

Sarah S. Stroup, *Borders Among Activists: International NGOs in the United States, Britain, and France*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012. 246pp. \$39.95 ISBN: 978-0-8014-5073-0

In *Borders Among Activists*, Sarah Stroup examines many of the world's leading INGOs, finding variations in how each organization is individually orchestrated: "While many INGOs are increasingly active in *international* arenas, actual organizational structures and strategies are deeply tied to *national* environments" (3). Stroup shares her analysis of a selected group of organizations in three different countries to show how "globalization" is not really a product of their effort(s), despite what the leaders of those INGOs or we may like to think. Rather, she argues, national issues, concerns, and conditions preclude the true accomplishment of such solidarity. As such, she sheds light on the larger implications of the organizational failure of INGOs by suggesting that a disconnect among the individual INGOs about, say, what particular service a charity should perform is what is really driving debacles. As a result, she provides a concrete area of transnational politics on which focus ought to be paid, lending a smaller and certainly more feasible place to attack and, consequently, alleviate organizational failures and improve the state of affairs.

Stroup begins with an allusion to the recent Haiti crises, and thereby captures her audience through the pertinence of her descriptions, that are further clarified with reference to a comprehensive list of abbreviations used in this realm of work (ix-x). This book provides a look into the inner workings of transnational relations, which may be helpful for a breadth of fields ranging from public policy to political science to international relations, among others. She writes with the clarity and didacticism necessary for a non-expert to interpret and enjoy her book but with the knowledge and insight for the INGOS and leaders it studies to take into account.

Rather astutely, Stroup condenses the scope of her analysis of organization practice variation to two sectors, humanitarian relief and human rights, and limits her case selection to three countries: the United States, France, and Britain. In so doing, she allows for a more thorough study of a representative piece of INGO operations and she can more succinctly explore *how* national origin matters. Stroup's particular case research for the countries further narrows the scope of her evaluation to, firstly, six major INGOs—"CARE and Human Rights Watch from the United States; Oxfam and Amnesty from Britain; and Médecins Sans Frontières and the Fédération Internationale des ligues des Droits de l'Homme from France"—secondly, those six INGO's respective host country offices and, lastly, to a dozen smaller comparative "mini cases"—two from the humanitarian aid sector and two from the human rights sector for each country—to distinguish sectoral effects from national effects (24-25).

Stroup provides both a reason for why INGOs operate similarly and for why their practices diverge. By providing data suggestive of a counterargument (the isomorphic character of INGOs), she concedes that others may see the situation differently and doing so lends a degree of impartiality to her rhetoric; her audience can better rest assured that she is not touting staunchly one-sided views. Another strength of *Borders Among Activists* is the extensive amount of research and interviews on which Stroup founds her arguments. She conducted over seventy interviews and, as can be ascertained from her

exhaustive 14-page reference section, took a great number of works into account when making her claims. Stroup clearly did her research.

Something to note about Stroup's book is that the assertions she makes, though very well-referenced and researched, are founded on a limited pool of information—insofar as they arise from the case studies of three representative countries as opposed to the world as a whole—and are meant to serve as seeds of thought that offer insight into the entire transnational sector. I think that Stroup clearly points this out both within the text of the chapters and especially in the appendices (see page 217). She contends that she selected case study organizations using a “least likely” method, picking subjects that would foreseeably have the smallest probability of exhibiting national origin effects. I find this method indubitably sounder than other methods used earlier in other INGO studies, such as the American NGO study by Lindenberg and Bryant, which included organizations willing and able to attend a round of conferences (216). Such reliance on availability and financial propensity would likely shroud the research and the researcher's conclusions.

There are a few grammatical errors in the book, and some uneven writing; but overall, Stroup's book is an important piece of transnational relation analysis that I recommend to readers interested in this area of research.

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