

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN GLOBAL CONTEXTS

*International Education, Community
Partnerships, and Higher Education*

**EDITED BY
JIM BOWMAN AND JENNIFER DEWINTER**

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Introduction

RETHINKING SERVICE LEARNING, CITIZENSHIP, AND DEMOCRACY IN GLOBAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Jim Bowman and Jennifer deWinter

This collection was imagined as one featuring work from scholars in the fields of rhetoric, composition, and literacy studies that would interrogate global partnerships and the structures that shape them. We sought analysis that would question some of the assumptions about reciprocity, equity, and implicitly democratic norms valued by most universities in Western societies. These essays demonstrate the vibrant, collaborative efforts at civic engagement occurring around the world in higher education. Unfortunately, the landscape for global cooperation, exchange, and engagement looks and feels even more uncertain and challenging following the geopolitical tumult manifest in events of 2016 and beyond. The rise of populist, nationalist political movements both in the United States and abroad is a lens through which it is difficult *not* to read these studies and narratives about global civic engagement.

On January 27, 2017, as one of his first actions as president, Donald Trump signed an executive order to ban people of several Muslim majority countries from traveling to the United States. Though the policy has been resisted by many and challenged in courts, it has created a chilling effect on many would-be immigrants and potential visitors, including foreign students (Wall and Carey). Early results of the ban suggest that people are more reluctant to come to the United States than before, and a similar phenomenon appears to be occurring among Americans seeking opportunities abroad. The climate for foreign travel had been deteriorating for years as the fighting in Syria, the subsequent refugee crisis, and years of spectacular attacks by Islamic State fighters around the world has impacted perceptions of safety in foreign travel, whether for academic, professional, or recreational reasons. Though the world was facing great challenges leading up to the US 2016

presidential election, such as violent conflicts in the Middle East and the looming threats posed by the planet's rapidly changing climate, at least structures for cooperation exist to provide some response to these considerable difficulties. As we write this introduction today, the same threats remain, yet the means of unified global response have weakened, and traditional US partnerships, agreements, and understandings have been rendered unstable and in some cases ruptured. The United Kingdom has voted to leave the European Union and seen political chaos in its aftermath; a campaign fueled by demagoguery and nationalistic critiques of "globalism" has also propelled Donald Trump into the presidency; subsequently, US foreign policy has become hostile toward traditional democratic allies in Europe and sought to improve relations with authoritarian regimes in Russia, Turkey, Egypt, the Philippines, and elsewhere; the United States has pulled out of the Paris Agreement and ceded its role as a leader in addressing the challenge of fossil fuel reduction. Within populist, nationalist movements around the world, globalism has become a fashionable—and in many cases, politically effective—target of discontent and a scapegoat for economic stagnation.

Geopolitical backlash against trade and climate agreements appears to have buckled the very landscape of global cooperation. In such a climate, faculty and administration in institutions of higher education face new and greater uncertainties and a host of difficult questions: Is this the time to invest resources in sustaining ongoing relationships between universities and community partners of different countries? Should new relationships and programs be initiated in such a climate? With xenophobia rising around the world, especially in the United States, will people still want to invest in the United States and its colleges and universities?

We want to believe that, now more than ever, the answers to such questions should be a resounding "yes." The essays in this collection certainly demonstrate the value of global engagement and the important role universities can play in connecting people from different societies to respond to twenty-first-century challenges, located in the field of rhetoric and composition but broadly applied in our engaged activities. Global civic engagement has never been the easy path, and the obstacles to forging successful programs appear to be increasing in type and degree.

If we take global civic engagement in the context of higher education to mean the practice and reflection upon academic work and experiences involving intentional, ethical encounters among people and institutions of higher education from different societies, then we

have to acknowledge that these efforts are already too established to disappear; if anything, their value should be confirmed in these times where more, not less, contact and understanding need to be developed and sustained. The works assembled here reassert the value of global cooperation and illustrate the role of universities in efforts to promote global civic engagement—in the form of service learning, foreign study, faculty and student exchanges, and bilateral and transnational projects. These projects have material consequence as practices of everyday life, where we see agency, action, and transformation. Nevertheless, many aspects of such programs continue to struggle with best practices to connect universities and local communities to each other and to partners around the world.

In the decades leading up to our current moment, many US colleges and universities embarked on ambitious projects abroad in an effort to enhance their work in an increasingly globalized world. These efforts have been fueled by both pragmatic and idealistic motives. Some institutions seek to develop a global brand that brings prestige and perhaps even a pipeline of international students to the United States (Pon and Ritchie). Others seek to immerse students in diverse cultural contexts and thus realize college-wide learning goals pertaining to global awareness (Hovland). Yet others develop initiatives that afford students and faculty opportunities to practice civic engagement on a global scale (Bringle et al.). Engagement efforts of this type involve work within international communities that represent service and strive for social change in both professional and educational contexts. Colleges and universities may partner with international NGOs, such as Engineers without Borders, Doctors without Borders, and Presidents United to Solve Hunger (PUSH), the latter in a project described by Patricia Dyer and Tara Friedman in this collection. Community literacy and service learning—with their focus on place-based learning, reciprocity, pragmatic outcomes, and sustainability—appear to make sense as frameworks for such initiatives. These projects demonstrate their efficacy in realizing institutional goals, yet additional effects, not always or entirely positive, are likely to occur for the people and institutions involved. National and international power structures and conflicts can infuse reading, writing, and learning at the level of the individual, local communities, regions, and nations.

Writing and literacy practices remain crucial to the efficacy and ethics of global civic engagement projects. The design of the projects, their outcomes (often written products), and student and community partner reflections become important in measuring impact and success. Thus,

writing programs are particularly well-positioned to contribute meaningfully to civic engagement in higher education in diverse global contexts. Emerging scholarship has productively examined how writing programs and campus-wide initiatives involving writing and learning more broadly operate in comparative contexts (Thaiss et al.). The collection *Transnational Writing Program Administration*, edited by David S. Martins, includes several essays that feature in-depth explanation of how socio-political contexts of universities shape the construction of writing programs. Still, research in these areas is new, and many of the complexities of this work remain under-theorized in important ways. Civic engagement, for instance, is a movement that naturally reflects US neoliberal attitudes and implicit norms of democratic citizenship: service-learning projects and pedagogies may not always travel well given how university, faculty, student, and community relationships may differ markedly across diverse societies with distinct political systems and circumstances.

This collection examines the role of writing, rhetoric, and literacy programs and approaches in the practice of civic engagement in global contexts. Writing programs have experience in civic engagement and service-learning projects in their local communities, and their work is central to developing students' literacy practices. Further, writing programs compel student writers to attend to audience needs and rhetorical exigencies as well as reflect on their own subject positions. Thus, they are particularly situated to partner with other units on college campuses engaged in global partnerships. These types of projects are important and valuable, but only with critical self-reflection and iteration with community partners.

Civic Engagement in Global Contexts provides practical pedagogical and administrative approaches for writing studies faculty engaging with global learning projects, as well as nuanced insight into how to navigate contact zones from the planning stages of projects through to the hard work of self-reflection and change. Partnerships and projects across national borders compel us to think through the ethics of writing studies program design and teaching practices. Doing this difficult work can disrupt presumptive notions of ownership that faculty and administrators hold concerning the fields involved in these projects and can even lead to decentering rhetoric/composition and other assumptions held by US-based institutions of higher education. We organized the chapters loosely around three main groupings: administrative considerations and approaches; US students and international experiences at home and abroad; and service learning and civic engagement pedagogies in non-US contexts. The challenge that any collection has in grouping like

chapters is that there is a lot of overlap between content and themes. Therefore, in the following section, we offer four themes through which this collection can be additionally read and understood:

1. Focusing on students learning global perspectives and communicative competencies through rhetoric and composition practice;
2. Developing faculty while decentering US ideological practices for a more inclusive and ethical engagement in international and global contexts;
3. Understanding how universities can work within and across international contexts and the role that scholars and practitioners in rhetoric and composition can play in facilitating this collaborative approach; and
4. Looking to the ethics and practices of international service learning and community literacy as a geopolitical endeavor.

These four themes run throughout the book, and highlighting them here makes clear the argument that our field's engagement with international service learning and community literacy is an important democratic intervention in the formation of educated citizens who must understand their place in relation to international and global politics, identities, and ethical forms of engagement.

STUDENT LEARNING OF GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCIES

University-wide and program-specific student learning outcomes centered on global knowledge and communicative competencies tend to drive global partnerships and curricula. These outcomes are well-intentioned, as well as inherently abstract. According to the initiative from the American Association of Colleges and Universities titled "Shared Futures: Global and Social Responsibility," created by dozens of faculty from diverse disciplines, students should strive to achieve the following:

1. "Become informed, open-minded, and responsible people who are attentive to diversity across the spectrum of differences
2. Seek to understand how their actions affect both local and global communities
3. Address the world's most pressing local and global issues collaboratively and equitably"

Though ambitious articulations of this sort identify students' behavioral expectations and desired learning outcomes, they provide much less guidance concerning the roles that faculty, students, and administrators

must play in producing such outcomes within complex global learning environments. The task at hand can be daunting. Barnett et al., in “Diversity, Global Citizenship, and Writing Transfer,” suggest the extent of the efforts necessary for success in global civic engagement projects: “To achieve learning outcomes common to . . . articulations of global citizenship and to make these global learning initiatives most effective . . . universities need innovative learning structures and pedagogical approaches to help students make meaning from these encounters with and studies of human difference” (60). The chapters in this collection demonstrate the depth of knowledge among scholars and program administrators working in writing studies, a field that concerns itself with the teaching of critical communication skills and regularly produces academic leaders focused on student learning. Innovation of the sort referenced above compels us to consider the training and knowledge of faculty charged with designing and delivering programs with the capacity to reach such important student learning outcomes.

This collection provides descriptive and theoretical accounts of efforts to support students in developing global perspectives and competencies in and through writing. We have in mind several different contexts. In one common scenario, US colleges and universities sponsor students through foreign study projects and programs, in which students are often tasked with writing prompts that help them develop self-awareness as they engage in diverse global environments (Gindlesparger; Dyer and Friedman). Katie Gindlesparger, in her chapter “The Use of Writing for Transfer in Study Abroad,” takes an intimate look at the capacity of reflective writing to increase the value of foreign study experiences for students by helping them connect the learning with their (future) careers. Her follow-up interviews with foreign study alumni at her professionally oriented institution demonstrate that writing tasks of this sort may fail to do more than reflect students’ relationships toward their future careers. She calls, instead, for a more structured reflection on global learning experiences tied to a dynamic understanding of their future career practices and contexts. In her study, a more critically self-aware understanding of one’s own career path shapes the potential impact on students’ global learning.

Student learners examined in two chapters develop their writing skills as they address US and foreign audiences in order to respond to global challenges facing communities abroad (Dyer and Friedman; deWinter). As they undertake these sorts of personal and professional writing tasks, students face complexities typical of all college writers, yet compounded by the considerable difficulty of writing about and sometimes for

communities with distinctly different cultures, histories, and traditions, especially about learning and higher education. Overcoming these challenges might account for the high impact of international service learning on lifelong learning, which deWinter reports based on a longitudinal study. Similarly, Patricia M. Dyer and Tara Friedman's "Service Learning as an Agent of Local and Global Social Change" operates at the intersection of global civic engagement and literacy studies. Their contribution offers a rich narrative of a multi-year project in the United States and Honduras in which reflective, professional, and academic writing tasks are deployed to support student engagement in addressing global problems that challenge both societies. Writing represents a key component in students' involvement before, during, and after their participation in the project. The tireless efforts of writing faculty have led to substantial cultural shifts on their campus toward global engagement and the promotion of writing, critical thinking, civic engagement, and sustainability.

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND DECENTERING US PRACTICES

Though universities around the world have seen increased interest in writing studies and rhetoric in recent decades, the field itself continues to be a largely US-centered discipline. PhD-granting institutions in rhetoric and composition by and large reside in the United States. As a result, most writing pedagogies reflect US approaches to teaching, writing, and identity formation—hegemonically defined as mostly white and middle-class. In other words, many US-educated writing faculty involved in global civic engagement deploy pedagogies that have emerged from decades of theorizing and practice within predominantly North American contexts. Within universities and communities outside the United States, however, many of these practices—service learning, collaborative learning, reflective writing, and other student-centered pedagogies—may appear to be alien and even at odds with conventional practices within these societies. Thus, they become a potential source of confusion, misunderstanding, and conflict that requires careful coordination and engagement with global partners, a theme that appears throughout this collection. Aksakalova, for example, discusses the political history of education and writing in Russia, cautioning writing teachers and administrators working in non-US contexts to “be mindful of the socio-economic and political forces that shape educational policies and inform the notions of citizenship and civic engagement.” More strongly, Charry Roje reflects on a US satellite campus in Croatia, asserting that

“it seems more imperative than ever to avoid even the perception of paternalistic or neocolonial intentions, particularly in societies unfamiliar with the concept of service learning and skeptical of the efficacy of grassroots social change movements in general.” The very act of working in these international spaces, in other words, functions to challenge and sometimes decenter US-based pedagogies, opening spaces in international collaborations while also transforming US-based or trained faculty in their quotidian practices.

Preparing faculty for these experiences can be as important as engaging students with the literature and theories of contact zones, cosmopolitanism, or voluntourism. While work with communities via service learning and community literacy generally sees the positive effects of sustained, engaged educational practice that energizes all of the stakeholders (cf. Cella; Flower), scholars in the field are already warning about the ethical challenges of working with community partners. For example, Ervin argues in her chapter “Composition and the Gentrification of ‘Public Literacy’” that compositionists professionally and materially benefit from work in public and community literacy, and that we are doing the middle class “gentry” work in reorganizing social orders to the benefit of faculty, students, and institutions (39). This critique rings especially poignant in international community partnerships, which are not always geographically located near the partner institution. The danger, of course, is a type of cultural imperialism, often critiqued in the literature surrounding voluntourism (Banki and Schonell; Wright), which notes that traveling to destinations with the intention of volunteering is often more beneficial to the tourist-volunteer than the hosting community.

Faculty training, then, must be cognizant of the ways in which faculty must be prepared, both for themselves and as ambassadors in different international contexts, as well as fulfilling their student learning objectives in the classroom and around the assigned coursework. Meyers and Zambrano in this collection attend to this challenge by focusing on faculty development, particularly on faculty exchanges between the United States and Mexico. Meanwhile, chapters from both Dyer and Friedman as well as deWinter note that service-learning tours where US institutions are sending US students to volunteer in other nations and nonadjacent communities need long-term commitment from the faculty and institutions. In Dyer and Friedman’s chapter, the authors outline a faculty fellows program that partners US faculty with faculty from Honduras to facilitate student volunteer work in rural areas. DeWinter discusses the logistics of running service-learning programs at over

forty project centers all over the world and engaging over half of the undergraduate body of a small-midsized STEM university in this work. Both discuss the need for focus on faculty training and development through mentorship, and both echo service-learning research that calls for long-term, sustained engagement with these communities through institutionalizing partnerships.

Practically speaking, the best work possible for truly decentering inherently US-centric pedagogies and curricular practices involves commitments beyond those we are trained to imagine. Rather than faculty-to-faculty partnerships, we should be striving to link programs, departments, colleges, and community partners with one another. Rather than semester- or academic year-long projects, we should be building multi-year collaborations that bake in periodic self-reflections of stakeholders seeking to understand and develop sustainable, equitable relationships with one another (see, for example, Cushman; Vogel et al.; Stewart and Alrutz). These prescriptions for success align squarely with what we know to be best practices in service learning and civic engagement. They are also easier said than done, especially given how engrained power dynamics can be between, for example, universities and local communities, as well as between middle-class university students and community partner organizations. Information, perspectives, and resources should be flowing in both directions as these relationships grow and evolve. Further, faculty involved in designing, delivering, and evaluating such transnational collaborations need to continue making their voices heard and sharing their stories in professional conferences and in the journals and forums. As this occurs, more experienced faculty leaders as well as graduate students and ultimately undergraduates can appreciate and acknowledge the (North American) particularity of so much of what we learn and how we learn it. In doing so, each party and person involved can promote and practice better, deeper, more ethical global learning.

UNIVERSITIES WORKING IN AND ACROSS INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES

Global civic engagement is an extension of traditional US university values that see one of the primary purposes of higher education as educating a civically engaged population. In many ways an evolution of John Dewey's civic education, civic engagement has often provided the underpinning of community literacy and service-learning work in rhetoric and composition (Flower; Adler-Kassner et al.; Delano-Oriaran et al.).

Jacoby speaks to this in quoting the Coalition for Civic Engagement and Leadership (2005):

Civic engagement is acting upon a heightened sense of responsibility to one's communities. This includes a wide range of activities, including developing civic sensitivity, participation in building civil society, and benefiting the common good. Civic engagement encompasses the notions of global citizenship and interdependence. Through civic engagement, individuals—as citizens of their communities, their nations, and the world—are empowered as agents of positive social change for a better world. (qtd. in Jacoby 9)

Jacoby builds from this to note that the phrase “civic engagement” is a “‘big tent’ that allows individuals and initiatives representing a range of perspectives to gather beneath it for the purpose of creating a cohesive whole that advances responsibility for the common good” (10). Universities, then, are tasked with educating not just a future, educated workforce but also a thoughtful citizen who can critically define a “good” and find the discursive ethos necessary to work collectively toward that good.

This ideology runs throughout this collection, with writing and rhetoric programs often acting within these university values in engaging students and defining and working with diverse communities. Dewey's philosophies have long influenced rhetoric and composition; writing courses ask students to consider audiences, write with purpose, write reflectively, and write to form an identity for oneself and in relation to others. Thus, multiple essays in this collection ask readers to consider rhetoric and writing practices enacted in non-US locations. Aksakalova challenges the reader to critically engage with writing pedagogy in a Russian university, linking critical thinking and academic integrity to teaching civic responsibility both within the nation-state and within larger international intellectual communities. In other words, values about ideas and plagiarism are as formative in civic consciousness in the underlying logic of knowledge as a sense of “good” might be. Austin, Mauer and Mir, and Charry Roje likewise look to rhetoric and composition pedagogy in non-US sites as a US-trained method to teach civic engagement, service, and ethics to university students in Croatia, Egypt, and Qatar. Such global campuses are in the United States as well, as Licon et al.'s article explores: Their work at The University of Arizona and funded by the Ford Foundation looks to bring together “university colleagues from distinct personal, disciplinary and epistemological backgrounds, [who] share an interest in social justice and transdisciplinarity [to begin] discussion about the possibility for a deliberate move to

experimental approaches to co-teaching, co-research, and co-writing.” The project outlined in this collection engages with Tucson youth, sexual health, and the rhetorics of the body as a form of participatory service learning within the always already international and global context of the US-Mexican border. And as Meier reminds readers in this volume, most classrooms are already international in nature, with non-US citizens in service-learning composition classes and doing work in US communities as international visitors.

While the civic has historically been limited to the civic body in which voting rights were associated (city-states, nation-states, etc.), global interconnectedness through travel, economies, and world problems causes this sense of civic engagement and the common good to necessarily expand. Thus, multiple universities are adopting language concerning global civic engagement in programs or outcomes, such as the University of North Carolina’s Global Civic Engagement program for international service-learning opportunities or Penn State’s statement on civic engagement and its connection to global activities, or the Center for Communication and Civic Engagement at the University of Washington. At the university level, the discourse around global civic engagement tends to fall within four categories:

1. Global service learning with students studying abroad or doing service learning in international contact zones
2. Global problem solving large challenges that transcend geopolitical borders
3. International campuses comprised of faculty, students, and staff from diverse national backgrounds
4. International collaborations between faculty and researchers

Universities are able to claim these activities categorically under global engagement or global impact, extending the reach of the university into other domains, whether or not they have satellite campuses in other nations.

As Deans argues in *Writing Partnerships: Service-Learning in Composition*, writing studies, with its emphasis on engagement, reflection, and social justice, is functionally a complementary outgrowth of the history of higher education in the United States: “Throughout the history of US higher education, service to the community, be it the local, national, or global community, has been integral to the missions of a wide range of colleges and universities, whether motivated by an ethic of public service, a mandate to extend research to the general public, or a commitment to particular religious beliefs” (10–11). What has been true for

universities in general has also been the case for writing programs and English departments. Deans continues,

English studies has a long-standing tradition of concern for social justice. Much of our theory is propelled by commitments to democracy, equality, critical literacy, and multiculturalism. Moreover, much of our classroom practice is motivated by a commitment to prepare all students for reflective and critical participation in their personal, cultural, working, and civic lives. (11)

Ultimately, then, universities benefit from the international and global civic service projects of writing studies and can claim the positive effect on the university brand, the positive impact on faculty, the opportunities for students, and the long-term positive influences on alumni, communities, and the learning situations.

Unsurprising, then, is that rhetoric and composition scholars participate in university initiatives vis-à-vis global civic engagement and international service learning. If not run within a rhetoric and composition program directly, what we see in this collection is rhetoric and composition scholars fully involved in university-wide programs, bringing with them expertise in writing and reflection within the often-challenging situations of non-university communities or international contact zones. In this collection, for example, Gindlesparger discusses a summer study tour in Europe, focusing on student learning and writing development, but also on faculty development. DeWinter's chapter looks to a different model—service learning with community partners in international contexts—and presents the assessment data on learning outcomes in writing, communication, engagement with the project, and ethics. Important in this chapter is not just what students and faculty learn in the process of international service learning but also the long-term impact on alumni surveyed years after graduation. Meyers and Zambrano's chapter pivots from students abroad to discuss the need for faculty development at the level of international exchange of faculty, with the United States and Mexican universities sending faculty to one another's campuses to learn, engage, and build sustainable relationships. Such an exchange is beneficial to faculty and the university profile. While desirable positive effects on faculty and universities can energize such projects, Bowman's chapter reminds readers that the often volatile politics of different geopolitical regions can disrupt well-planned exchanges in his discussion of past Fulbright-Hayes trips, and, more recently, his abandoned Fulbright grant to Turkey in response to growing unrest in the country.

Read as a collection about writing studies within larger university missions concerning global activities and presence, what emerges in this

collection is a series of activities and projects that can be adapted for different university contexts. The chapters provide evidence that writing and reflection are beneficial to both students and faculty in defining themselves within global communities. They offer thoughtful interrogation of the challenges of international research and engagement, both theoretically and in everyday practices. Pulling from Marginson's 2011 work that imagines a "networked and more egalitarian university world patterned by communication, collegiality, linkages, partnerships and global consortia" (422), Boni and Calabuig imagine that higher education "may foster a democratization of knowledge, which implies the participation of more and more actors in the social construction of reality" (23). Here, the authors in this collection support the university's role in building a cosmopolitan worldview through engagement, audience empathy, reflection, and writing by bringing to bear the theories and practices of rhetoric and composition to their quotidian engagement with international and global communities.

EDUCATION AS A (GEO)POLITICAL ENDEAVOR

As should be clear from this introduction, the civic engagement work of US-based writing studies programs represents political work undertaken with a goal of developing critically literate national citizens. The shift to global civic engagement alters the dynamic and needs to account for how we imagine citizenship, especially if we explicitly aspire to producing not just national citizens but global citizens. In many ways, each contribution to this collection speaks to this challenge. The matter of so-called global citizenship—a well-intentioned if ill-defined cousin to cosmopolitanism—carries potential value and deserves more attention than can be provided here. The larger concern in considering political dimensions of global civic engagement is that too often our work either neglects to consider, or insufficiently examines, how citizenship differs across borders and national contexts. Yet participation in a democracy has always been tied to the political and national structures of other countries—now more so than ever. As we understand ourselves better, we may hope to come to know others across important lines of difference.

Civic engagement and service-learning projects are always inherently political, and sometimes explicitly so. A closer look inward at the cultural dynamics of writing programs demonstrates the political nature of their work for not just students and faculty but the institutions themselves, especially in the context of community service. Our field

knows rhetorical education and composition involve political literacy and action. Such edited collections as *Going Public* attest to how much attention has been devoted to citizenship and public writing within writing programs and higher education. In his chapter from *Going Public*, “Infrastructure Outreach and the Engaged Writing Program,” Jeffrey Grabill argues that writing programs “constitute a powerful and potentially transformative infrastructure for outreach and engagement. Transformative for students and teachers certainly, but—just as importantly—transformative for universities as a location for high impact experiences and not ‘merely’ service” (16). How might universities, which are committed already to a mission of serving students as well as local and global communities, be transformed by this work? Outreach and service have been typically undervalued by institutions, due in no small part to a failure in imagination. Grabill understands writing programs as “emergent” and capable of value beyond conventional place-based ways of thinking. Instead, the value comes in producing work made possible through relationships to other departments, programs, communities, and, in the case of the global projects outlined in this book, in exposure to different national contexts, traditions, and people, especially in the current epoch of populism. The contributions of Meyers and Zambrano, Dyer and Friedman, and deWinter highlight how crucial these relationships among institutions can be to students and programs. In the context of global civic engagement, these exposures to difference carry a value intrinsically linked to the content and skills of project work.

Writing programs emerge from a particular political space and reflect cultural assumptions about what constitutes a public or a community—as well as which priorities higher education institutions should focus on in their efforts to develop students. Shamooin and Medeiros’s chapter “Not Politics as Usual: Public Writing as Writing for Engagement” illustrates how democratic norms concerning public space and citizenship are embedded within US culture and its institutions of higher education. Thus, these interests need to be carefully accounted for in the work US universities imagine engaging in with global partners. They note that, “public writing . . . focuses squarely on another common goal of writing for engagement, namely writing for civic and political engagement in the community. . . . Many service-learning organizations embrace civic responsibility or the development of social responsibility and citizenship skills as an important outcome of the community engagement experience” (Shamooin and Medeiros 178–179). This explicit attention on the citizen goes so far as to posit that courses in their writing program with

a public writing and community engagement focus will “position students firstly as citizens in a democracy who have the potential for political agency” (179). Even within universities in the United States, where noncitizen residents and international students represent a not insignificant number of the university population, this assumption should be recognized more openly as problematic—a point that is evident when examining, for example, Joyce Meier’s compelling contribution to this collection on her community-based learning project involving international students at her university. Not all societies are democratic, not all democracies are comparable, and the rewards of democratic cultures are never distributed equitably within societies. Global partnerships of today and into the future extend across US borders into a world where democratic norms and protected public speech cannot be taken for granted. Most of the projects described in this collection involve collaborations between institutions of the United States and societies where democratic politics and public speech are either absent or not vigorously protected. Chapters in this book by Austin, Licona et al., Mauer and Mir, Aksakalova, Charry Roje, and Bowman testify to the complexity and range of diverse political cultures that faculty and students experience in global community-based learning work. Project design itself needs to be ready to address such differences in assumption that undoubtedly affect the terms and nature of engagement.

CONCLUSION

As we review this collection in its entirety, we are reminded that scholars in rhetoric and composition, as in other fields, have rightly directed attention to place, especially in the context of service learning and civic engagement. Ashley Holmes’s *Public Pedagogy in Composition Studies* demonstrates the deep historical links between higher education and its local communities. She advocates for more public writing in partnership with communities, while recognizing how such work is often fraught with political conflict as students and universities engage with partners in projects where differences over values, resources, language practices, and worldviews can be commonplace. Like Grabill’s work, she posits a transformative power to public pedagogy and civic engagement initiatives, rationalized according to feminist ethics: “public pedagogies attempt to shift the loci of power and authority, positioning students and community partners as teachers and teachers as learners, blurring traditionally defined roles” (Holmes 150). Obviously, community-based learning projects of this sort would represent inherently political work

in any context. Across lines of difference, the multiple sources of conflict are likely to be configured in ways we may struggle to recognize, requiring sensitive cultural preparation and stakeholder buy-in, extensive ongoing project support, and critical self-reflection of students, faculty, and administrators. Failure to approach such work in these ways could easily exacerbate the underlying problems that fuel increased authoritarianism, nationalism, and populism.

It is with this political warning ringing in our ears that we edited this volume, the purpose of which is to provide a praxis of engagement in such international civic endeavors. While we have provided multiple thematic ways to read with this volume, each chapter can be taken on its own—case studies of driving ideologies, motivations, and commitments from our field that speak to challenges of globalization and internationalization in our times. Such a case study approach, too, offers an opportunity for us as editors and for any reader to compare the chapters, seeing homologies as well as important variations that are bound up in location, time, and the political structure of the situation. They invite us to imagine possibilities for our own future teaching, to reflect on our own engagement with students and with local and global community stakeholders, and to grow as scholars and educators through shared practice.

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