

Living in our Globalized World: Notes 6
Processes of globalization: Diasporas
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- Another kind of process that leads to globalization, or increasing interconnection and contact: diasporas
 - Where the discussion of capitalism looked at an overall cause, this discussion of diasporas is more descriptive
 - diasporas are caused by something else
 - often, but not always, eventually rooted in the perpetual growth of capitalism
 - also by wars, religious persecution, and other factors
 - they are a kind of phenomenon that recurs in different cases and has interesting features
 - which help us to understand and compare cases
 - labeling something as a diaspora is an aid to thinking about it, not an explanation of it
 - Origin of the word, and the metaphor on which this category of phenomenon is based: Greek for roughly “sow (seeds) over”
 - that is, broadcast sowing: scattering seeds widely across a prepared field
 - This is how Greeks visualized their practice of planting colonies of settlers around the Mediterranean region
 - leading to a spread of Greek people and culture from a compact core region of Greece into many new and distant areas
 - The prototypical case in modern usage: the Jewish diaspora
 - occurred in many stages from Biblical times on
 - the Jews (or Hebrews, or Israelites) were thought to originate in the region where Israel is now
 - through a long series of misfortunes, they were forced to leave or flee one place after another
 - spreading pockets of Jewish settlers ever further around the Middle East, Europe, and northern Africa into Medieval times
 - with further population movements into the early twentieth century
 - and then the dislocations of the twentieth century, especially before and after WWII, in which many Jews moved even further to North and South America, South Africa, and elsewhere seeking safety
 - most of this dispersal was involuntary
 - The African Diaspora: the spread of mostly West Africans to many parts of the world, especially the New World, by the slave trade has been seen as analogous to the Jewish Diaspora
 - albeit shorter in duration
 - also involuntary
 - Now quite a few other dispersals of people are thought of as similar in some ways
 - although many lack the involuntary quality of that of the Jews and African slaves
 - Robin Cohen, in his classic “Global Diasporas, An Introduction”, outlined some characteristics found in most diasporas:
 - (not all need be present in every case)

- Dispersal from a homeland, often traumatically, to multiple foreign regions
- or expansion from homeland seeking work, trade, or colonial ambitions
- collective memory and myth of the homeland
- idealization of the putative ancestral home and commitment to its maintenance, restoration, creation
- a return movement that is generally approved of
- strong sense of ethnic distinctiveness, history, fate
- troubled relationship with host societies
- empathy and solidarity with co-ethnics elsewhere
- possibility of rich life among tolerant hosts
- Cohen also labeled four general kinds of diasporas, based primarily on the nature of their causes:
 - Victim diaspora
 - generally involuntary expulsion or flight from terrible circumstances
 - Labor diaspora
 - diaspora of people seeking paid work outside their homeland
 - Trade diaspora
 - diaspora of traders settling in many regions where their contacts with the homeland and other members of the diaspora in other places facilitate their trading activities
 - Imperial diaspora
 - diaspora of the settlers from an imperial core, moving out to the colonized periphery and staying there
- Finally, Cohen points out some things that he would not call diasporas, as a way of delimiting the concept
 - World religions
 - more about spread of ideas than spread of people
 - Borderland cultures (often “migratory bi-locality”)
 - lacks the homeland-to-multiple-distant-places geographic pattern of a diaspora
 - also lacks the long-term settlement aspect, since borderland cultures often involve moving back and forth, rather than dispersing and staying
 - Stranded minorities
 - again, lacks the geographic dispersal pattern
- But these are still processes that bring cultures into contact...
 - still processes of globalization, just not diasporas