



## 8

# THE POWER OF STORY IN PLANNING

### INTRODUCTION: THE ROAD TO WOLLONGONG

A rhyme's  
a barrel of dynamite.  
A line is a fuse  
that's lit.  
The line smoulders,  
the rhyme explodes –  
And by a stanza  
a city  
is blown to bits.

(Mayakovsky, 1975)

I had an epiphany on the road to Wollongong almost 20 years ago. I was doing research on the social impacts of economic restructuring in the coastal steel town of Wollongong, 100 miles south of Sydney, when I realized, with a power of epistemological detonation akin to Mayakovsky's poem, that the research as formulated wasn't going anywhere. My political economy framework appeared to me as a ghostly ballet of bloodless categories (class, labour, capital) that could only be animated by the power of story, or stories – the stories of the men who had lost their jobs. I changed the research plan, hired a research assistant to do in-depth interviews, read a book of poems by a Wollongong lad that told obliquely of the ordeals of some of the retrenched miners and steelworkers. But after two years of a research grant I was unable to write the expected academic book. I had a macro-political economic framework (that carried one narrative), and a micro-sociological and psychological set of field data, and I didn't know how to put the two together. I didn't know how to make a good academic story out of these two discrepant sources. I gave up on the project, and before long resigned from my Chair in Urban Studies in Sydney and moved to Los Angeles, where I enrolled in a Masters in Screenwriting at UCLA. My epistemological crisis was such that I didn't believe it could be resolved from within academia. I wasn't aware of any models at that time that suggested otherwise.

For the next half dozen years, once I'd graduated from Film School, I led a somewhat schizophrenic life as a part-time screenwriter and part-time academic in Los Angeles, before choosing to return full-time to the academic fold. Ever since then, I have tried to

apply what I learnt in film school to my academic teaching and writing. I believed in the power of stories, but in a completely fuzzy and stubbornly un-analytical way. I was afraid I might spoil the magic if I thought too much about why story is important, how it works, in what circumstances, and what kind of work stories do. This artificial binary that I'd created for myself came partly from previous academic conditioning. For the longest time, 'story' was thought of in the social sciences as 'soft', inferior, lacking in rigour, or, worst insult of all, as a 'woman/native/other' way of knowing.<sup>1</sup> There was even a time, in the academic discipline of history (my starting point), in which story was demoted and more 'analytical' approaches were sought. In response to this kind of marginalizing of story, feminists, historians, and workers in the cultural studies field, not to mention anthropologists, have reasserted its importance, both as epistemology and as methodology. We shouldn't be forced to choose between stories and so-called more rigorous (positivist, quantitative, etc.) research, between stories and census data, stories and modelling, because all three 'alternatives' to story are each imbued with story.

In order to imagine the ultimately unrepresentable space, life and languages of the city, to make them legible, we translate them into narratives. The way we narrate the city becomes constitutive of urban reality, affecting the choices we make, the ways we then might act. As Alasdair MacIntyre put it: 'I can only answer the question "What am I to do" if I can answer the prior question, "of what story or stories do I find myself a part?"' (quoted in Flyvbjerg, 2001: 137). My argument will be deceptively simple. Stories are central to planning practice: to the knowledge it draws on from the social sciences and humanities; to the knowledge it produces about the city; and to ways of acting in the city. Planning is *performed* through story, in a myriad of ways. I want to unpack the many ways in which we use stories: in process, as a catalyst for change, as a foundation, in policy, in pedagogy, in critique, as justification of the status quo, as identity and as experience. By 'story', I mean 'verbal expressions that narrate the unfolding of events in some passage of time and some particular location' (Eckstein, 2003).

My approach is not uncritical. Despite increasing attention to and use of story in some of the newer academic fields (feminist and cultural studies, for example), I don't see it as the new religion, and I take to heart Eckstein's caution that stories' ability 'to act as transformative agents depends on a disciplined scrutiny of their forms and uses' (Eckstein, 2003). We still need to question the truth of our own and others' stories. We need to be attentive to how power shapes which stories get told, get heard, carry weight. We need to understand the work that stories do, or rather that we ask them to do, in deploying them, and to recognize the moral ordering involved in the conscious and unconscious use of certain plots and character types. A better understanding of the role of stories can make us more effective as planning practitioners, irrespective of the substantive field of planning. Story and story telling are at work in conflict resolution, in community development, in participatory action research, in resource management, in policy and data analysis, in transportation planning, and so on. A better understanding of the role of stories can also be an aid to critical thinking, to deconstructing the arguments of others. Stories can also sometimes provide a far richer understanding of the human condition, and thus of the urban condition, than traditional social science, and for that reason alone, deserve more attention.

In short, I want to make two bold arguments in this chapter. One is about the importance of story in planning practice, research, and teaching. The other is about the crucial importance of story in multicultural planning. Much of what planners do, I will argue, can be understood as performed story. Yet the importance of story has rarely been understood, let alone validated in planning. Story is an all-pervasive, yet largely unrecognized force in planning practice. We don't talk about it, and we don't teach it. Let's get this out of the closet. Let's liberate and celebrate and think about the power of story. And let's appreciate its importance to the 21st-century multicultural planning project, as a way of bringing people together to learn about each other through the telling and sharing of stories.

## HOW STORIES WORK

Very few scholars within the planning field have investigated the work of story in planning, and, even then, only aspects of it (Forester, 1989; 1999; Mandelbaum, 1991; Throgmorton, 1996; Marris, 1997; Eckstein and Throgmorton, 2003).<sup>2</sup> In coming out of the closet about the importance of story, I want to be systematic about the ways, implicit and explicit, in which we use story, and to demonstrate what I mean when I say that planning is performed through story.

But first I need to say something about story itself, because 'story' conveys a range of meanings, from anecdote, to exemplar, to something that is invented rather than 'true', in the sense of strictly adhering to widely agreed-on facts. All three of these meanings are present and demonstrable in the way story is used in planning.<sup>3</sup> In their most developed form, stories have certain key properties, and here I draw on my film school training, and also on Ruth Finnegan (1998), to sketch some of them. *First*, there is a temporal or sequential framework, which often involves a ticking clock to provide dramatic tension. *Second*, there is an element of explanation or coherence, rather than a catalogue of one damn thing after another. *Third*, there is some potential for generalizability, for seeing the universal in the particular, the world in a grain of sand.<sup>4</sup> And *fourth*, there is the presence of recognized, generic conventions that relate to an expected framework, a plot structure and protagonists. Aristotle's *Poetics* was our bible on this subject in film school. We learnt from him that stories have plot as well as characters, both equally important: and that stories have a beginning, middle, and end, a shape or structure. Perhaps a *fifth* observation should be that moral tension is essential to a good story.<sup>5</sup> Finnegan (1998: 9–13) notes that the moral ordering of the more familiar fictional genres is equally present in stories in and about planning.

I want to elaborate briefly on the second and fourth of these properties of story, the elements of *coherence or explanation*, and plot structure. Historian Hayden White wrote that narrative is a 'form of human comprehension that is productive of meaning by its imposition of a certain formal coherence on a virtual chaos of events' (quoted in Eckstein, 2003). Literary, folklore and myth analysts have argued that there are a number of widely recognized plots: most obviously, the hero's tale, the rags-to-riches tale, the fall

from grace, the effects of villainy, the growth to maturity, the Golden Age lost, the pioneer's tale, the stranger comes to town, and the young man leaves home in order to find himself/make his place in the world/escape from the provincial straightjacket. To take a few examples from planning:

1. The conflict between settlers and indigenous peoples in New World countries over land uses and land rights. For indigenous peoples there is a core story that is about paradise lost, or an expulsion from paradise. For the settlers, the core story is the pioneer's tale of bravery and persistence in the face of adversity.
2. The story of the young man leaving home to escape the provincial straightjacket. This may evolve into the urban story of the young gay man who seeks out the big city to find a community of those like him. Or it may become the story of a squatter settlement in the hills outside town or on the banks of a river, or a homeless encampment in skid row on the edge of downtown. Each is a potential domain of planning action.
3. The Golden Age lost. This is a story that recurs in writings about communities and their destruction. Sometimes the villains in this plot are developers. Other times, they are planners.

And so on. Stories in and about planning, even the most seemingly abstract, embody quite familiar and recognizable plots.

If we think about the East St Louis story as told by Ken Reardon (Reardon, 1998; 2003) and which I re-told with a slightly different emphasis in Chapter 7, it's possible to see all five story conventions at work. There is a *temporal sequence* that begins when the University of Illinois is challenged in the State House regarding its community service work, and proceeds through early tentative efforts to do something, followed by setbacks, turning points, crises, obstacles, and finally reaches dramatic resolution when we learn that a decade later, \$45 million in funds has been committed to the revitalization of the hitherto abandoned neighbourhood. There is certainly an *element of explanation*. In Reardon's version, this achievement was primarily the product of the faith of certain community leaders, and secondarily the result of hard work on the part of community members. (In my version, Reardon and his students play a significant role also.) There is *potential for generalizability* in the way that Reardon draws lessons from this story that may have applicability for other poor communities as well as for university/community partnerships. There is the presence of the *generic conventions of plot and character*. At one level, the 'plot' is about deindustrialization and globalization, abstract and impersonal forces, but it is also about community resistance and mobilization, coalition building, and the triumph of the human spirit. There are individuals who embody some, but not all, of these abstract forces. The 'noble community activists' have names and brief biographies, as do the 'few good men' who come forward to invest in the community with public or private funds, whereas those who had abandoned the community remain unnamed villains. Finally, the moral ordering of the story is clear. Faith produces a will to act. The capacity to act is enhanced by the university/community partnership. There is also blindness/self-deception in the university's involvement, and that has to be over-



come, through the courage, honesty and compassion of the community leaders, as well as the humility and self-criticism of the researchers. An ethic of service to others drives the story . . .

I want to turn now to the ways in which I see *planning as performed story*: in process, in foundational stories, in stories as catalysts for change, in policy, and, finally, in academic stories, as method, as explanation, and as critique.

## PLANNING AS PERFORMED STORY

### STORY AND PROCESS

For many planning practitioners, the role of story is central, although not always consciously so. Those who do consciously make use of story do so in diverse, often imaginative and inspiring ways. The best way to demonstrate this is by using some examples – of story as process, and of story being used to facilitate process. These examples are so varied that I'll use sub-headings as guides.

#### Community participation processes

In community or public participation processes, planners orchestrate an event in such a way as to allow everybody, or as many people as possible, to tell their story about their community, neighbourhood, school, or street. We tend to refer to this as drawing on local knowledge, and there are various techniques for eliciting people's stories, such as small group work with a facilitator for each group, or doing community mapping exercises.<sup>6</sup> What is not always clear is how these collected stories will be used in the subsequent process, but the belief operating here is that it is important for everybody to have a chance to speak, and to have their stories heard. This is linked with an argument about the political and practical benefits of democratizing planning.

If a participatory event is a way of *starting* a planning process, its purpose is most often about getting views and opinions, so the story-gathering is likely to be followed by an attempt to find common threads that will help to draw up priorities. If, on the other hand, the participatory event is a response to a pre-existing conflict that needs to be addressed before planning can move ahead, then the gathering of rival stories takes on more import. In such a situation – like the Redfern story discussed in Chapter 7 – practitioners will usually meet separately with each involved person or group and listen to their stories of what the problem is before making a judgement about when and how to bring the conflicting parties together to hear each other's stories. In extreme cases, where the conflict is long-standing, relating to generations or even centuries of oppression or marginalization, this is very difficult work, but when done well can be therapeutic, cathartic, even healing.

#### Mediation, negotiation, and conflict resolution

In one growing branch of planning practice – mediation, negotiation, and conflict resolution – there is a raft of techniques and procedures for facilitating story telling, and the

hearing of stories, in conflict situations.<sup>7</sup> In this kind of work, the ability of a practitioner to make the space for stories to be heard is more important than the ability to tell stories. And it is here that the importance of listening to others' stories, and the skills of listening in cross-cultural contexts, is at a premium.<sup>8</sup>

In Sarkissian's mediation and social planning work in the cross-cultural conflict in Redfern, there were two stages in the process when story telling was critical. The first was in the preparatory phase, when Sarkissian was scoping out for herself what was going on in this neighbourhood. She went from house to house, and from one small group of residents to another, listening non-judgementally to each of their stories, hearing people speak bitterness, speak anger, speak fear and resentment. The purpose of this first phase was not only for the consultant to learn about the issues and the emotions surrounding them, but also somehow to convey to all of the conflicting parties that the consultant had really listened to and heard their story. After reflecting on the intensity of feelings involved in this conflict, Sarkissian judged that conflicting parties needed to hear each other's stories, but initially in a situation where they could not interrupt or argue with those stories. Thus she designed an event, the Speakout, with carefully established rules of procedure that everyone understood and agreed to before the event. At the Speakout, everyone in the neighbourhood had the opportunity to tell their story, and also had to respect others' rights to speak theirs. From that event, more trust was generated, and there was a subtle shift in perspective among the conflicting parties. They were now prepared to engage in some form of dialogue with their neighbours. 'In telling stories, parties tell who they are, what they care about, and what deeper concerns they may have that underlie the issues at hand' (Forester, 2000: 166). Without using these two forms of storytelling, Sarkissian would not have been able to bring the conflicting parties into the same room to discuss the issue that the Council wanted discussed – some agreed-on principles for a Master Plan for the factory site.

Forester describes a similar case in Washington State, where the mediator, Shirley Solomon, brought together Native Americans and non-Native county officials to settle land disputes. A critical stage in that mediation was the creating of a safe space in which people could come together and 'just talk about things without it being product-driven' (Solomon, quoted in Forester, 2000: 152). Solomon ceremonialized this safe space by creating a talking circle and asking people to talk about what this place meant to them. Everyone was encouraged to tell their story, of the meaning of the land, the place, to them and their families, past, present, and future – the land whose multiple and conflicting uses they were ultimately to resolve. It was this story-ing that got people past 'my needs versus your needs' and on to some 'higher ground', moving towards some common purpose. Solomon describes this stepping aside to discuss personal histories as both simple and powerful, as a way of opening surprising connections between conflicting parties. Or, as Forester has it, story telling is essential in situations where deep histories of identity and domination are the context through which a present dispute is viewed. Stories have to be told for reconciliation to happen (Forester, 2000: 157). In terms of process, too, the design of spaces for telling stories makes participants from different cultures and class backgrounds more comfortable about speaking, and more confident about the relevance of the whole procedure. A tribal elder who was present at Solomon's

mediation said to her: 'In those meetings where it's Roberts Rules of Order, I know that I either have nothing to say, or what I have to say counts for nothing' (quoted in Forester, 2000: 154).

### Intercultural collaboration in participatory action research

In the case of the university/community partnership in East St. Louis which involved an intercultural collaboration, Ken Reardon is not explicit about his use of story in the participatory action research process, but I can imagine it by extrapolating from his account. In order to recruit students into this project, Reardon would have had to tell a particular kind of persuasive story about why this work was important and what might be achieved. In order to persuade the sceptical community leaders that they should allow university researchers to work with them, Reardon had to tell other stories, about his track record, and tell them as convincingly as possible. Further into the project he describes a speech he gave on a public occasion at the University in St Louis, in which he appealed for 'a few good men' to come forward and invest in the East St Louis community: another occasion on which persuasive story telling, this time about progress already made, was crucial. Throughout the decade of his involvement in this project, Reardon was using story telling skills in a wide variety of circumstances, to a wide variety of audiences, and part of this involved a skill in translating from one cultural context to another, knowing what 'language' to use in which circumstances. Finally, when Reardon speaks his account of these events,<sup>9</sup> he weaves them together in the manner of a true story teller, using all five conventions of story, as I described earlier.

### Core story

Another interesting development of the use of story in practice is what Dunstan and Sarkissian (1994) call 'core story'. The idea of core story as methodology draws on work in psychology which suggests that each of us has a core story: that we do not merely tell stories but are active in creating them with our lives. We become our stories. When we tell stories about ourselves we draw on past behaviour and on others' comments about us in characterizing ourselves as, say, adventurous, or victims, or afraid of change, or selfish, or heroic. But in telling and re-telling the story, we are also reproducing ourselves and our behaviours. Social psychologists argue that communities, and possibly nations, have such core stories that give meaning to collective life (see Houston, 1982; 1987). Culture is the creation and expression and sharing of stories that bond us with common language, imagery, metaphors, all of which create shared meaning. Such stories might be victim stories, warrior stories, fatal flaw stories, stories of peace-making, of generosity, of abandonment, of expectations betrayed.

In their work in evaluating the success of community development on a new outer suburban estate developed by a public agency in an Australian city, Dunstan and Sarkissian used an array of research tools: attitude and satisfaction surveys, interviews, focus groups, as well as census and other 'hard' data. When they came to analyse this material, they found contradictions that were not likely to be resolved by collecting more details. In order to go beyond the details and the quantitative scores on 'satisfaction', they explored the notion of core story, drawing on heroic, mythic and meta-poetic language.

They scripted such a story of heroic settlers, of expectation and betrayal, of abandonment, and took the story back to the community, saying 'this is what we've heard'. The response was overwhelming, and cathartic. 'Yes, you've understood. That's our story.' The task then, as the social planners defined it, was to help the community to turn this doomed and pessimistic story around. They asked them how they thought their story might/could/should be changed. Underlying this was a belief that core stories can be guides to how communities will respond to crisis, or to public intervention. As with individuals, some tragic core stories need to be transformed by an explicit healing process or else the core story will be enacted again and again. Renewal and redemption are possible, Dunstan and Sarkissian believe. New 'chapters' can be written if there is the collective will to do so. They suggest four steps towards renewal. The first is a public telling of the story in a way that accepts its truth and acknowledges its power and pain. The second is some kind of atonement, in which there is an exchange that settles the differences. The third is a ceremony or ritual emerging out of local involvement and commitment by government (in this case municipal and provincial) that publicly acknowledges the new beginning. The fourth is an ongoing commitment and trust that a new approach is possible and will be acted on (Dunstan and Sarkissian, 1994: 75-91).

This fascinating case study offers some illumination to a more general puzzle in participatory planning: how to turn a raft of community stories into a trustworthy plan, one that is faithful to community desires. To turn the light on inside the black box of that conversion surely requires planners to take their plan back to the community and say, 'this is how we converted your stories into a plan. Did we understand you correctly?': In a community or constituency where there is only one core story, this is a more straightforward process than in a situation where what the planners have heard is two or more conflicting stories. In the latter situation there is far more working through to do, in order to prioritize and to reach some consensus about priorities.

### Non-verbal stories

Less 'verbal' story telling approaches have been developed using people with community arts experience to be part of a community development project that creates the opportunity for residents to express their feelings and tell their story vividly and powerfully. The Seattle Arts Commission matches artists with communities to engage in just such projects. At their best, they can create a new sense of cohesion and identity among residents, a healing of past wrongs, and a collective optimism about the future. A community quilt, and quilting process, has proved to be a successful way to bring people together and for a group to tell their story. Depending on the community involved in an issue, video or music, or other art forms, may be more powerful forms of story telling. In his violence-prevention work with youth in the Rock Solid Foundation in Victoria, British Columbia, Constable Tom Woods initiated a project to create an outdoor youth art gallery and park site along a 500-meter stretch of railway right-of-way between two rows of warehouses. This area, which had a long history as a crime corridor, is now home to the Trackside Art Gallery, where local youths practise their graffiti on the warehouse walls. Woods realized that these teenagers needed a safe site for their graffiti. More profoundly, he realized that they needed a space to express themselves through non-

violent means, and that graffiti is a communicative art form, a form of story telling (Macnaughton, 2001: 5). The potential of planners working with artists in processes like these that encourage story telling has only just begun to be tapped.

#### Future stories

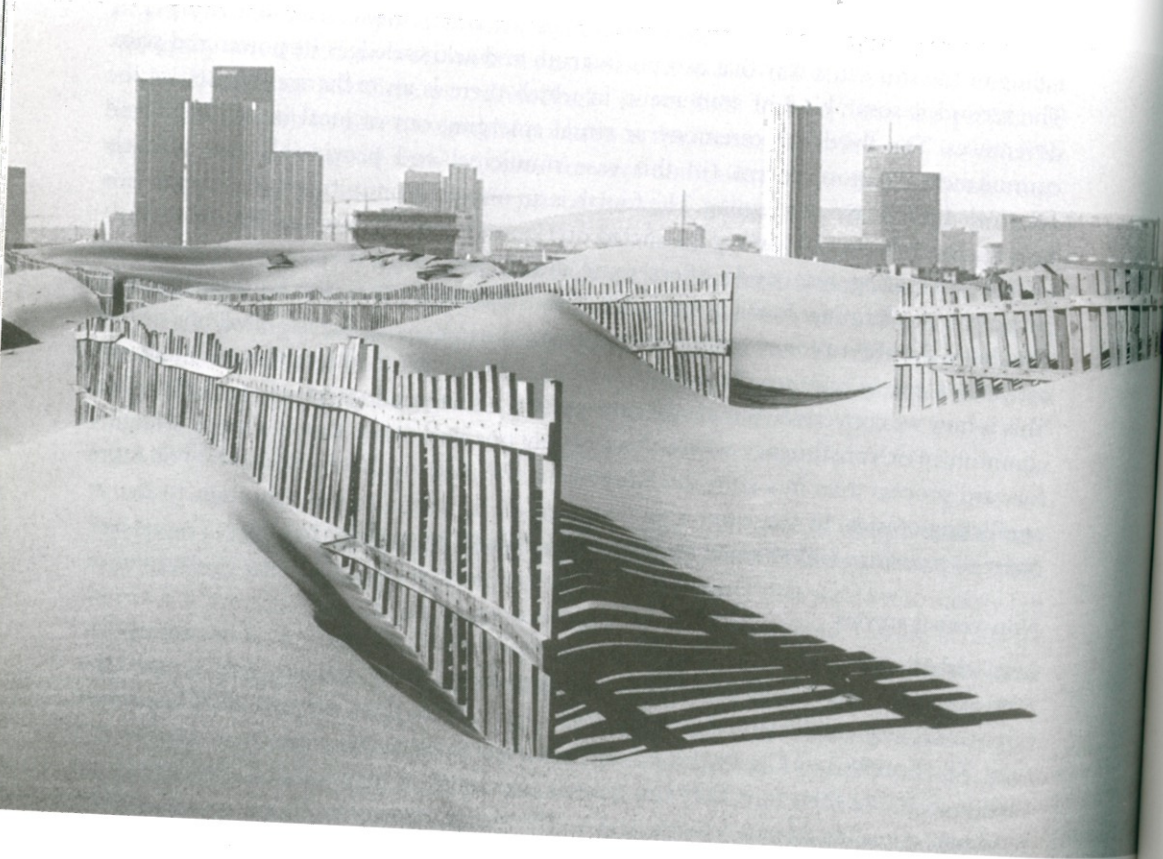
Peter Ellyard is another consultant who uses story in an imaginative way in his 'preferred futures process'. Working with an array of clients, from institutions and corporations to place and interest-based communities, he helps them to develop their own 'future myth', a preferred future scenario; he then takes them through a process of 'backcasting' or reverse history, as they unfold the steps from the future back to the present, which got them to where they want to be. On the way, there are missions, heritages, disasters, triumphs and pitfalls. He consciously employs these narrative devices as an aid to imagination. Once the future myth task is complete, they proceed to SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analyses and to the development of capacity building strategies and action plans (Ellyard, 2001).

What emerges then is the use of story in both obvious and imaginative ways in planning processes: an ability to tell, listen to, and invent stories is being nurtured as well as the equally important ability to make the space for stories to be heard.

#### STORY AS FOUNDATION, ORIGIN, IDENTITY

I've already discussed the notion of core story and how it might be used by planners. There's a related but not identical notion of foundational story, a mytho-poetic story of origins, a story that cities and nations tell about themselves. This is particularly relevant to planning in multiethnic, multicultural contexts in which conflicting notions of identity are at play. Take Australia. The foundational story that Anglo-Australians have been telling for the past 200 and some years concerns the arrival of the brave Captain James Cook, who landed with the First Fleet at Botany Bay in 1788 to establish a colony, and of subsequent heroic pioneers who explored and tamed the land – a familiar story in New World settler societies. On one level this story is mytho-poetic, but on another it is also politico-legal. The founding institutions, and specifically the system of land ownership, were based on the legal concept of *terra nullius*, that is, empty land. This concept rendered invisible the previous 60,000 years of indigenous occupation, as well as their continued presence on the continent.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, growing numbers of non-indigenous as well as indigenous Australians grew increasingly uncomfortable with this founding fiction. Momentum grew for the rewriting of the story of origins. Many of those concerned with celebrating nation-building at the turn of the 21st century wanted to tell a more complex origins story, and the foundational myth became contested terrain. Part of the battle was legal and was fought through the High Court. Another part was symbolic and emotional, concerning apology and atonement. That was handled in part by the placing of 'Sorry Books' in all public libraries across Australia. Anyone who wished to could sign one of these books, and thereby publicly apologize to the Aboriginal people for their dispossession. There were also a series of 'Sorry Day' marches throughout 2001, one in each



capital city. Half a million people participated in Sydney and 300,000 in Melbourne. The refusal of the Prime Minister (since 1996), John Howard, to make an official apology on behalf of the government continues to anger many Australians, and to be seen as unfinished business in the reconciliation process.

Having participated in the Melbourne march, this was in the back of my mind in the winter of 2002 when I was working in Birmingham, at the invitation of the City Council. Partly in response to race riots in other northern British cities in the preceding summer, Birmingham's politicians were concerned about 'getting it right' in relation to 'managing' ethnic diversity (see Chapter 7). As I met with various groups in the city, from the city planning staff to workers in a variety of community development programmes, to young black men and Muslim women, I began to hear very different versions of Birmingham's identity. There was a fairly widely accepted founding story on the part of some Anglo residents (who referred to themselves as the 'indigenous' population) that Birmingham was an *English* city (not a multicultural city) and that those who were there first had greater rights to the city than the relative newcomers from the Indian sub-continent, the Caribbean, and so on. This profoundly political question of the city's changing identity clearly needed the widest possible public debate. I suggested that at some point the city was going to have to re-write its foundational story, to make it more inclusive, and open to change. The planning staff were very much implicated in this debate. At the community coalface, and especially in non-Anglo neighbourhoods, these predominantly Anglo-Celtic planners were either reproducing the founding story of 'British Birmingham', or helping to change that story by making their policies and programmes reflect and respect the diversity of the 'new city'.

This is not an isolated example any more, but a situation increasingly common across Europe in this age of migrations. The need to collectively change (and represent in the built environment itself) these old foundational stories is one of the contemporary challenges facing planners.

### STORY AS CATALYST FOR CHANGE

Stories and story telling can be powerful agents or aids in the service of change, as shapers of a new imagination of alternatives. Stories of success, or of exemplary actions, serve as inspirations when they are re-told. I've lost count of the number of times I have told 'the Rosa Parks story',<sup>10</sup> either in class, or in a community or activist meeting, when the mood suddenly (or over time) gets pessimistic, and people feel that the odds are too great, the structures of power too oppressive and all-encompassing. When Ken Reardon tells or writes his East St Louis story, he is amongst other things conveying a message of hope in the face of incredible odds. This 'organizing of hope' is one of our fundamental tasks as planners, and one of our weapons in that battle is the use of success stories, and the ability to tell those stories well, meaningfully, in a way that does indeed inspire others to act.

In multicultural contexts, there is usually a dominant culture whose version of events, of behaviour, and practices, are the implicit norm. It is also usually the case that those engaged in planning – as a state-directed activity – are members of the dominant culture, and therefore less likely to recognize, let alone question, current cultural norms and

practices. For a society to be functionally as well as formally multicultural, those norms occasionally have to be held up to the light and examined and challenged. One effective way to do that is through story. Describing his first experience with participatory action research, Rajesh Tandon (in Forester, Pitt and Welsh, 1993) recalls his PhD fieldwork in rural Rajasthan, working for a local development organization that wanted someone to do some training for village-based groups of tribal youths. Tandon stayed in the village and interacted with local people while he developed his data collection instruments. The locals began to ask questions. Why was he trying to get a PhD? Why was he developing a data instrument that was alien to the context? Why was he pretending to be more objective than he really was? Why did he think that only outsiders could be objective, while insiders could only be subjective? One night after dinner he was sitting with some local people in the darkness, chit-chatting as was the local custom. One of the elders told him a story: about a trader who came several generations back from Afghanistan to their area, how he lived there quite a while but took away a lot of their jewelry and things like that, never to return. They trusted him and he stayed in the village. He said he'd bring spices back with him, but he never did. After a while, the elders turned to Tandon and said: 'What lessons did that story teach you?'. Tandon wasn't prepared for the question. He thought they were telling stories to each other to pass the time. But the elders were actually confronting him, he a city boy with a different class and cultural background, and forcing him to examine the ethical dimension as well as the methodology of his research. In this case, the use of story in confrontation was life-transforming for Tandon, forcing him to question his own training, and to critique what role knowledge plays in society. It propelled him to invent a participatory action research approach (Tandon, interviewed in Forester, Pitt and Welsh, 1993: 101–102).

Canadian planner Norman Dale has written of the critical importance of hearing the stories of the Haida Gwaii (an indigenous community on the Northwest coast of Canada) in what was meant to be a cross-cultural community economic development project in the Queen Charlotte Islands, sponsored by the provincial government (Dale, 1999). After a series of formal meetings with local residents, Dale was struggling to create a space in which the lone Haida representative (whose name was Gitsga) would feel empowered to say anything. Gitsga seemed to have taken a vow of silence, and was on the verge of pulling out of the consultation process when Dale sought him out and encouraged him to return. At the next consultation meeting, there was some informal chat among the white folks, before the real meeting began, about the artistic and environmental merits of a sculpture that had been erected on a rock offshore. It hadn't occurred to anybody to ask the Haida people what they thought. When Gitsga broke his silence to volunteer the information that the rock was sacred to the Haida, there was genuine shock and consternation, leading to an opening up of the whole community economic development planning process to the involvement of the Haida. Planners have a tremendously important role in acknowledging the voices of minority groups, designing meetings in which such groups are comfortable speaking, and encouraging them to speak.

Depending on the context, success stories may not be enough to disrupt existing habits of thought and bring about profound change, as we've seen in the last two examples. We may need different kinds of stories: stories that frighten, stories that shock, embarrass,

de-familiarize (Eckstein, 2003). Deciding what stories to tell in what circumstances is part of the planner's art. The puzzle of how to change the stories that people tell themselves everyday, often repeating familiar stories from the media, absorbing and internalizing the messages of the dominant culture or class, is an old one. For Marx, this was a problem of 'false consciousness' (that is, a group, or class, not understanding what was in its own best interests in the long run), and called for a revolutionary vanguard to enlighten the proletariat. This answer is no longer acceptable, partly because it prejudices and demeans the actual life experience and knowledge of oppressed groups, and their capacity to analyse their own circumstances and organize themselves. Faced with a situation where people appear to be telling themselves 'the wrong stories', there are two things that planners can do. One is, in good conscience and with humility, to suggest alternative stories. The second is to build 'education for a critical consciousness' into their participatory approaches.<sup>11</sup> Planners are, after all, just one of the actors in the force field of public conversation.

I have one more example of the use of story in planning practices – in the process of policy analysis, formulation, and implementation – before I turn to academic story telling about planning.

#### STORY AND POLICY

Here I am aided by James Throgmorton and Peter Marris, each of whom has done a lot of thinking about the connections between story and policy. In *Witnesses, Engineers and Storytellers: Using Research for Social Policy and Community Action* (1997), Peter Marris argues that the relationship between knowledge and action is not straightforward, and that knowledge itself cannot, has not ever, determined policy. In analysing various types of and approaches to social policy research, Marris asks why so little of the research produced on poverty, for example, has affected policy. His answers are several. One is that academics are powerful critics but weak story tellers. That is, they fail to communicate their findings in a form that is not only plausible but persuasive. (By contrast, he notes that community actors have great stories to tell, but no means of telling them, except to each other. So the wrong stories win the debates.) Story telling, he says, is the natural language of persuasion, because any story has to involve both a sequence of events and the interpretation of their meaning. A story integrates knowledge of what happened with an understanding of why it happened and a sense of what it means to us. (If it fails to do all this, we say things like 'but I still don't understand why he did that' or 'why are you telling me this?' or 'so what's going to happen?'.) Stories organize knowledge around our need to act and our moral concerns. The stories don't have to be original, but they must be authoritative (that is, provide reliable evidence marshalled into a convincing argument). The best are both original and authoritative.<sup>12</sup>

To be persuasive, the stories we tell must fit the need as well as the situation. Policy researchers compete with everyone else who has a story to tell, and their special claim on public attention lies in the quality of their observation as well as the sophistication of the accumulated understanding through which they interpret their data. But this truthfulness is not, in itself, necessarily persuasive. Good stories have qualities such as dramatic

timing, humour, irony, evocativeness and suspense, in which social researchers are untrained. 'Worse', says Marris, 'they have taught themselves that to be entertaining compromises the integrity of scientific work' (Marris, 1997: 58). Writing up policy research is hard work: it's hard to tell a good story while simultaneously displaying conscientiously the evidence on which it is based. But, Marris insists, the more social researchers attend to the story teller's craft, and honour it in the work of colleagues and students, the more influential they can be. We have to be able to tell our stories skilfully enough to capture the imagination of a broader and more political audience than our colleagues alone.

There are two notions of story at work here. One is functional/instrumental: bringing the findings of social research to life through weaving them into a good story. The other is more profound: story telling, in the fullest sense, is not merely recounting events, but endowing them with meaning by commentary, interpretation, and dramatic structure.

While Marris seems to confine his advocacy of story telling to the publishing of research results, James Throgmorton's work addresses the next step, the arts of rhetoric in the public domain of speech and debate. The lesson he wants to impart is that if we want to be effective policy advocates, then we need to become good story makers and good story tellers, in the more performative sense. In *Planning as Persuasive Storytelling* (1996), Throgmorton suggests that we can think of planning as an enacted and future-oriented narrative in which participants are both characters and joint authors. And we can think of story telling as being an appropriate style for conveying the truth of planning action. However, what should be done, he asks, when planning stories overlap and conflict? How can planners (and other interested parties) decide which planning story is more worthy of the telling?

Throgmorton (1996: 48) draws on the concept of 'narrative rationality' in claiming that humans are story tellers who have a natural capacity to recognize the fidelity of stories they tell and experience. We test stories in terms of the extent to which they hang together (coherence) and in terms of their truthfulness and reliability (fidelity). But Throgmorton is unhappy with this, reminding us of situations in which two planning stories, both of which are coherent and truthful on their own terms, compete for attention. What then makes one more worthy than another? Throgmorton suggests that the answer to this question lies in part at least in the persuasiveness with which we tell our stories. Planning is a form of persuasive story telling, and planners are both authors who write texts (plans, analyses, articles) and also characters whose forecasts, surveys, models, maps, and so on, act as tropes (figures of speech and argument) in their own and others' persuasive stories. A crucial part of Throgmorton's argument is that this future-oriented storytelling is never simply persuasive. It is also constitutive. The ways in which planners write and talk help to shape community, character and culture. So a critical question for planners is what ethical principles should guide and constrain their efforts to persuade their audiences.

I am unsatisfied by Throgmorton's argument here on two grounds. First, there is the question of values. I cannot accept that it is 'persuasiveness' that makes one story more 'worthy' than another in a public policy conflict. I want to bring in the notion of 'value rationality' and suggest that ultimately, in public policy, we are arguing over values rather



than facts.<sup>13</sup> We can rarely marshal all of the relevant facts in complex public policy decisions, in part because of complexity itself, in part because there will never be agreement on what are the relevant facts. Judgements about 'relevant facts' are just that, judgements based on a values-informed notion of what is important, what matters, what is in the public interest. We should stop pretending that there is any such thing as an objective answer to any public policy issue, and acknowledge that all available answers are informed by values. The public debate can then be around those values (what kind of city do we want, what kind of transport system, how much are we prepared to pay, and so on) rather than around contested data. This would help to clarify policy choices as political choices, but it doesn't resolve the problem of knowing when policy stories are based on lies and deception, or on what Flyvbjerg (1998) calls the 'the rationality of power'. This brings me to my second problem with Throgmorton, the question of power. We are all too aware of the capacity of spin doctoring, or manipulating facts and arguments in order to make them more persuasive. Powerful people and organizations also tell stories (about why we need budget cuts, or why we need more roads and less public transport, or why any one project is better than another) and use all of their material as well as persuasive powers to get their stories heard and to silence, trivialize or marginalize others. Are planners' counter-stories going to make a difference when power is not on their side? Here stories suffer the same limits as 'rational argument' does in the direct face of power. But counter-stories can serve to mobilize opposition, to bring people on to the streets or to organize any number of attention-grabbing and potentially embarrassing (to politicians answerable to a constituency) forms of protest. And such oppositional stories are likely to be more powerful than rational argument in defeating naked power, because they appeal through their ability to mobilize emotions, to reach out to what matters most to people.

Marris's and Throgmorton's work has very important implications for policy research and recommendations. If planners want to be more effective in translating knowledge to action, they argue, then we had better pay more attention to the craft of story telling in both its written and oral forms. That means literally expanding the language of planning, to become more expressive, evocative, engaging, and to include the language of the emotions. 'Academic story telling', writes Finnegan, 'is ugly in its stark, clichéd monotone manner. We tell the dullest stories in the most dreary ways, and usually deliberately, for this is the mantle of scientific storytelling: it is supposed to be dull' (Finnegan, 1998: 21). What Finnegan alleges of academic story telling is equally true of bureaucratic story telling. Policy reports produced by government planning agencies, and also by consultants for those agencies, are cut from the same clichéd cloth. They are dry as dust. Life's juices have been squeezed from them. Emotion has been rigorously purged, as if there were no such things as joy, tranquillity, anger, resentment, fear, hope, memory and forgetting at stake in these analyses. What purposes, whose purposes, do these bloodless stories serve? For one thing, they serve to perpetuate a myth of the objectivity and technical expertise of planners. And in doing so, these documents are nothing short of misleading at best (dishonest at worst) about the kinds of problems and choices we face in cities.

To influence policy, then, as well as to be effective in planning processes, planners need

to learn story, or rather, an array of story telling modes. But where to learn this? What to learn? How to learn to critically scrutinize stories? What is the academy teaching?

### STORY AS CRITIQUE AND/OR EXPLANATION

There is a false binary in our heads that separates planning documents, social scientific research and theorizing from story telling, rather than allowing us to appreciate the ways in which each of these employs story. Planning documents, from maps, to models, to GIS, to plans themselves, do in fact all tell a story. Sometimes the story is descriptive, or poses as descriptive – 'this is how things are', 'these are the facts'. But there is no such thing as mere description, or pure facts. There is always an author who is choosing which facts are relevant, what to describe, what to count, and in the assembling of these facts a story is shaped, an interpretation, either consciously or unconsciously, emerges. Facts are usually marshalled to explain something and to draw some conclusions for action.

Scholars also use story in their critical writings about cities and planning, sometimes consciously, but usually not. Even unconsciously, however, academic urban stories – even the most seemingly abstract – often exhibit some of the five familiar properties of story that I described in the introduction, drawing on familiar plot lines. There are heroes and antiheroes, victims, and other familiar character types: the witch figure/demon of international capitalism; the two-faced fairy of progress; the insubstantial and ambiguous trickster called postmodernity; and the darling love, long-lost, but in some stories found again, of community (Finnegan, 1998: 21). There is a temporal ordering, often on a grand scale, taking us from pre-industrial to industrial to postindustrial cities, or from deindustrialization to the knowledge economy and the space of flows. The most familiar plot is change itself, and the desire to explain it.

Along with the explaining usually comes a valuing. Things were better before, or after, such and such, which then suggests we should go backwards or forwards. Evocative plots, of rural superseded by urban, community by alienation, tradition by modernity, or community triumphing over capital, residents over bureaucracies, squatters over the forces of law and order, are moving stories with which individual readers can identify, positioning themselves in a larger historical narrative. There are stories of times of transition, of new eras, of an old order passing, of lost Golden Ages. And there are some stories, but not many, which foretell a happy ending, if only . . . If only 'we' would do such and such, then we could live happily ever after. One of the reasons for the appeal of the New Urbanism is that it tells just such a story with a happy ending, rather than the more familiar bleak urban stories in which the bad fairy of political, economic, or environmental exploitation triumphs yet again.

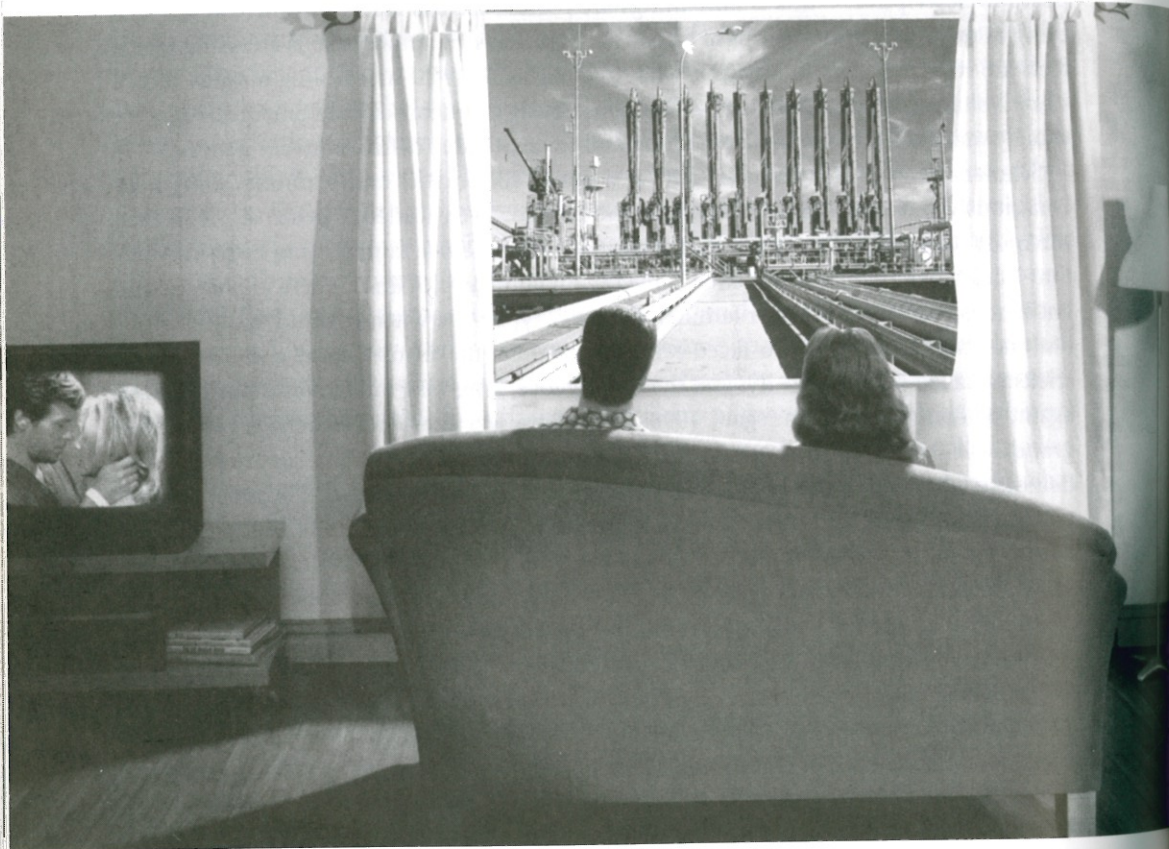
In other words, academic urban stories and theories evoke basic narrative plots that are familiar to us from other contexts (from fairy tales to movies) and which resonate with us morally as well as intellectually, satisfying or disturbing or challenging us. My point here is not to say that these stories are therefore worthless. On the contrary, they are illuminating and instructive precisely because of these underlying plots, which are all exercises in valuing human activities, in a moral ordering of life and social organization. As with planning documents, the more alert we can be to the underlying story or stories,

the better we are able to evaluate them. We need to understand the mechanisms of story, both in order to tell good stories ourselves, to be more critical of the stories we have to listen to, and to be able to resist persuasive stories as well as create them. How to do this?

Rein and Schön (1977: 5) argued that the validity of stories is measurable, and offered five criteria: stories should be consistent, testable by empirical means, actionable, beautiful, and lead to a moral position. This is a curious list of criteria, part normative, part aesthetic, and part quantitative. It fails to get at a number of important issues. First, when planners are listening to stories, and depending on the context, the most important thing to listen for may be the story truth rather than the data truth, that is, to get at the emotional core of an issue, rather than to worry about whether all the facts alluded to are accurate. Second, Rein and Schön don't advise us to ask who is telling the story. But, as Eckstein (2003) argues, identifying the author/s is the first step in determining who or what 'authorizes the authors'. What power is being invoked by the story teller? For whom, and with what justification, are they claiming to speak? What is their place in the prevailing systems of power? We have to interrogate story tellers and the powers behind them. When public decisions are afoot, 'every story teller is narrating to control others' actions' (Eckstein, 2003). Third, if we need to interrogate the story teller, we also need to interrogate the story. Rein and Schön's criteria don't help us to get inside the construction of a story, the real engine of its persuasive power, to which I now turn.

Stories do their work, make themselves compelling, by manipulating time, voice, and space (Eckstein, 2003). So we need to attend to all three when hearing or constructing stories. *Time* is 'manipulated' through the device of duration. How much story 'space' is given to specific time intervals or periods of time? Which parts of a chronological story are collapsed into relatively few sentences, pages, or minutes, compared with other parts of the story that are given extended treatment? Paying attention to this issue of duration can allow the listener/reader to hear what matters most to the teller, as can listening for repetition, which produces patterns of significance. *Space* ranks with time as a component of and in story, and is critically important for urban scholars and practitioners. We must be able to 'see' time in space' (Balzac, quoted in Eckstein, 2003). Geographic scale is an important factor in the production of meaning. Stories operate at different geographic scales, sometimes metaphorical, and interpretation requires careful attention to those scales. The most obvious example would be whether one is viewing the city from the windows of an aeroplane or skyscraper (the bird's-eye view) or from the street. Stories also sometimes ask us to adopt a different spatial perspective than the one we're most comfortable with. For example, residents and local activists may be most familiar with looking at issues from the local or neighbourhood perspective. Some stories ask us to take a global perspective. If this is beyond our familiarity, the story teller will have to be very skilful in helping us to do this.

*Voice* is also central to story telling. Is the story being told in the first person, third person, or first person plural (I, s/he, we), and what does that signify about who is speaking on behalf of whom? Whose voices are given prominence, whose are repressed? As with the myths of other cultures, our planning and academic stories function as sanction and justification for the current order, but also as launching pads for counter-versions. Academic stories about planning usually take sides, although not always overtly.



Sometimes this is revealed by asking, of any narrative, what voices are missing here? In *Making the Invisible Visible* (1998), I critiqued what I call the 'Official Story' of planning's history, by pointing out what that story leaves out. The 'Official Story' portrays planning as a heroic pursuit, often without any fatal flaws, always on the side of the angels, and those who oppose it as irrational, reactionary, or just plain greedy. What this leaves out, as I explained in Chapter 2, are the gender, class, race, and cultural biases of planning practices; the ways in which planning has served as an agent of social control, regulating (certain marked) bodies in space; and the many stories of oppositional practices, grass roots planning by excluded groups, in opposition to a state-directed mode of planning that has always disadvantaged them.

To imagine the future differently, we need to start with history, with a reconsideration of the stories we tell ourselves about the role of planning in the modern and postmodern city. In telling new stories about our past, our intention is to reshape our future. If we can uncouple planning history from its obsession with the celebratory story of the rise of the planning profession, then we may be able to link it to a new set of public issues – those connected with a dawning appreciation of a multicultural heritage and the challenge of planning for a future of multicultural cities and regions.

Stories matter. They can make a difference. Whether that difference is for the better depends, to a not inconsiderable extent, on the capacities of listeners to hear and critically interpret the elements of time, space, and voice in the narrative.

#### STORY AND PEDAGOGY

There are a variety of ways of using story in pedagogy: that is, specifically in the training of planners. I will mention a number of them, and then concentrate on the contribution of one outstanding educator. It is not new for planning educators to use story in the form of role-play in the classroom (or in problem-solving workshops). The intent is to nudge people beyond their own horizons, into the worlds of others with whom they are in conflict. I have a number of reservations about role-play. One is that the effect of asking participants to take on roles with which they are unfamiliar, or opposed to, may simply be to mobilize the worst kind of stereotyping of others' views and positions and behaviours. Another is that some people feel extremely uncomfortable having to be anybody but themselves. This may be more than shyness. For example, the mediator Shirley Solomon, in the case discussed earlier in this chapter, tells how in one case the attempt at a role-play turned into a near-disaster. 'The people couldn't get into it because they just wanted to be themselves . . . all these people are very much engaged in these issues, and it's passionate for them. They learned not at all from having to take the other's role . . . One of the tribal leaders never got it, couldn't get into it, and just couldn't believe that he wasn't able to represent himself . . . The (county) general manager was asked to be a developer. He just didn't want to be a developer. So he tried to do it for a while and then just got aggravated with it' (Solomon, in Forester, 2000: 158–9).

I have been inspired by new teaching ideas emerging from feminist studies in the 1980s. During my decade teaching graduate students in the Urban Planning Program at UCLA, I used the device of 'life stories' as a way to explore difficult issues of identity and

difference. My students, in their diversity, mirrored the social and cultural diversity of that city, and this occasionally led to tensions in classes. I began each semester asking students to write short stories about the ways that race, or gender, or ethnicity, or disability, had shaped their lives. We then shared those stories in class, and drew on them during the semester, as a way of connecting the personal with the political. I have also used the idea of (what I called) a 'housing autobiography' when teaching undergraduates about housing issues, asking students to craft a story about the houses they've lived in and how that might have shaped their ideas of the ideal house and neighbourhood. When I did this at the University of Melbourne, with students from Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia in class as well as Anglo-Australians, it worked very well in bringing out cultural and class stereotypes of the 'normal' house and neighbourhood. In general, I have found that the more creative I can be in the classroom (by using music, images, and so on) the more creative is the response of my students in their own papers and in their thinking. It was partly feminism, partly my film school experience, and partly the need to find as many ways as possible to connect with my multicultural student group that led me to experiment with story. The results, in terms of wonderful papers and presentations from my classes, have taught me a lot about the creativity that so often lies dormant, or is undernourished or even discouraged, through our academic straightjackets of 'appropriate', 'objective', 'scientific' papers.

For two decades, John Forester has been a story-gatherer, collecting the details of the working days and lives of a wide range of practitioners in North America and a handful from Israel and Europe, using interviews to get them to describe what it is that they do, always in terms of action rather than theorizing. With minimal editing, these 'work stories' have been published both as transcripts for pedagogical purposes and also, with detailed commentary and interpretation, incorporated into Forester's books as the foundation of his understanding of and theorizing about planning (Forester, 1989; 1999).<sup>14</sup>

Over the past decade, Forester has been dedicated in his pursuit of an understanding of difference in planning. I see his larger project as an attempt to reshape planning as a practice of deliberative democracy. But, as part of that quest, he recognizes 'the challenges of a multicultural planning practice – the ability to anticipate and respond sensitively and creatively to complex differences of standpoint, background, race and gender, cultural and political history' (Forester, 2000: 147). He puzzles over what it means to 'respect difference'. He sees the danger of respect conceived as the mere acceptance or appreciation of difference: in that form, respect can stymie dialogue and mutual learning. He is acutely aware that planning conflicts are often about more than resources (such as land, money, facilities). They are also about relationships, and this involves not only personality and politics, but also race, ethnicity, and culture. To learn about how to work successfully in such cross-cultural or multicultural situations, he has sought out practitioners with good stories to tell. One such story, that can do double duty for me in writing here about pedagogy and story, is the work of Marie Kennedy, who teaches community development planning at the University of Massachusetts in Boston.<sup>15</sup>

Kennedy's undergraduate students are primarily of working-class background, urban, and older (average age 39). The class works with grass roots community organizations in the Boston area, around issues defined by those organizations, and in the process

students learn planning skills. The project that Kennedy describes in her interview (Forester, Pitt and Welsh, 1993: 110–22) was in the city of Somerville, adjacent to Cambridge and Boston, population around 100,000. Somerville was in transition from a predominantly white ethnic working-class district to a city with a significant new immigrant population, as well as a new liberal/radical, more educated white group who were moving in from Cambridge. (This latter group had become politically active and pushed the agenda of Somerville as a Sanctuary City.<sup>16</sup>) In the previous ten years the population had changed from 95 per cent white ethnic working-class to 25 per cent foreign born (Haitian, Vietnamese, Central American) and this was accompanied by increasing racial tension and incidence of racial violence. Kennedy was approached by the Mystic Welcome Project, an organization of newcomers in the Mystic housing project, the largest public housing project in Somerville. The question was how to build, or rebuild, a sense of community cooperation and support in this neighbourhood. There was also the challenge of how to bring together several neighbourhood-based organizations in the same area who had nothing to do with each other. For Kennedy the agenda was clear. 'We are explicitly going in with an agenda to build a healthy multi-racial, multi-ethnic community. So the goal is out front. We will have many discussions, and some of them will be heated' (*ibid.*: 118).

What I want to draw from this story is how Kennedy prepared her students to work in this situation. The students themselves were diverse in terms of age, gender, race, and ethnicity, and mostly working-class. For the first month (of a one-year course) she met with the students and concentrated on their own attitudes towards immigrant communities and newcomers, and their own attitudes towards Somerville as a place. 'We spend the initial time getting their biases and preconceptions on the table . . . I feel strongly that no matter who we are, we bring our previous experience, our baggage, our preconceptions with us into any planning situation. The first step is to get real clear about what you are bringing . . . You can either set your baggage aside in order to clearly hear and listen to other people's experience, or you can check it out against other people's opinions and against facts to see whether your preconception is born out or not' (*ibid.*: 113).

The students all individually took walking tours through the neighbourhood and had to figure out how the neighbourhood affected them, whom they saw there, what racial and ethnic and socio-economic groups, what they saw in the physical environment, what their assumptions about it were, whether they thought it would or would not be a 'nice' place to live. Kennedy got all the students to write about Somerville, and to write about their attitude to newcomer groups and individuals. The writing was done anonymously, and discussed collectively. There was a lot of disagreement among students about their impressions. What came out in the discussions was how different students' backgrounds (growing up, or not, in a public housing project; living, or not, in a neighbourhood of newcomers, and so on) had shaped their reflections on Somerville. Students were asked to think about the experience of becoming a minority newcomer, maybe the only family that is different from the now-majority community. Some could draw on their backgrounds as minority members to talk about this, and educate their fellow (white) students. Gradually this led into discussions on housing policy, immigration policy, a

needs analysis of the area, and so on. But a whole semester was spent in this kind of preparation, before the students started to work with the community group, in the community.

This is a deeply informative account of what it takes to work as an agent of social change in a changing neighbourhood, and how important it is to examine one's own preconceptions. It gives us some idea of the detailed personal work that needs to be done in preparation for working in multicultural environments. In this learning stage, the stories that students tell about themselves, and hear from each other, are crucial in peeling back layers of preconceptions and assumptions about 'others', and about physical, residential environments different from whatever one is accustomed to. In turn, when I read this account of Kennedy's work, I learn new ways of approaching the training of community development planners. Her 'work story' helps my work. Forester's gathering of such stories helps us all. Stories teach. But what do they teach?

Forester's work is both empirically based and ethically and normatively saturated. Despite his disclaimer that 'we sought no particular philosophy or style' when seeking out potential interviewees, he is not merely describing what planners do, in their own words. He wants planners to do good and make a difference, and he searches for stories from practitioners which demonstrate these possibilities (and correspond with his understanding of doing good). His purposes shape his collection of stories. His pedagogical aims in passing these stories on to his students are not simply to convey the skills of these practitioners but also to inspire his students with how those skills are used, that is, for what moral purposes. In Kennedy's case, the purpose is building healthy multi-racial, multiethnic communities. And herein is perhaps the oldest and most traditional use of stories, as moral exemplars.

## CONCLUSIONS

There are of course limits to the power and reach of stories and story telling in planning. Two need to be mentioned in closing this chapter. One concerns scale: the other, power itself. I am not claiming that story telling works in situations of extreme conflict that divide nations, such as contemporary conflicts between Zionists and Palestinians in Israel, or Hindus and Muslims in India. My examples are drawn from local and regional contexts and from scenarios where planners have a role and some leverage. Nor am I claiming that story telling is so powerful that it can or should replace other planning tools. Persuasive story telling is one form of power at the disposal of planners, but it takes its place in a force field in which there are other powers at work, including the powers of misinformation, deception, and lying, which are deployed within planning as well as by outside forces opposing planning interventions.<sup>17</sup> Encountering and countering such stories is another layer of the process of judging and judgement that is part of all planning work.

Nevertheless, this chapter has argued that stories and story telling are central to planning practice, that in fact we can think about planning as performed story. We have seen

stories working as, and in, *planning processes*, where the ability to tell, to listen, and to invent stories is being nurtured as well as the equally important ability to create/design the spaces for stories to be heard. When stories work as *catalysts for change*, it is partly by inspirational example, and partly by shaping a new imagination of alternatives. We've explored the notion of *foundational stories* that need to be rewritten, whether at the level of the nation, the city, or the neighbourhood. We've heard how story could be critical in *policy research and analysis*, as well as how the mantle of scientific story telling may be handicapping our policy causes. We've seen how academics use story, *as explanation and as critique* of planning practices, and how these stories too can make a difference, can uphold as well as question the status quo. We've explored various ways that stories are used in the *training of planners*, personal stories, practical stories, moving and inspiring stories. Specifically, I have argued the crucial importance of story in multicultural planning, and demonstrated in each section of this chapter how particular applications of story contribute to the multicultural planning project.

But there are still too few practitioners or academics who are conscious of or creative about the use of story. My purpose in drawing attention to the centrality of story is, among other things, to suggest that the role of the story telling imagination could be given far more prominence in the education of planners. A better understanding of the work that story does, or can do, and how it does it, could produce more persuasive plans and policy documents. It could help us to analyse such documents. And the creative use of or responsiveness to stories in planning processes can serve many purposes, including widening the circle of democratic discourse, and shifting participants in such discourses out of their entrenched positions and into more receptive or open frames of mind.

As cities become more multiethnic and multicultural, the need to engage in dialogue with strangers must become an urban art and not just a planner's art, if we are concerned about how we can co-exist with each other, in all our difference. This most ancient of arts begins with the sharing of stories, and moves towards the shaping of new collective stories. 'The storyteller, besides being a great mother, a teacher, a poetess, a warrior, a musician, a historian, a fairy, and a witch, is a healer and a protectress. Her chanting or telling of stories . . . has the power of bringing us together' (Minh-ha, 1989: 140).

I am advocating both a creative and a critical approach to stories and story telling. Using stories in planning practice must be done with an alertness to the ways in which power shapes which stories get told, get heard, and carry weight. Critical judgement will always be necessary in deciding what weight to give to different stories, as well as what stories are appropriate in what circumstances. *The telling of stories is nothing less than a profoundly political act.*