

5 Minutes with Kip Jones: “we engage in the creative process and open new doors for communication”

 blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2013/02/01/5-minutes-with-kip-jones-carrigan-interview/

2/1/2013

Kip Jones acted as Executive Producer and Author of the award-winning short film *Rufus Stone* (2011). This effort is the main output of a three-year *New Dynamics of Ageing* research project that explored the biographies of older gay and lesbian citizens and their experiences of rural living in Britain. This professionally made film was created by means of a unique collaboration between the director, Josh Appignanesi (*The Infidel*), and Jones. In this article Mark Carrigan, Managing Editor of the [British Politics and Policy blog](#), interviews Jones.



How did the idea for ‘Rufus Stone’ come about? Had you been involved in any projects like this previously?

I had always been involved in arts-based work in one form or another. When my work moved from community engagement into an academic sphere, the ‘creative’ was more or less put aside. I had a moment of revelation, however, when I realised that my interest and experience in the arts could be put to good use in disseminating research. This is when a ‘fusion’ of the arts and science became a possible way for me to reach wider audiences with findings.

I started with a short [video](#) shot on an inexpensive still camera with 640 X 480 capability, cobbled together in PowerPoint on a cheap pc in my bedsit in Leicester. I corralled friends to act the parts and record the soundtrack. This video has been seen worldwide tens of thousands of times now. I mention this experience, because it is not always necessary to raise lots of funding, hire a well-known director and a production company to produce innovative outputs.

Rufus Stone was an opportunity to test out my belief that solid research turned into film could transform audiences and change hearts and minds. Through three years of planning, negotiation and funding applications, I never lost sight of this goal. The subsequent three years of research also presented me with problems and roadblocks. The life stories that were shared with us as part of the research process only increased my commitment to insure that the film was made and disseminated.

One particularly interesting aspect of the project is the relationship between the film and the data from your research. Could you explain this link? What did the scripting process entail in practical terms?

Because we were stepping into very new territory by using substantial research to create a story for a film consisting of composite characters and, therefore, a fiction (or ‘fictive’ reality as I like to call it), I had to ensure that the research was truthfully represented at every turn in the filmmaking process. A colleague and I spent one summer ‘swimming in the data’ and discussing possible characters and plot turns. When we had some sense of the story and who would populate it, I then began to write ‘back-story’ about the characters on my [blog](#). When we reached the point of engaging a director for the film, I wrote what is called the ‘treatment’ or general outline or précis of the film. After Josh Appignanesi was hired to direct, he and I then met and discussed the story further. Josh went away and wrote the first drafts of the screenplay. We conferred on these through many discussions; mostly details about plot and dialogue. Although I wanted to give him as much creative space as possible, it was also crucial at this juncture to insure that the script truthfully represented the research. So it was a long process of creatively imagining, rechecking the facts at hand, of give and take (with the director) as well as ‘letting go’ so that he could produce the best possible film as visual poetry to represent our efforts.

What advice would you give to social scientists interested in using tools from the arts and humanities? How

can these tools help social scientists conduct their research and disseminate its findings?

There are now many scholars internationally working with Performative Social Science, or using tools from the arts and humanities to either carry out social science research and/or to disseminate it. I have supported their efforts by moderating a [newsgroup](#), [Facebook](#) group, conferences, master classes and seminars. I continue to write about PSS in academic [journals](#) and books. My best advice would be to enlist collaborators from the arts in your major efforts. Although we as researchers may have a great idea for a play, a film, an art installation or a dance, there are people in the arts who can work with us to ensure that our outputs are of the highest quality and have meaningful impact.

People often ask: What funding is available for this work? My response is: We are still at a point where it is necessary to shoehorn arts-based research and dissemination into larger projects for the most part. Production by stealth, in other words! I wouldn't let any of this, however, dampen enthusiasm or put people off creating their own more modest projects and outputs. Creativity is the great problem-solver of limited resources anyway. By moving into doing what I like to call 'kitchen sink' work, or humble outputs, we engage in the creative process and open new doors for communication and future development possibilities.

Kip Jones will be a member of the panel at the LSE Review of Books hosted event as part of the 5th LSE Space for Thought Literary Festival, entitled, "Beyond the Book: new forms of academic communication". Date: Thursday 28 February 2013 Time: 12.30-2pm Venue: Wolfson Theatre, New Academic Building. More info: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lseviewofbooks/events/>

Note: This article gives the views of the author(s), and not the position of the Impact of Social Sciences blog, nor of the London School of Economics.

About the author:

Kip Jones BA MSc PhD is Reader in Performative Social Science (PSS) at The Media School and the School of Health & Social Care at Bournemouth University. PSS uses tools from the Arts & Humanities in researching and/or disseminating Social Science subjects.

- Copyright © The Author (or The Authors) - Unless otherwise stated, this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution Unported 3.0 License.