

Understanding Artists' Relationships to Urban Creative Placemaking

Through Documentary Storytelling

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Abstract

This essay utilizes the extensive research developed for the documentary film, *A Day in the Sun*, and offers a focused case study of the relationship between arts-driven development practice (creative placemaking) and individual artists in the dense, micro-urban space of York, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. In doing so, it explores the relevance of narrative encounter and creation in understanding the motivations and actions of artists and those of practitioners or administrators in the arts development environment. Utilizing an interdisciplinary composition of research in economics, urban planning, organizational theory and arts development, as well as hours of the documentary's raw and unedited audiovisual material, this essay explores storytelling as a viable means of understanding the relationship between artists and their creative urban spaces.

Keywords: Artists, Creative Placemaking, Storytelling, Documentary, Urban Renewal, Economic Development

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Introduction

Building on past work, and my interest in working artists, I spent three years documenting the emergence of an arts “movement” in York, Pennsylvania, U.S.A., and produced a 30-minute Public Television documentary, *A Day in the Sun* in 2012. This effort drew me to many artists, as well as professionals working to develop an arts district within an old, industrialized city. Although the documentary advocates for the importance of the arts within the economy, my perspective evolved throughout the process of encountering and telling the story. I now seek to unpack and assess the experiences I gathered in crafting the documentary, in order to 1) cultivate a deeper understanding of York’s creative placemaking within the context of existing research and 2) validate knowledge creation through storytelling in the arts/commerce confluence.

From the beginning, the project posed interesting challenges with respect to documentary storytelling. One important narrative thread in the documentary follows the city’s ardent push to gain recognition as an arts destination. Other threads are woven together from artists’ individual stories, revealing the daily beauty and struggle of artistic creation and sustenance. The storytelling challenge arose from the attempt to reconcile two very different storylines, each comprised of characters with very different motivations and actions, despite the common narrative of “the arts” and their importance to the city.

York’s Emerging Arts Community

Surrounded by one of the fastest-growing counties in Pennsylvania, the City of York is a small, dense urban space between Baltimore, Maryland and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. York is also positioned close to Philadelphia (90 miles to the east) and Washington D. C. (90 miles to the south), and lies within 150 miles of over 28 million people along the densely populated American east coast corridor (Destination Development International, 2009:11).

York felt the sharp economic declines experienced by most American cities beginning in the 1950s, especially those with heavy investment in industry. Like many other urban centers, York’s leadership developed a variety of development strategies for renewal throughout the late 1990s and 2000s, including amenities like sports and cultural heritage activities (Sheets, 2010; Schreiber, 2010).

York has been home to many artists over its long history. Painters like Lewis Miller (1796-1882), Horace Bonham (1835-1892), as well as the potter Johann Pfaltzgraff, namesake of the internationally known Pfaltzgraff Company, made their homes in York. The city can claim a continuously operational fine arts academy since 1952 and many of its graduates are regionally known painters and sculptors. Most impressive is York’s claim to one of the most famous living artist today. Jeff Koons was born in York County, resides part-time on a large farm in the county and takes part in major arts events and celebrations in the area.

York’s long association with the arts combined with its urban development efforts in 2002. City leaders recognized the arts as a much-needed economic development

strategy with its first “York Arts District Conceptual Plan.” In 2006, the city developed an Arts District Task Force and the city’s redevelopment authority launched a city-wide Artists’ Homestead Program, which was intended to attract artists to the city. The overall movement developed decisively in 2009 with the formation of the *York County Community Cultural Plan*. The plan employed a nationally recognized cultural change agent, convened a 75-member steering committee, surveyed 290 artists, profiled 65 non-profit agencies and published the definitive road map for developing arts and culture in York County (Cultural Alliance of York County, 2009:4-8; Riley, 2009). Almost simultaneously, Downtown Inc., a non-profit development corporation, hired Destination Development International, an internationally recognized community branding firm, and published *Downtown York Strategic Branding, Development and Marketing Plan*. This resulted in “Creativity Unleashed,” and claimed the convergence of industrial heritage and the growing creative community as York’s unique brand (Huntzinger, 2013).

These developments attracted the attention of the Pennsylvania Governor’s office, and in 2009, York was named the host city for the annual Governor’s Awards for the Arts. This event honors individual artists, arts groups, communities and philanthropists for their contributions to arts and is informally known as “the Oscars for Pennsylvania artists.” The ceremony is hosted by a small or mid-sized city each year, chosen by the Governor’s office (Sheets, 2010). This opportunity represented York’s turn to be recognized and the documentary’s story structure was forming naturally around this major event.

During this time, Pennsylvania was experiencing a monumental budget crisis, which delayed the legislature in passing the annual budget by almost four months. During that time, all state funding to municipalities and organizations, including arts organizations, ceased and resulted in the delay or suspension of many arts programs (Pullo, 2009; Riley, 2009). Furthermore, the legislature considered a budget that included Senate Bill 850, which would have removed all state funding for the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, “essentially eliminating the agency.” (Hershour, 2009). Under such fiscal strain and heated debate, the Governor’s office canceled its Awards for the Arts ceremony, which was to be held in York on October 8th, 2009. Georg Sheets coined the title of the film during his interview, when explaining the deflation that seemed to occur. “We were told that we’re going to get this great day in the sun. And then the day came and the sun didn’t shine.”

The main narrative thread of the documentary concludes during the spring of 2010. The ceremony had been reinstated by the Governor’s Office, and on April 8th York finally had its “day in the sun,” heralding the grand achievement in creative placemaking. The ceremony was held in a beautifully restored performing arts center, and was attended by a small host of famous artists and notable personalities: Jeff Koons, Del McCoury, Rocco Landesman (National Endowment for the Arts) and Governor Ed Rendell, among many others known throughout the region. It was regarded as one of the largest and most publicized celebrations in York and provided the documentary’s story with a triumphant denouement.

The Artists

Although the city's journey provided the structure for the story of the documentary and the topics or ethos of the film, I deemed the stories of individual artists working and living in the city as essential to film as well. Although there are dozens of artists in the city and hundreds in the county, five artists, representing the energy and "soul" of the city, emerged as main characters of the film.

1. Pat

I was born in New York City and I came here even though my family really thinks I'm crazy (she laughs). But they can say that I am happier than I've ever been, simply because I have a lot of people around me here, and I'm doing what I love to do and my art is selling. And it just started to sell and I am 70 years old (laughs again).

I visited with Pat several times between August 2009 and August 2011, and we often ran into each other at arts events and galleries (she seemed to be everywhere). During my first visit to her home, she set up a large piece of canvas on the back porch floor, opened up several cans of furniture paint and proceeded to make an absolute mess, lashing and swiping brushes over the paper. Oddly enough, she was dressed all in white and by the end of the demonstration she did not have one errant dribble or speck of paint on her.

Pat is prolific. She had an inventory of over 900 abstract and impressionistic urban-scape paintings in her home, local galleries or restaurants. Her smallest paintings sell for \$10, some of her larger paintings, only \$300. She liked her fast turnover at such low art-world prices. She was selling art, keeping her costs low, and cobbling together a living in way that meshed with her personality and energy.

Pat also possessed a generosity of spirit and much of her life has been devoted to cultivating a support system for young people suffering from addiction. When I met her, she was celebrating her 40th year of sobriety, and nearly every day, she opened her home, facilitating support groups, as well as cooking and serving lunch or dinner out of the small kitchen in the rear of her first floor apartment.

I know I have a passion for painting that is probably stronger than any other passion that I've ever had. And sometimes, the people that need you most are pushed aside when you're ambitious and want to accomplish a lot. So I have to be very careful not to do that – too keep myself humble and to keep myself focused on why I'm here in this world, you know, to help others.

Each of my artists occupies a place in York, but in the documentary I also position them temporally throughout the year, in which the story of the Governor's Arts Awards takes place. I placed Pat's chapter immediately after the opening titles and a quick visual exposition of York in the summer time. Pat exuded a buoyant and dogged optimism, which paralleled that of York's arts community. At a time in life when most are reflecting, Pat was flowing headlong into the future with a sense of youth that defied age.

2. Carol

After several years of wandering, Carol returned to York and made a conscious decision to be a self-sustaining artist. Since 1990, she has sustained herself with the sale of her paintings, purchased a home and raised her daughter by herself. Like Pat, Carol was optimistic, but she talked much more about the practical dynamics of life as an artist and how she promotes herself and her work.

You have to self-promote. I could sit here and do all the painting I wanted to do, but unless I get out there and do the selling...I don't have an agent. I have (my work in) galleries, but galleries are having a tough time right now. I've had to be, I guess, a little more pushy. You can't hang back and wait for someone else to do it.

Carol also evidenced a dualism in her career. She promoted her work tirelessly, but expressed concern with her role and reputation as a fine artist. She understands how the relationship between business and art may influence what work she chooses to do and promote.

I've noticed that whenever I get an idea and I've thought, 'oh, this is going to make me a lot of money,' those things sit in the studio forever. It starts with an intention and if the intention is to make money, it doesn't work for me. The intention has to be an expression of beauty or love or creativity...otherwise it is not going to sell...Art is a commodity too, but it comes from here. (she lays her hand on her heart).

Although York's creative placemaking star was on the rise, Carol, like many artists, was concerned about how long she could sustain through the ongoing economic downturn, especially with a college-aged daughter. Of course, she responds to this with her customary humor rather than an outward anxiety, perhaps a signal that after 20 years of financial ups and downs, she knows how to live with the uncertainty.

How do you know when the painting is finished? Andy Warhol said 'the painting is finished when the check clears the bank.' I like that...

I first interviewed Carol in the fall, when beautiful, warm and colorful days first give way to longer and colder nights. Carol's optimism was clear, but she exuded the street-smarts that evidenced her understanding of where her art fit into the economy. In the documentary, her chapter comes after the heady days of summer, while York is still intoxicated by the prospect of its "day in the sun," and before the cold harsh reality of economic draconianism suddenly emerges. Although we share in Carol's hopeful story, the impending turn of the seasons foreshadows a dark turn in the tale.

3. Gerald

My earliest experience was that of a broken family and living in poverty for the first several years of my life. However, the discovery of sketching, drama at school, dancing with other kids in the neighborhood did something for me. It was more

than therapeutic. I think it was healing. It gave direction and purpose to my life, and enabled me to have this spark, this... I'm not even sure what to call it, but a desire to live and to be someone.

Gerald experienced the debilitating effects of institutional racism and segregation during his youth in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Over the course of his adult life, he sought something different and lived in London, Cape Town and Trinidad & Tobago, before moving to the U.S. with his wife and son. When I met Gerald in 2009, he had been living in York for about four years, and was seeking an opportunity to rediscover his artistic voice.

A great deal of my adult life had been lived not from an internal motivation, but rather from external motivating factors, like the need to earn a living. And I was kind of frustrated, because I felt like the real me, the creative part of who I am was actually withering and dying.

In 2005, a teaching job brought Gerald and his family to York. However, a short time later, Gerald stumbled upon a freelance job, allowing him to fabricate and restore stained glass windows for a historic church that had recently burned down. He spent six months working with glass, "fell in love with it" and reinvented himself as a glass mosaic artist. I periodically tracked his progress for the next two years, through the opening of his own mosaic gallery near the downtown arts district. When I met him in the fall of 2009, he had only recently made a dramatic change in his life. He quit his teaching job.

It wasn't easy, leaving a well paying job – a stable income – and just venturing. However, it was also liberating in a sense that I could now do what came naturally. It's just been in the last two years that I've tried to rediscover myself as an artist and not to give primary importance to the earning component or the commercial component but to the creative spark within me.

Gerald's chapter comes in the midst of metaphorical winter, after the governor's office canceled the awards ceremony and as the story rests in a moment of sobering reflection. He personifies a quiet resilience within the story that all classic protagonists have – that "spark within," as Gerald would say.

4. Lindsey and Pete

Lindsey and Pete purchased and created their own creative live/work space in the summer of 2009 through the city's Artist Homestead Program. I first met with them in winter of 2010, and followed them periodically throughout the development of their living space into an art gallery and collaborative music performance venue.

This place (their homestead) has been so beneficial to us – working and creating together. Having a space and eventually being able to open up the ground floor to the public a couple of days a week to show art and have music. I think that is ultra conducive to the type of people we are – to be able to share with the community is really important.

Prior to purchasing the homestead, Pete and Lindsey played with a wide variety of local musicians, developed new venues and attracted musicians to perform in York, strongly contributing to a critical mass of activity in York's otherwise off the radar music scene. The creation of space around these activities and passions provided the cohesion – only two months into their endeavor, Pete and Lindsey were hosting “First Friday” art crawl activities and after party musical performances, including artists and musicians from all over the East Coast and attracting as many as 150 people to their downtown townhome during such events.

Lindsey is primarily a fine artist, specializing in oil painting, printmaking and art restoration. In the homestead, she created a painting studio and printmaking studio, in addition to exhibition space. Lindsey spoke of her good fortune in being able to stay a full-time artist, even before the homestead venture with Pete:

There's always been something keeping me on the path of being self-employed, even though it's always up and down and barely scraping by. It's what I've always done. And if there is any way I can keep making my living doing completely art all day every day that's more important than being comfortable.

Lindsey and Pete's chapter appropriately appears in the spring. I wanted to harness the contagious quality of their enthusiasm. In addition, I wanted to capture the spirit of homesteading in a new context. The idea of forging out a living with hard work and perseverance in the face of risk will forever be a part of that classic canon of romantic American lore. In the film, Lindsey and Pete's story represents the larger idea of renewal in the city.

Digging Deeper Into the Story

As of 2013, York's transformation was just over 10 years old, and is represented in the hundreds of surveys, pages of reports, myriad arts activities, dozens of artists' residences reclaimed from urban blight, businesses taking advantage of a renewed energy, as well as glamorous new creative spaces developed through public and private investments. The motivations, voiced by the diverse range of these agents of York's change are unified: the arts are important and we want to create a place for them to flourish. However, the documentary's story, especially in the editing phase, continued to challenge my ability to bring cohesion to the overall story of York's placemaking. Frequently, I found that artists had little or no idea of what arts managers, developers or civic leaders were planning. Often, I found the managers, developers and leaders had little familiarity with York's artists. Why was there this chasm between these groups of people acting under the larger cause of the arts?

Richard Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class* was debated and challenged by scholars, but ultimately brought the “creative economy” to the attention of many policy makers (Glaeser, 2005; Markusen, 2006:1922; Peck 2005:740-741). Despite this debate and scholarly concern, Florida's work was referenced consistently by York's municipal leaders, community leaders and arts managers throughout the documentary's production. In her analysis of other communities' receptions of the

Floridian philosophy, Ann Markusen coincidentally summarizes what was happening in York:

What American Mayors of large and small cities seem to have gleaned from this work is a renewed appreciation of the role of the arts in urban development and of the significance of amenities. Unfortunately, because the 'creative' literature is so anecdotal and lean on analysis, they are often at a loss to know what to do with such intelligence beyond using it as window dressing for tourism marketing and downtown development strategies (Markusen, 2006:1938).

Jamie Peck also examines the public policy craze stemming from the key narrative of Florida's work:

According to this increasingly pervasive urban-development script, the dawn of a 'new kind of capitalism based on human creativity' calls for funky forms of supply-side intervention, since cities find themselves in a high-stakes 'war for talent' that can only be won by developing the kind of people climates valued by creatives... (Peck, 2005:740)

Florida estimates the size of the creative class to be 30% of the workforce, spanning a range of professions in science, business, medicine/health and law, as well as the arts – all of which contain educated, highly trained and, with the likely exception of artists, potentially affluent individuals (Florida, 2002:8). He also establishes the idea that major corporations are no longer interested in conventional civic enticements like tax breaks, but are going to go where the "highly skilled people are" (Florida, 2002:6). These narratives, along with the correlation of Bohemian presence to high-technology and employment growth (Florida, 2005:41-42) has likely influenced the shape of York's creative transformation.

In examining the York's plans and reports from 2006 and 2009, I find parallels between the language that was emerging from these documents and Florida's concept of the creative economy, as well as Markusen's and Peck's observations regarding misunderstandings at the policy-making level.

The 2006 *Arts District Task Force Report* is focused on the geographic boundaries of the identified district or "place;" conflating the arts and economic development; redevelopment efforts and the built environment; broadening the arts to include the creative and community branding. The Community Cultural Plan published by the Cultural Alliance of York County in 2009 appears more balanced between community development concerns and economic development language. For example, it includes action plans on increasing awareness of arts activities throughout the community and increasing involvement of arts in education. However, it also includes action plans focused on expanding the arts to include the creative sector (rebranding), physical urban revitalization and tourism (20-28).

The 2009 report, *Downtown York Strategic Branding, Marketing & Development Plan*, is highly aligned with Florida's language of a "Creative Class," and consistently ad-

dresses tourism and community branding. The result of the report is “Creativity Unleashed,” a web-based marketing campaign, claiming York as the “Industrial Art and Design Capitol of the Northeast” (United States). The website’s “Profiles” page, features a wallcoverings outlet, a robotic automation corporation, an architectural testing facility, Harley Davidson Motorcycles, a violin maker, a pottery company, a packaging corporation, a metallurgical artist (the only self-professed artist featured), and a company that makes paper converting equipment for folding and packaging products like baby wipes and aluminum foil. This parallels Florida’s discussion of the creative sector and its expansion to include scientists, engineers, and other professionals as well as artists.

The executive director of Downtown, Inc., the non-profit development organization that commissioned the 2009 marketing and branding plan, states that the plan and resulting web-based marketing campaign “was always a business recruitment and workforce development tool.” When asked about its connection to the arts, she characterized the fine arts as “icing on the cake,” but strongly advocated for ways to distinguish York’s downtown from other arts destinations through its unique brand of creativity filtered through York’s illustrious industrial heritage (Huntzinger, 2013).

Finally, the results from the highly publicized Governor’s Awards for the Arts ceremony in 2010 may also reflect the strong alignment between York’s placemaking and the perception of Florida’s analyses among policy makers. On the day of the ceremony, Governor Ed Rendell committed \$2.8 million dollars toward the renovation of the old Fraternal Order of Eagles building within the arts district boundary, transforming it into an arts incubator with a museum, classroom space, artists work space, apartments and an exhibit hall (Schreiber, 2010). The Pennsylvania Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program was leveraged to fund the project, and Marketview Arts – A Place for Creativity was finished in 2012. The York County Industrial Development Authority owns the property and now leases the spaces to York College, The Pennsylvania Arts Experience and individual artists. Moxie, a relatively new downtown marketing firm, manages and rents the exhibition space for artists’ residency programs, events, galas, fund-raisers and weddings. A description of the space can be found at the York County Economic Alliance web page and also reflects the influence of Florida’s key assertions:

The Authority is proud to work with the City of York to attract and retain creative businesses in downtown York, as it recognizes that a robust and creative downtown is crucial to economic development, not only for the City of York but also for the entire County. In addition, it is the Authority’s belief that enhancing the quality of place will also aid in attracting and retaining a young, creative workforce.

Issues associated with the underlying subtext for attracting artists to a locale, developing the arts, and creative activities have been illustrated elsewhere in a variety of disciplines. Laikwan Pang, in her Marxist reading of the “creative class,” argues that creative labor, under the logic of capitalism, has “...a wide array of aptitudes and values. At the same time, it is also under a broader spectrum of

pressure and exploitation.” (2009:71). The logic behind the creation of art is very different than that of other commodities. An artist featured in the documentary, Carol, acknowledges that art is a commodity, but also asserts that it is created through a very different process (it comes from her heart) – one that even contradicts normal economic or entrepreneurial evaluations. Florida, illustrates the importance of “street-level” artistic activity as a lure for the creative class – often yielding opportunities for the consumer to meet the artists while consuming the product (Florida, 2002:182-189). Pang argues that in the rush to commodify the creative, it is not the products that are being commodified but rather the artist themselves being presented as a commodity and are thus at risk for exploitation (Pang, 2009:65).

Doris Eikoff's and Axel Haunschild's in-depth study of theater actors revealed an entangled relationship between arts-driven logics in the *L'art pour l'art*, Bohemian lifestyle and economic logics that govern state-subsidized German theater production. This study found that many characteristics of the Bohemian lifestyle are harnessed to serve the economic logic of a tight arts employment field. Exploitation was as an issue consistently voiced throughout the actors' interviews and the study resulted in the identification of a major paradox in the creative/commercial confluence:

Bringing artistic motivation into market runs the risk of weakening or even destroying it, and thereby endangers the artistic logics of practice invoking *l'art pour l'art*. Therefore we argue that all attempts to manage and market artistic practices invoking economic logics of practice endanger the resources vital to creative production (Eikoff & Haunschild, 2007:536).

A case study of three municipalities in Massachusetts, U.S.A, receiving funds from the Adams Arts Program for the Creative Economy to develop arts and culture in their local economies, did not find exploitation, but rather disconnections. Although the results ranged from clear success to marginal success among the municipalities, observations noted some suspicion among artists toward local government involvement in arts development. Moreover, all three communities evidenced this disconnect among members of the community and the stated goals of the community's economic development plan. “The variety and inconsistency of the goals made it difficult to determine which objectives were being pursued, at what time, by whom.” (Maloney & Wassall, 2013:71-75).

Several artists I encountered felt uncomfortable participating in the documentary, because of frustrations or resentment toward civic and major non-profit leadership throughout York's transformation. Some felt slighted because they lived in the wrong neighborhood – outside the arts district - and had to negotiate a byzantine city permit process to launch events, sell their work or even create off-street parking for customers. Others felt pressured to participate in activities they did not enjoy or agree with, or donate artwork for events, and expressed concern about maintaining their public image in the arts movement. One artist I interviewed struggled to understand the salaries of employees in arts non-profit enti-

ties, while he struggled to pay rent. A preliminary and informal study shows that York offers too many arts activities and events that can be adequately attended by arts and cultural consumers in York County, so new audiences must be attracted in order to sustain the existing arts community (Georg Sheets, 2010). With this in mind, artists voiced skepticism about a creating a critical mass of artists and the increased competition that would bring. One artist, who has been working in York for nearly 50 years, felt completely disenfranchised by the movement:

We've got plenty of damned good artwork in this county that people in this county need to be purchasing with their paychecks. We don't need to be creating more organizations that further drain our tax resources to create jobs for people with these grandiose ideas.

Soho in the 1960s still serves as the paradigm for arts-based, built-environment development, and once that was understood and harnessed by financial communities in the 70's and 80's, the "Artistic Mode of Production," began. This trend linked the built-environment to cultural consumption, masked unemployment or underemployment within the haze of cultural industries and linked the economic with the aesthetic to produce an economy not entirely ascertained by simple productive measures (Zukin, 2001:259-260). By the time Florida published *Rise of the Creative Class*, urban development policy was experiencing a neo-liberal vacuum, and Florida's creative development script, however misunderstood or selectively applied by policy-makers, rapidly propelled urban spaces like York to repackage and heavily market cultural assets in order to attract the creative class in a highly competitive arena. This misunderstanding, as Markusen suggests, combined with the accelerated implementation, may lead municipalities into top-down strategies that promote exploitation and urban gentrification (Peck, 2005:764-767). One arts-immersed non-profit executive in York, when responding to a question I asked about the possibility of gentrification in the city and the "Soho-syndrome," said, "what a wonderful problem to have."

More than 40 years after the phoenix rose from Soho's industrial ashes, Alternative narratives of urban planning, placemaking and social equity are emerging that address these problematic practices. Scholars and practitioners are discovering, experimenting and articulating new planner/artist collaborations in Australia and Canada that place artists at the center of transformations in urban spaces (Sandercock, 2005: 101-102). Debra Webb acknowledges the skepticism now directed toward neo-liberal placemaking initiatives that are focused on urban renewal and the built environment. She cites case studies that exercise alternative forms of development and artists entrepreneurship, which champion collaboration, social equity and cultural stewardship. These greatly challenge the arts-driven urban renewal strategies from the past decades (Webb, 2014:35-38). Strong case studies in Minneapolis cultural development cite the effectiveness of cross sector collaboration and significant community and artists' leadership in creative placemaking efforts (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010:21; Borrup, 2014:108-109).

The 2006 *Arts District Task Force* in York only included two artists within the 17-member committee. Although the interview pool for the 2009 Cultural Plan included 290 artists (12% of the interviewees), only 9 artists were included within the 75-member steering committee, and no artists were included on the Cultural Alliance Planning Team. The 2009 marketing and branding plan, which was most aligned with the creative class rhetoric, was developed entirely by an outside development consulting firm, and they interviewed no artists during the creation of the report. In the long lineage of conventional and neo-liberal development practices, and despite the emergence of responsible and sustainable alternatives, it appears York gravitated toward an artist-exclusionary method for its placemaking, which may have also been the result of a misinterpretation of popular theories or narratives involving the creative economy and class.

Storytelling and Knowing

There are two modes of cognitive functioning... each providing distinct ways of ordering experience, of constructing reality. The two (though complementary) are irreducible to one another. Efforts to reduce one mode to the other or to ignore one at the expense of the other inevitably fail to capture the rich diversity of thought. (Bruner, 1986:11).

Bruner draws distinction between “paradigmatic” and “narrative” modes of thought in the pursuit of knowledge. Paradigmatic refers to the logical system of description, testing and evaluation: “empirical discovery guided by reasoned hypothesis.” Narrative knowing is concerned with placing particulars in the context of space, time, epiphany and the human condition. It is made from the landscape of action, but also the landscape consciousness – how those within the landscape of action think or feel (Bruner, 1986:13-14).

Andrew Isserman, a revered planning educator and scholar devoted much of his career to the advocacy of storytelling as a key ingredient of self-knowledge, world knowledge and ultimately planning praxis:

The power of storytelling has captured me. Through the movies and the student stories, I meet new people and gain new understanding of lives and life...I know many more human beings in the peculiar way of knowing that relies on images on the screen and made up stories that somehow become real and bring people closer together (Isserman, 2010:314).

Whether teaching economic theory or working data, storytelling is inescapable. The history of economics is conveyed through narrative, complete with central characters, like Marx or Keynes, and plot through the economic concepts of equilibrium, disturbance and a new equilibrium. These dynamics are common in dramatic structure and bring the disciplines of economic study and the “narrative way of knowing” into partnership (Boettke, 2005:447-448).

While notable scholars use literary works, writing exercises and screen studies in interdisciplinary storytelling pedagogies, practitioners have experimented with

the creation of multimedia stories as a learning tool as well. A study of family and intergenerational communication was conducted through digital storytelling. This required students to gather audio, video and still images with their community participants and organize them into a personal, historical narrative. Not only were the connections between scholar and participant deepened by the production of the digital material, the intricate act of organizing, scripting and editing the material thereafter promote discovery and dialogues that are valuable, even if they are not included in the final edit (Flottemesch, 2013).

Penny Gurstein offers yet another application of storytelling – to counteract narratives that misinform public engagement and policy making:

Myths and preconceptions often govern public policy formation, limiting its ability to respond effectively. While it is difficult to counteract dominant beliefs and ideologies, the power of multimedia is in its ability to uncover countervailing stories that challenge the dominant discourses and tap into more intuitive and other forms of knowledge (Gurstein, 2010:210).

There are problems, however, with knowledge creation through storytelling that must be addressed. Bruner admits that stories can violate consistency and logic in order to achieve dramatic effects, like in the works of Kafka or Beckett (Bruner, 1986:12). Economists can be better storytellers than economists. “Some economic stories are science, others are science fiction and the study of economics is vital to making that distinction (Boettke, 2005:449). Michael Rabiger asserts that objectivity is a myth – impossible to achieve despite journalistic balance, the best of intentions and many sleepless nights (Rabiger, 1992:7-8). Noted documentary scholar Bill Nichols extends the discussion much further in an examination of how documentary “voice” has evolved in its relationship with realism and artifice:

...documentaries always were forms of re-presentation, never clear windows onto ‘reality;’ the filmmaker was always a participant-witness and an active fabricator of meaning, a producer of cinematic discourse rather than a neutral or all-knowing reporter of the way things truly are (Nichols, 1983:18).

Noah Isserman and Ann Markusen continue the work of Andrew Isserman in advocating for storytelling and narrative in planning education and practice, but clearly assert that narrative, especially causal in nature, must be “...moving beyond rhetoric to reality,” and tested, through what Bruner would call, the paradigmatic way of knowing (Bruner, 2013:131-132). And although Penny Gurstein lauds multimedia storytelling as a means of countering dominant and flawed narratives, she also warns against the inherent dangers of such explorations by asking important question. Who is creating and controlling the information, how is it being analyzed and interpreted and for what ends? (Gurstein, 2010:210).

Conclusion

The facts and events associated with York’s placemaking provided the larger narrative thread of the “landscape of action.” My insistence on including individual

artists' stories, despite the difficulty integrating them into the action landscape, provided the "landscape of consciousness." The resulting incongruence between the two did not foreground itself in the documentary. Instead, I used allegory, metaphor and literary digression to tenuously, but conceptually connect the artists to the larger story. York's landscape of action served as a functional milieu, out of which the particulars of the human condition emerge and engage an audience.

My work started with the simple and naïve intention to explore the reasons artists are attracted to live and work in York, and why a struggling city would want to attract a group of professionals who themselves often struggle financially. After three years of working within the community's story, gathering story materials and organizing a coherent narrative of events, my knowledge of the community's collective experience has deepened considerably. And it was the use of those storytelling tools that led me to the deeper understanding that cannot be represented in the film, but instead rises from the hours of unused video and audio out of which the film was ultimately sculpted. Countless hours spent reviewing audiovisual material, transcribing interviews, and editing scenes, brought me much closer to the subject matter than I had anticipated. The documentary is therefore superficial – the story itself is based on the myths and preconceptions of an outmoded and misinformed arts-harnessing economic development practice. However, it is during the process of encountering the story, and especially reflecting on the process itself when true discovery or way of knowing something started to emerge.

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