
Citation:

Ali, N and Ivanova, M (2015) Endnote: Diasporas and identity. *Tourism, Culture and Communication*, 15 (3). pp. 249-251. ISSN 1098-304X DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3727/109830415X14483038034326>

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ENDNOTE: DIASPORAS AND IDENTITY

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We set out to bring together research that advances the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical understandings of diasporic identities and attachments in and beyond Tourism Studies, in particular cultural, postcolonial, and intercommunication studies. We conclude this special issue of *Tourism, Culture & Communication* on “Diasporas and Identity: Tourism, Being, and Becoming” with an endnote, which “looks back” at the collection of articles in this special issue in order to “look forward” to further advancing the often complex communicative (cultural) beings and becomings of diasporas in tourism studies. You, the reader, have traveled in this special issue to many international destinations with historical pasts, contemporary presences, and futures of travel migration—imaginary/intangible and physical/tangible. Before you entered the global diasporic spaces you understood the diverse entanglements, negotiated, and “mixed-up” positions diasporas are often (imaginatively) (dis)located in. This further led to critical inspections of diasporas disentangled through a transdisciplinary lens, which was a springboard for creatively and imaginatively inspecting and staying alert to the complexities of beings and becomings associated with identities in the context of diaspora and tourism. The reader then journeyed with the Iranian diaspora living in Dunedin, New Zealand as their nostalgic longing for the homeland, desire to strengthen networks, and

friendships with fellow Iranians has led to domestic diaspora tourism mobilities in and around New Zealand. You met with the Polish diaspora in Derby, UK to understand the role of travel and food as expressers of diasporic identity and maintenance of links with pasts, people, and places from a distance, or even participation in what can be termed “diaspora food tourism.” There was a return to New Zealand, this time meetings with the Indian diaspora resident in Auckland, and their encounters, experiences, and interactions with the alterities of the Diwali festivities as they—the Indian diaspora—became embroiled in the dialects of commercialization. You, the reader, traveled to New Zealand’s neighbor—Australia—where you were greeted with the Celtic diaspora as they reimagined their homeland through attendance and participation in the Australian Celtic Festival in Glen Innes. The last destination stop was New York in the US, where the Ukrainian diaspora were caught up in the cartographies of diaspora tourism—to connect or disconnect with their ancestral homeland Ukraine.

Several grand and major ideas about diaspora emerge from these journeys both from within and outside Tourism Studies.

As an avid commenter on the state of Tourism Studies, Hollinshead sets the tone by noting that the very concept of the imagined diasporic network generally gives rise to troubled ideas about

enforced flight, reluctant scattering, and dislocated wandering, and therefore demands rich and deep levels of interpretive perspicacity if the resultant conflictual identities and the involved indeterminacies of being are to be effectively mapped and deeply registered.

Ivanova and Hollinshead propose the inspection of diaspora as a wicked problem and transdisciplinarity as a useful line of inspection of complex issue that hard and fast definitions about it (and solutions for its problematics) are not easy to conjure up. They call on the increasing numbers of Critical Tourism Studies investigators to think into, act upon, and have “wicked fun” with ontologically committed researchers from other fields and demesnes to get “cross” with, and (secondly) copious stocks of imagination to spirally rely upon with them.

From a more insider (to Tourism Studies) position, Etemaddar, Tucker, and Duncan offer alternative ways to understand identity maintenance for those in diaspora and, in so doing, challenges current dominant understandings of “diaspora tourism,” which tend to limit ideas of identity within diaspora to certain forms of travel back to countries of origin.

Adler investigates the complex nature of diaporic identity and proposes that people and places give migrants a meaning of belonging and being connected. It is a social meaning that extends beyond territoriality and is based on the values and beliefs held by migrants.

Booth outlines how simplistic mass culture representation of India has removed many traditional religious and culturally specific aspects of Diwali that has to an increasing perception of powerlessness within the more conservative Indian communities over the audience split and cultural representation. She proposes that complex networks of local as well as international diasporic relationships are required to deal with the increasing complex negotiations of diaporic identities and their representations.

Mackellar investigates the corrective nature of diasporic communities where social, cultural, and spiritual components are imported into the host community by professional performers or specialist groups and associations that have a stronger focus on the rituals and symbols of the country of origin identity than residents in the local area.

From a human ecology perspective, Iarmolenko and Kerstetter posit that the unique background and context of migration for this diaspora produces identities and transnational relations uncharacteristic for earlier waves or other ethnic groups, and thus their diaspora tourism patterns are heavily dependent on the situation (familial, economic, political) in the country of origin.

So, in terms of “looking forward” we maintain that future studies should be inspired by the critical interpretations contained in the collection of articles in this special issue that challenge the dominant categorizations of diaspora-related travel to comprehend the symbolic relationships between tourism, culture, and communication. Future contributions should continue to draw attention to the cultural and communicative value of diaspora-related travel, and in doing so appreciate (especially the “messiness”) the imaginative and physical journeys of diasporas through transdisciplinary research—in theoretical, conceptual, and methodological contexts. However, the limitations of this special issue present opportunities for future research agendas that critically interpret and challenge matters of being and becoming of diasporas in tourism. There are several limitations of this special issue, discussed below.

The empirical focus is very much on diasporas living in developed nations (e.g., Australia, New Zealand, UK, and the US), thus not considering diasporas resident in less developed countries—comprising of people and populations (or internal diasporas) relocating in culturally/religiously/racially/politically different areas within the same country or those migrating from other nations, especially developed countries. Therefore, future research is needed to comprehend the dialectics of being and becoming of diasporas and the extent to which diaspora-related travel communicative conduits such as culture, events, narrative, performances, places, rituals, symbols, and traditions create *messy* worlds.

The collection of articles in this special issue are limited to the articulations, expressions, and interactions associated with cultural and ethnic diasporic identities in host lands or migrant settlements, consequently overlooking other contexts of diasporic identifications, which are being and becoming in tourism, such as religious, political, and regional and continue to imaginatively and/or physically

bind diasporas across the world. This presents directions for future research, which centers on examining subdiasporic groups that challenge the notion of homogenous/culturally/ethnically mobilized diaspora and could affect the return visit to the ancestral homeland or domestic diaspora tourism. For instance, diasporas may not want to travel with or attend events where they feel unwelcome due to issues of contested identity, fueled by territorial divisions or disputed territories, consequently challenging the notion of “one” imagined diaspora.

The research studies in this special issue concentrate on the “mobilization of diasporas” (see Robin Cohen’s insight on mobilization of diasporas in International Migration Institute, 2012), through travel-related activities, with people with similar histories of migration, roots, and origins, and sharing the same homeland. There is scope to develop future research agendas on communication and culture in view of tourism, which brings together diasporas with different histories of migrations, heritage, and ancestral homelands through shared travel-related activities (e.g., events, hospitality, leisure, sports), thus extending beyond notions of “enclaved” diasporas and showing ways in which tourism connects different diasporic groups through an event or tourism encounter (e.g., dark tourism).

Understanding the mobilization of diasporas is, as Cohen notes (in International Migration Institute, 2012), central to the growth of the concept diaspora, especially in comprehending diasporic experiences, creations, and performances.

In view of the above proposals, future empirical studies will continue to further the use of interpretive and reflexive research philosophies, principles, and practices in tourism studies, as embedded in the collection of articles in this special issue. We encourage future researchers not to “shy” away from the *wicked problems* that diasporas in tourism present— proceed into intellectual challenges and confrontations with confidence in your transdisciplinary awareness. You should not hesitate in revealing the chaotic cartographies, juxtapositions, and trajectories emerging in the critical interpretations of diaspora-related tourism in view of identities. We do hope to see future work/special issues on tourism, communication, and diasporas that builds on this collection of articles to act as informers and advancers on issues of being and becoming.

Reference

- International Migration Institute. (2012). *Alan Gamlen interviews Robin Cohen about diaspora*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=To52DmmlOQ>

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