Panel: Is anarchism Western? Anarchism in a (post)colonial world and the challenges this entails.

**What are we fighting for!/? The Primacy of Performance in Association**

**Abstract:**

For millennia Jerusalem has been a crossroads and a destination. From the four points of the compass armies triumphed and retreated, merchants gave their toll and kept their piece, migrants and pilgrims came and went and stayed. The city is a repository of the thoughts, tongues, texts, deaths and lives of the humanity that has touched upon its hills, and this cultural accretion is unending. Today the *Sheikh Jarrah* neighborhood lies meters from 'the seam', the 1967 armistice line that defines Jerusalem as being both East and West. Each Friday since 2009 a protest has been held here to oppose the eviction of Palestinian families by Jewish settlement organizations. Here for an hour or so you will find local Palestinians, veteran and neophyte Jewish Israeli activists, tourists, anarchists, internationalists, grandmothers, Christians and social scientists all gathered together. This tiny multitude may proclaim 'solidarity!' and seem to act as one, but ethnographic investigation finds a multiplicity of diagnostics, motivations and aims amongst the participants. Yet the performance of protest itself does realize a community of sorts, a voluntary association, which also produces sociality beyond the aims of its elusive 'common purpose'. This paper brings empirical insight into a practice of grassroots, non-violent, anti-domination politics, in a region seen to be defined by those very opposites. The first challenge to the panel is to question the efficacy of imposing an anarchist label, and its attendant proscriptions, on what is an unstated but inherently anarchist practice. The second challenge is to ask what can anarchist theory learn from anti-domination praxis, and the nature, durability and potentiality of connections it produces?

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**Introduction: Where are we now?**

The perception that the globe experienced an unexpected explosion of street protest lead Time Magaine to elect ‘The Protestor’ as its person of the year in its December 2011 edition. The front cover image that distilled the millions of people who came to the streets to defy an assortment of powers in varied socio-political fields from Wall Street to Amman was a veiled woman. For executive editor Jim Frederick “The protester is an embodiment of the global, disunited, unorganized and spontaneous wellsprings of civic unrest that has been - according to the editors of Time - the story of 2011” (Merav 2011). To what degree is the editor (in)correct in describing the regional protests thus, and how can such tenuous cohesion and coordination be an effective force for shaping social life across continents? Certainly the causes, aspirations, motivations and tactics of the unrest of 2011 were not unrelated. In Appadurai’s (2008) model of transnational flows a massive contraction in the neo-liberal financescape lead to an unprecedented transfer of wealth from multiple national reserves to international private corporations. Mediascapes disseminated struggles for freedom motivated successive revolts against strong-man nepotistic national monopolies across an Arab ethnoscape. International travel of the well enough heeled certainly assisted in promoting the ideoscapes of the democratic meta-narrative. Mobile phone footage posted on YouTube, text messages and social network sites often played a significant role in profiling and organizing local resistance and documenting suppression on technoscapes unconstrained by territorial boundaries. The tactic of taking to the streets was seen and reproduced in many different cities and in different states across the world. Though each protest is expressed in a specific physical space the interconnectedness of the phenomenon is undeniable (cf Juris & Razsa 2012).

Interconnectedness is not however unity, though Fredrick does feel some sense of fellowship amongst these protests. “Even if the ideologies and even if the politics do not match up, there is a feeling of a bottom-up movement to this” (Merav 2011). A structural affinity and a feeling fellowship connecting a dispersed multitude who never have, and never could meet one another? This sounds as much like Anderson’s (1991) imagined community as one could wish for, and in recent decades theorists have been trying to imagine just what the globalization of social protest might be. Global Civic Society, Civitas, Ethnoscapes, Long Distance Nationalism, Distant Issue Movements, Transnational Networks are just a few of the objects of analysis now well established in academia, and which are posited as a significant resources for social agency (cf Melucci & Keane 1989; Basch et al. 1994; Diani 1997; Beck 2005; Appadurai 2008; Landy 2011). However, the culmination of recent protests has not immediately instantiated a New World Order. The balance sheets of financial corporations have benefited while nations and individuals seek insolvency. Austerity plans are imposed by undemocratic institutions, and uncertainty defines the future of the nations of the Arab Spring. Global Civic Society is not as united, organized and long planned as the dominant forces against which it rallies and the performance of protest is highly contextual and, compared to the performance of nationhood or commerce, highly
ephemeral. Social revolution takes time and endurance to overcome the embedded structures. Can the transnational connectivity between localized protests produce more than just tactical and inspirational connections amongst dispersed practitioners? Can Global Civic Society become more than just an abstract, the intermittently instrumental structure of *geselshaft* - a society in which operate? Can the connections produce a more affective collective capable of reproducing itself over time and space it will need to endure? Can we and should we be talking more about *gemeinschaft* – a community in which we belong – and the fluid and far reaching connections between various communities?

In this paper I explore these questions by comparing how community has traditionally been understood, as a self-reproducing social collective linked to a bounded space, and how that conceptualization is now being challenged by contemporary social practice. Here I follow on from the work of Vered Amit (Amit & Rapport 2002), Sarah Pink (Pink 2008) and others on ‘communities of purpose’ and ‘emplaced sociality’. My observations are drawn from the last twelve month’s ethnography working with various ‘left-wing’ activists in and around the Jerusalem area. Anti-domination activism in this region provides a unique perspective from which to explore these question of transnational dissent and community for two significant reasons. Firstly, this not an issue which has suddenly exploded onto the scene. The practices of domination here and of non-violent resistance to those practices now span generations. Secondly, the transnational dimension of this resistance goes way beyond technological and ideological connections. Thousands of people come here every year to engage directly with the issue (Koensler & Papa 2011).

Within Israel and Palestine we can observe the ‘emplaced sociality’ of multiple local identities and backgrounds, and hundreds of others from places and perspectives across the globe, joined together in long-term practice of non-violent resistance. I believe this practice goes beyond the dry abstractions of networks and society, to become for a time an intimate and affective community. Indeed when such a diversity of backgrounds and opinions are brought together in this way it is not some primordial essence or unifying origin which constitutes the community, but only the practice of dissent itself. Underlying and motivating this collective practice is a multitude of different understandings of the situation and its resolution, whose only common expression is that something is wrong here. My primary argument is that although such contextual communities are now widespread and common they remain unrecognized by state-power, academia. Consequently their legitimacy as an affective and natural form of collectivity is dismissed, even to a large degree by its own constituents. In analyzing this reality the paper is also secondarily a critique of Framing Process Theory (Benford & Snow 2000) and the limits of utility in transnational social movements. Amongst the myriad of local, generational, occupational, cultural and other such distinctions which constitute the protestor, the imposition of specific problem diagnosis and solution prognosis framings serve as much to divide the community of the wrong as do the counter-frames presented by the structures they seek to change. This must necessarily include Anarchist framings, for though these people come together through voluntary

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1 Since I am exploring who we are and what we are fighting for I use the term Left-wing very loosely here.
association and practice anti-domination politics most certainly do not identify themselves as an anarchist collective, many would find the assertion absurd. Our primary concern is not to tell people what the problem is but to support, enable, and celebrate the performance already underway. Specifically for this panel the two challenges I present are firstly to question the efficacy of imposing an anarchist label, and its attendant proscriptions, on what is already unstated but inherently anarchist practice. The second challenge is to ask what can anarchist theory learn from anti-domination praxis, and the nature, durability and potential of the sociality it produces?

Who are we again?

I was given a lift home by some Israelis from the weekly Friday protest in the predominantly Palestinian neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem. Deirdre and Tanya in the front, are some of the founding members of Women in Black. They are anonymous and quiet icons of an international franchise of anti-war of movements who use the name and adopt their practice of weekly silent vigils. I sat in the back with Goldman whom I have known since 2003 when he was a signatory to Courage to Refuse, a conscientious objection movement that emerged out of the experiences of Israeli combat soldiers during the Second Intifada. He is one of my best Israeli friends. He had noticed how I had mingled today, not having enough time in the hour and half that the protest tends to last to speak to him. “You’re really part of the left-wing community now”, he said. “Well, you know the trouble with community?” I replied. He shook his head and furrowed his brow until, with all the flourish and timing of a good punch-line, I pulled out Amit & Rapport’s book The Trouble with Community. We shared a laugh and chatted more until we dropped him off. For the rest of the trip I talked to the two ladies about a conference paper, how it was influenced by my observations at their weekly vigil. They were happy that they had helped and asked whether anthropology was all “bla-bla-bla” before dropping me off to write up my days observations.

Thus ends my typical Friday routine. After collecting the kids from nursery I get to Jerusalem city centre for one o’clock for the weekly Women in Black vigil. Deirdre usually arrives first with Tanya. She keeps the banners and black hand-shaped placards upon with is written “End the Occupation”. There are three versions of the placards: Hebrew, Arabic and English. We are regularly joined by half-a-dozen other Israeli women, and one man Micha. They have been maintaining this vigil every week for 23 years and most of the women are now grandmothers. Three to five Internationals from the World Council of Churches (WCC) also regularly join the vigil. They are volunteers on three month rotas in Israel and their movement between protest sites and security checkpoints is dictated by a regional coordinator. Often two or three other random visitors from abroad join. Recently the Yasamba drummers have turned up on a few occasions, adding their rhythmic volume to the silent vigil. The place, time and format of the vigil has remained roughly the same for twenty-three years, “We have kept this as a space where people know they can come to protest...I am convinced that it is more important now than ever”, Tanya tells me. “It’s pathetic”, says her husband Pauli, “fifteen people, six of
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them Israeli? All the protests here are pathetic”. At the stroke of two the women greet the end of the vigil with smiles and self-deprecating relief. There is small bustle of chit-chat as everyone comes back together to return the signs and placards, a criss-cross of \textit{Shabbat Shaloms} and everybody heads on their way.

This leaves me an hour to cross the city centre to the weekly protest in \textit{Sheikh Jarrah}. Deirdre and Tanya also regularly attend this protest, as do a contingent from the WCC observers. A handful of male adult local residents who have either been evicted or face eviction constitute the core of the group. Other locals sometimes join, young children often hang about, sometimes a group of Palestinian \textit{Balad} activists from the Hebrew University also partake. A dozen Israelis regularly attend. There has been a protest here since 2009 against the eviction of the Palestinians residents and the settlement of Jewish families in their homes as part of a larger Zionist settlement project in East Jerusalem. A large and vibrant Israeli left-wing movement, \textit{Solidariot Sheikh Jarrah}, grew out of the protest which was started by one of the evicted local women. In Autumn 2011 when I first joined the protest \textit{Solidariot} had, somewhat contentiously, just decided to move on to some of the many other sites of inequity around the city and country. As such the protest is not particularly constituted by the local community or a particular movement. Most locals do not take part and of the Israelis there are people from \textit{Ta'ayush}, \textit{B'Tselem}, \textit{Breaking the Silence}, \textit{Yasamba}, \textit{Anarchists Against the Wall}, \textit{Women in Black}, \textit{Rabbis for Human Rights}, \textit{Boycott from Within}, \textit{New Profile}, \textit{Courage to Refuse}, \textit{Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions}, \textit{Solidariot}, and some who are un-aligned. Many Internationalists come and go. The WCC schedule a regular attendance and almost every week there is a contingency of once-off visitors; Christian groups on ‘fact-finding’ tours from Holland, a French Palestinian Solidarity group, New York Communists, activists from the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), the Speaker of the Irish Parliament and his entourage. Some people take signs from the bag and stand by the road side, or gather around the samba drummers and join in the chants, a fair number hang back chatting in groups of three or four, surprised and smiling when they meet someone they haven't seen for a while, exchanging news both personal and political. At the end of the protest everyone disperses, to home, hotels, hostels, or to coffee shops and bars to meet friends or prepare for a family meal.

Here is a segment of the left-wing community in Israeli, not I stress the Isreali left-wing community in which Israeli identity is primary, but a community in which its emplacement in Israel is the key. \textsuperscript{2} The protest in \textit{Sheikh Jarrah} is an inherently transnational affair of a temporal social ‘performance’ in Turner's terms (1988) which for an hour or two brings together people from various neighbourhoods,

\footnote{The use of the national label here is, like most things in the region, a contentious convenience and should I stress that I am not theoretically bound by national limits for Israel, Palestine or the processes which support and oppose these constructs. Methodologically though I have proceed to observe the practice of dissent here firstly and primarily from the Israeli side and there are many others who can more capably speak of the left-wing community in Palestine.}
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cities, countries and predilections on the basis that something is wrong. Some members of these communities spend considerable time and effort organising and orchestrated these performances, monitoring their causes and effects, maintaining and disseminating information and mobilising resources. If we step back from the organisers and shapers of the protest practice and discourse we find however that the majority are not fully engaged with the script of the performance. It is not a Durkheimian cohesion ritual focused on a collective totem (Durkheim 1912). Some chant, some don't, some don't like the content of some of the slogans, some don't like the drums, other love them.

So this is the community that I am said to be part of. An Irishman carrying out research in Israel for an English university. One of a few hundred people from different towns and neighbourhoods who go to one or two protests sites each weekend, out of a dozen or so to choose from. We join with hundreds of international activists to act in solidarity with individual Palestinians and with Popular Resistance Committees. Aside from protest activism there is also a plethora of local NGO’s like Ir Amin, Alternative Information Centre, Macshom Watch, Grassroots Jerusalem, Adalah, Centre for Peace and Justice who are all in various ways opposing oppressive state power. Is the colloquial use of ‘community’ just shorthand for dissent’s capacity to produce social capital, “ties that are based on mutual trust and mutual recognition among the actors involved in the relationship, although they do not necessarily imply the presence of collective identity” (Diani 1997 emphasis added)? And there’s the rub, is my community ‘merely’ an instrumental network of potential resources without the affective sense of belonging that constitutes an identity (Antonio R. Damasio 2000; Marranci 2006; Berezin 2001; 1999)? To explore this I turned towards the participants’ understandings of the situation, their own diagnostics and prognostics of the issues, appropriating the classic protest chant as a research question - What are we fighting for?

What are we fighting for? The Moral Multiverse

Nilli: “What are we fighting for...oh that’s a hard one [a minute’s silence] we’re fighting for different things you see [another minute’s silence] I don’t know, can I get back to you on that”

Vered: “I’m fighting so I can go camping, hiking at the weekend. I want a normal life”

Moshe: “I could give you the political answer, justice, equality, bla bla bla, but I just want to live in an normal city. Like Montreal”

Khalid: “This is not political this is social”

Kate: “I’m here in solidarity with the Palestinians”

Jake: “This is about justice and equality”

As the above responses to my question demonstrate ideological communality is also loose and un-
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ascribed. While Palestinian national flags are commonly flown and the chants my call out ‘Free Free Palestine’, ‘Israel is a fascist state’, such overtly nationalist symbols and notions are more rhetorical or perfunctory than essential. This is true even for the local Palestinians, as Khalid, a dedicated organiser revealed when he told me his protest was social and not political, while following this up with “they want to build a huge settlement from here to Silwan”. Though in many imaginations the Two State Solution has gained much traction Farouk from Hizme tells me he doesn’t care what flag flies “so long as I’m left alone to build a house and raise my family, find work”. Amongst some Internationalists Palestinian national liberation is a strong trope – “as is anti-Semitism” claims another Jewish Israeli activist. Other Internationalists talk of respect for Human Rights or liberal democratic values. Israeli critiques and visions of the future are also fragmented. While the Women in Black call for an end to the occupation “it’s a rather outdated notion” noted Yigal as he stood there holding a black hand at the vigil commemorating 45 years of the 1967 occupation. “I hate to think what would happen if the occupation ended...the population transfers, the racism”, Goldman told me. While some still aim for an independent Palestinian others see a future in a single state with equality for all, - the very end of Zionism in some eyes. Another sees the primacy of cities for future polities and focuses his efforts on Jerusalem. Given the long duration of the conflict many older dissenting Israelis hate what the country has become since 1967. Others without memories of innocence hate what it is, and a few logically following the causality critique back before 1948 to European Colonialism, have come to hate what it has always been.

There is simply no unifying framing to access, no definitive protagonist to blame, no certain prognosis for resolution. This is commonly cited as a weakness in social movements and a cause of internal fracturing of left-wing movements in general. Such accusations have also been levelled at the Occupy X movement. While I do not dismiss the efficacy of framing, the diffuse powers that the dissenters face - state ideology and force, international capital, private property rights, geo-politics, messianic visions, bureaucracies, and national curricula to name a few – offer no head of the beast to be decapitated (cf Pallister-Wilkins 2009). Fortified as they are by years of implementation, such post-modern mechanisms of liberal control deliberately obfuscate culpability. The dictators’ delight in pasting their bust on any and every street corner ultimately portraits them as the one who must fall, but the evicted Palestinian tenants from Sheikh Jarrah are locked in an Israeli court fight over private property rights and Ottoman era documentation. That their opponents in court are Nahalat Shimon International. One of a number of US based organizations who are explicit in their Zionist motivations to settle Jews in East Jerusalem, has no bearing on the proper proceedings of civil cases (cf Blau 2009; B’Tselem 2011; Ravid 2011; Eldar & Hasson 2012). It is stipulated that justice is blind to race, gender or creed.

Faced with such a complexity of power relations any attempt to present a framing of the situation and a solution that will resonate validity to the diversity of interpretation, is not only futile it is divisive. And so here is the first challenge to the panel, for the post-colonial world is well past simplification. Thus while ‘the left’ is often accused of in-fighting and fragmentation it must be acknowledged that internal
dissent is partially the result of a Simmelian process (Simmel 1904), where diverse knowledge and tactics are produced in opposition to a diffuse and elusive system of control. The few Israeli anarchists I work with realise this and make no effort to promote political theory, focusing instead on practice. The irony of fighting for a nationalist cause is not lost on them, but in the opinion of one there is “no possibility” of the Palestinians turning to this social critique. There is obviously a degree of unity in the performing of protest itself, of being there, but there is also a unifying social critique underpinning this performance. Quite simply everyone shares the sense that something is wrong. In the transnational moral-multiverse a subjective sense of wrongness has the power to overcome the normatively ‘feel-good freedom counter-framings’ that on a global level have been remarkably successful in legitimizing dispossessions and colonisation of Palestine. Even our generally generous disposition towards freedom from violence, due process, democratic accountability, freedom to trade, self-determination, freedom of choice, even human rights, have failed to overcome the sense that something is wrong in the way that Palestinians are put out of work and out of home and replaced with Jewish families.

The obvious argument is that thinking something is wrong isn’t any kind of solution and is therefore of little use to anyone. One can commonly hear even from activists that ‘it’s complicated’ or from inactivists ‘well, what are you going to do?’. Clearly the entire history of dissent in Israel hasn’t ended the occupation or prevented the growth in settlements, which leads to the second challenge of this paper: is there anything of use that anarchist theory learn from so ineffective an anti-domination praxis in Israel? My answer is that the nature, durability and potential of the connections it has produced and continues to produce go beyond the tactical, the inspirational or the instrumental. They produce community united by the sense of wrongness and the practice of dissent. This is not a community as traditionally imagined or described, and so in the following section I turn to theoretical critiques of community and of what a transnational dissenting collective might come to imagine what they are doing and what they are achieving or failing to achieve. Exploring anthropological approaches and observations of community I submit that the discrepancy between how community is traditionally defined and perceived, and how community is actually practiced, limits the sense of potential and agency within these communities of wrongness.
What is Community or How is Community?

Eran: “Yeah I think the Palestinians here, at least in Sheikh Jarrah, are part of the community...the Internationals they are only here for a few months but they play an important role because they spread the message...and change won’t come from the government here or the Israeli left, we’re too small” 17/08/12 SJ

Noam: “Yeah I think you should come to the meeting, this is a public issue, you come here, you’re part of it” 17/08/12

In her theoretical dialog with Nigel Rapport on how the notion of community has been conceived and approached in the social sciences, Vered Amit points out that the historical practice of ethnography – anthropologists going somewhere to study someone – has reinforced a correlation between place and community, in effect employing location as the unit of analysis rather than the object of research (Amit & Rapport 2002). The discipline had taken its time in coming to understand that their observed cultural isolates were neither timeless units of primordial sociality, nor structured on innocent balanced cohesion of Biblical imaginations. It began when Max Gluckman, Victor Turner and others of the Manchester School made confirmed collective sociality as being places of constant contention and linked to a multiplicity of agencies external to ‘the tribe’. Gender, generation, blood-lines, indeed any given social structure define expressions of dissent as much as they do collective unity. Gluckman unpacked the distinction between rebellion and revolution, where common rebellion serves to reinforce the underlying traditions of organisation and authority. Turner explicated the ‘social dramas’, the processes and trajectories along which tensions emerged and were resolved within various communities (cf Turner 1957; 1967; Gluckman 1958; 1955; Mitchell 1969; Epstein 1969). Critique of traditional collectives eventually lead to a reappraisal of modern expressions of collectivity previously presumed and promoted to be natural, nations and nationalism, Gellner and Anderson were amongst the first of many to unpick the historical contingency through which nations had come to be, and the mechanisms used to support and enforce the idea of the ‘imagined community’ in the peoples of those nations. The flags, narratives, myths, symbols and institutions constantly disseminating the notion of sameness through school and ceremony to a plurality of people, have been astoundingly successful in fixing the national notion in the minds of billions of people across the in the twenty-first century. In the nineties the critique went further as it followed the accelerating flow of peoples, resources, ideas and practices through and beyond the borders of nations, showing that even great states cannot define, control and protect the authenticity of national expression. The world was unbound. (cf Gellner 1983; 1994; Anderson 1991; Billig 1995; Handelman 2004; Basch et al. 1994; Appadurai 1990; Berezin 1999; Beck 2005).

Much of transnational research focused either on meta-critique of social organization in globalization,
such as Beck’s Global Civil Society, or followed the reproduction of community continuity over great distances. In the second case, Amit argues, that anthropology in particular replaced place with ethnicity as its prime unit of analysis. Ethnicity is often equated with origin transmitted through blood, and origin is most often related to place. Thus we hear of ethnic Armenian, Afro-American, Irish or Jewish all of which reproduce a sense of community through strong place-blood identities, even when the people themselves have never themselves set foot in Afro-America. However, in Amit’s research on travelling salesmen, holiday jobbers, high-tech contractors and high-school ‘communities’ she found people trained for, expecting, embracing and even valorising disjuncture as part of a cosmopolitan adventure of possibilities. This is not movement with practiced continuity or imagined de-territorialised belonging to a Diaspora. This form of movement is, in the testimonies of Amit’s informants, associated more with liberty than with imposition and one that produces contextual communities where place and ethnicity is of secondary importance to purpose and feeling.

**From Consociation to Personal Intimacy**

Amit uses the term community to distinguish a collective connection that is not merely or even primarily instrumental. This excludes for example members of a workforce if they engage only through formal roles. However, when co-workers begin to meet for coffee, lunch conversations, or go bowling together some of them may come to feel part of a community. This 'casual' getting together constitutes a great deal of the social interactions that occur in modern urban life.

“Most of our experiences of communality arise similarly out of more or less limited interactions afforded by a variety of circumstantial associations, with our neighbours, the parents of children at our children's school, or team-mates, fellow students, club members, conference-goers and more” (Amit in Amit & Rapport 2002, pp.58–9)

Even more limited, less formal, familiarities can grow in urban areas. We recognise others, at shops or bus stops, over time learning the rhythms of the lives of people whom we do not know by name. For Wallman (1998) recognising and being recognised by others in these ‘traffic relations’ creates a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging, through what Amit calls *consociation*, emerges first through eye-contact, recognition, then being able to put names to faces and telling stories about mutually shared experiences. Some such relationships can lead to dyadic links, exported out of their initial context, to become imbedded in a personal networks, or friendship in common parlance, where communality is conceptualised though commonality rather than by Barth’s (1969) traditional academic notion of belonging defined through difference. Amit cites Dyke's work on the construction of community sentiment in suburban Canada through the consociation practices of parents supporting their children at track and field days. At their childrens’ track-days they shared the purposes and practices of positive child rearing, leading to formal identification as a “track parent with reference to a person’s history of co-participation with others in happenings”(Dyke & Amit 2002, p.116). Repeated presence at and participation in track days, entailing casual social interactions and a growing intimacy with both people
and behavioural norms, can lead to one being identified with – and feeling as part - of a community.

This is form of sociality is reflected in my experiences at the Sheikh Jarrah and in the testimonies of my participants. An event similarly contextual, choreographed and scheduled in time and place as a track day event, one driven by a loosely shared purpose. For the track day parents the shared purpose is concern for raising children, for dissenters it is the concern that something is wrong. Initially I had pre-existing relationships with some people at the events, who helped me meet other people, at first exchanging no more than names and hand-shakes. People gradually learn the rhythm of the performance, what to chant, when to chant, and when to chat. Faces become recognised. smiles and nods are exchanged before background stories, points of view, and imaginations on current events and possible futures. Some, but by no means all, of these short coffee-break-style conversations are exported beyond the boundaries of the protest performance. Occasionally and inadvertently initially instrumental interactions become nakedly interpersonal, what could be called a good night out with friends. Thus I became to be seen as part of a community and to feel as belonging to a community.

The sense of something wrong is a significant distinction between the consociate communities of pro-Palestinian activism and those of track-day parents. Wrongness is a powerfully affective motivator of behaviour requiring a social conceptualisation that presupposes rightness, it is a moral precept requiring an acculturated understanding of how the word ought to be. It does not require cognitive reasoning to feel something is wrong for a feeling is an almost instantaneous judgement that informs our rational thought processes. Onto this embodied judgement we retroactively validate that judgement by consciously accessing narratives and framings of the situation that support the feeling (cf Antonio R. Damasio 2000; 1997; Prinz 2004; 2007; Jasper 2006). Thus, hearing reasonable counter-arguments or realising the complexity of a situation doesn’t necessarily dispel the deep seated sense that something is still wrong. For Israelis in the left-wing community the perception of wrong trumps the acculturated fear of an anti-Semitism world or accusations of treachery. For Palestinians and Internationalists their understandings of what is wrong is shaped by completely different narratives and experiences, but the rationalization of the wrong is of secondary importance than its affective capacity to motivate them to protest together.

The community of dissent in Israel and Palestinian has endured long enough to witness the changing fortunes in the legitimacy of major critiques claiming to define right and wrong, Communist Internationalism, Nationalism, Human Rights, Anarchism included. It has continuously reproduced itself over generations. Aside from its affective content it has helped produce institutional and occupational spaces of dissent in a myriad of NGOs employing a range of diagnostics and tactics. Participation by Internationalists in groups or as individuals has greatly increased over the past decade and enthusiasm and energy to weary locals. International governments and NGOs, who also provide occupational space for dissent, are also repositories of expertise, large capital reserves and transnational channels of communication which may be accessed by localised dissent performances. There are bars,
bookshops, coffee-shops, organised tours, protests, film-screenings, book launches, dinner parties, and music concerts where many of these people will cross paths both in professional and social contexts. Very often friends meet by design or accident, faces are recognised, and introductions are made. Not everyone is personally acquainted with each other and certainly not everyone agrees with the next. Some who are well acquainted are not currently on speaking terms. Others may not form strong and enduring bonds from people within this group and move on after a short time to other fields of practice. Others find and loose love. If we dispense with the need for a sense of place as an ontological anchor this is as much a community as one to hope to imagine.

The Troubled Community

It would however be trite to ignore the fact that this community has had to reproduce itself or that it is not the subject of brutality, oppression, derision and death. The power structures, practices and society it resists are recalcitrant, militaristic, at times openly racist and messianic. It is certainly not a community one could describe as happy or having a sense of agency. It is necessary to be critical and identify some dimensions affecting such a negative understanding.

Failure and Oppression: It cannot be said the ‘peace camp’ or the pro-Palestinian movements have had much material success. Symbolically the issue of Palestinian rights is a prominent discourse across great swathes of the world, and the PA has built state institutions within Area A. But this Palestinian archipelago lies within the Israeli controlled Area C. The sense of potential is not as strong as the feeling of fatigue and resignation.

Identity Fragmentation and Interpersonal Tensions: Localized and nationalized identities and understandings, different agendas, suspicions and egos, condescension, and the constant flow of people also diminish the sense of unity. “There is no solidarity amongst the Palestinians”, one veteran told me and Israel’s control has fragmented social cohesion. Despite their successes mobilizing global solidarity activism over the last ten years, many of the Palestinian Popular Committee protests are also sites of internal contention and are having to reassess the solidarity discourse to avoid stagnation (cf al Saafin 2012). The Israeli left is also characterized by most everyone as unfriendly, aloof and condescending. There is a cool reception to newcomers both from Israel and abroad. A large number of Israeli participants describe finding it difficult to become accepted. “I went to Nabi Saleh for weeks and no one [Israeli] would talk to me…there’s a macho thing about getting arrested to become accepted”. Another told me, “I started by going to Neve Shalom but I wasn’t comfortable there”, and another, “we basically started the drumming because we felt alone, isolated at demos…selfish reasons really”. Knowledge and understanding of the complexity of powers, laws, territories, private enterprise, bureaucracies, and ideologies which maintain the occupation are difficult to explain, particularly to other Israelis who are only just
coming to question the official narratives. Rigid, dogmatic, and angry re-framing of that narrative to family members or friends can be as divisive institutionally imposing them. As are the arrays of diagnostics and prognostics developed and discarded over time, experienced dissenters would do well not to impose their accumulated expertise upon the curious and tentative dissenter. This is already a small and marginalized group and more effort must be made to thank new participants for turning up and to be patient with discourses they feel the situation has grown out of.

Institutional Dysfunction: The role of NGOs is also problematic, as is the decision to professionalize dissent. Post-Oslo the large international NGOs are open to accusations of normalization or occupation sub-contracting by providing core services which frees Israel from its obligations to ensure the wellbeing of populations under its military administration. They are also beholden not so much to those local populations as they are to the patrons that fund them (cf Nakhleh 2011). “I don’t want to be employed by the occupation – I don’t want to be out of a job when it finishes”.

So far as a community they engage in as much ‘internal’ contention as any other social collective. Institutional dysfunction is not unusual, and few people find a dream job. Interpersonal tensions emerge in all familiar networks and there are few homogenous communities free of identity politics. In a mobile world people come and go all the time and community can seem a very temporal and fluid affair. Hope and failure and a lack of agency, while not unique to this community, are the most difficult and important issues to address, for as one activist told me “this is not like environmentalism or animal cruelty in the UK, this is a military occupation and people die”. The sense of agency, I suggest, can be empowered when those practicing dissent, understand they are practicing community and that community is not one big happy family where everyone knows your name but is a “a wider set of social potentials that exist for a specified population”(Pink 2008).

This community of wrongness already manifest many of the features Amit identifies with a diaspora (Amit & Rapport 2002); they are fragmented, dispersed throughout the lands, and they maintain transnational contacts with individuals and organisations who like them are similarly disposed to perceive the wrongness. Two impediments stand in the way of realizing the potential of this community:

Legitimate structure: There is no common place or origin of this diaspora and so it is neither a traditional community nor does it employ the traditions used to imagine the community. There are no common origin myths, no proscribed rituals or official celebrations, no symbols, and little sense of its historical legacy or future permanence. In Herzfeld’s (1997) terms there is no structural nostalgia. There are none of the meta-functions normally used to reproduce cohesion and identity in other imagined collectivities. The proscription of community being of place, of ethnicity, or of transcendental belonging, devalues the community of purpose.

Traditional Imagination: This in turn is understood to be true by members of this community. The collective deixis ‘we’ is rarely extended beyond a given movement or specific event, ignoring the long historicity of their practices, the extent of dissent, and the latent capacity in the wider Global
Civic Society in which it is embedded. This restricted notion of community as place is found in an answer I’m commonly given “There is a left-wing community in Tel Aviv, but not here in Jerusalem”.

A community is practiced here, but without the bells and whistles, and without the perception of potentiality in the given population. It is an unimagined community.

**Imagining the Unimagined**

So what is being achieved here through the making of these connections? Certainly the practice of dissent in Israeli is not exactly turning the tide against the constriction, oppression and dispossession of Palestinian social expression. Israeli politics is trending rightwards through democratic elections, and there is talk of annexing Area C. It is idle to talk of where we would be without the practices of dissent for resistance comes with power and so we must ask instead how resistance can be empowered in a post-modern, post-colonial world.

To that end I offer the following theses:

1. Community and the sense of belonging it imparts are more significant in their affective dimension than abstractions like Global Civil Society or transnational networks, because they are more than instrumental practices.

2. They impart a greater sense of agency than Civitas or Cosmopolitan identity because they are collective practices.

3. Contemporary practices of community as temporal practices, loosely driven by purpose rather than place or identity are commonplace.

4. Theorists and other agencies of power do not accord to these social expressions the same status or rights, as they do to traditional conceptualizations of community.

5. As acculturated subjects of those same theorists and agencies of power, our power to imagine the extent, durability and potential agency of the dissenting community is limited.

6. It imperative that dissent feels it has agency.

7. Legitimizing flexible belonging to communities of purpose in the minds of global polities may help engender a greater sense of enduring collective potential agency.

8. This must encompass the need for flexibility in diagnostics and prognostics so as not exclude participation in the performance of dissent.

9. This will allow the community to reproduce itself organically.

10. Indeed flexible belonging and communities of purpose may be the only viable option for the globe in the decades to come.

11. Or perhaps that’s just anarchy.
Bibliography


