



**WESTERN
MICHIGAN**
UNIVERSITY

The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 27
Issue 3 September

Article 15

September 2000

**Review of *Healing Communities in Conflict: International Assistance in Complex Emergencies*. Kimberly A. Maynard.
Reviewed by Nancy Farwell, University of Washington.**

Nancy Farwell
University of Washington

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>



Part of the Peace and Conflict Studies Commons, and the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation

Farwell, Nancy (2000) "Review of *Healing Communities in Conflict: International Assistance in Complex Emergencies*. Kimberly A. Maynard. Reviewed by Nancy Farwell, University of Washington.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 27 : Iss. 3 , Article 15.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol27/iss3/15>

This Book Review is brought to you by the Western Michigan University School of Social Work. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



**WESTERN
MICHIGAN**
UNIVERSITY

is no longer on slave-ownership for life but slave-holding for as long as a slave is useful—hence the title, *Disposable People*.

The most poorly developed part of Bales thesis can be found in the contradictions in his argument on modernisation. This he says is a good thing because it can lead to employment and education, which provide an escape from slavery. However, he also argues for example, that modernisation can destroy the traditional rules and bonds that might have protected potential slaves. Despite the contesting intellectual paradigms echoed here, Kevin Bales' book is an important contribution overall and will act as a compelling catalyst for further research into new slavery globally. Moreover, for those concerned with social development, it stands as an important reminder of how global social policy solutions have to be found at the international as well as national and local levels. Moreover, these in turn cannot be divorced from the workings of the global economy and the human rights agenda. In terms of the latter, Bales leaves us in no doubt that in terms of slavery, cultural relativism cannot be tolerated and only a universalist perspective will do.

Jo Beall

London School of Economics

Kimberly A. Maynard, *Healing Communities in Conflict: International Assistance in Complex Emergencies*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999. \$27.50 hardcover.

During the eight years since the end of the Cold War, the world has witnessed horrific levels of violence played out in internal conflicts within states. International relief efforts have attempted to rebuild communities and alleviate the tremendous hardship of affected populations with mixed results. Social workers have not played a prominent role in international assistance, and as such, within the profession, the discourse on armed conflict is often limited to the psychosocial impact of trauma on war-affected refugee populations resettled in northern countries. This book places the focus directly on conflict-ravaged communities and the responsibility of those who intercede to incorporate a systems approach in collaborative efforts to promote recovery and a sustainable peace.

In this book, Kimberly Maynard notes the intense personal animosity and intergroup hostility underlying contemporary warfare, suggesting that this violence might best be conceptualized as *identity conflict*. This intimate warfare results in a soaring percentage of civilian casualties and is fueled by the ready availability of arms from the Cold War stockpile as well as by an abundance of newly manufactured weapons. Basic means of survival are targeted in such conflicts, as is the very framework of community cohesion and cooperation, resulting in societal implosion leading to complex emergencies. International intercession is based on outdated patterns of warfare, which do not involve such pervasive societal interaction.

This book is divided into two parts. The first establishes the context for Maynard's thesis that the nature of contemporary conflict requires new approaches to humanitarian intercession. The second part offers a conceptual and practical framework for international assistance and community rehabilitation. The five chapters comprising the first section of the book include a discussion of the tools and premises of international humanitarian assistance, and an overview of how identity conflicts evolve into complex emergencies. Of particular interest to the social work profession is Maynard's discussion of the ramifications of such emergencies for all sectors of the society: political, economic and food security, health, vulnerable populations, psychosocial distress, human rights, and environmental devastation. One of the severe and lasting consequences of such emergencies is forced migration: movements of large numbers of uprooted people fleeing ethnic cleansing, human rights violations, persecution, forced relocation, and other threats to security. This sets the stage for a comprehensive discussion of the process of repatriation, the decision-making process and the often thorny reintegration issues that may accompany the return—for both the returnees and the community. The final chapter in Part 1 focuses on communities ravaged by identity conflict, a perspective that has not been widely explored. This particularly intimate form of warfare destroys community life, creating great challenges for reconstruction and reintegration under conditions of distrust and ongoing security threats, competing claims of ownership of resources, and the shredding of intergroup reliance.

In the three chapters that comprise Part 2, Maynard examines multidimensional approaches to rebuilding community cohesion and healing. The author presents specific strategies and programmatic approaches which, she contends, must be adopted by international agencies in complex emergencies. Programs must fit the context, be sustainable locally, and operate with a long-term view of managing conflict and rebuilding civil society, a requisite for sustaining peaceful relations. The final chapter advocates for a systems perspective in international development assistance, covering an expanded time frame from the prevention of conflict to long-term development. This will require substantial modification in the operating procedures, mandates, coordination and time frames currently used in international assistance. Maynard challenges the international community to take up this vision, and to create innovative new parameters for intercession in complex emergencies.

Drawing from a wide range of disciplines, the author provides a timely and constructive critique of international assistance and its role in complex emergencies in this admirably integrative work. As a practitioner, researcher, and consultant with extensive experience in disaster management and international aid, Maynard incorporates into her presentation firsthand knowledge of the complex emergencies generated by these identity conflicts, in places such as Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Caucasus, Tajikistan, and Kosovo. It is this experience "on the ground" that gives the book particular authority.

Fascinating issues touched on by the author suggest to this reader key areas for further analysis. One is the question of sovereignty, and the respective degrees of autonomy expected and required by the local authorities as well as by the international aid agencies. Development aid often comes with conditions attached, related to the nature of the market system and "democratization" as defined by northern countries. War-torn states such as Eritrea have asserted their sovereign right to set policy and development directions on their own terms, to the point of asking the international non-governmental organizations to leave the country. Lessons learned by the international community in this setting could be put to good use in relation to Maynard's proposals for new approaches to aid.

A second point that deserves further attention relates to the underlying conditions and inputs that fuel armed conflict and complex emergencies. To what extent are international aid agencies exponents of these same conditions? This is a complex question beyond the scope of this book. However, the question of how legitimacy is conferred on the activities of the international donors, by whom, in whose interests, and to what ends bears examining in any discussion of outside intervention. Third, while identity conflict is a useful organizing concept that can be applied in many contexts, it would be useful to explore conditions such as environmental scarcity that might foster such conflicts.

Healing Communities in Conflict: International Assistance in Complex Emergencies is a singular contribution to the ongoing debate about international aid. It is well organized and well referenced. This book will be of particular interest to scholars, graduate students, and practitioners, and deserves a place in every library of international social work and social welfare.

Nancy Farwell

University of Washington

Leroy Pelton, *Doing Justice*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999. \$21.95 paperback.

Almost all topics in social welfare contain references to some form of justice, and they take the form of:

- In a just society such and such should be done . . .
- This form of redistribution should take place, so that past injustices can be corrected.
- Such and such behavior is deviant behavior, and justice requires that it be dealt with in such and such manner . . .

The term justice is used as a slogan to support or oppose social policy. It is important that this slogan is deconstructed, or at the least put in perspective. The term stands for too many templates of state behavior. Leroy Pelton's work, *Doing Justice* makes an important contribution toward such deconstruction. He has argued that "[I]t is time to recognize and respect group diversity and experiences as a pervasive fact of life, but as a poor and unjust basis for the formation of public policy" (p. 218). Put