

# *Understanding Local Responses to Globalisation: The Production of Geographical Scale and Political Identity*

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**Abstract** *A common perception persists that local responses to globalisation are inherently fundamentalist in nature. The purpose of this essay is to critique two recently published best-selling books that propound this argument. In *Lexus and the Olive Tree*, Thomas Friedman argues that the globalisation of capitalism is an intrinsically democratic process, which has nonetheless sparked local, fundamentalist reactions. Benjamin Barber argues in *Jihad versus McWorld*, that democracy, rooted at the scale of the nation-state, is being undermined from above by a globalising consumer culture, and from below by a fundamentalist backlash to globalisation. The *Lexus/McWorld versus Olive Tree/Jihad* framework therefore implies that local identity-based responses to globalisation are always regressive in nature. This binary division is inadequate because it ignores the many examples of progressive community responses that have also occurred. This essay argues that by adopting a social theory of geographic scale, we can recognise that that nature of local responses to globalisation is a geographically and ideologically open question. The essay concludes by examining three identity-based communities in the US, Canada and Spain to show how they used cooperatives to progressively articulate with the capitalist world economy, while retaining their local identities and attachment to place.*

## **Understanding Globalisation**

Two recent best-selling books present a disturbing view of the post-Cold War world. Benjamin Barber's *Jihad versus McWorld*, and Thomas Friedman's *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* both argue that the accelerating pace of global integration and cultural homogenisation has sparked a fundamentalist backlash. According to Friedman, globalisation evokes a reactionary response from groups, rooted in the 'ancient forces of culture, geography, tradition and community,' that fear the loss of identity.<sup>1</sup> Barber argues similarly that the tensions between 'globalism and tribalism are reshaping the world.'<sup>2</sup> But is it true that all local responses to globalisation are fundamentalist, and anti-democratic in nature?

This review challenges the binary frameworks used by Barber and Friedman for understanding local versus global relationships. I argue that the nature of a local response to globalisation is an ideologically and geographically open question. Undoubtedly, anti-democratic local responses to globalisation can be seen in the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, neo-Nazi groups in Germany, and the militia movement in the US. However, it is also clear that many communities have adopted progressive responses to globalisation over the past 50 years. The Mondragon communities in the

Basque region of Spain, the Evangeline villages in the Canadian province of Prince Edward Island (PEI), kibbutzim in Israel, and the town of Renville, Minnesota use co-operatives to participate in the global economy, while preserving their local identities.<sup>3</sup> Other progressive, local responses to global change can be seen in the Grameen Bank microlending program that helps groups of female entrepreneurs in Bangladesh, the progressive urban planning policies in the Brazilian city of Curitiba, and Gaviotas, a sustainable village in the Llanos region of Columbia.<sup>4</sup>

The world is a profoundly more complex place than the 'McWorld/Lexus' versus 'Jihad/Olive Tree' framework portends. Not only are there progressive versus reactionary responses to globalisation, there are also differences of scale. Responses to globalisation may be localised and ephemeral as in the protests waged against the World Trade Organisation meetings in Seattle, and during presidential candidate conventions in Philadelphia and Los Angeles.<sup>5</sup> Other local responses are more sustained, such as the rise of producer co-operatives, which have reinvigorated agricultural communities in the American Midwest during the past decade. One way to get beyond the binary relationships described by the two authors is to inject geography into the analysis of globalisation—specifically, the concept of geographic scale.

### **Outlining the Argument**

Over the past two decades, scholars have attempted to develop a social theory of scale. Traditionally, scale has been a passive idea, helping us interpret the relationship between maps and the real worlds they portray.<sup>6</sup> However, there has been a recent move to portray scale as an active political strategy. For example, Andrew Herod describes how labour unions have used geographic scale as a strategy to cope with management.<sup>7</sup> He notes how some manufacturers established branch plants in low-wage, non-union regions to avoid militant workers. The union response was to 'scale up' labour relations by unionising the branch plants and pursuing 'pattern bargaining'. This strategy ensures similar wage scales for all workers in a particular firm, or even within a particular sector, such as when the United Auto Workers union secured similar wage packages for employees at General Motors, Ford and Chrysler. As the firm expanded its scale of operations to encompass branch plants, the union had to reconstitute its identity at a larger scale to effectively bargain with management. This shows how group identities are scale-dependent, geo-political strategies described by some as a 'politics of scale'.<sup>8</sup>

This approach to understanding identity differs from that espoused by other scholars of national identity. For example, Breuilly notes that while class, culture, or ideology, are important elements in understanding identity formation, it is necessary to acknowledge that nationalism and national identity are fundamentally 'about politics and that politics is about power'.<sup>9</sup> He argues further that in the modern world, 'power ... is principally about control of the state [and that] the central task is to relate nationalism to the objectives of obtaining and using state power'.<sup>10</sup> The state-centric focus of much research on national identity has provided important scholarly contributions. But Breuilly, Michael Hechter, and others can be critiqued for focusing only on one scale—that of the nation-state.<sup>11</sup> In addition, much research on political identity has been criticised for its Eurocentrism and territorial fetishism—that all national identities attempt to emulate the western European model of territorial statehood.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the primary focus on strategies used to control the state ignores how important political processes rooted within group identities operate at, and seek control over, other scales besides the nation-state.<sup>13</sup>

For example, there is a movement in the US to implement national education standards in the public school system. Academics, business managers and policy makers concerned about America's declining economic hegemony support this movement.<sup>14</sup> However, conservative ideologues such as Pat Buchanan and Phyllis Schlafly oppose this initiative. Increased contact with foreign influences at home (e.g. multiculturalism) and abroad (e.g. free trade) has prompted conservatives to reinforce 'traditional American values' perceived to be at risk from globalisation and education standards. Conservatives have countered these threats locally by attempting to introduce school prayer, religious values, and school choice into local public school systems.<sup>15</sup> A 'politics of scale' is being used to protect from external threats, conservative values that are thought to constitute the American identity.

But are all local responses to globalisation inherently fundamentalist in nature? *Jihad versus McWorld* and *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* argue that in fact they are. Barber chooses McWorld as his metaphor to represent the homogenising impact of American values and goods on non-Western societies. Friedman presents the Lexus as the embodiment of a new global order. The Lexus, built using computer-assisted robots and sold worldwide, represents the 'global markets, financial institutions and computer technologies with which (people) pursue higher living standards today.'<sup>16</sup> Resisting globalisation, Barber identifies 'jihads' or fundamentalist, identity-based movements that have arisen in particular places to protect traditional identities from the onslaught of Western values. Similarly, Friedman identifies the olive tree as representing local attachments to particular places.

With the 'McWorld/Lexus' versus 'Jihad/Olive Tree' tension in mind, this review examines how the two authors address the ideologically open, but scale-dependent nature of identity. The arguments unfold in the following manner. Part two explains how scale and identity are interlinked, active strategies that can produce either progressive or reactionary responses with a range of scales. Part three summarises the books, focusing on how the authors treat scale as an intrinsic element in the creation of identities. The book titles suggest the authors will examine identity formation at the local, national and global scales. Unfortunately, both authors assume that local responses to globalisation are inherently fundamentalist. Part four critiques the books for their essentialist worldview, and their failure to take geographical scale seriously. This appraisal is based on Joe Painter's *Politics, Geography, & 'Political Geography'*.<sup>17</sup> This section argues that by taking the politics of scale more seriously, we will see the progressive, not the just the reactionary identity-based responses to globalisation.

### **The Production of Scale and Identity**

Given the centrality of 'scale' within geography and other social sciences, it is remarkable to think that it has only been treated seriously as a political construct since the early 1980s. Social scientists have largely taken scale for granted or treated it as an 'arbitrary mental contrivance.'<sup>18</sup> But some geographers have begun to examine the 'socially constructed' nature of scale, arguing against the traditional stance that scale is 'unproblematic and unrequiring of theory.'<sup>19</sup> Herod asserts, 'Geographic scale is socially produced as the resolution of processes of co-operation and competition between and among social groups.'<sup>20</sup> Building on this point, Smith claims that the scale at which any social process operates, is the outcome of 'intense political struggle' between competing interests.<sup>21</sup> The boundaries and frontiers that define the limits of a neighborhood, locality, region, nation-state, or sphere of influence are not pre-given.

Rather, these limits represent the outcome of politically charged and evolving processes rooted at particular scales.

Of course, the existence of a territorial entity implies some form of identity or emotional attachment to a particular place. But this essay argues that identity is not only linked to a particular territory, it is also linked to a particular scale. And if it is possible for the territorial dimension of identity to change, it is possible for the scale-dimension of identity to change too. It is this idea—the relentless tug-of-war between groups trying to preserve their identities at the local scale versus the homogenising effects of an intensifying capitalist consumer culture operating at the global scale—that is the focus of this review.

Therefore, the purpose of this section is twofold. First, it argues that ‘the production of scale’ is integral to the explanation of any political process.<sup>22</sup> Second, this section extends the argument made about scale, and applies it to the concept of political identity, setting forth the hypothesis that the identity of any group is scale-dependent. Not only can we discuss the ‘production of scale’, we can also talk about the ‘production of identity’. Scale-based identities are an inherent element in the strategies used by groups to achieve political and economic goals. Once the connection is made between scale and identity, the books will be reviewed, paying attention to the way that scale is used to explain the interaction between local identities and global culture.

Let us begin, then, with a reconsideration of ‘scale’ within the social sciences. One of the first geographers to take scale seriously was Peter Taylor, most notably in his textbook on political geography that was subtitled ‘*World-Economy, Nation-State, and Locality*’.<sup>23</sup> By adopting a world-system theory approach, Taylor shows how the reality of the global economy was experienced at the local scale through the ideological apparatus of the nation-state. While the recognition of the multi-scaled dimension of identity is important, Taylor’s work does not emphasise the dynamic nature of scale and the creation of place-based identities.

Neil Smith explains how the identity or ‘iconography of place’ is produced through scale-dependent processes.<sup>24</sup> He argues that scale not only helps to differentiate between places, it also helps us to understand the distinction between ‘different *kinds* of places’.<sup>25</sup> Smith then presents a typology of spatial scales: the body, the home, community, city, region, nation, and the global. But these spatial scales also represent identities—and the question is which identity is hegemonic in a particular place and time? And maybe more importantly, why is a particular scale-based identity hegemonic at a particular time? This question lies at the heart of this essay.

Smith begins his argument with the assertion that scale is ‘the geographical resolution of contradictory processes of competition and co-operation’.<sup>26</sup> The most recognisable example of this point can be found in the nation-state. Capitalism is based on the free enterprise system of competition between producers. But unregulated competition between firms results in overproduction, market distortions, and other self-defeating outcomes. Hence, the capitalist class co-operates within the nation-state to establish conditions for economic growth. Producers agree on ‘the reproduction of labor power, legal constitution of the economy, provision for infrastructures of production and circulation and certain ideological institutions—even as separate (producers) compete for markets, capital, labor, technology and land’.<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, the scale of the nation-state represents, at least temporarily, the distillation of competitive and co-operative processes in the global economy.

Central to this distillation are the ideological institutions that regulate and perpetuate national economies such as the public education system, the popular press, academic,

business and ideological elite, and the military. Following Gramsci, political economists argue that programmes such as the welfare state and social security have a hegemonic and ideological role muting labour militancy, racial conflict, gender dissatisfaction, and regional separatism by diverting popular attention towards national loyalty.<sup>28</sup>

Recently, however, many producers have found the scale of the nation-state to be overly restrictive. Some businesses seek to reconstitute their regime of co-operation and competition at the continental scale through free trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Maastricht Treaty in Europe, and MERCUSOR in South America. By doing so, firms can more easily abandon regions with strong unions and high taxes, moving to places with better business climates.<sup>29</sup> The question is how are ideological institutions, including national identity, that perpetuate capitalist accumulation reconstituted at the continental scale?

Some have argued that international labour, race, or gender-based identities have emerged to counter the new continental or 'post-national' scale of economic development.<sup>30</sup> For example, Canadian unions contacted Mexican workers after the NAFTA to better coordinate labour movement strategies. Indigenous people have used the Internet to establish a virtual Pan (Native) American movement encompassing all of the Americas.<sup>31</sup> Free trade has prompted working-class women to establish international groups such as *Mujer a Mujer* (Woman to Woman), with offices in Mexico City, San Antonio, and Toronto.<sup>32</sup>

But how does the 'scaling up' of social movements and group identity, as in the case of *Mujer a Mujer*, affect local identities? Does the transnational nature of this group weaken or obliterate the local identities of movement members within their respective communities? Some analysts of the globalisation process argue that free trade, deregulation, and new technologies are accelerating the capital accumulation process—resulting in what Friedman calls 'the Fast World' and Luke and Ó Tuathail label 'fast capitalism.'<sup>33</sup> Does the status of place-bound identity change in this accelerating world order? An answer to this question lies in recent conceptualisations of the so-called 'Fast World.'

Some argue that there is a 'growing disorientation in many people's sense of place' as the 'fixed statics of space are becoming eclipsed by a new fluid dynamics of pace.'<sup>34</sup> Does this mean the end of place, and hence the demise of local identity? Paradoxically, the answer is no. In the face of accelerating capitalism, many analysts witness the intensification of place and identity, as a response to globalising culture. This intensification comes through the active marketing of place identities, the creation of progressive communities, or the rise of local fundamentalisms.<sup>35</sup> Hence we see a parry and thrust of scaled identities as competing groups attempt to achieve, at least temporarily, their political and economic goals. The question is how do Barber and Friedman address the dynamic nature of local responses to globalisation?

### **'McWorld/Lexus' versus 'Jihad/Olive Tree'**

#### *Review of The Lexus and the Olive Tree*

Thomas Friedman's book is reviewed first, because it generally supports the current global order. As a regular correspondent and columnist for the *New York Times*, Friedman has had ample opportunity to travel around the world, interviewing powerful leaders and common workers alike. This book is a distillation of his experiences and encounters with globalisation. For the purposes of this review, Friedman's argument is

pretty simple. He argues that we have entered a new post-Cold War era, governed by a new, more market-driven, set of rules, 'where the walls between countries (and) markets ... are increasingly being blown away.'<sup>36</sup> Global ideological divisions, epitomised most visibly by the Berlin Wall, shaped the Cold War era. The post-Cold War era is based on global integration, epitomised by free trade, global telecommunications, computer technology and, most significantly, by the World Wide Web. Drawing on the work of Francis Fukuyama, Friedman argues that the new digital era is post-historical and post-ideological.<sup>37</sup> Capitalism is triumphant. *Homo economicus* is hegemonic. Communities, from the local to national scale, that erect walls to resist the impact of market forces on their cultural identity will suffer as a result.

In order to elaborate on this point, Friedman's book unfolds in four sections. It begins by explaining how the title for the book came to him after touring a Lexus factory in Japan. There, Friedman saw how 66 workers and 310 robots manufactured 300 luxury cars per day. While returning from this visit, he happened to read a story about on-going conflicts in the Middle East. These contrasting images came to symbolise the divisions in the post-Cold War era. On one hand, half the world 'was intent on building a better Lexus, dedicated to modernising and streamlining and privatising their economies in order to thrive in the system of globalisation. And half the world ... was still caught up in the fight over who owns which olive tree.'<sup>38</sup> Positive aspects of the 'Olive Tree' such as family, tradition, and community are to be cherished. Negative aspects of the 'Olive Tree' such as protectionism, xenophobia, or any other local responses that impede market capitalism must be eschewed. The challenge, argues Friedman, 'is to find a healthy balance between preserving a sense of identity, home and community and doing what it takes to survive within the globalisation system,' where walls separating nation-states and markets are tumbling down.<sup>39</sup>

According to Friedman, the increasingly integrated nature of the global economy is driven by the democratisation of technology, finance, and information. Access to inexpensive televisions, cellular telephones, and desktop computers has enabled people even in the poorest neighborhoods of Iran, China and India to expand their intellectual horizons. Greater access to investment tools and startup capital provided by credit cards, discount brokers such as Charles Schwab, and the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh allows the entrepreneurial spirit to flourish among the poorest of communities. The Internet enables people to access information and communicate with others around the world. This development allows Friedman to claim, 'Tip O'Neil was wrong. All politics isn't local—not anymore. All politics is now global.'<sup>40</sup>

At this point, Friedman acknowledges that globalisation has spread around the world in a geographically uneven manner. The companies and countries that have fallen behind are most likely victims of MIDS—microchip immune deficiency syndrome. Key examples are the Soviet Union or many large American companies of the early 1980s, such as IBM. These entities faltered because they were 'bloated, overweight, sclerotic' systems managed in a top-down manner.<sup>41</sup> The institutions that prevailed had inoculated themselves against MIDS by embracing the microchip, bottom-up management styles, and freer access to technology, finance capital, and information. The only way for nations and institutions to exploit these changes is to don the so-called 'golden straightjacket,' an ensemble of *laissez-faire* policies that 'when ... stich(ed) together' stimulate economic growth.<sup>42</sup>

The golden straightjacket only fits, however, if countries downsize their bureaucracies, privatise inefficient government services, lower trade barriers, deregulate capital markets, keep inflation in check, balance their budgets, and eliminate government

subsidies, among other policies.<sup>43</sup> When countries adopt this array of policies, two things tend to happen. First, their economy grows. Second, political options shrink. Political discourse narrows in countries fitted for the 'golden straightjacket,' because there are no obvious alternatives to market capitalism.

Countries that resist putting on the golden straightjacket become targets of the so-called 'electronic herd.' Investment rating companies such as Moody's or Standard & Poor's assess the soundness of national economies. Countries that have not adopted free-market policies are likely to be given a poor rating, thus raising the interest rates that country has to pay to borrow money in the international market. In addition to the ratings companies, the electronic herd also consists of companies and individuals who trade stock, bonds and currency. If a country has not adopted appropriate free market policies, investors will shun it. The world order is now profoundly affected by capitalists and investors more interested in their bottom line, than on political identities or citizenship.

Part two explains how nation-states have become integrated into the global system. Countries exist along a continuum of engagement with the global economy. The US is most integrated, due to its free-market orientation. Laggards must move along the continuum towards the American model, or risk losing out. Sometimes, a country is plagued by so much nepotism and corruption, that the only way for change to occur is through a 'revolution from beyond,' a process Friedman calls, 'globalution.'<sup>44</sup>

Indonesia in the 1990s represented a country transformed by globalution. Middle class Indonesians were reluctant to overthrow the Suharto regime. The urban poor were unlikely to revolt, fearing brutal military retaliation. The press was powerless to directly criticise government policies. The only hope among progressive Indonesians was that by engaging with the global economy, Indonesia would be forced to comply with international standards for conducting business and politics. One Indonesian reformer told Friedman that he exacted revenge on the corrupt Suharto regime by 'eating at McDonald's.'<sup>45</sup> The assumption was that the more successful free enterprise is in Indonesia, the more likely democracy will flourish.

The importance of free enterprise, symbolised by McDonald's, for the development of democracy and global peace is most intriguingly illustrated in Friedman's 'Golden Arches Theory of Conflict Prevention.'<sup>46</sup> This theory argues that there has never been a war between two countries that are host to McDonald's restaurants. Countries with a sufficiently large middle class to support a chain of McDonald's restaurants are reluctant to wage war. Residents of a 'McDonald's Country' are more likely to want peace, prosperity and consumer opportunities than to capture someone else's 'olive trees.' The broader message is that free markets beget happier people and more peaceful international relations.

Friedman acknowledges that unfettered free markets can obliterate local cultures. His remedy is for communities to erect filters on globalisation—a process called 'glocalisation.'<sup>47</sup> Healthy glocalisation occurs when communities incorporate aspects of foreign cultures that enrich them, while rejecting other influences harmful to their identity. However, there are instances when an entity cannot engage in successful glocalisation. In this case, 'hard filters' such as protected cultural areas may be appropriate to preserve the essence of unique places. But on the whole, if a place-based culture does not have the will to preserve its identity, it will inevitably vanish.

This leads to section three that explains how the new free-market ethos has sparked a backlash among communities unwilling, or unable to fully engage in the global economy. Friedman argues that an array of groups have attempted to counter the

effects of globalisation, including Russian nationalists, xenophobic political parties in France and Australia, East Asian countries hammered during the currency crisis of the late 1990s, environmentalists, and labour organisations such as the AFL-CIO. Friedman claims that the most virulent backlash originates among religious fundamentalists in the Arab world.<sup>48</sup> Despite the disparate origins of protest, these entities share one thing in common—the fear of globalisation.

These fears are well founded. The Darwinian subtext of this book makes clear that any efforts to resist globalisation will be futile. In order to put a favourable gloss on this message, Friedman claims that criticisms of globalisation aside, there are also many people in the developing world clamouring for the benefits of globalisation. However, there is an elision in Friedman's argument. He denigrates as anti-democratic and anti-capitalist the community-based social movements protesting against globalisation. He celebrates the efforts of individualistic capitalist enterprise. In this view, community identity is a hindrance. Rational individualism is an asset.

In order to justify this stance, Friedman claims that globalisation is not a top-down process. Rather, 'globalisation emerges from below, from street level, from people's very souls.'<sup>49</sup> Globalisation is in fact a global grassroots movement. The trouble with this view is that it is a tacit acknowledgement that the loss of community is okay. This view also denies the rapacious behaviour of multinational corporations, neo-colonial governments, and the possibility that despite these processes, progressive community responses can emerge in different guises in different parts of the world.

Part four, the weakest part of the book, contains strategies for ameliorating the worst aspects of the new era. It includes a paean to American-style free market principles as the way for the future. He acknowledges that some people and countries will be left behind. Therefore, a social safety net must be maintained. However, the construction of such a safety net is not explained. Friedman concludes by exhorting other countries to embrace American-style capitalism because it can balance the needs of markets, individuals, and communities. Note, however, how the claim that communities are healthy in the US flies in the face of research on declining levels of American civic engagement and volunteerism over the past two decades.<sup>50</sup>

### *Review of Jihad versus McWorld*

Where Friedman cheers globalisation as a step leading to more democracy, Barber argues that globalisation threatens the future of democracy, rooted at the scale of the nation-state. McWorld, a homogenising global consumer culture threatens national democracies from above. Jihad, the fundamentalist, identity-based response to consumer values threatens democracy from below. Barber suggests that McWorld and Jihad represent countervailing, but co-dependent forces that threaten to undermine civil society and democracy. A strategy must be found to sustain civic life in the face of these threats to democracy.

This argument unfolds in three sections. First, the author recounts the rise of industrial capitalism and the Keynesian nation-state, where welfare programmes co-opt social conflict; and the recognition of unions helped co-ordinate mass production and mass consumption. Barber discusses how the nation-state arose out of the Enlightenment ideals of scientific rationality, individual freedom, and the inevitability of progress. As a political form, the nation-state can be seen as the full embodiment of Enlightenment values.

But in the late twentieth century, forces have weakened the nation-state from above and below. Resource scarcity has forced nation-states to increasingly engage in trade.<sup>51</sup> But the benefits of increased trade come at a cost. The spectre of Malthus will be seen if China and India aspire to American levels of development. The only way to promote sustainable development despite declining resources is through international collaboration. But collaboration implies globalisation and increased contact between countries. Inevitably, resource scarcity will turn increased contact into conflict and factionalism. Increasingly, ethnically defined groups are liable to squabble over scarce water, energy and land resources.

State sovereignty is further weakened when firms, facing declining profitability in the developed world, shift production to the developing world where cheap labor and lax environmental regulations ensure higher profits. The desire for greater capital mobility is seen in free trade, welfare state cuts, deregulation and neo-liberal discourse that have shaped economic policy since the 1980s. During this time, the service sector eclipsed the manufacturing sector in terms of employment and contribution to national GDP.

Within the transition to the post-industrial economy, the author documents the shift from producing goods aimed at the body to the production of goods aimed at the mind. This marks the beginning of the 'infotainment telesector' and the sale of American products—and thus American culture—in the global economy.<sup>52</sup> The marketing of American 'goods' as American 'style' underpins McWorld, as does the concentration of media ownership. Barber describes information as the 'black gold' of McWorld.<sup>53</sup> Whoever controls the 'pipes' for delivering information has great power. This reality explains the recent flurry of mergers and acquisitions among media conglomerates.<sup>54</sup>

Media executives herald the synergy created by the merging firms. But Barber suggests that 'synergy' is really a euphemism for monopoly and limited political perspectives. Choosing between 500 TV channels is not the same as choosing between political candidates. Technologies such as the Internet 'have made the bourgeois revolution unnecessary and the proletarian revolution nearly impossible.'<sup>55</sup> There are no workers, citizens, or communities—only consumers. Broadcast media 'create cultural values necessary for material consumption' at the global scale. McWorld suppresses other identities that undermine the ideology of consumption.

In part two, Barber describes Jihad as a local response to the homogenising impacts of McWorld. At the same time, he points out that McWorld 'needs cultural parochialism to feed its endless appetites.'<sup>56</sup> Imagine an Islamic fundamentalist wearing Adidas. Alternatively, consider shopping or entertainment districts in American cities, such as Faneuil Hall in Boston, that have a particular theme. So this dualism should not be interpreted as Jihad versus McWorld. Rather, it should be seen as Jihad via McWorld.<sup>57</sup> In the twenty-first century, just as in the nineteenth century, nations are, in the words of Benedict Anderson, 'imagined communities.'<sup>58</sup> They are fictive constructs where identities are created in particular places at particular scales to achieve particular goals.

Barber makes this point by describing the centripetal and centrifugal aspects of nationalism. Prior to the twentieth century, nationalism fragmented the power of the church and severed the feudal bonds of servitude. Integrative nationalism reconstituted identity as attachment to territory. The nation-state represented the Enlightenment ideals of individual freedom, rationalism, and a belief in progress and democracy. Allegiance to tribe, feudal lord, or community was replaced by a fidelity based at a higher scale, at the territorial state—whose highest purpose was to secure liberty for all citizens. The nation-state in its purist form was an amalgam of rational individualism and communitarian identity politics.<sup>59</sup>

The reality of the nation-state fell far short of the ideal. Imperialism and colonialism undermined the integrative effects nationalism might have had on former colonies. Even in Europe, the illusory nature of national identity is susceptible to pre-modern ethnic rivalries. National identity is based on selective memory. Janus-like, leaders selectively borrow symbols and myths from the past to create a national consciousness.<sup>60</sup> However, Barber also argues that the creation of national identity requires 'selective forgetting.'<sup>61</sup> Past grievances come to the fore, tearing a nation apart unless they can be sanitised or forgotten. Seldom is the erasure of pre-modern identity complete.

The last section examines how McWorld and Jihad, seemingly oppositional forces, work in tandem to diminish democracy and civil society. First, Barber questions the benign nature of markets noting that 'democracies prefer markets but markets do not prefer democracies.'<sup>62</sup> This is a criticism of Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, Bill Clinton—and Thomas Friedman—who all extol the democratising influences of the market. Barber counters that consumer choice must not be equated with democratic freedom.

Barber further argues that market forces weaken the bonds of nationhood, community and family in the drive to create a global society of individualistic consumers. Barber warns 'market relations are simply not a surrogate for social relations.'<sup>63</sup> McWorld will corrode family and community relations, resulting in social segmentation, rising poverty, and social anomie. Barber reminds us that modernity and the nation-state create 'imagined communities' of identity because face-to-face interaction with all members of the community is impossible. As the bonds that keep imagined communities intact decay, pre-existing, pre-modern communities may reconstitute themselves at the local scale. Jihad is therefore a strategy to create political life at a smaller scale. Unfortunately, local community tends to be based on the politics of exclusion, parochialism and resentment.<sup>64</sup>

Advocates of democracy are caught in a bind. The market forces of McWorld undercut the social relations of family and community necessary for civil society. A Jihad reasserts chauvinistic social relations and identities at the local level, breeding intolerance and a retreat from civility. According to Barber any solution to this dilemma will rest on public institutions rooted at the national scale. The blueprint for this new democratic world order is found in the *US Articles of Confederation*.<sup>65</sup> The Articles could provide 'rival national fragments' with sufficient autonomy while creating a context for citizenship and local civil society.<sup>66</sup> A confederal political system is recommended because it does two things. First, it retains the modernist idea of a territorially defined political entity providing a basis for citizenship. Second, it creates a system of states with a second layer of identity, where citizens of one state have rights and privileges within all member states. This would mitigate the worst offences of Jihad. The system is further connected by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) rooted at the level of the state that reach across borders to perpetuate an internationalised civil society. This 'scaling up' of NGOs will preserve democracy and civil society under attack from local and global scales.

### **A Critique of Friedman and Barber**

While Friedman and Barber provide lucid, if competing arguments, they ignore how the production of identity is a scale-based political strategy. At the root of this neglect is their failure to distinguish between formal and informal politics.<sup>67</sup> Like Breuilly, both

authors focus on formal politics involving boundaries and constitutional practices of sovereign states—the central topics examined by traditional social science.<sup>68</sup> The problem is that while formal politics affect our lives, they exist above the fray (and scale) of every day living.<sup>69</sup> Attention to formal politics diverts attention away from important informal office, household, and community politics operating at the local scale.

To understand how informal politics also shape political identity, Painter draws on the work of Michel Foucault to argue that politics are comprised of both material and discursive elements.<sup>70</sup> Material aspects include the manipulation and organisation of things. Discursive elements include language and symbols that provide meaning and context to words and actions. Meaning depends on who is speaking, how it is said, and the broader milieu of symbols and ideas that contextualise a setting. Foucault refers to this milieu as a ‘discursive formation’ or discourse that provides meaning to a material object or process.<sup>71</sup>

The following assumptions help show how a ‘discursive formation’ can be used to explain the scale-based aspects of political identity.<sup>72</sup> Politics arise because it is impossible to simultaneously meet the needs of all the people living in a territory. People acting as individuals or through institutions engage in strategic actions of co-operation or coercion to secure unmet goals. Strategic actions require resources, but resources are spread unevenly across the landscape, creating differential abilities to affect change through strategic action.

Individuals and institutions make claims of authority and sovereignty as part of their strategic actions, but there is no absolute right to authority or sovereignty. It must be perpetually legitimated either through persuasion or coercion. The process of legitimation is a discursive process as the political strategy of one institution or individual is imposed over other contesting strategies. As individuals and institutions launch strategic actions, they take on different identities that operate at different scales. These identities are partially our making, but are also subject to the discursive and material actions of others.<sup>73</sup>

Painter uses these assumptions to reconsider the ‘high politics’ of state formation, war, and diplomacy. He argues, for example, that nation-states are discursive constructs, not some preordained organic object. The idea of sovereignty is merely an assertion that must be constantly reinforced. This view supports the earlier contentions that the nation-state represents the scale of resolution of inter-capitalist competition and co-operation.<sup>74</sup>

The scale at which legitimation occurs has changed over time. Originally, sovereignty was reinforced at the state scale through overt violence directed inwardly through public executions, and outwardly through war. Gradually, the high politics of state formation gave way to the low politics of domestic social policy during the nineteenth century. The shift from ‘state security (to) social security’ was precipitated by social unrest caused by the industrial revolution.<sup>75</sup> States responded by creating a new discursive formation. Local police and public health departments comprised a surveillance system to monitor society. The nascent social welfare system, also administered locally, was designed to blunt social unrest.<sup>76</sup> These institutions, justified through the discourse of public safety, represented a scale-dependent state strategy to regulate domestic society.

Discursive formations also helped justify imperialism and colonialism beyond European nation-states. Drawing on Edward Said, Painter reveals how academic and political discourse created a bifurcated world.<sup>77</sup> European colonial powers were

TABLE 1. Location and number of anti-American terrorist attacks on foreign soil, 1999

Location of anti-American terrorist attacks	Number of terrorist attacks
Latin America	96
Western Europe	30
Africa	16
Middle East	11
Republics of former USSR	9
Asia	6
Total	168

Source: Ali Abunimah, 'Terrorism's real locale', *The New York Times*, 8 May 2000. Available Online. < <http://partners.nytimes.com/yr/mo/day/oped/08abun.html> > .

constructed as a rational, masculine, and intellectually superior 'West'. The non-European world was portrayed as a seductive, feminine, and unknowable 'Other.' By discursively constructing this 'Other,' it became easier to justify the subjugation of non-European peoples.

In order to break through Eurocentric discourses about statehood and international relations, Painter argues for a 'critical geopolitics' that links the high politics of foreign affairs with the low politics of popular culture and everyday understanding. This enables us to understand how foreign enemies or objectives are discursively created and understood by the public as an acceptable target of foreign policy. To see how this works, consider how Barber uses the word 'Jihad' derived from the Arab-Muslim world to refer to all fundamentalist responses. Similarly, Friedman uses the Olive Tree, symbolic of the Middle East, to refer to all traditional, local, tribal communities. Both authors use symbols from the Arab-Muslim world to represent fundamentalist, anti-American groups opposed to democratic ideas. These metaphors work because most Americans see Arab-Muslim groups as the most likely to launch anti-American terrorist attacks. But this perception is not based on fact. As a recent Op-Ed article from the *New York Times* reveals, of the '16(8) specifically anti-American attacks on foreign soil in 1999 ... only 11 were in the Middle East.' (Table 1)<sup>78</sup>.

The unfair demonisation of groups, and persistent social and regional inequalities that occur through globalisation have prompted group responses from across the political spectrum, rooted in different regions, operating at various scales. The only way to see this is to acknowledge that social movements represent a nexus of high and low politics with formal and informal politics.<sup>79</sup> Painter argues that previous attempts to explain the rise of social movements based on national, class, gender, or other identities are unsatisfactory. These explanations either focus on the objective conditions that gave rise to a grass roots response, or on the subjective experiences that prompted individuals to join a particular social movement. These approaches dissatisfy because a focus on objective conditions does not explain why a set of identical social conditions prompt a grass roots response in one region, but not in another—or why two different responses occur within one community. A focus on the subjective experiences of individuals within a social movement reveals nothing about the rise of group identities.

Painter presents an alternative approach that emphasises how people have multiple

identities based on gender, ethnicity, race, class, region, or national affiliation. We can then examine why some identities are politicised and others are not by focusing on the construction of particular discursive formations. And by extension, we should examine how and why particular discursive formations are created at particular scales in particular places. Only then can we understand how some identities are politicised at the expense of others to garner support for particular social causes.

To expand on this point, Painter argues that local discourses and community resources determine if a local identity will become politicised into a social movement.<sup>80</sup> A discursive formation must be constructed that elevates the group identity into a social movement, capable of achieving a particular goal. The discourse may draw on local tradition, rituals, or symbols to signify how the local identity is under real or perceived threat from outside forces. Once a critical level of interest has been developed, proponents of the social movement must marshal the resources in the community to perpetuate and expand the movement.

Consider how the following communities use local identities to create a progressive response to globalisation. American farmers and rural communities have been under siege for two decades due to low commodity prices and the vertical integration of processing driven by globalising markets. Cleaving to the Jeffersonian ideal, some farmers have gone out of business trying to live up to the myth of the individualistic yeoman farmer. But some farmers are confronting globalisation directly by forming producer co-operatives to process and market farm commodities. Farmers use a discourse of preserving small town America, environmental stewardship, and egalitarianism to recruit members into the co-operatives.<sup>81</sup> These co-operatives can match the economies of scale achieved by agricultural processing behemoths such as Cargill and ADM. By reconstituting their identity at the scale of the community, individual farmers can accomplish as a group, goals that cannot be achieved as individuals—that is, the preservation of rural communities.<sup>82</sup> The best example of this occurs in the community of Renville, Minnesota (population 1,300). It currently hosts nine co-operatives, employing 500 people, not including the farmers who belong to the co-operatives. The symbiotic relationship between the rural community and surrounding farmers has prompted Renville to identify itself as the ‘Co-operative Capital of the US.’<sup>83</sup>

In the Canadian province of PEI, a community of Acadians has created, in the words of one community leader, ‘the uncontested co-operative capital of North America.’<sup>84</sup> The Acadians are a French-speaking minority that settled PEI, and other parts of Eastern Canada during the seventeenth century. After the British forced France to relinquish its colonial holdings in the New World, French-speaking colonists experienced discrimination based on language and class. This sense of oppression fostered a sense of cultural solidarity. With no official language laws to protect their culture as in Quebec, Acadian communities feared they would lose their identity and language, just as their distant relatives, the Cajuns, did when they were forced to leave Canada to settle in Louisiana.<sup>85</sup> But instead of turning to violence as did the Quebecois separatists during the 1960s, the Acadians created an egalitarian ‘community controlled economy’ comprised of 16 worker and consumer co-operatives.<sup>86</sup>

The first Evangeline co-operative was established in 1939, when impoverished fishermen organised a processing co-operative to earn a higher return on their catch. The most recent co-operative, a grocery store, was opened in 1990.<sup>87</sup> The community now has a range of producer and consumer co-operatives that provide employment and

purchasing opportunities for community residents. The result is that compared to other linguistic minority communities in PEI, the Evangeline region has lower unemployment rates, higher educational attainment, higher earnings, and a larger proportion of the community who can communicate in French.<sup>88</sup> Acadians in this region have adopted a scale-based strategy that has simultaneously improved the local economy while preserving local culture.<sup>89</sup> Here we see two different scale-dependent strategies to preserve francophone identities in Canada. Quebec separatists use provincial boundaries to delimit their identity. The Acadian identity is rooted at the regional and community level.

The Mondragon co-operative community in the Basque region of Spain represents the third example of a progressive community response to global capitalism. The Basques usually gain notoriety for the violence launched by the Basque nationalist movement, ETA, against perceived Spanish oppression.<sup>90</sup> Basque cultural identity and language pre-date modern Spain. A nationalist movement developed in the late nineteenth century in response to the centralisation imposed on the Basques by the Spanish state. The movement started out as a conservative reaction to modernisation.<sup>91</sup> However, Basque nationalists became radicalised during the Spanish Civil War. The Spanish dictator, Generalissimo Franco, was wary of the Basque pursuit of greater autonomy, and launched a pre-emptive strike. At Franco's behest, Adolf Hitler's airforce bombed the traditional Basque capital city of Guernica—an event captured by Pablo Picasso in one of his most famous paintings.<sup>92</sup> Franco suppressed expressions of Basque language and culture for four decades, further antagonising nationalists. The ETA was formed in 1959 as a militant left-wing group to end this oppression. Its underlying philosophy was that the Basque region was an internal colony of Fascist Spain.<sup>93</sup> Only through complete independence could the Basque people be free.

What is not as well known is that Basques disagree among themselves about how best to preserve their cultural identity. Even now, supporters of the ETA pursue a violent strategy to reconstitute the Basque identity at the scale of the nation-state, even though the European Union has effectively trumped this strategy. On the other hand, Basques living and working in the Mondragon communities have adopted a peaceful strategy, pursuing cultural and economic survival through worker co-operatives.<sup>94</sup> Don Arizmendi, a Basque priest who had been persecuted during the Spanish Civil War, founded the first Mondragon co-operative in 1956. He wanted to improve the quality of life for his parishioners and the broader community by finding a third way between 'unbridled capitalism' and 'centralised socialism.'<sup>95</sup> The challenge was to find an economic development model that 'elevated collective security' but maintained 'individual incentives.'<sup>96</sup>

The solution was to develop worker co-operatives, infused by the values of shop floor democracy, community support, and cultural identity. From 1956 to 1996, the Mondragon community has expanded from 1 to 108 co-operative enterprises, employing 29,407 people. In 1996, the Mondragon co-operatives had assets worth \$13.8 billion, and total sales valued at \$6.0 billion.<sup>97</sup> The dramatic success of the Mondragon is attributed to the infusion of Basque culture and the Christian worker movement in the community.<sup>98</sup> The point is that Basque identity is implicated in two processes operating at two different scales. ETA nationalists use violent tactics, including the assassination of Spanish officials to create an independent Basque nation-state. The Mondragon co-operatives, on the other hand, promote cultural identity and egalitarianism at the community scale.

## Conclusions

This review began with the proposition that laws, social norms and political institutions are the outcome of scale-dependent processes of competition and co-operation. A discussion of the shifting scales of labour activities and public school policies were offered in support of this assertion. If it can be accepted that politics are based on scale-based processes, then it can be argued that identities are also defined by geographic scale. This review examined two important books in light of this argument.

Both books set up a binary framework pitting global processes against reactionary local responses. The review concludes, however, that local responses to global capitalism are not all regressive. Just as free markets do not necessarily beget democracy, local communities do not necessarily beget fundamentalism. This can be seen in the expressions of Basque identity in Spain, and the preservation of francophone identities in Canada. In both cases, different subsets within each group attempt to preserve political identity at different scales, with different underlying ideologies. Basques attempt to preserve their identities violently at the national scale, and progressively at the local scale. In Canada, separatists in Quebec want to establish an independent nation-state. Acadians, on the other hand, promote economic development and cultural identity at the local scale. The Basque and Canadian examples might again imply a binary relationship between progressive local and regressive larger-scale responses.

Anticipating this critique, the reader is asked to consider the model of development pursued in the Indian state of Kerala. With a population of about 30 million people, the scale of development is larger than many independent nation-states. The policies of religious and ethnic tolerance coupled with education advocacy have extended the average life expectancy to 70 years, lowered fertility rates to developed world levels, and raised female literacy rates to be the highest in India. Despite the array of religions found in this state—Kerala has the second highest proportion of Muslims in India—a regional cultural identity has emerged over the past two centuries that is infused with democratic ideas. It has attracted so much attention, that Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen has written about Kerala as a model to be considered by other regions of the Developing World.<sup>99</sup>

Friedman and Barber provide compelling narratives about the current world order. But in the end, they founder because they do not critically evaluate their own assumptions about capitalism. They present capitalism as a monolithic system, founded on the objective, value-neutral operation of market forces. However, a more careful analysis of these assumptions about capitalism undermines their prescriptions for the future. Barber touts a modified, loosely confederated system of nation-states that provide more protection for regional identities. Friedman does not advocate any changes, save an expanded social safety net to help the inevitable losers in the system. In his view, global capitalism is post-historical and post-ideological—the highest form of development.

But a critique of the ideological underpinnings of capitalism is in order. Capitalism, like any socioeconomic system, is a discursive formation that also has to be legitimated. Humans are not preordained to be rational, individualistic, economic actors. People living in North America and Western Europe have just been socialised to live that way. As Julia Kristeva notes, the pursuit of profits is a 'holy war' in the US, just as the pursuit of religious goals might be called a 'holy war' in other parts of the world.<sup>100</sup> Other identities can and have been created around the world to foster co-operative, egalitarian communities and societies. Only a better understanding of discursive formations and

the social theory of scale will help to explain why local communities respond regressively in one place and progressively in another.

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## Notes

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11. John Agnew, 'Representing Space: Space, Scale and Culture in Social Science', in James Duncan and David Ley (eds), *Place/Culture/Representation* (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 251–271; Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1975); Breuilly, *passim*.
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17. Painter, 1995.
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19. Neil Smith, 'Homeless/Global: Scaling Places', in Jon Bird, Barry Curtis, Tim Putnam, George Robertson, and Lisa Tickner (eds), *Mapping The Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change* (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 87–119.
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25. *Ibid.*, p. 99, italics in the original.
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35. David Harvey, ‘From Space to Place and Back Again: Reflections on the Condition of Postmodernity’, in Jon Bird, Barry Curtis, Tim Putnam, George Robertson, and Lisa Tickner (eds), *Mapping The Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change* (New York: Routledge 1993), p. 4.; Luke and Ó Tuathail, 1998, p. 72.; and Salman Rushdie, ‘Rethinking the War on American Culture’, *The New York Times*, 5 March 1999, p. A25.
36. Friedman, 1999, p. 23.
37. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992); Friedman, 1999, p. 70.
38. Friedman, 1999, p. 31.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 76. Tip O’Neill was a Democratic Congressman from Massachusetts who famously said that, ‘all politics is local.’
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Ibid.*, p. 249.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 295. Friedman’s use of the term ‘glocalisation’ to describe local cultural change should not be confused with the more nuanced use of the term by Swyngedouw, 1997, pp. 137. Swyngedouw uses the term ‘glocalisation’ to refer to a much more complex intertwining of social, economic, and political processes operating at a range of scales.
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49. *Ibid.*, p. 348.
50. Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000). Putnam provides a compelling argument that market forces and a consumer culture promoted by TV, movies and the Internet are eroding our ability to create and sustain a local sense of community identity.
51. Barber, 1996, p. 29.

52. Ibid., p. 60.
53. Ibid., p. 90.
54. Robert McChesney, 'The new global media: It's a small world of big conglomerates', *The Nation*, 29 November, 1999, pp. 11–13. See also other articles in this special issue of *The Nation* for specific examples of corporate mergers and acquisitions, creating a 'media globalopoly'.
55. Barber, 1996, p. 70.
56. Ibid., p. 155.
57. Ibid., p. 157.
58. Anderson, 1991.
59. Barber, 1996, p. 159.
60. Nairn, 1975.
61. Anderson, 1991, p. 199, cited in Barber, 1996, 167.
62. Barber, 1996, p. 243.
63. Ibid., p. 237.
64. Ibid., p. 222.
65. Ibid., p. 298. The Articles of Confederation represent the first, short-lived American constitution, effective between 1776 and 1789. It linked the former British Colonies comprising the nascent US into a system of loosely linked, but largely independent entities.
66. Ibid., p. 298.
67. Painter, 1995, pp. 8–10.
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83. Co-op Town, Website for Renville, Minnesota. Online Version. <<http://www.ci.renville.mn.us/cooptown/page1.htm>>. This is a dramatic example of how a discourse of rural community survival has supplanted the identity of rugged individualism that has characterised farmers since the time of Thomas Jefferson.
84. Paul Wilkinson and Jack Quarter, *Building a Community-Controlled Economy: The Evangeline Co-operative Experience* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p. 3.
85. Wilkerson and Quarter, 1996. Pere Anselme Chiasson and Nicolas Landry, 'History of Acadia', in James Marsh (ed), *The Canadian Encyclopedia, Year 2000 Edition* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1999), pp. 11–13. Readers should be aware that the word 'Cajun' is derived from the word 'Acadian.' Many Acadians were expelled from the Canadian province of Nova Scotia between 1755 and 1762. At that time, Canada was still a British colony. The French-speaking Acadians were expelled because the British did not trust them to remain neutral as the British and French battled for geopolitical ascendancy in the New World. Expelled Acadians settled along what is now the east coast of the United States. However, one group of refugee Acadians journeyed to what is now Louisiana. The American poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, immortalised this journey in his epic poem, *Evangeline*, published in 1847. Naomi Griffiths,

- 'Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie', in James Marsh (ed), *The Canadian Encyclopedia, Year 2000 Edition* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1999), p. 798.
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