

*On Diaspora and Loyalties in Times of  
Globalization and Transnationalism:  
Response to the Sklare Lecture*

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**Contemporary Jewry**

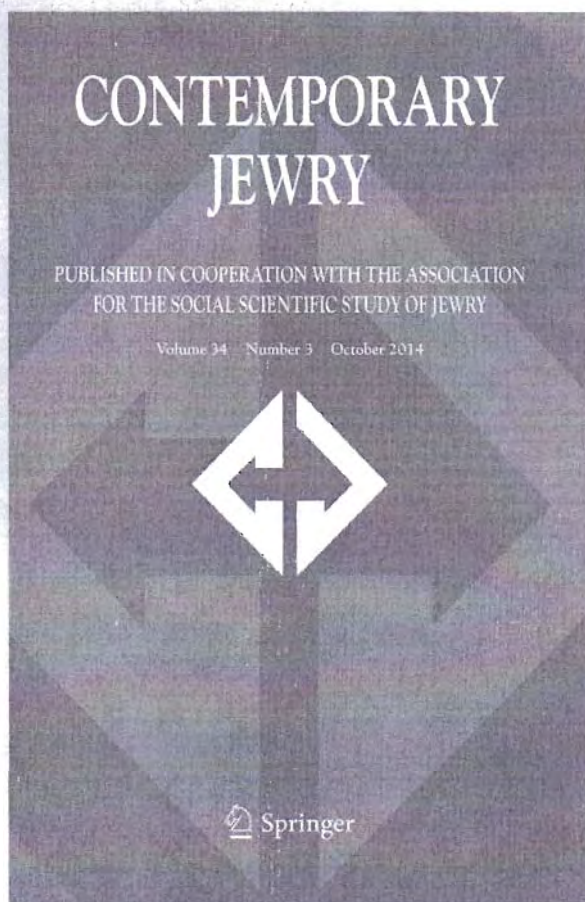
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# On Diaspora and Loyalties in Times of Globalization and Transnationalism: Response to the Sklare Lecture

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Morton Weinfeld's article opens with a fascinating perspective that calls for a reflection on globalization, Jewish history, and the Americas. Historically, the Jewish experience has successively transformed—leading to large-scale migrations, population dispersion and relocation, new concentrations in diverse countries and regions, and exposure to unprecedented sets of opportunities and constraints. The perception of a Jewish World System allows us to assess the peculiarities of each local or national development in a comparative perspective and with a global outlook. Such a perception applies to the constitution and evolution of Jewish life and Jewish identities across the competing paradigms of the national and the transnational and of the center-periphery concepts of Jewish peoplehood.

By bringing Canada to our purview, Weinfeld has richly illustrated a problematic that can be assessed by looking at other and different realities. One of these realities, which is not sufficiently known, concerns Latin America and its Jewish communities, which we will address in this article.

The Americas, the American alternatives—North and South—constitute the first historical case of “multiple modernities” (Eisenstadt 2000). The European experience extended to the Americas; however, the Americas became not just “fragments of Europe” nor replicas of one another. Instead, they were civilizations and societies in their own right. The distinctive institutional patterns that these societies followed to enter and/or create modernity refuted the homogenizing and hegemonic assumptions of the Western European program of modernity. The idea

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of multiple modernities presumes that the best way to understand the contemporary world is to see it as a story of continual constitution and reconstitution of a multiplicity of different and equally legitimate cultural programs.

The notion of ‘multiple modernities’ denotes a certain view of the contemporary world—indeed of the history and characteristics of the modern era—that goes against the views prevalent in scholarly and general discourses. It goes against the view of the ‘classical’ theories of modernization and of the convergence of industrial societies prevalent in the 1950s, and indeed against the classical sociological analyses of Marx, Durkheim and (to a large extent) even of Weber, at least in one possible reading of his work. They all assumed, if only implicitly, that the cultural program of modernity as it developed in modern Europe and the basic institutional constellations that emerged there would ultimately dominate in all modernizing and modern societies; with the expansion of modernity, they would prevail throughout the world. (Eisenstadt 2000, p. 1)

Eisenstadt’s work on Latin America, his studies on modernization and their conceptual and methodological interactions with categories such as migration, development, secularization, and heterodoxy, are part of an ongoing dialogue with theoretical currents that prevailed in Latin America. However his intellectual (and existential) formulation—which Tiryakian (2011) suggests was a voyage undertaken for both universalistic and particularistic reasons—was also part of his Jewish experience and research, both in Europe and in Israel. A heterodox and peripheral stand characterizes Eisenstadt’s work (Spohn 2011). Such a theory of modernity is based on critical reflection upon the profound tensions, contradictions, and paradoxes arising from the diverse phases of an emerging interconnected global world. Multiple modernities conceptually and methodologically contributes (in part because of its meta-theoretical empathetic implication) to an understanding of the complexity, heterogeneity, and contingency of different historical patterns of development.

While a cultural dimension influenced the different ways modernity developed, modern institutions mattered because they were central to the granting of citizenship, pluralism, and democracy. However, the public sphere and collective identities were approached differently in Canada, the United States, and Latin America.

In Latin America, the search for national integration and identity and the central place and role of the Catholic Church, as well as European corporate traditions, has led to difficulties in dealing with religious and ethnic diversity. Facing the Other became a combined reality of existing social diversity and the persistence of a narrative that highlighted homogeneity. De facto collective coexistence acted as an open parameter to building Jewish life, defining its communal contours, and redefining its borders in light of complex dynamics between social integration and group autonomy.

Therefore, it is relevant to analyze the different circumstances of Jewish life and its presence in society as well as the pathways to building collective identities and

communal frameworks of the common and the singular dimensions of a diaspora that has dealt historically with the question of allegiances and loyalties.

Global immersion and transnational links marked the experience of Latin American Jewish life from its very beginning. The founding immigration and colonization waves, as well as their later development, were defined by a constant process of being attached to different shifting and overlapping external centers of Jewish life—both real and imaginary, concrete and symbolic. Latin American Jews shaped their communal life, built their associational and institutional profile, and their collective consciousness as part of a broader feeling of peoplehood. By keeping the transnational moment at bay while at the same time interacting with it, the new national frameworks were called upon to play a central role in defining the character of the new Jewish communities and their defined ethno-national diaspora profile.

As a socio-cultural formation that persisted in the modern era, the ethno-national diaspora was perceived as an anachronistic, unacceptable realm of Otherness from the logic of citizenship and sovereignty of the nation-state. Its members were suspected of not having been assimilated or integrated into the citizenry, and they were held responsible for *allosemitism*, which shifted into its anti-Semitic pole as a result of diasporic self-segregation (Bauman 1998). While this has been part of the European configuration of modernity, it is also the case in Latin America, where the state emerged and has developed as a founding actor of the nation.

Historically, Latin American Jewry grew out of large-scale immigration and established powerful and original patterns of Jewish life and community organization. During the last decades, however, the net direction of migration flows tended to be from Latin America to other destinations. It is estimated that in the past 40 years between 150,000 and 250,000 Jews emigrated from Latin American countries, both inside the region and outside of it (DellaPergola 2011).

Partly following and preceding the transformation of other diasporas into transnational communities, Jewish communities on the continent transit toward modalities of re-diasporization. In fact, we are witnessing the conjunction of two factors: the recovery of a historic trajectory of ethnic and ethno-national diasporas and the pluralization of new migrant populations. While the very nature of the Jewish experience underlines the singularity of its global dimension, migratory flows contribute directly and indirectly to reinforcement of the Jewish consciousness of a universal people. Counter to this, the particularistic character of the Jewish experience is, paradoxically, strengthened. This process goes back to the popularity of the very concept of diaspora as a more flexible one for the analysis of the contemporary itinerary of dispersion: the “new global ethnic landscape,” as Appadurai calls it. But simultaneously, there is a growing self-affirmation and visibility in the national public sphere. Therefore being and belonging as well as allegiances and loyalties undergo changes. In this line of thought, Weinfeld’s reflections on Jewish scholarship and its interface with social research carry utmost relevance and warrant attention.

## A Conceptual Trajectory. Diaspora, Globalization, and Transnationalism: The Jewish Case

Let us first recognize with Weinfeld the infrequent interface of Jewish scholarship with current research conducted in the fields of diaspora, transnationalism, and globalization. This situation has led to parallel academic pathways and mutual exclusion, thus reducing the potential for a fruitful dialogue that could expand interdisciplinary efforts.

From this follows a conceptual and methodological paradox. On the one hand, in diaspora studies the Jewish case has been downplayed thus losing its centrality, whereas transnational studies have minimized the issue of border maintenance and diasporic density (Brubaker 2005; Cohen 2008). Moreover, the Jewish case is frequently displaced or even subsumed under the critique of the “ethnic lens” (Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Levitt and Waters 2002). On the other hand, the exclusive and isolated focus on national boundaries to approach the Jewish diaspora in Jewish studies has led to conclusions of exceptionalism rather than to the development of an analytical angle that accounts for singularity (Frenkel 1995; Mendelsohn 2004). Once the global-world dimension of Jewishness is pushed aside, this type of “methodological nationalism” becomes a prevalent trend (Beck 2007). However, the Jewish historical experience has questioned and surpassed the latter, given that its social processes are not reduced to state or national borders.

The modern study of Jewish diasporas was born out of the specificity of Jewish historical studies, where a disciplinary, ethno-national focus became dominant within a general, neo-positivist scientific program that analyzed national minorities in Eastern Europe. According to this conceptualization, unlike other diasporas, the Jews were led into *galut* (exile) following the loss of their political and ethno-national center for centuries a sense of expatriation and the dream of return as epitomized by Dubnow (1931, 1958; Bokser Liwerant and Senkman 2013).<sup>1</sup> The more modern historiographical works of Ben Tzion Dinur and Shmuel Ettinger continued with the conceptual tradition of *galut* within the framework of Jewish historic studies, but they lacked convergent codes with other disciplines. The uniqueness of *galut* in designating the Jewish nation, eradicated from its ancestral homeland, and its dispersion under the yoke of alien powers, would come to characterize the cyclic sequence of diverse exiles (Galchinsky 2008; Zeitlin 2012).<sup>2</sup> Undoubtedly, the disciplinary specialization of Judaic studies endowed its diaspora approaches with a trove of scientific knowledge regarding social, ethnic, demographic, religious, cultural, and historic dimensions but largely remaining within disciplinary boundaries.

One might claim that the interdisciplinary deficit in the study of Jewish diasporas was dealt with only recently, due precisely (and paradoxically) to the proliferation of globalization and transnational studies. Not surprisingly, transnational studies, in

<sup>1</sup> For a previous version of this section analysis cf. Judit Bokser Liwerant and Leonardo Senkman, *Diásporas y transnacionalismo: Nuevas indagaciones sobre los judíos latinoamericanos hoy* (2013).

<sup>2</sup> This exile condition developed throughout history up until the advent of modernity: *galut* Edom, *galut* Ashur, *galut* Babel, *galut* Sefarad, *galut* Ishmael.



addition to the migratory and ethnic perspectives, originally focused on diasporic practices, praxis, and projects, parting from the formation of new diasporas of Asians (Chinese, Hindi, Pakistani), Middle Easterners (Lebanese, Palestinians), and Eastern Europeans (Baltic Germans, Hungarians, Romanians, Russians, Belarussians, and other ethno-national communities that had been separated from their real or imaginary homelands) (Moya 2011). The need to comprehend this world created by atypical communities has also posed new questions and thus prompted efforts to articulate with other disciplines, *beyond* migratory and ethnic studies.

One has to underscore that the Jewish diaspora paradigm and its emphasis on the historic and symbolically religious center that nurtured the Zionist dream of return was recovered by William Safran in his pioneer article, "Diasporas in modern societies," and influenced the spread of diasporic studies following its publication in 1991. The proliferation of academic diaspora literature starting in the 1990s, despite its indiscriminate use of the term to refer to groups as diverse as migrants, expatriates, refugees and displaced peoples, temporary migrant workers, groups of exiles, or ethnic communities, highlighted three essential components of the diaspora: a) dispersion of its members, b) orientation toward an ethno-national center, real or imaginary, considered to be a homeland, and c) host country maintenance of the group's ethno-cultural borders (Brenner 2008; Cohen 2008; Esman 2009; O'Haire 2008). All these factors strongly imply issues of identity, belonging, and loyalties.

However, over the past decades diaspora studies have moved away from the dynamics characteristic of traditional, archetypical cases such as the Jews, the Armenians, or the Greeks. Instead, they underscore the issues raised by immigrant ethnic communities that are diasporized in their new nations and analyze their strategies of economic adaptation, cultural resistance, and collective negotiation of identity. One may ask if the modern conflictual-dual loyalties question has been selectively diluted or sharpened, thus unveiling the common and the singular.

Studies by scholars such as cultural anthropologist James Clifford, among others, have reassessed the tenets of the Jewish diaspora paradigm. In addition to de-emphasizing the model of the ancestral home-center and the myth of return so central to Safran's theoretical framework, Clifford rescues from the Jewish diaspora paradigm a "virtual and intangible space" between the center and the periphery of dispersion. Reflecting on the notion of the diaspora's "virtual space," Clifford enriches diaspora theory in the globalization era by stressing that "Diaspora involves dwelling, maintaining communities, (having) collective homes away from home...diaspora communities mediate, in a lived tension, the experience of separation and entanglement, of living here and remembering/desiring another place" (Clifford 1994, p. 308, 311). Moreover, diasporas are seen as social and cultural spaces that suggest simultaneous mobility and fixity, closeness and distance, and only exist through circulation. But while authors like Roger Rouse (1991) recognized the material substance of diasporas in which specific communities circulate, Clifford believes that there is another level of circulation which is virtual, intangible, a body of transgenerational memories and feelings.

Such a fruitful contribution to the understanding of the singularity of the Jewish diaspora shows, however, a surprising reductionism. Indebted almost exclusively to

a diaspora paradigm (after Boyarin's work)—not only as a conceptual framework, but as a meta-theoretical and political stance—Clifford fails to recognize the singularity of the Jewish experience as an ethno-national diaspora with a center, as well as its current change into a transnational diaspora. Rather than comprehending Jewishness as encompassing a national center with lateral relations and multiple exchanges, as well as homelands that do not operate by substitution or displacement, this paradigm questions the center's existence. Therefore, despite having opened up an innovative analytical inroad, the specificity of the case is minimized.

Thus, as stated, a conceptual and methodological dilemma has developed. While in diaspora studies the Jewish case has been diminished, transnational studies have minimized the issue of border maintenance and diasporic density in contemporary migratory movements. This panorama becomes more complex if we consider the fact that a substantial portion of the social research of contemporary Jewry has succeeded in incorporating, through a multi-disciplinary approach, the contributions of diverse disciplines (sociology, migratory studies, anthropology, social history, and the history of ideas) while maintaining national boundaries. Whereas the historical Jewish experience has questioned and surpassed the conception of social processes reduced to state or national borders, this discourse has come a long way toward overcoming the limitations of methodological individualism, centered on migrants and their networks as units of analysis (Amelina et al. 2012; Portes et al. 1999). Due to the presence of structures and collective patterns that define agency and social action, the Jewish case—with the very weight of its diaspora life and organizational systems—allows us to approach and expand the conceptual fields of transnational studies, such as transnational social formations or transnational social fields (Bokser Liwerant 2013; Faist 2000; Levitt and Schiller 2004). Framed and stimulated by these structural worlds, loyalties develop through multiple referents that engross and engage community and society.

The changing polysemy of concepts in diverse theoretical traditions illustrates the continuous need to search for new meanings. Migration is no longer a unilateral movement that proceeds from the homeland to a land of destination but rather exhibits greater recurrence and circularity in its destinations. The coexistence of the original home (mythic, symbolic, real) with interconnections between communities of dispersion—challenges traditional concepts and points toward a novel convergence of processes, such as the diasporization of communities of migrants, or the de-diasporization, re-diasporization and conversion of the ethno-national Jewish diaspora into a transnational one. This poses new challenges to identity building and the pluralization of loyalties (Bokser Liwerant et al. 2010; Sheffer 1986).

In the United States transnational studies focused on the diasporic practices of émigré ethnic communities and emphasized processes of cultural hybridization, fluidity and creolization, as well as religious syncretism, rather than analyzing diaspora practices as derived from the maintenance of borders between those communities (and dilemmatic or conflictual loyalties).<sup>3</sup> Rogers Brubaker warns us about such ambivalence found in the literature on transnationalism for which the

<sup>3</sup> A more widely quoted example of this position is that of Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in Jonathan Rutherford (Coord.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, London 1990, pp. 222–237.

predominant orientation toward hybridism resists (and even refutes) diasporic practices that have underscored the principle of *boundary-maintenance*. Although boundary maintenance and the preservation of identity are ordinarily emphasized, a strong counter-current, especially the literature of transnationalism, highlights hybridity, fluidity, creolization, and syncretism. In recent years, this perspective has tended to merge with diaspora literature, but there remains a tension in the literature between *boundary-maintenance* and *boundary-erosion*.

It is intellectually stimulating to see that a major theorist of diaspora and immigrant assimilation like Brubaker is aware of the need to maintain the perspective of what he calls *boundary-maintenance* as a key resource that explains interaction with society at large:

Boundaries can be maintained by deliberate resistance to assimilation through self-enforced endogamy or other forms of self-segregation...(Boundary-maintenance) that enables one to speak of a diaspora as a distinctive 'community,' held together by a distinctive, active solidarity, as well as by relatively dense social relationships, that cut across state boundaries and link members of the diaspora in different states into a single 'transnational community.' (Brubaker 2005, p. 6)

After explaining why the paradigm of the Jewish experience would not be useful in explaining more recent general diaspora phenomena from the 1990s, he adds that "the Jewish experience is *internally complex, ambivalent and by no means straightforwardly 'diasporic' in the strict sense of the term*" (Brubaker 2005, p. 3–4). Thus, Brubaker recognizes that building integration and diversified identification processes, essentially related to belonging and loyalties, has a singular profile in the Jewish case.

Valuable work in contemporary Jewry studies has been recently affected by the lack of necessary theoretical articulations and mediations between ethnic studies and contemporary Jewry and by the examination of *boundary-maintenance*, mainly along perspectives centered on ethnicity that do not integrate the conceptual framework of transnational diasporas. The limits of ethnic lenses are stressed by sociologists and historians who recognize that ethnicity has been weakened by local and global processes in central countries, such as the United States. The special issue of *Studies in Contemporary Jewry: Ethnicity and Beyond: Theories and Dilemmas of Jewish Group Demarcation* (Lederhendler 2011) specifies certain limits and pitfalls of the ethno-communal paradigm in a time when multiculturalism, postmodernity, and the porous ethno-religious borders of former generations are currently losing the capacity to construct ongoing collective identities.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the acute theoretical restating of the ethnic paradigm and the need to undertake comparative studies, this volume of *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*,

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<sup>4</sup> According to David Hollinger (2009) the differences between Irish-, Italian-, German-, Polish-, or Jewish-Americans will lose relevance in an expanded public agenda that increasingly respects a discourse that is "post-ethnic and post-Jewish (also 'post-Black' and 'post-Catholic') and points toward sensitivity to demographics and filters of 'ethnic' influences." From a historical perspective, Jonathan Sarna (2011) considers that certain major cultural and socio-demographic factors have irreversibly eroded the ethnicity of Jewish Americans in recent years.



which showcased talented researchers, did not consider it necessary to make any incursion into transnational studies.<sup>5</sup>

The Latin American experience toward the conceptualization of a theoretical framework of diasporas and their current moment may be found in studies of postmodernism. This work, which has provided reflections on topics related to the transnational phenomenon, at the same time omits an analysis of diasporas on the continent, both in Indo-American and Euro-American countries (Avni 1999).

The bibliography on the Latin American experience shows the difficulty of finding diaspora approaches that integrate transnational interdisciplinary analytical perspectives and ethnic studies with an interest in examining *boundary maintenance*. Another challenge can yet be added: the few formulated approaches are largely grounded on postmodern studies and mostly oriented by the concept of *boundary erosion*.

The postmodern vision has conferred an unprecedented respectability to diasporas in the public spheres of modern Latin American nation-states, basically due to the overemphasized role of civil society in countries that have successfully transitioned from dictatorships to democratic coexistence. Whereas in regimes with strong states that were stable and democratic, civil society was mainly conceived in terms that led to the redefinition of the role of the state or favored a new political-institutional equilibrium. The new democratized scenarios of civil society aim to legitimize diasporic formations as emerging social movements amidst radical changes, in the public and private spheres, toward cultural pluralism and diversity.

However, civil society in Latin American countries which have not yet consolidated democratic transitions channel the lion's share of their efforts into implementing and strengthening their traditional republican institutions, as well as streamlining their political efficiency for improved governability and reform of the nation-state. Indeed, far more than the political horizon of liberal democracy and of civil coexistence and new civic conceptions, Latin American external transnational processes have validated diasporas. In other words: the legacy of the constitutional order of national institutions, reestablished within the republican democratic tradition, lukewarmly legitimized traditional diaspora formations. If these formations were actually revitalized, it was because of processes external to the local political system, such as the impact of globalization processes on their economic and political, social, and cultural dimensions, and the expansion of transnational networks. This process becomes both convergent and divergent when compared with experiences like Mexico's, where the impact of globalization processes led to the recognition of a Mexican "diaspora," essentially derived from the transition to democracy. Thus, the winds of change reflect the times of both globalization and transnationalism and their impact on the decreasing relevance of the discourse of conflicting loyalties.

Contemporary emigration of Latin American Jews exhibits very particular characteristics, including the multi-directionality of migratory flows, which

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<sup>5</sup> The sole exception is historian Ewa Morawska (2011), who theoretically conceptualizes ethnicity, following Steven Fentzen, as a hybrid and an ever-changing constellation of primordial, circumstantial, symbolic, and constructed components in order to comparatively analyze the diversity of ethnic practices and identities throughout the history of specific Jewish émigré groups.

presuppose reversible trajectories; frequency of movement; volume of migrants; and living across borders, which suggests a simultaneity of involvements “here” and “there.” Therefore, despite conceding centrality to the concept of diaspora—through new diasporas—authors who adopt the transnational perspective emphasize the construction or maintenance of ongoing social, economic, political, and religious relations in such a way that *an individual* or organized group (of migrants) becomes a participant in multiple and diverse social fields of varying importance (or power), composed of “networks of networks” (Glick Schiller and Caglar 2008).

Thus one sees the importance of re-analyzing the Jewish experience also in terms of modalities of re-diasporization and regrouping through interdisciplinary lenses, which has not always characterized contemporary studies of Jewish life.

### **Being National/Being Transnational in Latin America**

Understanding Jewish life and identities in Latin America requires considering different conceptual challenges that derive from the inner diversity of the region and its diversified patterns of historical development, as well as from the current impact of globalization processes. Latin America, both its societies in general and its Jewish communities, is characterized by common ground while simultaneously encompassing much diversity. Shared features and singularities in the region reflect the way the local, national, and global dimensions operate and the different modalities in which they interact with the particular, and yet global, condition of the Jewish people. Significant differences have historically marked Indo-America; where countries such as Mexico, Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia, among others, experienced limited immigration that resulted in an indigenous highly hierarchical composition of their populations; and Euro-America, where countries such as Argentina and Uruguay attracted mass immigration in the 19th and 20th centuries. In both categories we may further differentiate between, for example, the uniform *mestizo* character of Chile and Colombia as opposed to Brazil, Cuba, and some Caribbean areas where the complex multi-racial societies have a pronounced Afro-American element (Avni 1999; Eisenstadt 1998).

In countries such as Argentina where mass immigration changed the socio-ethnic profile of the population, multi-ethnic society was built based on a de facto tolerance toward minorities, counterbalancing the primordial ethno-national, territorial, and religiously homogeneous profile that the state aspired to achieve. While the territorial and religious bases of the national state’s collective identity tended to conceal the multi-ethnic composition of its civil society, mass migration led to a growing gap between the discourse of the melting-pot and the prevailing reality. Thus, ethnic tolerance in a society of immigrants worked as the main framework for the building of communities among immigrants, including Jews, who sought to preserve their ethnic links with their homelands. The uniqueness of Argentina resides in the specific way foreigners and naturalized communities, which formed a multi-ethnic immigrant society, were allowed to continue to be attached through transnational links to their original ethnic or national communities. At the same time, unlike religious and cultural diversity and pluralism in Canada or in the United

States, interdenominational civil religion in Argentina was never rooted in its collective identity, but the advantages of a multi-ethnic diverse society were de facto recognized.

In Indo-American societies, like Mexico, the predominantly original ethnic composition of the population enhanced the unified and homogenous contents of national identity. Mexico's dominant conception of national identity was rooted in an ethnic-religious cultural model—*mestizo*—based on fusion, assimilation, and the merging of Spanish-Catholic and indigenous populations. As a resource for identity-building and national integration, this model became a central criterion for evaluating the full incorporation of minorities. Historical hegemonic conceptions of national identity defined membership criteria and conditions for collective action, given the close interdependence between ethnicity, national belonging, and the state's political project. The real and symbolic meaning of the founding project of *mestizo* expressed the nation's ethnic and political dimensions. While it called for an ethnic-socio-cultural encounter between the indigenous and the Hispanic-Christian components, its primordialist features had limiting effects on the social construction of diversity. Thus, not every group and culture was a foundational layer of the nation, or perceived as such, while at the same time the Jewish collective sought integration into the nation without ethnic assimilation. This, nevertheless, allowed for the development of ethnic enclaves even though they were not part of the dominant national narrative.

Patterns of collective identities shape social boundaries and public spheres with far-reaching implications for the ongoing construction of national identities and the dynamics of social integration as a relevant factor of identification, belonging, and loyalties. They certainly refer to the formation and transformation of the criteria of membership within national communities. These processes, then, point to challenges that emerge from collective identities in the states and across national borders. By bringing together both dimensions, the national and the transnational, this binomial provides a relevant angle for analyzing the past and the present condition of an ethno-national Jewish diaspora amid the more general process of identity construction and its expression in the public sphere. The binomial aims to capture the interaction between the changing place of Jewish communities in the national dimension and their equally changing transnational historical condition, thus sharing a convergent perspective with Weinfeld's analysis. Its relevance to explain past and present processes is enhanced by our understanding of bordered and bounded social and communal units as transnationally constituted spaces with fluid interacting patterns.

The national component of this binomial includes not only shared identity referents for both individuals and communities, but also ways in which the recognition and legitimacy of Otherness have been elaborated and internalized; for the Other, such cultural referents may cross national frontiers.

The transnational component of the equation refers to previously existing but also presently expressed relations, connections, spaces, cultural referents, and meanings for a diaspora and its homeland(s)—past, concrete, ideal, even new ones. Contemporary Jewish history is a web reflecting the unique dialectic between place/home of origin, the elected place of residence/voluntary home, and also the

spiritual and/or ideological elected place that could act as a substitute for home. In the 21st century, it adds new spatial scopes in the framework of increased migration waves of Latin American Jews.

Latin American Jewry is part of an exit region for wide social sectors. In parallel to processes of growing pluralism (political, institutional, and cultural) and the ensuing affirmation of civic commonalities, recurrent failures of modernization processes followed by economic crises, political instability and high levels of public violence and lack of security, had a serious impact on emigration. Jewish communities are exposed to multiple experiences of belonging and leaving, leaving and joining, constructing homeness, and perceiving exile (Bokser Liwerant et al. 2010).

Peoplehood loyalties and the hegemonic Zionist paradigm accompanied Latin American Jewish life. The Zionist idea, the State of Israel, and its traditional center-Diaspora model acted as a focus of identification, as an axis for the structuring process of communal life, and as a source of legitimacy for the Jewish presence in Latin American societies. The permanent debates between world visions, convictions, strategies, and instrumental needs made the Zionist idea and the State of Israel central referents. Objective conditions of transnational links and political interactions brought to the forefront a shared mission and commitment to a new ideological, political, and cultural external center. This transnational phase represented an unknown chapter of solidarities and ambiguities regarding the meaning of an evolving relationship between an ideological-political-public center and a peripheral Latin American Jewish community. It expressed an inherent tension between the notion of a national project that would renew Jewish life in a homeland and the intention to build Jewish life in the Diaspora in connection with other Jewish communities worldwide. Thus, a one center-periphery model was expressed in the particular but collectively shared conceptual substratum Exile-Dispersion-Diaspora (Gilman 2003).

This perception of a dialectical relationship between a perceived ideal “center” in Palestine/Israel vs. Latin America—intended as an expression of ideal “periphery”—was probably more significant in the Latin American case than elsewhere across world Jewry. Being national/being transnational was expressed through a complex process of identity formation, and the ways in which the latter swayed between an ideal-spiritual home that substituted for the place of origin and the new concrete place/home of residence. Considering existing differences within the region and its Jewish communities, one can point to new links to Israel as part of a transnational shared space that provided Jews with the possibility to have a *madre patria*, either as a place of immigration/new residence or as an imaginary substitute for the original home that excluded them.

### **The Dynamics of Being National/Being Transnational: Loyalties and Beyond**

While national and transnational dimensions vary in importance across time and space, their present dynamics point to complex interactions that exclude reductionist conceptions that emphasize only one of the two components of the binomial. Both dimensions have undergone changes and could be viewed as different, yet

interacting, facets of the individual/citizenship/collective/identity/belonging conditions. The challenges, opportunities, and limits of these communities to be perceived and recognized as legitimate components of the national being and define their membership along the ethnic-civic criteria of citizenship, are basic concerns of this article.

Historically, the transnational links of Jewish communities in Latin America have been partially visible, invisible and/or questioned in the public sphere where representation, recognition, and social practices take shape, consequently limiting the scope and meaning of the “public” as a suitable domain for expressing the particularity of an ethno-national diaspora group. The recognition of Jewish transnational links, though diverse in Argentina or Mexico, was ultimately conditioned by the state’s conceptions of the nation, thus questioning dimensions that were meaningful from a Jewish collective perspective (Bokser Liwerant 2008, 2011).

In the public sphere, where discourses and interpretations encounter and intersect, where hermeneutics take place and where hegemonic and subordinated/subaltern vocabularies get constructed, the model of one center-periphery faced its limits. On the one hand, various Jewish communities progressively experienced growing public legitimacy of their ethnic assertiveness that consequently reinforced their collective identity’s cultural referents. On the other hand, other communities were exposed to harsh questioning of their legitimate place in the national scene. Such was the case of the Mexican Jewish community under the impact of the equation  $\text{Zionism} = \text{Racism}$  in relation to its complex national citizenship-transnational networks.

The nationalist discourse of the regime evinced and strengthened the political-cultural marginality of the Jewish community and its limited citizenship status, its lack of spaces and channels of expression in a Mexican society that was largely non-participatory and in a state that failed to meet the demands for participation. Without ignoring the pragmatic dimension of the 1975 Mexican vote, the critique of the links with the State of Israel and with the American Jewish community was projected onto the embarrassing realms of national loyalty. The dynamics of the vote/boycott conduct of the American Jewish community and the clarifications offered by the Mexican government to the United States and Israel fostered a domestic vision of disloyalty, lack of patriotism, and the noxious impact of those who constituted a “powerful group” within the country’s economy and politics. The main argument advanced by various sectors of civil society juxtaposed national and transnational as mutually exclusive terms (Bokser Liwerant 1997).

Thus, Mexico represents a paradigmatic case where national circumstances and international changing scenarios affected the dynamics between centrality, dependency, and interdependency. The limited citizenship—expressed in the absence of channels for participation and expression—strengthened the ethnic national character of Jewish identity. The interplay between adscription and self-adscription, while reinforcing the collective identification with the state, reduced its expression to the communal space, so that Israel’s centrality was reaffirmed and simultaneously endogenously constrained. Furthermore, in the mid-1970s, as the local Jewish leadership did not have direct access to governmental officials, a delegation of



North American leaders met President Luis Echeverría to clarify the vote. A negative equation between solidarity and externality developed.

However, changing national and global conditions, the distancing of the regime from revolutionary nationalism, and its adherence to social liberalism resulted in a redefinition of actors and strategies. The new economic politics of liberalization and openness assumed a central role not only as a resource for socio-economic development but also as a source of political legitimacy. In this new constellation the Jewish community was called upon to join in the new national effort through its transnational links. The Salinas de Gortari period (1988-1994) recognized and valued the Jewish community's networks and potential support during the rapprochement with the Northern neighbor. This implied overcoming the cultural code of Otherness and the representation of alienated loyalty that had been underscored by the 1975 vote. The community was viewed and defined itself as a "bridge of friendship and understanding" between Mexico and the "most dynamic sectors of American society" (Bokser Liwerant 1997).

The Jewish community further connected with other meaningful public expressions of collective identity, e.g., the open condemnation of anti-Semitic pronouncements, such as those occasioned by the Gulf War. The argumentative code and endurance of these anti-Semitic/anti-Zionist expressions reflected the permanent and complex relationship between the ideological discourse/symbolic representations and the political conflicts. They also demonstrated how symbolic violence can transpose a social conflict and crucially affect the interaction of public and private spaces for the construction and expression of a group's identity. The transcendence of symbolic violence and its impact on newly created conditions mobilized the Jewish community to collectively affirm transnational solidarities. Ultimately, the Salinas government promoted the initiative to revoke the Zionism-Racism equation.

Political cultures that underscore homogeneity are likely to question the legitimacy and limit the visibility of Jewish collective affirmation and transnational links. Paradoxically, when the public sphere is limited, organized world Jewish organizations are preferred by governments (authoritarian, dictatorial, or democratic) as the primary interlocutors over the local Jewish community leadership. Behind their preferences stand deep-rooted prejudiced images of world power rather than the legitimate recognition of difference. Similar and different from the Mexican case, this pattern appeared in the Argentinian authoritarian regime in the 1970s. Legitimate membership of Jews in the Argentinian nation was questioned by right-wing and official sectors. Facing antagonistic expressions, the Jewish local leadership could not transmit the community's interests, preferences, and worries through institutional and/or informal channels into the governmental sphere. Community representatives were not received by the main political actors (Lopez Tega and Isabel Peron). Transnational entities of the organized Jewish world were effective actors working as a deterrent force while simultaneously being strategically absent from the public (Senkman 2006). Reports from that period point to the magnified image of world Jewry held by the government.

On the other hand, democratizing societies characterized by cultural polarization codes and conservative interests are likely to offer wider access to the political

participation of Jewish individuals. At the same time they may establish limits to their collective ethno-national status and diasporic condition, leading in some instances to the questioning of the belongingness of the Jews in the nation.

In Argentina in the 1990s, in the midst of a democratization process as a result of the AMIA bombing attack, Jews found themselves between the politics of victimization and citizenship building and between claims of identity and of justice (Goldstein 2005). The bombing of AMIA became a national metaphor for the experience of military repression. The AMIA metaphor also functioned as a universal mirror that reflected a triangle: AMIA-military repression-the Shoah. Every year, the anniversary of the AMIA bombing became a public, real, symbolic, contested, politicized place of remembrance and advancement of individual-national-universal claims.

The public sphere's spatial dimensions also widened. The bombing, its implications and investigation, were openly brought to both the national and the international public arenas. This paradoxically generated new ways of recognition of the relevance of the transnational dimension for the reaffirmation of the national condition on the part of world Jewry.

No phases or rules can be defined regarding the impact of political changes on the recognition of collective identities and transnational Jewish links not conceived as a risk to national allegiances and loyalties. Thus, in Mexico, the interaction between primordial and civic referents in the expansion of the public sphere had a positive effect coming from a political party that had a clerical tradition. The political transition in 2000—when the one dominant party system came to its end—witnessed increasing public legitimacy of the religious factor. In addition, the unprecedented public space that was granted to previously private expressions of the majority religion facilitated the adscription of the Jewish group in religious-communitarian terms, thereby minimizing the tensions deriving from the place of the source of diversity in defining national belongingness.

Simultaneously, reconfigured state-society relationships and newly legitimized social collective actors claimed to modify the interactions between national identity, cultural-ethnic groups, and citizenship. The Jewish community's new visibility derived not only from these processes which allowed for communal representation, but also from the government's strategic considerations such as the need to diversify the mediation structures that were built during a 90-year-period of dominance by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). Such was the case of commercial, industrial, and entrepreneurs' bodies that were substituted by new direct links through community structures of Jews (as well as Lebanese). The result was a new overlap between ethnic minorities, organizational spaces, and social conditions. Direct and public interactions relied both on the socio-economic and the religious-ethnic dimensions of the Jewish collective. In addition to a shift toward new forms of incorporation made available to ethnic groups in the process of national construction, changes also emerged in the deliberate exploration of civic presence in official domains.

On its part, in Argentina, the concern with democratic political culture and with becoming full citizens in order to participate in the public sphere, while maintaining their ethnic difference, led many Jewish intellectuals toward the mainstream

discourse of assimilated ethnicity. This behavior implied no global belief in the desirability of individual assimilation, but rather a concern about sharing civic commonality (Senkman 2008).

## Epilogue

Latin America today is experiencing ongoing transformations in the scope and nature of its diverse public spheres, the criteria of membership, the spaces and dynamics of identity building, and its expressions in the political realm. Socio-cultural-political parameters and limits to diversity are subject to transformations. Political pluralism and recognition of difference, a new identity politics, and the emphasis on heterogeneity, act as a substratum that enhances and reinforces pluralism. “Struggles for recognition” (Fraser and Honneth 2003; Taylor and Gutmann 1994) and “identity/difference movements” (Connolly 2008; Young 1990), nourish a new political vision that propels cultural identity issues to the forefront of the public political discourse in the broadest sense. Thus, in light of the general processes, Jews, like other minorities, find new paths of recognition and collective expression in the public sphere and its wider scope.

However, closely related to contradictory trends of globalization processes, identities oscillate between the primordial and the elective, the local and the global, the known territory and the de-territorialized space. Elective and civic bonds coexist with ethnic and/or religious affiliations, linking individuals, communities, and larger societies in unprecedented ways (Appadurai 1990, 1996). Changes are not lineal. Being national thus entails new interactions between social, ethnic, religious, and civic identities along the axes of inclusion and expansion or their antithesis, erosion and withdrawal.

An increasingly expansive force of democracy takes place amidst global cycles of economic crises, social conflicts, and public violence. Neo-liberal and institutionalized regimes coexist with corporatist political forms, popular mobilization, and plebiscitary democracy. In the current liberal democratic era, Jewish communities share a democratic discourse of liberal pluralism and confront the challenge of redefining their adscriptions and self-adscription. Pluralism and multiculturalism and new claims for recognition of collective identities under changing political conditions also lead to inclusion and public roles, both of individuals fully identified as members of the Jewish community and of the Jewish community itself as a relevant actor in the public sphere. Argentina preceded Mexico in time and scope in this regard.

Citizenship building becomes a means to confront the prevailing configuration of the political arena. It takes place when legitimate inhabitants of the public sphere are recognized and/or empowered as such. Thus loyalty may be displayed in a wider terrain where plural belonging is a *de facto* reality. Simultaneously, critical events, such as the “Memorandum of Understanding” between Iran and the Argentine government to paradoxically clarify the role of the former in the bombing of the AMIA, engendered strong reactions from the local community and the Israeli government, and brought the argument of double loyalties to the fore. Not marginal

to underscore is that the Argentine Foreign Minister who defended the Memorandum and referred to the conflict of loyalties is Jewish.

The binomial being national/being transnational unfolds scenarios that expand the public sphere. Latin American Jews have moved and are moving to different locations, including new centers of destination in the United States, but also in Canada and Europe, mostly Spain, and in Israel, thus leading to new dynamics that affect the triadic founding model of diaspora in its objective conditions and the subjective criteria of membership, belonging, and citizenship. A redefinition of the original communal/national framework and a complex re-socialization (reconnecting to the communal and the national) takes place in the new country. Terrains where loyalties are built and expressed broaden their scope and affirm a transnational dimension.

However, the complex interaction between different referents of collective belonging—culture, ethnicity, language, religion, and history—is also expressed in anti-Semitism in singular modes. In Latin America today, the diverse dimensions interact in specific ways. Mutually reinforcing anti-Semitic (and later anti-colonial and anti-imperialist) meanings get transferred and reinforced through a historical (and now trans-regional and trans-national) cultural/ideological code that characterizes wide sectors of intellectuals, public figures, and the media (Volkov 2007). Thus, in a wider spectrum, anti-Semitism has become a transnational phenomenon of global concern that in some instances gets expressed through criticism of Israel as the embodiment of collective Jewry.

Anti-Zionism connects people across countries, regions, and continents, operating through the political agenda of social movements performing at the local, regional, and global levels. Already in the 1960s and 1970s, anti-Zionist discourse served in the United States and Western Europe as a cultural code among the “New Left” that suggested belonging to the camp of anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, and a new sort of anti-capitalism. In North and South America, anti-Zionist charges—with their frequent anti-Jewish twists—initially were not an independent issue among the prevalent political and social views of the left, but rather a code for matters other than the Israel-Palestine conflict. The cultural contours of this code displayed its struggle against the overall set of values and norms typical of the imperialist West and the legacy of colonialist conceit *vis-à-vis* the Third World. Nevertheless, as Shulamit Volkov points out, following many years of an unsettled Israel-Palestine conflict, today’s opposition to Israel can hardly be regarded only as a code for some other evil. Together with a more open anti-Semitism expressed by right-wing xenophobic groups, but not only by them, the subculture of the left, even of the center-left, cannot be seen in its position toward Israel as a side-issue, ripe to serve as a cultural code. Increased hostility toward Israel is globally coordinated, transcending the national boundaries of countries and standing at the center of the new left’s anti-imperialist and anti-globalization discourse. It is a “transnational ideological package” that symbolizes the struggle against globalization and US hegemony (Bokser Liwerant and Siman forthcoming; Senkman 2014). Thus, sustained dynamics act as a reminder and source of double loyalties arguments.

Even when the national society remains the accustomed universe still claiming to be the frame of reference for daily life, the new migrant and renewed global

immersion experience is not completely understood within its boundaries. Both the territory of the nation and its symbolic horizons share new cognitive and normative maps that allow for the expansion of the core referents of identification and the parameters of loyalties. In this complex scenario, the idea of cultural diversity has certainly drifted away from the claims for assimilation derived from a foundational thought in search of a national soul. Simultaneously, practices of displacement should be seen as “constitutive of cultural meanings, rather than their simple transfer or extension” (Clifford 1994).

The claim for civic communality—being the same as other groups, but also like the Jewish communities in other pluralized, democratic surroundings—and the reaffirmation of difference exhibit common and singular traits. This axis opens the alternative option of loyalties as an expression of multiple identities.

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