From Doorstep to Planet
Re-drawing the ‘Field’

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I must attempt to care as much for the world as for my household. Those are the poles between which a competent morality would balance and mediate: the doorstep and the planet. (Wendell Berry)

Among the memorable characters in Charles Dickens’s novel Bleak House is the formidable Mrs. Jellybe. Of aristocratic birth, and intent on solidifying her status through charity, she resolutely devotes every waking hour to projects designed to relieve suffering in distant Africa. All the while she ignores the plight of the ill-fed, poorly clothed, and untended members of her own household and at her own doorstep.

Few would debate the value of global learning to Western intellectual life. Not only does it expand our knowledge of distant peoples and places; it also deepens our empathetic experience of cultural systems different from our own, allowing us to critically question our own ideas, values, and identities. This is the necessary basis for ultimately making judgments and moral commitments that transcend the more narrow loyalties to family, ethnic or religious community, or nation.

At the same time, the mapping of global learning—that is, where it should take place—has been the subject of critical re-evaluation. For over 100 years, global educators have employed geographically marked language—like distant lands, overseas study, education abroad, offshore and international education—to define their work. Global learning was expected to take place across a body of water or a geopolitical border. Even today, despite global techno-economic and socio-cultural networks that transcend national boundaries, global education continues to be largely organized around the opposition between the faraway and the nearby. The global in global learning is almost exclusively located in the international—that is to say, in places geographically, rather than socioculturally, distant from home. We might call it the “Mrs. Jellybe syndrome.”

For decades, study abroad professionals have experimented with program designs and synthesized literature from allied fields—all to answer what is arguably the field’s most important question: What kind of student is needed to shape what kind of world, through what teaching and learning process? But curiously absent from the discussion has been the question of ‘field’ or place: If global learning is to help mend the world, where—in what settings or locations—do we expect students to best learn how?

What follows offers a tentative response. It proposes a basic reconceptualization of the ‘field’ of global learning to include domestic contexts. More controversially, it makes the case for a tactical progression of intercultural experience—from the nearby (‘doorstep’) to the faraway (‘planet’). Repositioning the local/regional as priority field is not meant to force an either/or choice between education-at-home and education abroad. The aim is much more sublime: to bring the domestic and the international into a dynamic, both/and dialogue that rebalances the geography of global learning.
The essay unfolds in three parts. Part one explores the disciplinary borderlands of ‘home’ and ‘field,’ complicating both. Part two analyses two stumbling blocks or impediments to constructing a more inclusive model of global learning—an undomesticated cosmopolitanism and an intractable separation between internationalism and multiculturalism. Finally, part three will propose two pedagogical repairs for the institutional rift. The first, presented through a four-fold rationale, is to begin global learning at home. The second urges students to connect domestic learning to projects in international settings, allowing rigorous comparison and selective borrowing to inform responses to the global-scale problems of the 21st century.

I. Disciplinary Borderlands

*There is nothing mere to the local.* (Arjun Appadurai)

Nearly every academic field today is preoccupied with the interface between the national and the international. Anthropology provides an especially salient example. Since the time of Bronislaw Malinowski, one of the founding fathers of British anthropology, the discipline has been distinguished by the practice of fieldwork. The ‘field’ was a rather fixed entity—typically a semi-isolated, technologically simple, small-scale tribe or village that was inhabited by exotic others and located in distant lands. In other words, sites of exploration and discovery were almost always *there*, rather than *here*.

The opposition between ‘home’ and ‘field’ in early (18th century) anthropology-sociology was grounded in a number of familiar dichotomies: modern/primitive, first world/third world, West/Rest, North/South, center/periphery, Us/Them, familiars/strangers, nearby/faraway. It is worth remembering that most of the fieldwork that was undertaken during this time was located in world areas that were part of Western Colonial Empires, including Native Americans in the United States who were considered ‘domestic dependent nations’

French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, in *Tristes Tropiques*, explained these binaries as cultural products spawned through Euro-American capitalist expansion into the supposedly New World. In time, the totalizing and differentiating logic that supported them could no longer hold up to empirical and political scrutiny. But not before the dichotomous language became naturalized, whether along the lines of gender (male travel versus female domesticity), social class (bourgeois traveler versus soulful poor), race/culture (white moderns versus dark-skinned primitives), or place (Europe and North America versus Asia, Latin America, and Africa).

It took fieldwork in Western domestic settings to gradually break down the binaries. Beginning with the Chicago School in the 1920s and 30s, the attention of non-anthropologist scholars—urban sociologists, social historians, geographers, cultural studies specialists, among others—turned to burgeoning U.S. cities. Their studies of groups and communities featured complex articulations of race, social class, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. Like the faraway-focused anthropologists, the nearby scholars sought to “make the familiar strange and the strange familiar.” But unlike the anthropologists, domestic researchers were unburdened by geography. Gradually a perspectival shift took place.
Robert Park, the famed University of Chicago sociologist, was among the first to recommend the ethnographic method for investigating domestic realities:

The same patient methods of observation which anthropologists like Boas and Lowie have expended on the study of the life and manners of the North American Indian [i.e., non-Western cultures] might be even more fruitfully employed in the investigation of the customs, beliefs, social practices, and general conceptions of life prevalent in Little Italy on the lower North Side in Chicago, or in recording the more sophisticated folkways of the inhabitants Greenwich Village and the neighborhoods of Washington Square, New York. (1925, p. 2)

Park’s declaration predated, of course, the dramatic demographic changes set in motion during the second half of 20th century. Extensive migrations would radically re-draw the map of ‘home’ and ‘field,’ especially in metropolitan areas. We use a shorthand term—globalization—to indicate a world that no longer is confined to sovereign borders. Everything and everyone is on the move, nothing staying in their places. World cities like New York, Los Angeles and London are not only command centers for transnational corporations; they are also extraverted centers of meeting and mixing for the world’s cultures, classes, and creeds. The result is innumerable “contact zones” where cultures once geographically and historically separated now “meet, clash and grapple” (Pratt, 1991, p. 501).

The Other meets us at our regional doorsteps. Within a 25 mile radius of my residence in Los Angeles County is perhaps the greatest diversity of language, cultural tradition, religion, food, and music found anywhere in the world. The ten million strong “minority majority” includes a kaleidoscope of racial and ethnic groups—Latinos, Blacks, Chinese, Thai, Filipinos, Arabs, Koreans, Indians, Iranians and Samoans, among many, many others. Even the poor and working class, those who can’t afford to travel the world, now find the world traveling around them. The educational implications are profound: “There is the sense that learning about home and learning about a foreign world can be one and the same thing,” observes travel writer Pico Iyer (2000).

Los Angeles may be an extreme case, but in 78 counties in 19 states (including California) minorities now outnumber Whites. In the fast approaching future, what geopolitical analyst Robert Kaplan experienced during an evening dinner in Santa Monica is becoming the norm: “I sat down at an outdoor Thai-Chinese restaurant for an early dinner. The manager was Japanese, the hostess Iranian, and the other help Mexican... On the sidewalk beside my table a large crowd watched a black youth tap dance to Brazilian music” (1998, p. 2).

‘Home,’ as experience teaches us, is not simply a matter of geography; it also has a social and psychological dimension. A white, suburban-bred thirty-something may actually have more in common with her upwardly mobile counterpart in New Delhi or Barcelona than with immigrant service workers in her hometown. Geography has no special claim on diversity, or on marginality. Multiethnic cities also tend to be unequal cities. The same place that includes high-value people into its “network society” also excludes low-value people within its depressed neighborhoods and expendable jobs. No doubt there are corners of North America and Europe that are still predominantly monocultural, monclass,
and monolingual. But they are harder and harder to find. In most places, the traditional boundaries of ‘home’ and ‘field’ have been permanently transgressed.

This presents global educators with one of those aha moments. Since its modest beginnings in the 1190, when Emo of Friesland travelled from northern Holland to study at Oxford University, the international education narrative has drawn a clear boundary line between civic engagement at home and education abroad in geographically distant locations. The ‘global’ in global learning has largely been situated in the international, even as the ‘learning’ has come to be defined by the alleged strangeness of faraway peoples and places.

Acknowledging this reality doesn’t erase the special distinctions of domestic and international locations. International sojourns reveal sights and values and issues that we ordinarily ignore at home. Human and ecological degradation is obviously far greater in Dacca and Freetown than in Dallas or San Francisco. At the same time, we need to ask whether a semester in Oaxaca or Guanajuato will automatically or inevitably prove more stretching than a semester in East LA or Huntington Park, both of which are over 95% Mexican and mostly poor. The precise lines that separate ‘doorstep’ and ‘planet’ are often difficult to draw. Even so, this isn’t an argument for collapsing the ‘international’ into the ‘domestic’ (or vice versa). Our interest is simply to enlarge the canvas on which the art of world learning is performed.

As a group, global educators labor in a “field between fields,” allowing them to be remarkably fluid and synthetic. So it is somewhat surprising that they have yet to settle on language that adequately fits the experience of contemporary student-travelers. In today’s world, “one no longer leaves home confident of finding something radically new, another time or space,” explains James Clifford. “Difference is encountered in the adjoining neighborhood, and the familiar turns up at the ends of the earth” (1998, p. 14). The full implications of the renegotiated borders between ‘home’ and ‘abroad’ may not be fully represented in our policies and programs. What we do recognize, however, is that the ‘global’ is no longer somewhere ‘out there’; it is ‘here’ and ‘there,’ nearby and faraway.

This new reality has pushed some global educators towards a new learning model. In Globalizing Knowledge: Connecting International & Intercultural Studies (Cornwall & Stoddard, 1999), the authors spotlight the complementarity and potential synergy between two historically disconnected movements: multicultural education and international education. Building on this work, the American Council on Education’s At Home in the World initiative advocates for a more inclusive and integrated curricular approach to global learning. More recently, the various programs profiled in Putting the Local in Global Education (Sobania, 2015) reveal how diverse domestic communities can fully support a set of essential global learning outcomes (see AAC&U, 2011). The authors in this volume helpfully employ the term study away to indicate the broad range of global learning experiences available to students in domestic off-campus settings.

II. Stumbling Blocks

The task of enlarging the spaces of global learning confronts two major stumbling blocks. One is ideological in nature, and the other institutional.
Undomesticated Cosmopolitanism

As economic and social relations continue to spill over national boundaries, the language of global citizenship or cosmopolitanism has gained new currency in colleges and universities. The concept signifies, as an attainable educational goal, the broadened of our “ways of thinking and living within multiple cross-cutting communities—cities, regions, states, nations, and international collectives” (Schattle 2007, p. 9).

The attraction of cosmopolitanism to international educators rests on two key principles. The first is that we have much to learn from our differences (Appiah, 2006). The planet hosts a wild array of human societies, each with its own languages and literatures, stories and songs, traditions and tastes. Our way of doing things is just one of many ways of doing things—one necessarily constrained by chance and upbringing.

The second principle is that one should act with an impartial concern for all. Human beings—all human beings—are irreducibly precious. As such, they are entitled to equal worth and consideration irrespective of morally arbitrary traits resulting from the lottery of birth: nationality, race, gender, spatial proximity, natural endowments, socioeconomic circumstances. Each of these may mediate one’s relation to the world, but they don’t define it. One’s race or religion, for example, cannot have priority over the interests of the world community of human beings.

The metaphor long used to stretch our thinking and living outward is that of an expanding circle. Ralph Waldo Emerson, in an 1841 essay titled “Circles,” describes human life as “a self-evolving circle that, from a ring imperceptibly small, rushes on all sides outwards to new and larger circles and that without end.” Following Emerson, Anglo-Irish historian and philosopher William Lecky (1955) considered an ever-expanding circle of obligation to be the mark of a truly developed—that is to say, cosmopolitan—person. “At one time the benevolent affections embrace merely the family,” notes Lecky. “Soon the circle expands to include first a class, then a nation, then a coalition of nations, then all humanity, and finally, its influence is felt in the dealings of man with the animal world....” (p. 285).

![Figure 1. The expanding circle](image-url)
For both Emerson and Lecky, the world’s true frontiers are not defined by geopolitical boundaries but by the boundaries of human sympathy rooted in reason. This view holds that no temporal authority—be in family, friends, or the state—deserves first allegiance. Additionally, no ‘natural’ differences should be allowed to erect barriers between others and us. For example, we may identify with a particular faith (or none at all), but our outlook is staunchly universalist. The cosmopolitan ambition is to understand the richness of humanity in its many guises, overcome parochialism, and bring others into each our intimate sphere of concern.

Well-designed international experiential programs often support this grand enterprise. Far too often, though, the cosmopolitan ideal is co-opted by a mindset rooted in private ambitions and faraway places. Study abroad increasingly appeals to young adults looking to mix golden time off with resume building. Moreover, the once dominant models of year and semester long programs have largely been replaced by periods of eight weeks or less, mostly in the “nice” areas of European cities. Community immersion is minimal and ‘bonding’ is largely restricted to a pack of familiar faces and voices. Learning from differences and acting with impartial concern tend to receive short shrift. Results are predictable: participants content themselves with an individualistic, what’s-in-it-for-me experience that renders global citizenship a kind of “merit badge in a strictly personal journey towards self-discovery and upward social mobility” (T. Zemach-Bersin, 2009).

Part of the problem is that cosmopolitanism is invariably framed as an outcome of international experiences. The idea is marketed to a generation already severed from place and ensconced in the world of their smartphone. The faraway appeals to a way of being where one can remain largely oblivious to roots, rights, relationships, and responsibilities. The implicit message is that the world is now unbounded by the old divisions of place, and that one’s identity need no longer involve neighborly (domestic) affinities and obligations. Indeed, the assumption is that global learning can help shape the kind of persons who think and act beyond the boundaries of place. Like the lawless buccaneers featured in Pirates of the Caribbean blockbusters, we are free to traverse all cultures but be responsible to none.

“Domesticating” cosmopolitanism is about reversing our flight from those realities we prefer to ignore. Local and regional settings bring socially distant peoples, and the misfortunes they endure, physically near. The exhortation to “love thy neighbor” now requires us to take an interest in the lives of proximate people, and especially those occupying the ‘underside’ within our own national boundaries. To come out of social isolation is to face the denial that accepts human vulnerability and ecological damage as natural and inevitable (“that’s just the way it is”). It is to allow easy certitudes about how life works to be unsettled. That includes the belief that one’s ultimate moral significance is embodied in and depends upon a vague yet tantalizing loyalty to one’s nation, race, or class status. Pulitzer-prize winning journalist Chris Hedges (2012) narrates his own transformation of consciousness that began in the back regions of Boston:

I am not sure when I severed myself irrevocably from the myth of America. It began when I was a seminarian, living for more than two years in Boston’s inner city on a street that had more homicides than any other in the city... I was sickened and
repulsed. My loyalty shifted from the state, from any state, to the powerless, to the landless peasants in Latin America, the Palestinians in Gaza or the terrified families in Iraq and Afghanistan. Those who suffer on the outer reaches of empire, as well as in our internal colonies and sacrifice zones, constitute my country... For a poor family in Camden, N.J., impoverished residents in the abandoned coal camps in southern West Virginia, the undocumented workers that toil in our nation’s produce fields, Native Americans trapped on reservations, Palestinians, Iraqis, Afghans, those killed by drones in Pakistan, Yemen or Somalia, or those in the squalid urban slums in Africa, it makes no difference if Mitt Romney or Obama is president. And since it makes no difference to them, it makes no difference to me. I seek only to defy the powers that orchestrate and profit from their misery.

Structural Separation

The second impediment to enlarging the canvas of world learning has to do with the historic and institutionalized separation between international education and multicultural education. Most colleges and universities can boast of an impressive list of on-campus structures and activities of an international or multicultural character: international student services, foreign language instruction, multi-ethnic student associations, globally oriented courses, ethnic and women’s studies programs, and diversity training. What these initiatives share in common is a campus compound. However, when it comes to program activities, office space, staff and budgets, it is a segregated world.

The rift only widens when we look at study, service and research activities in off-campus settings. A primary and fateful distinction is made between:

- **Domestic Off-Campus programs**: Educational activities that occur away from the student’s home institution but within the same country (e.g., service learning, field study, border study); and

- **Education Abroad programs**: Educational activities that occur outside the student’s home country (e.g., Fulbright scholars, cultural exchanges, study abroad, international research). (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2011)

Two things stand out as one surveys the landscape of on- and off-campus learning activities. The first is the sheer diversity of programs and practices; the second is their entrenched disconnection from each other.

With rare exception, ‘ethnic,’ ‘international,’ ‘intercultural’ and ‘global’ courses and programs have grown on US campuses like individual flowers in a largely unkempt garden. Foreign language training is rarely paired with country- or region-specific coursework in, let’s say, political science or international business. Area studies programs that deal with East and South Asia, Africa, or Latin America tend to exclude American Studies. Non-credit volunteer events seldom interface with academic service learning. The divide doesn’t stop there. On almost all campuses, one can expect to find “diversity” offices in one place and “internationalization” offices in another place. Minority student concerns are treated largely independent of services for both international students and study abroad participants. Education abroad also tends to operate in isolation from community/urban
studies and other “civic engagement” programs. And this doesn’t begin to touch the structural separation maintained between undergraduate programs and those offered at the graduate level.

The fateful divergence of international/cross-cultural initiatives from those with a domestic/multicultural focus is traceable, at least in part, to their respective histories and motivations (see Table 1). Internationalism grew up in the aftermath of World War II and during the Cold War. These two events reshaped the once distant relationship between the federal government and the university into a close partnership (Chomsky, 1997). University programs that facilitated the exchange of ideas, information, and other aspects of culture were now expected to help the U.S. to achieve its diplomatic goals.

Table 1. Internationalism-multipolarism divergences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internationalism</th>
<th>Third Space</th>
<th>Multiculturalism</th>
<th>Civic Engagement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>International Education</strong></td>
<td><strong>Global Learning</strong></td>
<td><strong>Civic Engagement</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Top Down:</strong> Spearheaded by mainstream academics, government administrators, and private foundations in post-World War II and Cold War era economic globalization</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Bottom Up:</strong> Spearheaded by marginalized groups as a response to a legacy of racism, social subordination, and restricted educational and economic opportunity</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Eurocentric:</strong> Identified with programs where privileged white people travel to European destinations and study European languages and cultures</td>
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<td><strong>Multicentric:</strong> Identified with progressive social movements where the realities and interests of marginalized women and people of color are represented</td>
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<td><strong>Strategies:</strong></td>
<td>1. Foreign language study</td>
<td>1. Ethnic studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Study/service abroad</td>
<td>2. Women’s/gender studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. International student recruitment</td>
<td>3. Urban studies/service-learning</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Goal:</strong> To promote international understanding and US strategic interests within overseas settings</td>
<td><strong>Goal:</strong> To right historical wrongs and strengthen group identity for US minorities in domestic settings</td>
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<td><strong>Support structures:</strong> Student affairs: multi-ethnic clubs, cultural celebrations, diversity training</td>
<td><strong>Support structures:</strong> Academic affairs: curricular programs (e.g., global studies, modern languages)</td>
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To more fully institutionalize the nation’s “soft power,” area studies programs were installed in major US universities starting around 1946. Initially they were funded by private foundations, and then covertly by the CIA. The academic goal of acquiring knowledge about foreign territories merged explicitly with US state interests to control or combat its foreign enemies. During this same period, various international educational exchange and service programs were either founded or expanded: the Institute of International Education (1920s), its Fulbright Scholar Program (1946), the Council on International Educational Exchange (1947), and the Peace Corps (1961). Young adults had the opportunity, not just to gain a fuller understanding of their own and another society, but also to serve as cultural ambassadors for their nation. Politically volatile “third world” countries, in particular, received tens of thousands of adventurous, college-educated
development workers over the succeeding decades. In short, public diplomacy has been woven into the fabric of international education and exchange for nearly seven decades.

Implicit in internationalism’s historical trajectory is an easily overlooked but hardly trivial fact: international education programs were founded and led almost exclusively by middle-aged or older white men embedded within dominant institutional orders (governmental, military and business). This is significant not only because they all came from a common origin of privilege (although most of them did). More importantly, they shared a common worldview—a “community of interests”—that predisposed them to make decisions that would strengthen and extend, rather than challenge, the structural status quo that had created them (see Piff, et al., 2012).

Famed sociologist C. Wright Mill, in his books White Collar (1951) and The Power Elite (1956), analyzed the complex intersections of race, class, gender, profession, and politics of this era. His central insight was that occupations define social class, social class shapes political interests, and political interests powerfully influence policies and programs. By and large, the early architects of international education practice lived in social worlds with little direct contact with poor persons of color, or their problems. They reasoned from within a vacuum of limited personal experience and understanding. Predictably, minority communities were largely disregarded as sites for shaping student consciousness and impacting the world.

The roots of multiculturalism could not be more different. It arose, not within elite institutions, but through the social protest movements of the 1950s and 60s (civil rights, Chicano, anti-war, women’s, etc.). Economic deprivation and social dislocation, not the extension of soft power, were primary catalysts of activism. Whereas the vast majority of internationalists were White, Anglo, male and affluent, the early multiculturalists were mostly working class persons of color. Multiculturalism was seen as a way to reduce domestic (race/ethnic/class/gender) divides, and the cultural mis-/under-representation that resulted. Towards that end, interdisciplinary Women’s Studies and Black Studies programs were founded across the country. The new language and new consciousness they offered would, in time, get translated into critical pedagogies and community-based programs—all within the national borders. What we know today as “civic engagement” stands on the shoulders of multiculturalism’s unfinished project: to transform U.S. colleges and universities into democratic centers of critical thought and social responsibility.

Thus, a deep cultural divide underlies the structural separation of internationalism from multiculturalism. As a result, they define themselves competitively. Professionals in both fields assume different ‘turf,’ consecrate different traditions, advocate for different causes, and populate different conferences. Moreover, they tend to view each other with suspicion. Many multiculturalists generally perceive internationalists as white bread elitists whose sense of racial or ethnic superiority prevents them from forming all but functional or patronizing relationships with people of color. Internationalists, for their part, can view minorities as professional victims obsessed with power and inequality. From this perspective, the best thing Black or Latino students can do is travel abroad and hopefully become less ‘ethnic’ in their outlook.
Clearly, stubborn cultural and structural issues prevent internationalists and multiculturalists from turning inherent tensions into a richer, more comprehensive model for engaging the world.

III. Repairing the Rift

Are we left, then, with a rootless internationalism and an immobile multiculturalism? How might the two factions be reconciled and the internationalism-multiculturalism rift repaired? F. Scott Fitzgerald, back in 1936, challenged the human propensity toward binary, either-or thinking. “The test of a first-rate intelligence,” wrote Fitzgerald, “is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function.” The handicapping polarization of the two movements conceals an important educational opportunity if we can suspend the tension long enough to permit exploration through a “third space” that transcends and transforms the historical divides.

Towards that end, a growing number of campus offices have re-branded themselves—from study abroad and international education to study away, off-campus, and global engagement. Sociocultural difference, rather than geographic distance, is made the distinguishing marker of an “internationalized” education. A groundbreaking example is Pitzer College’s Institute for Global/Local Action & Study (IGLAS). Intentionally established to build pedagogical linkages between the school’s community engagement and international education missions, the IGLAS infuses global/local themes throughout a sequential, experience-based curriculum. The old ‘home’ and ‘field’ categories are transcended without abandoning the interests and insights that continue to give them meaning. Nigel Boyle, the institute’s founding director, explains the critical synthesis: “Restoring the civic [via domestic engagement] and embracing the global [through education abroad] are neither discrete nor merely complementary educational objectives... They combination opens up exciting opportunities for transformative learning” (Pitzer College, 2014).

Pitzer and others are discovering that an integrated model of the nearby/multicultural and the faraway/international integration has considerable common ground to build upon (see Olson & Peacock, 2012).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Common subject:</th>
<th>Real-world problems, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations, in nearby and faraway settings</th>
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<tr>
<td>Common context:</td>
<td>Diverse communities with complex histories, institutional realities, languages, values systems, and group practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Common values:</td>
<td>Respecting differences (national, cultural, racial, class, gender) and righting wrongs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common concerns:</td>
<td>To promote global flourishing, including economic opportunity, human rights protection, and climate stability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Common pedagogies:</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary, experiential, community-based learning (study, service, research) processes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Common aversion:</td>
<td>To a single, mono-cultural “melting pot” social ideal that homogenizes and assimilates global diversity</td>
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<td>Common outcomes:</td>
<td>Essential cognitive, attitudinal, communication, and collaboration knowledge and skills</td>
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Common ground is the basis for pursuing the common good. White internationalists have much to learn from minority sisters and brothers about how power circulates in multiethnic communities. Likewise, multiculturalists of color are challenged to extend their vision beyond the domestic arena to appreciate the global forces of history, politics, and economics that are always enmeshed in local realities.

What bridging construct might link the particularities of the local to the transnational forces that shape them? Several have been proposed: “global citizenship” (Schattle, 2009), “study away” (Sobania, 2009), “interculturalism” (Deardorff & Jones, 2012), and “grounded globalism” (Olson and Peacock, 2012). The AAC&U has injected “global learning” (Hovland, 2009) into the professional lexicon, an idea that tactfully weaves together global studies, multicultural relations, and social/ecological responsibility. Guided by a set of “essential learning outcomes,” students are encouraged to make connections across disciplines and spatial contexts. As a framing idea, ‘global learning’ attempts to repair the rift between the local and the global, civic engagement and education abroad. It invites us to imagine a 21st century global education where students attend both to the welfare of nearby communities and to the matters that affect and afflict the wider world. The result is a competent morality, one that alternates, as Wendell Berry (2012) says, between “doorstep and planet” (p. 90).

![Figure 2. Global learning as a nearby-faraway nexus](image)

**Making the Familiar Strange: The Doorstep**

*Democracy must begin at home, and its home is the neighborly community.* (John Dewey)

At this point, we might readily embrace a model of global learning that combines doorstep (domestic) and planet (international) experiences. But what if we were to propose that students move *from* doorstep to planet? In other words, global learning would originate, not in international settings, but in multiethnic domestic communities, whether local or regional. Four reasons compel us to consider a model that “starts at home”:

1. **Doorstep-to-planet learning checks exoticism.**

During the colonial era, people of power and wealth traveled to subjugated lands to revel in peculiar peoples and curious customs. The colonial system not only constructed the West/Rest binary, but also an intimate tie between whiteness and wealth. Citizens from “developed” countries possessed both the financial means and the legal documents to travel most anywhere. Those in “developing” countries had access to neither. Edward Said
famously used “Orientalism” to describe the way Westerners Other-ized so-called ‘non-traditional’ places and ways of life by portraying them as primitive, authentic, and enchanting.

Exoticism, the charm of the unfamiliar and distant, continues to be an occupational hazard of study abroad, especially in ‘non-traditional’ locations. “Quaint” and “colorful” cultures, almost invariably located in post-colonial contexts, are easily viewed as failed attempts at modernity: like museum pieces, they are best admired and visually consumed before they fade away. John Urry’s (2000) caution toward tourism could equally apply to many study abroad programs: “an ecstatic spiraling search for further and even more bizarre inauthentic simulations produced by, and within, safe modern environments of global networks” (p. 38). The supreme irony in all this, of course, is that the authentically exotic no longer exists. Few places on earth have not been mapped, commercialized, and converted into hyper-managed objects of the tourist gaze.

In more ‘traditional’ destinations, the exotic is often packaged as unencumbered fun. Berlin, Madrid, Florence, London, and Tel Aviv are all renown as travel fantasylands, serving up everything from historic districts and natural monuments to booze cruises and all-night pub-crawls. I mention this, not to throw a wet blanket over good times abroad, but to call attention to how the paths of the pleasure principle and public diplomacy largely and perhaps inevitably diverge. Unfortunately, the proverbial Ugly American remains a standard fixture abroad, especially in places with a low drinking age and a thriving party scene.

Global learning at one’s ‘doorstep’ interrupts the charm- and amusement-seeking that roughly correlates with the physical and imaginative distance of destinations from ‘home.’ Students need not travel far to undertake significant self-exploration. On campus itself, students may find themselves, perhaps for the first time, interacting across races or sexualities, or with peers whose religious and political perspectives are substantially different from, if not opposed to, their own.

Then, sometimes right outside the campus gate, are communities of remarkable diversity and unpredictability. Compared to foreign enclaves where virtually everything has been carefully ordered for tourist consumption, heterogeneous domestic spaces are largely freed from the burden of performance. The everyday worlds of Appalachia and South Chicago, for example, are neither themed nor simulated. They have no corporate sponsors or staged productions. Social relations are unrehearsed and struggles unscripted. “Authenticity” is found in the raw, unmediated life of rural hollers, city streets, households, buses, restaurants, storefront churches, hospitals, and jails. True, these are not venues that will attract rootless travelers or endless fun-seekers. But that is precisely the point. Domestic global learning offers a practical self-sorting and screening mechanism, effectively weeding out party animals from serious students.

2. Doorstep-to-planet learning frames the world in local-personal terms.

One of the problems with going straight from one’s native place to faraway lands is that matters needing sustained focus tend to be left “over there.” Touristic enthusiasms encourage us to bracket social realities encountered across the globe from those same
realities that might be encountered at our doorstep. Many program designs unwittingly reinforce the disconnection. Students are expected to “occupy” and “consume” site locations, but rarely to “inhabit” them on the basis of intimate knowledge and affection. The predictable result is that sojourners learn to invest little, know little, and care little for host locales beyond their ability to gratify their desires and expectations. This helps to explain why few returnees give a second thought to how their experiences abroad might practically influence their ‘regular’ lives unless someone purposively ‘intervenes’.

At the same time, educators are giving renewed attention to the integration and application of knowledge—across courses and disciplines, over time, about unscripted problems, and within real-world (domestic and international) settings (see AAC&U, n.d.). Such a project sets a high bar for global learning. If it is to achieve new heights, students must learn to value the near over the far, and tangible duties toward the stranger next door over a love for humanity in general.

Travel into any major U.S. city and we soon discover that societies’ most vexing social problems know no geographic boundaries. What we typically associate with distant “developing” world—failing schools, suffering poor, concentrated wealth, land abuse, biodiversity loss, water depletion, transportation gridlock, organized crime—are pervasive features of every American and European city. The divide is primarily social and economic, not geographic, as Manuel Castells reminds us:

> Every ‘First World’ city has in it a ‘Third World’ city of infant mortality, malnutrition, unemployment, communicable diseases and homelessness. Similarly, every ‘Third World’ city has in it a ‘First World’ city with high finance, fashion, and technology. The conventional distinctions between North and South are misleading diplomatic artifacts. Instead, the global divide runs through each society between the globalized rich and the localized poor. The First and Third worlds now live around the corner from each other, mutually dependent everywhere. (Quoted in Steffen, 2005)

In 1962 Michael Harrington chronicled America’s hidden “third world” underbelly in The Other America. But decades later, the internal colonies of invisible and forgotten have-nots remain. They work as farm workers and house cleaners, restaurant bus boys and dishwashers. They build skyscrapers in Phoenix, harvest onions in Georgia, sew garments in L.A., slaughter poultry in Alabama and Nebraska, and staff every regional Walmart. Many work 10-12 hour shifts, sometimes seven days a week, doing anything that can’t be off-shored or out-sourced to other countries. They are not being exploited as much as discarded. They are structurally irrelevant, thus dispensable.

Several years ago, the HBO series The Newsroom caused a stir when the protagonist anchorman, played by Jeff Daniels, is asked what makes America the greatest country in the world. Daniels delivers a biting diatribe that synthesizes statistical data on a broad range of quality-of-life issues. The evidence paints a disturbing picture of ‘home’ that tends to get lost in the rush to witness a fragile humanity in Asia or Africa. Despite being the world’s largest economy and most powerful nation, the U.S. has the highest rate of child poverty; the highest wealth inequality; the lowest rate of social mobility; the lowest life expectancy; the highest homicide rate; the highest incarceration rate; the second-highest
high-school dropout rate (behind only Spain); the highest per capita carbon dioxide emissions; and the highest (by a colossal margin) per capita rate of military spending and arms sales. Add to that the highest rates of infant mortality, mental illness, obesity, and personal bankruptcy resulting from medical expenses (Speth, 2011).

A credible global education will help a new generation of students to understand the complex causes and costs of the economic and political system that entangles their lives. Why has the American Dream turned nightmarish for so many? Why are tens of millions either chronically poor or part of the new working poor? Why have many of our most important institutions failed? Why does the marketplace now rule without constraints? What are the ecological, and thus long-term economic, consequences? Lacking a body of insight formed at home, students risk using unquestioned assumptions to interpret the misfortunes they encounter abroad as either accidents of history or merely the result of individual moral failure. “What is needed educationally,” contends Immanuel Wallerstein, “is not to learn that we are citizens of the world, but that we occupy particular niches in an unequal world” (1998, p. 63) This is the self-awareness needed to comprehend how the world that is so pleasurable to us is the same world that is utterly perilous to others.

3. Doorstep-to-planet learning brings racial privilege and disadvantage to light.

When conducting anti-racism training with law enforcement officers, Tim Wise asks, “What’s the first thing you think when you see a young black or Latino male driving a nice car in your neighborhood?” Without exception, the officers respond, “Drug dealer.” Wise then asks, “What’s the first thing you think when you see a young white male driving the same type of car in the same community?” Again, without exception, they say, “Spoiled little rich kid. Daddy probably bought him the car” (Wise, 2008).

Race may have no biological validity, yet most white students continue, for many reasons, to act as though it does. White study abroad students, in particular, have historically been drawn from privileged (upper-middle class) backgrounds. Their sense of self in relation to the world has been constructed within fairly homogeneous neighborhoods and schools where white culture was the norm. They intuitively know that their racial identity and economic position has profoundly shaped their perceptions of self and others.

Whiteness and wealth, and to a lesser extent being American, continue to serve as “passports to privilege” that are rarely “checked” in overseas settings. Foreigners enjoy a kind of diplomatic immunity from being chastised for behaviors that would instantly be called out as bigoted or bourgeois back home. A type of positive discrimination allows them, as temporary guests, to remain safely suspended above the fray of economic disparity and intergroup conflict (Zemach-Bersin, 2008).

In domestic settings, that courtesy is largely withdrawn. Near-neighbors are much more likely to relate to students in terms of the perceived power relationships inscribed in skin color, dress style, language, and personal manners. They are also much less reticent to tell students what they feel and think.

This became strikingly obvious the day I escorted three very white, well-groomed college students to the depths of the Skid Row, a predominantly black internal colony of the
destitute and mentally ill in Los Angeles. We stood on a corner preparing to cross onto a street lined with tents and cardboard encampments. Before we could step off the curb, two black women on the other side stood up, faced us, and shouted out, “Whassup white bread. You come down here to pet the mice?” We froze, uncertain what to say or do.

Days later we found ourselves still replaying the incident. Self-questioning struck deep to the core of politicized racial attitudes and beliefs about social privilege and disadvantage. Were our reactions biased more by ‘liberal’ racial pity or by ‘conservative’ racial contempt? What do we believe about why social benefits flow to some groups, whether or not they have earned them? Or why some groups are on the receiving end of racial insult and social inequity through no fault of their own? How do we explain, in Martin Luther King Jr.’s words, why so many white Americans “experience the opportunity of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in all its dimensions,” while many black Americans face a “daily ugliness” that leaves only “the fatigue of despair.”

Global learning is not so much a search for answers, but for better questions. Those questions emerge as we do our “homework” (Visweswaran, 1994). Playing on the pedagogical senses of the term, homework is not a matter of literally staying put, of never venturing outside one’s own local or national context. It indicates a type of global learning privileges depth over breadth. Settings proximate to home can disorient and displace, inviting us to venture into the inward passages where are home-grown prides and prejudices, stereotypes and suspicions reside. Pico Iyer writes in *Sun After Dark* (2005):

> The modern, shifting world has brought disorientation home to us, and mystery and strangeness; even in the most familiar places we may come upon something unsettling, just through the alien presence at our side... all the spirits we like to keep, locked up—suspicion, defensiveness, fear—suddenly rear their heads. A stranger is always at our door, nowadays, with an offer, an inquiry, and we don't know what to make of him. (p. 10)

Negotiating self-definitions relationally means that emotionally charged questions related to power and privilege will be asked. Those questions inevitably connect to disturbing events of U.S. history—like genocide, enslavement, colonialism, and military occupation—from which domestic heterogeneity has emerged. ‘Doorstep’ learning protects against our natural tendency to escape emotional discomfort by traveling abroad to meet those we consciously avoid at home. In such cases, the sociological dictum holds true: “Those closest to us are often the ones furthest away.”

4. **Doorstep-to-planet learning supports a more accessible, diverse, and sustainable global education.**

The conventional model of study abroad faces three formidable challenges. The first entails accessibility for those representing the “new majority” of American higher education—low-income, first-generation students of color. The second concerns the under-representation of racial minorities participating in overseas programs. The third is the long-term sustainability of the current, fossil fuel-dependent study abroad paradigm.
Since the 1870s, overseas study has attracted a fairly uniform student-participant: financially secure white females, typically in their early twenties. Coming from privileged families, travel vacations and conversations on international topics were a normal part of growing up. Study abroad was conceived of, and naturally internalized, as a normal and appealing part of higher learning. This “traditional” profile of students studying abroad looks much the same today.

What has taken a distinctly “non-traditional” turn, however, is the typical college student. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (Hussar & Baily, 2013), forty percent of those currently enrolled in higher education are older than twenty five, and a high percentage of these are from lower-income groups and communities of color. And the trend is expected to continue: The report projects a 25 percent increase in black students and a whopping 42 percent increase in Latinos by 2021, with only a 4 percent increase in Whites.

This “new majority” possesses a wealth of cultural experience and perspective, but their presence is largely absent within the ranks of conventional study abroad. Although programs in non-European locations have mushroomed, most non-Anglo students cannot afford to quit work, pay thousands of dollars in program fees, and take off for a semester in Bolivia or Ghana. Many work to help support families that can easily construe study abroad as an unaffordable luxury.

Disparate participation rates in study abroad are also shaped around color lines (Simon & Ainsworth, 2012). Only about five percent of Americans who study abroad are Black. Key gatekeepers in the study abroad process may perceive, falsely, that blacks students simply are not interested in things international. Often a subtle racism is at play. Study abroad staff and faculty may presume “that all Blacks are poor, that they lack the necessary educational requirements, or that study abroad is not relevant to their lives” (Simon & Ainsworth, 2012). It is also true that few minorities—Blacks in particular—see themselves reflected in those that run international offices and programs; nor among students in program cohorts. Racial minorities naturally wonder: Will anyone understand the stereotype threats that students of color often face abroad? Do program outcomes justify the price tag, especially for those who already have learned to see themselves, and the world around them, through foreign (dominant white/Anglo) eyes? (Lugones, 2003).

Finally, there is the question of whether a fossil fuel-dependent model of education can be sustained as the climate system continues to warm. Transporting tens of thousands of students from their homes to destinations abroad requires large amounts of fossil fuels and contributes to the concentration of greenhouse gases in the sensitive upper troposphere and lower stratosphere. Air travel currently accounts for about 13 percent of total transportation sector emissions. Generally speaking, a jet discharges about as much carbon dioxide as each passenger would driving the same distance alone in an average car. For example, a round trip from Los Angeles to Kolkata, or from Boston to Quito, or from the East coast to Europe and back, would produce about 3 tons (6,000 lbs.) of CO\(_2\) per passenger. That’s roughly equivalent to driving a Honda Accord 8,000 miles (333 gallons of gasoline).\(^5\)
Where does the inconvenient truth about pollution generation leave an enterprise whose mission is to expose students to the good and beautiful things of the world? “So far,” notes a group of global educators from Augsburg College, “most international offices have failed to grapple with this conundrum: Carbon use for study abroad has a negative impact on the stability of the earth’s climate and, by extension, on the very cultures and peoples it seeks to illuminate” (Dvorak, et al., 2011, p. 145). The tacit assumption seems to be that the educational and personal value of study abroad, seemingly regardless of program quality, outweighs the ecological impacts.

There is no crystal ball to predict the future. Nevertheless, it’s a fairly safe bet that the combined effect of “non-traditional” students and continuing, escalating global climate breakdown will increasingly challenge the legitimacy of high-cost, high-polluting global learning models. Rather than seeing a dramatic expansion of study abroad participation (like that envisioned by the Institute of International Education’s “Generation Study Abroad” initiative), we could witness a steady contraction of international travel for all but a tiny mobile elite. For the vast majority of collegians, global learning could conceivably take place in local or regional communities.

These four, mostly philosophical, arguments only begin to make the case for a ‘doorstep’ initiation to global learning. Ira Harkavy (2015), a national expert in university-community engagement, also draws attention to some of its compelling practical benefits.

Ongoing, continuous interaction is facilitated through work in an easily accessible location. Relationships of trust, so essential for effective partnerships and effective learning, are also built through day-to-day work on problems and issues of mutual concern. In addition, the local community provides a convenient setting in which a number of service-learning courses, community-based research courses, and related courses in different disciplines can work together on a complex problem to produce substantive results... And finally, the local community is a democratic real-world learning site in which community members and academics can pragmatically determine whether the work is making a real difference, and whether both the neighborhood and the higher education institution are better as a result of common efforts.

“Alright, I’m convinced,” you might say. “But how do I begin?” Fortunately, creative program designers have much to emulate. For several decades some of the most sophisticated models of semester-long, full immersion learning have operated in domestic milieus of rich human or ecological diversity, including Chicago, Philadelphia, New York, the Pacific Northwest, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, and the U.S./Mexico frontier.6

Making the Strange Familiar: The Planet

It is indispensable to be perpetually comparing their own notions and customs with the experience and example of persons in different circumstances from themselves: and there is no nation which does not need to borrow from others, not merely particular arts or practices, but essential points of character in which its own type is inferior. (John Stuart Mill)
Thus far we’ve argued in favor of prioritizing the ‘doorstep’ in a socially and ecologically responsible global education. However, we do not equate “starting at home” with “staying at home.” To become intimate with a particular place—its landscape and peoples and culture—is not to sever ties across other places. Global learning entails roots and shoots. Scott Russell Sanders explains:

To become intimate with your home region, to know the territory as well as you can, to understand your life as woven into local life does not prevent you from recognizing and honoring the diversity of other places, cultures, and ways. On the contrary, how can you value other places, if you do not have one of your own? If you are not yourself placed, then you wander the world like a sightseer, a collector of sensations, with no gauge for measuring what you see. Local knowledge is the grounding for global knowledge. (Sanders, 1993, p. 114)

Ghanaian philosopher Kwame Appiah (2004) captures a similar ordering of doorstep-then-planet with his idea of “rooted cosmopolitanism.” As individuals move cognitively and physically outside their spatial origins, they continue to be linked to place, to the social networks that inhabit that space. Primary ties continue to be domestic, even as the “circle” of relationships and responsibilities expands into other societies. Rooted cosmopolitans imagine a world where persons are “attached to a home of one’s own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different places who are home to other, different people” (Appiah, 1997, p. 618).

Among the many “aha!” moments during a term abroad is realizing our basic connectedness and interdependence with distant places and peoples. Very few places on earth are not permeated and profoundly affected by ideas and people and products from elsewhere. Global forces can have beneficial or damaging affects on local communities. Greenhouse gases produced in rich countries, for instance, can have grave effects on livelihoods in poor and middle-income countries thousands of miles away. Similarly, communities stretching from Peru to Cambodia feel the almost irresistible force of American fast food chains and pop culture. And there is probably no place on earth untouched by the global financial and military architecture, dominated by megabanks, transnational corporations, special interest lobbies, and the Pentagon. Each and every one of the planet’s places is inexorably enmeshed in cultural, economic, and political relationships.

The “planet” pole of our learning model critically connects discrete localities with globalizing forces and institutions through sustained analysis. Some anthropologists call this multi-sited field study, a process whereby learners are inserted into different places, with different social actors, practices and ideas (Marcus, 1995). “Planet” learning builds on the social sensibilities and practical wisdom spawned in ‘doorstep’ communities. Students venture outside the borders of their homeland to investigate how those in other national cultures define and address issues of central importance to planetary wellbeing. Two learning goals define the project: (1) to generate comparative perspectives on shared problems, and (2) to engage in a continuous “borrowing” of ideas and practices from elsewhere.
Cultural comparison

Each planet’s human societies, though cut from the same genetic cloth, are unique manifestations of reality. Their edges are blurry and their identities blended—a Turkish resident in the Netherlands may simultaneously identify with Dutch culture, Turkish culture, Sunni Islam, and so on—but each has its own raw genius and human potential. We may look upon traditional or indigenous cultures as victims of a technocratic age. But we also need to be reminded that,

The other peoples of the world are not failed attempts to be us. They are unique expressions of the human imagination and heart, unique answers to a fundamental question. What does it mean to be human and alive? When asked that question they respond in 7000 different voices, and these collectively comprise our human repertoire for dealing with all the challenges that will confront us as a species (Davis, 2010).

The “planet” pole encourages us to follow take our personal passion and follow it across traditional and modern societies. Our special interest may be in a particular population (e.g., migrant workers, refugees, trafficked persons); a certain branch of knowledge (e.g., media, politics, religion); a thorny controversy (e.g., abortion, gender identity); or a pressing predicament (e.g., the ‘new poverty,’ climate disruption, arms trade). With competence acquired at home, we establish residence in other places of special relevance to our issue of interest. There we draw on the local wisdom to trace the local shades of a global concern.

The aim of multi-sited global learning is not simply to acquire an intellectual grasp of cultural variation (as interesting as that is). Rather, it is to construct deep and complex understandings that might potentially inform broader public action on everything from education and land reform to legal protection of children. Even a seemingly apolitical topic like art, as anthropologist Clifford Geertz insists, is often illuminated through cultural comparison: “The question is not whether art (or anything else) is universal; it is whether one can talk about West African carving, New Guinea palm-leaf painting, quattrocento picture making, and Moroccan versifying in such a way as to cause them to shed some sort of light on one another” (1983, p. 11, emphasis added).

To illustrate the comparative process, consider the case of a young collegian of Mexican heritage. During sophomore year at Azusa Pacific University, Grecia R. learned that between 600,000 and 800,000 people—half of them children and 80 percent female—are trafficked across the U.S. border. Could this be a global issue in her backyard? After several inquiries, Grecia arranged an internship with a L.A.-based organization dedicated to “ending forced labor and slavery-like practices.” It wasn’t before she made her first discovery: the sex trade has no borders. In the back regions of L.A. were marginalized children, desperate for love or money or both, wind up “in the game.” Through a combination of focused study and grassroots outreach, Grecia gradually built up a working theory of a complex reality. Factors that included poverty, parentlessness, crushingly low self-esteem, and childhood sexual abuse helped her to explain the presence of underage and adult prostitution she witnessed. What remained unintelligible, at least at the time, was
why over 90 percent of those on the street were Black, most of the rest Latinos, with very few Whites.

During her final year, a senior seminar opened the door for Grecia to delve deeper into the issue. She made the 90-minute drive from Los Angeles to the border town of Tijuana, hoping to gain a firmer grasp of commercial sex work, now set against her L.A. experience. For several days she observed street life in Zona Norte, the city’s red-light district. As opportunity presented itself, she casually struck up conversation with the women. Immediately apparent, and in striking contrast with the L.A. scene, was how public prostitution in Tijuana was. The “industry,” Grecia soon learned, is a legal and profitable sector of the city’s economy.

Many of the women were reluctant, understandably, to talk about their trade. Those who did open up described their experience in both negative and positive terms. For most of the women, abusive partners and economic desperation had driven them from the countryside to the streets of Tijuana. Prostitution allowed them to do what working in factories or fields could not: financially support their children and other extended family members. Sex work, Grecia realized, was not the same as human trafficking. True, many of the women were victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence. But they were also women at work—supporting children as single parents, saving money to go to school, and trying to survive in a cruel job market.

Grecia’s investigation wasn’t yet over. Following graduation, she enrolled in a field-based master’s program in development practice that landed her at a third site: Kolkata, India. She took up residence in in Sonagachi, one of the largest and most prominent red light districts in Asia. Everyday she rubbed shoulders with dozens of Sonagachi’s sex workers. Some were employed through a fair-trade bag and apparel business where Grecia interned. As trust relationships grew, many of the women began to tell their stories. Some elements mirrored realities in Los Angeles: the fractured families, the black market of trafficked minors, the exploitative pimps, and the poisonous social stigma. Other women highlighted the economic compulsion and quick money, similar to what was heard in Tijuana. But some realities were specific to the Indian context, diverging sharply from the situation in both L.A. and TJ. The women talked about the abuses associated with entrenched patriarchal traditions and the customary devaluation of daughters. Social norms had convinced many of the women that they were inferior and subordinate to men, and that gender-based violence was acceptable. And not just by pimps and clients, but also by corrupt police who extorted money and forced the women into unprotected sex.

Gauging the “sex industry” across Los Angeles, Tijuana and Kolkata, Grecia uncovered real differences in root causes and social effects. But all three sites shared one thing in common: the commodification and commercialization of female bodies within a lucrative global market. Cross-cultural comparison, extending from doorstep to planet, allowed Grecia to peel away the cultural-specific symptoms and to decipher the root cause.

**Cultural borrowing**

Multi-sited global learning also creates a basis for cultural borrowing or adoption from elsewhere. Appiah (2006) positively describes this endless process of revision and even
reinvention as “cultural contamination.” In making his case, Appiah cites Salman Rushdie, the Bombay-born British novelist whose fourth novel resulted in a \textit{fatwa} calling for Rushdie’s death. Even in exile Rushdie continued to extol the virtues of cultural contamination:

\textit{The Satanic Verses} celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelisation and fears the absolutism of the Pure. Mélange, hotch-potch, a bit of this and a bit of that is how newness enters the world.

A minority opinion depicts this kind of two-way borrowing and lending in negative terms, as tantamount to theft. They point to the many instances where an outside power forcibly took what rightly belonged to another culture, as when magnificent aesthetic treasures throughout Europe were seized and destroyed by the Nazis during World War II.

Most cultural appropriations, however, are morally benign: Two Euro-Americans in California go out for sushi or Vietnamese \textit{pho}. A Chinese tourist buys several pieces of indigenous art in Santa Fe, New Mexico and carries them back home. Superficial, largely commercialized borrowings can be cited endlessly.

Appiah and Rushdie are more interested in deep borrowing, the kind that enriches the human experience and becomes a public good. Almost all religions, for example, incorporate teachings or practices from other faiths, raising the moral and ethical character of millions. The essential idea is that someone from one society finds something in another society good and important and useful. They then decide to allow those cultural features to alter their way of living in the world.

Transformative potential is often found in unlikely places. And for global learners reared under and enamored by modernity, an under-valued source of cultural wisdom is to be found within place-based economies. Rural villages, informal urban settlements, indigenous societies, Amish communities, transition towns, and eco-villages—these living experiments, tens of thousands of them, reveal alternative ways of knowing and being. Like any good teacher, they challenge us to radically rethink our relationships—with God, with material things, with ourselves, and with one another. Perhaps their most important lessons have to do with shaping a more human-scaled, self-reliant, low-impact, and convivial mode of life. Although there are vast differences between a village in Rajasthan and the Los Angeles Ecovillage, certain features are common to all. Generally speaking, these are places where:

- People are intimately connected to their land, to each other, and to local knowledge;
- People rely on their wits to meet their daily needs with locally supplied resources;
- Little is wasted and much is shared;
- The ruling ideas elevate neighborliness and contentment over competition and consumption;
- The majority hasn’t ‘progressed’ from a foot, pedal, or horse economy to a fuel economy;
- More time is spent outdoors than sitting and looking at screens; and
Basic knowledge—of husbandry, horticulture, carpentry, and basic mechanics—is passed down from generation to generation.

Alternative communities hold up a great mirror to the modern world, compelling us to think hard about the pros and cons of industrialized lifestyles. Why, asks Jared Diamond in *The World Until Yesterday* (2012), are children in small-scale societies rarely lonely, overweight, morally confused, monolingual, or insecure in their identity? How did they develop what are arguably superior ways of training children, caring for the elderly, and settling disputes? By asking such questions, we’re not idealizing traditional peoples. (Their lives are often poor, nasty, brutish and short.) We’re allowing alternative societies to remind us that our way is not the only way to be human. Not every society is debt-saddled and largely unhappy, working endlessly and consuming gluttonously. Hyper-modern students have a rare opportunity to gradually *un-learn* a way of life based on expansion and extraction, combustion and consumption; and then to *re-learn*, day by day, new patterns of desire, diet, resource use, technology dependence, and energy consumption. The key is for them to *live the alternative* for a long enough period of time to create a “new normal” of everyday habits.

If small-scale societies model some of the *individual* (lifestyle) changes needed to help repair the world, some of the bigger, more *structural* solutions are showcased within select urban centers. Most of humanity now lives in cities. It follows that there can be no healthy planet without healthy cities. And there can be no healthy cities without social innovations that scale up into new policies and institutions. Valuable lessons in building durable societies are to be found, as Ireland President Michael Higgins (2012) says, in “the interaction of inherited tradition with a technologically driven modernity.”

Take for example the rising rates of traffic congestion and obesity in North American cities. How might the combined wisdom of cultural tradition and technical innovation suggest a way forward? In search of an answer, a group of students from a U.S. center of car culture—say, Houston or Atlanta—might explore transportation policy and planning in Copenhagen, Denmark. Despite frigid conditions (it’s spring semester), the students immediately notice that the people of Copenhagen are as comfortable on bicycles as North Americans are in cars. In fact, 50% of the residents pedal to work, school or college every day. How can this be? The students talk to bicycle commuters and city officials, hoping to uncover potential “borrowings”—distinct values and ideas and policies that, *if successfully* transplanted to the U.S., could help achieve a fundamental shift in mindset and commuting behavior.

Similar models of innovation abound in locations across the planet:

- *Energy consumption*: In Freiberg, Germany, a city of 200,000 people, there are more solar roofs than in the whole of the United Kingdom (60 million people).

- *Urban governance*: In Porto Alegre, Brazil, through a debate and consultative process, the general public decides where and when tax monies will be spent, whether on better schools, better transport systems, or better playgrounds.
• **Cooperative organization:** *Mondragón*, in the Basque Country of Spain, is an entirely resident-owned town and birthplace of the Mondragón Corporation, an extraordinary 80,000-person federation of 110 worker-owned cooperatives that has innovated worker-owned forms of social organization within the market system.

• **Food self-sufficiency:** In both *Havana* (Cuba) and *Dar Es Salaam* (Tanzania), urban organic gardens supply fresh produce, meat, and dairy products, and perform a vital socializing function for farmers, communities, and neighborhoods.

• **Urban design:** *Medellin, Columbia* has become a model of urban sustainability through long-term investments in public spaces, green areas, and its famous Metrocable system that connects the city’s poorest and most isolated neighborhoods to its booming economic center.

Multi-sited global learning, for all its wonder, does raise thorny ethical questions about financial cost, time demand, and carbon footprint. Do the potential lifestyle adjustments and long-term social innovations justify the costs? When is globetrotting “worth it”? The answer, obviously, is neither simple nor immediately evident. But one thing seems clear: the cities that get built over the next 50 years will critically depend on the kind of people we want to be. And we best re-imagine our collective selves, not in a cultural vacuum, but through encounters with places and peoples that do things far better than what most of us think we do best.

**Conclusion**

In the early 1950s the distinguished urban intellectual Lewis Mumford laid out a global learning strategy that would counter the rise of a bureaucratic, narrowly technical civilization and the gradual loss of social caring. Sojourns would begin at one’s ‘doorstep’: "Every young man and woman, at the age of eighteen or thereabouts, should serve perhaps six months in a public works corps. In his own region he will get training and active service, doing a thousand things that need to be done…" Learners would then venture to localities strewn across the planet: "…every effort should be made, for the sake of education, to take the student out of his home environment for a period, introducing him to other regions and other modes of life (p. 278). Scores of women and men, journeying nearby and faraway, would receive a boon of wisdom for ‘home.’

The result of such transmigrations would be to enrich every homeland with mature young men and women, who knew the ways and farings of other men, who would bring back treasures with them, songs and dances, technical processes and civic customs, not least, ethical precepts and religious insights, knowledge not taken at third hand from books, but through direct contact and living experience: thus, the young would bring back into every village and city a touch of the universal society of which they form an active part. (p. 278-9; italics added)

Mumford captures the particular genius of a global education: to shape student consciousness with “a touch of the universal society.” That such a cosmopolitan ideal may never be attained or, if achieved, would require eternal vigilance to maintain, is no reason to not pursue it. Doorstep-to-planet learning is ultimately a pedagogy of hope. In a re-
drawn ‘field,’ a new generation of global learners can hope to discover an optimal balance between being localized (rooted in a physical place) and being globalized (uncover insights from elsewhere). In helping to shape such a cosmopolitan localism, we help to build the better future.

References


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**Notes**

1 International education continues to be charged with a public and cultural diplomatic mission, only now the focus is on winning a war of culture with fundamentalist terrorism, along with revitalize America’s world role. In his 2014 State of the Union speech, President Barrack Obama reiterated the geopolitical role of international education: “We’re also expanding cultural and educational exchanges among young people... On every issue, the world turns to us, not simply because of the size of our economy or our military might, but because of the ideals we stand for, and the burdens we bear to advance them.”

2 As defined by the AAC&U, global learning is “... a critical analysis of and an engagement with complex, interdependent global systems and legacies (such as natural, physical, social, cultural, economic, and political) and their implications for people’s lives and the earth’s sustainability. Through global learning, students should (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, and (3) address the world’s most pressing and enduring issues collaboratively and equitably” (AAC&U, 2014; emphasis added).

3 Examples abound: Polynesian hula dance shows in Hawai’i; indigenous Maasai performances at luxury lodges in Kenya; guided slum tours in Mumbai; the hill tribes of northern Thailand; Mayans in Central America, and so forth. The superficial associations with “native” styles disguise the main show: convincing people they are having fun as long as they continue to spend their money. Most post-moderns know that the promise of “authenticity” is mostly hype. Nevertheless, they are content to revel in the carnavalesque simulacra of “tourist traps,” without letting their inauthenticity detract from their enjoyment (see Urry, 1995).


5 These figures don’t account for the huge plumes of exhaust released by jets during taxiing, idling, takeoffs, and landings. Nor the energy used in the airport buildings, facilities, baggage systems, airport service vehicles, concession facilities, aircraft fueling, airport construction, air navigation, and safety operations.

6 See The Chicago Program offered through the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM); The Philadelphia Center program founded by the Great Lakes Colleges Association; The New York Arts program of Ohio Wesleyan University; Whitman College’s Semester in the West program; the Metro Urban Studies program sponsored by the Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs (HECUA); Azusa Pacific University’s Los Angeles Term program, and Earlham College Border Studies program. Many of these programs are profiled in Neal Sobania (2015).