Discovering Through Experience… Embodiment Caught Between Planning and Theater

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This article explores the use of constructivist embodied methodologies in a multi-case study researching two community-based theaters in support of the democratization of urban planning. The theaters in question seek community change through immersive, collaborative, and intensive theater productions. The article contains critical reflections of myself, the research process, and the work necessary to ethically act within social and entangled environments. The research conducted required a concentrated reflexivity not just of positionality, but of methods, epistemology, and historical legacies of academic institutions and urban and regional planning. Through co-constructing and performing within theatrical productions, I provide a framework for how the pedagogical experiences derived from the cases helped to understand constructivist embodiment as it applies to urban planning.

Key Words: *Embodiment, Relationality, Dialogue, Learning, Urban Planning*

I had been rehearsing for three months as a stage manager for a second production in Water County. The group consisted of myself, the director, the tech, and six other actors. Two weeks out from our first performance we were drained and looking for some new air to breathe. Scheduling had plagued us through the journey leading to many missed opportunities. Many were still reading from the script, and we barely had the set put together. We had gone through a string of actors for a major role, and another had just dropped out because of personal troubles at home. I switched from stage manager to actor. I had never acted before this.

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Four months prior, I was working with the leadership of an Appalachian theater. The project entailed a two-week grind to find the heart of the home they call storytelling theater. Before going to the first rehearsal at the local high school, I sat at a renovated historic park looking at the sole walking path in the county which follows one of the many creeks. The theater, with the help of a small grant, built this walking path that now stands as a little symbol of renewal; salt was made on these grounds over 100 years ago across past generations. This area is familiar with hardship and pain, as well as such renewal…so when I saw a group of courageous community leaders (mostly women) marshalling people to speak of their lives and the lives of others on a high school stage…I lost my words. The sight of everyday men, women, and children performing the lives of each other with little directing and only supportive affirmations rendered me speechless. In another of many awe-inspiring moments, a group of women from the local prison came to the high school auditorium to watch a rehearsal. One of them was to see her own story unfold through the performance of Appalachian Theater's dedicated cast on a small, elevated, and well-worn stage ten feet in front of her. She could do little more than cry as her companions, dressed in orange uniforms, held her.

I chose to study community-based theater (CBT) to bring more humanity to planning as well as to the veritable battle arenas of policy. Currently, the field of urban and regional planning is at a deadlock regarding how to ameliorate social inequities, and much of the emergent theory suggests furthering planning democratization as a solution (Healey, 1997; Innes, & Booher, 2010; Feinstein, 2010). However, this viewpoint is contested through a reprisal of post-modernism, post-positivism, and post-structuralism in the name of reflective pragmatism (Baum, 2017; Hopkins, 2010; Huxley, 2010). As such, I purposefully chose to study what citizens are doing, practicing, and creating through embodied participatory processes in their own lives outside of private, formal, bureaucratic, and/or governmental contexts. For me, it is not just a question of democratization, but also one of changing the identity of the "planner."

There is value in sharing what I went through in the delicate and personal process of research at these sites (Inckle, 2010). In this paper, I explore the practice of embodied methods in these cases. My aim is to problematize still further the epistemological individualism born from the Enlightenment which pervades planning's systems of pedagogy and to problematize, in particular, the inertia of urban and regional planning's historical practices which are based in Foucauldian governmentality (Conquergood, 2002; Brown, Cromby, Harper, Johnson, & Reavey, 2011; Foucault, 1991; Scott, 1998; Inckle, 2010). Succinctly put, in planning, there is still work to be done in connecting our personal identities and our bodies to our methods, both in and out of the classroom (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011; Inckle, 2010; Sandercock, 1998).

An examination of community-based theaters (CBTs) can serve the field of planning, as CBTs are often highly affiliated, intertwined, and communicatively

based upon personal identity and personal identity's intersection with history, culture, politics, economy, and geography (Cohen-Cruz, 2005). This is a rather nebulous and non-descript commonality, but one that is based firmly within processes of scalar identity change and transformation (Leonard, & Kilkelly, 2006; Cohen-Cruz, 1999; Sánchez Ares, 2015). As such, before entering these communities, and before navigating relationships of trust and expectation between myself and the leadership of the organizations, I questioned myself: who am I in relation to these performative communities? What role(s) was I to balance with them as I simultaneously navigated the research? Further, to what degree would I be open, transparent, reflexive, conscious, and even apologetic for my own fumbling mistakes in performing the work? How far will I let them in? If planning is to be challenged through the use of such embodied methodology on behalf of planners, all of these experiences matter in our creation and construction of knowledge in embodied practices and are questions that need deeper exploration in planning pedagogy and practice (Inckle, 2010; Garcia, 2018; Jackson, et al., 2018).

The research I conducted, and the methods practiced therein, were embedded in two small impoverished southern communities which utilize CBT as a social intervention for identity and community change. The two CBTs are in rural counties that either have no or very little planning and have sprung forth as community hubs within socially and economically challenging environments. For all intents and purposes, these theaters are akin to planning agencies as they seek developmental change, but the theaters' approach is one of cultivating culturally embedded relationships and partnerships rather than one of formal bureaucracy. Each of the two CBTs are headed by small groups of leaders and are reliant on volunteerism and inclusivity to realize their initiatives, performances, and events. Further, the CBTs are situated within a permeable and liminal relationship between non-profit and public status. They are the fleshy bodies entangled with socio-cultural and socio-economic structures striving to create a space and place they can call their own (Denzin, 2003).

Continuing to push beyond the limits of rational expertise in planning

Urban and regional planning, at its core, seeks to bound and facilitate community development in local-regional geographies. However, planning has often fallen short in doing so. In conventional conceptualizations of the planning profession, planning is generally performed through centralized and siloed bureaucratic organizations of government and performed by experts. Traditional planning processes create a constrained continuum including everything from "decisions proceeded from goals provided by elected officials, to data collection, analysis, and formulation of plans and policies by experts, to implementation performed by both elected officials and bureaucrats" (Innes, & Booher, 2010, p. 5). Possibly the most crucial to problematize is the fact that knowledge produced scientifically is

deemed as legible and functional within traditional systems of planning (Scott, 1998). Prioritization of scientific data leaves little room for the inclusion of local, informal, lay, historical, or experiential knowledge and participation in both the construction and implementation of plans (Sandercock, 1998; Friedmann, 1987; Dewey, 1986; Scott, 1998).

Planning is, for the sake of brevity, a practice of order-making in the pursuit of development (Scott, 1998). Western civilization, and the global north, has long used abstract regulatory systems in order to promote this order. As it stands, planning's history is riddled with a pattern of methodically and calculatedly worsening inequities in the name of progress and developmentalism (Davidoff, 1969; Maskovsky, 2012; Scott, 1997; Connerly, 2005; Friedmann, 1987; Castells, 2015; Jacobs, 1992). The normative forms of knowledge, policy, positionality, and methods historically used to make decisions in planning limit the potential of the vulnerable human touch that is necessary to supplement and even argue against such plans (hooks, 2014). Normative practices often other, denounce, displace, and omit social interdependencies that give rise to culture, policy, and structure through supposedly neutral positionality (Forester, 1988; Flyvbjerg, 1997). Planning dislocates itself from the present through a prescriptive rationality that Oyěwùmí (2005) summarized beautifully:

> The much vaunted Cartesian dualism was only an affirmation of a tradition in which the body was seen as a trap from which any rational person had to escape…'Bodylessness' has been a precondition of rational thought. Women, primitives, Jews, Africans, the poor, and those who qualified for the label 'different' in varying historical epochs have been considered to be the embodied, dominated therefore by instinct and affect, reason being beyond them. (p. 5)

CBT laid the groundwork in this research for the emergence of more embodied participatory processes based in the expression of intimacy in co-created affective environments. As stated, the choice to study CBTs was purposefully made as the leadership of and planning-esque processes within the CBTs stand in stark contrast to the modernistic and 'enlightened' training that still reifies institutional racism and misogyny within planning (Frisch, 2002; Doan, 2015; Bordo, 1986; Ross, & Leigh, 2000).

My research within the two sites studied stands to further push planning into a more communicative, democratic space as part of the relatively new challenge to modernist planning which has called planning theory and practice into question (Healey, 1992). Within this challenge to historical practices which are based within positivistic epistemologies, there has been a partial re-conception from the traditional scientific planner to planner as facilitator (Forester, 1999). Planners as facilitators help support, construct, and sustain public participatory processes for the construction and implementation of plans. The purpose of such facilitation is to integrate, in theory, socio-cultural realities/knowledges into the construction of

plans. However, much of the communicative rationality and collaborative planning literature hangs on process and system dynamics, which as valuable as they are, leave out critical dialogue regarding interpersonal embodied behavior across differences (Innes, & Booher, 2010; Forester, 2009).

Planners as facilitators are largely concerned with process, or rather with the adjudication of time and resources for public participatory processes under the banner of communicative planning/rationality (Forester, 1999; Feinstein, 2010; Innes, & Booher, 2010). Various interpersonal skills are necessary in successfully coordinating such things as public meetings, forums, and negotiations, which include emotional sensitivity and active listening skills (Forester, 1988; Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 2011). However, participatory planning processes risk exacerbating existing inequalities and conflicts, and can even instill deeper hegemonic regimes through a non-consequential approach to public participation (Arnstein, 1969, Innes, & Booher, 2010; Forestor, 1988; Friedmann, 1987; Healey, 1997). Put another way, public participation in its weakest form can be summarized as DAD (Decide, Announce, Defend) (Innes, & Booher, 2010). In general, much of the current theories of collaborative planning contain two positions; one being the use of communicative rationality as derived from Habermas' set of ideal speech conditions, and the other being the use of negotiation theory to reach agreement through mediation and consensus building (Innes, & Booher, 2010; Glenn, & Susskind, 2010; Forester, 2009). I argue that this very set of methodological conditions for dialogue and collaboration within participatory planning processes, despite being an advancement upon instrumental rationality, is still openly Western, white, and omits the identities, lived experiences, and bodies of the participants.

In order to push the field of planning with this work and in order to ethically do so, I needed to be personal. The work needed to be "descriptive, not prescriptive" (Blomberg, Giacomi, Mosher, & Swenton-Wall, 1993, p. 123). The compassion and trust exercised in such work not only affirms critical literature but also challenges the consultative tradition that still pervades planners' interactions with the public (Rogers, 2016; Lyles, White, & Lavelle, 2018). What if we, as planners, invested in the construction of avenues of intimacy that are capable of and necessary in resituating our embodied behavior with each-other (Pratt, & Johnston, 2007; Pratt, & Johnston, 2009)?

The culturally embedded cases

Appalachian Theater (AT) – Mountain County

Located in middle Appalachia, Mountain County is privy to the experiential dislocation of being spoken over by those that have little understanding of what life is like in the mountains. For over 150 years, the inhabitants of the county that AT

serves have personally experienced the pain of state coercion, elitism, feudal violence, extractive industries, and the projected prejudicial shame of sensational journalism that omits the complex experiences of those simply trying to build a life worth living (Billings, & Blee, 2000). This history has culminated into a present-day sense of loss and grief as the county's inhabitants pursue self-recreation in the midst of entrenched and chronic poverty – poverty created and ongoing due to systems of greed shaped by those with power and privilege (Billings, & Blee, 2004). AT is not suited for the amelioration of poverty in Mountain County, but rather for driving forward on the hope of creating belonging, connection, and relationships based in care. The President of AT (a 65-year-old white woman), who owns a 200-year-old tobacco farm and practiced as a speech pathologist for 30+ years, shared with me regarding her theater:

> I think it tells the people you can take a sensitive issue and you can talk about it commonly. You can present the way it is. You can give it the respect that it needs, it deserves, and you're not gonna follow, and you're not gonna culture them. You're not gonna die over it. You're still gonna live and breathe. (President of AT, personal communication).

AT, and its leadership, takes personal responsibility for the vulnerabilities present within the lives of their Appalachian participants. The generation of hope through the theater's participatory experiences is what AT fights for in a county with annual poverty rates that consistently exceed 40%. Collaboration in this county is the difference, quite literally, between life and death when tragedy strikes. Without the generation of this collaborative hope between participants, the theater, and other non-profits, there exist no other initiatives (governmental or otherwise) which have the potential to change the conditions within the county.

AT does not have a building to call its own, but rather utilizes supportive relationships to access resources that enable performance productions through a decentralized grassroots relationality. AT works in conjunction with other non-profits in the effort towards the sustained creation of positive community space for constructive lived experiences (i.e. soccer fields, campgrounds, coffee shops, preservation of a historic park with a stage, a paved walking path, outdoor activities, and more). All of these efforts are made outside of governmental and private contexts and are largely initiated by the leadership of the theater as it aids in the creation of relationships. The combined work is a collective effort for the preservation of cultural heritage, as well as for the creation of evolutionary experiences to simultaneously heal and activate social potential through performative and intimate mediums (Norman, 2012).

Where's Home? AT's Performance

The ties that bind and the connections that make a house a home were the themes of AT's production that I observed and participated in during my research. Given

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the history of Mountain County, these themes are salient and important; what happens when abrupt change arrives? Where do we go, and who do we reach out to? What happens when tragedy strips you down to isolation? Will you have what you need? For Mountain County's inhabitants, the answer to this last question may well be a resounding "no" as planning, bureaucracy, and elected officials have historically failed them. Still, AT is dedicated, in what ways it can be, to sustaining its community where government has failed through the sharing of stories and the generation of intimacy.

Towards this end, AT's performance culminated into a story of a boy who loved his grandfather. While seemingly inconsequential, the simplicity of a story about family ties belies the importance which such ties carry in a community that has been isolated like Mountain County has. The grandfather in the story had no technology, not even a phone, and lived deep in a wooded holler. This home and bond were sanctuary for the child in the story as his own home was not safe. In the scene, the grandfather had two near death incidents; one from a heart attack, and one from being hit by a car at his mailbox while getting the daily mail. The scene ends with the grandson coming onstage to find his grandfather dead from a final heart attack, as his body could go on no longer after a lifetime of manual labor. "I loved my Papaw," was the final declaration under the spotlight on stage. In the context of the isolation, shame, and degradation faced by inhabitants of this county, such a story takes on meaning of deep personal significance for the members of the community to whom it was told. It is in this way that AT's performances and productions assuage feelings of disconnectedness within the county as they seek to forge bonds of trust, intimacy, and understanding.

Sitting in The Shade Together Theater (SSTT) – Water County

Located on the Gulf Coast of Florida, SSTT is situated in a county with a troubled past. SSTT experiences daily friction with the historical hegemony of white political, cultural, and economic power. SSTT uses social praxes to incrementally assist in adjusting the socio-cultural landscape of its participants. SSTT, through the cultivation of generative citizen-based relationships (similar to those utilized in AT), pursues a demonstrative community based in racial, gender, sexual, intergenerational, and class diversity. However, the struggle to achieve such an intention often finds itself in direct opposition to historic headwinds that threaten violence for disrupting the status quo; a place and state of social positioning that many marginalized and oppressed populations know all too well when facing Southern honor (Cohen, & Nisbett, 1994; Connerly, 2005). Nonetheless, SSTT engages in the empowerment of both oppressed populations, particularly the Latino/Latina and Black communities within the county, as well as that of established citizens. SSTT often houses moments of celebration, empowerment, and

remembrance for the Black community on such days as the county's historic day of Emancipation.

SSTT juggles its position and intentionality with localism as well as with regional shame which characterizes the county as backwoods, backwards, and stupid. I cannot share the degrading social title that the county has been given through typecasting, but the name is used to project fear, dominance, and ownership of the county evocative of white revanchism. Further, this name given to the county is reproduced by many within the county through bumper stickers often adjoined to a truck/SUV with a Rebel Flag and camo paint. The President of SSTT - who is gay, Black, and male, but also a professionally trained director, playwright, actor, and local - had this to say,

> But there's so many things about [Water County] that, um, that has been *signaled* that we're a backwoods group of people. That we are all completely ignorant. That we are nothing more than the good old boy network, and we don't have the guts to stand up to fight for what it is that we want ... but this is my home. And even I used to think that about [Water County]. When I was a student in school, and especially in high school, I had no idea that when I was sitting on the front lawn of the high school, having lunch with my friend…Chatting it up. That I was literally sitting in the middle of a lawn area that was designed as a confederate flag. (SSTT President, personal communication)

SSTT, unlike AT, has a house to call its own. Using a traditional black box theater (a room no larger than 50ftx30ft that has seats, raisers, lights, and sound but no stage), SSTT operates and thrives in close proximity to volunteers, actors, crew, and audience. Closeness, interaction, and co-production is implied by its very nature. This closeness and work-oriented relationality help ameliorate individuals' reticence to collaborate. Almost inevitably people become closer, and thus the often-estranged relationships between race, gender, sexuality, age and class change and grow. Diversity becomes a strength of expression in the realization of lived experiences that become fuel for performative art in a scripted affective environment. In exploring this strength, I asked a theater participant what she thought the theater brought to the county. Without missing a beat, she responded, "Diversity. Which it desperately needs" (Theater participant, personal communication).

Who's our neighbor? Performing at SSTT

The performance that I participated in during my research at SSTT was a narrative representation of intra-white elitism and violence. In the script, a new house in an upscale satellite community is raffled off by the homeowner's association, and guess who wins the house? A callused, white, blue-collar, old-truck-driving, emotionally-wounded construction worker who had no care in the world for

personal boundaries or bougie role-playing…An apt story considering the county's self-perception is that of the exiled backwoods stepchild in the shadow of the larger, 'hipper', nearby regional city.

Trust was key in this performance as actors were challenged to channel deeply held beliefs in regard to themselves and the themes of the narrative itself. Over time during rehearsals, we worked up to the powerful scenes that shook the audience. However, it took real vulnerability amongst strangers to make the emotions real and to express the shared and often shameful experiences of those within the county. Speaking on the vulnerability that allows SSTT's performances to bridge divides between individuals, the president of the theater had this to say:

> There's gotta be a certain thing where I am looking you in the eye and I feel comfortable with you enough to take a chance to be vulnerable. And then when you become vulnerable and you get that signal that the other person recognizes that you are vulnerable, and that we are in this together, then I am going to be vulnerable with you. And then…that's exactly what happened. (President of SSTT, personal communication)

In the play thus described, the blue-collar outsider was to be shot on stage with blank .22 rounds after the lead actor's character cultivates a neighborhood militia with the aim of driving the outsider away. Fear and secrets were the narrative drivers among the all-white cast of characters, conjured towards the end of upholding the façade of wealth and status. These themes were not incidental, as the president of SSTT had chosen the play because of those themes' relevance to Water County's history and current circumstances. We needed the audience to feel the seduction of gun violence and to recognize the implications of class-driven violence as it relates to Water County and the divisiveness therein. Without vulnerability on behalf of both the actors and those witnessing the performance, however, the impact of the narrative could not have been felt.

Getting involved — Multilocational Embodiment

Experiencing socio-cultural details, moments in time and place, and processes happening at each theater was vital to the overall conception and refinement of my work through constructivist embodiment. In order to break these unique experiences down, investigating multiple places over time within the theaters was also required to find a grounded understanding. The practice of co-participating in differing but overlapping simultaneous processes provided the proverbial backdrop to these key experiences in both cases, particularly when placing these moments in historical and temporal contexts. Methodologically, this helped me to more deeply understand social interaction across differences in time and space.

During post-performance dialogues at SSTT, which myself and the director facilitated, audience members were predominantly middle-aged, white, and of mixed gender. However, within each performance there were a few Black

individuals that were of mixed gender and in the 30-50 year-old age range. However, no Black individuals spoke during the talkbacks. Each were noticeably focused on and attentive to the conversations as many other audience members were waiting for the dialogue to be over. This observation can be explained by Conquergood (2002): "Subordinate people do not have the privilege of explicitness, the luxury of transparency, the presumptive norm of clear and direct communications, free and open debate on a level playing field that the privileged classes take for granted" (p. 146).

After a talkback when everyone was packing to leave, though, a middle-aged Black woman from the county felt safe enough to come to me while I was still in costume and beseeched that I "don't ever stop fighting for kindness." She was speaking in reference to racial violence in the county and the hand that opens in support of vulnerable contact between community members which aims to stymy that violence. I was left reeling for days on the statement's meaning as it pertains to the challenges faced by the county as well as those faced by planning. Would this exchange have been possible in a formal participatory planning process in this county? I believe, truly, that more honest and vulnerable communication can occur if a planner is not behind a podium but is, rather, face-to-face in a co-constructed space of dialogue with people on the ground (Arnstein, 1969).

At each theater investigated in this research, working relationships are communicative and action oriented. These intra-action behavioral modalities are contained in multiple processes that organize into intentional actions that support and create performances (Herbert, 2015). In other words, the differing forms of being face-to-face, and being with each other, are navigated through emotional reflexivity as a form of awareness based in shared subjective environments for the construction of multifaceted meanings across differences (Burkitt, 2012). Social interaction in the theaters, in contrast to the structures of planning, is not manifested or mediated through technical/instrumental techniques or methodologies (Spatz, 2017; Sandercock, 1998). Rather, the technical apparatuses of the theater architecture help transmit the co-constructed meanings of the shared and differing narratives. As Spatz (2017) states, "embodied research asks questions like: what can voices do? What can fingers do? What can bodily rhythms do? What can sensitive listening do? What can unison movement do? What can storytelling do?" (p. 5). By placing my body in multiple situations and systems, I was able to learn through my body as I was coordinating with the bodies of others in a performative, community-based space of interdependent responsibilities, artistries, and functions.

The flexibility of constructivist embodiment, as well as the flexibility to perform constructivist embodiment in multiple locations, was vital in tapping into the dialogic, experiential, and socially constructed spaces/places of the cases. Further, the depth of these experiences helped me to understand myself, my position and history, as well as those of the others with whom I was working and co-participating. As stated by Sandercock (1998), "local communities have grounded,

experiential, intuitive and contextual knowledges which are more often mani-fested in stories, songs, visual images and speech than the typical planning sources" (p. 131). This level of engagement, of interdependent trust, and of vul-nerability necessary to learn is obfuscated by the modernistic paradigm hanging on the coattails of planning which intensifies the hierarchy of personally detached episteme and methods.

As part of my own methodology, I needed to recognize these interdependent microcosms to comprehend and refine my own experiences through embodied co-participation (Conquergood, 2002). I needed to situate myself in multiple inter-dependent contexts to delve *into* systems of relationships, places, spaces, contexts, action, coordination, performativity, and intentionality. The practice of engaging in multiple entangled and embodied participatory actions allowed me a deeper understanding of the confluences and collisions happening between and within individuals that uncover artifacts and relationships of and with culture. For ex-ample, being a bisexual Jew has left indelible marks upon my perspectives which have been derived from lived experience. Meanwhile, learning about the lived ex-periences of oppression in both counties from locals created connective resonance within myself that ultimately supported the investigation of creative expression both on and off the stages. I once watched the Black director at SSTT backstage look at a six-foot four-inch, massive white male (the actor to be shot on stage), and say jovially backstage with pointed finger, "I'm gonna shoot you." The direc-tor oversaw firing the blank .22 rounds because of the obvious responsibility and care necessary to carry out such an act. This slightly morbid humor occurred dur-ing the halfway break in the performance, and this fascinating moment, caused us all to laugh uncontrollably (a moment literally not possible a generation ago). This laughter emanated from the trust underlying the juxtaposed disease of gun vio-lence and it allowed us all a moment of comic relief.

Whilst working in each theater, I had to ensure that I didn't interfere with the progress of each theater, since both theaters walk the knife's edge between education and entertainment. This means that if the theaters push too hard on sensitive cultural topics, the public will not come to performances, but if the the-aters don't push at all, then nothing worthwhile is addressed.

> Our first group of stories that we staged, Zech, were very lighthearted. Sto-ries of just stories. You know true stories, but just stories. They did not [portray] any kind of serious issue, or issues in the county. That's the way [AT] has evolved, it evolved into a trusted group that we can now stage sensitive issues. (President of AT, personal communication)

This sensitivity to historical and present cultural interpersonal boundaries is a necessary condition for the vitality of the theaters because they are culturally em-bedded within and reliant upon voluntary local relationships. The acts of seeing and understanding, as well as honoring, are powerful motivators for increased

engagement with participants as they push deeper into lived experiences and belief systems.

Further, AT in particular seeks participatory experiences for children with the knowledge that those children within the county need intergenerational food to grow. After AT's performance cycle, I spoke with the president of an affiliated non-profit in the county that uses outdoor experiences to also help children;

> We try to look at kids' lives. You know…what do they need exactly? … Being a whole person. There's a lot of kids in the county, that are impoverished. I can take you up in the holler, and most of the folks that live up through there live off government assistance and teach their kids to live off government assistance. … I'll be honest with you, some of those kids, and the majority are very smart, but they don't have the opportunity because of their parents to get out and do what their ability is. (President of Outdoor nonprofit, personal communication)

These non-profits, including the theaters in Mountain and Water Counties, work with the messiness of socio-cultural life so that pointed and intimate messages and projects can be more finely tailored. At both theaters, this work of engaging with social life permits individuals fuller access to themselves by way of providing open opportunities of expression. This intimacy of expression subsequently supports new relationships, and in the case of AT, this intimacy has the capacity to put clothes on children's backs and food in their stomachs while also providing places for play where no other places exist.

In this work itself, empathy and sincerity through deep listening between myself and community actors also allowed for more descriptive and analytical discussions of individuals, groups, and the wider community (Poncelet, 2001). This constitutes a reflective and present engagement that is of key importance in such things as the acknowledgement, inclusion, and representation of gender, age, race, sexuality, history, and class (Sanchez-Hucles, & Davis, 2010; Winker, & Degele, 2011). I don't wish to re-ascribe, and further cement, the racialized categorical determinism that reifies inherited power, but rather to seek a reconstitution of power through the contact senses of bodies (Oyěwùmí, 2005).

Multi-locational embodiment required that I be flexible with how I work with others, and fundamentally necessitated a negotiation of personal behavior (and the reasons behind such behaviors). In order to find a sense of understanding with those with whom I worked, I made efforts to meet others where they were by being sensitive to power and position and by not asking them to work on my schedule (Innes, & Booher, 2010; Healey, 1997). Multi-locational embodiment in this work is a dismantlement of, and in part a personal choice of attempting to obliterate, a centralized 'world view' held by Western institutional power through intentionally abandoning knowledge certainty as a paradigmatic function of bureaucracy and planning. Without this decentralized action of learning through

others, planners and institutional actors fail to reflexively see the self in the other (Oyěwùmí, 2005; Sweet, 2018).

The art of active listening…there's more than meets the eye

In conjunction with my work in embodiment, I examined a wide range of practices from both normative and transformative participatory planning practices (Arnstein 1969, Healey, 1997; Flyvbjerg, 1998; Friedmann, 1987; Schön, 2017; Innes, & Booher, 1999; Poncelet, 2001; Iveson, Fincher, & Gleeson, 2018). Knowing the challenges and questions posed by such literature, I held myself in a simultaneous state of support of and opposition to my own field and myself. This dialectic between planning practices that struggle with power – symbols, ideology, politics, networks, language, processes, social positions – and the intentional organizational salutation of behavioral change was the basis of the studies in constructivist embodiment (Figure 1 and Table 1). Further, dialectics became manifest through dialogic, performative, and embodied practices and these dialectics substantiated a grounded meta-discussion through the transdisciplinary collaborative work between planning and CBT (Lee, Hart, Watson, & Rapley, 2015; Englund, et al., 2000).

> Figure 1: Dialogic, Experiential, and Performative Learning Processes based in the Conceptual Bricoleur
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> 1. Assumptive Cognitive Form/Preunderstanding
> 2. Event(s) in Place/Time
> 3. Realization and Abandonment/Refinement of Previous Assumptions/ Understandings
> 4. Integration of new Information/Experience(s) into Theoretical Model of Individual, Organization, and Community

In order to explain this complex process, I am utilizing Kincheloe, McLaren, and Steinberg's (2011) concept of bricolage. Bricolage is a situational work that seeks to employ multidisciplinary and even transdisciplinary theory and methods for critical research. As stated by Kincheloe et al. (2011):

> Such multidisciplinarity demands a new level of research self-consciousness and awareness of the numerous contexts in which any researcher is operating. As one labors to expose the various structures that covertly shape our own and other scholars' research narratives, the bricolage highlights the relationship between a researcher's way of seeing and the social location of his or her personal history... The critical researcher-as-bricoleur abandons the quest for some naïve concept of realism, focusing instead on the clarification of his or her position in the web of reality and the social locations of

other researchers and the way they shape the production and interpretation
of knowledge. (p. 350)

Acting from an epistemology of complexity, the bricoleur seeks to actively employ
methods within the social context of the work site through co-creation and inclu-
sivity with/in the activities, people, and settings that are being investigated (Kin-
cheloe et al., 2011).

   In lieu of the situationally negotiated investigation, this research was con-
ducted through the simultaneous acts of observing power differentials and fluctu-
ations, participating in the research sites as a co-creating volunteer in the man-
agement of interdependent responsibilities and relationships, interpreting rele-
vant moments/situations/processes as related to available theory and literature,
and negotiating research methods (such as interviews) within socially sensitive
environments. Simply put, "the task of the bricoleur is to attack this complexity,
uncovering the invisible artifacts of power and culture" (Kincheloe et al., 2011, p.
350). An openly transparent (i.e. researcher's identity, intention, and purpose),
complex, and time-intensive process that is close in epistemological nature to that
of the conceptual bricoleur allowed for rich and context laden understanding of
the individuals, organizations, and operating environments within this research.

   Methodologically, the research focused on the physical, imaginary, subjec-
tive, and embodied apparatuses to visit and experience the interdependencies be-
tween the universes of the performances, the audiences, and the wider communi-
ties (Norman, 2012). This theatrical thesis of embodied and experiential spatial
apparatuses is antithetical to bureaucratic participatory planning processes which
are built upon the reductive inoculation of the public by experts and that disman-
tle social, cultural, economic, and ecological interdependencies (Sandoval, 2013).
In other words, this process of research and self-criticality in the web of socio-
cultural experiences would necessitate that a planner open personal boundaries
with themselves towards the public as a reflexive action of vulnerability in an
awareness of positionality.

   The establishment of workable and flexible relationships at both theaters,
ranging in various degrees from familiarity to deep friendship, required a decolo-
nization of myself and the knowledges that create dualities and divisions within
informal social realities and practices (Conquergood, 2002). My position as re-
searcher was to be a position of reflexively knowing my field of planning, its trou-
bles both past and present, and understanding the dangers of Cartesian behavior
in contexts of identity change. Planners have the chance to provide opportunities
for others to be a part of the development of the very worlds people live in, and
planners also have the opportunity to learn from others in the very same process
to help unveil the living history in the present to help prevent the continual in-
flammation of socio-cultural oppression. In other words, personal identity built
upon lived experiences becomes the point of negotiation within a participatory

process which includes the reflexive acknowledgement that not all identities have had an equal voice historically. As Sandoval (2013) states:

> The self-conscious operation of differential social movement represents the opportunity to engage in social praxis through the constant surveying of social powers and interjection in them by a new kind of depoliticized citizen-warrior. Differential oppositional social movement[s] and consciousness represent constructive functions that perceive power as their world space, and identity as the monadic unit of power via subjectivity capable of negotiating and transforming power's configurations. (p. 178)

The trained cognitive separation between self/method, and between self/other, is a function of institutional control (Friedmann, 1987). Socio-cultural realities are deep, complex, messy, and require concerted participation to understand, and this form of participation is often not advocated for in planning practice or taught in planning classrooms (Watson, 2006).

Self-knowledge is not a prerequisite for the employment of these methodologies (Hebert, 2015), but being able to reflect-in-action and maintain sensitivity to the "experiential, moral, emotional, and personal dimensions" of social experiences is (Van Manen, & Li, 2002, p. 22). Further, dialogue is needed to assist in the transition from partaking in intense social experiences to knowing whilst actively participating (Lieberman, 2013). This is the dialectic built in personal and relational trust, the point of opposition/support to my own field, and the breakthrough that permits deeper learning. It is also important to note that dialogue, in conjunction with interdependent deep listening, is a method in itself that is capable of reinstituting ourselves in the social 'world sense' through concerted conscientization (Oyěwùmí, 2005; Forester, 1988).

Informed by these methods, I was participating in environments of performative expression as I sought to assist others in self-actualization through the generation of a supportive organizational structure which enervated their voices and bodies from the bottom-up. This necessitated that I change myself lest I became disruptive in such a delicate process due to position, training, and history. As stated by Myles Horton, "you experiment with people not on people. There's a big difference" (Horton, & Freire, 1990, p. 148). In other words, "if you're not a part of the solution you are part of the problem" (President of AT, personal communication). This is the reversal of the projective positivistic rationale (Sandoval, 2013) through the integration of self into the web of socio-cultural worlds begotten by a time-laden relational building process. The integration of the self, or in this case of myself, into a social 'domain' came through an embodiment of internal nothingness (space) capable of being with myself and others in a state of concerted and labor-intensive presence without projection, comment, or permanence of knowing. In other words, I accepted that I did not know what would happen and that I would not control the course of events to ascertain a defensible position

towards the end of maintaining personal position, power, or role (Lyles, White, & Lavelle, 2018).

If planning is to more deeply include the realities of social worlds in plans, constructivist embodiment can help engage planners (and the students training to be future planners) with people across difference to more intimately implement plans (Forester, 1988; Forester, 1999). Across both cases, relational and dialogic practices on and off stage assisted in more deeply knowing the lives of others by simultaneously challenging and supporting me in instantiating methods and identity in a web of local life. Constructivist embodiment in affective community-based environments, which are not entirely dissimilar to the affective environments of planning agencies, assisted in the "reading of local political culture"; "reading local political culture means going beyond the surface of both formal politics and informal power games, into the embedded cultural practices which structure routines and styles, and flow knowledge and value around the political networks" (Healey, 1997, p. 240). In other words, the cultivation of intimacy across difference in the co-creation of performances, which can be substituted with the co-creation of plans, more deeply affirms and includes the complexities of lives that go unrecognized in traditional forms of participatory planning (Innes, & Booher, 2010).

Constructivist embodiment calls upon the planner to be fully present to those citizens with whom they engage, which includes, as mentioned in Figure 1, deep cognitive shifts that unveil greater layers of local life, politics, personal identity, and culture. A practice of embodied bricolage by planning actors potentializes opportunities to understand more deeply than normative methods allow, and also grants further opportunities to include the voices and knowledges of the social, experiential, lay, local, and the excluded (Sandercock, 1998).

This inclusion is an admittance that planning and planners are not synoptic or comprehensive; planners don't have a purported position as the technical intelligentsia (Friedmann, 1987; Flyvbjerg, 1998). Constructivist embodied methodology can be likened to an intensive learning process in conjunction with others in a performative environment. In other words, intimately navigating a complex set of actors supports the subsequent hodological navigation of people and history for the execution of empowering projects, whilst also holding the institutional actor responsible for decisions made that affect the complex array of people involved (Norman, 2012). As a social praxis, constructivist embodiment specifically locates the planner in the happening of the social process and thus reorients the technical planner charged with executing plans towards planning as a cultural process.

Constructivist embodied praxes of public and social engagement align well with Healey's (1997) well-known institutionalist planning perspective. "The new institutionalism is grounded in a relational view of social life, which focuses on people actively and interactively constructing their worlds, both materially and in the meaning they make, while surrounded by powerful constraints of various kinds" (Healey, 1997, p. 35; Powell, & Dimaggio, 2012). As such, constructivist

embodiment as performed by a planner can assist in the dismantling of long-standing institutional methods that reify socially caustic practices which objectively separate personal responsibility from the end results. Constructivist embodiment, and bricolage, demands an awareness of the mode(s) of being from which actors emanate. Presence, which is the intentional behavioral activation of interdependency, should not be conflated with the projective idea of the present. Presence is the active deconstruction of the separation between internal experiences and external happenings that separate our bodies/selves from the present and that also firmly imply heterogeneity (Buber, 2012, Young, 1986; Butler, 1988). Presence is a conscious *behavior* that is performed in the confluence of multiple times spanning from the past into the future within a system of happenings, which includes the behavior of the researcher/planner. Presence, in this case, is not a totalizing metaphysic, but rather a learning behavior that openly engages the changing elements of space and place through a conscious orientation that is intentionally driven by collaborative and interdependent relationships (Lowenthal, 2010). Lastly, and most crucially, the construction of meanings that encompass the multiplicity of situated elements of people and environment is openly and dialogically created within a state of presence so as to not further totalize through synthesis, but to instead further active negotiation of difference. From this perception of presence as behavior, and as an active negotiation of difference, presence is moreover a furthered negation of the idealism that purports the holding of truths outside of "time and change" (Young, 1986, p. 4).

Table 1 - Reflexive Experiential Learning Through Dialectical Practice*

Dialectics of Context

Urban and Regional Planning	Community-Based Theater
Formal Bureaucracy	Informal Non-Profit
Planner Driven Positivism	Embodied Performativity
Expertise/Professionalism	Inclusive Social Learning
Formal Funding	Ticket Sales and Participant Contribution
Policy/Statutes as Structural Framework	Relational Organization Structure

Dialectics of Method

Positivism/ Instrumentalism	Constructivist Embodiment
External Absolutism	Experiential Internal/Social Learning
Scientific Process	Collaborative Process
Positionality of Expertise	Entangled Social Interdependency
Identity of Formality	Cultural Person as Process

Dialectics of Self

Academic Institute	Ethnographic Contexts
Positivistic Training/ Policy Background	Constructivist Embodiment
R1 Research Institute	Informal Social Theaters and Non-Profits
Urban and Regional Planning Program	Community-Based Theater
Dissertation/Article Research	Personal Relationality and Supportive Organizational Responsibility

*Driving Forces—Interaction with Literature, Differing Theaters, Organizations, Techniques, Processes, Leadership, Participants, Responsibilities, Audiences, and Communities.

Reflectively engaging culturally embedded places and socially navigating complex environments requires deep, concerted, and demanding listening. The very act of engaged listening, from an intentionally held state of presence, is a radical act capable of reinstituting history through behavioral changes (Argyis, 1977; Sandoval, 2013). Deep listening, the social practice of day-to-day compassionate embodiment, is best captured by Forester (1988) regarding the examination of planners' behavior,

> If we listen so that we respond with sensitivity and care, our actions may be freeing, empowering others rather than mechanically generating feedback…If our listening serves as a corrective to the distorted, ideological claims we face in daily political and professional life, then when we fail to listen well we allow such claims to have influence, to go unchallenged. To

> understand how this can happen, we should recapitulate the subtle ways in
> which we can fail to listen. (p. 110-115)

Listening, and presence, is the linkage between self and other that opens consciousness to environmental and identity-based experiences in a space of dialogical and relational learning. Without this linkage, ideology and power will perpetuate through an unexamined and normalized repetition of institutional power (Healey, 1997). Without presence and deep listening, constructive change capable of recalibrating planners' de-historicized world view to a learning 'world sense' is not possible (Oyěwùmí, 2005).

Conclusion

My work and its practiced methods can be summarized briefly in a question: what would happen if a planning administrator removed the badge, changed out of formal clothes, left the podium and poster, and engaged in intimate and personal environments to learn more about local life? Further, my work corroborates the notion that decisions which impact the lives of others are to be made after permission is provided and only after permission is preceded with dialogue (Innes, & Booher, 2010). This pivot to the personal matters when power-driven decision making has long held a historical precedent of de-historicizing the present. I assert, then, that a crucial part of the democratization of planning is the behavioral democratization of practicing planners that apply interpersonal reflexivity as a part of their developmental praxes.

If a planner is to be the facilitator of a public participatory process, the planner as facilitator must be also educated in the navigation of boundaries, in the inscription of social experiences, and in the harvesting of multiple realities across time and space in the activation of inclusion and democracy. The planner as facilitator must know the historical legacies of their communities across race, gender, age, sexuality (amongst other things) in order to realize public wellbeing beyond the institutional controls that propel inflammatory legacies (Healey, 1997; Friedmann, 1987; Flyvbjerg, 1998; Sandercock, 1998; Lyles, White, & Lavelle, 2018).

I would urge authors (Spatz, 2017; Kovach, 2017) in the consideration of embodied methods as an epistemological stance and process, but also as an epistemology that is itself amenable to multiple other epistemologies and methods. Within this research, the processes of action and reflection through coordinated relationality were performed through dialogic relationships which call into awareness the multiple facets that comprise individuals, organizations, communities, and environments. Embodiment calls into being ourselves and our existence amongst others in entangled spatial arrangements that specifically cut boundaries. Lastly, as both deconstructive and emergent efforts, praxes based in embodiment constitute a radical step towards the rearrangement of power by forcing ourselves

to experience and co-experience the multiple worlds that act upon and through us all.

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