

CHAPTER 15

Africa Has Moved!: New African Diasporas and the Anthropology of Transnationalizing Africa

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INTRODUCTION: AFRICAN DIASPORAS-HISTORICAL AND “NEW”

This chapter briefly traces the emergence of “new African Diasporas” as an object of scholarly analysis over roughly the last quarter century, and reviews anthropological engagement with this phenomenon. It begins by examining the definitional distinctions referenced through this term, and how these serve to index this relatively recent body of work at the intersection of several other fields of scholarship.

Drawn from the Greek, the term “diaspora” (*speirein*, meaning to sow or scatter) is a concept that has become much more commonly used – and more widely debated by scholars – than was once the case. Thus, for a long time, scholars reserved this term to refer to a restricted subset of stateless population groups, that had been created through historical processes of global dispersal (most notably: the Jewish diaspora, the Armenian diaspora, and the African diaspora). However, over the last four decades anthropologists and other social theorists (Clifford [1994](#); Cohen [2008](#); Dufoix [2003](#); Hall [1990](#), 2003; Manning 2003; Tololiyan [1996](#); van Hear [1998](#)) have increasingly used the term “diaspora” more expansively to refer to a much larger number of transnational social communities and identities which are the product of particular characteristics of contemporary global migration – most notably the continuous circulation and sustained social interaction that is maintained by migrants with their societies of origin. No longer reserved to refer only to historical dispersions and the social identities of the stateless groups, the term “diaspora” is now frequently used to refer to transnational communities who self-identify in terms of their country of origin (or otherwise socially-defined (e.g. common ethnicity) location).

It bears noting that with even with respect to Africa, “diaspora” was not always the prevalent term used to identify those people of African descent who were forcibly dispersed across the globe during the historical slave trade. In fact, as George Shepperson notes, “none of the major

intellectual forerunners of African Diaspora Studies, from Edward Blyden ... to W. E. B. DuBois ... used the term ‘African diaspora’. The Negritude writers from Francophone Africa and the Caribbean also did not use it. Instead, the term used to define and mobilize African populations globally was Pan-Africanism” (Shepperson [1993](#)).

Historian Paul Zeleza ([2005](#), pp. 278–279) notes: “The term African diaspora gained currency from the 1950s and 1960s in the English-speaking world, especially the United States. Dufoix ([2016](#), pp. 9–10) offers further explanation for why this term became increasingly important as a form of the self-representation of scholars, activists, and communities of African descent, at this particular historical moment:

From the late 1960s within the African American community, academic and non-academic publications started to multiply that used “diaspora” to refer to black people residing outside Africa. “Diaspora” provided black people with a name for themselves. This name was at the same time a reminder of their historical tragedy and a positive way to recover a sense of unity by emphasizing the connection and the return – spiritual and intellectual if not physical – to Africa. This emphasis established the existence of continuities or survivals between the African origin and the black people living outside Africa. From this time on, the value of the word was changed and it was more and more widely used to express the continuing existence of communities characterized by a common historical origin.

However, by the 1960s “African diaspora” had become an umbrella term that was commonly used by scholars and activists alike to encompass all people of African origin and descent living outside of the continent (Price [2010](#); Okpewho and Nzegwu [2009](#); Shepperson 1993; Zeleza [2010](#)). Arguably, this definition continues to be the dominant one in the humanities and social sciences – and has played a significant role in defining important fields of study – particularly in literary studies and other humanities, and in certain interdisciplinary fields (such as Africana Studies).

The term “new African Diasporas (*plural*)” was coined much more recently, to signal a contrast from the aforementioned understandings of “the (*singular*) African diaspora” already widely in circulation. It demarcates a body of scholarship that has emerged over the last quarter century which focuses on contemporary (as opposed to historical) global migratory flows from post-colonial Africa and on the resulting communities created abroad and/or that span new transnational social fields when migrants continue to sustain relationships with their communities of origin. Popularized in particular by Khalid Koser’s ([2003](#)) edited volume of the same title the concept of “new African Diasporas” thus endeavors to carve out conceptual space for exploring

new forms of African global migration and social circulation that have occurred largely since the end of the Cold War.

The origins of contemporary global migration from Africa's newly independent nations (starting in the 1960s) initially mapped closely onto their recently shed colonial relations (with migrants from Francophone Africa headed to primarily to France, from Anglophone Africa to the UK, Lusophone to Portugal, etc.) (Adepoju [2009](#)). However, these migratory flows expanded and diversified in destination – starting during, but particularly since the end of the Cold War – even as they also intensified. This rising tide of African global migration has been driven in no small part by the political and economic turbulence experienced across much of the African continent over this time period, which has been characterized by a great many civil wars and other forms of political violence, natural disasters, humanitarian emergencies, a variety of development and governance failures, and profoundly detrimental international policy interventions (such as structural adjustment).

If the precarity of the post-colonial condition throughout much of Africa has driven this new – socially diversified and ever more widely dispersed – wave of global out-migration from the continent, other aspects of globalization have served as its significant enablers. Amongst these important enabling conditions, must be factored the advent of high-speed commercial international travel, the global telecommunications revolution, and ubiquitous social access to international financial transfer mechanisms (Moneygram, Western Union, etc.). These technological developments have not only enabled a new wave of global out-migration from the continent, but have also provided unprecedented opportunities for migrants to sustain social relationships across great distances and at a high level of intensity – through phone calls, airplane travel, and remittances – with family members who have remained back in Africa and/or who have migrated to other destinations. The result has been not only a new geographic dispersal of Africans around the globe – but one which notably does not preclude the possibility of maintaining social ties, and even enacting a form of simultaneous social presence, back in Africa. In this sense, the explosive growth of these new African Diasporas differs from the migration that produced the historical African diaspora, and represents a marked departure from even the relatively recent past. By way of example: during the decade of the 1990s, more Africans migrated from Africa to the United States than had done so over the cumulative span of the previous 180 years (Hume [2002](#)).

If the term “new African Diasporas” distinguishes the study of contemporary African global migration from its historical precedents, it also locates this research squarely within another burgeoning field of “new diaspora” scholarship that examines comparable migratory dispersions and transnational community formation worldwide. In this scholarship, the term “diaspora” has escaped the confines of its original referents, so that over the last 40 years it has become quite conventional for it to be used to describe many dozens of “state-linked diasporas” (defined with reference to nations of migration origination – Nigerian, Kenyan, Portuguese, Somali, etc.); as well as to a great many globally dispersed “ethnic” groups (Oromo, Tigrayan, Tamil, Kurdish, etc.). In fact, the term has gradually come to be applied to an ever broader and diverse range of social groupings – whose primary shared characteristic is an experience with some form of territorial dispersal. These have included numerous immigrant/transmigrant, refugee, and exile groups (Tololiyan [1996](#)). More recently, it has been used to describe groups who share pan-national religious affiliation (Kokot et al. [2004](#); Werbner [2005](#)), and even extended to describe transnational networks that are identified in terms of narrower forms of shared interests or social characteristics (e.g. gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender diasporas) (Brubaker [2005](#), p. 3). As Dufoix ([2016](#), p. 8) points out: “The instance of diaspora demonstrates the many lives a word can live: as a religious term, as an academic notion, as a category of practice, as a scientific concept and as part of the international bureaucratic lexicon.”

While appreciating the analytical possibilities rendered by these broader applications of the concept of diaspora – and without pretending (or intending) to address the full range of questions in the unfolding debates around that term – the definition of “new African Diasporas” in this chapter closely follows Koser’s initial formulation of the term – referencing populations who are distinguished by three key characteristics emphasized in Robin Cohen’s well-known definition of “diaspora” (2008, p. 25), namely a population: (i) dispersed from an original homeland (in this case in Africa), (ii) who retain an ongoing orientation toward that homeland, and (iii) who maintain a sense of distinctiveness within, and from, the society that is its host.

When Koser first identified these populations as a “significant empirical research gap” (Koser [2003](#), p. 3) the study of new African Diasporas was still in its infancy, even though a few anthropologists had already conducted some investigations (e.g. MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga [2000](#); Matsuoka and Sorenson [2001](#); Moussa [1993](#), Shandy [2003](#), Stoller [2001](#), Woldemikael 1997). Over the 15 years since Koser’s observation, many more anthropologists have made many more contributions to what is an increasingly robust literature on the subject

(Besteman [2016](#); Bernal [2004](#); Brun and Fabos [2015](#); Carter [2010](#); Coe [2014](#); Covington-Ward [2016](#); D'Alisera [2004](#); Horst [2007](#); Kleist [2015](#); Lindley [2010](#); Lubkemann [2008b](#); Shandy [2008](#); Stoller [2001](#)).

The remainder of this chapter first provides an overview of several questions that have oriented and animated anthropological scholarship of new African Diasporas since its inception, and traces how approaches to these themes have evolved. In particular it focuses on how scholars of new African Diasporas have drawn upon and contributed to the development of frameworks and concepts first proposed by anthropologists working elsewhere – in particular the concept of transnationality – to examine and describe contemporary African global mobilities and social outcomes and to critique earlier theoretical formulations. Anthropologists have often entered these debates by posing questions about “home,” “return,” and “belonging” and through ethnographic examinations of the social practices through which transnational relations emerge are sustained. This has led them to explore how social relations and identities come to be transformed in the process.

This chapter then briefly reviews how anthropologists have participated in, and made distinct contributions to, two other areas of inquiry that have attracted considerable (and arguably more) attention from other disciplines – namely the role that new (African) diasporas have come to play in economic development and in political processes in their nations of origin. It subsequently flags a number of more recent and emergent lines of query, before signposting a number of noticeable gaps that still remain and posing questions that are meant to provoke and point the anthropology of new African Diasporas in productive new directions.

While focusing predominantly on the work of anthropologists, this review inevitably references the work of several “fellow-travelers,” who may technically hail from other disciplines (e.g. human geography, cultural studies, international relations, etc.) but whose broad similarity in theoretical and methodological approach, and mutual enmeshment in the scholarly debates through which this new field is being constituted, renders them largely indistinguishable from their anthropologist colleagues and highly relevant to its central arguments and concerns.

Throughout this review, a number of points and arguments are illustrated by drawing upon the co-authors’^{[1,2](#)} own long-term fieldwork (spanning over two decades in both cases) with African migrants to Europe and North America and in those migrants’ countries of origin in Africa.

Finally, our conclusion poses a few provocative questions about what new African Diaspora scholarship offers to anthropology as a discipline and how it provokes a critical re-interrogation

of how “Africa” is constituted as an object of study and how “African Studies” should be conceptualized and pursued within a globalizing world.

Orienting questions: return, belonging, and meanings of home in transnational Africa

Until relatively recently, understandings of immigrant behavior and identity formation were dominated by assimilationist perspectives in the field of sociology that emerged in the 1920s. These frameworks theorized that new migrants would “assimilate” into their new host societies and become, say, Canadian, or French, or American. As early as 1921, Park and Burgess described assimilation as “a process of interpenetration and fusion in which person and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other person and groups, and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life” ([1969](#) [1921], 735). Contra such assumptions, scholars who have investigated how Africa’s new global migrants think about “home” and “belonging” have generally found that they think and behave more like members of what scholars working elsewhere (Basch et al. [1994](#), [1995](#)) initially termed “transnational communities.” Although defined in a variety of different ways by different scholars (Levitt and Glick-Schiller [2004](#)), a transnational community is, fundamentally, a collectivity of individuals or groups who are distributed across different countries as the result of migration (of a part of a household, family, or community) but who remain connected through a variety of affective, social, and material ties and interactions (including migration itself), and who act upon some degree of mutually recognized shared interest and cultural identity.

For example, the Nuer people originating in South Sudan and their global diaspora represent one such transnational community. Enshrined in the anthropological canon by the classic work carried out by anthropologist Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, the Nuer were a population of cattle farmers who inhabited parts of present-day southern Sudan when it was under British colonial rule in the decades prior to World War II. The global dispersion of many Nuer originated in the prolonged civil war that followed Sudanese independence. During the second round of this protracted conflict in the 1980s, many Nuer fled to neighboring African countries. There some of them were registered as refugees by international organizations, which subsequently led to some being resettled by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in countries as far afield as Australia, Canada, and the United States. Meanwhile many more remained in neighboring African countries, e.g. Kenya, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Uganda, with others in Sudan (and now South

Sudan) itself. As Shandy has documented (see also Abusharaf [2002](#); Holtzman [2000](#)), despite this global dispersal, many of the Nuer (and other Sudanese) in these different destinations have worked hard to maintain social ties with their relatives who have remained in Sudan or migrated to other countries.

The connections between Liberia and North America have much deeper historical roots which extend as far back as the United States' involvement in Liberia's founding as a nation in the mid-nineteenth century (Beyan [1991](#); Lubkemann 2017; Moran [2006](#)). However, the explosive growth of Liberia's diaspora in the United States (as well as Europe and globally) dates back to Liberia's 1980 coup that ended over a century of political dominance of Liberia's Americo-Liberian settler elite who fled the country in significant numbers and sought exile in the United States.

Throughout the 1980s this diasporic population grew in response to the new government's repression, until a 1989 insurrection originating from the diaspora and led by Charles Taylor sent the country into a spiral of over a decade of civil war, and warlordism, ultimately resulting in the deaths of hundreds of thousands, the internal displacement of an estimated 70% of those remaining, and driving many hundreds of thousands more to flee the country into exile. By the time peace was restored in 2003, notable populations of Liberians were located in several countries throughout West Africa, in the Netherlands and the UK, and with at least 150,000 in the United States (Lubkemann [2008b](#)).

The transnational social practices of many contemporary migrant groups from Africa (such as the Nuer from South Sudan or Liberians) have forced scholars (if not yet policy-makers) to critically re-think the extent to which assimilationist assumptions apply to current global migration flows – and to reconsider what notions such as “assimilation” and “integration” actually mean.

Anthropologists exploring the experience of transmigrants from Africa have contributed to a broader body of scholarship that clearly establishes that migrant “integration” in contexts of transnationality is a highly complex process that is multi-dimensional (linguistic, social, cultural, legal, economic, political, etc.), often partial (integration occurring in various degrees); in which different dimensions do not always correlate in the extent to which integration achieved (thus occurring more in some respects than in others); and that is highly contingent on opportunity structures that are mediated by a variety of social differences (e.g. gender, class, race, etc.) – which interact in complex ways with socio-cultural forces (e.g. racism, nationalism, sexism, etc.), as well as political or economic events and developments in host countries.

While these factors have been documented to interact in many different and highly complex ways, many of the anthropologists conducting research amongst a variety of African diaspora groups in many different countries (Abusharaf [2002](#); Arthur [2010](#); Clark [2009](#); Coe [2014](#); Copeland-Carson [2004](#); D'Alisera [2004](#); Drotbohm [2009](#); Drotbohm and Hasselberg [2015](#); Elabor-Idemundia [1999](#); Fikes [2010](#); Habecker [2008](#); Halter [1993](#); Hannaford [2017](#); Horst 2006, 2007; Humphries [2009](#); Konady-Agyemang et al. [2006](#); Lindley [2010](#); Lubkemann [2008b](#), 2017; Lucht [2011](#); MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga [2000](#); Matsuoka and Sorenson [2001](#); Okafor [2009](#); Shandy [2007](#), [2008](#)) have highlighted race/racism as a particularly important factor that frequently mediates (most often by highly constraining) the possibilities for the integration of contemporary African migrants in many hosting societies. Thus for example, Naluwembe Binaisa ([2015](#), p. 52) describes a successful 29-year-old British-born professional and British passport holder who, over time, insisted on being called by her Ugandan name instead of “Mary,” her English name, because she felt that, “her identity as British, is eroded through every day and institutional racism that remind her that she will never be accepted as British without a qualifier.” Similarly, in his recent and powerfully poignant ethnography of Ghanaian fisherman who migrate to Italy in the face of diminishing catches (resulting in part from the over-fishing by trawlers from the Global North), Hans Lucht recounts how those who survive the perils of a Mediterranean crossing culturally contend with the blatant racist discrimination and exploitation that awaits them in Italy. He quotes one immigrant named Benjamin:

We know from the Bible that man must sweat to get his daily bread but this is too much, the sweat is too painful...eight to ten hours a day carrying cement, stones, sand up a six-story building...I shed tears because what we heard about Europe in Africa, that is not what I am seeing. If we were treated right...Most of the blacks can be competitive in so many fields, but no, here the door is totally shut. We the blacks, have all that it takes...and yet we feel defeated all the time.

(2011, p. 81)

A number of anthropological studies have shown how race can interact with gender, class, generation, and religion – in ways that result in very socially-differentiated experiences by African migrants in host countries. Thus, for example in his study of the Liberian diaspora in the United States, Lubkemann ([2008b](#), 2017) has demonstrated how the downward economic mobility experienced by many Liberian refugee men (particularly those from the political elite) tends to accentuate the sense of exclusion they already experience in the United States as a result

of racism. By contrast the experience of many Liberian women in the United States involves new restrictions imposed by racism, which are counter-balanced by new opportunities afforded by different gender norms. These differences translate in turn into marked gender differences with respect to a variety of behaviors, including a far greater interest amongst men in returning to Liberia and far more ambivalence about that possibility amongst women. Similarly complex interactions between gender, class, generation, race, and other forms of social difference – but with their own specific outcomes in terms of what behaviors are differentiated and how so – have been documented by anthropological research conducted amongst many other new African diasporic groups as well (Besteman [2016](#); Carling and Akesson [2009](#); D’Alisera [2004](#); Habecker [2008](#); Horst 2004, [2006](#); Lubkemann [2008b](#), [2017](#); Shandy [2008](#)). These and other scholars have also noted how the particular possibilities/limits for integration in a host societies can factor prominently into how notions of “home,” “belonging,” and “return” are constituted by Africa’s recent global migrants. They can in fact play a crucial role in underwriting the emergence and reproduction of diasporic community and identity amongst African migrants, by motivating migrants to maintain social ties and retain social options in their societies of origin (Lubkemann 2017).

However, at the same time, the work of these anthropologists has also made it clear that social relationships and conditions in societies of origin remain powerful factors in their own right in the transnationality equation. A sense of obligation to family members back in Africa – or who have migrated elsewhere – thus often continues to play a major role in a whole range of decision-making by migrants abroad – including employment, marriage, education, and other forms of social interaction and economic decision-making. For example, in her oft cited analysis of the remittance behavior of Somalis living in Maine, anthropologist Laura Hammond ([2010](#)) documents how a strong sense of obligation towards family members back in Somalia shapes many aspects of these migrants’ economic and social decision-making – in ways that would not be understood without taking this “obligation to give” into account. This includes decisions such as those which involve forgoing educational opportunities that could provide possibilities for socio-economic mobility in the long term, in order to be able to continue to meet the short-term expectations and economic needs of relatives back in Somalia. The expectations of significant social others back in Africa has been documented as a force that powerfully shapes transmigrant behavior by many other scholars as well – although sometimes with very different results – such

as when migrants begin to make choices aimed at eluding, evading, or reshaping those expectations – rather than merely conforming to them (Awedoba and Hahn [2014](#); Carling and Hoelscher [2013](#); Drotbohm [2009](#); Lindley [2010](#); Lubkemann [2008b](#)).

Ultimately, the burgeoning literature on new African Diasporas demonstrates that factors in migrant host and originating societies interact with each other in highly complex ways to shape identity and social behavior in these transmigrant communities and social fields. Moreover, the picture emerging from this body of work has increasingly challenged the way theorists think of these transnational fields themselves. Thus, a number of recent anthropological works highlight the complexity of new African Diasporas by documenting how transnational communities often do involve ties and flows between “origin” and “host” countries, but may span multiple migration destinations and involve ties, flows, and interactions directly amongst these (rather than just with communities of origin in Africa). The complex multi-directionality and multi-locality of these social fields is readily apparent in several recent anthropological contributions to the increasingly expansive literature on remittance flows. For example, the combined work of several anthropologists documents how Somali diasporans in Europe and America send financial and in-kind resources back to Somalia, as well as to relatives in other parts of East Africa (Ahmed [2000](#); Besteman [2016](#); Bjork [2017](#); Hammond [2010](#); Horst [2006](#), 2007; Lindley [2010](#); Maimbo [2006](#); Shandy and Das [2016](#)), and even to Somali asylum seekers elsewhere in Europe.

At the broadest level, these multi-stranded and multi-located webs of interactions can generate vast and expanding social networks that span the globe, which are participated in by people who self-ascribe to an important form of (diasporan) social identity. By way of example, one of Shandy’s own interlocutors participates in and sees herself as part of a transnational “South Sudanese” community that includes fellow South Sudanese living in various locations throughout the United States; extended family living in South Sudan, yet other South Sudanese family members – to whom she sends financial support – in Ethiopia and Kenya, a younger brother (a lawyer) who lives in Sydney, Australia; several South Sudanese school friends who live in Canada; and finally many other people who self-identify as “South Sudanese” scattered elsewhere across the globe – but whom she has not met in person – and in all likelihood never will.

Another major topic taken up by anthropologists of new African Diasporas in the course of their studies of transnational social practices and communities, has been the question of how social relations themselves are transformed within these communities as a result of transnationality.

Thus, for example, from the very the outset of this field the question of how gender relations were

being transformed within new African diasporic communities emerged as a prominent research question (Elabor-Idemundia [1999](#); Matsuoka and Sorenson 1999, [2001](#); McSpadden [1999](#); Moussa [1993](#)) – and has remained so ever since (Cole and Groes [2016](#); Feldman-Savelsberg [2016](#); Kleist [2010](#); Kringelbach [2016](#); Mainsah, Groes [2016](#); Ramsay [2016](#); Sargent [2011](#); Shandy [2008](#)). The focus of anthropological investigations of this question has evolved from its earlier predominant emphasis on migrant communities abroad, to increasingly explore how gender (and other social) relations back in migration-origin communities in Africa are also affected (e.g. Coe [2011](#), [2014](#); Drotbohm [2009](#); Groes [2016](#); Hannaford [2017](#); Lucht [2011](#); Sargent [2011](#)).

In a telling example, Cati Coe notes the re-emergence and growing popularity of child-fosterage practices amongst migrant women to the United States from Ghana, even after such practices – which had once been ubiquitous across large swaths of West Africa – had in fact been dwindling in popularity for some time. Migrant women have revived this option which allows them to leave children with relatives in Ghana because it proves too expensive to bring and raise children in the United States, and because they believe the social environment in the United States will undermine their children's moral development. What is interesting about her study is not only the new forms of “scattered families” and innovations in long-distance parenting that have emerged, but the revival (and adaptation) of a social practice (child fosterage) with significant and ramifying effects on kinship relations and socio-economic strategies back in Ghana itself.

Research such as Coe's also demonstrates how anthropologists of new African Diasporas have expanded their investigations of social transformation to increasingly encompass more in-depth analysis of other types of social relations. In this respect, a relatively recent focus of note has been anthropological work done on children – inclusive of those who migrate with their parents, but also amongst unaccompanied minors as well as international adoptees from Africa (Coe [2014](#), [2016](#); Feldman-Savelsberg [2016](#); Kea [2016](#)). Shandy's work with African migrant women who arrived in Ireland when they were pregnant thus introduces a new category of “migrants in utero”. Her study examines the relationships that these women have with these children, and with other children who migrated with them or who were left behind – and amongst these children themselves (Shandy [2008](#)).

Some of the most interesting and theoretically provocative work on the transformation of social relations produced by African global mobility, comes from the growing number of anthropologists who have been able to conduct multi-sited research that encompasses work in migration destinations as well as in communities of migration origination in Africa. In this vein,

the work of anthropologist Pamela Feldman-Savelsberg ([2016](#)) is able to explore more complex cultural constructions of “belonging” and explain the social practices through which these are enacted because her fieldwork was conducted amongst Cameroonian women on both ends of a major migration circuit, that links Germany and Cameroon. Her analysis demonstrates how the social navigation of Cameroonian migrants is continuously attuned to, and simultaneously accounts for, social dynamics in both worlds, regardless of where they happen to be at the moment. Thus, for example, many of these women in Germany deploy specific social strategies in order to draw upon the diasporic community to sustain themselves when faced by hardships in that host society, but also in order to navigate challenges and difficulties that emanate from pressures grounded in ongoing family dynamics back in Cameroon. The multi-sited research of anthropologists such as Cati Coe ([2014](#), [2016](#)), Hans Lucht ([2011](#)), and Dinah Hannaford ([2017](#)) all focus similarly on family units spread across geo-politically differentiated space, and are based upon comparable multi-sited ethnography.

Many of the pieces in Cole and Groes’s ([2016](#)) edited volume, *Affective Circuits: African Migrations to Europe and the Pursuit of Social Regeneration*, not only frame their analysis explicitly in terms of entire transnational social fields that span origin and migration destination communities – but also challenge us to think theoretically in other ways as well. This volume makes the case that new multi-stranded ties not only link kin across time and space but also create conditions in which entirely new social strategies emerge. These are premised upon linkages and interdependencies between prior forms and logics but create complex new forms of relatedness and affect. Thus, for example, through their individual pieces in that volume, Cole and Groes, provide a comparison of how Malagasy and Mozambican women married to European spouses pursue very different social strategies in terms of how they balance obligations to kin in Africa and the expectations of spouses/partners who often prove reluctant to be drawn upon for such obligations (Cole [2016](#); Groes [2016](#)). This work highlights how social enmeshment in both of these systems is mutually transformative of the rights and obligations defining marriage and their affective performance.

Ultimately, such scholarship pushes scholars of new African Diasporas to more fully consider the socially generative potential of the contemporary migration circuits they study. They urge us to move beyond simply examining how diasporas retain and maintain connections with those who remain in the “homeland,” harness migration to merely replicative forms of social reproduction,

or build a sense of identity based on an imagined past, to more fully explore how diasporas may serve as social wellsprings for the *initiation of* altogether new forms of relationality – as well as of new social problematics and possibilities.

Economic development and political impacts of new African Diasporas: anthropological contributions

If anthropologists have played a central role in developing a more nuanced and complex analysis of the social dynamics within Africa's emergent transnational communities, they have also contributed on a more limited basis than other disciplines to at least two other lines of inquiry that have been central to the development of the interdisciplinary field of new African Diaspora studies. The first of these revolves around the question of how Africa's new global migrants affect or contribute to economic development within their societies of origin in Africa. Driven in no small part by the interests of the development policy-makers in the Global North,³ a burgeoning literature has emerged on this subject, framed largely in terms of their primary questions and concerns. At the very forefront, has been policy interest in the developmental impacts of migrant remittances to, and investments in, their societies of origin; followed by only marginally less interest in questions about the human capital impacts of migration (in particular about the extent to which migration is responsible for “brain drain”⁴), and whether, how, and in what way transnational communities can be tapped to mitigate or reverse this through policies that foster “brain repatriation” or “brain circulation.” Finally, more minor lines of investigation have involved diasporic philanthropy and specialized forms of development (like post-conflict reconstruction).

Anthropologists of new African Diasporas have participated in these lines of research, yet arguably not as central players. Nevertheless, they have made several important critical contributions to this literature. Thus, for example many of the authors in the relatively recent edited volume by Lisa Åkesson and Maria Eriksson Baaz ([2015](#)) *Africa's Return Migrants: The New Developers?* take to task some of the myths that animate policy initiatives – in particular those that assume certain outcomes will be the result of social connectedness. They deconstruct experiences of migrant return to demonstrate the many ways it can be problematic, and generative of social tensions that undermine investment efforts. Moreover, forms of human or social capital that may be generated and accrued abroad may also not readily translate to homeland societies, where economic life may be premised on different logics of social capital accumulation.

A more specific area in which anthropologists of new African Diasporas have made a critical contribution has been through ethnographic studies of remitting and investment behavior amongst Africa's global migrants (Al-Sharmani [2004](#); Horst [2006](#); Van Hear [2004](#), 2006). A number of these (Bjork [2017](#); Drotbohm [2009](#), [2015](#); Lindley [2006](#), 2007, [2010](#); Lubkemann [2008a](#), [2008b](#); Shandy [2006](#)) have specifically underscored how remittances are not merely economic exchanges but ultimately forms of social action which use material transactions in order to accomplish relational objectives and work. As “much more than mere money” (Lindley [2010](#)) remittances (in cash and in-kind) must be analyzed as a modality through which sociality – defined in culturally-specific terms – is performed (Cliggett [2006](#)).

A number of anthropologists have also critically explored the ways in which African migrants are not merely “alternative development agents”, but how their investments in home communities often embody entirely different understandings of what “development” itself is and should be. Thus for example, Mercer et al. ([2008](#)) demonstrate the cultural logic behind a Cameroonian hometown association's prioritization of a modern mortuary over and above other more conventionally recognizable “development needs”. By allowing corpses to be preserved long enough to allow family members working in the United States to return and participate in burial ceremonies, the mortuary now enables children working abroad to fulfill cultural prescriptions believed important in order to avoid ancestral malfeasance, while at the same time it has created a mechanism for ensuring migrant returns and fueling participation in the very lavish (and expensive) funerary celebrations which provide significant periodic boosts to the local economy (through sales of palm wine, food, etc.) (pp. 157–180).

Studies by anthropologists working elsewhere similarly demonstrate how alternative visions and logics ultimately redefine the “development” that African transmigrants aspire to participate in, while also critically deconstructing policy depictions of their actions which dismiss migrant priorities as inherently “consumptive,” or deficient simply because they resist being re-directed in service to the development priorities of the national state or the international aid industry (Horst [2013](#); Lubkemann [2008b](#); Sinatti and Horst [2015](#)). Similar critiques have characterized the very few anthropological studies to date that have explored other forms of philanthropic (Copeland-Carson [2007](#); McDiarmid [2014](#)) or humanitarian (Horst et al. [2016](#); Horst & Nur [2016](#); Clarke [2010](#)) activity.

While economic development has been one of the most dominant areas of research in shaping and fueling the growth of new (African or otherwise) diasporas studies as an interdisciplinary

endeavor, another important topic for which the literature has grown considerably over the last 15 years in particular – has been research on the ways in which diasporans and transnationals engage in and shape political life in their nations of origin (Cohen [1996](#); Kleist [2008](#); Koslowski [2000](#); Lyons [2007](#), [2012](#); Mohan [2008](#); Shain [2002](#); Shain and Aryasinha [2006](#); Sheffer [2003](#)). Relatively speaking, Africa has been a minor focus within this literature (Lyons [2007](#), [2012](#)), though anthropologists of new African Diasporas have made some contributions – particularly when it comes to the politics of countries that are war-torn or suffer from political volatility and violence (Hammond [2012](#); Horst 2004, [2006](#); Kleist [2008](#), [2010](#); Lubkemann [2008b](#); McGregor and Primorac [2010](#); Mohamoud [2005](#); Turner [2008a](#), [2008b](#)). Interestingly, Eritrea and its diaspora have been the focus for two of the most comprehensive and important of these anthropological interventions, namely those by Victoria Bernal ([2006](#), [2014](#)) and by Tricia Redeker-Hepner ([2009](#)).

In her 2009 book *Soldiers, Martyrs, Traitors and Exiles: Political Conflict in Eritrea and the Diaspora*, Redeker-Hepner traces a detailed 40-year history of the Eritrean revolution as an inherently transnational struggle that cannot be understood outside of an assessment of the diaspora's deep involvements or of the ways in which the struggles amongst political factions played out abroad as much as they did within Eritrea itself.

Meanwhile in her 2014 book *Nations as Network*, Victoria Bernal focuses on how Eritrean politics and nation-building is shaped online, as diasporans use new media and communication technologies to narrate politically-consequential versions of Eritrean history and engage in other forms of “infopolitics” (i.e. the struggles over information management –content, provision, and claims of legitimacy) to both contest and challenge or subvert state power. Transnationals thus have ambivalent political effects – often reinforcing nationalism, but sometimes also undermining it.

Simon Turner ([2008a](#)) and Jennifer Brinkerhoff ([2006](#), [2009](#)) also both identify cyberspace as important political space for diasporans – to rather opposite effect however. Thus Turner demonstrates how its relative anonymity has lent itself to the proliferation of particularly radical forms of ethnocentric and anti-democratic extremism by exiled Burundians – who would otherwise hesitate to publicly display such views, despite living outside of Burundi and beyond the reach of its state. Meanwhile Brinkerhoff explores how Somali activists monitor and manage political dialogue on [somalinet](#) in ways that are aimed at preventing extremism and mitigating political conflict.

Several scholars have written about other ways in which diaspora populations are politically active – for example through advocacy that counters negative images associated with their country of origin or Africa as a whole (Binaisa [2015](#), p. 52), or in seeking to influence the foreign policy of their hosting country towards their region of origin (Hammond [2012](#)), or of refugee /diaspora voices promoting counter-hegemonic narratives of violence in places such as Eastern Congo (Godin and Dona [2016](#)). Yet others such as Horst ([2009](#)) have examined how remitting behavior can be shaped by political as well as social objectives, or explored some of the implications for state sovereignty of the mobilization of African diasporans for purposes of development (Turner and Kleist [2013](#)).

In a particularly interesting effort that brings together many of the aforementioned strands of investigation of new African Diasporan political action, Karen Morris's recent (2012) analysis of political competition, crisis, and conflict in Côte d'Ivoire uses a detailed analysis of that country's recent violent political struggle, to highlight a strategic political topography which she describes as being "multifocal" – centered on, and enacted across, a network of locations in which the key activities of competing political elites are carried out – and upon which they depend. This network includes certain locations in Côte d'Ivoire but also amongst its diaspora – in Europe and the United States – the importance of each related to particular comparative advantages (sometimes for limited time) in terms of particular political resources, or for particular political ends. Thus, Brussels may shine brightly in this constellation for a period – because of a particular platform it offers for the opposition to highlight the government's human rights abuses – while internet servers in the United States provide a way of securing vote counts so that the same government cannot steal an election. Her framework highlights how national political praxis has been thoroughly transnationalized.

THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF NEW AFRICAN DIASPORAS: NOTABLE GAPS AND FUTURE DIRECTION

Although no longer in its infancy, much remains to be done in the anthropology of new African Diasporas. The truth is that many very basic questions still remain challenging. Some of the most basic methodological challenges identified 15 years ago by Koser ([2003](#), 3) still offer conundrums to all scholars in this interdisciplinary field. In particular, the measurement of the scope and scale of diasporas remains a fraught process – not least of all because of the myriad ways in which population estimates for diaspora populations are often highly politicized (Van Hear [2004](#)). Also

while much work has been done to date on individuals and on households, far fewer studies have focused on organizations (such as “hometown associations”) (but see Copeland-Carson [2004](#); Fumanti and Werbner [2010](#); Gregoire [2015](#), p. 25; Marabello 2013; Mercer et al. [2008](#)) or aimed to map out the institutional topographies of new African Diasporas (but see Riddle 2008). In this respect, cues can be productively taken from the robust Africanist anthropological study of urbanization and urban/rural migration in which such associations have featured as a central focus for several decades (see Gugler [2002](#); Trager [1998](#), [2001](#)).

As the anthropology of new African Diasporas continues to develop as a field of scholarship, it will also remain increasingly important to continue to address basic questions about the evolving technological context that has already played such an important role in enabling the development of these transnational social fields and that will continue to centrally shape their social reproduction. A number of scholars are already examining how digital media is shaping the diasporic public sphere, alongside other older technologies (such as radio, telephone, and cassette tapes) which still remain in the communication repertoire alongside social media (e.g. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc.) (Brinkerhoff [2009](#); Bernal [2014](#); Cole [2014](#); Falula and Sanchez [2015](#); Godin and Dona [2016](#); Mainsah [2014](#)). Video and other media that provide for “virtual social presence” will also be important in the negotiation of transnational social relations (Kea [2016](#), p. 92). This will require cross-fertilizing engagement with the even newer and burgeoning field of anthropological scholarship that is examining how social practice and relations in Africa are being transformed by new media (de Bruijn and Dijk [2012](#); also see this volume, [Chapter 16](#)).

As we have already noted, there is still a tendency for conversations about new African Diasporas to focus nearly exclusively on links between “abroad” and “home” – when there is growing evidence that social networks and diasporan identities are constituted through multi-directional interactions within multinational transnational social fields rather than simply through bilateral links between a location of dispersal and “home”. Where, for example, does the person of Ghanaian descent, who holds a British passport, has legal permanent residence in Norway, but who studies in the United States, fit into a transnational schema that focuses on – or theoretically presumes – that a transnational social field is arrayed only between a “home” and a “host” society? (see Toa-Kwapong [2016](#)).

Taking the multifocality of transnational fields seriously has several implications for the future direction of new African Diaspora research. For one, it should lead us to question why diaspora still implicitly – at least in the African case – tends to be used only to refer to those who have left

the continent (Bakewell [2008a](#)). Why would Somalis in Italy be more diasporic than Somalis in South Africa – about the same geographic distance as the crow flies? The scholarship of new African Diasporas must consider the ways in which newly emergent transnational social fields may in some cases primarily span destinations within the African continent (Bakewell [2008b](#); Crush and McDonald 2002; Lubkemann [2000a](#); Whitehouse [2012](#)) while in others span both migration destinations within and outside the continent, and involve complex interrelations amongst all of these (see Horst [2006](#)).

Future scholarship needs to consider “decentering the West” in other respects as well. Most of the current literature on the new African Diaspora has focused on migrants whose experiences involve connections between Africa and destinations in “the Global North,” – particularly in Europe and North America, leaving a great deal of room for expanding the scope of analysis to encompass transnational social fields that either do not concern “the Global North” at all, or that at least also encompass destinations in the “Global South.” The work of scholars such as Rogaia Abusharaf ([2002](#)) and Cawo Abdi ([2015](#)) have been important in expanding the socio-geographic scope of new African Diaspora studies to include the Middle East. Many other sites in the Global South remain far less-researched, despite having their own emergent and growing new African Diasporas. China in particular will proving an important new destination of focus for new African Diaspora scholars to consider (Haugen [2017](#); Li [2015](#); Lynos et al. [2012](#); Matthews 2015; Monson and Rupp [2013](#); Siu and McGovern [2017](#)).

Bakewell ([2008b](#)) has cautioned us to be wary of readily assuming analytical categories that may implicitly reflect policy priorities but do not map onto the worldviews of the migrants we study. Thus, for example, the term “Somali diaspora,” tends to refer to Somalis in Europe, North America, Australia, and parts of the Middle East (e.g. the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia). Some Somalis acknowledge that Somalis in Sudan, Egypt, or South Africa could likely fit definitions of diaspora, but Somalis themselves do not tend to think about diaspora in those terms (Al-Sharmani [2004](#), [2006](#); Mursal [2014](#)). In one study, a member of the Somali diaspora in Europe contrasted “regional diaspora” and “global diaspora” to highlight this distinction (Shandy and Das [2016](#)). Our points of departure for defining transnational social fields should ultimately mirror those of our interlocutors – and follow wherever their networks may lead.

Ultimately it is important to more fully explore all of the different types and directions of flows through which transnational communities and relations are constituted. Thus, as astutely observed by Binaisa (2015, p. 53) – as attuned as they may be to migrant outflows from places like Gambia

– most scholarly frameworks for examining the economic and social relationships within transnational social fields do not acknowledge, much less empirically examine or analyze, economic flows *from* Africa *to* the rest of the world. The same could be said for other forms of social contributions and migrant flows that have yet to be fully incorporated into the new African Diasporas paradigm. Exceptions include Fesenmyer’s very recent (2015, p. 66) description of Pentecostal religious missionaries from Africa who have set out to evangelize the United Kingdom and Kristine Krause’s examination of transnational therapy networks based upon Ghanain etiologies and remedies, and that are drawn upon by diasporans from that country who live in London (Krause [2008](#)).

Finally, while our review has already indicated trending developments in the anthropological analysis of social practices and relations in Africa’s newly transnationalizing social fields, certain ones may merit additional emphasis. In light of the growing feminization of Africa’s global migration, women who are migrating alone or as heads of households may be one of these (Coe [2014](#); Covington-Ward [2016](#); Feldman-Savelsberg [2016](#); Fikes [2010](#); Hannaford [2017](#); Ramsay [2016](#); Sargent [2011](#); Shandy [2008](#)).

As new African Diasporas mature, it will also be important to focus on the question of how subsequent generations negotiate identity, socio-economic opportunity, and their political activism within transnational social fields. In certain respects, these questions will increasingly close the gap between African Diaspora and new African Diaspora Studies, inasmuch as these subsequent generations confront identity choices that stem from the duality of their positions – as potential social members in, and shaped by the dynamics, stemming from both the living legacies of and communities created through historical dispersion as well as in those that stem from Africa’s contemporary global migration (Konady-Agyemang et al. [2006](#)).

To date, only a handful of anthropologists have focused on questions about the relationship between African American and African immigrant populations (D’Alisera [2004](#), [2009](#); Habecker [2008](#); Lubkemann [2008b](#), [2017](#)), and more broadly on how new African Diasporans and their descendants confront and negotiate the possibilities and ascriptions of identity rooted in the historical diasporan process – and their relationships with other social groups in host societies as a result. As these studies have shown, those reactions are varied (Clark [2009](#)) – ranging from a rejection of ascriptions such as “African American” in favor of a distinct and direct “African” connection signaled through reference to national origin (Habecker [2008](#); Halter [1993](#); Humphries [2009](#)), to strategies that subsume race and origin beneath other forms of social identity

– such as religion (D’Alisera [2004](#)) – to others that embrace an identity reconstituted in terms of broad Pan-African referents (Copeland-Carson [2004](#)).

In this last vein, a growing body of work at the intersection of diasporas and urban studies (Newell 2005; Stoller [2001](#)) has started to highlight global cities such as Paris, New York City, and Johannesburg as important nodes in which the transnational networks of migrants who may have originated in many different African countries meet and inform each other. At the intersection of multiple transnational social networks, these cities may become what some analysts have termed “Afropolitan spaces” (Knudsen and Rahbeck [2016](#); Mbembe [2007](#)) in which yet new forms of broader diasporan identity are emerging specifically amongst, and driven by, new African Diasporans. According to one website (Afropolitancities.com, n.d.), “Afropolitans are progressive and culturally savvy young urban professionals of various races, but typically of African descent, living in metropolitan cities around the world and identify with Afro-Caribbean culture.” In this vein, Eze ([2016](#)) also writes, “we provisionally define the Afropolitan (Afro Polites) as one who, on the strength of birth or affinity, can call any place in Africa his or her place, while at the same time being open to the world” (Eze [2016](#), p. 114).

Relatively recent, this emerging literature on Afropolitans (Mbembe [2007](#)) signals important and still emergent generative potentialities of new African Diasporas – as a potential source of forms of identities – which not unlike earlier identities that referenced historical dispersion – also index the continent (rather than any specific country) as the point of reference for “homeland.” These are likely to represent an important new avenue of analysis for future anthropological inquiry, underscoring a point made by Koser ([2003](#), p. 3) in his effort to demarcate the field of new African Diaspora studies, when he noted how, “the distinction between earlier and later concepts of diaspora is at times unhelpful.” Increasingly, the most productive approach will be to remain carefully attuned to, and to investigate, the intersections and interactions between what Lewis ([1995](#)) has referred to as “overlapping diasporas.”

New diasporas: contributions to anthropology

“Diasporas” – African, new or otherwise – are not new fare for anthropology – having received plenty of attention in the larger 1990s postmodern intellectual project that sought to take older theoretical notions of “culture” to task because diasporas were a social formation that quite evidently decoupled people, identity, and culture from place and territory (Malkki [1992](#)). James Clifford ([1994](#), p. 302) asked, “How do diaspora discourses represent experiences of

displacement, of constructing homes away from home? What experiences do they reject, replace, or marginalize? How do these discourses attain comparative scope while remaining rooted in specific, discrepant histories?” Anthropology has continued to leverage diaspora to ask important questions about the relationships between culture, place, identity, and social groupings (Brazier and Mannur [2008](#); Brubaker [2002](#), [2005](#); Brun and Fabos [2015](#); Hall [1990](#); Ong, [2003](#)).

While the study of new African Diasporas will surely continue to inform questions about hybridity and identity, there are other important – if perhaps not quite as theoretically lofty – questions, that the particular social conditions and dynamics within these newly transnationalizing social field readily prompt us to consider as well. At the forefront will be questions about how the discipline understands and conceptualizes sociality itself. How do the possibilities and challenges of enacting and performing social relations over great distances that highly limit face-to-face interaction, and in ways mediated by changing technologies, differ from the more conventional interaction scenarios in which our disciplinary understandings of the “social” have been forged? In this vein, to what extent might a greater reliance upon material forms of transaction (such as remittances) to enact these social relations accentuate, or otherwise transform, already existing cultural logics that rely heavily upon materiality to signify affect? (Carling [2014](#); Carling and Akesson [2009](#); Coe [2016](#); Hannaford [2017](#); Lubkemann [2008b](#)). In this vein, some of the promise for the broader discipline lies in how scholars of new African Diasporas are increasingly moving beyond questions of identity to also explore how different aspects of the transnational experience confound and unsettle a wider variety of the discipline’s theoretical concepts, such as “hope” (Kleist [2017](#); Kleist and Thorsen [2017](#)) or “generation” (Lubkemann 2015) as well.

IN CONCLUSION – PLACING AFRICAN STUDIES ON NOTICE: AFRICA HAS MOVED!

All of this leads to our concluding question: Will it remain possible for there to be an African Studies that does not fundamentally incorporate Africa’s new diasporic dimensions?

Increasingly the stories of new African diasporic individuals and communities complicate and confound straightforward notions of “migration” and “return” and instead suggest how strategy and contingency – at various levels – interact in complex ways to generate and reproduce the transnational social fields in which African global migrants currently formulate and enact their life projects. These life strategies and the communities of those who enact them elide and

confound any conventional analytical boundaries that we may want to draw between social, economic, and political processes in Africa and those in the locations outside the continent to which new African Diasporas migrate and congregate.

Ultimately, the mounting evidence suggests that it is increasingly difficult to understand what is going on in Africa in almost every respect (socially, economically, or politically) and at any social level (be it the household, community, national, or sub-regional), if we do not recalibrate our fundamental analytical frame to encompass and account for the transnational fields forged by Africa's new global diasporas. Across all domains – social, political, economic, and cultural – multi-sited fieldwork (Marcus [1995](#)) reveals how Africa's new diasporas affect places of origin in myriad ways – some predictable and some not. The evidence is everywhere:

In politics, it is telling that the newly elected president of Somalia is a resident of upstate New York, and that in recent years nearly three out of four Somali Members of Parliament have been dual nationals, many living abroad. Similarly so, both the presidents of Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire worked and lived in the United States for decades before taking up their new posts – after participating in organized opposition movements which led to the removal of their predecessors and were mobilized primarily from abroad (Lubkemann 2008b, Morris 2012).

In the economic domain, remittances and other contributions of Africa's global migrants are profoundly reconfiguring local economies (Akesson and Boaz [2015](#); Ahmed [2000](#); Brinkerhoff [2008](#); Carling [2014](#)). Sigona et al. ([2015](#), p. xx) note that, in “The Gambia, where over 60 per cent of the skilled population lives abroad, businesses of various kinds are riding on the back of the moral economy of migration. Many South Sudanese in Ethiopia purposefully choose to live near to Western Union kiosks, as access to remittances outpace more “traditional” markers of social status (Shandy [2007](#)).

Meanwhile the knock-on social effects of diasporic activity increasingly reverberate with transformative effect across almost all domains of social practice and relations – ranging from the revival and adaptive redeployment of child fostering in Ghana (Coe [2014](#)) to the growth and transnationalization of polygynous marriages back in Senegal (Kringelbach [2016](#)), to the transformation of gender hierarchies and power configurations in Cape Verde (Åkesson 2004) – to cite but a few examples.

Ferguson ([2006](#)) points out that “anthropologists and others who have refused the category of Africa as empirically problematic have, in their devotion to particularity, allowed themselves to remain bystanders in the broader conversations about Africa.” The same, might be said about the

perils of continuing to disregard blinders that are rooted in the somewhat wary relationship that has long prevailed between African and African Diaspora Studies. Moving beyond the more conventional argument (Herskovits [1941](#)) that the study of the African diaspora could gain greatly from more fully incorporating studies of the African continent, Kuflu (2015) posits that studies of Africans in Africa might gain from including and incorporating African Diaspora Studies. In the case of Africa's new diasporas, we must begin to think about what is crucially *lost* if they are not accounted for in the analysis of social existence across the continent.

We would argue that the ascendancy of new African Diasporas should be taken by anthropologists and other scholars as a historical pivot in the study of Africa, moving scholarship in a direction that should not be viewed merely as an interesting detour taken by some Africanists and not others. Rather, an understanding of Africa's ongoing transnationalization should be analytically incorporated into how we think about and study all forms of African social, political, cultural and economic life. Africa has moved. Africa's anthropologists will need to quickly follow.

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NOTES

- 1 Shandy's research originated with a focus on conflict-induced migration from what is now known as South Sudan to neighboring African countries (Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda) and to Europe and North America (Shandy [2007](#)). This particular project branched off over time into derivative ethnographic investigations amongst pregnant and recently post-partial African women in Ireland undertaken at the historical moment when the Irish national referendum eliminated birthright citizenship – partially in response to what some saw as a “surge” of migrants coming to Ireland to acquire citizenship for their unborn children (Shandy [2008](#)). Meanwhile she has also worked collaboratively with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Offices on a project exploring Somali diaspora connections to other Somalis who remain in the East Africa region (Shandy and Das [2016](#)).
- 2 Lubkemann's first research on African mobilities focused on the massive wave of migrants who arrived in Portugal – some of European and others of African descent – in the wake of Portuguese decolonization in 1975–1976, focusing on how racist social ideologies mediated their efforts at integration (Lubkemann [2002](#)). Subsequently his fieldwork shifted to Africa itself and focused on the transformation in gender relations occasioned in post-war Mozambique resulting from the social consequences of wartime refugee movement – in particular the new transnational communities that resulted from the trans-nationalization of polygyny – by which Mozambican migrant men began to simultaneously pursue marriages and build families in multiple locations (Mozambique, South Africa, and sometimes also Zimbabwe) (Lubkemann [2000a](#), [2000b](#), 2008a). Over the last two decades, he has also done extensive fieldwork in Liberia itself, and within Liberian diasporan communities in the United States, Europe, and West Africa that has focused on how social relations, political processes (including conflict), and economic behavior are being transformed within the Liberian transnational social field (Lubkemann [2008b](#), [2015](#), [2017](#)).
- 3 Some key texts which provide strong points of entrée to this literature include – in general: Brinkerhoff [2008](#); Faist [2008](#); Gamlen [2014](#); Ionescu [2006](#); Lowell and Findley [2002](#); Newland [2010](#); Newland and Patrick [2004](#), Ozden and Schiff [2005](#); Riddle and Marano [2008](#); and with respect to Africa more specifically: Mohan and Zack-Williams ([2002](#)).
- 4 Introductions to this topic include Kaba ([2009](#)), and Lowell and Findlay ([2002](#)).

