



BOOK CITY ★Roanoke

Notes for

Dar Williams'

What I Found in a Thousand Towns

POSITIVE PROXIMITY: Living in close quarters doesn't have to mean conflict and loss of privacy. A community can use proximity to its advantage to integrate the talents and skills of residents. We have it in Roanoke and can strengthen it.

"First: there are **SPACES**, indoors and out, that naturally maximize the number of good interactions in a town. Generally these spaces have some individual character while still being open enough to accommodate the desires and interests of good citizens."

"Second, there are **PROJECTS** that build a town's **IDENTITY**—socially, culturally, and /or historically—helping them become...themselves. These projects bring out the advantages of proximity by attracting the passions and skill sets of people who are like-minded in some ways but very different in others, cross-pollinating abilities and personalities. Citizens tend to see past their partisanship and biases when they're trying to accomplish something they can't do alone..."

"Third...**TRANSLATION** is all of the acts of communication that open up a town to itself and the world...the ability of a place to incorporate every willing citizen's contributions, and in so doing, find ways to make life more interesting, welcome the outside world, and provide stability for those who need support."

CHAPTER EIGHT: Conscious Bridgers

- ★ Positive proximity is built through collective effort, yet there are some who we can learn from...*Conscious Bridgers* – "love to make connections everywhere they go. They weave together disparate fibers of a town's identity, open channels of communication..." (p. 213). They say, "We've got a problem to tackle."
- ★ "Conscious bridgers are always on the lookout for new alliances and connections." (216) They "experience each project as a learning opportunity in which they themselves can thrive." (228). They are interested in following [the moral arc] as far as it goes, finding opportunities for the whole community to gain more access to understanding, to healing; and in both the long and short term, to justice." (228)
- ★ "Bridging social capital interweaves the strengths and weaknesses of different demographics so that positive proximity can be experienced more widely and confidently." (216)
- ★ "Gainesboro, Florida, is the example community. Jenny Lee Baxley, dance therapist. When I visited her, I got a full rundown on all of the people she introduced me to: what they did for a living, their hobbies, how they related with the community, what they were working on, and anything they might have in common with me." "Gainesville experiences itself as a town of many viewpoints." The Arts in Medicine program at the University of Florida has developed "a *mutually curious bridge* between two disciplines." (218)
- ★ Doctor and Musician Chuck Levy: "I'm not the smartest guy I know, I'm not the person who reads the most, I'm not the person who has all the details," he said. "I do seem to actively like to connect the different parts of stuff that I see with other parts." (223)
- ★ Celebrating (and enjoying) moving from collectively not knowing to knowing... instead of being scared of not knowing something publicly. (228)

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NEXT EVENT: Dinner at 16 West

Monday, DEC. 11 – 6-8 PM

