

by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation have been interpreted not so much as participation incentives than as public appeasement. Much remains to be said about the underlying motivations of the LMDC and about hidden planning processes, which were never transparent and only occasionally came to the surface through discrepancies between statements of government officials. Also, in considering the regional planning efforts for New York, the new airtrain that provides a fast connection between JFK airport and Manhattan through the transportation hub of Jamaica Station in Queens should not be forgotten. This and other examples of “missing parts” throughout the case studies suggest that a deeper understanding of a smaller amount of case studies could have benefited the clarity of the argument.

In general, the authors’ definition of region as sub-global seems problematic, as the supra-national region has been gaining power in the last two decades. Especially in Europe, cross-border regional cooperation has played a crucial role in international integration and supra-national economic development. Nevertheless, the book is a valuable addition to the rich, yet often generalized discussion on the relationship between globalization and the city. It is a significant contribution to attempts in grounding, localizing and differentiating a lively debate.

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Uri Ram, *The Globalization of Israel: McWorld in Tel Aviv, Jihad in Jerusalem* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2005), 266 pp.

In *The Globalization of Israel*, Uri Ram analyzes the complex, highly contradictory Israeli reality through the prism of globalization. A powerful process that transpires on both the material and the conceptual level of society, globalization has dissolved traditional lifestyles and schemes of thought. In Ram’s book, it serves as a connecting axis between the various strata of Israeli society and culture currently caught in a state of crisis. Ram’s objective is both to comprehend Israel’s “contradictory” and “shattered” reality and “to find some kind of consistency” (p. 8) within it, which, he argues, is provided by the phenomenon of “glocalism.” This term encompasses the encounter of two conflicting forces: globalization, that is, the movement of goods, people, capital, technologies, information and knowledge, which effectively transforms ways of life; and localism, a force that runs counter to this movement. Glocalism thus refers to the inescapable dialectical situation in which the secular cosmopolitan market exists side by side with locally defined, nationalist and fundamentalist trends. Ram claims that the diametrically opposed but intertwined forces of glocalism have altered the face and nature of Israeli society, weakening Israeli nation-state society and placing it at a historical-political junction of options – on one side, liberal consumerism and, on the other, nationalist ethnicity and regressive fundamentalism.

The importance of Ram's work lies not only in its new, broad picture of Israeli reality. Its theoretical and disciplinary place in sociopolitical thought is equally intriguing. The first part of my commentary focuses on the latter by examining the book vis-à-vis some of the main parameters of Critical Theory. I then offer an alternative analysis of sociopolitical realities which, I believe, should supplement Critical Theory.

Uri Ram's analysis is to be placed within a broader, historical-political context of thought, namely, what Theodor W. Adorno has circumscribed as "after Auschwitz," i.e., the contestation of fundamental philosophical, political, sociological and ideological assumptions in the wake of World War II and its atrocities. The challenge that these "events" have posed to philosophy, art and politics has expanded following more recent sociohistorical events, such as the 1968 French student revolt, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and 9/11. Debates on the meanings of these events and their impact on traditional assumptions about cultural and political life have been stormy and passionate. There is general agreement on the unrecognizable and irreversible change in our familiar ways of knowing and representing, but there is no agreement on the new direction in which Western culture is heading.

Critical Theory, in the sense developed by the Frankfurt School and in the post-Marxist orientation of its heirs, reflects on the impact of such events on both social reality and social theory within the frame of a radical sociology whose contents are always open to change. Although it views society as a single unit for analysis, Critical Theory addresses the social body as simultaneously unified—in its modes of production and ideologies—and torn apart by its inner contradictions. It is on this axis and within this tradition that *The Globalization of Israel* should be situated. The book presents us with a critical picture of changes, trends and anti-trends in most areas of Israeli life: in economics, the passage from a centralized or quasi-centralized to a market society; in social policy, the move from the welfare state to neo-liberal socioeconomic policies; in the narrow political arena, the breaking up of the major parties; in politics and ideology, the development of contradictory trends, namely, nationalism versus citizenship; in the field of political values, democratization versus occupation, apartheid and tribal particularism; and in culture, Americanization, high tech and shopping malls versus ethno-religious cohesion.

In line with the parameters of Critical Theory, Ram's claims are supported by an analysis of various data: statistics on industrialization, election patterns, the division of income and patterns of fast food consumption alongside analyses of newspaper articles and statements by politicians, officials and opinion-making professionals. Concomitantly, events that seem "merely" anecdotal are granted broad political significance from the double perspective of proactive globalization and reactive localism.

Of course, Critical Theory also analyzes and criticizes prevalent social theories, often by coining or using new, challenging concepts. In this spirit, *The Globalization of Israel* conducts a disciplinary dialogue with such theorists as Shmuel Eisenstadt and Baruch Kimmerling and, through the concept of "glocalism," claims to reach a new

understanding of central phenomena in Israeli society. Self-reflexivity, yet another salient feature of Critical Theory emphasized in Ram's book, is especially evident in those passages in which the author, himself one of the actors in the historiographic debate on the politics of Israeli knowledge production, uses the concept of glocalism to drive these debates further.

While these analytical moves place Ram's book within the scope of Critical Theory, there is, I believe, a serious drawback in terms of a *radical* Critical Theory, as the author refrains from earnestly and systematically addressing the Palestinian issue. Ram does not afford sufficient significance to the unique historical-political configuration of Israeli society as a colonial power, which, since Israel's establishment as a nation and all the more so since the 1967 war, has shaped all aspects of social, political and cultural life there. Though part of the analysis, the Palestinian issue is altogether too marginal in Ram's discussion, which aims to analyze the political crossroads that the Israeli state and society have reached from a post-Marxist perspective.

The marginalization of this important issue stems, I assume, from what might be called the book's "mimetic trap." Ram explicitly and directly relies on several central claims that Benjamin Barber (1995) made in *Jihad vs. McWorld: Terrorism's Challenge to Democracy*. Here Barber develops the idea that there are two major global trends today, which paradoxically reduce the world to intractable fragments and give it an unprecedented unity. On the one hand, global consumer capitalism is rapidly dissolving the social and economic barriers between nations, transforming the world's diverse populations into a blandly uniform market. On the other hand, ethnic, religious and racial hatreds are fragmenting the political landscape into ever smaller tribal units. Barber explores the alarming repercussions of this potent dialectic for democracy. His goal is to show that the erosion of democracy and the nation-state promotes the role of civil society and direct democracy—concepts that Barber developed in some of his earlier works (Barber, 1985, 1998). This tenor, however, creates several "blind spots" in his analysis, related to the problem of imperialism. One example is the eco-imperialist position to which Barber adheres when he accuses Brazilian farmers of "asphyxiating the planet" by burning down parts of the Amazons to prepare additional land for their agricultural needs (1995:13). Barber evidently ignores here the role of wealthy countries, among them the United States, and private US companies in the exploitation of Brazilians and their natural resources. He also conveniently overlooks the fact that the US is the world's biggest polluter.

Though explicitly inspired by Barber, Ram writes from a different viewpoint. He is not arguing for a broader or more active civil society in Israel. His interest is to reframe the role of the left in Israel from a post-Marxist viewpoint. "What is left of the left today in Israel?" he asks in the preface. Yet by turning glocalism into an exclusive organizing force and analytical tool, Ram mimics Barber's liberal-imperial viewpoint such that he forecloses the option of a more radical analysis. He thus distances his analysis from the radical political and analytical goal of post-Marxism, which is to

point out the contradictions between a given reality and ideology and to reveal new forms of knowledge by raising consciousness and creating openness and the imminent possibility for radical change. Within such an analysis, there is no need to explain sociopolitical reality as a direct product of the economic setting or basis, as in classic Marxism and in its most convincing, structuralist interpretation (Poulantzas). In an analysis of the interaction between various ideological strata that does not privilege the material stratum (class, status, employment), as Ram's book does, there is certainly room for other, no less fundamental, questions. The connection between the Palestinian people and the Israeli-Jewish nation is manifested not only in economic or material life. Their lives are deeply intertwined yet strikingly separated by their history, myths, cultures, literature, fears and hopes, that is, in all those same aspects that shape the social and political identities on which Ram's book focuses. Thus, from a leftist and, even more so, from a radical viewpoint, it would be impossible to explain the post-national and neo-national Israeli "revolution" without relating it to the myriad facets of the colonial dimension in military, cultural, economic, ideological and everyday life.

In his preface, Ram raises a question not only on the Israeli left, but also on "the method" of contemporary leftist analysis. I would now like to offer "micro-analysis" as a supplementary method to the sort of macro-analysis characteristic of Critical Theory. Let me begin with some brief remarks on the philosophical basis of this method.

The current crisis of Western culture is related to the growing disenchantment with three of its key concepts in sociopolitical analysis: the "I" or the self, language and praxis. Late modern theory, including Critical Theory, neo-Marxism and post-Marxism, accept the criticism of the subject as formulated through Heidegger's concept of a "de-centered" subject, Derrida's call for its deconstruction or Foucault's idea of its "disappearance." Sociopolitical identity is therefore understood as the product of a sociocultural formation rather than the closed and homogeneous unit proposed by early modern ideas of the self and political identity. This understanding is the basis of such critical theories as radical feminism and post-colonial criticism, which refuse to posit "man" as the privileged referent for social, political and cultural analysis.

The second key issue in theories of late modernity is language. Here it has been customary to view language as the medium that constitutes meaning and not, as before, as a mirror of reality or a representational tool. This is the common background behind the critical perspectives of Habermas and of Laclau and Mouffe, which, though divergent, view language as the major means for the constitution of social and political realities.

With regard to praxis, the Marxist view on work, as the paradigmatic position of modernity on practice, has been open to reconceptualization since the works of Gramsci or Raymond Williams. One of the perhaps most challenging and groundbreaking late-modern approaches to practice is that of Michel de Certeau. I believe de Certeau proposes a form of micro-analysis that can serve as a method for radical critical analysis. In his *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), he analyzes the logics of common, ordinary acts through which consumers of culture can resist the disciplinary forces of society.

Such micro-practices can evidently be viewed from two perspectives: one emphasizes issues of repression or domination; another, like de Certeau's, highlights possibilities of resistance and autonomy. We may quote Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* regarding a perspective that sees in micro-practices an inherent potential for perpetuating repression, even if on a macro-analytical level they oppose it: "It is too easy to be antifascist on the molar [i.e., macro] level, and not even see the fascist inside you" (1987:215). What this provocative statement implies is that, even if today, after the vanishing of Mussolini, Hitler or Stalin from the political stage, fascism can easily be opposed, its traces can still be found in micro-practices and everyday acts.

As an example of micro-fascism, one can take a case related to an event brought up in Ram's book—the discovery of silicone in the milk produced by Tnuva, the largest dairy industry in Israel, founded in 1929, before the establishment of the state. There was much public turmoil when, in 1995, silicone was found in the company's milk. Ram uses this case very persuasively in his analysis of the deterioration of the pioneering ethos of Israel. I wish to connect this event to one that took place 11 years earlier, in 1984, in the same dairy company. Ms. Mia Kuch, who then worked as secretary for Tnuva's head cashier, blew the whistle on the company's executive by revealing financial mismanagement. Her findings led to the arrest of those responsible, but her colleagues ostracized her, and she was fired from her job. In response to her appeal to the labor court demanding to be reemployed, Tnuva's lawyers presented a psychiatric report in which Ms. Kuch was diagnosed as paranoid and recommended for hospitalization in a mental institution. The report was given without a single meeting between her and the psychiatrist. Mia Kuch never got her job back, but some years later the psychiatrist was convicted of professional malpractice and ordered to pay compensation to Ms. Kuch.¹

The story of Mia Kuch can give us an idea of the kind of micro-fascism Deleuze and Guattari are referring to. While Ms. Kuch's coworkers, Tnuva's management and the psychiatrist might be seen as defenders of the Israeli pioneer myth, embodied by Tnuva, their behavior could just as well be interpreted as micro-fascist, that is, as aggressive toward an agent of progressive democratic citizenship. The question that arises here is: What are the social conditions, the institutional frameworks and the political effects of micro-fascism?

Another question in the field of micro-practices concerns the possibilities of enacting the freedom and autonomy they offer. This is indeed an important question, since globalization, in the general sense of which I spoke above, seems to turn individuals into billiard balls pushed around in a giant game of monetary, technological and cultural forces. These forces operate within a public space in which individuals are being

1 Detailed information on the case can be found in the police complaint filed by Mia Kuch at the Tel Aviv Police Station, 274/84; in the Tel-Aviv-Jaffa District Court Decision, criminal file 416/85; and in the High Court decision of the case, "Mia Kuch vs Attorney General," 34/91.

engineered by means of techniques that are increasingly difficult to discern. It is precisely in this space that old identities fall apart and new ones are generated. These processes challenge critical analysts to look for the ways still available to individuals in their attempts to enact autonomy.

To clarify the challenge of this question, let us look at an example from the juncture of Israeli consumer society and political culture. The Shas political party (Party of the Guardians of the Sephardic Torah) is the fourth largest in today's Israeli Parliament. Since its founding, the party has been a channel for expressing disappointment and alienation of Sephardic religious and traditional Israelis who feel long-standing grievances based upon real and perceived discrimination. A significant number of the party's voters come from cities and towns in the less privileged south of Israel. The chairman of Shas, Mr. Eli Yishay, is probably one of the most well-dressed, if not *the* most well-dressed, member of Israeli Parliament, flaunting his Armani suits in a setting where most of his colleagues dress rather slovenly. How should we interpret this act within the parameters of Israeli glocalism? Is it merely a form of consumerism that mimics the global image of male success? Is it an act of Sephardic resistance against the sloppiness of Mr. Yishay's Ashkenazi colleagues? Or is it an act of revolt against his old classmates from the Yeshiva? And if it is, in some senses, an act of revolt against the forces that imposed on him certain forms of identity, then one must ask further: How does this resistance, seen within the specific cultural circumstances in which it takes place, fit in with the agenda of Shas, which strives to maintain an oppressive patriarchal order in Israeli society?

In his preface to *The Globalization of Israel*, Uri Ram raises the question of the goal and method of today's left. I assume that the goal is not very different from what it was in the past: to lay bare the forces that oppress individuals and groups and limit their possibilities of enacting freedom and autonomy. Today, however, it is clear to us that the sources of repression are not only in government and the production modes. Rather, they are scattered throughout the social body and its institutions, where they can be reactivated by individuals. This dissemination of oppressive forces is precisely what, in my view, requires a micro-theoretical approach to questions of agency, which can serve as a supplementary path to more traditional approaches of Critical Theory. Traditional critical analysis of Israeli society is indeed, as Ram's book shows, challenged by glocalization and its effects. Yet the Israeli versions of colonialism and micro-fascism should play a major role in a radical critique of this society. The lingering, toxic traces of new imperialisms and old fascisms are indeed apparent in the ways of life of this society. This leaves us with a new set of questions for sociopolitical analysis: What are the everyday forms of repression used by Israeli institutions and/or individuals? What are their forms of resistance? In sum: What is the logic of micro-political practices within the Israeli colonial glocality?

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