

Jonathan Joseph, *The Social in the Global: Social Theory, Governmentality and Global Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 302).

Reviewed by Ulrich Hamenstädt

Global change appears to us as a multifactorial and complex phenomenon. In his new book, Jonathan Joseph combines the concept of Hegemony from Gramsci with the Foucaultian Governmentality approach, in order to analyze this phenomenon more in detail. It is an outstanding monograph that works on how the neo-liberal discourse and several central ideas of liberalism “trickle down” from the official papers of the World Bank or the IWF to the EU administration, and there of into the developing programs in Africa. What makes the book unique is the theoretical framework that combines two central terms of critical IR theory: Foucault’s Governmentality approach and Gramsci’s notion of Hegemony. Joseph uses the concept of Hegemony to explain “why” certain phenomena become present, and the concept of Governmentality to answer the question “how” they function.¹ To summarize this in Jonathan Joseph’s own perspective: “While the neo-Gramscian approach tells us a lot about neoliberalism’s social and historical context, Governmentality tells us more about its rationality.”² The second advantage of this book is the practical application of these approaches: first, the EU is analyzed (in chapter 6). Second, the developing strategies of international institutions and donor countries for Africa are discussed more in detail (in chapter 7). These applications could hardly be found in Foucault’s own work, and so Jonathan Joseph offers here a “blue print” for further research using these theories of Foucault and Gramsci. However, while Joseph is mostly recognized during the last years for his neo-Gramscian work as a critical realist,³ in “The Social in the Global” he offers a fresh angle on Foucaultian Governmentality studies to the discipline of International Relations.

Foucaultian Governmentality is the central concept and the initial point of the book. After the introduction, the second chapter develops the framework and highlights especially the concept of Governmentality, since this “... is notoriously unclear in Foucault’s

¹Jonathan Joseph, *The Social in the Global: Social Theory, Governmentality and Global Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 41.

² Ibid, p. 65.

³Benjamin Opratko, *Hegemonie. Politische Theorie nach Antonio Gramsci* (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2012).

own work."⁴ Chapter 3 deals with theories of globalization and global civil society. The aim is to show how theories and specific ideas present themselves there as critical, but can be combined with neoliberal practices of global governance.⁵ Joseph's argument is that these theories mix up practices as processes of globalization,⁶ and take different aspects of globalization for granted, process these theories aim to explain. Rather than been critical, these globalization theories he discusses within the chapter tend to strengthen the idea of neoliberal Governmentality instead. In chapter 4 Joseph goes on to discuss terms like network society and especially social capital, which became recently popular in social sciences. The popularity is mostly based in the fact that these terms are very unspecific, and even in Foucault's own work they are also very unclear.⁷ Currently these terms are used, in Joseph's view, to promote a neoliberal agenda.⁸ In chapter 5, the last chapter of the theoretical part, the author mostly discusses the terms risk and reflexivity, and how they are introduced by Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck to the social science debate. He illuminates how contradictory these theories are, and how they promote (by their underlying assumptions) modes of liberal governmentality. This is the theoretical framework Joseph devolves in the first part of the book, and which he applies to empirical cases in the second part.

As mentioned above, chapters 6 and 7 deal with the empirical implications of the concept of Governmentality. Jonathan Joseph considers in this second part of his book two very different cases. While in chapter 6, the EU case fits very well with current ideas of neoliberal Governmentality. The last chapter instead is concerned with developing strategies for African countries. These two cases are well chosen, because they are so different. On the one hand the author can show the concept of Governmentality well delivering a better understanding of the ongoing processes in the EU, while on the other, the concept becomes much clearer as it is applied to a more fragmented and uneven process. These uneven (but somehow combined) developments could be best illustrated by looking at the ideas of international organizations such as the World Bank or the IWF for development strategies in African countries.

⁴ Joseph, op.cit. in note 1, p. 16.

⁵ Ibid, p. 109.

⁶ Ibid, p. 254.

⁷ Michel Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College De France, 1978-1979* (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

⁸⁸ Joseph, op.cit. in note 1, p. 22.

The book offers, from my point of view, different possible starting points for further research. First, researchers could investigate more into the theoretical framework presented by Jonathan Joseph. Second, the empirical part seems to be more an illustration in some parts of the theory, and could be complemented by detailed historical investigations or in depth (even quantitative) analysis of the considerate documents. Finally, theories, in my opinion, are best understood when the limit of their explanations is reached. In the course of chapter seven, Joseph underlines that notably at the local level in the case of developing countries, a functioning form of Governmentality could sometimes not be found, just parts of it. This could be also a very interesting point for further investigations of this topic.

To summarize the book as a whole: it is a very interesting piece of work for researchers and students as well, who may be looking for a fresh angle and an heterodox approach to IR theory. The book speaks notably to those who are interested in questions of Governmentality, or more generally in Foucaultian theory and IR. Another strength of the book is the combination of theoretical work and its empirical implications for current world politics.

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