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Diasporas, Media, and Culture

Exploring Dimensions of Human Mobility and Connectivity in the Era of Global Interdependency

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After a timid debut in the 1980s, over the past three decades, the term "diaspora" has featured prominently in numerous studies and in the broader theoretical debates within different, mainly interdisciplinary, fields such as cultural and media, postcolonial, and area studies. During the same period, similar attempts to introduce the term in the discourses of social science and humanities have been making inroads into older and more established fields such as politics, sociology, international relations, literary criticism, and social anthropology.

It is clear that the popularity of the term has not just been a terminological fad. It was partly the product of a desire, and need, among scholars to explore new dimensions of human mobility and, eventually, as this handbook aims to illustrate, connectivity, that were not adequately addressed through the use of existing conceptual frameworks that had particular histories and connotations. Moreover, it was intended to link phenomena associated to human dispersion with broader theoretical advances associated with the study of globalization, postmodernity and postcolonialism, to name but a few.

"Where once were dispersions," Khachig Tölölyan observed at the time, reflecting on this trend (1996, p. 3), "there now is diaspora." Indeed, as James Clifford (1994, p. 306) suggested,

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> For better or worse, diaspora discourse is being widely appropriated. It is loose in the world, for reasons having to do with decolonization, increased immigration, global communication and transport—a whole range of phenomena that encourage multi-locale attachments, dwelling, and travelling within and across nations.

Returning for a moment to Tölölyan's remarks, it should be pointed out that the shift from dispersion to diaspora indicates much more than the theoretical convergence we identified. The difference between dispersion and diaspora also lies in the ways in which diasporic phenomena and cultures are seen in the context of an increasingly transnational terrain and, we would argue, brings to the fore the notion of agency. Whereas dispersion refers to the process of populations spreading beyond the bounds to their place of "origin," diaspora connotes processes of making sense of this dispersion, of creating infrastructures for narration and action in transnational and translocal contexts, or to the meeting of roots and routes as Gilroy (1993) aptly suggests. Diasporic studies have thus tended to look at the processes of the making of a diaspora, the conscious and subconscious ways in which particular transnational communities, networks, and identities are formed and transformed. In other words, social action and cultural change, the way in which migrants construct meaning, develop subjectivities and identities, and embark on action, are central in our understanding of the notion of diasporas.

However, the ascendancy of the term in social science discourse was not welcomed by all concerned as many remained skeptical, finding "diasporas" an unnecessary distraction most likely to bring confusion and undermine existing theoretical advances by its sheer presence in the debate. Characteristically, reflecting this skepticism and, even, hostility, at the opening plenary of the 1999 American Historical Association meeting, Colin A. Palmer claimed that "diaspora is a problem that invites a great deal of methodological fuzziness, ahistorical claims, and even romantic condescension" (in Winkler, 1999). Even more sympathetic commentators such as Alain Medam (1993) and James Clifford (1994), expressed skepticism and dismay at the gratuitous usage of the term often in order to merely, and descriptively, refer to the dispersion of a population from one nation-state to several "host countries," stressing the need to attempt a more robust theorization.

This rapid expansion of the usage of the term has had significant implications as far as the concept, its meanings, and its theoretical usefulness are concerned. Quite often the term has been used loosely and descriptively, referring uncritically to diverse phenomena associated to human mobility. Equally often, it has been used interchangeably with other categories that have had a presence in social science discourse for much longer such as those of "ethnicity" or "race," "minority," or even "migration." Often criticisms focused on the undiscerning conflation between diasporic phenomena and other forms of mobility such as tourism, retirement migration, and a host of other similar practices. Indeed, "diaspora" would

often be used to refer to phenomena as diverse as medium-term "professional" mobility or to the dispersion of "expatriates" from Western postindustrial societies to other parts of the world—while concerns have also been expressed as to the capacity of the concept to refer to phenomena as diverse as exile and forced displacement on the one hand and the transnational mobility patterns of entrepreneurs in the Asia-Pacific region on the other.

In addition to this terminological laxity, conceptualizations of "diaspora" have been "partial" and, not uncommonly, not integrated within relevant theoretical frameworks that would give the concept depth, theoretical usefulness and enhance its critical utility. It is quite clear that, as "diaspora" has become "one of the buzzwords of the postmodern age" (Cohen, 1999, p.3), in some cases, the usage of the term adds no value to attempts to better understand the complex phenomena it is purported to describe and probe; indeed, on some occasions its uncritical and unreflexive application, may be counterproductive. In such instances, "diaspora" becomes more of a catch-all term, referring uncritically to a variety of dissonant contexts of displacement and human mobility, lacking some common denominator and disregarding crucial factors such as the particular social relations and imaginations that underpin such phenomena.

The agenda of any attempt to theorize "diaspora" and, by extension to talk about diasporic cultures, therefore is a complex and extensive one. In order to avoid the pitfalls identified above, one needs to pose questions as to the particular meanings, if any, that "diaspora" assumes in the particular political and theoretical constellations it has been part of during its rapid ascendance to the universe of social science and humanities discourse. One needs to explore the multiple ways in which the debate on diasporas and the very concept of "diaspora" converge with the broader contemporary to it debates of globalization and late modernity. Such an examination involves a search for the intersections between a "theory of globalization" or of "transnationalism" and the study of diasporic cultures. It requires thinking in terms of transnational and global flows and situating "diasporic cultures" in their midst, understanding them in terms of their relation to the complex ethnoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, and ideoscapes that make up the global terrain and the networks that populate these. The intersection of the complex connectivity that underpins the transnational field and of the processes of cultural reinvention and reconstruction that the diasporic condition sets in motion effectively renders media technologies and diasporic media crucial factors in the reproduction and transformation of diasporic identities, and of diasporas in general. In other words, the global flows making up the complex array of institutions and practices that, following Appadurai (1996) we can call diasporic ethnoscapes, ideoscapes, financescapes, and technoscapes, are translated into diasporic imaginaries, partly through their representation and narrativization that is achieved within the context of the relevant mediascapes. Focusing on the cultural implications of the global flows of information and capital, Appadurai suggests that it is through the complex landscapes these constitute, that community may be

imagined and realized (Anderson, 1983). In an increasingly globalized world, the mediascapes that enable interaction across distance are crucial in shaping transnational, national and local politics, cultures, and identities. Contemporary ethnoscapes reconfigure beyond recognition traditional ethnic and local notions of community as the notions of culture and community have shifted from the more static geography of the locality to the fluid topography of the transnational landscapes Appadurai identifies. He points to the struggle by Sikh immigrants in the West to further the cause of an independent homeland (Khalistan) within India, although the population involved in this struggle and the underlying imagination of Khalistan is only connected via the mediascape of a set of internet technologies: these landscapes thus, are the building blocks of what, extending Benedict Anderson, could be seen as imagined worlds, that is, the multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe (Appadurai, 1996). Community is therefore "imagined," mediated through the imageries of the mediascape, ideologies of the ideoscape, and ever-shifting demographics of ethnicity (ethnoscape) and information.

Such rethinking poses questions, not only of the impact of mobility, but more crucially, of connectivity, of the ways in which dispersed populations, develop networks and the crucial connections that turn them from merely that—dispersed populations—into transnational actors in an increasingly globalized world.

In this respect, developments in the fields of media and cultural studies have played a significant role in understanding diasporas both conceptually and empirically. Research has brought to the foreground the interconnections between locations (past and present), and between spaces—physical and virtual (cf. Aksoy & Robin, 2000; Brinkerhoff, 2009; Diminescu, 2008; Georgiou, 2006; Gillespie, 1995; Nedelcu, 2012; Retis, 2006; Siapera, 2010). Within such a conceptual and methodological context, diasporic media and cultural studies have largely challenged the occasionally excessive emphasis on the notion of a homeland left behind, lost and/or lamented and they have focused on mediated interactions, on flows of ideas, information, resources. They have more broadly questioned the conventional state-centered logic that stresses the importance of not only homelands but also countries of settlement. As Beck argues, mediated mobility has transformed "the experiential spaces of the nation-state from within" (Beck, 2006, p. 101) and has therefore prompted the study of alternative experiential spaces that surpass the geopolitical restrictions associated with the nation-state. They have set the concept against, and within, the imagination and practices that, over the past couple of centuries, have given rise and sustained the resilient geopolitical entity of the nation-state. Recognizing that diaspora (and diasporic cultures) straddle uncomfortably the divide between the national and the postnational, remaining fluent in the idiom derived from the territorially bounded universe of the former while embracing the fluid and deterritorialized terrain of the latter, they have prompted a rethink of the concepts of the nation, national culture and national identity, which diasporas are often claimed to be offshoots of. They have simultaneously

explored the processes that the emergence and reproduction of diasporic cultures entail and which transcend these very concepts: the deterritorialization and transnationalization of social imagination and identification, of the social practices and relations that are set in motion in these new contexts of social action.

Although not explicitly referring to diasporas and the diasporic experience, media studies pointed out the importance of media technologies in facilitating the compression of time and space, and thus bringing about new possibilities of being; in particular, "new possibilities of being in two places at once" (Scannel, 1996, p. 91)—referring to the place where audiences receive the broadcast content and the place where an event actually takes place. Indeed, broadcasting permits the live witnessing of remote happenings that might bring these as close—experientially—as those in someone's immediate physical surroundings. Meyrowitz (1985), focusing on the emergence of electronic media and their time–space distanciation effects, reaches a similar conclusion as he argues that the utilization of these new media produces a reconfiguration of our understanding of place that he describes as a novel condition of having no-sense-of-place. In this sense, subsequent work on diasporic media has pointed out that physical remoteness characteristic of the diasporic experience no longer prevents individuals in remote locations to coexist and interact in ways that we can effectively describe as co-presence. Diasporic media do not merely enable their audiences to "be in two places at once" but effectively give them the opportunity of producing new spaces where multiple remote localities and the experiences generated and shared by their inhabitants come together and become synchronized and related to each-other. This is not merely a rhetorical distinction but an important dimension in the processes of making sense of the encounters that take place during the consumption of diasporic media content.

Thus, the much-needed emphasis on transnational communication and networking prompted us to rethink spatiality, not only in terms of conventional geographies but also in terms of digital spaces, of networks and flows (Gilroy, 1993; Hall, 1990), not only of boundaries but also of crossings. Such studies, have shed light on the impact diasporic media have on the reconfiguration of time and space in profound ways: the utilization of space- and time-distanciating technologies by populations dispersed across borders has potentially significant implications in how different members and components of diasporas experience events and engage in interaction, affecting in turn the ways in which diasporas are imagining themselves and situate themselves in space. They have addressed the complex ways in which diasporic communities seem to be simultaneously uprooted and connected, experiencing loss and engaging in creating new spaces where they feel at home (Tsagarousianou, 2001, 2007). As researchers in the fields of media and cultural studies have shown, diasporas are not looking toward one direction (usually back home, as earlier studies indicated). Instead they inhabit complex fields where information, ideas, cultural and political imaginaries emanate from diverse nodes and are multidirectional. These complexities have been addressed in the

analysis of the consolidation of Latin American diasporas in North America, Europe, and Asia in the last decades. Accustomed to processes of hybridization within the region, Latin Americans have consolidated diasporic communities, built in imaginary rather than physical space where cultural and media consumption become central (Retis, 2006, 2014; Retis & Sierra, 2011).

Cunningham and Sinclair (2000) suggest that the flow of media and cultural products does not only occur from the center to the periphery; in addition to the information and cultural flows that emanate from the North and spread to the South, usually associated with phenomena such as cultural or media imperialism, an array of significant information flows from South to North is emerging, and is increasingly defining new world regions. Indeed, Sinclair, Jacka, and Cunningham (1996) argue that the emergence of diasporic media not only is breaking down the traditional geocultural imagination of the world along the lines of the center–periphery distinction itself, but is beginning to define what they call geolinguistic regions, that is, regions across which linguistic and cultural similarities are at least as important as geographical proximity has been in forming world regions in the past. The media space of a diaspora largely tends to be of this kind, to the extent that it is spread throughout several of the national markets that have been the territorial unit for international media distribution in the past.

This diasporic ethnoscape, although truly global, nevertheless comprises ethnospecific media flows that connect communities in dozens of countries while also embracing their situatedness in a given one. (Sinclair & Cunningham, 2000, pp. 27–28). It should therefore be stressed that this complex "geography of flows" cannot and should not be decoupled from the conventional geographies of the nation-state. To a certain extent, grounded in and circumscribed by the constraints of the latter (Bauman, 1998), diasporas are located in a highly complex and challenging social field characterized by tension between the nation and the transnational.

Within this context, the ever-increasing use of transnational communication technologies has become central in supporting, organizing, and disseminating shared narratives, memories, and experience as well as diversity within diasporas, in their cognitive and affective mapping (Tsagarousianou, 2001, 2007), in supporting diasporas' sense of ontological security (Georgiou, 2013, p. 307), in grounding them in translocal spaces. The comparative study of multidimensional processes of production, distribution, and consumption allow us to achieve a greater understanding of media practices in diasporic transnationalism contexts (Retis, 2017, p. 32).

The literature on diaspora use of media, old and new alike, has shed light on the production of "culturally relevant and locally vital information to immigrants in the host society" (Yin, 2013, p. 3); on opening spaces "for a self-reflective discourse among migrants" (Bozdag, Hepp, & Suna, 2012); "processes of reinforcing identities and sense of belonging" (Georgiou, 2006; Tsagarousianou, 2004); of "(re-)

creation of alternative space(s) alongside existing mappings" (Diminescu, 2008; Karim, 2003; Nedelcu, 2012); and to the construction of "a multi-ethnic public sphere" (Husband, 2000).

Debates on the social and political shifts that are part and parcel of human mobilities, have become even more relevant in the current political context. Movements of populations across borders are of course not a new phenomenon. However, over the past few years, and as a result of wars and conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere, and of heightened global economic or environmental hardships, borders and their perceived "permeability" by great numbers of refugees and migrants have become central issues of discussion on and concern over the future of the post World War II liberal order.

In Europe, the rise of populist forces that have used the issue of migration for votes is increasingly shaping the agenda over the future of the European Union and European unity and values, while, across the Atlantic, President Donald Trump's "no tolerance" immigration policies are redefining a country that has been built on migration. The powerful idea promoted by demagogues, that developed nations have to protect their territories, citizens, and values from the "invading hordes of migrants" described as "criminals, rapists, and drug dealers" in the words of Trump, or as the destroyers of "European Christian civilization" by Hungary's Victor Orbán, seem to be taking hold and to be reshaping our responsibilities to suffering "others," while testing the values of solidarity and respect for human rights that have been the defining principles of our societies. In this context, we are further deviating from the ideal of hospitality to strangers, as eloquently outlined by Derrida (Dufourmantelle & Derrida, 2000) while the militarization of borders and erecting walls—solutions offered by the advancing forces of nativism and nationalism—are increasingly seen as preferred options to "protect" the citizens of the state. The border, both external and internal, has become the new delineating force of identity politics across the western world and beyond.

Europe's asylum policies—which have put emphasis on security rather than safeguarding the rights of the dispossessed and displaced and work around the principle of prioritizing politically defined needs and a hierarchy of suffering that distinguishes between migrants defined as *at* risk and therefore in need of protection and care, or *a* risk to the integrity of the territory, economy, and culture of European countries and therefore in need of monitoring and control (Aradau, 2004; Pallister-Wilkins, 2015) —have failed both to protect migrants and to counter populists and demagogues. As The Guardian reported on June 20, 2018, 34,361 migrants have drowned in the Mediterranean Sea trying to reach Europe since 1993 and great numbers are languishing in ill-equipped camps at the borders of the European Union. Meanwhile, populists, who have refused assistance to boats carrying migrants, or have introduced legislation[1] which makes it a criminal offense for both individual citizens and organizations to assist migrants, have successfully

increased fears and misconceptions about the numbers of people arriving and their effects on our societies. In such a climate, we are getting used to and perhaps immune to scenes of caged migrant men and women separated from their children, of children crying for their parents, of people of color stopped and harassed over their citizenship status, or of children of Muslim migrant families of noncompulsory education age in Denmark, being taken away from their families to be inculcated with "national values."[2]

A vision of Europe or of the US as needing to protect western traditions and values tries to erase the fact that western economic advancement has been built on administering empires that have exploited the lands and populations of large parts of the world, the same parts of the world whose citizens, impoverished and voiceless, are trying to escape from in search of a better future in what they often see as a promise for freedom and rights. It also hides the fact, that the neoliberal global order has been built and sustained on human mobilities that are managed following the demands and the dominant logics of the global labor markets (Balibar, 2004; Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013). Visions of "superior western nations" forged in isolation from their non-Western "Others," or ideas of racial purity and civilizational supremacy and the calls for security that have been promoted as solutions to a perceived loss of control by the forces of populism, need to be questioned now more than ever before. As Hannah Arendt has argued, the danger for our civilization of the existence of the "alien" as a symbol of difference, be it minorities, refugees, or other rightless people that are placed outside the guarantee of equality of rights

> is that their ever increasing numbers threaten our political life, our human artifice, the world which is the result of our common and co-ordinated effort in much the same, perhaps even more terrifying, way as the wild elements of nature once threatened the existence of man-made cities and countrysides … The danger is that a global, universally interrelated civilisation may produce barbarians from its own midst by forcing millions of people into conditions which, despite all appearances, are conditions of savages. (1973, p. 302)

Overview of the Handbook

The aim of *The Handbook of Diasporas, Media and Culture* is to provide an authoritative outline of the relevant intellectual terrain by presenting key debates and state-of-the-art research on the intersection of diasporic phenomena, media and cultural studies. This volume is divided into seven sections consisting of 39 chapters seeking to make a contribution to a better understanding of diasporic cultures and their impact on our globalized world, the complex networks and flows that underpin it, and the transnational cultural politics and practices that are emerging.

Part I. Roots and Routes: The Nature of "Diaspora(s)," their Relation to Nation, Ethnicity, Religion, Societies of Provenance, and Societies of Settlement

The section's opening essay discusses the origins and changing use of the notion of diaspora. **Robin Cohen** revisits the history of the concept and its meanings, examines the key difference between a diaspora and other forms of migration, and reviews the different forms of diaspora: as a social form, as consciousness, as mode of cultural production, and as political orientation. The author looks at the future of the term that may be imperiled by having been commandeered to serve too many discrepant purposes and its use to describe cognate, yet different phenomena. **Candidatu**, **Leurs,** and **Ponzanesi** propose a critical intervention in digital diaspora studies by foregrounding a relational approach that is inspired by feminist and postcolonial theory. By providing a genealogy of digital diasporas scholarships the chapter annotates the lack of critical attention for power differences and material social and emotional contexts, and plea for a reassessment of digital diaspora studies as being constructed between different continuums of digital everydayness.

Thomas Hylland Eriksen addresses indispensable questions in the research on diasporas, transnationalism and diversity: the relationship of the social to the cultural, and that between purity and mixing. He argues that the flow of culture, which is usually entailed by human mobility, does not necessarily entail the mixing of people or the obliteration of social boundaries. **Myria Georgiou** advocates an understanding of diaspora as inherently cosmopolitan, but not as inherently progressive. The author argues that, rather than being a privilege, cosmopolitanism has become increasingly ordinary and incorporated in diasporic imaginaries: a way of living (a practice) and seeing (an ethics) in an intensely interconnected and culturally entangled world. She discusses diasporic imaginaries through analyses of visual and aural representations produced by three diasporic female artists in cinema and music as they represent powerful projections of diasporic cosmopolitanism. **Roza Tsagarousianou** proposes re-evaluating the theoretical toolkit through the study of Muslim transnationalism. She argues that the experience of building a transnational European Muslim identity can provide a useful corrective, challenging the role of a mostly passive sense of nostalgia and stressing the importance of agency and creativity. She suggests that now more than ever, we have to move conceptually from the more essentialist notions of a concrete *homeland*, national or ethnic identity, and geographical location that have persisted over the history of the term, to deployments of the notion of diaspora conceptualized in terms of transnationality, imagination, ambivalence, performativity, and heterogeneity.

The section concludes with a discussion on the methodological challenges and innovations in the field by **Kevin Smets**. He argues that the concept of diaspora can no longer be ascribed exclusively to one disciplinary or conceptual field. The

author discusses the pitfalls of ethnic labeling, diasporas and intersecting identities, the multilevel position of space and place in diaspora research, strategies of comparative research, and ethical challenges that typically arise in diaspora and media research.

Part II. Home and Away: Transnationalism, Localism, and the Construction of Diasporic Identity

The focus of this section shifts to the economic, political, and cultural meanings of international mobility from Latin America to the Global North and the processes of *latinization* of global cities in North America, Europe, and Asia. **Jessica Retis** argues that the study of contemporary Latin American diasporas living transnational lives, demands interdisciplinary approaches that help us examine the complexities of these heterogeneous groups that, paradoxically, have been homogenized by the public discourse in countries of destiny driven mainly by political and administrative precepts as well as by commercial and marketing campaigns.

Focusing on Brazil's context, **Niall Brennan** discusses how although diaspora and hybridity are indispensable tools for understanding the structural and subjective forces that shape global postcolonial space, they present the conceptual danger of offering totalized views of that space. The author argues that geopolitical context should be used to unravel the presumed links between diaspora and hybridity that prevent seeing their distinct, and not their coterminous, importance. **Denise Cogo** and **Terezinha Silva** offer further discussion on the mechanisms of racism and news media practices in Brazil. By examining media's coverage of Haitian diasporas, the authors explore how news reports tend to expose veiled or explicit racism, which marks interethnic relations in Brazil; selectivity in the treatment of different migratory groups in the country; and the ties between racism and xenophobia, and between migrations and the domestic political situation. **Wanning Sun** focuses her attention on the formations of diasporic Chinese media to propose a major rethinking of transnationalism, digital diasporas, the Sinophone world, and diasporic public sphere. The author examines the main continuing and emerging political, cultural, and economic forces affecting the contours of the diasporic Chinese media landscape, and how such forces are shaping the relationship between China's state media and diasporic Chinese media.

Saskia Witteborn traces the developments of the concept of diaspora through new technology research. The author engages with the question of what can be gained by looking at diaspora through the lens of loss, potentiality, and digital practice. It is argued, that understanding diasporas through the prism of digital and embodied alliances, opens up ways of becoming that offer political, historical, and social visions beyond national solidarities, whether one is a work migrant or

an asylum seeker. In closing the section, **Karina Horsti** examines how diasporic communities commemorate border-related death seeking to identify and theorize a previously unexplored research area, that of transnational commemoration of border death. Drawing on the Eritrean diaspora and the Lampedusa tragedy of 2013, her chapter shows how the new media technology shapes commemoration in ways that challenge politics, both in Europe and in Eritrea.

Part III. Cultural Politics in the Diaspora: Diasporic Public Spheres/Spaces, Identity Politics, and Diasporic Activism

In this section authors take up some of the challenges of examining cultural politics in diasporic contexts. **Annabelle Sreberny** and **Reza Gholami** initiate the discussion by exploring the process of integration among Iranians in London. They problematize the very idea and discourse of integration that frames much debate in the UK and elsewhere for presupposing an ethicized Other. Exploring the ways in which Iranians themselves describe their experiences, authors raise analytic concerns regarding the contemporary diasporic experience. **Radha S. Hegde** discusses how diasporic national affiliations are defined, transformed and remediated within global assemblages of capital, media, publicity and nationalist ideologies. Her chapter examines how scripts of authentic Indianness mobilized by different constituencies travel across media platforms and politics strategically, linking and delinking the diasporic to the nations of residence and origin.

Miquel Rodrigo-Alsina, **Antonio Pineda**, and **Leonarda García-Jiménez** provide insights into the relationship between diasporas, their societies of settlement, the media, and the audiences. They argue that media representations are crucial not only in how they make diasporas visible, but also in how they represent the attributes of these diasporas. In this way, media influence on audiences conditions the possibility of intercultural communication within society. **Alicia Ferrández Ferrer** explores, on the one hand, the development of media targeting Latin American immigrants in Madrid and London, and on the other hand, the inclusion of ethnic diversity in mainstream media and the challenge for minority journalists to express different views or to introduce new issues for debate in the public sphere. She argues that both options have a great democratizing potential, but face serious limitations, due to the pressure exerted by the economic and political fields over contemporary journalism: censorship, reduction of alternative discourses, and the maintenance of segmented media spaces are all challenges to overcome.

Antonieta Mercado examines how two Mexican indigenous immigrant organizations in the United States have used transnational communicative public spaces to discuss issues of power imbalance, coloniality, and resistance. In doing so, they have shaped public conversations about indigenous people both in Mexico and the

US. She argues that due to their double-marginality, contemporary indigenous migrants constitute important diasporic counterpublics that are capable of challenging and reshaping the debates about the narrative of the nation as a homogeneous body. In the last chapter of the section, **Ximena Póo**, centering her attention in the Chilean context, examines the networks of communication built by organizations that form part of the Migrant Action Movement (MAM). These organizations have linked their local collectives and through this networking practice engage with the general public in the hopes of influencing, from a legal rights perspective, the ongoing debate regarding the necessity for immigration reform in Chile.

Part IV. Nation and Diasporas: Diasporas, Nationalism, and the Making of National Cultures

The fourth part of this Handbook features chapters that focus on the nature of diaspora(s), their relation to nation, ethnicity, and societies of settlement. **Thomas Barker** examines how the particular historical conditions of Indonesia coupled with the characteristics of the Sindhi community, enabled a small group of Sindhi businessmen to become the country's leading content producers. Despite not having their own ethnic or diaspora media per se, this chapter shows how a small diaspora minority can utilize their ethnicity and their transnational networks to shape national media and as a base from which to go global themselves. **Musab Iqbal** explores everyday newspaper debate about the border, migration, violence, and mobility. By analyzing news coverage of episodes of violence in the Bodoland region of Assam, the author explores how "immigrant" is not just a name but produces a meaning-making project that defines the immigrant in ways which legitimize certain politics of discrimination in everyday life while it narrativizes the nation vis-à-vis the category of the immigrant.

Drawing on two different research projects on migrants' media consumption practices in Berlin, Stockholm and London, **Janroj Yilmaz Keles** argues that the mediation of the Turkish and Kurdish ethnonational conflict has played a crucial role in the differentiation and fragmentation of political, ethnic, and social identities among migrants from Turkey. Exploring the links of diaporas to nation, **Angeliki Monnier** addresses the results of a comparative study between two migrant LinkedIn groups, Greek and French. Through the application of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" she argues, that the symbolic constructions that take place within social media in terms of nationhood are not the simple results of causal determinisms but are forged at the crossroads of the migrants' motivations and strategies, the features of the platforms used, the migrants' approaches to nationhood, and the countries' positions in the migration field.

Michele Gonnelli provides insights from a western Italian, yet Somali and Muslim perspective and argues that Somali Italian diaspora members for whom education was a central experience, qualify as development/social change agents for the broader Somali Italian diaspora, but that they are often challenged in their endeavors by the "culture" of radical Islamic groups/movements in their home country, currently under the grip of new religious interpreters. **Miyase Christensen** and **Christian Christensen** examine media coverage of migrants, refugees and diasporic communities in Europe in order to consider the nature of the migrant/refugee discussion (from economics to culture to terrorism) in relation the fluidity of the lines between migrant/refugee and the placement of these groups into "states of exception." They argue that critical geopolitics in conjunction with media and communication studies offer a meaningful framework to make sense of the recent shifts in the representation of migrants and refugees in Europe.

Part V. Gender and Generation: How Do Gender and Generation Intersect with the Diasporic Condition and Impact on Diasporic Cultural Politics?

In the fifth section, authors discuss how gender and generation intersect with the diasporic condition. **Alexander Dhoest** focuses the attention on the intersection of ethnicity, migration, and nonnormative sexualities. Drawing on intersectionality theory, the author addresses issues related to the "queer diaspora" and analyzes the importance of digital media in this context. Social media offer possibilities for diasporic connection, but present a challenge for people communicating with vastly differing social contexts in which they do not want to disclose their sexual orientation in the same way. He argues that digital media often operate as a tool of disconnection as much as connection. Based on ethnographic research, **Shashini Gamage** studies media consumption by Sri Lankan migrant women at a diasporic cultural association in Australia. The author examines how the social act of watching visual narratives from the home country can generate a social space and a collective identity for women who engage in exchanging teledrama DVDs, archiving, and socializing through the club.

Gabriel Moreno-Esparza examines the communication of diasporic families using a variety of information and communication technologies, thereby calling for their inclusion in the study of digital diasporas. Focusing on the subjects of conversation between members of Mexican families in Mexico and the United States, the author argues that the talk of diasporic families puts into perspective a range of activities such as travel and remittance sending in ways that contribute to an understanding of how connectivity across borders breeds transnational social spaces. **Margherita Sprio** explores how Southern Italian cultural identity

for their second-generation children, has been mediated by both historical and contemporary factors and the ways in which this identity has been shaped by the process of immigration. The author addresses how assimilation is understood through cinema and memory for a generation who do not have an "original home" (Italy) to go back to whilst at the same time not feeling themselves to be "British enough" in Britain.

Part VI. New Technologies, New Experiences: Changing Media and Information and Communication Technologies, and their Impact on Diasporic Cultures

Contributors of this section address the impact of the ever-changing media and information and communication technologies on diasporic cultures and public spaces but also domestic and family life. **Christine Horz** initiates the discussion with an exploration of the Iranian diaspora in Germany and its TV productions in public-access channels. Interviews and qualitative content analysis reveal a significant heterogeneity and debate culture among the Iranian diaspora, and how it makes itself heard in inner-diasporic as well as transcultural public spheres through specific discursive strategies. Drawing on ethnographic research in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, **Bryce Henson** explores the black subaltern intellectual and hip-hop cultures through an African diaspora lens, and argues that thinking through multiple connectivities carves a space for subaltern subjects to illustrate how they engage, interpret, and use diasporic media and culture to speak back to their sociohistorical conditions. Tuning into the lower frequencies of diasporic media enables us to find the complexities, nuances, and tensions between the global and the local forces that marginalize Blacks in the African diaspora.

Deborah James studies responses to the floods in the Balkans by their diaspora in Toronto, Canada. The author examines the intersection of diaspora engagement, and Web 2.0 style-collaboration, to examine how participants leverage networked relationships in times of crisis to become civically engaged and active communities. Based on a netnographic study of diasporic dynamics or Romanian scholars, **Mihaela Nedelcu** analyzes the emergence of a scientific e-diaspora and the mechanisms that led to its recognition as a transnational actor within the Romanian civil society. In this process, it is argued, knowledge transfer and collective expertise take place through overlapping online and offline practices, as well as transnational and local agency.

Melissa Wall, **Madeline Otis**, and **Dana Janbek** analyze the ways Syrian refugees in Jordan experience information precarity—a condition of information instability and insecurity—as it intersects with their ability to achieve social inclusion. Interviews with urban refugees living in and around the country's capital suggest

that an inability to develop new social networks and the deterioration of existing ones, means that their information networks are increasingly fragile to the point that they appear unable to establish the sort of social connections in their new homes that are strong enough to sustain them. Whilst **Olga Bailey** and **Lorena Nessi** explore how the relatively privileged Mexican European diaspora interacts through social media and investigate how racial discourses are used as markers of difference. The authors aim to contribute to the existing research by introducing concepts related to the negotiation of class and race and their use as social distinctions by diasporic subjects.

Part VII. Redefining Social Spaces in the Diaspora: The Transformation of Urban, Physical, and Virtual Spaces

In the final part of the volume, contributors address the ways in which contemporary diasporas are redefining social spaces in urban, physical, and virtual settings. **Fanny Christou** and **Spyros Sofos,** drawing on fieldwork conducted in the city of Malmö, Sweden, analyze diasporic practices of place-making by the Palestinian communities settled there. They trace expressions of diversity within the community through the creation and use of physical as well as digital interaction, and the impact of the use of digital technologies and the connectivity these entail as far as the modes of interaction and cultural and political engagement within the Palestinian diaspora are concerned.

Charisse L'Pree Corsbie-Massay and **Raven S. Maragh** argue how the geographically, culturally, and racially diverse community of the Caribbean serves as a unique case study to explore how a history of intersecting diasporas can affect mixed and multiracial individuals. By synthesizing the experiences of multiracial Caribbeans, the authors propose rhetorical strategies that may affect discourse and interpersonal interactions in an increasingly transnational world.

Drawing on hybrid imagined communities and multilayered belonging theories and the related concept of multilayered identities, **Joseph Straubhaar, Laura Dixon, Jeremiah Spence,** and **Viviana Rojas** examine the impact of media on identity construction in several diasporic populations in Austin, Texas. The chapter explores the impacts of family generation, as well as their generation of immigration (whether they are a first-, second-, or third-generation immigrants), and language on the use of media in the construction of national identity. **Mirca Madianou** addresses the intersection between migration and new communication technologies. Based on her comparative, multisited and dynamic study on Filipino transnational families, the author argues that research with transnational families presents the opportunity for truly transnational work by focusing on the migrants and their "left-behind" families as well as their relationships. The research with Filipino

transnational families has provided the foundation for a theory of communication technologies—offering insight not only on the intersection of technologies and migration but on communication technology more broadly.

Critical Perspectives on the Diasporic Condition: Spaces of Encounter and Negotiation

In this volume, we argue that critical theorizations of diaspora, far from focusing on internally "unified" diasporic subjects, recognize hybridity and heterogeneity. To start with, diasporas and their cultures are simultaneously transnational and local. Diasporic cultures are dependent on and contribute to the dialogue, the intersection, the balancing, and the translation that their multisitedness and the unstable and fractious landscape they populate, makes necessary. Diasporas are not and should not be understood as "revolutionary subjects" or even benevolent agents of social change. They rather carry in their cultures and their everyday practices the potential to unsettle and to question, to challenge certainty with ambiguity, homogeneity with their difference. Their contribution lies in the "little things" as Thrift would say (2000), in the instances where their inextricable link with the transnational and the intercultural dots the social with dialogic spaces, asserts the reality of encounter—often uneasy—over the narrative of closure and injects into the everyday, antibodies of resistance to the logic of homogeneity. It is in this sense that diasporic subjects display plural identifications severed from essentialized, nativist designations affiliated with constructions of the nation or homeland. To draw upon Gilroy (1993, p. 38), "the politics of transfiguration" that critical perspectives on the diasporic condition necessitate, "strive in the pursuit of the sublime, struggling to repeat the unrepeatable; to represent the unrepresentable."

We further suggest that in the era of intensified globalization characterized by the proliferation of transnational flows, diasporas challenge the myth of national homogeneity that has been permeating narratives of national identity. They do so, by challenging the homogeneity both in the countries and the localities which they inhabit, asserting their difference but also their similarities with those populations that are designated as "native," and in the countries of their "origin" by distanciating themselves not only physically, but also emotionally and critically from them, while also asserting bonds of kinship and cultural heritage. They do so also, by creating spaces and moments that challenge the binary divisions that the static geography of boundaries and homelands institute. These spaces that diasporas—migrants, exiles, refugees, nomads—form "in between" are the sites that Mann (1986) calls intersticial and identifies as important sources of social renewal. These spaces of encounter, syncretism, and hybridity are becoming a significant topos in the context of the transnationalization of social relationships, within which

difference is collapsed in the blurring and reworking of what boundaries seek to separate and demarkate, the self and the other.

Diasporas are at the center of such processes of reconfiguration of geography, culture, and identity, in the sense that they develop and utilize institutional and cultural infrastructures that make possible the imagination of transnational communities and set in motion processes of collective action around the notions of recognition, visibility, and voice. And as globalization is not singularly a macro-concept that can only be accounted for through references to large structures but is present in everyday life, at the micro-level, even the dayliness of diasporic practices and experience has the capacity of generating transnational flows that are constitutive of this new metageography and inhabit it with their collective action, cultural consumption, and the materiality of their imagination. In this situation, largely as a result of the rise of the politics of difference in an era of rapid social change, alongside the more traditional politics associated with the concept of citizenship and social rights, new forms of politics and collective action revolving around the issues of recognition and voice are emerging in the public domain including the cultural politics emanating from diasporic activism and everyday practices (Tsagarousianou, 2007, pp. 178–179).

In this respect, we want to argue, that diasporas cannot, and should not be reduced into mere "ethnic" minorities, possessing what is deemed to be belated cultures, or into mere appendages of faraway nations and nation-states. Resisting the long-established methodological nationalism (cf. Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002) that still dominates the social sciences and the centrality of the nation and the nation-state that this entails is important, if the concept of diaspora is to retain its critical capacity. The instances of collective action and manifestations of their cultural creativity as explored in many contributions in this volume, provide ample evidence of their capacity to construct and enhance spaces of encounters and of negotiation. True, diasporic politics and cultural activism are not always benevolent and can take unpalatable essentialist, racist, and cultural separatist forms. But their very positioning in the transnational and intercultural nexus, straddling borderlines and constructing alternative geographies of flows, their strangeness in both countries of origin and countries of settlement, their continuous encounter with others, and the necessary need for diasporic cultures to be intensely premised on translation and negotiation, open new ways of thinking about belonging, about national culture and identity, multiculturalism, and citizenship. Borrowing Geertz's own words on the importance of the anthropological imagination as a corrective to the superficial engagement with others (2000, p. 16) and slightly paraphrasing, we would argue that the diasporic condition

> involves discovering who they [others] think they are, what they think they are doing, and to what end they think they are doing it … It involves learning how, as a being from elsewhere with a world of one's own, to live with them.

Notes

1 Perhaps the most relevant example is the "Stop Soros" laws introduced in Hungary that make it an offense to help, shelter, and feed migrants.
2 New legislation has been introduced, or is currently discussed in Denmark in order to solve the perceived "problem of the ghettoization of Danish society" whereby, following the proposals, children of migrant families (mostly from Muslim backgrounds) that live in deprived—so-called "ghetto"—areas, will have to attend educational settings for at least 25 hr per week. The children could be as young as 1 year of age. Families that refuse to comply will be denied financial assistance, often their only guarantee of access to housing and income support.

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