing Dance Society's belief in the importance of dance is realized in their classes held in Rosa Parks Circle. The classes being held in a public space, open to the public, free to the public, send a clear message: dance is a public act. Because of the seating-like steps surrounding the public park, the space is naturally receptive to audiences. The bandstand also adds to the space's performative nature. In Rosa Parks Circle, public space plays host to public dance.

Dynamic Landscape

*Lovejoy Fountain, Portland, Oregon*



Lovejoy Fountain Park was designed by Lawrence Halprin in 1966 as part of Portland Open Space Sequence. It was designed based on Halprin's RSVP Cycles and Motation, as well as the topography of the Sierra Mountains<sup>70</sup>. The design of the park is meant to stimulate dynamic movement and simulate the sublime American landscape. In this way, the park acts as both the backdrop of motion and an active participant in stimulating and influencing motion.

### Physical Context

The Lovejoy Fountain Plaza is a 140 by 270 foot rectangle in the heart of Portland, Oregon. It takes up just over half of a downtown block. The surrounding buildings range from fifteen feet to one hundred feet tall. The topography of the Plaza itself has about a ten foot height change overall. The Plaza is surrounded by buildings on all sides. Its perimeter is also planted with trees. This creates a sense of enclosure around the entire space, where one does not see the horizon but rather the sky overhead. The Lovejoy Fountain Plaza is surrounded by pedestrian trails on all sides. There is also a light rail station on both the north and south side of the block. In addition, there are multiple bus stops on the block. There are no dedicated parking lots on site. The stepped topography would also make it difficult for those with mobility issues to access all parts of the site. The Plaza is only accessible via the pedestrian trails. It is not directly on a street so it is not visible to anyone except someone using the space or the trails. The high points of the landscape create a highly visible stage for dance to be performed. The ground of the Lovejoy Fountain Plaza is stepped stimulating different speeds of movement. This stimulates dance-like movement through the Plaza. The various levels can act as stages for the dancers. This space was designed with the movements of dance in mind. The Halprins thought of public space and public action as performance space and performance action. The sculptural space is designed to stimulate and inspire dancing movements.

### Social Context

This park space is open to all, but is more biased to users in the immediate area. People would need to be able to walk to the space or access it from one of the transit stops. The space can be used by children and adults alike to play in the fountains. It closes at midnight, so it is not used for most of the night. This space was used by a group of dancers to perform a "City Dance." This type of dance was pioneered by Anna Halprin, where she reacted to the space of the city through dance. Lawrence Halprin designed this space with movement in mind. He developed these ideas from his ongoing collaboration with Anna Halprin. He used foundations laid by dance to develop the landscape architecture field. There are a few restaurants on the same block as the Plaza. This could bring people into the area to use the space. The City Dancers take ownership of the space through their dance. They call to attention the way that their bodies inhabit the space. This also invites other users to have the same awareness of their place in public space.

### Dance

In site-specific dances, the dancers are not harmonizing with music but rather with the space around them. This type of dance was pioneered by Lawrence Halprin's wife Anna. The interaction with the physical space of the park gives the dancers a personal connection with the city. It encourages their audience to also pause and connect with the physical space around them. This type of dance raises awareness of public spaces, instead of taking them for granted.



## Scenario

The dances at the Lovejoy Fountain Park have been choreographed and rehearsed to be specific to the site. The site-specific dances are performed in groups. These performances are planned to occur during specific times and prepared for in advance.

## Space

Lawrence Halprin designed Lovejoy Fountain Park in 1966.<sup>71</sup> It is part of the Portland Open Space Sequence, a series of parks designed for the purpose of urban renewal.<sup>72</sup> The park features waterfall-like fountains designed to be interacted with. The topography of the park has dynamic shifts in height. The topography is stepped, designed to stimulate movement.

## Place

Lovejoy Fountain Park is part of the Portland Open Space Sequence. It is well connected by trails and surrounded by various transit stops.

The Lovejoy Fountain Park is a dynamic landscape designed by Lawrence Halprin meant to inspire users to movement and greater appreciation of the landscape around them. These ideas are directly related to the City Dances choreographed by Anna Halprin, whose movements were meant to highlight the relationship of body to space. The Park was designed as an abstraction of the Sierra Mountains, with a stepped landscape that also offers an urban stage. The fountains also encourage interaction with the water. The City Dances choreographed for the Park itself doubly emphasize the relationship between space and body through dance.

## **Conclusion + Call for Further Study**

I decided to research this topic because I believe in the importance of dance and the power of public space. The case studies analyzed here demonstrate that public space can be successfully used for dance. What this project has produced is a small survey of public dance spaces that designers can begin to use to think about creating public space for dance. The project also produced a method of analysis for public dance spaces that can be applied to any number of similar case studies. I hope that I and others passionate about this topic can continue to use this method to build a stronger base of research for designers, dancers, and public space enthusiasts to use. Even though the case studies involve different types of dance, all of them demonstrate the positive effect of dance on the social environment. The case studies also sample a diverse set of cultures, demonstrating dance as a universal need not exclusive to any one group. My conclusion and call for further study is that because dance fulfills basic human needs, public space should be used to accommodate it. More research and more action is needed in this field, and my hope is that this project can aid and educate others on this topic.

My purpose in this Capstone was to better understand the intersection of Dance and Public Space and to provide tools for myself and others to use in that understanding. The series of diagrams that I developed allowed me to clearly lay out certain factors that contribute to Dance occurring in Public Space. They are also applicable beyond my seven selected case studies. I would like to see these tools used by others and developed further. They are useful for understanding existing spaces, but I would like to see them pushed into tools to create new and enhance existing public spaces for dance.

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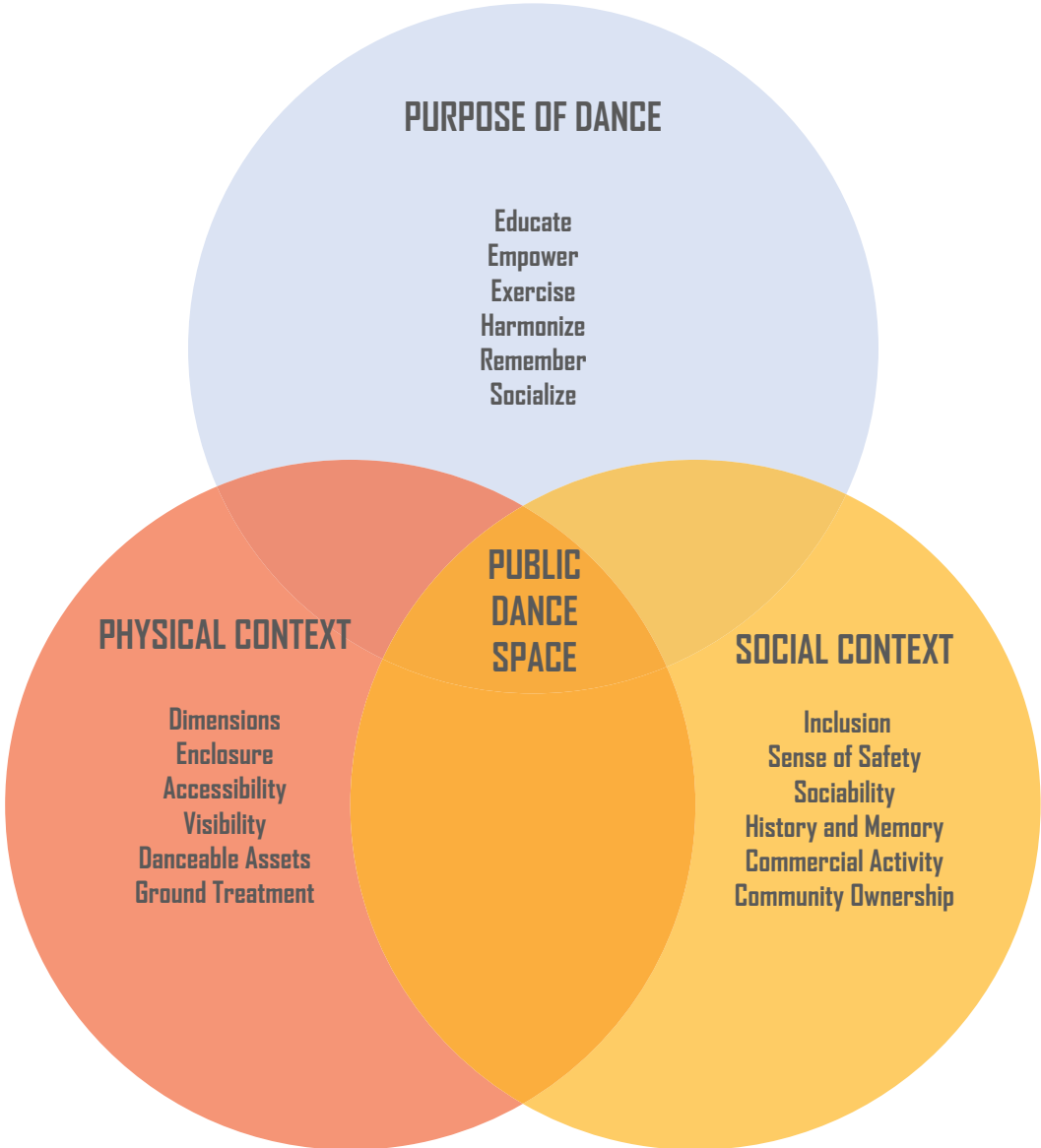
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# DANCEABLE SPACE

DANCE, SPACE, AND THE PUBLIC





# PURPOSE OF DANCE

WHY WE DANCE, AND WHAT IT DOES FOR US



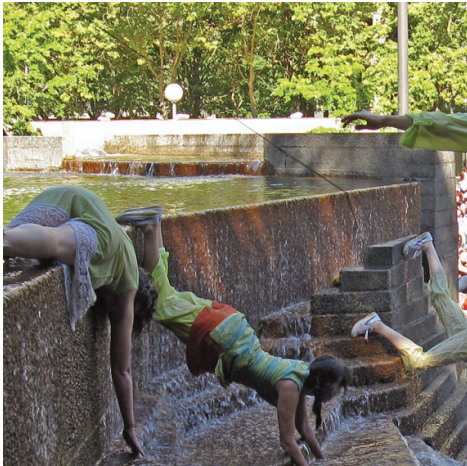
**EDUCATE:** to learn a new skill through imitation



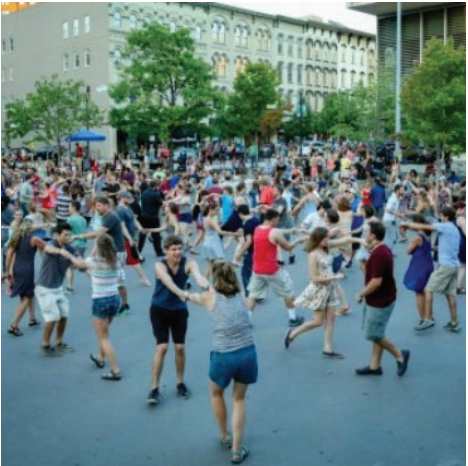
**EXERCISE:** to engage in physical activity to sustain or improve fitness



**EMPOWER:** to become stronger and more confident, more able to control one's life and claim one's rights



**HARMONIZE:** to physically engage with music or space



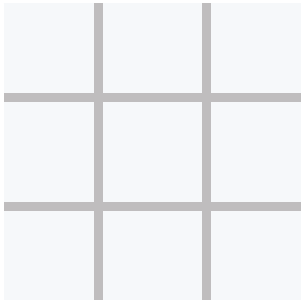
**SOCIALIZE:** to gather people together for a common purpose



**REMEMBER:** to recall one's personal and cultural past

# PHYSICAL CONTEXT

## WHERE DANCE TAKES PLACE



PERCENTAGE OF CITY BLOCK OCCUPIED

### Dimensions

One physical characteristic of a dance space is its dimensions. This includes its size in plan, as well as its shape. It also includes the space's relationship to the buildings around it, such as the height of buildings and the size of blocks.



SIDES ENCLOSED

### Enclosure

Degree of enclosure is another factor in dance spaces. This can be understood by the number of sides that are open to the street, as well as number of access points and their locations. A covered space can also increase the sense of enclosure.



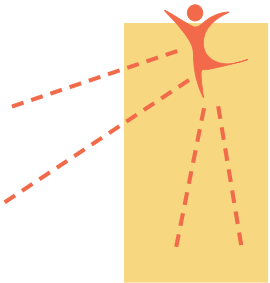
PEDESTRIAN

PERSONAL VEHICLE

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

### Accessibility

Accessibility measures how a space is accessed, and by whom. It is more than being accessible by disabled people, though that is a factor. Accessibility analyzes where and how a space is entered and exited. It also looks at whether the space can be passed through as part of a path or is a stopping point. Access also looks at where users come from and how they arrive.



OUTSIDE

INSIDE

### Visibility

Visibility is very important in dance spaces. Low visibility provides privacy, while high visibility provides an audience. It analyzes who can look in from the outside, and what one sees on the inside of a space. It also looks at whether there is continuous visual access or if the activities of the space can only be seen from certain points.



GROUND MATERIAL

### Ground Treatment

Ground Treatment looks at the dance surface to analyze how possible dance is in a location. It factors in topography, if there is a flat surface provided for dance and if not how people can interact with the topography. It also looks at the surface material, such as its levels of hardness and smoothness to determine what kinds of dance moves can be performed.



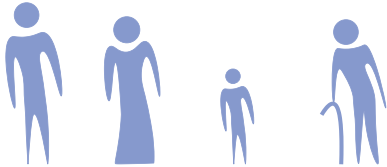
ASSET

### Danceable Assets

Danceable Assets are any factors that promote dance, whether they are specifically designed to do so or simply promote it serendipitously. The ability to play music is one such factor, as well as having a dedicated performance space, a space for the audience, and seating to rest. It also looks at the surrounding context as the "backdrop" of the performance.

# SOCIAL CONTEXT

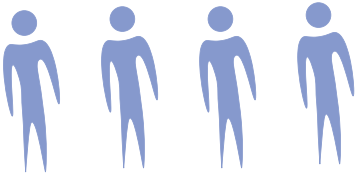
## ACTIVITY IN PUBLIC SPACE



REPRESENTED GROUPS

### Inclusion

Inclusion analyzes what groups are not only allowed but welcomed into and have free use of their rights in the space. This metric looks closely at minorities, women, the elderly, children, and the disabled. The presence of these groups indicates a public space's success. It indicates that the public space is welcoming and safe.



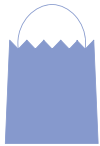
SOCIABLE ACTIVITIES

### Sociability

Sociability indicates how the space is used for gathering. The space may be used primarily for celebrations and other fun gatherings. It may serve a vital community role as being a place where citizens meet to make decisions or serve other civic functions. It could also be a place where people meet in passing.



DINING



RETAIL



TEMPORARY VENDORS

### Commercial Activity

Commercial Activity, either in or near a public space, can be a strong catalyst for activity. People may come to shop, but if there is a pleasant public space nearby, they could turn a utilitarian trip into a memorable day enjoying their city. Workers can also spend their breaks in these spaces. Similarly, a good public space can stimulate local business. Food vendors can turn a public space into an outdoor dining experience with minimal effort.



SENSE OF SAFETY

### Sense of Safety

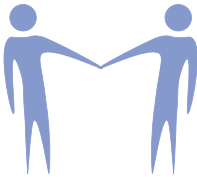
A Sense of Safety is important in a dance space. People will not use a public space if they are not comfortable there, and safety is the most basic metric of comfort. This metric looks beyond crime statistics which may be accurate to how safe a space actually is, to the indicators of people's feelings of safety. This includes building conditions, use at night, and use by women, children, and the elderly.



HISTORY

### History and Memory

The roles of History and Memory cannot be overlooked in the vitality of a public dance space. The space could be on the site of an important historic event. The space itself or the surrounding buildings could have great historic value that draws people to the place. Dance can be a way of calling attention to these factors and telling the story of a space, creating a reciprocal relationship between space, dance, and memory.



INVESTED GROUPS

### Community Ownership

Community Ownership indicates the sense of ownership the users of the space have in the space, whether or not they legally own it. This is indicated by community involvement, such as the organization of activities. It is also indicated by how the space is maintained and/or altered by the users. Even seemingly unpromising spaces can become highly active due to community involvement. A space may be supported by just one group, or by many.

# DANCE



**DANCE FORM:** Indicates the style of dance  
**NEED:** Indicates basic needs fulfilled by dance

This section analyzes dance itself. The movement of the dance, the dancers themselves, and even the history of the dance are important to understand. These characteristics can influence what space is chosen and how it is used.

# SCENARIO



DANCER



AUDIENCE

**PERFORM** ← → **PARTICIPATE**

In a performative dance, there is a clear distinction between the dancer(s) and the audience which remains in place throughout the dance. Alternatively, in a participatory dance, any person can join the dance.

**SOLO** ← → **GROUP**

A dance may involve any number of people, from a single dancer to a large group.

**PLANNED** ← → **UNPLANNED**

A planned dance is prepared for before it occurs, while an unplanned dance is not. Subspectrums of this spectrum include choreographed to improvised dances and scheduled to flash dances. In choreographed dances, movements are decided and practiced before they occur, while in improvised dances, movements are decided as they occur. In a scheduled dance, it can be expected by the general public that a dance will occur at a certain time and location. A special example of this would be an instigated dance, which occurs in response to an event such as a holiday. A flash dance is a surprise to the public, unanticipated by all except the dancers until the moment it happens.

# SPACE



DANCE SPACE



ASSET



STREETS



SURROUNDING BUILDINGS

**DIMENSIONS:** The physical dimensions of the dance space

**DANCEABLE ASSETS:** Physical and contextual qualities that promote dance in a space

This section describes the physical conditions of a space. This includes physical dimensions and characteristics of the space, its dimensions, form, and ground surface. It also takes into account the immediate physical context, including connectivity, and level of enclosure. It describes any special assets that specifically promote dance.

# PLACE



This section describes the activities in the space or its immediate surroundings. This diagram begins with tangible, often measurable, qualities at its outer ring, which are then used to describe the intangible qualities of the inner rings. Contextual data on the top half of the diagram describe the sociability and levels of activity that lead to dance in certain spaces. Physical data on the bottom half of the diagram describe its accessibility and levels of comfort that promote dance. Understanding the physical and cultural context of a space makes it possible to understand what qualities may lead to dance, and how dance may promote positive outcomes for a community.

# PROJECT LOCATIONS

## DANCE AROUND THE WORLD

DYNAMIC LANDSCAPE



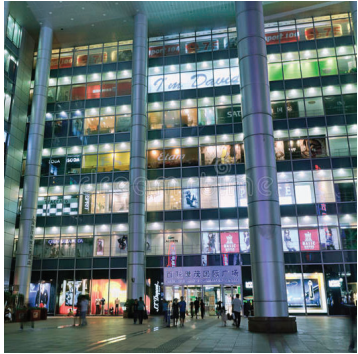
LOVEJOY FOUNTAIN, PORTLAND, OREGON

PAIRS IN A CIRCLE



ROSA PARKS CIRCLE, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

COMMUNITY SQUARES



PEOPLE'S PARK, SHANGHAI, CHINA

REMEMBERING SQUARE



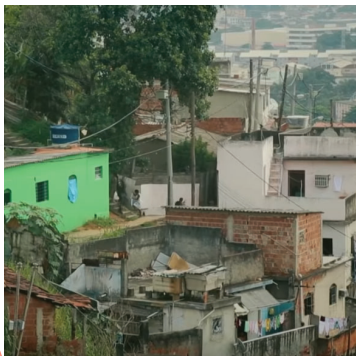
ZOCALO, MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

MEMORY PARADE



FRONT STREET, HAMILTON, BERMUDA

EMPOWERING ENCLOSURE

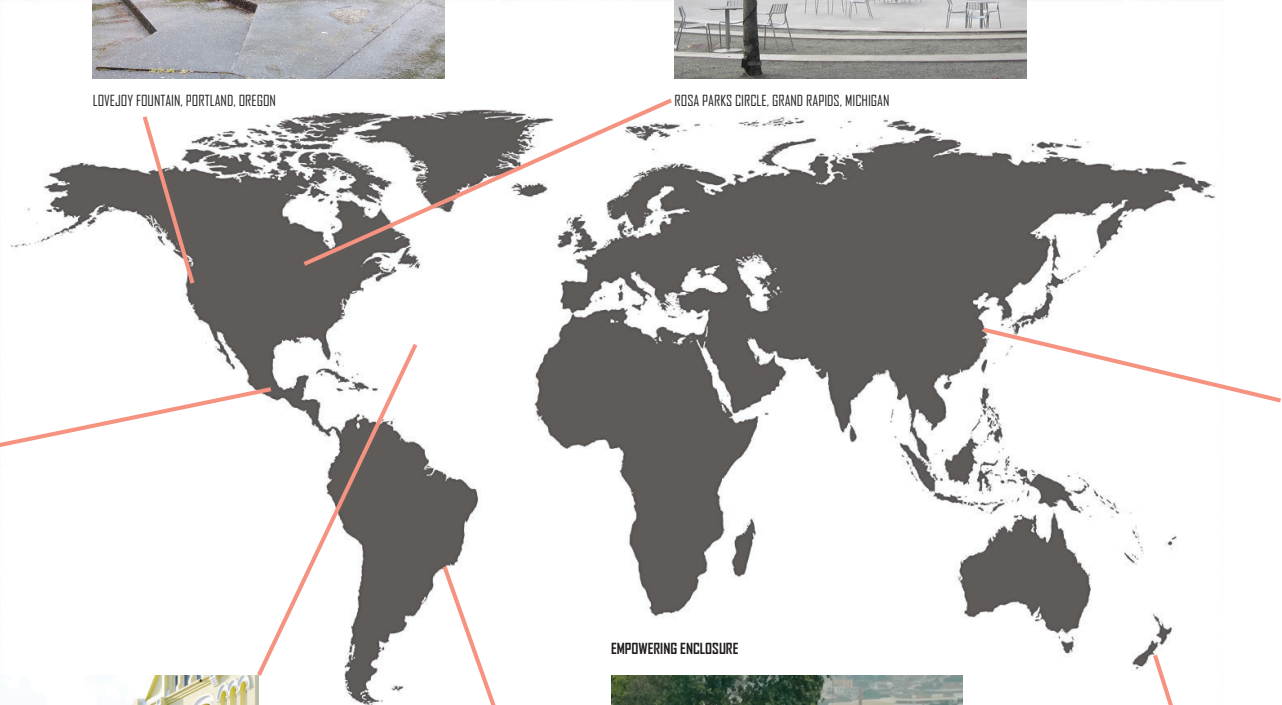


MORRO DO ADEUS FAVELA, BRAZIL

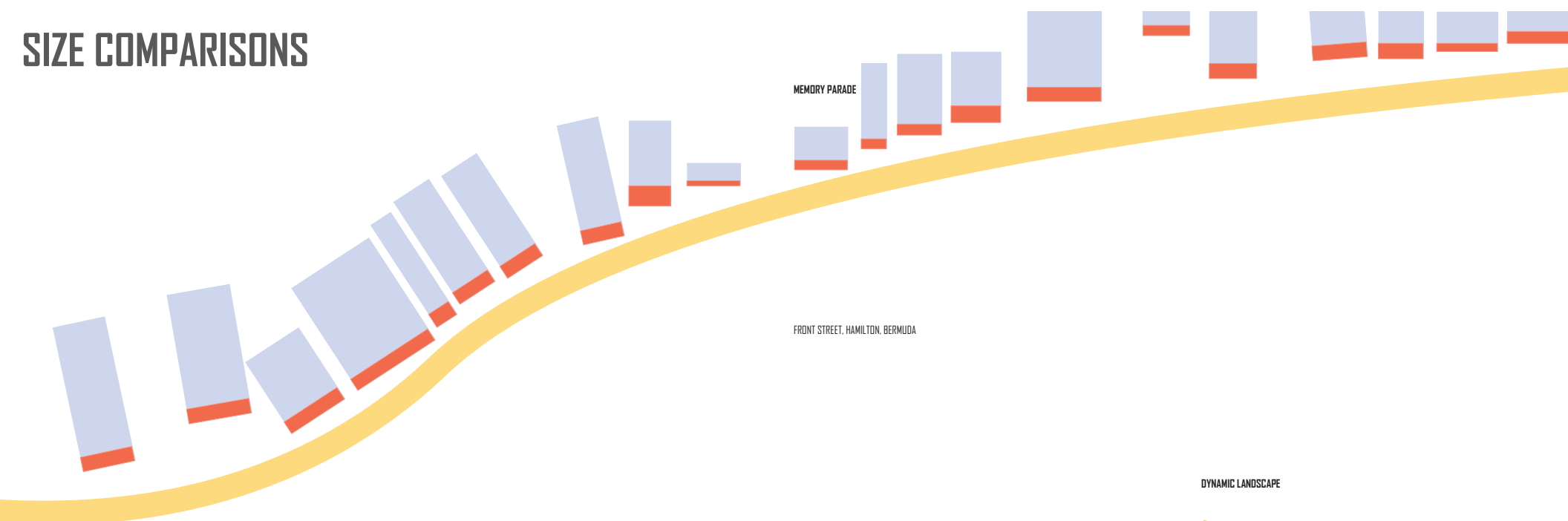
MUSICAL INFILL



DANCE-O-MAT, CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND



# SIZE COMPARISONS



MEMORY PARADE

FRONT STREET, HAMILTON, BERMUDA

DYNAMIC LANDSCAPE

EMPOWERING ENCLOSURE

COMMUNITY SQUARES

PAIRS IN A CIRCLE

MUSICAL INFILL

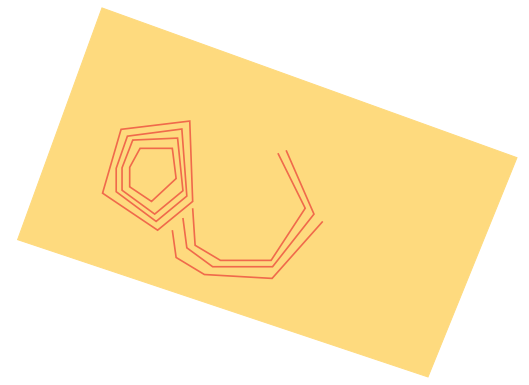
MORRO DO ADEUS FAVELA, BRAZIL

PEOPLE'S PARK, SHANGHAI, CHINA

ROSA PARKS CIRCLE, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

DANCE-D-MAT, CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND

LOVEJOY FOUNTAIN, PORTLAND, OREGON





REMEMBERING SQUARE



ZÓCALO, MEXICO CITY, MEXICO



# EMPOWERING ENCLOSURE

## MORRO DO ADEUS FAVELA, BRAZIL

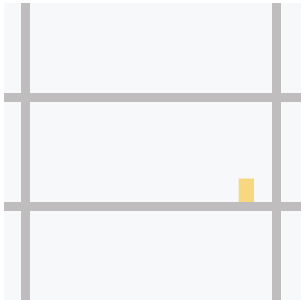
Projeto Na Ponta Dos Pés (“On Tiptoes”) is a ballet school founded and run by Brazilian dancer Tuany Nascimento. The school is located in the Morro Do Adeus Favela in Rio, Brazil. This neighborhood, Nascimento’s hometown, is stricken by poverty and gang violence. These conditions make life for young women in the favela very difficult, limiting many opportunities. The ballet school is a way to provide these women with physical and mental outlets, empowering them to have greater agency in their lives. The dance classes originally took place on a basketball court at the local community center. In 2020 the girls constructed their own indoor ballet studio, but this study will analyze the use of the basketball court before it was constructed.





# PHYSICAL CONTEXT

## WHERE DANCE TAKES PLACE



PERCENTAGE OF CITY BLOCK OCCUPIED: <1%

### Dimensions

The basketball court where the dance classes take place is a 25 by 30 foot rectangle. The surrounding buildings are about 50 feet tall. Due to the hilly terrain and the informal nature of the favela, there are no regular blocks in the surrounding area.



SIDES ENCLOSED: 4+Roof

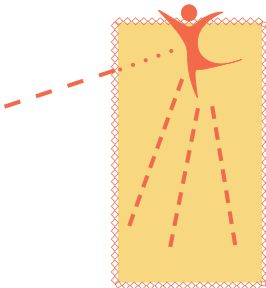
### Enclosure

This space is enclosed by a chain-link fence on three sides and the wall of the community center on the other. Even the permeable fence gives a sense of enclosure and safety to the dancers. The roof over the court further increases this sense of being enclosed.



### Accessibility

Nascimento's dance school is located on the street R. Régio. The dancers get to the community center by walking. They often walk in groups for safety through the streets of the favela. The space is entered through a door in the fence or through the community center.



OUTSIDE INSIDE

### Visibility

The transparency of the fence allows children and community members to watch the dance classes. This makes the dance classes a part of the larger community, even while being somewhat isolated from the community violence. Non-dancers are also welcomed inside of the space. The dancers can also see outside of their space to maintain vigilance in case violence breaks out.



GROUND MATERIAL: Concrete Basketball Court

### Ground Treatment

The surface of the dance space in the Morro Do Adeus Favela is a smooth, polished blue floor, presumably polished concrete. The smoothness enables the dancers to more easily perform moves that involve spinning or sliding. This is also vital because a rough surface would more quickly wear out their ballet slippers, which could not be easily replaced.



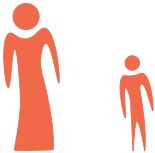
ASSET: Enclosure

### Danceable Assets

The basketball court used for the Na Ponta Dos Pés dance classes is danceable because it provides a flat, smooth dance surface and a sense of enclosure. The enclosure isolates the dancers, at least psychologically, from the violence around them, and the proximity to the community center gives them a refuge in case actual violence occurs.

# SOCIAL CONTEXT

## ACTIVITY IN PUBLIC SPACE



REPRESENTED GROUPS: Women and Children

### Inclusion

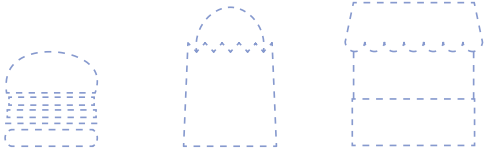
Being able to use the basketball court as a dance studio enables women and children to take part in their public space. Many of the girls in the class feel unsafe leaving their homes, and the dance classes are a way for them to safely go out into public space. It empowers them to be women and children in a public space, but also minorities in a dance space. As minorities do not fit the typical picture of a ballerina, having this space empowers the girls to take part in dance.



SOCIABLE ACTIVITIES: Recreation

### Sociability

The Community Center where the dance classes are held is likely a social space, due to the nature of its purpose. It is used for recreation, as evidenced by the basketball courts and dance classes. Adults and children from the community come to watch the classes, even if they do not join in.



DINING

RETAIL

TEMPORARY VENDORS

### Commercial Activity

The Community Center seems to be located in a primarily residential area, there is no evidence of nearby commercial activity.



SENSE OF SAFETY

### Sense of Safety

Overall, the Morro Do Adeus Favela is an unsafe place. The women and girls especially feel unsafe even leaving their homes. However, the fact that they are willing to regularly meet at the community center indicates that it provides at least a relative sense of safety. The classes occur during the day and are canceled if there is too much violence in the area.



HISTORY

### History and Memory

The favela is filled with unfortunate histories of violence. This includes recent violence, as well as historic violence. Black people continue to be pushed to the periphery in Rio, and make up a disproportionately higher percentage of favela residents.



INVESTED GROUPS: Women + Children

### Community Ownership

Projeto Na Ponta Dos Pés indicates a high level of community ownership. Nascimento takes it upon herself to organize the dance lessons for the girls of her neighborhood. She also raised the funds to build an indoor dance space for her classes, showing investment in her community.

# EMPOWERING ENCLOSURE

## MORRO DO ADEUS FAVELA, BRAZIL



### DANCE

STYLE: BALLET  
NEED: EDUCATE, EMPOWER

At her dance school Na Ponta Dos Pés, Tuany Nascimento teaches the girls in her neighborhood ballet. This dance form is European, originating in Italy and popularized in France during the Renaissance. Since then ballet has become popular worldwide and a powerful symbol of culture. Unfortunately, people from poor neighborhoods such as the Morro Do Adeus Favela are not exposed to this art form and certainly do not get the opportunity to learn it. This is even worse for minorities who do not fit the typical European image of the ballerina. Schools such as Nascimento's seek to provide opportunities to these communities and change the standard image of who can be a ballet dancer.

Enclosure is empowering to the dancers in Morro Do Adeus because the girls can claim the space as their own. The dancers in the favela are in a situation where their personal agency has been compromised. This is due to the violence in the favela within drug gangs and between drug gangs and police, which stems from a long history of the poor, especially minorities, being oppressed by those in power and pushed to the periphery. The women in the favela are not free to leave their homes due to the violence, and teenage pregnancy also hampers their opportunities. They grow up seeing cycles of poverty and violence, many experiencing death in their own families from a young age. Ballet classes are more than just exercise or a fun activity, though they do provide those things. The ballet classes offer a life outside of violence and poverty. They show the girls that there are opportunities for them. Even if the women do not decide to pursue dance or are unable to pursue it as a career, they learn to work hard for the things they are passionate about. It motivates them to work harder in school and gives them dreams of a bigger world than the neighborhood they grew up in. Even though the area is unsafe, the women claim their rights within their neighborhood by using the space together for the purpose of dance.



DANCE FORM : Class

### SCENARIO

**PERFORM** ← ● → **PARTICIPATE**

Dance at the Morro Do Adeus Favela is participatory. Dancers come to learn new skills and improve their technique. Other children of the favela come to watch classes without participating.

**SOLO** ← ● → **GROUP**

These classes are a group activity. The instructor teaches girls of all ages at the same time. More advanced students demonstrate for others.

**PLANNED** ← ● → **UNPLANNED**

The instructor holds classes regularly. Unfortunately, violence in the neighborhood often interrupts or prevents classes from occurring.



### SPACE

DIMENSIONS: 25' x 20'

DANCEABLE ASSET: ENCLOSURE

The dance space is a basketball court which is part of the local community center. It is outdoors but semi-enclosed by a roof and a fence. Due to regular violent confrontations in the Favela, having this public space enclosed enables the dancers to learn in greater safety. Even though the fence cannot physically protect the dancers, it provides a mental sense of security. Its attachment to the community center also gives the dancers a place of refuge if a shootout occurs. After a few years of using this space, fundraising enabled Nascimento to build an indoor, enclosed dance school so the girls could learn in greater safety.

### PLACE

This public space is challenged by being located in an impoverished area torn apart by crime. In the Complexo do Alemão, a collection of favelas that includes the Morro do Adeus favela, there is a shootout every 30 hours. The area is hotly contested between drug gangs and occupying police militia forces. While young men in the favela are often swept into the violence, either becoming involved in the drug trade or simply caught in the crossfire, women are left marginalized and voiceless. They are trapped in cycles of poverty and violence. However, because of Nascimento's instruction, women and children have a place in this public space, making it more sociable, even if it is not comfortable or safe.



# MEMORY PARADE

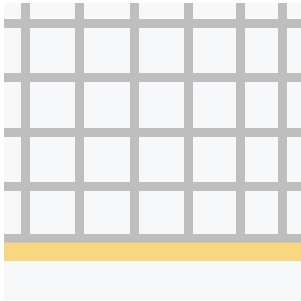
## FRONT STREET, HAMILTON, BERMUDA

The city of Hamilton, Bermuda hosts Harbor Nights every Wednesday night during the summer. These weekly festivals take place on Front Street, which faces Hamilton Harbor. They are an opportunity for people, especially tourists, to interact with local culture.



# PHYSICAL CONTEXT

## WHERE DANCE TAKES PLACE



PERCENTAGE OF CITY BLOCK OCCUPIED: 7 Blocks

### Dimensions

Front Street in Hamilton, Bermuda, is a 4,200 foot long paved street fronting Hamilton Harbor. The surrounding buildings are two to five stories tall with porches and balconies facing the street. The blocks along the street are approximately 200 by 600 feet.



SIDES ENCLOSED: One

### Enclosure

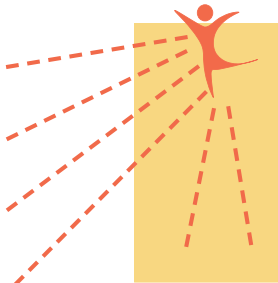
Front Street is open on the Hamilton Harbor side, and permeable on the inland side. One can enter from the east or west ends, but also from the buildings or side streets that face Front Street. Overall, the space has an open feeling with a permeable edge defined by lines of porches and balconies.



PEDESTRIAN PERSONAL VEHICLE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

### Accessibility

Front Street is very accessible. It is a central hub of travel in Bermuda. Hamilton Harbor is the departure point for all ferries on the island. The bus system hub for Bermuda is just over a five minute walk away. This makes it very accessible for both locals and tourists.



OUTSIDE INSIDE

### Visibility

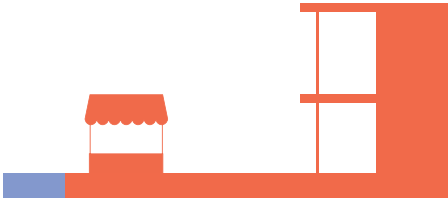
Front Street is an urban stage. From the porches and balconies facing the street, one can look down on all of the action below. Because there are only buildings on one side of the street, there is high visibility all the way down its length. Because it is on a harbor, the street can also be seen from the boats on the water.



GROUND MATERIAL: Asphalt

### Ground Treatment

Front Street is an asphalt street with curbs and sidewalks on either side. The flat pavement of the street offers a level surface to dance on.



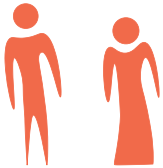
ASSET: Urban Stage + Street Vendors

### Danceable Assets

Street vendors during Harbor Nights bring people to Front Street. This increases an already generally large audience of locals and tourists that are attracted to the area. The festival atmosphere makes the Gombey dance, performed parade-like, moving down the street, a welcome and enlivening activity. The stage-like qualities of the street, with porches acting as the "seats" for the audience, also play an important role in making Front Street a dance space. The ocean acts as a backdrop to this performance.

# SOCIAL CONTEXT

## ACTIVITY IN PUBLIC SPACE



REPRESENTED GROUPS: Afro-Caribbean Bermudans

### Inclusion

Harbor Nights is meant to attract both locals and tourists to Front Street, so it is receptive to all ages and nationalities. Gombey dance is rooted in African and Caribbean cultures, so it is especially powerful to people sharing that heritage. It is a traditionally male-only dance form, but the audience is inclusive of females.



SENSE OF SAFETY

### Sense of Safety

Harbor Nights enliven Front Street at night, making it feel safe due to the large number of people and festival atmosphere. The buildings are also well-maintained, adding to this sense of well-being.



SOCIABLE ACTIVITIES: Festival

### Sociability

Front Street serves many social purposes. During the day, it is a hub of commercial activity, with shops, restaurants, and businesses. It is also a transportation node, acting as a street and a hub for ferry travel. In the evenings, and especially on Harbor Nights, it is a celebratory place, meant to show off the best of Bermudan art and culture.



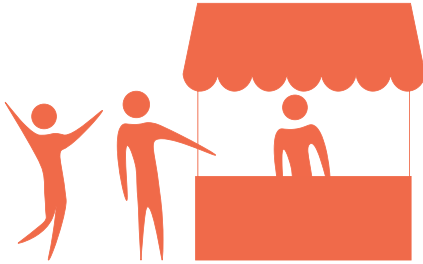
HISTORY

### History and Memory

Gombey dance is a way of preserving and celebrating the heritage of enslaved Bermudans. Originating from African, Caribbean, and British dance and music traditions, it was a way for slaves to communicate, to celebrate, and to preserve their culture and identity. Their stories were repressed for generations, and Gombey dance is the primary survivor of their legacy. Dance is a way to pass on their stories.

### Commercial Activity

Front Street is lined with shops, businesses, and restaurants, attracting both locals and tourists. Harbor Nights increase this activity by closing down the street to vehicular traffic and allowing vendors to set up their shops there. These vendors may sell food but may also be local artists selling their work. This activity brings people in who may not otherwise have an opportunity to see Gombey dance.



INVESTED GROUPS: Gombey Dancers + Local Businesses

### Community Ownership

Harbor Nights bring together multiple citizen groups. Artists, restaurants, and food vendors come to sell their products. Gombey dancers have the opportunity to perform in front of a new crowd every week. The Bermuda Chamber of Commerce is in charge of this event.

DINING

RETAIL

TEMPORARY VENDORS

# MEMORY PARADE

## FRONT STREET, HAMILTON, BERMUDA



The Gombey dancers at the Hamilton Harbor Nights turn Front Street in Bermuda into a Memory Parade. The Harbor Nights intentionally bring a festival atmosphere to Hamilton Harbor. Street food, local artists, and music are a way to stimulate the local economy, especially bringing in money from the tourists. The Gombey dancers, while part of the spectacle, bring something more to the evenings. This is a way for native Bermudans, especially those of African and Caribbean descent, to share their unique culture. Because there were no indigenous people groups in Bermuda when it was first settled, its culture is a unique blend of English from those who colonized the land and their African and Caribbean slaves and indentured servants. This naturally created a tension in the culture where the enslaved peoples' cultures were repressed as much as possible for centuries. Gombey dance was how these people celebrated and remembered their culture, and also how they protested their unfair treatment. The Gombey dance is all that survives of their stories and art. Being able to perform on Front Street, with locals and tourists looking on from balconies and porches, preserves and celebrates the memories of the Bermudians that came before.

### DANCE

STYLE: GOMBEY  
NEED: REMEMBER

Gombey dance is unique to Bermuda, stemming from a blend of African, Caribbean, and British traditions. It uses African drums and rhythms and the dancers wear highly decorative costumes and masks. It was created by enslaved people and for many years derided and even outlawed by authorities who feared what the dancers could do while hiding behind their masks. However, it has since become accepted and celebrated as a powerful part of Bermudan culture. The significance of Gombey to Bermudan culture and history cannot be understated. According to Bermuda historian Ruth Thomas, "We don't have any language from the slaves who were here; we don't have their arts. We have very little about where we've come from, so thank goodness that we have the Gombey tradition."



### SCENARIO

**PERFORM** ← ● → **PARTICIPATE**  
The Harbor Nights Gombey dances are performed by trained dancers. People attending the weekly festival can be entertained by the dancers while shopping and eating, but do not join in the dances.

**SOLO** ← ● → **GROUP**  
The Gombey dances are performed by a group of trained dancers of all ages. Gombey is traditionally a male-only dance form.

**PLANNED** ← ● → **UNPLANNED**  
Gombey dance is performed at the Harbor Night festivals, which occur weekly in the summer.

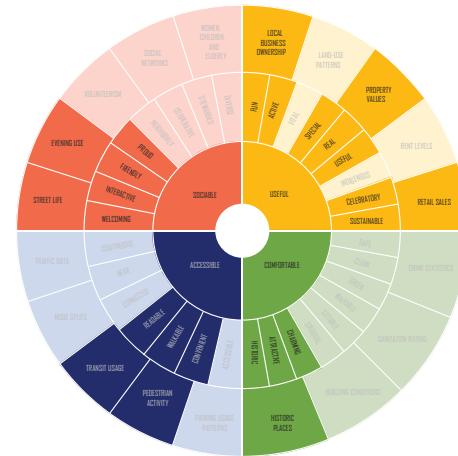


### SPACE

DIMENSIONS: 4,200'

DANCEABLE ASSET: STREET VENDORS, PORCHES

Harbor Nights are held on Wednesday evenings during the summer in Hamilton, the capital of Bermuda. These evenings are used to introduce visitors to the culture of Bermuda and boost the local economy. Gombey dancers are a regular part of this entertainment, with local food and products being sold along the street. The celebration runs along Front Street, which is 4,200 feet long, 40 feet wide, and faces Hamilton Harbor. The festival nature of the Harbor Nights draw people, including many tourists, to Front Street. Instead of passing by a static dance group, the dancers pass by the people. This means that even if someone comes to the Harbor Nights for food or shopping they will also become the audience of this dance parade. The porches and balconies on the buildings that front the street also act as "seats" where the audience can watch the dancers perform on the urban "stage" of Front Street, with Hamilton Harbor as the backdrop.



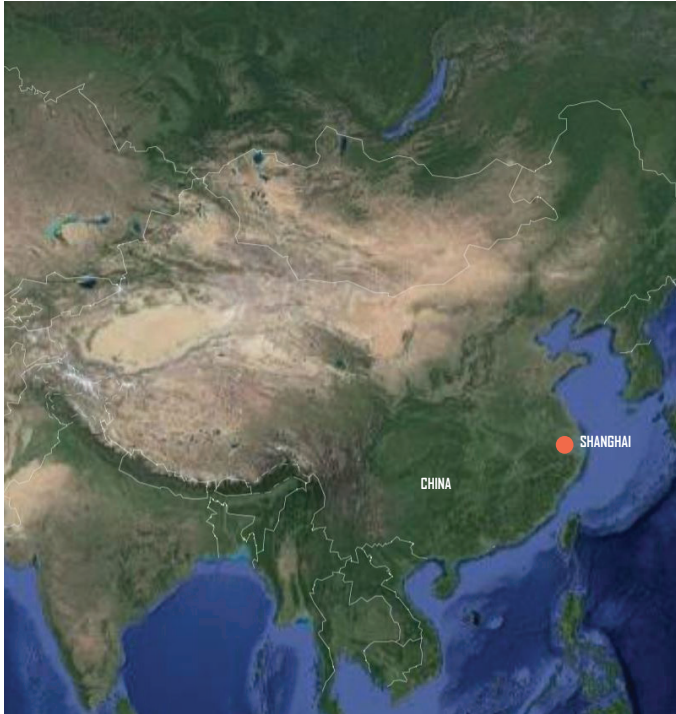
### PLACE

Weekly Harbor Nights in Hamilton give tourists a chance to engage in local culture while promoting local businesses. Scenic Hamilton harbor is activated by the festive atmosphere of street merchants and Gombey dance. People living or staying in Hamilton may arrive by foot, but the island is small and well-connected by public transit so anyone in the country can easily attend. The central terminal for the bus system is located in Hamilton, less than one thousand feet from Front Street. The Ferry Terminal is located on Front Street, so all of the ferries on the island leave and return there.

# COMMUNITY SQUARES

## BRILLIANCE SHIMAO INTERNATIONAL PLAZA, PEOPLE'S PARK, SHANGHAI, CHINA

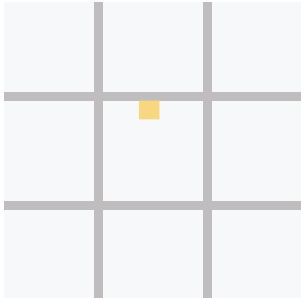
Throughout China, Guang Chang Wu is a popular pastime among the elderly, especially women. Guang Chang Wu translates to square dancing, which for those who practice it means dancing in a public square. This dance form is an inexpensive pastime, allowing the elderly to exercise and form social connections. The Brilliance Shimao International Plaza in Shanghai, China, is one of many public spaces used for Guang Chang Wu.





# PHYSICAL CONTEXT

## WHERE DANCE TAKES PLACE



PERCENTAGE OF CITY BLOCK OCCUPIED: 2%

### Dimensions

The Brilliance Shimao International Plaza is a 60 by 70 foot square located in the densely built heart of Shanghai, China. While the surroundings are very densely built with tall buildings, the Shimao Plaza and other public squares in the People's Park of Shanghai provide relief from the density.



SIDES ENCLOSED: 4 + Partial Roof

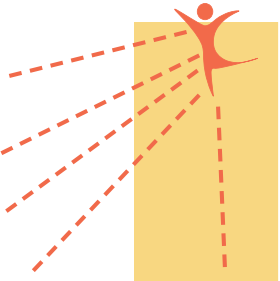
### Enclosure

The Plaza is enclosed on all sides, entered and exited by a pedestrian street that runs along its longer axis. The building also extends over the Plaza, creating a well-defined urban "room." This "room" becomes a stage for the dancers to perform, protected from rain and distractions of city life such as traffic. The pedestrian street acts as a counterpoint to this sense of enclosure, creating a space that is welcoming, visible, and accessible. In this way, the space provides both prospect and refuge.



### Accessibility

The Brilliance Shimao Plaza is a very accessible place, located just off of a pedestrian street in an area with plenty of public transit options. This means that one does not need to own a car to use this space, which especially positive for the elderly who may not feel safe driving but still need access to opportunities to socialize and exercise. There is no curb between the pedestrian path and the Plaza, removing yet another access barrier for elderly people who may have a higher risk of tripping. This space is a node along a pedestrian path, where people can stop to rest or simply move through.



OUTSIDE INSIDE

### Visibility

This is a highly visible space. Once one enters the Plaza from the pedestrian road, the entire space is clearly visible. This gives the dancers plenty of opportunity to have an audience, or even to have more participants join in.



GROUND MATERIAL: Rectangular Pavement

### Ground Treatment

Square pavement tiles act as the floor surface of the Brilliance Shimao Plaza. They appear to be textured similar to a sidewalk and about two feet by two feet in size. The rougher texture would allow people in various types of shoes to move without slipping. This would be especially important to the elderly. The flat surface and lack of curbs also increase safety, while also providing fewer barriers to dance.



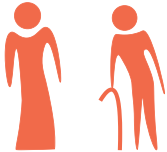
ASSET: Enclosed but Accessible

### Danceable Assets

The enclosed but accessible nature of this space makes it a good dance space. The enclosure gives the dancers a well-defined space where they will not be interfered with in their activities, while the pedestrian street gives the dancers the opportunity to have an audience.

# SOCIAL CONTEXT

## ACTIVITY IN PUBLIC SPACE



REPRESENTED GROUPS: Elderly Women

### Inclusion

The Guang Chang Wu dancers are very inclusive. The majority of the dancers are older women. This means that this dance in public space gives greater ownership of public space to both the elderly and women, two groups that can often feel unsafe in public spaces. The groups themselves are very welcoming, including men, women, old, young, singles, couples, natives, and foreigners. Anyone who wants to join is welcome.



SENSE OF SAFETY

### Sense of Safety

The Brilliance Shimao International Plaza gives a sense of safety. The enclosed nature of the space means that one has both prospect and refuge. The users can see who comes in and out by the pedestrian street, increasing a sense of safety. The location near a large shopping center also gives a sense of purpose to those using the space, rather than loitering. The shopping center would also be monitoring the space, giving users an extra sense of protection. The buildings are well-kept and the space is used by women, children, and the elderly, both day and night.



SOCIABLE ACTIVITIES: Shopping

### Sociability

Located just off of a pedestrian road, the Brilliance Shimao International Plaza is an ideal location for casual gatherings and meet ups. The Guang Chang Wu dances are slightly more formalized in that they are planned ahead, but passers-by can casually watch or join in.



HISTORY

### History and Memory

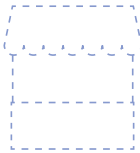
The elderly Guang Chang Wu dancers grew up during the height of Communism in China. Growing up, they participated in public marches and other collective activities. Therefore, they still thrive in group activities, and social isolation would be especially damaging.



DINING



RETAIL



TEMPORARY VENDORS

### Commercial Activity

The Brilliance Shimao International Plaza Building is full of stores and is itself located in a shopping district. This ensures plenty of daily activity with both local and international people. The regular commercial activity makes the place lively, gives an increased sense of safety, and offers varied audiences for the dancers.



INVESTED GROUPS: Elderly People

### Community Ownership

The Guang Chang Wu dancers feel ownership of the public space, but also a duty to share the space with other users. This is due to a highly communal mentality about ownership in China.

# COMMUNITY SQUARES

## BRILLIANCE SHIMAO INTERNATIONAL PLAZA, PEOPLE'S PARK, SHANGHAI, CHINA



### DANCE

STYLE: GUANG CHANG WU (SQUARE DANCE)

NEED: SOCIALIZE, EXERCISE

Guang Chang Wu, called Chinese Square Dance because it is practiced in public squares, is a collective dance form especially popular among the elderly in China. Rather than having a specific dance vocabulary, this dance form is distinguished by its collective aspect. The dancers may incorporate traditional dances or western-style partner dances, but most often dance to pop music. The dance provides the elderly with two needs often unmet for their demographic: exercise and social connection.



DANCE FORM : Collective Dance

### SCENARIO

**PERFORM** ← → **PARTICIPATE**  
Chinese Square Dancing, or Guang Chang Wu, is a way for the elderly, especially elderly women, to exercise and socialize. These groups are welcoming to all ages, genders, and cultures.

**SOLO** ← → **GROUP**  
Guang Chang Wu is always done in groups. Sometimes the groups will do western-style partner dances or the dancers will freestyle on their own, but the social group element is essential to Guang Chang Wu.

**PLANNED** ← → **UNPLANNED**  
Guang Chang Wu groups often meet at regular times and locations. Due to noise complaints, the groups are only allowed to dance and play music during certain hours.



### SPACE

DIMENSIONS: 60' x 70'

ASSETS: ENCLOSED BUT ACCESSIBLE

The Brilliance Shimao International Plaza is just one of many locations within the People's Park in Shanghai where Guang Chang Wu takes place. It is enclosed on the sides, sheltering the dancers within a defined space. Yet it also fronts a wide pedestrian street so it is very accessible. This gives more people the opportunity to join in the dance as they pass by. It also gives the dancers a large casual audience. As people walk by, they can pause to watch without a large commitment or simply have something interesting to see on their way to their destination.



### PLACE

Chinese Square Dance is an inexpensive form of exercise, especially popular among elderly women. Many of these women were raised during the height of Communism in China and thrive on collective activities. Being able to gather in a public place also combats the isolation often suffered by elderly populations worldwide. The Brilliance Shimao Plaza is a good place for these women to gather. There is plenty of public transit and the Plaza is walkable to the nearby residential districts. The highly commercialized zone is active with shoppers and workers who may pass by and see the dance.

# MUSICAL INFILL

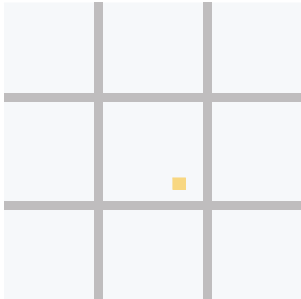
## DANCE-O-MAT, CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND

The Dance-O-Mat is a public space intervention by Gapfiller located in Christchurch, New Zealand. After the 2011 earthquake left much of the city devastated, with open spaces in the city fabric a painful reminder of what had been lost. The project is a dance surface and a laundry machine that has been turned into a jukebox inserted into one of these empty lots. This turns a space of loss into a space of celebration and gathering.



# PHYSICAL CONTEXT

## WHERE DANCE TAKES PLACE



PERCENTAGE OF CITY BLOCK OCCUPIED: <1%

### Dimensions

The Dance-O-Mat is located in an open 215 by 115 foot lot cleared by the Christchurch earthquake. The dance space itself is a 20 by 30 foot rectangle. The area is defined by large, irregularly shaped blocks and large open spaces. The surrounding buildings are between 60 and 210 feet tall.



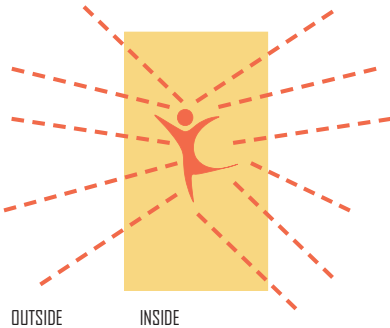
SIDES ENCLOSED: None

### Enclosure

This area of dance space is very open due to the destruction of the earthquake. The space itself has no walls. There is a building next to the dance space which is the only space defining vertical plane.

### Accessibility

The Dance-O-Mat is fairly accessible. There is ample parking in the area, as well as a few bus stops. It is a one-minute walk from the Te Pae Christchurch Convention and Exhibition Centre and the Turanga Library. It is also located just off of a sidewalk.

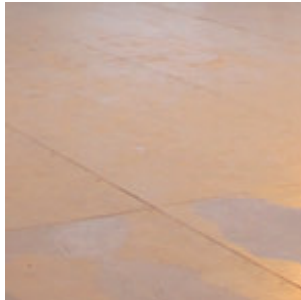


### Visibility

As there are no walls, the Dance-O-Mat in Christchurch, New Zealand, is highly visible. It is just off of a road and sidewalk. It is also in clear view of both the convention center and the library.



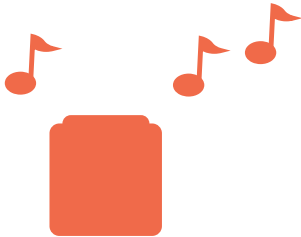
PEDESTRIAN PERSONAL VEHICLE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



GROUND MATERIAL: Custom Sprung Dance Floor

### Ground Treatment

The dance surface is a custom-made sprung dance floor. The sprung dance floor makes it easier and more comfortable to jump higher.



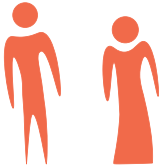
ASSET: Music System

### Danceable Assets

The sprung dance floor makes the space great for dancing. The Dance-O-Mat also features a coin-operated washing machine that has been turned into a jukebox. One can connect their own music to the washing machine, which is connected to four speakers. The four speakers are in the corners of the dance space.

# SOCIAL CONTEXT

## ACTIVITY IN PUBLIC SPACE



REPRESENTED GROUPS: Local Community

### Inclusion

Dance at the Dance-O-Mat is informal and unscheduled. This makes the space open to anyone who wants to use it. In the early days after the earthquake, it was used by dance schools with no place to teach their students.



SENSE OF SAFETY

### Sense of Safety

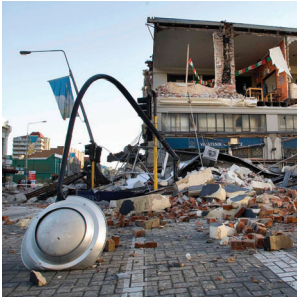
The space is lit so it can be used at night. It is used by both men and women, as well as children. The proximity to important public buildings, such as the convention center and library, gives an increased sense of safety.



SOCIABLE ACTIVITIES: Dance

### Sociability

The Dance-O-Mat is specifically designed to be a space for the people of Christchurch to gather to dance. Some dance groups plan to meet regularly, but other people can meet casually to dance.



HISTORY

### History and Memory

The Dance-O-Mat is a way for the people of Christchurch to heal from the trauma of the Christchurch earthquake. The Dance-O-Mat heals the urban space by turning a vacant lot into a public space. This healing of the urban space is healing for the people of Christchurch as well, so that instead of seeing the scars of destruction, they see their own resilience and growth as new things come to be.

### Commercial Activity

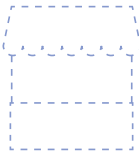
While the area surrounding the Dance-O-Mat is not necessarily a commercial district, there are a few restaurants and stores that can generate activity which would bring people to the dance space.



DINING



RETAIL



TEMPORARY VENDORS



INVESTED GROUPS: Christchurch City Council, Gapfiller, +Local Businesses

### Community Ownership

The Dance-O-Mat was designed and initiated by Gap Filler. "Gap Filler is a creative placemaking agency operating at the crossroads of community development, urban design, art and public intervention." Their client and sponsor is the Christchurch City Council. Multiple organizations came together to offer supplies and labor. The project has had numerous volunteers over the years. The Dance-O-Mat is clearly a beloved civic project that allows people to engage with and give back to their community.

# MUSICAL INFILL

## DANCE-O-MAT, CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND

In the wake of the 2011 Christchurch Earthquake, the decision by Gapfiller and the Christchurch City Council to turn an empty lot into a dance space demonstrates the importance of dance to healing. The intervention into the physical space is minimal. Its main components are a purpose-built dance floor, a sound system based out of a coin-operated laundry machine, and some lighting. While the materials are minimal, the message and impact are great. The message of this dance space is that it is alright to dance, to celebrate, to find joy, even in the wake of pain. The underlying message of this is that dance is important, it is needed. The impact of the space was healing to the city. The Dance-O-Mat did not use dance to heal people physically as Anna Halprin had demonstrated. Instead, it healed the fabric of the city itself, while also helping people recover mentally from the event.



### DANCE

STYLE: FREESTYLE  
NEED: HARMONIZE, EMPOWER

The Dance-O-Mat lends itself to all types and styles of dance. The simplicity of a smooth surface and the ability to play any music from one's own device gives users the freedom to perform how they like. It gives everyone the opportunity to harmonize with music. It is also healing for the city to be able to fill and animate an area that had been destroyed.



DANCE FORM: Freestyle

### SCENARIO

**PERFORM** ←—————●————→ **PARTICIPATE**  
The Dance-O-Mat allows anyone to connect their music and dance however they want.

**SOLO** ←—————●————→ **GROUP**  
While the Dance-O-Mat can be used by individuals or pairs, it is most often used in groups.

**PLANNED** ←—————●————→ **UNPLANNED**  
The Dance-O-Mat promotes spontaneous dancing. The space can be animated at any time by music, allowing for flash-mob style dances to occur.



### SPACE

DIMENSIONS: 30' x 20' (Dance Surface)

DANCEABLE ASSETS: MUSIC AND DANCE SURFACE

The Dance-O-Mat by Gapfiller shows that very minimal interventions can be made to allow and encourage people to dance in a public space. A 30 foot by 20 foot sprung dance floor gives people a flat surface to dance on outside of the surrounding gravel. Four speakers hooked up to a laundry machine-turned-jukebox allow people to play whatever music they would like. In this era of portable speakers, the dance floor and the jukebox themselves act as message just as much as functional parts of an animated public space. Simply giving people music and a dance floor is enough to make a dance space.



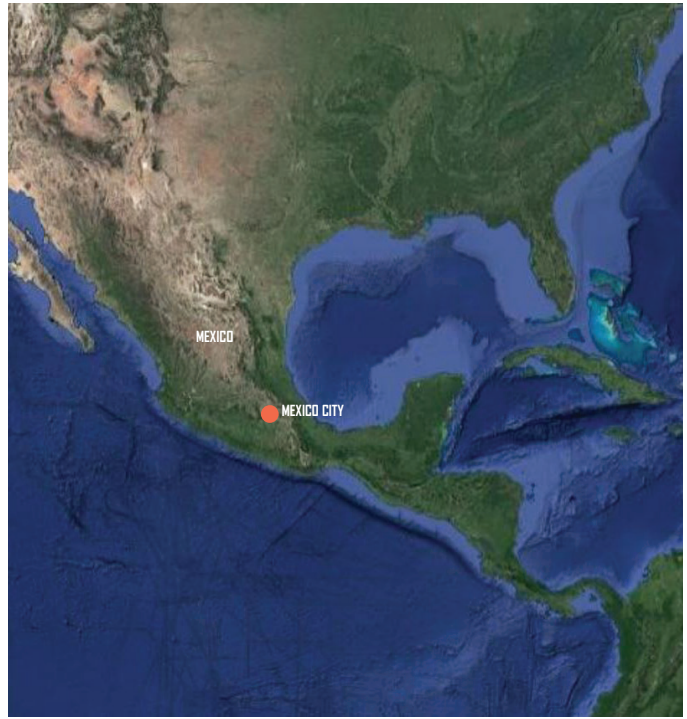
### PLACE

The construction of the Dance-O-Mat was a reaction to the destruction left by the 2011 earthquake. It was not constructed out of a need for public space; there are plenty of nice parks nearby. Its purpose is to activate the open space it occupies through music. Simply giving people the opportunity to dance here changed it from the site of a tragedy to a fun location.

# REMEMBERING SQUARE

## ZÓCALO, MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

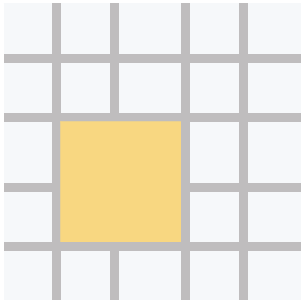
The Zócalo is located at the physical, cultural, and historical heart of Mexico City, Mexico. Now the location of the Plaza de la Constitución, it was originally the ceremonial center of the Aztec empire. This connection with Mexico's indigenous past makes it the perfect stage for Conchero dance. This Aztec dance form is a way for people to connect with their ancestry and the ceremonial legacy of the Aztec empire.





# PHYSICAL CONTEXT

## WHERE DANCE TAKES PLACE



PERCENTAGE OF CITY BLOCK OCCUPIED: 4 Blocks

### Dimensions

The Zócalo takes up a full city block in Mexico City, Mexico. It is a 615 by 730 foot square. It is surrounded by buildings around 70 to 100 feet tall creating an enclosed-feeling space.



SIDES ENCLOSED: 4

### Enclosure

This historic plaza is surrounded by buildings on all sides. The tall buildings, including the Metropolitan Cathedral and the National Palace, create a well defined boundary. This boundary can be understood as an urban "room," where the streets that interrupt its "walls" act as "doors." Vehicular streets buffer the space between the Zócalo and the surrounding buildings, bringing people and cars into this strongly defined urban "room." The edges of the plaza itself are also defined by tall lamp posts.



PEDESTRIAN PERSONAL VEHICLE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

### Accessibility

The Zócalo is surrounded by multi-lane streets, so it is not very comfortable to walk to. However, there are large crosswalks as well as pedestrian paths at two of the corners, so the issue is not insurmountable. Users of the space can also enter through the Zócalo/Tenochtitlan subway station located underground on the site. As it is located just off of a few major transportation nodes, the space is both a point of pause and a destination in itself.



OUTSIDE INSIDE

### Visibility

Dancers in the Zócalo are highly visible. The open space of the plaza is very large, putting anyone using the space on display. The volume of traffic also means that multiple new viewers can come and go in a matter of minutes.



GROUND MATERIAL: Square Pavement

### Ground Treatment

The ground of the Zócalo is flat and slightly raised above the street level. It is paved in large concrete squares. The rough surface gives the dancers needed traction for kicks, spins, and other dance steps.



ASSET: Memory

### Danceable Assets

Physically, the enclosure of the Zócalo, the background of prominent buildings such as the Cathedral and Palace, and the flat ground surface makes it an ideal urban stage set. However, it is the power of memory that draws the Conchero dancers to this location. The embedded memory of the site as an indigenous seat of power resonates to this day as dancers gather to remember their heritage.

# SOCIAL CONTEXT

## ACTIVITY IN PUBLIC SPACE



REPRESENTED GROUPS: Indigenous Mexicans

### Inclusion

This site was appropriated from the indigenous Aztec people by Spanish colonizers, becoming the site of seats of power such as the Cathedral and Palace. However, it is now a place where all groups can gather, and those with Aztec heritage can reconnect to their roots.



SENSE OF SAFETY

### Sense of Safety

The Zócalo is a highly visible space located adjacent to two important cultural buildings. It is used at night, both for dance and for community events such as ice skating. The surrounding buildings are well illuminated.



SOCIABLE ACTIVITIES: Events + Protests

### Sociability

This is an important civic space, given its proximity to significant cultural buildings and its own power as a public space. The Zócalo is large enough to be used for all kinds of community events. However, when it is not specifically programmed, it is a good spot to gather informally.



HISTORY

### History and Memory

History and Memory are vital to understanding the Zócalo. Historically the ceremonial center of the Aztec empire, later appropriated by the Spanish as the center of their power in Mexico, it highlights how place can carry memory far outlasting its owners and users. The Conchero dancers gather in this spot to commemorate their heritage. They are not simply remembering the past but continuing their legacy.

### Commercial Activity

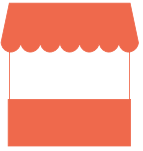
There is not much permanent commercial activity in the immediate area of the Zócalo. However, the open space of the site lends itself to various temporary vendors setting up shop within the space.



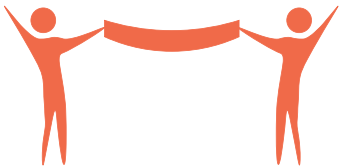
DINING



RETAIL



TEMPORARY VENDORS



INVESTED GROUPS: Community Members + Activists

### Community Ownership

The Zócalo is not only a place to gather, but also a place where citizens can make their voices heard. It is the site of both national celebrations and national protests.

# REMEMBERING SQUARE

## ZÓCALO, MEXICO CITY, MEXICO



### DANCE

STYLE: CONCHERO  
NEED: REMEMBER

The Conchero dance is an Aztec dance which originated around the time of the colonization of Mexico. It was and continues to be a way for indigenous people to pass down ancient cultural knowledge and meanings. The ritual dance is believed to purify its audience. In 2021, a ceremony was held in the Zócalo to commemorate the 696th anniversary of the founding of Tenochtitlan.

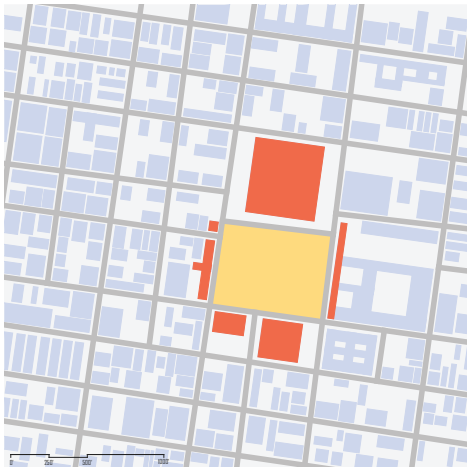


### SCENARIO

**PERFORM** ← ● → **PARTICIPATE**  
Conchero dance has been passed down through the generations. Once forbidden for outsiders to watch, it is now performed by those who have been trained in it.

**SOLO** ← ● → **GROUP**  
Conchero dance is generally seen being performed in groups.

**PLANNED** ← ● → **UNPLANNED**  
These dances can be performed any time, but are especially practiced during days of religious and historical significance. For example, in 2021 thousands of dancers gathered to celebrate the 696th anniversary of the founding of Tenochtitlan.



### SPACE

DIMENSIONS: 615' x 730'

DANCEABLE ASSETS: ENCLOSURE & MEMORY

The Zócalo is the common name of the Plaza de la Constitución in Mexico City, Mexico. In the pre-Colonial period it was the ceremonial center of the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan. Today it is surrounded by the Cathedral, the Supreme Court Building, the National Palace, and other government offices and museums. Dancers gather in this space to perform the Aztec Conchero dance. The buildings surrounding the Zócalo give it a complete sense of enclosure, making it like an "outdoor room." However, the streets that surround the Zócalo make the walls of that "room" porous, enabling both motorists and pedestrians to easily join in or pass by the space.



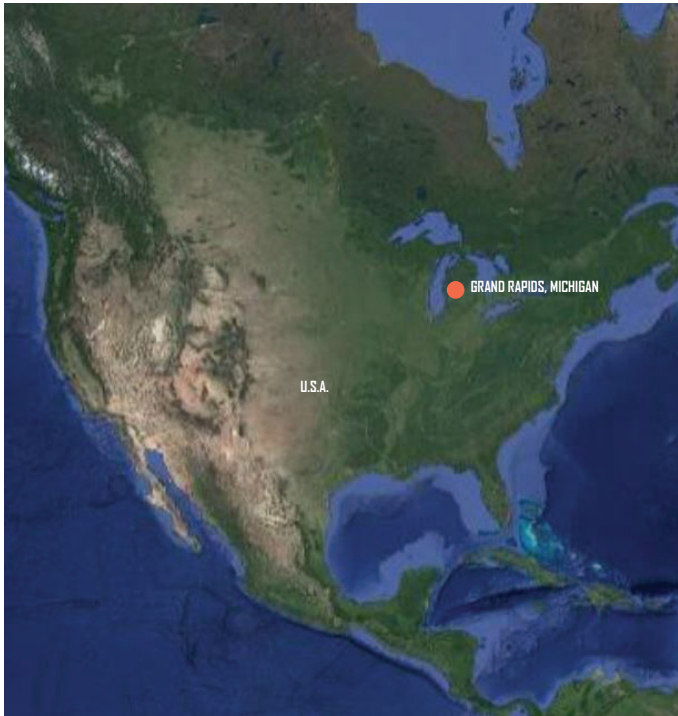
### PLACE

The Zócalo is located in a prominent spot in Mexico city. It is surrounded by important civic buildings, as well as being a historically important location in its own right. The plaza is very accessible. It is ringed by roads for both drivers and pedestrians to enter or pass by. The Zócalo/Tenochtitlan subway station is also located below the surface of the plaza. This gives any dancers reliable access to an audience. However, the most significant force making this a space for dance is memory. The history of the Zócalo as the center of the Aztec culture, appropriated by colonizers, makes this space an important site for indigenous people. The dance is a way to remember and pass on their culture, and there is no better place to do so than in the heart of the city.

# PAIRS IN A CIRCLE

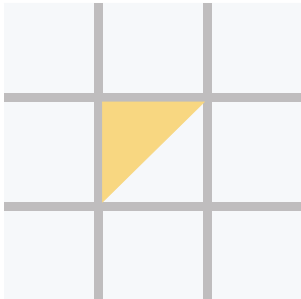
## ROSA PARKS CIRCLE, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN, U.S.A.

Rosa Parks Circle in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is the host to weekly swing dance classes throughout the year. These events are organized by the Grand Rapids Original Swing Society. These free lessons expose community members to swing dance who otherwise may not have the space to dance, the money to afford lessons, or a community to dance with.



# PHYSICAL CONTEXT

## WHERE DANCE TAKES PLACE



PERCENTAGE OF CITY BLOCK OCCUPIED: 50%

### Dimensions

Rosa Parks Circle is an ellipse sunken two feet into the ground from the level of the surrounding street by a series of shallow steps and ramps. The 170 foot long by 130 wide ellipse sits in a triangular site off of Monroe Center Street, which cuts and orients the surrounding blocks on a diagonal. The nearby buildings range from forty feet to over two hundred feet above the street level.



SIDES ENCLOSED: All Permeable

### Enclosure

Rosa Parks Circle is surrounded by buildings of various heights on all sides. There are also trees planted on the perimeter of the ellipse in various densities. This creates a gradient of enclosure, with the park more open on the Monroe Center Street side. With full views of surrounding buildings and streets, Rosa Parks Circle is clearly connected to the city, while also offering an open space for the citizens to use.



PEDESTRIAN PERSONAL VEHICLE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

### Accessibility

Even though it is sunken into the ground, ramps allow disabled people to use Rosa Parks Circle freely. There are also several bus stops around the Park, including one right on the park itself. There is also a public parking lot across the street, as well as some on-street parking. This gives users a few options of how to access the space.



OUTSIDE INSIDE

### Visibility

Rosa Parks Circle is especially visible from Monroe Center Street, a one-way, pedestrian-oriented street. Grassy berms planted with trees make it less visible on the Monroe Avenue side, which is a vehicular-oriented street. This means that people driving by might not see the dance classes, but pedestrians could easily see the dancers' activities, and also easily join in.



GROUND MATERIAL: Concrete

### Ground Treatment

The ground at Rosa Parks Circle is smooth concrete. It is a flat surface with no joints in it for the dancers to trip on. The hardness of the surface would not inhibit swing dancing too much, as jumps are more advanced moves done for effect and not as essential as other gliding, turning, or walking steps.



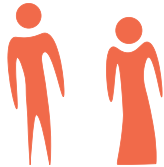
ASSET: Seating + Bandstand

### Danceable Assets

The bandstand provides the space with a place to play music from or for instructors to demonstrate dance steps. The steps surrounding the circle provide a place for an audience to watch, or for people to rest in between dances.

# SOCIAL CONTEXT

## ACTIVITY IN PUBLIC SPACE



REPRESENTED GROUPS: Local Community

### Inclusion

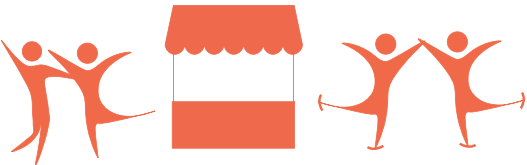
The Grand Rapids Original Swing Society offers lessons to all ages and experience levels, free of charge. This can bring many different demographics into the space, all with the common interest of learning to swing dance.



SENSE OF SAFETY

### Sense of Safety

Being located on a pedestrian-oriented street increases the sense of safety of the Park because people on the street can see what is going on inside of the Park. It is used at night and by families.



SOCIABLE ACTIVITIES: Dance, Festivals, + Ice Skating

### Sociability

Rosa Parks Circle is used for many types of gatherings. In addition to being a regular meeting spot for swing dance classes, it is also an ice skating rink in the wintertime. The space is used for other civic functions as well, like festivals and art shows.



HISTORY

### History and Memory

The site of Rosa Parks Circle has been used as a public space in Grand Rapids long before its current design. In the 1970's it was redesigned as a pedestrian mall, but this proved unsuccessful and the design was altered to its current state in 2000. It was named for Rosa Parks, a Michigan Resident, in 2001.

### Commercial Activity

Monroe Center Street hosts a few restaurants, otherwise there is little commercial activity in the immediate area. This does create opportunities for people to dance after dinner, or to watch the dancers from patio seating at the restaurants.



INVESTED GROUPS: The Grand Rapids Swing Dance Society, Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, the National Endowment for the Arts, + the City of Grand Rapids

### Community Ownership

This space is strongly supported by the Grand Rapids Community. The Grand Rapids Swing Dance Society's classes are sponsored by the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the City of Grand Rapids. The city also sponsors other programming of the space, such as art shows and the ice skating rink.



DINING



RETAIL



TEMPORARY VENDORS

# PAIRS IN A CIRCLE

ROSA PARKS CIRCLE, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN, U.S.A.



## DANCE

STYLE: SWING  
STYLE: EDUCATE

The Grand Rapids Original Swing Society hosts weekly swing dancing classes in Rosa Parks Circle. The lessons are free, welcoming to all ages and abilities, and require no special dress code. Hundreds of people attend each week, so it is not required to bring a dance partner. On August 7, 2012, the Grand Rapids Original Swing Society organized 756 people to swing dance at Rosa Parks Circle, landing a Guinness world record for largest number of people swing dancing in unison.



DANCE FORM : Pairs

## SCENARIO

**PERFORM** ← ● → **PARTICIPATE**

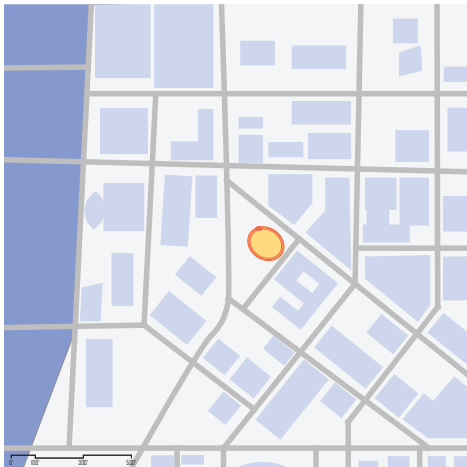
The local swing dance society gives free lessons to dancers of all ages and experience levels. No partner is required.

**SOLO** ← ● → **GROUP**

Swing dancing is performed in pairs, often with many pairs dancing simultaneously.

**PLANNED** ← ● → **UNPLANNED**

This event occurs every Tuesday night at 7pm.



## SPACE

DIMENSIONS: 170' (Long Axis) x 130' (Short Axis)

DANCEABLE ASSETS: BANDSTAND & SEATING

Designed by Maya Lin in 2000, Rosa Parks Circle is a beloved public space in Grand Rapids, Michigan. It is a sunken ellipse reached by steps and ramps of various sizes. These steps make good seats, in addition to outdoor tables and chairs often located on the periphery of the ellipse. A bandstand located on the edge of the ellipse is an ideal location for live performances, more seating for an elevated vantage point, or demonstrating dance moves. Besides hosting regular dance classes, Rosa Parks Circle also hosts concerts and functions as an ice-skating rink in the wintertime.



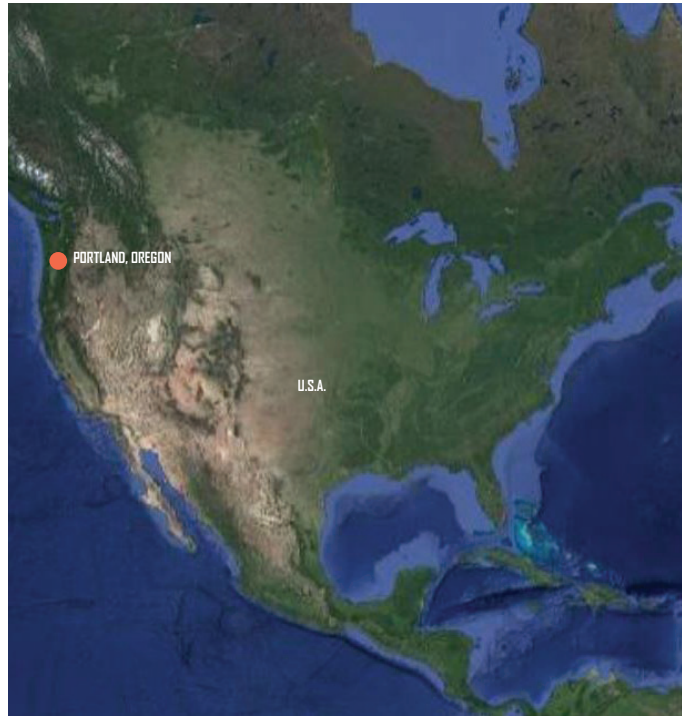
## PLACE

Rosa Parks Circle is a highly sociable place, used for both art and recreation. The activities of the Grand Rapids Original Swing Society activate the space, making it more inclusive, a lively and safe evening location, and building social networks. The Swing Dance Society is a non-profit organization, sponsored by the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the City of Grand Rapids.

# DYNAMIC LANDSCAPE

## LOVEJOY FOUNTAIN, PORTLAND, OREGON, U.S.A.

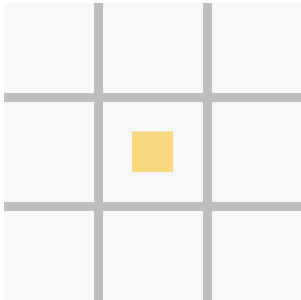
Lovejoy Fountain Park was designed by Lawrence Halprin in 1966 as part of Portland Open Space Sequence. It was designed based on Halprin's RSVP Cycles and Motation, as well as the topography of the Sierra Mountains. The design of the park is meant to stimulate dynamic movement and simulate the sublime American landscape. In this way, the park acts as both the backdrop of motion and an active participant in stimulating and influencing motion.





# PHYSICAL CONTEXT

## WHERE DANCE TAKES PLACE



PERCENTAGE OF CITY BLOCK OCCUPIED: 10%

### Dimensions

The Lovejoy Fountain Park is a 140 by 270 foot rectangle in the heart of Portland, Oregon. It takes up just over half of a downtown block. The surrounding buildings range from fifteen feet to one hundred feet tall. The topography of the Park itself has about a ten foot height change overall.



SIDES ENCLOSED: 4

### Enclosure

The Park is surrounded by buildings on all sides. Its perimeter is also planted with trees. This creates a sense of enclosure around the entire space, where one does not see the horizon but rather the sky overhead.



PEDESTRIAN PERSONAL VEHICLE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

### Accessibility

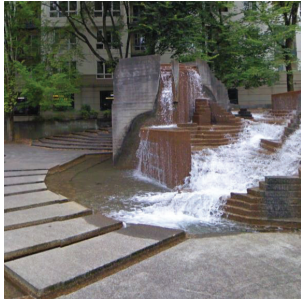
The Lovejoy Fountain Park is surrounded by pedestrian trails on all sides. There is also a light rail station on both the north and south side of the block. In addition, there are multiple bus stops on the block. There are no dedicated parking lots on site. The stepped topography would also make it difficult for those with mobility issues to access all parts of the site.



OUTSIDE INSIDE

### Visibility

The Park is only accessible via the pedestrian trails. It is not directly on a street so it is not visible to anyone except someone using the space or the trails. The high points of the landscape create a highly visible stage for dance to be performed.



GROUND MATERIAL: Stepped Concrete + Water

### Ground Treatment

The ground of the Lovejoy Fountain Park is stepped stimulating different speeds of movement. This stimulates dance-like movement through the Park. The various levels can act as stages for the dancers.



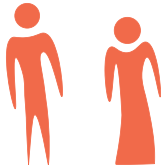
ASSET: Dynamic Landscape

### Danceable Assets

This space was designed with the movements of dance in mind. The Halprins thought of public space and public action as performance space and performance action. The sculptural space is designed to stimulate and inspire dancing movements.

# SOCIAL CONTEXT

## ACTIVITY IN PUBLIC SPACE



REPRESENTED GROUPS: Local Community

### Inclusion

This park space is open to all, but is more biased to users in the immediate area. People would need to be able to walk to the space or access it from one of the transit stops.



SENSE OF SAFETY

### Sense of Safety

The space can be used by children and adults alike to play in the fountains. It closes at midnight, so it is not used for most of the night.



SOCIABLE ACTIVITIES: Dance

### Sociability

This space was used by a group of dancers to perform a "City Dance." This type of dance was pioneered by Anna Halprin, where she reacted to the space of the city through dance.



HISTORY

### History and Memory

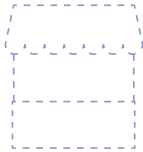
Lawrence Halprin designed this space with movement in mind. He developed these ideas from his ongoing collaboration with Anna Halprin. He used foundations laid by dance to develop the landscape architecture field.



DINING



RETAIL



TEMPORARY VENDORS

### Commercial Activity

There are a few restaurants on the same block as the Plaza. This could bring people into the area to use the space.



INVESTED GROUPS: City Dancers

### Community Ownership

The City Dancers take ownership of the space through their dance. They call to attention the way that their bodies inhabit the space. This also invites other users to have the same awareness of their place in public space.

# DYNAMIC LANDSCAPE

LOVEJOY FOUNTAIN, PORTLAND, OREGON, U.S.A.



## DANCE

STYLE: SITE-SPECIFIC  
NEED: HARMONIZE

In site-specific dances, the dancers are not harmonizing with music but rather with the space around them. This type of dance was pioneered by Lawrence Halprin's wife Anna. The interaction with the physical space of the park gives the dancers a personal connection with the city. It encourages their audience to also pause and connect with the physical space around them. This type of dance raises awareness of public spaces, instead of taking them for granted.

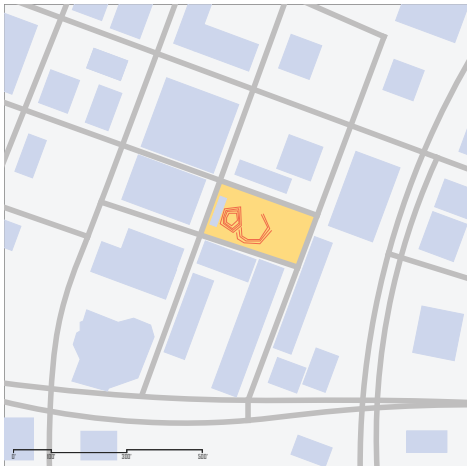


## SCENARIO

**PERFORM** ← ● → **PARTICIPATE**  
The dance at the Lovejoy Fountain Park have been choreographed and rehearsed to be specific to the site.

**SOLO** ← ● → **GROUP**  
The site-specific dances are performed in groups.

**PLANNED** ← ● → **UNPLANNED**  
These performances are planned to occur during specific times and prepared for in advance.



## SPACE

DIMENSIONS: 270' x 140'

DANCEABLE ASSETS: SCULPTURAL SPACE

Lawrence Halprin designed Lovejoy Fountain Park in 1966. It is part of the Portland Open Space Sequence, a series of parks designed for the purpose of urban renewal. The park features waterfall-like fountains designed to be interacted with. The topography of the park has dynamic shifts in height. The topography is stepped, designed to stimulate movement.



## PLACE

Lovejoy Fountain Park is part of the Portland Open Space Sequence. It is well connected by trails and surrounded by various transit stops.

# DANCE

## COMPARISONS AND CONCLUSIONS

EMPOWERING ENCLOSURE - MORRO DO ADEUS FAVELA, RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL



BALLET

MEMDRY PARADE - FRONT STREET, HAMILTON, BERMUDA



GOMBAY

COMMUNITY SQUARES - PEOPLE'S PARK, SHANGHAI, CHINA



GUANG CHANG WU

MUSICAL INFILL - DANCE-D-MAT, CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND



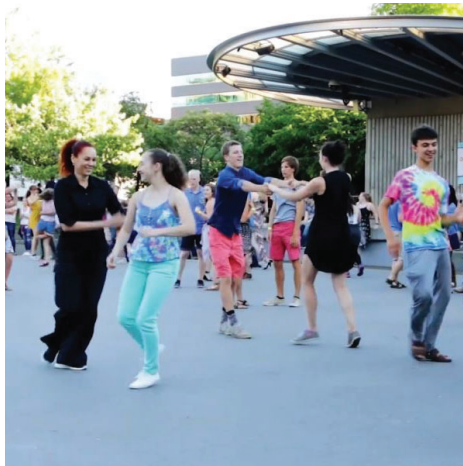
FREESTYLE

REMEMBERING SQUARE - ZÓCALO, MEXICO CITY, MEXICO



CONCHERO

PAIRS IN A CIRCLE - ROSA PARKS CIRCLE, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN



SWING

DYNAMIC LANDSCAPE - LOVEJOY FOUNTAIN, PORTLAND, OREGON



SITE SPECIFIC

The seven case studies all involve a different type of dance in public space. Some dances, like ballet, are strictly codified. Others are completely spontaneous, like at the Dance-D-Mat. These dances have different requirements, but all include basic movements like kicking, turning, jumping, and gliding. All of these different types of dances are viable in public space. These different dances also fulfill different needs. Some dances in certain spaces may fulfill a need for empowerment, while others fulfill the need for remembrance. Social Context influences how these needs are met by dance. Different dances demonstrate that dance in public space is important all cultures.

# SCENARIO

## COMPARISONS AND CONCLUSIONS

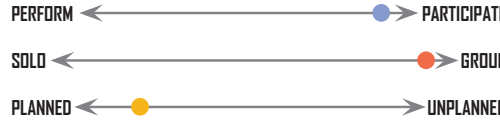
EMPOWERING ENCLOSURE - MORRO DO ADEUS FAVELA, RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL



MEMORY PARADE - FRONT STREET, HAMILTON, BERMUUDA



COMMUNITY SQUARES - PEOPLE'S PARK, SHANGHAI, CHINA



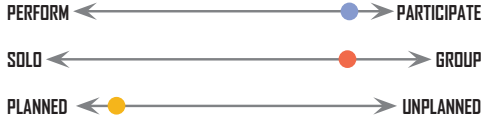
MUSICAL INFILL - DANCE-O-MAT, CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND



REMEMBERING SQUARE - ZÓCALO, MEXICO CITY, MEXICO



PAIRS IN A CIRCLE - ROSA PARKS CIRCLE, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN



DYNAMIC LANDSCAPE - LOVEJOY FOUNTAIN, PORTLAND, OREGON



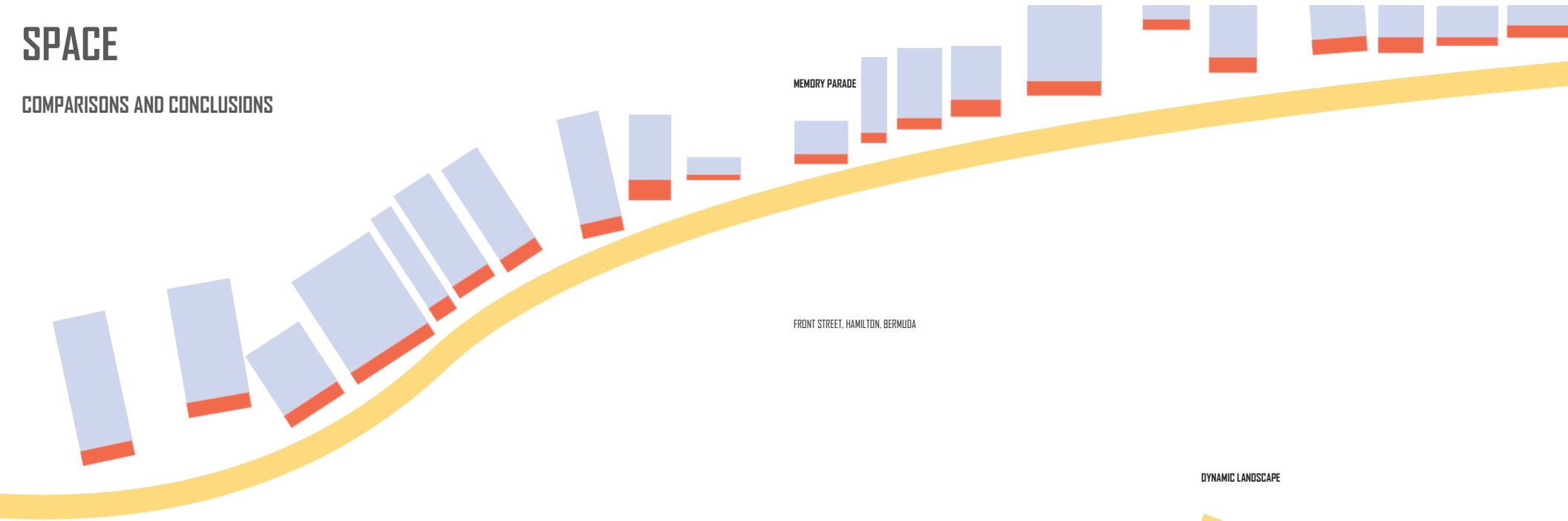
Some dances are highly participatory, where anyone can join in. These include the dance groups in China and at Rosa Parks Circle, as well as activity at the Dance-O-Mat. Other dances are much more performative, not open to outsiders. These include indigenous dances like the Gombey and Conchero, as well as the Site-Specific dances at Lovejoy Fountain Park.

When I selected these case studies, I chose spaces where groups regularly dance, so all of these scenarios are biased toward group dances. Some groups are larger than others. Dance at Rosa Parks Circle is an aggregation of pairs.

Most of these dances are planned. I selected case studies where dance occurred reliably so that I could define the spaces as "dance spaces." As such, more planned dances with reliable recurrence were chosen.

# SPACE

## COMPARISONS AND CONCLUSIONS



MEMORY PARADE

FRONT STREET, HAMILTON, BERMUDA

DYNAMIC LANDSCAPE

EMPOWERING ENCLOSURE

COMMUNITY SQUARES

PAIRS IN A CIRCLE

MUSICAL INFILL

MORRO DO ADEUS FAVELA, BRAZIL

PEOPLE'S PARK, SHANGHAI, CHINA

ROSA PARKS CIRCLE, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

DANCE-D-MAT, CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND

LOVEJOY FOUNTAIN, PORTLAND, OREGON





REMEMBERING SQUARE



ZÓCALO, MEXICO CITY, MEXICO



# SPACE

## COMPARISONS AND CONCLUSIONS

**EMPOWERING ENCLOSURE - MORRO DO ADEUS FAVELA, RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL**



**MEMORY PARADE - FRONT STREET, HAMILTON, BERMUDA**



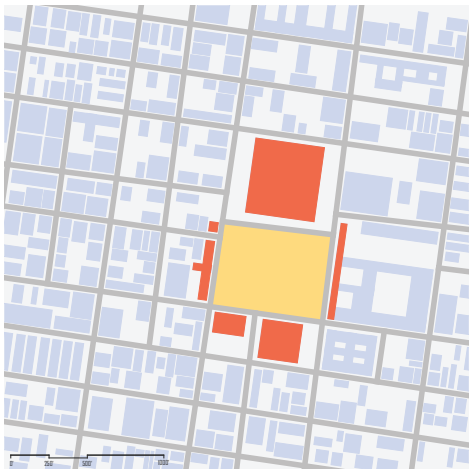
**COMMUNITY SQUARES - PEOPLE'S PARK, SHANGHAI, CHINA**



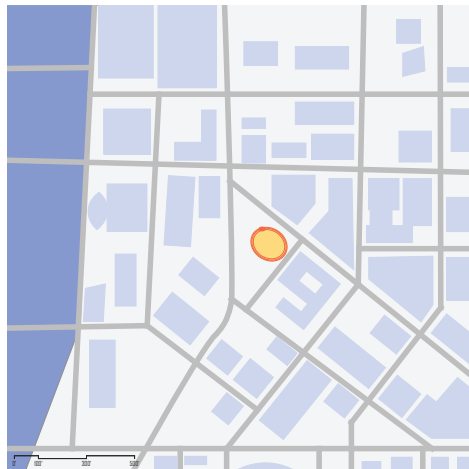
**MUSICAL INFILL - DANCE-O-MAT, CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND**



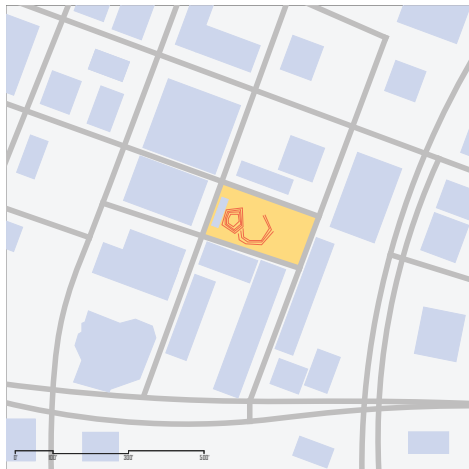
**REMEMBERING SQUARE - ZÓCALO, MEXICO CITY, MEXICO**



**PAIRS IN A CIRCLE - ROSA PARKS CIRCLE, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN**



**DYNAMIC LANDSCAPE - LOVEJOY FOUNTAIN, PORTLAND, OREGON**



Many of these dance spaces bear physical similarities. Five out of seven are rectangular. Four out of seven have all four sides enclosed, while six out of seven have at least one side enclosed. Two spaces have some overhead enclosure too, which would enable people to dance in rain or harsh sunlight. Five out of the seven spaces are less than 300 feet long at their largest dimension. However, these similar characteristics can also be attributed to the fact that they are common forms for public space in general. Most public spaces are rectangular in plan and have some level of enclosure.

What these studies show is that dance can occur in rectangular public spaces, but also on streets and in ellipses. It can occur on a space as small as a community center basketball court or as large as multiple city blocks. Dance can happen in an open space as well as a secluded one. Some factors may make a space more desirable, but these case studies suggest that there is no one formula for dance space.



# PLACE

## COMPARISONS AND CONCLUSIONS

EMPOWERING ENCLOSURE - MORRO DO ADEUS FAVELA, RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL



MEMORY PARADE - FRONT STREET, HAMILTON, BERMUDA



COMMUNITY SQUARES - PEOPLE'S PARK, SHANGHAI, CHINA



MUSICAL INFILL - DANCE-O-MAT, CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND



REMEMBERING SQUARE - ZÓCALO, MEXICO CITY, MEXICO



PAIRS IN A CIRCLE - ROSA PARKS CIRCLE, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN



DYNAMIC LANDSCAPE - LOVEJOY FOUNTAIN, PORTLAND, OREGON



The common factor in all of these places is that a dance space is a sociable place. Some dances allow women, children, and/or the elderly to engage more in public life. Other dances activate street life and evening use. On the other hand, there are some cases where the dance space is not comfortable. Whether it is an unsafe site or poor building conditions, these problems do not necessarily prevent people from dancing. It also seems that having multiple modes of access helps the dance space. This makes sense as with all public space, it is more used if people can access it through a variety of means. Sociability is the strongest argument for dance spaces. Dance brings people together in public space in ways they otherwise would not.