

Title: The City of Honeydew: How Tourism Studies Inspired Me to Make Art

Author:

Nataliya Kiyani
Independent Scholar, Canada

Abstract:

The idea of the fictional City of Honeydew came to me in 2016. That year, I graduated from Thompson Rivers University (TRU) in Kamloops, Canada, with a post-graduate diploma in Tourism Destination Development. I was so inspired by the concepts I learned during my studies, that just a few months after graduation, I started writing simple poems about an imaginary city with a silly name. The plot, the message and the main character all came to me at the same time. I loved the idea of turning the familiar concepts into poetry, as I have never seen “Tourism Poems” before. It took me 2.5 years to finalise the text and to develop a form that I am fully satisfied with. Many things have changed over those 30 months: many lines have been rewritten, some removed. At some point, I found myself singing through the poems, and this is when I realised that they are actually meant to be songs, and that I wished to turn them into a concept album.

This story is about how cities can be rebuilt on enthusiasm. I have witnessed it with my own eyes, in Kamloops, a city with a population of 100,000 people. During the 5 years I spent in that area, the city developed in many ways, and these positive changes were made by real people, many of whom I know in person. While some prefer to complain that their city is not nice enough, or does not have much to offer, there are the chosen few who generate ideas, win grants and work hard to make a difference in their local communities.

Honeydew is inspired by a few cities, in particular, Winnipeg (Manitoba, Canada) and Portland (Oregon, USA). Winnipeg is a great example of a city that may seem boring at first sight (a popular opinion among visitors and locals), but has a great local culture and activist scene, and, in my opinion, the potential to become a tourism destination. Portland, in its turn, showcases what can actually be created on a bleak landscape, and how a city that does not seem very attractive can become a great cultural centre (Honeydew in the Future). Another great example could be the famous Manchester, UK, where the post-industrial reality from The Smiths’ songs, over the last few decades, has been developed into a bright and entertaining urban space.

The main purpose of the story is to encourage listeners and readers to take creative ownership in their own cities, and to remind them that it is the simple people like them who make changes.

Honeydew in its present form was finished in November 2018. It consists of 12 songs, and the first few paper copies were printed in January. I am currently working with a few musicians to turn this work into a concept album/musical. I will be present some of these songs, as well as the original printed version with poems, at the conference.
