

New African Diasporas

Edited by
Khalid Koser

Global Diasporas

 Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group



NEW AFRICAN DIASPORAS

The extensive literature relating to the African diaspora has tended to concentrate on the descendants of those who left Africa as part of the slave trade to North America. This important new book gathers together work on more recent waves of African migration from some of the most exciting thinkers on the contemporary diaspora. Concentrating particularly on the last twenty years, the contributions look to the United States and beyond, to diaspora settlements in the UK and Northern Europe too. *New African Diasporas* looks at a range of different types of diaspora – legal and illegal, professional and low-skilled, asylum seekers and economic migrants – and includes chapters on diasporic communities originating in Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ghana, Senegal and Somalia. It also examines often neglected differences based on gender, class and generation in the process. This book will be essential reading for anyone with an interest in the African diaspora, and provides the most wide-ranging picture of the new African diaspora yet.

Khalid Koser is Lecturer in Human Geography at University College London.

GLOBAL DIASPORAS

Series Editor: Robin Cohen

The assumption that minorities and migrants will demonstrate an exclusive loyalty to the nation-state is now questionable. Scholars of nationalism, international migration and ethnic relations need new conceptual maps and fresh case studies to understand the growth of complex transnational identities. The old idea of 'diaspora' may provide this framework. Though often conceived in terms of a catastrophic dispersion, widening the notion of diaspora to include trade, imperial labour and cultural diasporas can provide a more nuanced understanding of the often positive relationships between migrants' homelands and their places of work and settlement.

This book forms part of an ambitious and interlinked series of volumes trying to capture the new relationships between home and abroad. Historians, political scientists, sociologists and anthropologists from a number of countries have collaborated on this forward-looking project. The series includes two books which provide the defining, comparative and synoptic aspects of diasporas. Further titles focus on particular communities, both traditionally recognized diasporas and those newer claimants who define their collective experiences and aspirations in terms of diasporic identity.

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*Edited by
Khalid Koser*

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PREFACE

Donald Carter

Our view of the passage of time influences the value we attach to past events far more than is the case for the Dinka, whose points of reference are not years counted serially, but the events themselves. In the example of the man who called his child 'Khartoum' it is Khartoum which is regarded as an agent, the subject which acts, and not as with us the remembering mind which recalls a place. The man is the object acted upon.

Godfrey Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka* (1961: 150)

If we were to configure the architecture of contemporary anthropology the resulting structure might reveal the explorations of experience, material culture and space and time to be essential features of its fragile identity. One of the pioneering figures of this world was no doubt Godfrey Lienhardt who mapped the meanings of Dinka cosmology in his classic *Divinity and Experience* (1961). In the heart of the work Lienhardt considers memory, experience and the significance of naming a child 'Khartoum', the son of a man once imprisoned in the city. Remembering Khartoum does not just entail the acknowledgment of the enduring traces of place on both a present and future life. It also constitutes an 'act of exorcism', ensuring against potential harm of any kind. For the many people of the Southern Sudan, Khartoum has not only symbolized a seat of the national political power but also a site of ethnic discrimination, and religious and cultural intolerance. Indeed, as the legacy of residence in a place may have lasting significance across the generations, this type of experience can be integral to diasporas.

Lienhardt introduced a generation of anthropologists to the complexity of experience and the embodiment of aspects of the profane as well as the unseen world in everyday life. As we consider the nature of new African

diasporas we must perhaps acknowledge the capriciousness of the work of historicity and the precarious state of those figured by diasporas at times, through the disfigurement of their dispersal and the provisional status of all cultural identity. I think it is this kind of presence and contingency that we attempt to capture with such words as diaspora, dwelling, travelling and exile, the lineaments of profound change expanding outward like the spokes of a wheel in the real time of daily practice and future lives. We make the vehicle of displacement the trope that stands in for the experience of diaspora or what we might even call the culture of diaspora. As in Dinka remembering Khartoum, we tend to focus on an event – often departure – and the prolonged state of arrival and displacement of the migrant, the refugee or the exile. I would like to suggest that diaspora is not merely a form of transportation – a way of going from here to there – but rather a way of *being* here or there and all the points in between. What I have in mind is what Clifford has referred to as dwelling in travel. Diaspora is a kind of passage, yet a passage that encompasses the possibility of never arriving. Of drifting endless on the betwixt and between of the world's boundaries. Rather than seeking 'assimilation' as a goal, diaspora is a way of being 'other' among the established, of keeping alive the drama of the voyage of 'otherness' in worlds that seek sameness and homogeneity. As I see it, the power of remembering Khartoum is an acknowledgement of entering a new state of being, of the act of the transformative in the mundane world. Perhaps we might say that it is the act of embracing the ambiguities of becoming and belonging. The trauma and trace of loss may not always be the defining aspects of a diasporic identity. What Clifford calls 'collective histories of displacement and violent loss' (Clifford 1997: 250) are not the only articulations of identity possible, but rather one of myriad possible positions that may be occupied. Diasporic cultural forms may have a future in spite of 'homecomings' real or imagined, as these forms – like the 'act of exorcism' of naming of the Dinka – take on a kind of autonomy from the inaugural event that gave them life. It is in these futures, in the daily living of diaspora, that we must come to explore the changing world or worlds of new African diasporas.

There are a number of ideas that attempt to draw together new African diasporas by looking backwards to an ideal African homeland and to sets of Afro-centric values that stream from this common origin (Palmer 1998). Beneath the pan-African imagined global networks, however, run fluid discursive structures that blur conventional and taken-for-granted classificatory practices with emergent nodes of cultural identity that we have yet to imagine. Explorations of pan-African diasporic consciousness must therefore be disambiguated from the essential

markings of race, place and temporal anchoring (see Ifekwunigwe, this volume). There is no trans-historical box large enough to contain such disparate and heterogeneous processes, rather linkages must be accounted for with greater care and specificity. As Jayne Ifekwunigwe points out, the 'historical and contemporary narratives of continental Africa and its diaspora(s) . . . have always been intertwined', such that the interplay of racial, gender and class ideologies with the discursive features of divergent nation-state(s) forms the historically specific surfaces that are an integral part of these lives in diaspora. It is to these voices that we must increasingly turn to understand the 'paradox of belonging', as these forms of belonging, cutting across diverse ethnic, cultural, racial and gendered boundaries, reveal lived experiences that do not succumb to classical binary markers like Black/White, or the many national identifiers from which diaspora identity comes to be excluded. There is a danger of viewing these social forms merely in relation to a local racial currency and ideal of origin, and thereby reducing the scope and dimension of new African diasporas.

Networks that in part constitute but also sustain diasporas (ethnicity, gender, clan, kinship, religious and or affiliation) are not transnational linkages fixed in place for all time, but rather structures that come to be essentially 'reworked' in practices varying from one place to another (see Riccio and Koser in this volume). Popular music introduces young Congolese to Parisian life long before they board the 'plane to see the city for themselves. The links between a homeland and the places and people in diaspora is only a cell phone call, an email or a cable away. People often send letters or cassettes that are hand delivered from one part of the world to the diaspora in another.¹ No region or place cries out to be identified definitively with one group or another. West African groups who carry different passports may claim solidarity on the basis of a common religious affiliation, ethnicity or occupation. And yet groups sharing a common legacy to a colonial language may claim allegiance to a local language and thus diminish the European tie. Old classificatory systems of African populations such as Francophone and Anglophone, as David Styan points out in this volume, do not resonate with a contemporary world in which other languages may come first. Nor do such designations account for national, regional and religious affiliation that may influence language use in various contexts. Senegalese from rural areas, primarily ethnic Wolof, often insist on speaking an 'African language' and take great pride in the purity of their Wolof, while their counterparts – educated youth from urban centres – feel more at home in French (Carter 1997). Furthermore, ethnic Wolof will often identify as 'Senegalese' rather than claim the national identities that their passports afford them,

in effect blurring the boundaries of nation, ethnicity and language by invoking the solidarity implicit in diaspora. Senegalese in Italy often speak in Italian when the topic of work comes up, slipping completely into Wolof when watching a video from home and to an interplay of Wolof and French when speaking to a relative in France or Senegal. While a trans-ethnic national language in Senegal, Wolof in diaspora can act as a marker of ethnicity or of the non-European.

If, as Rey Chow suggests, modernity is characterized by pressing demands for clarity and demarcation of boundaries, then our time may be indexed by a kind of ‘boundary dissolving’. Yet this ‘dissolving’ seems a contradictory dynamic that often moves against the grain of the local while engendering a greater heterogeneity in the global. And yet favouring dissolution (if that is what is happening) is not the same for all. It may come to be experienced differently in ‘other cultures’. ‘Modernism is for these other cultures’, writes Chow, ‘always a displaced phenomenon, the sign of an alien imprint on indigenous traditions’ (Chow 1993: 56). And yet the line between the West and the rest is increasingly unreliable since, in practice and for the quotidian routine regimes of most lives, no such distinctions exist.

African diasporas emerge not only in sites where relationships have been established through colonial ties but in new contexts, often following the circuitous pathways of NGOs, religious organizations, political affiliations, transnational refugee networks and familial reunification. It is the diaspora, according to Paul Gilroy, that sets up an ‘alternative to the stern discipline of primordial kinship and rooted belonging’, and set free such determinations of identity that, linked to territory, produce a taken-for-granted chain leading from place to consciousness (Gilroy 2000: 123).

Shortly after I arrived in Rome, en route to Turin for my fieldwork, I went to the St Egidio centre in Trastevere. I was directed to the centre by a friend of a friend before I even had time properly to unpack my bags or recover from the journey. After my long absence from Rome I looked forward to wandering through the twisting streets of Trastevere, hugging close to the walls to avoid the intermittent motorists and scooters. In recent years the Roman heart of Trastevere had become a home to travellers, migrants and refugees from many parts of the globe. More a kind of turnstile than a quarter, especially for those longing to go elsewhere, a rest stop for those just wanting to stay somewhere and a refuge for those not wanted anywhere.

Wandering the streets of Trastevere, the director pointed out the changes that over the years had transformed the sleepy quarter: the well-appointed cars, the new shops and the not so newly acquired taste for the

good life of the consumer world. Becoming a world economic power had been beyond the dreams of most Italians a short time ago, now they were living in an undreamed of reality. As we walked into the hall where volunteers were serving dinner he pointed out that many Nuer and Dinka were frequent visitors to the centre's meal and language programmes. Standing by the wall, waiting for the dining room to fill up, were two young men, one Nuer the other Dinka, who joked with the director that they were all still there (in the centre and even in Italy).² I knew then that this was not going to be an easy field experience, that the world of the anthropological imagination was meeting, full scale, the world of a changing global, often volatile and certainly unexpected reality. Notions of divinity and power cast by the generation of Godfrey Leinhardt and Evans-Pritchard were impossible to reconcile with the waiting room of a lay Catholic Trastevere centre, a place accustomed to serving the homeless and less fortunate of Rome.³

The Nuer and Dinka agro-pastoralist, Nilotic cultural and linguistic groups, who subsist on a mixed economy of animal husbandry and cultivation, have been a standard feature of virtually every basic anthropological text. And many anthropologists have spent much of their academic lives re-examining and often recapitulating the wisdom imparted by founding figures like Leinhardt and Evans-Pritchard in classrooms, professional journals and documentary film (Holtzman 2000). Jon Holtzman suggests that the Nuer may be the most important case study in the history of anthropology, and are certainly one of the most well known. In this manner already pre-figured in a collective encounter with 'other cultures', it is perhaps not so surprising that the Nuer and the closely related Dinka are now an integral part of a new African diaspora. The southern Sudan by the late 1980s was the site of a protracted civil conflict, bombed by the government because of the concentration of rebel activity in the region. The Nuer and other southerners saw their home become a battlefield, their fields burned, their herds looted to feed the rebel forces and many of their number jailed by the government in Khartoum as suspected rebels or rebel sympathizers (Holtzman 2000). The romantic vision of the remote pastoral Nilotic people, represented on the cover of Evans Pritchard's *The Nuer* (1940) with a photograph showing Nuer harpoon-fishing from a canoe on the Sobat river, was perhaps being shattered forever. It was being replaced by the visage of refugee camps, and a world in motion, haemorrhaging slowly to neighbouring countries. The photograph depicts in the foreground young Nuer on the waterways in a small craft, one intent on harpooning his prey, and behind them a vast expanse fading into the horizon line. Fishing is part of the delicate balance of a mixed economy in which there is still

little room for error, and fish form an ‘indispensable article of food’ in a diet that influences the group’s seasonal movements in harmony with the natural world. This world, bounded only by the local ecology, and the marking of time by shifting subsistence agriculture, herding and fishing, comes full circle with the entrance of southerners into the world of the refugee and the subsequent loss of livelihood, land and cattle.⁴ Evans-Pritchard envisioned the world of the Nuer to be in a delicate ‘equilibrium’ with nature – ‘Man holds his own in the struggle but does not advance’ (Evans-Pritchard 1940: 92). Yet even in this semi-mythic world of the Nuer, in the distant beginnings of anthropological wanderings, this notion of bounded cultural realms was already beginning to break apart. Today, diaspora Nuer and Dinka face many of the problems of transition and cultural dislocations that other groups confront, including the Eritrean and Somali communities described in this volume: a diasporic experience bounded if at all by a kind of new global ecology at times beyond the reaches of the cultural account.

The Nuer and the Dinka are just as much part of a new African diaspora as are the Senegalese, Eritreans and Somalis with whom I would later work in Turin. For all of them, the transition from refugee camps to centres in Italy or their final destination in the United States or elsewhere was difficult. Some have lived for times in refugee camps in a number of countries, many have walked for hundreds of miles in order to reach these camps, often facing the resentment of local populations fed up with the flow of outsiders and insensitive to their pasts. Travelling without documents, the migrants not having attained the official status of the refugee, they faced periods of questioning, detention and even imprisonment by local authorities. Loss of immediate families, friends and relatives further complicate this passage from homeland to diaspora.

Nowhere is this interplay of the stereotype more apparent than in what I will call the historic tropes of diaspora, that play of historical trope and cultural field intertwined in the notion of passage of the sociological figures of diaspora into a realm in which they are unknown (White 1978). Detached from their historical moorings, diasporas may drift among the wreckage of an historical continuum, at times in the background, at others to the fore, but always a narrative form in a global economy of images of displacement and displacing agents knowing or unknown (Jameson 1998). It is in the instances of intolerance that we are drawn to the jagged edges of ‘othering’. As its structure crashes towards act of violence, we are compelled ourselves to depart on an intellectual journey of sorts in contemplation of this process.

There has been a great deal of discussion of diaspora that employs the trope of the voyage or the passage from one state or place to another.

So much so, that dispossession, exile and displacement have become the watchwords for the notion of diaspora. Terms such as hybridity, transnational, border and travel also play a part in the identification of diasporic themes (Clifford 1997: 302–6). The contemplation of diaspora as a residence in alterity, I suggest, has only really been considered at times of trauma. I never knew my boat, or the voyage of now distant generations, and yet I consider myself as part of a diaspora. Some would suggest that this distant trauma, the unintentional seaward movement of which I am a descendant, has left in its wake a ‘structure of feeling’, a way of being, if you will, that has some trace of that first boat.

The trace of diaspora and its attendant experiences do not appear in the ‘mud of the field’ or the ‘dust of the archive’ in conventional ways. The very metaphors of the practice of fieldwork or archival exploration are often inadequate. At times we are entreated to seek out new locations, sites of intervention and ways of interrogating diaspora, as demonstrated in this volume. By at once repositioning our idea of the nature of what is a legitimate target of study, and rethinking or refashioning the boundaries of the disciplines, we may come closer to an understanding of the nature of contemporary migrations, cultural displacements and the social transformations resulting from these population movements.

Theorists seek to contain a certain disciplinary cartographic anxiety through the care with which their subject of analysis comes to be neatly parcelled out, distributed across regions, cultural domains and otherwise well-defined areas of specialization. Those who live in the diaspora, by contrast, confound such notions as Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas in daily practice. Between the categories of the theorist and others engaged in these lives we must seek out a way of understanding the coming and going at the core of this process through an exploration of the relationship between the diaspora theory and experience.

Our days are marked by the visions of people in motion. Diasporas are historical phenomena bound up in the processes of global capitalism, the changing fortunes of nation-states and the complex interplay of power relations within and between nations of origin and settlement. In attempting to account for some of these features scholars have often employed the metaphor of navigation.⁵ The notion of navigation seems to condense a number of themes concerning representation, identity, consciousness, politics and diaspora formation. The trope of navigation has come to be shared by social scientists, politicians, journalists, novelists and filmmakers. Combining the notion of cultural distance with the ambiguity of cultural translation, the trope of navigation allows the ‘other’ to remain distant and exotic while reserving the right to exclude this ‘otherness’ as it may remain wholly unintelligible. And should this ‘other’ remain

impervious to the transformations necessary to pass into the cultural and social world of the present, our present, we seem to reserve the right of exclusion of this new threat, a practice I call the politics of closure. Visions of Haitian makeshift boats and Cuban crafts and rafts bound together with all manner of bindings by the men, women and children trying to escape poverty are the images that float through the newspapers and immigration discourse of our times. Of course there are some who do reach the shores of a Promised Land. But many voyagers never reach their destinations. The crafts that founder, that are lost off the coast of Spain, or the Mexican workers who die for lack of oxygen in the back of rented trucks headed for the sweatshops of California or the chicken factories of Maryland – each fades into the minutiae of contemporary news media. There is even a ‘celebration’ in the media, and often in the form of semi-documentary films, that justifies the forces of order in the control of populations that seek to reach the safety of new homelands. In the United States the border with Mexico provides countless images of border patrols, smugglers and confrontations with border police. Or the many vessels transporting would-be migrants from mainland China, packed in the depths of the ships that fly the flag of their desperation. Even the frozen lakes of the Canadian border provide walkways for migrants who must at times be pulled from the waters and processed by border agents and sent on their return journey. Indeed, the navigation off the coast of Spain and the countless speedboats that dart off the ribbon-like expanse of the Italian coastline dropping human cargo just before the light of day converge in the currency of contemporary diaspora formation.

One of the most haunting images of the late twentieth century has to be that of the tiny, wave-tossed crafts of the so-called ‘boat people’ during the mass exodus from Southeast Asia. Cast out on the seas in the least seaworthy of vessels, subjected to pirates, violence and violations of body and spirit, these lives provide us with emblematic forms of desperation and human tragedy, both in popular culture and in the world of expert or scholarly discourse. Such powerful images define the contours of the popular imaginary of forced dispersal, dramatic changes of state/status and the seeming powerlessness of the victims in process. This image condenses the central notions many of us hold of diaspora. The representation of such translocal, transcultural passages is often rendered intelligible to us through the idea of navigation. The ‘boat people’ convey to us a kind of surplus of meanings connecting home and country of settlement to a ready cultural logic provided by such taken-for-granted notions as assimilation, multiculturalism and cultural pluralism available to all and avidly recapitulated through media, literature and scholarship. This

confluence of ideas about the cultural and social markings comes to us through what Antonio Gramsci calls ‘common sense’ knowledge, a mixture of modes of thought inherited from the past and contained in national narratives, folk ideology, and fragments of scientific theory in any social formation (Landy 1986: 80). The ‘common sense’ understandings of the ‘boat people’ help to naturalize this image, rendering it a taken-for-granted part of our worlds.

The search in social theory for explanatory models that define and characterize the present seems to have accelerated as we face a new century. The tumultuous patterns of social, cultural and economic dislocations of global capitalism and the complex interplay of power relations in and across nation-states has often been associated with the creation of vast interconnected global systems of cultural, economic and social relations and the decentring of the people, objects and ideas that move across the ‘hypermodernity’ of late capitalism. Marked by unprecedented migrations, cultural disruptions and social disorders, the ‘multilinear quality of capitalism and modernity’ take on diverse cultural forms across different social formations (Pred and Watts 1992). The scope and nature of the reactions to these changes is experienced differently in each context. This New World shatters the idea of territorially fixed communities and of a local knowledge capable of producing relatively stable and clear-cut identities. Images of disjunction and the proliferation of identities in motion replace ‘essential’ markers of identity and boundary. The figure most commonly associated with the borderlands and interstitial zones of this world, caught between at times reconfigured national spaces, are the migrant, or diaspora communities. The new African diasporas explored in this volume are an integral part of this rapidly changing world.

Notes

- 1 Within the very same week that my family and I arrived in Turin, Italy, in the summer of 2001, the mother of a long-time friend sent a present to us from Dakar through a young woman who was returning to Italy after her holiday.
- 2 The Nuer and Dinka represent for anthropological literature inaugural ‘others’. They fit into a kind of classical tradition of the ‘exotic’ other. For a discussion of the ‘savage slot’ in anthropological thinking and the construction of the self-definition of the so-called West, see Trouillot (1995). Some suggest that the Nuer have diverged from the Dinka in recent centuries, while others, looking at the classical sources on the Nuer such as Evans-Pritchard, seem to think that the line between Nuer and Dinka may have been more fluid in the past, allowing one group to attach itself to the settlements of the other and in time becoming dependents of the neighbouring group (see Holtzman 2000).
- 3 I draw on the work in this essay of Evans-Pritchard and Godfrey Leinhardt

partly following the logic of the incident I recount there of the Roman shelter, and also to represent anthropological traditions often associated with the work of these authors. Godfrey Lienhardt's name is often associated with work in the phenomenological realm of the Dinka, his investigation of their notion of selfhood, time and space and the idea of divinity is unparalleled. I wish to emphasize here the innovative manner in which Evans-Pritchard's work employs a notion of ecological and cultural dynamic that inform the lives of people. In his famous ecological chapter in *The Nuer*, they emerge as people for whom the landscape is living tissue. The Nuer vision of landscape is integral to their self-definition. When we look through the lens of migration we often displace people from the cultural, ecological and social centres of their lives. Abstract notions like 'flows' and 'dynamics' entail detachment of a group of people from a world of meanings. What we might call 'experience' and 'form' are often lost in our discussions of diaspora.

- 4 See Sharon E. Hutchinson's discussion of the contemporary struggle of the Nuer, who at times must go for long periods to 'far-off Khartoum' to study or to work as labour migrants in the construction industry (Hutchinson 1996: 70). Hutchinson notes a labour history that compels many migrants to be away for years at a time – taking pride in their work, migrants 'assert . . . that they have built Khartoum'.
- 5 In an address commemorating the anniversary of the desegregation of Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas some years ago, former President Clinton employed the idea of navigation in an invocation of national solidarity: 'Only the American idea is strong enough to hold us together . . . whether our ancestors came here in slave ships or on the Mayflower, whether they came through the portals of Ellis Island or on a plane to San Francisco, whether they have been here for thousands of years, we believe that every individual possesses a spark of possibility.' Paul Gilroy in his book *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* employs the image of the slave ship as 'a living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion' (p. 18), in the constitution of the African diaspora. Even Homi Bhaba in *The Location of Culture* notes that the 'middle passage of contemporary culture . . . is a process of displacement and disjunction that does not totalize experience' (p. 8). Each of these statements places a premium on the idea of navigation (diaspora) as constitutive of the social, cultural and political nature of contemporary society.

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NEW AFRICAN DIASPORAS¹

An Introduction

Khalid Koser

Introduction

On the street corners of New York City, recently arrived West African traders sell to African Americans artefacts that appeal to their nostalgia for an Africa that no longer exists. In the schools of London, one per cent of children speaks Somali, while Yoruba is the ninth most common second language among children and Akan the thirteenth. In Paris there are over two thousand African Associations. Ghanaians in Toronto closely monitor the price of cement in Ghana, in order to build houses at home as cheaply as possible. The majority of Eritreans in the UK and Germany pay to the Eritrean state an annual contribution amounting to two per cent of their incomes. Somali communities in the USA and Europe send home the equivalent of over 120 million US dollars per year – these remittances regularly doubling the average household income in parts of Somalia. These anecdotes, selected from the contributions in this volume, begin to explain its focus on ‘new African diasporas’.

There is a significant – and growing – literature on the African diaspora, sometimes also described as the ‘black diaspora’ (Bonnett and Llewellyn Watson 1990; Conniff 1994; Harris 1993; Jalloh *et al.* 1997; Segal 1995). This literature usually considers that the original African diaspora arose from the dispersal of Africans as a result of the slave trade, although some scholars argue that there were earlier African diasporas comprising, for example, Egyptian and Ethiopian seafarers, Moor traders and the Mandingo mariners (Bernal 1991; Drake 1987, 1990; Lefkowitz 1996). Still, slavery has been the principal focus of most African diaspora literature, and has been subjected to exhaustive analysis, (for example Anstey 1975; Awoonor 1992; Berlin and Hoffman 1983; Curtin 1970; Drachler 1975; Gates 1987; Thompson 1988).

Much literature also extends the concept of the African diaspora to include the descendants of slaves who continue to live away from their 'homeland', and in this context it has mostly focused on the United States. Some of this literature makes explicit links between slavery and the experiences of subsequent generations, for example exploring continuity and change in African diaspora cultures. For other scholars the association is implicit, for example underlying the pan-African movement and providing added justification for 'black' resistance movements (Campbell 1988; Drake 1993; Esedebe, 1994; Lake 1995; Makonnen 1973). In contrast, the description 'diaspora' has been applied less frequently to what might be conceived of as a second 'wave' of African migration outside the continent in the early twentieth century, and often in the UK and northern Europe (e.g. Banton 1955).

Besides their primary focus on slavery, another characteristic of most African diaspora studies is their insistence on a single diaspora. Clearly the suggestion is not that slaves were transported from a single origin to a single destination. Although the Atlantic slave trade to the United States was dominant and has received the bulk of attention, there was also a substantial slave trade across the Indian Ocean (Harris 1971; Segal 1995) as well as large-scale slave plantations in South America and the Caribbean (Andrews 1980; Nascimento 1992) and in the Mediterranean (Hunwick 1992). Neither is the suggestion that there was a single slave experience or that there is a common memory. Much of the literature recognizes, for example, the specific experiences of slave women and their female descendants (Bush 1990; Gollock 1969). While fully acknowledging difference within the African diaspora, much of the literature nevertheless focuses on its unifying characteristics. These are suggested to include a pan-African political movement (Drake 1975), a shared cultural heritage (Hall and Freedle 1978), a common experience of ambiguous identities (Gilroy 1993) and outright racism and exclusion from host societies.

In this respect, this volume represents a departure from the dominant discourse on the African diaspora. It 'updates' the 'diaspora' concept in the African context. The concept of diaspora has recently been revitalized – not least in this series – and is now orientated away from the catastrophic and involuntary dispersal of which slavery is such a good (and terrible) example (Cohen 1997). For example, other volumes in this series are concerned with the Sikh, Hindu and Italian diasporas. Yet in the African context 'diaspora' has only rarely been divorced from slavery (one example is McGown 1999). In contrast, this volume focuses specifically on recent African migrations that have created 'new' diasporas. Given the association of early African migrations with the original diaspora concept,

more recent African migrations provide an interesting opportunity to evaluate its revisions. One of the themes that characterizes this book, for example, is that the distinction between earlier and later concepts of diaspora is at times unhelpful.

At the same time, its focus on recent African migrations beyond the African continent means that this volume also contributes towards filling a significant empirical research gap. Arguably, a preoccupation with slavery and its descendants has diverted our attention from striking new patterns and processes associated with recent migrations. In some cases these have taken place on a significant scale, although another reason for their lack of analysis has been the virtually complete absence of reliable data. Still, in this volume, Montclos estimates that aggregated host country data suggesting that there are over 200,000 Somalis outside Africa may represent only one third of their true population; Riccio estimates that there are over 30,000 Senegalese in Italy alone and Styan that there are about 15,000 people from the Democratic Republic of Congo in London. Just these three case studies also illustrate the range of processes associated with recent African migrations. Somalis, Senegalese and Congolese have arrived variously in Europe as students, professionals, asylum seekers and 'clandestine migrants'. Its focus on more recent African migrations therefore provides the context for another departure in this volume from the dominant African diaspora discourse, namely towards a plurality of African diasporas.

A final reason for the focus in this volume on 'new African diasporas' is to explore the extent to which they are beginning to realize the potential or assume the power so often ascribed to other global diasporas in recent literature. Diasporas have variously been described as influential in the international political arena (Shain 1995; Sheffer 1995), as representing a new force in international finance and commerce (Kotkin 1992), as providing an important source of adaptive strength and social resistance (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994), or as embodying a new cultural hybridity (Hall 1990). Some commentators are critical of the celebratory nature of this recent literature on diasporas. But if new African diasporas can realize even a semblance of this sort of power, an important question to ask is to what extent it can be targeted on tackling some of the manifold problems that hound most of their countries of origins. If it cannot, the question that needs to be answered is why not, and by implication in what ways are new African diasporas different from other global diasporas?

New definitions

What is meant and who is covered by the concept ‘new African diasporas’? This question is answered in two ways here. The first is simply to explain the editorial criteria for inclusion in this volume. The second is to explore the competing definitions of diaspora that arise in the contributions.

The geographical criteria used in this volume stipulate that new African diasporas include migrant communities from so-called ‘Black’ Africa, currently living outside the African continent. Clearly these criteria are arbitrary. They exclude significant migrant populations from the Maghreb (Brussels is purportedly the world’s second largest Moroccan city) and migrants (including Black Africans) from the Republic of South Africa. In an earlier volume in this series, entitled *New Diasporas*, Nicholas van Hear (1998) includes as a case study Ugandan Asians expelled by Idi Amin, and it is not clear whether they too comprise a new African diaspora – they are not included in this volume. Similarly, van Hear includes in his definition of diasporas Ghanaians living in (and subsequently expelled from) Nigeria. Clearly the majority of African international migrants remain within the African continent, but they are not included within the scope of this volume.

But beyond these geographical stipulations, there is little consensus among the authors in this volume, for example about what constitutes ‘new’. All of the chapters are primarily concerned with migrations from post-colonial Africa (arguably with the exception of Eritreans who fled before Eritrean independence) and usually in the last twenty years or so. At the same time, several contributions examine the interactions between these ‘new’ diasporas and earlier diasporas. Neither is there clear agreement amongst the authors concerning criteria that might determine who comprises or what forms a diaspora. For example, different authors deal with communities of different relative sizes – there is no agreement over whether there needs to be a critical mass of migrants to form a diaspora. And while some authors are concerned with national diasporas – that is, migrant communities whose association is a common national origin – others focus on what might more appropriately be described as religious or ethnic diasporas, such as that comprised of Mourides from Senegal.

There is arguably nothing wrong with not defining fixed criteria in the definition of a diaspora – a flexible approach is perfectly appropriate for a plural and dynamic concept. Indeed, for Stuart Hall, one of the hallmarks of ‘the diaspora experience’ is that ‘. . . it is not defined by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity’ (Hall 1990: 235). There is certainly nothing unusual in the lack of con-

sensus exhibited in this volume. Different contributors to this series on Global Diasporas, for example, have adopted different perspectives. Indeed, none of the various recent attempts to revitalize the diaspora concept have been preoccupied with specific geographical or numerical criteria. Instead their definitions revolve around rather more expressive criteria, relating, for example, to a history of dispersal, myths and memories of the homeland and ambiguous relations with host societies.

When such criteria are applied to the specific context of new African diasporas, at least four competing perspectives emerge. Some commentators see in certain recent migrations from Africa reflections of the original African diaspora. It is certainly true that there have been significant forced migrations from the African continent. One clear example in this volume is the 'refugee diaspora' from Somalia. Less clear examples are provided in chapters that cover migrants who have not fled primarily for political reasons, and thus do not necessarily qualify for refugee status, but who consider themselves to have been forced to leave their home countries as a result of economic hardships. The Congolese diaspora is one example. Writing in other contexts, some commentators have likened the recent phenomenon of human trafficking to slavery (O'Neill Richard 1999), and it is clear that at least some recent African migrants in Europe have been trafficked there (Miko and Park 2000). Beyond their involuntary nature, however, it is debatable to what extent there are other direct parallels between the slave trade and recent refugee movements. The latter, even where trafficking is involved, lack the organization and certainly lack the contemporaneous legitimacy of the former. And again even trafficked migrants, who may well be exploited, are certainly not legally exploited.

In contrast, more recent definitions of the diaspora concept open up the possibility more incontrovertibly to apply it to recent African migrations. Indeed, at times the definitions proposed by certain authors are so flexible that the term seems to apply to virtually any population that originates in a land other than that in which it resides (Vertovec and Cohen 1999). Similarly, James Clifford suggests that the label has become so common that it seems to be replacing, or at least supplementing, 'minority discourse' (Clifford 1994). More specificity is introduced by Sheffer, who proposes that:

Modern diasporas are ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin – their homelands.

(1986: 3)

This simple definition captures the essence, if not the detail, of other definitions proposed, for example, by Marienstras (1989) and Safran (1991). It also captures the essence of all the case studies included in this volume.

In his introductory volume to this series, Robin Cohen went one step further, by developing a typology of diasporas. He distinguished between victim, imperial, trade, cultural and labour diasporas, all of which share the essential character identified by Sheffer and others, but which have been created for different reasons and have different underlying rationales. Although Cohen himself recognizes that there may be blurred boundaries between these types, this volume certainly contains examples of victim diasporas (the Somalis), trade diasporas (the Senegalese) and labour diasporas (the Ghanaians).

Until recently, the diaspora concept has been contested fairly exclusively in the academic literature. The diaspora discourse has now also entered policy circles and the vocabulary of migrant groups. At a meeting in Libreville (Gabon) in March 2001, government representatives from twenty-four African countries met to approve a new programme jointly co-ordinated by the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) and International Organisation for Migration (IOM) focusing on Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA). This programme acknowledges the general lack of success of previous programmes that attempted to 'reverse the brain drain' by encouraging skilled African migrants to return to their home countries. Instead its main purpose is explicitly to enhance the contribution that African diasporas can make to development in their home countries without returning home permanently.

While the MIDA programme continues to be developed, and is yet to be formally ratified, what is interesting is the way that the notion of a diaspora has been adopted and adapted by so many African governments. Their use of the term has some rather specific connotations. For example, it is interesting that Africans who, it was hoped, still intended to return home were usually described in policy documents in Libreville as 'migrants', whereas those who were apparently permanently settled in their host countries were now described as forming part of a diaspora. In general, diasporas are also regarded as comprising economic migrants rather than refugees. This follows from an understandable reluctance on the part of African governments to engage with political opponents overseas. More specifically, they have tended to use the term to cover highly skilled and well-educated migrants. This reflects the development-oriented nature of their interest in African communities overseas.

Perhaps most interesting of all is the way that the description 'diaspora' is gaining currency within a number of African communities themselves.

Arguably, self-definition is just as legitimate a reason to describe a group as a diaspora as any other. At least three reasons emerge from the contributions to this volume. One concerns relations with the host society, and arises from the perception on the part of these communities that there are fewer negative connotations currently associated with the term diaspora than with the terms ‘immigrant’, ‘refugee’ or ‘asylum seeker’. Perhaps as a result of its longstanding association with the dispersal of Jews and African slaves, the term has yet to be adopted in a derogatory manner by the media. Secondly, for at least some communities the term appears to be ‘self-motivational’. Diaspora is becoming a ‘buzzword’ rather like globalization, and for some communities appears to have connotations with which they are keen to be associated. In this volume, Jayne Ifekwunigwe, who defines herself as part of a new African diaspora, describes the concept of diaspora as a ‘. . . marketable millennial cultural currency . . . which re-casts our recurrent homelessness as an asset rather than a deficit’ (p. 58). Finally, for at least some communities, there is a sense that their experiences in some way compare with those of the original diasporas – that they too are victims, just as were dispersed Jews and African slaves. Arguably, association with these groups also might promote a more widespread sympathy within host societies.

New patterns and processes

Competing definitions provide one explanation for the focus in this volume on diasporas in the plural. There are several others. The most straightforward is that the volume is concerned with migrant communities from different origins and in different destinations. It includes chapters on diasporas originating in Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), Eritrea, Ghana, Senegal and Somalia, located variously in Canada, France, Germany, the Middle East, the United Kingdom and the United States. In some cases (the Ghanaian and Senegalese diasporas), authors provide evidence for transnational linkages within geographically dispersed single diasporas. There is no evidence in this volume, however, for links between different diasporas. In other words, these are on the whole separate diasporas.

The differences between the different diasporas covered in this volume extend, however, far beyond their specific geographies. As explained above, this is a broadly different conclusion from that reached in many earlier studies of the African diaspora, which have tended to emphasize a shared experience. It may well be that these earlier studies exaggerated this sense of unity; still, it is worth reflecting briefly on the sources of diversity among new African diasporas.

One source is broadly different reasons for dispersal. Quite deliberately, chapters have been included that cover different diaspora ‘types’ – following Cohen (1997) – including trade, labour and victim diasporas. These distinctions can have important implications for patterns and processes of migration. Thus while the pattern of dispersal for trade and labour diasporas is shown largely to be determined by opportunities in the labour market (both formal and informal), the pattern of dispersal for victim diasporas largely responds to political circumstances in receiving countries. There are also important differences in terms of the organization of migration. West African traders in the USA and Europe, for example, are shown to migrate on the basis of pre-existing social networks. Friends and relatives already located in the host country assist new migrants to enter the labour market. In contrast, much of the Somali refugee diaspora outside Africa has settled in countries where there was, for all intents and purposes, no pre-existing Somali community.

Similarly, their motivations for migration can influence the return movements of diasporas. Some, such as the Senegalese traders, move through the migration cycle on a regular basis, returning to Senegal in order to re-stock for market stalls and beaches in Italy. Ghanaian migrants – who can broadly be categorized as forming a ‘labour diaspora’ – are likely in contrast to move through the cycle only once, returning perhaps to retire. Still others are likely never to close the circle, especially those whose movements have been politically motivated, and who are waiting for political change at home.

At the same time, however, some grounds emerge on which to challenge Cohen’s implication that their reason for dispersal provides the primary difference between different diasporas. One reason is that often there is a convergence in the circumstances of diasporas which have been formed for broadly different reasons. Sometimes this results from immigration regimes in receiving countries. In Europe, for example, there are very few formal opportunities for labour migration, particularly of the low skilled. Thus while Senegalese migrants may leave Dakar as traders and entrepreneurs, they enter Europe as ‘illegal’ migrants. Similarly, increasing restrictions on asylum in the industrialized world mean that a Somali may well leave Mogadishu to escape political persecution but will be received as an ‘asylum seeker’. As the clear legal distinctions between ‘illegal migrants’ and ‘asylum seekers’ become blurred by the media and in public perceptions, the Senegalese and Somali migrant may well find themselves facing the same discrimination. Of course their experiences in host societies may also overcome their initial perceptions and intentions in terms of return. It might be argued, therefore, that a distinction between ‘legal’ and ‘illegal’ diasporas is more meaningful than that between ‘trade’ and ‘victim’ diasporas.

A final reason for insisting on diasporas in the plural, however, is to highlight differences within single diaspora communities. The contributions to this volume demonstrate differentiation, and changing patterns and processes of inclusion and exclusion, in a wide variety of ways. A crucial aspect is gender. Takyiwaa Manuh, for example, explains how Ghanaian men and women in Toronto have developed starkly contrasting perspectives on return. While for many men return is viewed as an opportunity to reinstate their traditional responsibilities and power within the household, for many women the prospect is one of reducing a new-found independence. Different generations also have varying perspectives on many issues, including return. Many African adults in the UK, for example, share with many other migrant adults around the world a concern that their children have become socially, culturally, linguistically and often religiously distanced from their 'homeland'. For children of mixed marriages, questions of identity become even more complex.

Economic and social status can also be divisive. The status of recent African migrants ranges from the highly skilled and professional (diplomats, academics, doctors) to the near-destitute (illegal migrants, asylum seekers). One of the chapters in this volume shows, for example, how clear lines have emerged within the Eritrean diaspora in the UK on the basis of whether or not people have been able to afford to pay the increasing contributions demanded of them by the government of Eritrea to fund the recent war effort and its aftermath. For migrants, political status is often allied with economic status, and it is noticeable that those Eritreans who have found most difficulty in raising extra money are often those who still have an insecure status in the UK. Another way that differentiation is often expressed is the extent to which different members of a single diaspora belong to formal community groups. Several authors emphasize that such groups are rarely fully representative – in many cases they are viewed as furthering the causes of the elite within the diaspora.

New potential and power

At times there is an exuberance about the revitalization of the diaspora concept, which is ironic given that the concept originated in the tragedy of forced dispersal and exploitation. According to Vertovec and Cohen (1999), for example, diasporas have recently been conceived as a new social form characterized by special social relationships, political orientations and economic strategies; as a type of consciousness that demonstrates an awareness of multi-locality, and as a novel mode of cultural production that interacts with globalization. The literature thus implies that diasporas have a new economic, social, political and cultural potential that can be

wielded transnationally. Policy-makers, too, have begun to share this exuberance. The UK government's Department for International Development, for example, sees in recent African diasporas the opportunity for the African continent to benefit from globalization, a process which so often has impacted negatively there (DfID 2000). And, as described above, African governments too are hopeful that diasporas can help reverse the deleterious effects of the 'brain drain' – or at least send home significant remittances.

Several of the contributions in this volume do indeed point up the potential of certain new African diasporas. West African traders are shown to be enjoying great success as entrepreneurs in the United States and, in another case study in Italy. Somali and Eritrean refugee communities are shown to exert great economic and political influence in their home countries. It would not be too much of an overstatement to say that a part of the Somali diaspora largely keeps the new state of Somaliland afloat, nor that the Eritrean diaspora largely funded the recent conflict with Ethiopia. Another chapter focuses on the great creativity in music and literature associated with the Congolese diaspora in France – approximating to Robin Cohen's conception of a 'cultural diaspora'.

At the same time, however, these and the other contributions also argue for a more cautious approach. At least four reasons emerge. First, as emphasized above, there are differences both between and within diasporas. Generalizations about diasporas betray the real lives of the individuals that comprise them. Second, diasporas can have negative as well as positive implications. None of the contributions in this volume focus specifically on crime or drugs, for example, but several at least allude to illegal activities. Many recent Francophone African migrants to the UK have arrived illegally – sometimes after paying smugglers – and remain illegally, sometimes also working illegally, for example as prostitutes. The message from the chapters on West African traders is often that their success has been based on an ability to manipulate the system, and often to cut legal corners. Even where it is positive, a third reason for caution is that the influence of diasporas is often narrowly focused, and can be exclusive and even exclusionary. As alluded to previously, for example, there is no evidence in this volume, nor indeed elsewhere, for a pan-African movement that unites new African diasporas. There is actually not much evidence either for diasporas even acting in a national interest. Most Eritrean refugees did indeed originally support independence struggles, but often now their interactions with their home countries are primarily to further the goals of a particular region or locality, religion or ethnic group, or simply to support their

immediate family. And it is probable that certain diasporas further the causes of the elite in their home country rather than those who are subjected to poverty, corruption or violations of human rights.

All of the above reasons probably apply across most recent diasporas world-wide, and this is one way in which this volume, despite its African focus, may contain lessons for the study of other diasporas too. In contrast, one experience that is arguably more specific to new African diasporas is racism and social exclusion in many host societies. This is another theme that pervades several chapters, which sometimes give the impression that African migrants can be triply disadvantaged – they are migrants, they are black and they are from Africa. For women add a fourth excuse for discrimination. For Muslims yet another. The conclusions about the implications of such discrimination for diasporic identities are to an extent contradictory. In the view of some contributors discrimination provides an incentive for Africans to maintain their African identity and a dream of returning to a better place. The response of others may be to reject as far as possible their African identities – to try to ‘conform’. Discrimination can, of course, have more concrete implications, for example in the labour market, and thus a fourth and final reason for caution in celebrating too strongly the potential of new African diasporas is that many individuals may not be able fully to realize their potential.

New African diasporas

This introductory chapter has identified some of the main themes that arise from the contributions to this volume. At times these themes challenge the pervading discourse on the African diaspora. What adds a certain weight to their challenge is that every chapter is based on recent empirical research. Together they combine quantitative and qualitative methods and analysis, represent a range of disciplinary or sub-disciplinary approaches, and are the fruits of detailed fieldwork in both sending and receiving contexts.

As a whole, this volume is loosely structured around the logic of what might be thought of as the diaspora ‘lifecycle’. The first two chapters focus on patterns and processes of dispersal – in other words on the creation of new African diasporas. The middle four chapters examine different aspects of settlement and identity formation. The final two chapters are concerned with perceptions of, and return to, the ‘homeland’.

In Chapter 2 David Styan provides an overview of, and starts to explain, recent Francophone African settlement in London. Policy-makers and academics alike have been perplexed by migrations such as

these, which appear to defy migration theories that expect migrants to settle in countries with which their country of origin has colonial, trade or cultural and linguistic links. But through closer analysis Styan demonstrates that there are quite well-established communities of Francophone Africans in London, that recent settlement there may comprise *la nouvelle vague*, but that they do not necessarily represent *la nouvelle vague*. He also critically analyses the concept ‘Francophone Africans’, and demonstrates enormous diversity within recent migrations.

Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos analyses the settlement of Somalis around the world in Chapter 3. In contrast to the Francophone Africans described by David Styan, Montclos maintains that many Somalis have settled in countries in which there are no established Somali communities, and in this context he describes the precarious nature of their settlement. Arguably, and also in contrast to many Francophone Africans, there is less doubt that the majority of Somalis are refugees fleeing political persecution, even though the majority are no longer recognized as refugees in Western Europe or North America. Nevertheless, Montclos establishes the concept of a ‘refugee diaspora’ – akin to Cohen’s ‘victim diaspora’. He also depicts the Somalis as ‘a community with its mind turned to the native country’, and draws on detailed empirical research to describe the incredibly well-organized system within the Somali community for transferring assets back home.

In Chapter 4 Jayne Ifekwunigwe unpicks what she describes as ‘the grand diasporic narratives’ of African diasporas past and present. Specifically, she challenges essentialized ideas about ‘mixed race’ identities for the children of mixed marriages. Using excerpts from her interviews, Ifekwunigwe demonstrates how age, class, gender, ethnicity and locality all intersect to produce plural and dynamic identities for her respondents. Conventional concepts of ‘race’, identity and belonging do not fully capture their experience. They can simultaneously identify with White English or Black African identities, and feel themselves both at home and in exile.

The notion of ambiguous identities also recurs through Chapters 5 and 6, in which Paul Stoller and Bruno Riccio respectively analyse the activities of West African trade diasporas. The context for Stoller’s ethnography of traders in New York City is their interaction with the African Americans – descendants of the ‘original’ African diaspora. He shows how the traders have recognised and commercially exploited the resurgent African identities of many African Americans. The traders are ‘marketing Afrocentricity’ – they are selling to African Americans images of Africa that bear little resemblance to the contemporary continent.

Many of the traders included in Stoller's ethnography originate in Senegal, and traders of the same origin form the focus of Bruno Riccio's chapter, the context for which is Italy. And it is the significance of context that forms one of Riccio's main points. Even though Senegalese traders world-wide tend to belong to the same ethnic group and religious brotherhood, and even though their trading networks have the same organizational principles and are often interconnected, their experiences and their success can be quite different depending on the receiving context in which they work. The receiving context is one of many factors that differentiate members ostensibly of the same diaspora, and Riccio's chapter reinforces the necessity to guard against generalizations.

As indicated earlier in this introduction, an increasing number of African states appear to be keen to try to mobilize their diasporas. In Chapter 7, I present a case study of the mobilization of the Eritrean diaspora during the recent conflict with Ethiopia. I suggest that what the state views as mobilization, the diaspora is increasingly perceiving as exploitation, and show how the state's policies may be dividing the diaspora and distancing a significant proportion from its homeland. My conclusion is that if they want sustainably to mobilize diasporas, African states need to demonstrate responsibility not just to those living on their territory, but also to overseas nationals in the diaspora.

According to many scholars the growth of a return movement is a defining characteristic of a diaspora. Chapter 8, by Désiré Kazadi Wa Kabwe and Aurelia Segatti, explores the evolution of a return movement among the Congolese diaspora. They analyse music and literature produced by members of this 'cultural diaspora', mainly based in Belgium and France. These sources provide a surprisingly accurate insight into the ambiguous relationship that recent Congolese migrants have with their homeland. The authors conclude that both music and literature are maintaining the 'myth of return' – the assumption that return should be the ultimate goal for the diaspora, which is rarely challenged.

In the final chapter – appropriately – Takyiwa Manuh analyses her interviews with migrants who have returned from the Ghanaian diaspora. Her interviews expose the realities behind the assumption that is made in the literature and music analysed in the preceding chapter, that 'there is no place like home'. Focusing on the divergent experiences of men and women, she shows how returning to a patriarchal system can reinstate the authority of the former but undermine the liberty of the latter.

Conclusion

Even given its arbitrary criteria for defining new African diasporas, this volume cannot possibly hope to be comprehensive – there are many more overseas African populations than those included here who might also fall within the definition. At the same time, this introduction has tried to emphasize the diversity of experiences encapsulated by the case studies included, and in this way the volume can make claims to be not just illustrative but also representative.

As already explained, the primary aim of this volume is to apply new diaspora concepts to recent African migrations – simultaneously exposing some of these migrations to greater analysis than they have often hitherto received. At the same time, however, it is hoped that analysis of these African case studies might also have implications for the study of other recent diasporas too. It may be that new African diasporas have a unique experience of racism, but many other diaspora populations experience discrimination and social exclusion in similar and different ways. It may be that new African diasporas have exceptionally plural identities, but diversity is surely also a characteristic of all but the most unusual diaspora. And it may be that some new African diasporas uniquely are interacting with old diasporas from the same origin, but there are very few genuinely ‘new’ diasporas in the contemporary world that are created *ex nihilo*.

In this way, this volume argues against generalizations both about new African and about other recent diasporas. Its argument is reinforced by the strong empirical analysis that underpins every chapter in this collection. This is significant, as the high level of theoretical development in the newly resurgent area of diaspora studies has not yet been matched by thorough empirical analysis. And it is only through such analysis that definitions can be refined, distinctions re-drawn and assumptions properly investigated.

Note

- 1 This chapter incorporates many useful comments made during the presentation of an earlier version at an African Studies Seminar at St Antony’s College, Oxford. I am also grateful to Tony O’Connor for detailed comments both on this chapter and on the scope of the volume as a whole.

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