MEHADRIN, EMBODIMENT OF THE 21ST CENTURY, NEO-LIBERAL, ZIONIST IMAGINATION
José Luis Moraguès CCIPPP - 24/01/2012

On 26 November 2011, more than 60 boycott actions, against Mehadrin, the number one Israeli producer and exporter to Europe of Israeli citrus (Jaffa) and avocado (TOP), took place in 13 European countries. The slogans were: “Take Apartheid of the Menu!” “Mehadrin out of Europe!” During the following month, the giant Israeli firm acknowledged the launch of this campaign by completely reorganising its website, some pages of which are still under construction (http://www.mehadrin.co.il). There is no doubt that the liquidation of Agrexco, triggered by the BDS Europe campaign, impelled Mehadrin to remove all trace of the origin of its products and phrases such as "Medjoul dates are "grown in Israel, in the Jordan Valley" vanished.

However, by suppressing certain information regarding the origin of its products (and thus of colonisation) and by replacing the pictures, the new version of the website clearly reaffirms the concept of a "new Mehadrin", white pioneer of Western modernity. In doing so, Mehadrin takes up and illustrates the racist metaphor used by Ehud Barak: "Israel is a villa surrounded by jungle." Though it hoped to neutralise the boycott of its products, Mehadrin has offered BDS new ammunition against not only the company and its products, but also Zionism.

In its endeavour to eradicate all trace of anything Palestinian or even Arab from its website, Mehadrin has wiped out any human or contextual feature that could evoke Palestine. The break is completed with nostalgia for "Biblical landscapes" as a historical reference to the origins of a claimed “Jewish people”. Yet, cementing the State to that history offers an uncertain future, which invites challenge and simply disintegrates. The steel of skyscrapers (and military tanks) offers greater security.

Thus, the space of the new Zionist imagination that is under construction in the super-neoliberal 21st century is a slate wiped clean of all Middle Eastern historical, cultural or religious content. It is a more or less virtual space, without boundaries and apparently limitless. However, the infinity of the horizon is reduced to the end of the field, to a mere boundary marker. It is a false horizon, flat and without perspective, with no future. With it, we enter an artificial, dehumanised, unnatural and closed space. It is a greenhouse-like space or, rather, that of a huge bubble: like Center Parcs where, beneath a massive glass canopy, "leisure" is consumed in an artificial, tropical environment.

Here there is no possible new alliance with nature, the land is no more than the biochemical substrate, totally manufactured and controlled by science so that it may be exploited to the maximum. All human, bodily and cultural relationship with the land is replaced by a relationship with the substrate, which can be metaphorically compared with hydroponics (a soil-less growing technique), i.e. the idealised goal of a totally artificial environment.

The new, imaginary world that emerges from Mehadrin's new website is interesting in at least two ways:

- It reveals Zionism's bounded and uncrossable horizon in an idealised form, as artificial hydroponics exported to Palestine. Suddenly, Ehud Barak's racist metaphor: "Israel is a villa in the jungle", no longer reads as a metaphor of Israel as a victim of hostile encirclement but, rather, as Zionism's ultimate goal as a project of enclosure.
- It shows that, in spite of changed content, the essence of Zionist ideas remains: "a land without a people", unlimited virgin space for development, a land where white, European pioneers shall make the desert bloom, thanks to Western technology. Note that the conquest of new territory (colonisation) has been excised: no new lands to conquer, only available substrates that are neither savage nor hostile and whose profitability just needs to be organised and managed. There is, however, one constant: the existence of the Palestinians and the resistance of the Palestinian people are totally denied.

We see below four key images of the new Zionism according to Mehadrin.

Industrial agriculture and technology in the service of the environment and organic food!
And, wherever you look, the horizon is the limit and boundary of a controlled space.

This is a new version of: "we shall make the desert bloom".

There is no longer a desert to conquer, only conquered spaces to exploit: vast, empty spaces just waiting to be made profitable.

I have sought diligently, yet I see nothing; this is "truly a land without people"!

Dynamic, young managers at the glass and steel cutting edge of Western modernity!

We are white Westerners!