Stoecker, Randy. (2018). *Liberating service learning and the rest of higher education civic engagement*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 228 pp. ISBN 9781439913529.

Noel Habashy
The Pennsylvania State University

Do university service learning and community engagement programs actually harm the very communities they seek to serve? This is the provocative question driving the critical examination conducted by Randy Stoecker in *Liberating Service Learning and the Rest of Higher Education Civic Engagement*. Those familiar with the literature of service learning will recognize Stoecker for his thought-provoking investigations of the benefits and costs of service learning programs for community members. While Stoecker explores university community engagement in the United States, the questions and concerns raised in this book are all the more significant among education-abroad programs that have enhanced challenges of increased cultural, economic, and linguistic differences between local community members and visiting students. This book is not a comforting affirmation, but rather a provocative dive into the theory driving much of community engagement. The author presents a stimulating read that is relevant for any individual engaged in education-abroad programs where students interact with local people. Scholars and practitioners alike will benefit from the exploration of theoretical conflicts outlined by Stoecker and his arguments for addressing these tensions.

Throughout the book, Stoecker weaves together a rich tapestry of seminal theories driving service learning from hundreds of scholars across the fields of education and community development, including Dewey, Freire, Horton, and Gaventa, to name a few. He argues that traditional service learning benefits students and reinforces power structures that result in harm to community members with limited power and resources. He states that typical service learning involves students designing a project of their own choosing, deciding on an issue, interviewing community members, and then creating a report that is given to a community organization which may or may not be of use. Since there is no development of relationships among the actual community members being surveyed which would provide opportunities for them to address problems in their own community, Stoecker argues there is actually little development of community taking place. He writes that traditional service learning focuses on things and individuals rather than building the collective capacity of a community to address and resolve its own challenges.

In Chapter 7, Stoecker further outlines his argument by exploring the sociological concepts of functionalist and conflict viewpoints on social change. Functionalist theory involves the accumulation of small steps, people acting collaboratively, and change taking place over a long period of time. Conflict theory is at the opposing end of the spectrum, where social change takes place as a result of structural characteristics, requires conflict between social groups, and happens suddenly. Stoecker posits that traditional service learning is driven by functionalist theory where students work to make

small changes over time in the lives of community members as students and community organizations act in a collaborative framework. This, Stoecker contends, not only has minimal impact but actually feeds into the systemic structural problems that perpetuate these challenges. Stoecker (2016) writes:

> The impulses toward creating the progressive society have been captured by neoliberalism and transmuted into system-maintaining activities that reproduce exclusion, exploitation, and oppression. Institutionalized service learning does this by acting as a social safety valve, providing necessities of living, and individualized attention to drain off their energy that could otherwise support organizing for collective action. (p. 90)

Stoecker maintains that traditional service learning creates a dialectic, between the goals of service learning and what it actually achieves in practice. While students and universities may be striving to help community members, they are actually reinforcing a social structure that oppresses community members. University students gain hands-on experience and added lines to their resumes, while community members are not any better able to address the challenges they see in their own communities.

Stoecker advocates that social change comes in the form of radical change rather than functionalist change. By this, he means big, conflictual, rapid change as opposed to slow, progressive, collaborative change. Unsurprisingly, many readers engaged in higher education may disagree with this argument, might feel this presents a false dichotomy, or perhaps believe it is impractical to implement. Based on Stoecker's provocative writing style, it seems that his intention is not to win favor with all readers, but rather to critically examine university-community relationships and deliberately change the conversation.

As a solution, Stoecker argues for the use of Community Based Research (CBR) as a different paradigm of conducting community engagement. CBR is a collaborative process between researchers and community members throughout the entire project. This practice seeks to recognize the value of multiple sources of knowledge and advocates for the use of multiple methods of investigation and sharing the knowledge identified (Jason & Glenwick, 2016; Munck, McIlrath, Hall, & Tandon, 2014). On a practical level, this means a partnership between community members (typically nonprofit staff or clients) and university participants (typically faculty and students) in all phases of a project: developing research questions, determining methods, conducting inquiries, analyzing findings, and disseminating information. Though CBR has been used for many years in the fields of community health and community development, few study-abroad programs have adopted this approach. A few institutions, such as Northwestern University (Illinois) have initiated CBR programs with partners such as Pachaysana (Ecuador), the Institute for Central American Development Studies (Costa Rica), and the Foundation for Sustainable Development (Uganda).

Stoecker recognizes that CBR itself can take many forms and may not be an inherently conflict-based practice and therefore questions whether CBR is any better at bringing about social change than other conventional methods. He argues for a radical CBR model wherein community members work through grassroots organizations to organize and address their own problems. He believes that mainstream CBR programs follow an expert model by choosing community agencies with fewer resources and mandating university control over research and teaching requirements. With the challenges of cultural and economic differences, study-abroad programs have a potentially enhanced

concern of reinforcing this expert model with visiting faculty and students being seen as experts over local people.

In the end, Stoecker offers CBR as a challenging but hopeful framework for collaboration between communities and universities. In the last chapter of his book, Stoecker (2016) states that "thinking theoretically means thinking critically—seeing the contradictions, the unintended consequences, the negative side effects" (p. 164). *Liberating Service Learning and the Rest of Higher Education Civic Engagement* provides many opportunities for readers to think critically about community engagement locally and internationally. This book will provoke many questions, identify challenges, and perhaps cause some discomfort while advocating for structural transformation to change the tides of power dynamics in university and community relationships. Whether a university administrator, faculty member, or study-abroad provider, this engaging and challenging read will provoke all to critically examine the nature of relationships between students, universities, and local communities who host study abroad programs.

References

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Vanessa Voller
University of Minnesota

What makes an institution of higher education "international"? How do current definitions of "international" affect perceptions and assessments of institutions of higher education on a global scale? These are some of the core questions that are posed in *Internationalization of Higher Education: An Analysis through Spatial, Network, and Mobilities Theories*, by Marianne Larsen. Using a combination of post-structural spatial and network theories, Larsen critically questions the "linear, binary, deterministic, Western-centric account of internationalization" (p. 2). The spatial, network, and mobility theories used in the book provide a dynamic, relational approach that questions static binaries such as global vs. local and space vs. place; it ultimately demonstrates the nuanced complexity of the increasing global field of higher education today. Throughout the book, Larsen demonstrates the dialectic between the global and the local (Arnove, 2013) as she shows time and again, "how the global and the local are interconnected" (p. 10). In addition, she makes clear throughout the book that the increased mobility of people, objects, and information should be seen in the context of economic, cultural, and social inequities. Larsen's book is in the vanguard of the field of international and comparative education and will be a seminal piece for international educators and practitioners who are interested in reframing the current discussion of internationalization processes.

Larsen defines internationalization as "the expansion of the spatiality of the university beyond borders through mobilities of students, scholars, knowledges, programs, and providers" (p. 10). She then uses her theoretical framework to explore internationalization as it relates to people (Chapters 3-5) curricula (Chapter 6), programs (Chapter 7), and rankings (Chapter 8). In each discussion, she notes that the ability to be internationally mobile is not evenly distributed around the world; often, this (im)mobility falls along axes of racial, class-based, national, religious, and gender identities and is dependent on available resources that are unevenly distributed.

In discussing student and faculty mobility, Larsen challenges traditional linear and binary analysis of movement that utilizes the nation-state as a unit of analysis and instead presents an analysis of flows and social networks. She makes the distinction between credit mobility (short-term study-abroad) and degree mobility. She also notes a relatively new category: educational migration. Larsen posits that the student is embedded within social, political and communication networks and connections, all of which impact their (im)mobility. For example, students who seek degrees outside their country of citizenship can be thwarted due to their national origin or because their local educational system is not validated by other countries. In addition, Larsen highlights how local social networks can encourage or discourage student mobility.

For short-term study-abroad, Larsen highlights the potential negative consequences of study-abroad and international service learning (ISL) programs when they are promoted in the all-to-familiar reductionist and dichotomous framework. She proposes that it is *both* the ISL or study-abroad student *and* the participating hosts who are transformed through a dynamic and symbiotic relationship. She calls on ISL and study-abroad program providers to consider ways in which they can create an "ethical space of engagement" (p. 74). Through her own research on Canadian students participating in an ISL program in Tanzania and Rwanda, she illustrates how such programs can perpetuate stereotypes of the "other" (p. 70) and create "imagined geographies" (p. 66) that ultimately shape the subjectivities of not only the student participants but also the hosts. Her caution against creating study-abroad and ISL programs that (re)produce binary discourses of "core/developed" (p. 42) and "peripheral/developing" (p. 42) and so forth, emerges naturally from her theoretical framework. Finally, in her discussion of scholar (im)mobility, Larsen challenges the notion of "brain drain" (p. 82), or one-way flows of knowledge, and instead suggests that scholar (im)mobility should be seen as knowledge flows or circulation.

Larsen then moves beyond individual actors to show how spatial and mobility analysis can be applied to higher education programs and institutions. She discusses internationalization of the curriculum advising against the binaries of domestic and foreign. Drawing on Jane Knight's (2016) transnational educational (TNE) framework, she discusses the variety of ways in which the university (as an institution and an edifice) becomes transnational. Here, Larsen suggests that with the increasing placelessness of the University, the local context needs to be critically examined because the global is always somebody's local.

In the closing chapter, Larsen highlights not only the problematic nature of global rankings but also the consequences of the culture of ranking in higher education. Global university rankings are based on Western norms developed at elite institutions (that already harbor much social, economic, political, and financial capital) and consider the number of research publications and international faculty and students. This privileges those universities that already have the real material capital to attract esteemed faculty and students who conduct and publish research (often in English). It also creates a feedback loop of self-legitimization and also a form of emulation, in which lower-ranking institutions emulate practices, norms, and/or physical structures of higher-ranked institutions. Ultimately, this leads to a form of educational imperialism and global homogenization.

Larsen's thought-provoking text utilizes current social theory to provide an innovative analysis of the internationalization of higher education. Future research on this topic should consider ways in which Larsen's post-foundational, spatial/network/mobility framework can be expanded to include empirical data collection and analysis to illustrate how her framework enables a more accurate reading of the current higher education global landscape. In addition, program providers and educators alike should consider ways in which they can problematize the widely accepted assumptions of global study-abroad programs that (re)create the dominant binary discourse.

Larsen's book should be considered a fundamental text in the field of international education. It exceeded my expectations and helped me reconsider my own understanding of internationalization and critically reflect on my own transnational identity and privilege.

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