



BOOK CITY ★Roanoke

Notes for

Dar Williams'

*What I Found in a Thousand Towns*

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

### CHAPTER FIVE! Culture

- ★ "The cultural environment influences the way the people of Carrboro live their lives." (121)
- ★ ArtsCenter- multigenerational, affordable with scholarships, afterschool programs, dance company, radio station, darkroom, jewelry studio, clay center.
- ★ ...dovetailing skill sets is needed to put on a concert. There are the sound person, the lighting person, the coffee maker, the coffee server, the volunteer coordinator, the person who designs the posters...a diverse gathering of abilities united under the wide-ranging interest in culture. (124)
- ★ "Knowing the beneficial social outcomes of collaborating in the arts, communities also can, and often do, consciously enlist people who might otherwise feel undervalued and overlooked...there is an understanding that for many citizens, this job is their primary social connection to the town and adjustments are made to facilitate them. Some retired people have more stamina than three people combined, but they can't drive at night and need a ride. (125)
- ★ "When there's a show to be put on, there really isn't an opportunity to dig into political differences or harbor strong resentments." (126)
- ★ Ellie Kinnaird—"She never meant to be mayor, but she was part of a small group, many of them artists who anticipated that outside interests and their proxies might take over the town. These artist-citizens wanted to take the reigns themselves." The Christmas parade. Get in and have fun. (132)
- ★ "Creative forces permeates," transcending traditional ideas, rules, patterns & relationships. (123, & 134)
- ★ Positive proximity as a magnet for philanthropy and investment, moving static wealth in the community.
- ★ Open mics as supporting and affirming acts (139). "In our open mic community, our strengths and rough edges were witnessed with kindness, and our strong, strange feelings often found common cause with others. In other words, we were loved for the very things that made us so odd." (140)
- ★ "Townpeople believe they own the town." (141)

"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."

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NEXT Session: Chapter 5 - **Culture**

**Aurora Studio Center** – 110 Campbell Ave. SW

Monday, **November 6** – 6:30 gather, 7 PM conversation

