

Cervinkova, Hana

International learning communities for global and local citizenship

European journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults 2 (2011) 2, S. 181-192



Quellenangabe/ Reference:

Cervinkova, Hana: International learning communities for global and local citizenship - In: European journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults 2 (2011) 2, S. 181-192 - URN: urn:nbn:de:0111-opus-51150 - DOI: 10.25656/01:5115

<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0111-opus-51150>

<https://doi.org/10.25656/01:5115>

in Kooperation mit / in cooperation with:



<http://www.ep.liu.se>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Gewährt wird ein nicht exklusives, nicht übertragbares, persönliches und beschränktes Recht auf Nutzung dieses Dokuments. Dieses Dokument ist ausschließlich für den persönlichen, nicht-kommerziellen Gebrauch bestimmt. Die Nutzung stellt keine Übertragung des Eigentumsrechts an diesem Dokument dar und gilt vorbehaltlich der folgenden Einschränkungen: Auf sämtlichen Kopien dieses Dokuments müssen alle Urheberrechtshinweise und sonstigen Hinweise auf gesetzlichen Schutz beibehalten werden. Sie dürfen dieses Dokument nicht in irgendeiner Weise abändern, noch dürfen Sie dieses Dokument für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, aufführen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.

Terms of use

We grant a non-exclusive, non-transferable, individual and limited right to using this document.

This document is solely intended for your personal, non-commercial use. Use of this document does not include any transfer of property rights and it is conditional to the following limitations: All of the copies of this documents must retain all copyright information and other information regarding legal protection. You are not allowed to alter this document in any way, to copy it for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the document in public, to perform, distribute or otherwise use the document in public.

By using this particular document, you accept the above-stated conditions of use.

Kontakt / Contact:

peDOCS
DIPF | Leibniz-Institut für Bildungsforschung und Bildungsinformation
Informationszentrum (IZ) Bildung
E-Mail: pedocs@dipf.de
Internet: www.pedocs.de

Mitglied der


Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

International learning communities for global and local citizenship

Hana Cervinkova

University of Lower Silesia, Poland (hana@post.pl)

Abstract

In this paper, I describe our ongoing international project in engaged educational ethnography and participatory action research with young adults and consider its relevance for a discussion on the community-building role of adult education in a globalized context. I use the example of our case study to suggest that adult educators can generate viable communities by creating learning spaces that nurture critical consciousness, a sense of agency, participation and social solidarity among internationally and culturally diverse young adult learners. Furthermore, I argue that participation in international learning communities formed through this educational process can potentially help young adults become locally and globally engaged citizens. International learning communities for global citizenship thus present a proposition for conceptualizing the vital role of adult community education in supporting democratic global and local citizenship in a world defined in terms of cross-cultural and long-distance encounters in the formation of culture.

Keywords: international learning communities; globalization; citizenship; participatory action research (PAR)

Introduction

In this paper, I take a position on the central theme of this special issue of RELA, whose editors invite discussion around two divergent orientations regarding adult education and community building (Wildemeersch & Kurantowicz, 2010). On the one hand adult education is seen by many as an instrument of community building, perceived as the process of strengthening shared identity and the restoring of social cohesion through the increase of social capital (Field, 2003; Putnam, 2000). In their analyses of contemporary societies, the proponents of this approach focus on what they perceive is a disintegration of the traditional social fabric caused by the decline of associational life accompanied

by the increased individualization and multiculturalism of present-day societies. Based on these popular theories, today's policy makers call for the restoration of the vision of a community based on shared interests and cultural harmony. On the other hand there are those who argue against this view of the rational cohesive community and propose that we should view present-day communities in terms of plurality and difference (Amin, 2005; Lingis, 1994). Proponents of this approach promote the concept of adult education as the deliberate process of creating public spaces, where issues can be debated from different positions. Hence, pedagogy for community building is not about the strengthening of the homogeneity of opinion and shared interest among people. Instead, it consists of creating public spaces where individual identities can be interrupted by the presence and opinion of various 'others' and where divergent issues can be democratically debated. One could say that a community consists of the ongoing practice of democracy and the role of adult and community education is to support this practice through the creation of learning spaces and opportunities.

I want to argue for the relevance of this latter concept of community education, which supports the articulation of difference in the process of democratic learning rather than the search for and enforcement of the commonality of attitudes and identities. I will support my position through reflection on an ongoing international project in engaged educational ethnography and participatory action research with young adults, which we have been conducting for the last three years in the Polish city of Wrocław.

Based on this work, I will argue that adult educators can help generate viable communities by creating learning spaces for internationally and culturally diverse learners with the goal of helping them become engaged local and global citizens. Such learning spaces are formed through an educational process that supports critical consciousness, sense of agency, participation and social solidarity across national and cultural boundaries. International learning communities, I want to propose, are a viable response of adult and community education to the current conditions of a globalizing world, permeated as it is by what Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (2004) calls 'frictions' - moments and spaces of contemporary global connections, where universal aspirations get enacted in the 'sticky materiality of practical encounters' (Tsing, 2004, p. 1). Firstly, I will explain the main theoretical and methodological concepts underpinning our work and secondly, I will describe the pedagogical project in engaged educational ethnography and participatory action research. In the conclusion, I will return to the reflection on the relevance of our work and its conceptualization and to the discussion on adult and community education's role in contemporary community building.

Key concepts and methodology

This work is located at the intersection of several theoretical and methodological traditions. In my concept of the international learning community, I draw primarily on the legacy of the learning community movement that began in the 1980s at institutions of higher education in the United States and has since expanded to include a wide variety of educational strategies. Following a useful definition of Smith, MacGregor, Matthews and Gabelnick (2004), learning communities are an educational approach that clusters two or more courses around an interdisciplinary theme or problem that is studied by a common group of students. 'Learning communities', they argue, 'represent an intentional restructuring of students' time, credit, and learning experiences to build community, enhance learning and foster connections among students, faculty and disciplines. At their best, learning communities practise pedagogies of active

engagement and reflection ... [and often] integrate academic work with out-of-class experience' (p. 20). In expanding the term to its international dimension, I am inspired on the one hand by the tradition of undergraduate international education in the United States, especially the work of the anthropologist Ellen Skilton-Sylvester and her colleagues at Arcadia University who have been working successfully to open undergraduate educational requirements to include experiences in local, international and cross-cultural contexts (Skilton-Sylvester, 2010; Shultz, Skilton-Sylvester & Shultz, 2007). In addition, I draw on the critical and action-oriented work of those educational anthropologists who insist on the need to change our notions of citizenship education to reflect intercultural and international diversity and thus work towards more just and open notions of citizenship and belonging in the global context (Abu El-Haj, 2007, 2009; Levinson, 2005). Based on these interdisciplinary inspirations, I define international learning communities as a pedagogy of building learning spaces that foster a shared learning experience by culturally and internationally diverse groups of learners in the course of an interdisciplinary educational process that seeks to cultivate social solidarity, critical consciousness, sense of agency and participation toward engaged local and global citizenship. In our methodology, we are inspired by the long interdisciplinary tradition of participatory action research and the American school of engaged educational ethnography. Characterized by a diversity of schools and practices that Reason and Bradbury call 'family of approaches' (Reason & Bradbury, 2006, p. xxii), we define participatory action research (PAR) as an approach that advances the potential of social research to support cultural and social change and people's emancipation through knowledge by bringing together social theory and practice, by blurring the boundaries between subjects and objects, by supporting participative methods of learning and social inquiry and by promoting social engagement and participation as integral elements of research and educational practice. As a fundamentally post-positivist approach, PAR presents a '*radical epistemological challenge*' to the traditions of social science, most critically on the topic of where knowledge resides' (Fine, 2008, p. 15).

Our work is also strongly grounded in the tradition of engaged educational ethnography (Camarota, 2008; Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991; Levinson & Holland, 1996; Spindler, 1999, 2002; Trueba, 1993; Willis, 1977, 1981). We are particularly inspired by the work of those engaged educational anthropologists who have combined in their approach the anthropological method with PAR to motivate practical community-based emancipatory action (Abu El-Haj, 2007, 2009; Camarota, 2008; Camarota & Fine, 2008; Guajardo, Guajardo & Casaperalta, 2008; Lipman, 2005; Trueba, 1993). In their work and in ours, the goal of the anthropological method and research is not the accumulation of ethnographic data by an academic anthropologist/ethnographer in order to produce an interpretation of the observed cultural reality. Instead, the anthropological method is understood as an engaged empirical field-based practice strongly grounded in critical observation, reflection and production, which is shared by a group of expert and non-expert researchers who use the knowledge gained in the process to act upon socio-cultural reality. The anthropological method is, therefore, a learning process which brings the researcher and the researched together in an empirical encounter that has a transformative and possible emancipatory potential.

The data for this article come from my work as an ethnographer, organizer, teacher and participant action-researcher during three sessions of an annual month-long international undergraduate summer program. During the three sessions (2008, 2009, 2010), I have closely worked with 43 American, Polish and Ukrainian students with

whom I have spent more than 250 hours in both formal and informal learning environments. I use both mine and my colleague's analysis of the primary material we have collected - both written (reflection papers, working session results, emails and on-line communication before and after the course), verbal (observations and recording of students' interactions) and non-verbal (ethnographic observations, recording and reflection on key moments in the ethnographic and action process). As is common in action-research projects, my role as a researcher has been blurred with that of the students' teacher and mentor on the one hand, and co-participant and practitioner on the other hand. Consequently, in this paper, I draw on my observations and analysis of the action-research process in which I was participating together with my colleague and my students.

Creating spaces of learning in the spaces of memory

The students...

Our project, which we have organized and participated in for three years now, is an international summer seminar for advanced undergraduate students mostly from the United States and Central Europe.¹ The program was born out of a co-operative agreement between an institute which I founded at the private college where I work – The University of Lower Silesia in Wrocław-and a public university, The College of Brockport that is part of the SUNY system in the state of New York. Every July, a small group of 10-20 American and international students come together in Wrocław for one month to take part in an intensive learning program for which they receive up to 6 credits at their home institutions. Students usually are at junior or senior levels (even though it is not unusual for us to have freshmen and exceptionally also graduate participants) and they frequently come from one of the SUNY honors programs. Many of the students have never been abroad before, an overwhelming majority had no knowledge of Poland before coming on the program and they usually have no foreign language skills. They are accompanied by a faculty member from Brockport who does not take an active teaching role. Students live together in a college dormitory, but must be self-reliant in terms of food, moving around the city by public transportation and in all daily extra-curricular activities or needs. Wrocław is a lively historic city of over 650,000 inhabitants and a learning center with 23 academic institutions and 135,000 students during the school year. That means, there is a lively entertainment environment and there are usually several international festivals or events that coincide with the summer course. Outside of the classroom time, students, who usually come from smaller urban or rural communities in the US, take an active part in the life of this large European urban hub.

The city...

A key feature of the city which is the setting for our program and which we have come to call an *urban laboratory* is tied to its unusual heritage. Apart from its multicultural traditions in its 1,000-year history, the city has been governed and settled by different nations, e.g. Polish, Czech, Austrian and German. Wrocław in the post-war years underwent a total population change. Due to the post-war settlements in Yalta and Potsdam, German Breslau became overnight Polish Wrocław as a result of the redrafting of the European map and the marking of the infamous Oder-Neisse line. This geo-political act has produced enormous human suffering that involved the mass

displacement and ethnic cleansing of peoples of different nations and ethnic origins. As the largest city in the territories acquired by Poland through the Westward shifting of its borders, Wrocław has become a particularly highly charged setting, a center of official propaganda whose goal was to erase the German past and replace it through a program of Polonization (Davies & Moorhouse, 2002; Siebel-Achenbach, 1994; Stern, 2006; Thum, 2003a, 2003b).

The outcomes of WWII are perceivable in Wrocław to the present day. Modern Wrocław is trying to figure out its own narrative, breaking the moulds of the Communist period's view of its history, including an awkward openness to its German past. In a somewhat ironic twist (not uncommon in Central Europe), the politically driven containment of the communist period has been replaced by a market-driven discourse of containment that builds on the literalism of multiculturalism (Thum, 2005). In this new discourse of containment, today's almost exclusively Polish Wrocław is being portrayed as a multi-cultural metropolis of the Polish borderlands. The language of multicultural Wrocław has acquired a life of its own, pervading official guidebooks, promotional materials and public and popular discourse.² Beyond literalisms, however, we find an overwhelmingly homogenous Catholic, white Polish community which is only now slightly becoming to any extent multicultural through 'expats' moving to the city on mostly temporary assignments as a part of foreign investment schemes.

The pedagogical program

It is in this context that our program takes place. Against the various finite discourses of multicultural city and simplified interpretations of its German and Polish legacies, we run a project that builds on an understanding of Wrocław as a changing organism constantly created and re-created through urban practices, in which we as educators should take an active part (Certeau, 1984; Cervinkova, 2006; Hayden, 1999). Striving against a simplified discourse of multiculturalism, we work within this urban space, digging through the layers of the past and its various interpretations, to lead students to an informed and complex understanding of cultural and historic processes at play in the making of the city.

In the course of the seminar, we pass, together with our students, through several stages of learning, which all build on the development of emancipatory and critical faculties through the nurturing of ethnographic competencies with their emphasis on seeing and text production. Each year, we tailor a unique calendar of classes and working sessions focused on a selected area of the city - known as the research area - and built around a series of meetings with a triad of stakeholders tied to this urban space. In this syllabus-building phase, an important part of our work as teachers is the preparatory work with our stakeholders - academics and experts, local authorities and active residents who are all tied to the research area. The goal is to define the focus and potential of their work and knowledge for our ethnographic learning sessions. In some ways we are involved in the initiation of a dialogue with individuals who become the future lecturers for our students, a dialogue which involves a great deal of cultural translating, which we continue to carry on throughout the course of the seminar. In the following section, I will describe our pedagogical program which is grounded in engaged educational ethnography and participatory action research:

1. The actual seminar begins with a strong initial 'into-the-deep-end' session, which takes place in a highly symbolic and monumental urban site - the UNESCO listed Modernist masterpiece, Centennial Hall. Students, who have no previous knowledge of the significance or meaning of this overwhelming space, are asked to make individual

observations, which they later ‘download’ collectively in the classroom setting. Then we, as teachers, through lectures with a strong visual element, place Centennial Hall within the larger context of the history and current debates over the meaning of the material culture of Wrocław’s spaces. The experiential site visit together with the subsequent visually strong presentations and intertwined with historic knowledge produce an effect that educational anthropologists have come to call cultural therapy (Spindler, 1999, 2002; Trueba, 1993; Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991). Spindler argued that through ethnographic observation, one could penetrate the unconscious assumptions of culture (illusions) that falsify the cultural reality behind them. Educational ethnographers can use critical insight to help students uncover layers of false perceptions in order to arrive at their true expectations for themselves. The effect of our cultural therapy is two-fold:

1. On the one hand, students realize that the apparently Polish urban spaces are morphed material remains of, broadly speaking, German culture. In connection with the historical knowledge about post-war settlements and population transfers, (lecture material and assigned academic texts) this realization inevitably produces a shock effect not dissimilar to the dialectic ‘flash’ described so eloquently by Walter Benjamin (1968). As I have argued elsewhere, it is such moments of intellectual reflection evoked by the material remains of the past that produce strong learning effects (Cervinkova, 2006).
 2. The students are made aware of the power of observation and the need to see. By seeing we mean the critical ability to penetrate illusions consisting of omissions and erasures of histories. Seeing is thus tied to memory, and the act of bringing to consciousness elements of the forgotten past.
2. The next phase of our work is the launching of the cultural production process (Willis, 1981; Levinson & Holland, 1996; Cammarota, 2008). At this stage, students are informed that they are going to receive an official tour of their research area, which will be the focus of their action and cultural production work, i.e. the creation of a self-guided tour for future tourists. They are then guided through the pre-selected research area by a representative of the official national tourist organization that monopolizes the Polish tourist guide market. Similarly to the first cultural therapy session in Centennial Hall, we do not prepare students for the experience. Likewise, the tour guide is completely unaware that our students are not just regular tourists.

Having taught the course for over three years, we are able to observe a pattern of behavior among our students, who begin the tour passionately taking notes trying desperately to keep up with the flood of historic dates, facts and disjointed information delivered in poor English, only to later become bored, disinterested drifters who are no longer able to process the applicability of the information to their assignment of creating their own tourist program. The subsequent working session consists of group work creating a collective SWOT analysis defining the strengths and weaknesses of the tour as well as the opportunities and threats of the research area. We observe students suddenly emboldened or empowered by their ability to critically analyze their tourist experience and the realization of the existence of an information gap that they suddenly realize they can fill through their own ethnographic research and cultural products. This observation is consistent with the experienced effects of cultural production defined by Willis (1977, 1981) and other theorists who claim that ‘through the production of cultural forms...subjectivities form and agency develops’ (Levinson & Holland, 1996, p. 14).

3. During the next two and a half weeks, the heart of the research seminar, students launch their own dialogues through meetings with representatives of our triad of

stakeholders. At this stage, my colleague and I become active learners vis-à-vis the stakeholders who are the sources of information about the research area, but we are also very active in helping to translate these sessions for the students - both linguistically (from Polish into English) and also culturally (discussing with students what they have learned, helping them identify key issues). Our focus on forging a learning process through dialogic exchange rather than one of directional inquiry comes from our effort to build our strategy on a dialogic cooperative approach, which deconstructs the borderlines between subjects and objects of research in the construction of knowledge (Freire, 1993; Fals-Borda, 2001; Reason & Bradbury, 2006).

4. Approximately half way through the seminar, we begin to work with the students in a concentrated working session focused on the production of the final cultural product. An essential conceptual element of this work is our highly intentional insistence on the layered collective nature of students work. Both American and Polish students come into the classroom with strong individualistic competitive tendencies. This became clear to us in the first year of our seminar when we divided our participants into two independent groups researching two different areas of the city. The members of the groups soon developed a strong rivalry, which we felt was detrimental to the democratic pedagogical process we were trying to forge, the outcome of which among other things is a strengthened potential for social solidarity and a learning community. Therefore, since then we make sure to pay attention to the development of healthy group dynamics which strengthens students' collaborative skills without compromising their individual creativity and drive to achieve excellence.

In this atmosphere of collective production, students decide on a path, which is the backbone of their self-guided tours and they negotiate the main theme reflected in the title of the tour as well as the meaning and importance of individual stops on the way. They divide themselves into smaller working groups in which they write segments of the tour and they also take pictures and prepare illustrations. Every stage of the production process is guided by us as teachers and mentors, but the content is collectively negotiated and decided upon by the students. The product of our collective effort is a branded local product called *Wroclaw self-guided tours: international students' projects in Wroclaw*, which is distributed as promotional material by public sector institutions, but is also sold at break-even prices at the local tourist information offices. We have created a website where the project is presented and guides can be accessed for online reading in animation formats or for free-of-charge downloads of the PDF versions - www.wroclawonyourown.pl. So far, we have four areas of the city covered in this unique way, and each year we add a new guide to the collection.

5. A key element providing closure to our pedagogical process are student presentations delivered in the city hall and open to the public and the media. These formal stagings are followed by student-led tours through their research area. This highly performative element of the seminar provides a further opportunity for students to present their different skills and become engaged and emotionally involved which significantly increases the chances for learning (Cammarota, 2008; Higgins, 2001; Pedelty, 2001). Because of the presentations' collective and public nature, the students' performances further foster their collaborative and mutual support skills and at the same time, strengthen their social and intellectual development. Perhaps most importantly, however, through this final act of performance, students transform the once foreign reality into their own world (the city - once foreign and strange, becomes 'theirs' through knowledge they have processed in the course of action ethnographic work). Through the collective processing of knowledge and its expression through performance, they become empowered intercultural agents in a fieldwork context. The

work that they leave behind has the potential to transform the tourist experience for future visitors to this Central European city. Because of its public visibility and exposure, their work can also challenge accepted versions of local identity narratives.

International communities of learning

Students, after the completion of the seminar, claim to have been changed by the experience. Tied to this 'home-away-from-home' albeit temporary and due to the intensive experience and knowledge acquired, they learn from the local urban space in which they are submerged to see differently. They also learn from each other. Importantly, as one can infer from the comments they make during their stay and in their reflection papers written later, students (turned anthropologists) become involved in acts of cultural critique (Marcus & Fischer, 1986), moving dialogically between their home and the foreign culture, extending the life of what they have learned while in the learning community to so that it has an impact in time and space.

Anna, one of the American students, for example, used the language of affection to express the core of her learning experience: '[O]ver the course of my recent one-month stay in Wrocław, Poland, I fell in love. I have never had this feeling toward Rochester – the city I grew up in.' In an effort to find the reasons for this surprising realization, she identifies two causes - first-hand contact with material history and knowledge learned:

One reason for this is the notion of material history. ... It is the touchable aspects of the past that help people remember and connect with history. Although material history is only the stepping stone to understanding, one must also gather at least some kind of knowledge of the surroundings and be able to interpret what they see around them. During my stay in Wrocław I attended many lectures about Wrocław's past. Starting with the creation of the city, I learned about how often the power of the city changed hands between nations. By studying the historical creation of the city, one begins to understand why the city is laid out as it is, refuting the understanding that it is not only a chaos of buildings but that it actually follows a precise, creative pattern.

And in the conclusion, she returns to the theme of emotions and love, which she eloquently connects to learning and seeing:

I have lived in Rochester my entire life and yet I do not feel 'tied' to this city as deeply as I felt after spending a month in Wrocław, Poland. By having this experience, not only did I learn a lot about the city of Wrocław, but I also learned a lot about myself. Since returning home, I have been about to have a better understanding and deeper respect of my heritage, of which (sic) I am of Polish descent, and the struggles that my ancestors went through. This experience has opened my eyes to a world I was living in but not actually seeing. (Anna³, American student, August 2010)

Anna's emphasis on seeing evoked through emotions and learning is an important reflection on our method in which we emphasize the importance of ethnographic vision as a powerful, highly localized, and radically partial perspective, and a source of knowledge that can, in turn, serve as a means of empowerment (Harding, 1987; Haraway, 1998; Marcus & Fischer, 1986). Such understanding of knowledge makes it the subject of learning for all parties involved in the research experience, which involves cycles of reflection, critique and joint action toward social change. This cycle is of course common in the tradition of participatory action research (Fals-Borda, 2001; McTaggart, 1997). By learning to see the material world around them through

knowledge and transformative action, students can acquire essential critical faculties that extend the effects of the learning community, formed in Wroclaw, to their life back home - turning them, as we may only hope, into more engaged local and global citizens.

During the course of their learning experience, students also learn from each other and their learning community. This aspect has been brought up by John who became known for his long Proustian explorations of the city, usually in the company of other students that he had invited:

Nearly every night I would explore the city, with or without company. ... Why do I think it is necessary to explore? I argue that it is important not only to explore and seek the unknown in any given environment, but to bring those who are close to you with you.

Later in the paper, drawing on the work of Walter Benjamin (Arendt, 1968), he provides an explanation of the connection between the community-building character of his wanderings and individual and collective memory:

While having great times and experiencing lots is important, it is equally important to remember what you have seen. Benjamin states in his book *Illuminations* that 'an experienced event is finite - at any rate, confined to one sphere of experience; a remembered event is infinite, because it is only a key to everything that happened before it and after it.' It is for this reason that I thought it was important to share my explorations with other people. While a camera can capture most things visually, but sharing the explorations, I was able to possess my own personal memories and also listen to and share in the group's collective memory. This allowed me to remember more things from each trip. Additionally, there are many things that a camera cannot capture such as sounds, feelings and emotions. For these things, other people are needed. ... One benefit of the program in Poland was that everyone, even those who normally wouldn't be adventurers, was forced to explore the environment around them. This meant that everyone in the group had similarities which bonded us together.

In his reflection, John brings out the interplay between collective memory and the community-grounded character of learning. Remembering through collective memory strengthens our learners' capacity to extend the local character of their learning community to its international and global dimension. In addition, of course, the work that these mostly American students leave behind impacts on future visitors' reading of the Central European city and influences local narratives of history long after the students have returned home or travelled to other places in the world. As such, the international learning community - a democratic space of learning produced through a pedagogical process, is our response as educators to the challenges of community and adult education in the globalizing world.

Conclusions

Recent anthropological and educational research points to the inadequacy of traditional citizenship education to respond to the challenges faced by people and communities in the context of the geopolitical complexities and conflicts under the processes of globalization. In her recent ethnographic work with Arab-American youth, for example, anthropologist Thea Abu El-Haj shows the multiple levels of exclusion experienced by Arab-Americans following the September 11 attacks on the World-Trade Centre (and the ensuing War on Terror) and the failure of the school-based citizenship education to nurture a sense of belonging and inclusion in this community of American citizens. She

points to the need to develop new forms of critical citizenship education and civic participation that challenges 'universal, abstract notions of citizenship that focus on legal status, and instead foreground the different ways that people are positioned in relation to the resources necessary for full participation in the social, political, and economic spheres' (Abu El-Haj, 2007, p. 310).

The tradition of critical global and international education actively seeks to respond to these global challenges by creating opportunities for students to experience and critically reflect on global realities by exploring local contexts (Skilton-Sylvester, 2010; Shultz, Skilton-Sylvester & Shultz, 2007). Our pedagogical project presented in this paper - international learning communities - is an example of such educational practice. Because of its methodological framing based on participatory action research and engaged educational ethnography, it nurtures not only critical but also activist and engaged faculties among young adult learners. As such, international learning communities - a pedagogy of building learning spaces that foster shared learning experiences by culturally and internationally diverse groups of learners - helps to cultivate social solidarity, critical consciousness, a sense of agency and participation toward engaged local and global citizenship.

Theorists of globalization point out the intersectional (Appadurai, 1996) or even frictional (Tsing, 2004) character of current cultural processes in the world. Under globalization, we can hardly continue pretending that cultures are neatly packaged products of isolated processes. Cultures, identities and communities are continuously produced in spaces and moments of cross-cultural and long-distance encounters - be they flowing or frictional: 'Cultures are continually co-produced in the interactions I call 'friction': the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference' (Tsing, 2004, p. 2). To be effective, a legitimate approach to adult and community education should take into account this interactional character of cultural processes. An international learning community is a proposition for conceptualizing the role for community education in a world defined in terms of cross-cultural and long-distance encounters in the formation of culture. It is a proposition that builds on the continued relevance of critical community and action-inspired pedagogy, strongly grounded in local work and aimed at helping people learn and act in an increasingly disempowering world, regardless of their culture of origin or that of their current or future residence.

Notes

¹ The ethnographic section of the present article was in part co-written by my colleague and fellow teacher Juliet Golden and presented at the biennial convention of the European Association of Social Anthropologists held at Maynooth, Ireland (August 24 - 27, 2010).

² See, for example, the official English-language web page of the Municipality of Wrocław, called, 'Multicultural Metropolis', at <http://www.um.wroc.pl/m6850/>.

³ I have changed the students' names for reasons of anonymity.

References

- Abu El-Haj, T.R. (2007). 'I Was Born here, but My Home, It's Not Here': Educating for Democratic Citizenship in an Era of Transnational Migration and Global Conflict. *Harvard Educational Review*, 77(3), 285-316.
- Abu El-Haj, T.R. (2009). Imagining Postnationalism: Arts, Citizenship Education, and Arab American Youth. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 40(1), 1-19.

- Amin, A. (2005). Local Community on Trial. *Economy and Society*, 34(4), 612-633.
- Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at Large*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Arendt, H. (Ed.). (1968). *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Benjamin, W. (1968). Theses on the Philosophy of History. In H. Arendt (Ed.), *Illuminations* (pp. 253-264). New York: Schocken Books.
- Cammarota, J. (2008). The Cultural Organizing of Youth Ethnographers: Formalizing a Praxis-Based Pedagogy. *Anthropology & Educational Quarterly*, 39(1), 45-58.
- Cammarota, J. & Fine, M. (Eds.) (2008). *Revolutionizing Education: Youth Participatory Action Research in Motion*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Certeau de, M. (1984). *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Cervinkova, H. (2006). Uczenie się w przestrzeniach pamięci. In Piotr Żuk & Jacek Pluta (Ed.), *My Wrocławianie: Społeczna przestrzeń miasta* (pp. 261-267). Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie.
- Davies, N. & Moorhouse, G. (2002). *Microcosm*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Delgado-Gaitan, C. & Trueba, E. (1991). *Crossing Cultural Borders: Education for Immigrant Families in America*. London: Falmer.
- Fals Borda, O. (2001). Participatory (Action) Research in Social Theory: Origins and Challenges. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of Action Research* (pp. 27-37). London: SAGE.
- Field, J. (2003). *Social Capital*. London: Routledge.
- Fine, M. (2008). An Epilogue, of Sorts. In J. Cammarota, & M. Fine (Eds.), *Revolutionizing Education: Youth Participatory Action Research in Motion* (pp. 213-234). New York and London: Routledge.
- Freire, P. (1993). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Guajardo, M., Guajardo, F. & Casaperalta E.C. (2008). Transformative Education: Chronicling a Pedagogy for Social Change. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 39(1), 3-22.
- Haraway, D. (1998). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575-599.
- Harding, S. (Ed.). (1987). *Feminism and Methodology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Hayden, D. (1999). *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*. Boston: MIT Press.
- Higgins, P. (2001). Comment on 'Teaching Anthropology through Performance'. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 32(2), 254-256.
- Levinson, B. A.U. (2005). Citizenship, Identity, Democracy: Engaging the Political in the Anthropology of Education. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 36(4), 329-340.
- Levinson, B. & Holland, D.C. (1996). Introduction. In B. Levinson, D. E. & Foley, D.C. Holland (Eds.). *The Cultural Production of the Educated Person: Critical Ethnographies of Schooling and Local Practice* (pp. 1-56). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Lingis, A. (1994). *The Community of Those who Have Nothing in Common*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Lipman, P. (2005). Educational Ethnography and the Politics of Globalization, War, and Resistance. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 36(4), 315-328.
- Marcus, G. & Fischer, M. (1986). *Anthropology as Cultural Critique. An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- McTaggart, R. (Ed.). (1997). *Participatory Action Research: International Contexts and Consequences*. Ithaca, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Municipality of Wrocław, *Multicultural Metropolis*. Retrieved August 20, 2010 from <http://www.um.wroc.pl/m6850/>
- Pedelty, M. (2001). Teaching Anthropology through Performance. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 32(2), 44-253.
- Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling Alone. The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New-York: Simon and Schuster.
- Reason, P. & Bradbury, H. (2006). Preface. In P. Reason and H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of Action Research* (pp. xxi-xxxii). London: SAGE Publications.
- Shultz, J., Skilton-Sylvester, E. & Shultz, N. (2007). Exploring Global Connections: Dismantling the International/Multicultural Divide. *Diversity & Democracy*, 10(3), 4-6.
- Siebel-Achenbach, S. (1994). *Lower Silesia from Nazi Germany to Communist Poland, 1942-1949*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Skilton-Sylvester, E. (2010). Making the Local Global Across (Cyber) Space and Time. *Paper presented as part of a panel: What about the Anthropology of Teaching? American Anthropological Association Meeting, November 2010, New Orleans*.
- Smith, B.L., MacGregor, J., Matthews, R.S. & Gabelnick, F. (2004). *Learning Communities: Reforming Undergraduate Education*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, John Wiley & Sons.

[192] Hana Cervinkova

- Spindler, G. (1999). Three Categories of Cultural Knowledge Useful in Doing Cultural Therapy. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 30(4), 466-472.
- Spindler, G. (2002). The Collusion of Illusions and How To Get People to Tell You What They Don't Know. In Yali Zou & Enrique T. Trueba (Eds.), *Ethnography and Schools: Qualitative Approaches to the Study of Education* (pp. 13-26). Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Stern, F. (2006). *Five Germanys I Have Known*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Thum, G. (2003a). Cleansed Memory: The New Polish Wroclaw (Breslau) and the Expulsion of the Germans. In S.B. Vardy, T.H. Tooley & A.H. Vardy (Eds.), *Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth Century Europe*, (pp. 333-357). Boulder: Social Science Monographs.
- Thum, G. (2003b). *Die fremde Stadt. Breslau 1945*. Berlin: Siedler.
- Thum, G. (2005). Wroclaw and the Myth of the Multicultural Border City. *European Review*, 13(2), 227-235.
- Trueba, E. T. (1993). *Healing Multicultural America: Mexican Immigrants Rise to Power in Rural California*. Washington, DC: Falmer.
- Tsing, A.L. (2004). *Friction*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Wildemeersch, D. & Kurantowicz, E. (2010). *Adult Education and The Community: Thematic issue no 3 of RELA*.
- Willis, P. (1977). *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Willis, P. (1981). Cultural Production Is Different from Cultural Reproduction Is Different from Social Reproduction Is Different from Reproduction. *Interchange*, 12, 2-3.