

## ***Introduction to Diaspora Studies Reader***

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### **Global Movements: Migration, Diaspora, Transnationalism**

It is now almost axiomatic to state that the early 21<sup>st</sup> century is an age of globalization. In fact the global movement of people, capital, products, cultures, information and ideologies has increased exponentially since 2000;<sup>1</sup> and this acceleration in the rate of migration, intensified by economic instabilities following the global financial crisis of 2008 and ongoing political upheavals in the Middle East since 2011, is predicted to continue (Nail 2015, 1, 239). These developments have been matched by an equally steep rise of research interest in the field. Research efforts have been increased in the wider area of migration studies in both its historical and contemporary dimensions, as the plethora of recent publications testify (see e.g. Cresswell 2006; Collier 2013; Kenny 2013; Bartram, Poros, and Monforte 2014; Sassen 2014; Nail 2015; Maley 2016; Tinti and Reitano 2016). At the same time, studies on specific aspects and consequences of migration have also gained in importance. Here, diaspora studies forms a particularly promising field, not only because diasporas have become ever more prominent in politics and culture world-wide, but also because the concept of diaspora straddles the divide, so to speak, between studies of people on the move and the changes that happen locally in traditionally 'settled' contexts as a result of migration movements. Although diaspora studies is not a new discipline and emerges from the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the renewed topicality of the field calls for both an assessment of what has been achieved so far, and of what the future of diaspora studies might

look like. The texts reprinted in this Routledge *Reader* will help students and all who want to gain a grounding in the field to find their bearings, even if it can offer neither complete historical coverage of what diaspora studies has been so far, nor an exploratory or speculative advance into what it may become in the future. It does, however, try to provide recent 'classics' in diaspora scholarship along with a good complement of selected texts that exemplify the numerous perspectives from which diasporas can be perceived and thus help readers reflect on the place of diaspora studies in today's humanities and social science research environments.

As to specific disciplinary approaches, in the last 25 years vigorous debates, revised theoretical paradigms and changing models of movement and resettlement under the impact of globalization have marked the flourishing of the multiple and interlinked social science and humanities approaches that comprise this inter- and transdisciplinary area. Development of the field devoted to this phenomenon is notable for a preoccupation with the terminology used to define and explain types of movement, whether these be contained or expanding, whether caused by economic failures, unemployment, or aspirations for a better future, or whether as transnational movements associated with trade, finance or business they function as spheres of power and influence. The identities of those who move are also categorized: for example, transnational migrants, political refugees, asylum seekers, illegal immigrants, dispersed economic migrants, nomads, sojourners, tourists, and exiles.

The number of international migrants worldwide reached 244 million in 2015 according to the UN Sustainable Development Home Page (Brah, SECTION III.8) and of that number, 65.3 million are refugees.<sup>2</sup> The current crisis in Europe

-- political exiles seeking asylum from Syria and Iraq, refugees from northern Africa, and many other homeless people displaced by war, poverty, political conflict or discrimination -- involves various forms of movement, only some of which may lead to the forming of diasporas. In the face of an increasingly dense web of state regulation and diminishing opportunities for migration through official channels, illegal migrants take their chances and willingly risk their lives in the hope of finding a better life in a new society. The search for political asylum and a new start in more affluent western European countries illustrates the increasing desperation of the world's poor and disadvantaged (Brubaker 2005, 9). Many of these stateless groups remain caught between one culture and another, confined to transit camps, detention centres or refugee zones, often situated near or on national borders as in the recently-dismantled 'Jungle' transit camp in Calais or on off shore islands such as Nwaru and Manus, detention centres for asylum seekers to Australia. These camps are seen as new juridico-political units, influencing the way society is organised (Agamben 1997, 113-114). For long-term refugees, especially those whose formative years are spent in such limbo settings, being suspended in transit is now considered a way of life, a normative form of constructing an identity, and a different way of being in the world (Agier, 2011).

Despite the uncertain and changing status of these groups, which makes categorization problematic, they are potential sources of diasporas: they will either coalesce into new communities or integrate into already existing diaspora groups in host nations (Brah SECTION III.8; Sokefield 2006, cited by Cohen 2008, 13).<sup>3</sup> This may take several decades if political asylum is sought after, although in cases of economic migration such as the Turks in Germany or the Poles in the UK,

the settlement process is usually faster. Within the many flows of migratory journeys, factors such as the numbers of migrants at any one time, the role of politics and culture in the mobilization process, or conditions of labour and the local economy, can make a difference in helping transform a category of underprivileged migrants into a fully-fledged diaspora, providing them with greater visibility and some status.

Such hazardous movements, and provisional arrangements for the asylum seeker, refugee or political exile before any settlement can take place, may be contrasted with the mobilizations of the Irish, Jewish, or Indian diasporas, which rely on the more prosperous status and brokerage of co-ethnic elites of established diaspora communities in the new hostlands. These movements carry some assurance of entitlement of citizenship and belonging through the facilitation of sponsorship from the collective identity in solidarity -- already established groups such as international corporations or NGOs with influence, financial independence, and vocational control.<sup>4</sup> In addition, in the widening gap of economic inequality between the disenfranchised, impoverished victims of war and civil upheaval, and the more affluent beneficiaries of globalization, are the "scattered diasporas" of multiply-displaced people who share transnational bonds of mobility: overseas contract workers, casual labourers, and female domestic servants, often trapped and exploited in situations of temporary employment (Parry 2002, 72).

This snapshot of the variable, often harsh conditions experienced by migrants describes current population movements that are often summarized by an unspecific use of 'diaspora' as an umbrella rubric, frequently including related concepts such as transnationals, refugees, asylum seekers, expatriates, exiles,

contract workers and so on. Such lexical eclecticism and expansion of terms referring to migration due to many new contexts of movement (e.g. Syrians fleeing civil war, refugees from Northern Africa, Mexicans crossing into the US, and East-European peoples moving to the UK) show the risk of the label diaspora being applied as a generic one indiscriminately, to the point of losing distinctiveness and hence usefulness as a descriptive tool in research (Brubaker SECTION II.3; Braziel and Mannur 2003, 3). Using a more specific terminological focus, although diasporas originate as a dispersal or a migration, not all dispersals can be defined as diasporas (Quayson and Deswani 2013, 3). That is, diaspora movements which lead to the formation of new communities in the host nation with the aspiration to a more secure future differ in this sense from those of transmigrants, transnationals or exiles -- who do not necessarily consolidate into a diaspora.

Diaspora subjects who have relocated usually maintain symbolic ties to the homeland, displaying a cultural pattern of longing, nostalgia and identity, sometimes dominated by the expectation of a return – real or imagined; they also benefit from the presence of political or cultural facilitators or brokers who promote that relationship, often with a utopian nationalism associated with the notion of home in diaspora. With a shared sense of belonging to a “nation in exile, dispersed throughout the world” (Bruneau 2010, 49) they work towards the consolidation of a translocal cultural identity, inflected by relations with communities of their co-ethnics and co-diasporans. Through trans-state diasporic networks as well as local networks within host nations, diasporas function “as a hinge between different spaces and different geographical scales” (Bruneau 2010, 48). Like the related term “transnationalism”, they are

reconfiguring modernity's social and political structures in the transnational social sphere of migration. With national and regional borders rendered increasingly permeable, social space fractures into new configurations and groupings ex-centric to the nation state, which is no longer considered to be the principal analytical category of the global sphere or of its interrelations (Werbner 2013, 109). This interconnectivity is increasingly facilitated by the digital netscapes of the new information and communication technology in which the internet has become the central frame for networking (Kissau and Hunger 2010, 246). Yet the transborder communities that emerge from the spaces of transmigration and transnationalism, whose subjects circulate within a transnational region like the EU, differ from long-term diasporas. They do not relocate within the host nation to form coherent communities, or organize long term co-ethnic networks, but have parallel lives in one or more nation-states (Bruneau 2010, 49; Sheffer 2006, 127). Indeed, the presence of such mobile, circulating communities within western nations that have come to be designated as havens for multicultural cosmopolitan citizens, has produced a backlash against such transnational globalizing trends, as recent political decisions in the UK (for Brexit) and the US (the recent presidential election of Donald Trump) and local manifestations of nationalist xenophobic sentiment, evident in the growth of populist, anti-elite or outsider political formations, testify.

### **Diaspora Studies**

The disciplinary label of diaspora studies gained wide-spread currency in the 1990s alongside cognate areas such as transcultural studies, transnational migration studies, or globalization studies, as part of a "paradigm shift" triggered

by deconstructionist and poststructuralist theories that foreground the fluidity and hybridity of transnational formations (Glick-Schiller 2003, 121, cited in Sheffer 2006, 124).<sup>5</sup> As an area of research, diaspora studies acquired more coherence, as well as a predominantly interdisciplinary character after the American Armenian scholar Khachig Tölölyan founded *Diaspora: a Journal of Transnational Studies* in 1991; it rapidly grew into a forum for debate and the consolidation of research initiatives and perspectives. The expansion of the field from its beginnings in the social and political sciences, in which diaspora was used as a descriptive and typological tool for understanding migration and settlement in the global era (Cohen 2008, 5; Anthias 2001, 631), and its developing intersections with disciplines such as area studies, cultural theory, postcolonial studies, film studies, and queer theory, is reflected in the multi-sectional structure of this *Reader* as well as in the diversity of perspectives offered by the articles chosen for inclusion. The genealogy and disciplinary complexity of diaspora studies are comprehensively mapped by sociologist Robin Cohen (2008) in the second edition of his *Global Diasporas*. Cohen's overview of the field's expansion in keeping with the increase in migration, transnationalism, and globalization since the early 1990s identifies four phases. Acknowledging the diverse theoretical approaches, disciplinary frameworks and categories of analysis that have emerged at the intersection of diverse disciplines within social sciences and the humanities, he identifies the most recent phase as one of consolidation, and advocates the reaffirmation of the diaspora idea in terms of its "core elements, common features and ideal types" (Cohen SECTION I.1).

Readers, companions, special issues of journals (see e.g. Thayil 2006), overviews (see e.g. Mishra 2006), and studies of particular diasporas (on the Indian diaspora see e.g. Brown 2006; Mishra 2007; Oonk 2007; Raghuram, Sahoo, Maharaj and Sangha 2008; Koshy and Radhakrishnan 2009; Rai and Reeves 2009; Dwivedi 2014; Gamez-Fernandez and Dwivedi, 2015; Mehta 2015) play a part in the explosion of diaspora studies spearheaded by the founding of the journal *Diaspora*; these, however, are now unable to do justice to the proliferating approaches that have added to diaspora's complexity as a concept. In between the two editions of Cohen's *Global Diasporas* appeared the pioneering *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader*, edited by Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur (2003). Like Cohen, the editors recommend a balance between theorizing diaspora in order to open up critical spaces for further research, and acknowledging the historical and cultural specificity of various diasporic movements. They steer between the dominant disciplinary models: the historical, empirical approach of social science research, and the cultural studies, social constructivist approach dominant in the 1990s, which challenged the prevailing view that attachment to the homeland and nostalgia for return were key to the diasporic experience, and focused instead on the community of relocation in the hostland.<sup>6</sup> Braziel and Mannur point to a "nomadic turn", reflecting the fact that nomadism is one of the many forms that diasporas have taken throughout history, rather than a "postmodern turn from history".<sup>7</sup> Drawing on the literal and metaphoric meanings of the term diaspora, they argue that in diaspora "specific historical moments are embodied and –as diaspora itself suggests—are scattered and regrouped into new points of becoming" (2003, 3). *Theorizing Diaspora* was followed by the second edition of

the *Postcolonial Studies Reader* (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2006), which expands the first edition (1994) with new sections including a selection of seven articles on diaspora. The editors point out that during the intervening decade diaspora had become increasingly relevant to postcolonial studies. They elaborate that the Janus-like dualism of the split diasporic subject who looks back to the cultural identity and heritage of the homeland and forward to the new society of relocation, drawing upon both perspectives in identity construction, can be linked to the doubled and hybrid discourse of postcolonialism (425). But while theories of nation, social marginality, and cultural hybridity, made familiar through the work of postcolonial theorists like Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, and Paul Gilroy, have been applied to the material conditions of diasporic communities, the relationship between diaspora studies and postcolonial studies is a shifting one. The two overlap through their common engagement with the marginalization and cultural specificity of minority groups. Experiences of diaspora and exile occur more often and more widely than those of colonization, however, as the semantically capacious and wide-ranging term 'diaspora' suggests. While the postcolonial field has thus developed a diverse set of practices and theoretical tools to deal with a range of phenomena relating to historical and contemporary conditions of political domination and subservience, extending far beyond its original moment of disciplinary formulation, it cannot on its own now either accommodate or account for the diverse examples and conditions of diaspora under globalization.

The new conditions of global movement in the present century inform the selection of articles in *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism*, edited by Ato Quayson and Girish Daswani (2013), which focus on diaspora and

transnationalism. Claiming that diasporas “transcend nations, areas and regions”, the editors argue that both diaspora and its cognate term transnationalism are core concepts by which to understand movements of people and goods in today’s globalized world (6). Indeed, diaspora and transnationalism seem to displace some of the key concerns of postcolonial studies with identity, resistance and decolonization, or at least to reconfigure these, as for example, in Islamic resistance to the west.

By contrast to the *Readers* and their limited representation of articles that mark key concepts and debates about diaspora, and the *Companion*, which studies diaspora exclusively in relation to transnationalism, aiming to disentangle these two concepts, the Routledge *Diaspora Studies Reader* presents a spectrum of articles on topics and issues drawn from a diverse range of disciplines within the humanities, social sciences and cultural studies: it includes articles which build on established theoretical formulations and disciplinary formations as in the sections on cultural identity and hybridity, queer studies and intersectionality, as well as others which represent recent developments, through emerging or under-represented topics such as subjectivity, citizenship, international policy and diaspora, and digital diasporas.

### **Diaspora, migration, trans-national: disciplinary intersections and differences**

Diaspora studies as a field of enquiry has appeared at the intersection of several distinct disciplinary interests, both in the social sciences and the humanities, all of which have at their heart the concept of migration and its different manifestations across centuries. Diaspora emerges here as a specific understanding of this larger social movement, as it is always construed in

relation to its cardinal points of reference, the hostland and homeland. However, given its overlap with several other scholarly fields, questions of terminology and conceptualization have occupied much of the early debate on how to properly define the object of diaspora studies.

Diaspora studies partly overlaps with migration and refugee studies, social and human geography, globalization studies and postcolonial studies, and for this reason has often been either elided by or included within these areas of research. Yet the themes and acts of migration and exile are recurrent in all cultures and societies from their very beginnings and this gives diaspora studies continued relevance and resonance within the disciplinary frameworks of postcolonial or migration studies with which it is most often associated. The persistence and growth of diaspora communities, as diaspora expands into one of the most prominent forms of global migration, has enabled diaspora studies to develop in ways that are distinct from these cognate disciplines and to form its own boundaries of enquiry and terms of scholarly engagement. Although the varied approaches and disparate discourses hint at the contradictions and ideological differences inherent in the evolution of this heterogeneous, cross-disciplinary field, diaspora studies shows growing coherence and consolidation with new areas of investigation developing, critiquing and expanding earlier arguments and debates.<sup>8</sup>

Notably, by contrast to other disciplines that seek to examine different movements and societies in relation to migration, the nation and globalization, the central focus of diaspora studies is on the connections between homeland and hostland generated by mobile subjects, including the perspectives of long-term residents both at home and abroad. Diaspora is about home and belonging,

cultural connectivity, hybridity and diversity, settlement and location. The different structures of belonging experienced by hybrid, migratory communities have been dominated by the foundational geographical model of the Jewish and Armenian diasporas, which foregrounds the points of origin and return, and associates home with “roots, soil and kinship” (Huysen 2003, 151). Among the ‘victim’ diasporas of cataclysm and trauma, where exile may be forced and return to the homeland denied, the classic cases are the Jews after the Babylonian captivity in 586 BC, the African diaspora created by the slave trade, the Armenians following the Turkish genocide of 1915, the Irish migration following the potato famine in 1845-1852, and the Palestinian diaspora after the British withdrawal in 1948 (Cohen 2008, 2-4). One can contrast these prototypical diasporas which emphasize nostalgia and loss with the more recent conceptual framework that takes as its central reference point the society of relocation and the strategies of making a new home within it. Here the idea of home is detached from its association with territory and broadened to include the affective response to dispersion. As Avtar Brah (1996) points out, this approach to living in diaspora is built on a “homing desire”, the wish to construct a home, by contrast to the “desire for a homeland” (180, 192-193).

Overlapping with this latter model of diaspora are the heightened circuits of transnational, transglobal mobility, and those forms of the deterritorialized nation that are marked by social networks, information technologies, digital netscapes, and affordable air travel (Laguerre 2009, 197). Such circulations of movement identified with cross-border communities and multilocational, mobile identities, undercut the binaries of models framed by the bounded entity of the nation state: of dispersal from the homeland and/or relocation in a hostland.

They emphasize the proliferation of migrant identities and collectivities across national borders, and of interlinked, translocal, co-diaspora communities which are both “multi local” and “polycentric” (Tölölyan 2007, 651). As Quayson and Daswani point out, these go well beyond the usual imagining of modern nation states which is linked to the concept of the migrant; for the transmigrant may have affiliation to more than one nation and develop ties of loyalty and experience nostalgia for two or more locations simultaneously (2013, 5-6).

Research in social science and humanities disciplines has begun to identify a body of recurring themes and preoccupations that can be recognized as part of a diaspora consciousness – transnationalism, subjectivity, paradigms in the visual and performing arts and literature identifiable as distinct generic and aesthetic forms, new modes of citizenship that supersede national boundaries. Diaspora focuses on the unequal power relations between different groups, ethnicities and nationalities who are uprooted by migration, and marginalized and/or displaced by various kinds of gender, ethnic, religious difference. The article, “Multiple axes of power: articulations of diaspora and intersectionality”, specially written for this *Reader* by Avtar Brah, shows their changing relationship to the traditional centres of power and institutional authority. The discipline’s flexibility of interpretation along the lines of difference, for example, has encouraged recognition of the parallels between the social and national exclusions resulting from migration that are associated with diaspora, and the sexual difference and non-heteronormativity that define queerness. The semantically defining properties of the term diaspora, of scattering, splitting and spreading of seeds, links diaspora as a form of dispersion to the queer subject’s state of being ex-centric to the social norms of gender,

family, and kinship. This alignment can be summarized as a shared sense of being “unhomed”, and indeed it has been extended to applying diaspora as a framework in the context of transglobal adoption, requiring a realigning of family relations, described as “queer kinship” (Eng 2003, 3010). In a dynamic interdisciplinary conjunction, diaspora studies thus becomes aligned with queer theory, through the theorization of the concept of a “queer diaspora” that functions under the terms of contemporary globalization, transnationalism, and other mobilizations that involve “unwriting the nation” (George 1996, 83).

Yet the unevenly powered global networks and netscapes of the social media, as well as the new forms of connectivity, suggest some redefining of or interrogation of persistent racial hierarchies and power inequalities as currently understood within diaspora studies. The challenge to the framework of marginality that often defines minority diaspora communities -- that is, of low-skilled and economically disadvantaged workers -- comes from highly skilled “privileged migrants” or “mobile professionals”, often called “expatriates”. These circulating transnationals who might have a home in more than one country are the contemporary globalized counterparts to the entrepreneurs of the commercial networks and trade diasporas that in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries emanated from China, Lebanon and India (Cohen 2008, 83). In globalizing cities like Dubai and Shanghai, they have become locally integrated entrepreneurs, achieved cultural and economic dominance, and often act as political or cultural brokers for co-diasporics in order to consolidate local and global networks (Fechter and Walsh 2012, 10, 18).

Diaspora studies over the last twenty-five years has expanded to embrace the different axes of home and modes of belonging; studies of national and

international policy-making (long distance, migration); it has taken note of the changing relations of the nation state and diaspora communities in relation to the homeland, and facilitated transnational concepts of citizenship; while the new media, digitalization of information and other technological advances have contributed to the respatialization of marginal minority groups in new and shifting constructions of co-diasporas, globally scattered but linked communities that affirm each other and share bonds of loyalty and affect.

### **Definitions and Approaches to Diaspora**

Diaspora has its etymological origins in the Greek verb *diaspeirein*, comprising the elements *dia-*, “through, across”, and *-speirein*, “to sow or scatter seeds”. It originally appeared in Deuteronomy 28.25, which in the King James Bible is translated as “thou [...] shall be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth”, and in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew, as “thou shalt be a diaspora in all kingdoms of the earth”. From the beginning, then, it was a term used to refer to the dispersion of the Jews after the Babylonian exile, a state that has overtones of punishment. It also refers to dissemination and scattering, with implications of communities dislocated from their place of origin through migration or exile, and relocated in one or more states, nations, or territories. Metaphorically there are hints of fertility in the scattering of seeds, and an etymological and conceptual link between diaspora and dissemination (Davis 2006, 338). This has remained the concept’s most significant definition, but recent uses have widened and expanded its meaning, as interdisciplinary research which defines mobile populations in the current era of globalization links diaspora subjects with other kindred terms such as exiles, transnationals,

refugees, and asylum seekers. What is included in discourses of diaspora often depends on the ideological perspective or dominant disciplinary affiliations of the writer; for example, whether referring to longing for home and homeland, the remaking of home, or the deterritorialization of home, to transnational movements of capital, products and information, as well as people, or to relocation and readjustment in the host society. Most theorisations of diaspora are based on a particular understanding of what constitutes the centre of power and its margins, whether these be formulated in economic, racial, or gendered terms. One of the strengths of the discipline in its current symbolic incarnation is the way it transcends all such border constructions and includes virtually any group (such as privileged elites and transnationals alongside low-skilled, blue collar workers or labourers) within some kind of diasporic experience. This inclusiveness may also be seen as a limitation (Brubaker SECTION III.1), and in response to such criticism and caveats, it is worth recalling the core constituency, traceable to the term's Greek and Hebrew etymologies: of migrating, travelling populations or geographically dispersed groups of any kind.

The present *Reader* seeks to represent all the major strains of diaspora studies today, from its roots in anthropology, migration studies and human geography, to the inclusion of new paradigms emerging from sociology, cultural studies, communication technology, and humanities research in literary studies and visual culture. The *longue durée* of the Jewish and Armenian expulsions, highlighting the seminal concept of a distant homeland and the nostalgia of return, is traceable to the paradigmatic case of diaspora as found in Jewish and Hebrew mythology and belief. Its pragmatic and empirical orientation around history and practice is represented by the articles included in Section I of this

*Reader.* By contrast, the sociological, cultural studies approach draws on more abstract concepts of diasporic spaces and defines a particular diaspora consciousness or subjectivity, as in the two articles by Avtar Brah, who argues that diasporas are centres of power struggles, and that by Lily Cho, who sees citizenship as a category or practice. Yet another interpretation of the field sees the humanities and social sciences approaches as complementary categories of diaspora that explain diaspora as both a social phenomenon and a subjective experience. In this configuration the work of Avtar Brah is grouped with that of sociologists Robin Cohen and Stephane Dufoix (2008) in providing social typologies of diaspora, while critics like Paul Gilroy, James Clifford and Marianne Hirsch (2012; Hirsch and Miller 2011) engage with the “affective economies of dispersal” (Quayson and Daswani 2013, 8). Their broad cultural studies approach includes the transient feelings of desire, nostalgia, and loss, and familiarizing practices of subjects who live outside the homeland, evident in memorabilia and particularised indicators of origins and cultural heritage, such as calendars, photographs, music, and cuisine, all expressive of the double consciousness of living in one place and retaining strong emotional attachment to the home of origin (Quayson and Daswani 2013, 7-8).

Other approaches stem from different views of expulsion and dislocation from some kind of centre (expanding the semantic associations of dissemination and dispersal), implying a degree of transgression or contradiction of social norms as well as geographical boundaries (as with the concept of a queer diaspora), and the distinction between how diasporas present themselves (the emic or participant’s view) and how they are transformed into an object of study

(the etic or observer's view) (Cohen 2008, 5; Tölölyan 2007; Quayson and Daswani 2013, 7).

### **The Structure of the *Diaspora Studies Reader***

The overall structure of the Routledge *Diaspora Studies Reader* considers the multiplicity of definitions and approaches sketched above, and organizes the five parts – or ‘metaframes’ -- according to particular theoretical or disciplinary emphases. Within each part, the distinct sections draw together various thematic threads shared across the articles included in them. One of the key objectives of the volume, which informs its organizing principle, is that of simultaneously highlighting the rootedness of diaspora studies in many already established fields, even while celebrating its porousness and ability to borrow from and blend with other disciplines.

#### **Part I. Origins**

This first section of the *Reader* highlights the cardinal points of origin and definition of diaspora in Biblical, Jewish and Hebrew studies, and reflects the institutional and historical origins and usages of the term before the 1990s resurgence of diaspora studies. The articles included discuss the archetypes of diaspora against which modern forms can be measured, and the concept of ‘victim diasporas’ – communities that, at the outset, like the paradigmatic Jewish and Armenian diasporas, may lack the agency to determine their own destinies. Here is the strongest and most conservative insistence on understanding diasporas as social and cultural formations motivated by a possible return to an (idealized) homeland, by contrast to contemporary ethnonational diasporas, which remain involved in the affairs of the original homeland as well as those of

the hostland where co-diasporics reside, and which are more inclined than most diasporas to become involved in criminal or terrorist activities (Sheffer 2006, 129).

## **Part II. Geopolitics**

This section, like the first, brings into play social science and historical approaches to the study of diaspora, and notably to their definition in relation to geographical and geomorphic categories -- land masses, regions, continents and interlinking oceans—and political allegiances. It illustrates that these create exclusions through disenfranchisement, but lend a semblance of coherence across national borders and collectively help define the structures of world power. This section also emphasizes the overlap between diaspora and various kinds of religious identity and worship across eastern and western cultures, prioritizing the crucial links between religious intolerance and discrimination, and cultural scattering and dissemination.

The articles in this section point to how much new understandings of diaspora remain grounded in concepts that can be traced to the seminal Jewish and Armenian diasporas, as the discourse around diaspora has developed and been reconfigured through related concepts like transnationalism, deterritorialization, exile, the transglobal and so on, terms that have entered the language in response to the new global movements of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

The very term 'geopolitics' feeds into the contemporary phenomenon of globalization and the ongoing tension between the nation state and its diasporas: this includes new forms of exclusion through mechanisms such as global checkpoints, reinforced borders, new identities and populist, anti-elite political

parties focused on sovereignty and homeland, indigenous forms of belonging, re-evaluations of citizenship including new aspirations. Embedded in this section is the acknowledgement that diaspora and migration are tightly woven into the texture of each nation state; that alternative communities exist which are distinct but nonetheless belonging; that diasporas have their own jurisdictions of power, existing as levers of national governments and agents of development (Appiah 2016).

### **III. Identities**

The term defining this metaframe belongs to cultural studies, and its use shows that diaspora intersects with this field as much as it does with social sciences and religious studies. Research since the 1990s has moved away from issues of nation, national frameworks or categories of analysis in tension with diaspora, towards a new emphasis on the subjectivity of being displaced (diaspora is often being used as a metaphor, a figure of hybridity in cultural studies). The study of the types of consciousness that develop around dislocation and resettlement in the host nation comes with this shift of focus to culture and cultural identity in the pioneering works of black writers like Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, and Paul Gilroy. Hybridity in these conditions comes about not as a result but as a precondition of all cultural life: this and other terms also familiar from postcolonial studies such as double consciousness, interrogate some of the homogenous notions of the nation state as well as of apparently monolithic diasporic communities.

### **IV. Cultural Production**

Diaspora studies, like postcolonial studies, moves into the realm of arts, visual culture, performance, literature and other types of artistic production where the

effect of diaspora is found in the disruption of traditional art forms, including genres, narrative and media formats. Overlapping with the postcolonial is the focus on the imaginary, beginning with the imaginary homeland, as represented in Salman Rushdie's (1991) seminal article (See *Reader*, SECTION V.11), and adapted by Vijay Mishra (1996, 2007) in his study of the Indian diaspora, while Ato Quayson (2013), in stressing the affective economy of diaspora, argues that textual genres and media, as in the production of images of homeland for displaced communities, as well as arguments about the politics of representation in hybrid, multicultural societies, are significant responses to the spatial and temporal dislocations of movement (147). Cultural production associated with diaspora shows that art not only reflects but creates and performs diasporic experiences. Furthermore, international festivals and exhibitions, together with prizes and awards like the Turner Prize for Art and the Man Booker Prize for Fiction, show that the artistic forms that stem from diaspora cultures can acquire fame and prominence on national and international levels. Diaspora cultural production differentiates itself from the mainstream, with a distinctive aesthetics that features a cross-cultural dynamic, and foregrounds the role of language through insistence on its hybridity and pluralism. But, as great art usually does, it can also transcend the conditions of its production and the borders of its location to acquire greater representativeness, enter the mainstream, and in time compel a reconfiguration of the canon.

## **V. Community**

Home and belonging are quintessential concepts in diaspora, and the area in which diaspora studies has made its most seminal contributions. In addressing this very contentious aspect of the field, diaspora studies has produced the most

vibrant contributions to the notions of home through a range of philosophical, sociological and artistic approaches. These issues have anchored the entire debate around twentieth-century philosophical thought and have been enhanced by the rise of the internet as a new form of interconnectedness, promoting the immediacy of networking, and introducing new notions of citizenship and belonging. The *Reader* concludes with the consideration of the internet as a new metaphor of home, joining up the world, creating new forms of nostalgia, a point of focus for states of being at home and homelessness.

### **Research context and acknowledgements**

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> According to the United Nations Sustainable Development Home Page, there has been since 2000 a 41% increase in the number of international migrants).

<sup>2</sup> The figures for refugees, i.e. forcibly displaced people worldwide, comes from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

<sup>3</sup> As not all migrations will cohere into communities, and as community is one of the principle definitions of a diaspora, the term diaspora cannot be used of temporary sojourns.

<sup>4</sup> Cohen (2008) stresses that these bonds of loyalty between co-ethnics in other countries might compete with a duty of 'co-responsibility', as not all mobile subjects wish to associated with lower class ethnics abroad (7). This is, in fact, one of the reasons why diasporas take so long to form and consolidate.

<sup>5</sup> The MLA bibliography lists at least 104 entries on diaspora up the 1980s and then 150 entries in that decade alone.

<sup>6</sup> The seminal statement comes from Safran 1991, 83-99; cf Brah, 1996. Social constructivism argues that knowledge is produced in the discourses which construct the objects we take to be the 'things' of the world; and such discourses are part of relations of power or everyday relations of communication (Burkitt, 1999, 67-71).

<sup>7</sup> Nomadism is one of the categories of migration adopted by Thomas Nail, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> For example, Cohen (2008) comments that social constructivist scholars privileged the "emic over the etic", ignoring the history and evolution of the concept of diaspora (9); the opposing view might be represented by El Tayeb (2011), critiquing the backward-looking character of exclusive identification with the culture of origin (52-53).

<sup>9</sup> As well as the universities of Muenster and Northampton, this partnership included the universities of Mumbai, Stockholm, Oxford and the School of Oriental and African Studies, London; see [www.itn-cohab.eu](http://www.itn-cohab.eu).

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