

**THEORIZING SUSTAINED SOLIDARITY: THE BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT AND
SANCTIONS (BDS) MOVEMENT IN TORONTO**

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Abstract

This dissertation seeks to understand the multiscalar dynamics that led to the fragmentation of the once relatively unified Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement in Toronto. The dissertation analyzes the interplay between endogenous and exogenous factors shaping the trajectory of the BDS movement in Toronto. These dynamics are informed by ontological (political imaginaries), temporal (intergenerational), institutional (community institutions), and agonistic (counter-movements) logics. Locating this project within an analysis of settler colonialism allow us to understand the particular contexts that shape solidarity. Both Israel and Canada share similar logics of settler colonialism that eliminate and/or racialize the native populations, and deploy various interconnected tools to keep the silencing dissident voices. The research is an activist-research, in which I employed triangulation as a methodological strategy, by combining in-depth interviews, archival work, and participant observation.

Deploying Bourdieu's theory of practice and its concepts of field, habitus, and capital, this dissertation contributes to theorize the multilayered and multiscalar variables that shape transnational movements. These dynamics are manifested in distinct political imaginaries oscillate between reviving the anti-colonial Third World Internationalism or adopting a pragmatic rights-based approach; collaborating with others with converging political projects versus avoiding those with diverging political visions; (un)intentionally reproducing colonial formations or attempting to decolonize.

The dissertation also integrates a temporal analysis that accounts for the variations of the political contexts, the birth of the "War on Terror" generation after 9/11, and the resurgence in the

demonization of the Arab, Muslim, and other people of color. Through an intergenerational lens, and by incorporating Mbembe's entangled temporality, the dissertation challenges the assumed total rupture created by transformative events that are associated with the formation of new political generations, and illuminates the internalized values and ideas that the "War on Terror" generation inherited from the previous generations, thereby contesting the reified boundaries that activists *themselves* have build between generations.

The continuity of the solidarity with the BDS is contingent on its ability to confront, adapt, and strategize against the multilayered and relatively unified Zionist counter-movements both in Toronto and transnationally. Moreover, the dissertation discusses the paradox facing social movements between institutionalization and grassrootsness.

DEDICATION

To Yasmine and Ali

And to those struggling for a better world

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAM	Anti-Apartheid Movement
ACLC	African Canadian Legal Clinic
AIC	Arab States Information Center
BDS	Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions
CAFS	Canadian Arab Friendship Society
CAIA	Coalition Against Israel Apartheid
CAUT	Canadian Association of University Teachers
CFME	Canadian Friends of the Middle East
CIJA	The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs
CJPME	Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East
CSIS	Canadian Security Intelligence Service
CUPE	Canadian Union of Public Employees
EUMC	European Union Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia
HAIA	High Schoolers Against Israeli Apartheid
IAW	Israeli Apartheid Week
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IHRA	International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance
IJV	Independent Jewish Voices
JDL	Jewish Defense League
NJCL	National Jewish Campus Life
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
QuAIA	Queer Against Israeli Apartheid
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
SCA	Syrian Canadian Association
TPFF	Toronto Palestinian Film Festival
TWPC	Third World People's Coalition
UIAFC	United Israel Appeal Federation Canada
WCAR	World Conference Against Racism

Chapter 1: Introduction

In its 2010 report about fighting back against the expansion of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, the Reut Institute, a leading think tank with close connections to the Israeli government, identified Toronto as a “hub of delegitimization” (2010, 16).¹ Indeed, Toronto had become a key site of local and global Palestine solidarity initiatives. In 2002, three years prior to the call that would establish the BDS movement, the United Church of Canada proposed to follow the strategy implemented during the South African Anti-Apartheid movement and to promote a boycott of Israeli products, and a divestment from Israeli companies. In 2005, a few months before the global call for BDS, some University of Toronto students launched the Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW), a week of educational conferences, workshops, teach-ins, performances, and exhibitions (Ziadah and Hanieh 2010). This annual event has now spread to more than 60 cities around the world. The movement gained further strength in May 2006 when the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) in Ontario - which represents 240,000 members (CJPME 2015)- endorsed the BDS resolution in its annual convention. CUPE’s endorsement would inspire many unions around the world to follow suit. In 2008, the Toronto Palestinian Film Festival (TPFF) began to spread Palestinian narratives to a broader audience. By 2009-2010, the Coalition Against Israel Apartheid (CAIA) became an umbrella organization for many other organizations in Toronto fighting for the liberation of Palestine. The city became a burgeoning site of BDS activism, with coalitions in campuses, churches, unions, and other community institutions. However, after 2012, political organizing and activism as well as

¹ The report also identified other global cities such as London, Paris, Madrid, and the Bay Area as sites of “delegitimization” (Reut Institute 2010, 16).

solidarity initiatives had begun to decline in the city, leaving only a few fragmented initiatives. CAIA, Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA), and High Schoolers Against Israeli Apartheid (HAIA) ceased to exist. IAW events became fragmented, and disorganized. What was once understood to be an active hub of local and global initiatives and coalitions with tangible impacts on Israel's international image, public awareness of the Palestinian struggle, and corporate investment policy had become weakened and fragmented. While the breakdown of sustained solidarity brought back to the table renewed questions about the movement's expectations, its transnational configuration and counter-movement challenges, and the balance between institutionalization and grassrootsness, the fragmentation and weakening of the BDS movement in Toronto after 2012 remains puzzling.

The fragmentation and weakening of the BDS movement in Toronto are both symptoms and warnings of larger and more complex transformations of local and transnational political landscapes of relevance to transborder multi-sited social movements. Understanding the vicissitudes of solidarity with the BDS movement in Toronto holds both theoretical promise and political urgency given that the dynamics that sustain and hinder solidarity continuity are rarely examined in the social movement literature, and the opportunities and obstacles facing non-state actors are not always easily discerned by activists themselves. Accordingly, this dissertation asks: How do endogenous and exogenous dynamics affect the possibility of sustained political solidarity?

By sustained solidarity, I mean enduring ties among non-state actors in different movements who are linked in order to pursue particular social justice claims. To answer my central question, I ask the following sub-questions: Which political dynamics shape the continuities and discontinuities of solidarity? How do differing understandings of political

emancipation and solidarity praxis facilitate or hinder solidarity? How do political-generational shifts matter to solidarity? How did the strategies and tactics of counter-movements shape the trajectory of solidarity? And finally, what was the role of Canadian and transnational political institutions on the possibilities for sustained solidarity? Each of these sub-questions will help me to better understand the dynamics of sustained solidarity in the case of the BDS movement in Toronto.

Theoretical Framework

In order to effectively answer these questions, this dissertation adopts a relational approach and builds on Bourdieu's theory of practice (Bourdieu 2002), and its trio of conceptual pillars: field, habitus, and capital.

Bourdieu's theory of practice is useful for analyzing the space of contention in which the BDS in Toronto is embedded, as well as the residual ideologies and strategic frameworks that different actors carry with them as they engage in practices of collaboration and confrontation. Crossley (2003) posits that the concept of habitus is useful to "theorise activism in terms of durable dispositions" (51), because it is a learned practice that is simultaneously produced through historical and cultural practices, and continues to reproduce activist's engagement. Habitus, defined as "a system of durable and transposable dispositions which, integrating all past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions" (Bourdieu 1977, 261) allows us to analyze how the learned practices and unconscious dispositions shape the ways activists perceive and practice solidarity, and how the historicity of these dispositions are enacted in the BDS movement. The concept of habitus suggests that agents

are both constructed by and constructors of the social world, which shape their ideas, tastes, practices, and preferences. Their previous experience and their political socialization shape their present and future perceptions, which in turn shape the social movements interactions and actions. Habitus should not be understood as a solo concept, but rather as a set of dispositions that are constantly produced and reproduced through interactions within what Bourdieu called “the field”.

The field is a social space with a specific logic, or set of rules, where competition occurs between its occupiers, who act and behave to maintain their dominance and their power over the field. To maintain their position within the field, agents attempt to acquire different forms of relevant capital. Bourdieu’s concept of field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) is particularly useful to my work insofar as it allows me to conceptualize the BDS movement in Toronto as a social space of contention where different actors engage in relations of allegiance, collaboration, antagonism, and competition and set the “rules of the game” in a contextually situated and ever-shifting political arena in order to increase their social and symbolic capital. Furthermore, given my focus on the issue of continuities of solidarity in movements, Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is a useful lens to engage the question of how certain practices, ideas, and relations are internalized over time and to examine the temporal trajectory of the movement. While recognizing that when the concepts of field, capital, and habitus are taken together in relation to each other give me access to both synchronic and diachronic dimensions of solidarity, the dissertation will specifically focus on the analysis of the field at multiscale levels, since it shows the different relations with and within the BDS movement, that shape the trajectory of the movement.

In recent years, social movement scholars started incorporating Bourdieu's theories in the analysis of collective action (Crossley 2003; Goldberg 2003; Ibrahim 2015; Haluza-Delay 2008; Husu 2013). Examining social movements as "battlefields" or sites of contestation, all agents (activists, movements, counter-movements) struggle to accumulate capital and strengthen their power within the field. By doing so, the field is being constantly reshaped by its agents who strive to increase their power and domination within this field; simultaneously, each field is constantly reshaped by its interplay with other fields. Having situated this dissertation within the relational Bourdieusian theoretical framework, the next section explains the conceptual approach used in this dissertation.

Literature Review and Conceptual Approach

In order to contextualize my research question and my selection of sub-questions, we need to understand the multilayered forces that shape the dynamics of sustained solidarity. First, we can analyze relations of solidarity by looking at the interactions, practices, and understandings that matter to activists and their opponents at multi-scalar levels. Second, given that the boundaries between endogenous and exogenous (or inside and outside) the movements are permeable, solidarity is shaped by both interactions within and across these boundaries. Third, the multiple ontological and political imaginaries among activists shape the relations between its members, and their potential for solidarity. Fourth, the temporal element is of importance to understand the intergenerational dynamics and the changing political environment that influence the trajectory of solidarity. Fifth, the relational and reciprocal relations between the movements and counter-movements determine the conditions for solidarity. And finally, settler colonialism is a multi-scalar process shaping each of these interactions. In combination, this approach allows us to understand the challenges of sustained solidarity.

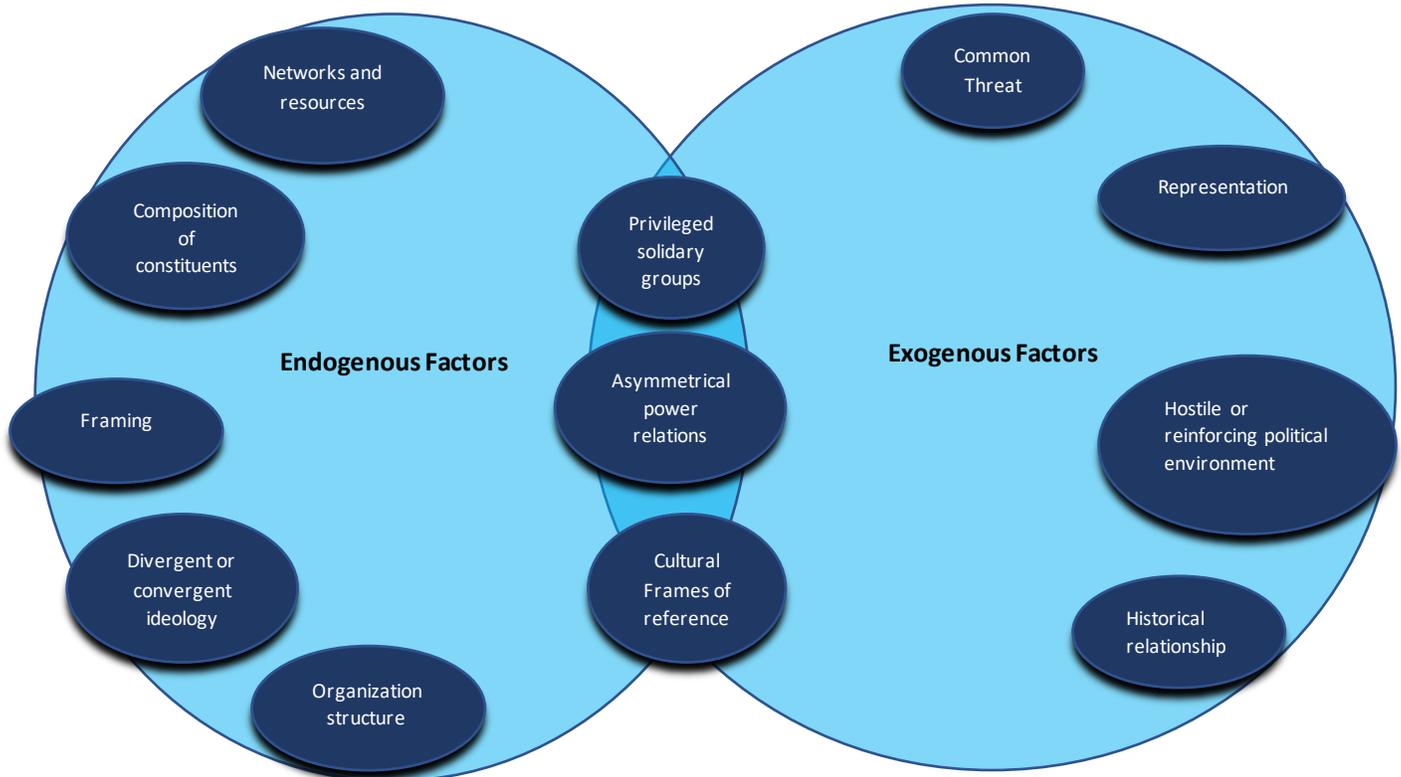
First, understanding sustained solidarity in contemporary movements requires a recognition that movements operate at a multiscale level, i.e., at the local, national, and transnational/transborder level.² This approach builds on existing literature on translocal solidarity, also known as “grounded transnationalism” (Brickell and Datta 2011, 3), which suggests the inextricable entanglement between local grassroots activism and transborder social movements, shifting the terrain of struggle from the local to the transborder and vice versa. The translocalism of these movements is manifested in a dynamic process of engagement and relationality that include network building, exchange of ideas, connecting framings, and delivering mutual support at the local, national, and transborder levels. These movements share

² The definition of transnational social movements varies, but in general includes movements that are spatially dispersed outside the state borders, operating in at least two countries (della Porta & Kriesi 1999). A transnational social movement can be limited to a specific region (the Arab uprisings as an example) or can be diffused across a wider space (i.e., the climate change movement). Most literature on social movements across borders equates nation with state. Such a position emanates from the Eurocentric understanding of the nation-state. The Westphalian state as a concept originated almost three centuries ago (1648) to privilege the sovereignty of state institutions and their complete exercise of power within specific borders. This conceptualization has been challenged by Indigenous studies, postcolonialism, and feminism. Contrary to the understanding of the state which connotes institutions, legitimacy, and bureaucracy, the nation is often understood as constituted by the people, ethnic groups, culture, which rarely coincide with the construct of the “nation-state” (Yuval Davis 1997). At core of this conceptual construct is the often-unrecognized formation process of the state, which does not acknowledge the multinational states, the multistate nation, and the stateless nations (*ibid*). To bypass this conceptual limitation, I employ the term transborder social movements. For example, the BDS movement is considered by some activists with Arab nationalist affiliation as a transborder movement when it operated in the Arab countries. In the context of this dissertation, I use transborder and transnational interchangeably, since the focus is on a movement originating in Palestine, and operating in Canada.

similar experiences of oppression from entangled and mutually supporting power systems operating in different contexts.

Second, transborder solidarity movements must be approached as a multi-scalar assemblage shaped by endogenous and exogenous dynamics. The distinction between endogenous variables such as inter-organizational collaboration, organizational cultures, composition of its constituents, and ideological compatibility and exogenous factors that occur outside the coalition, such as changing political contexts, the emergence of a common threat to the movements, or the strong alliance between the elites and the state is still analytically useful, but so too are analyses of the interactions between them. Figure 1 summarizes the factors discussed in the literature. To date, the dynamics of coalition building that could lead to sustained solidarity in social movements have received little scholarly attention with few exceptions, mainly the work of Thörn (2006), Meyer and Corrigall-Brown (2005) and Frieman (2018).

Figure 1: Factors impacting building and maintaining solidarity among movements (Davenport



2015; Meyer and Corrigan-Brown 2005; Frieman 2018).

David Meyer and Catherine Corrigan-Brown (2005) analyze the coalitional dynamics of Win Without War coalition groups in the United States—an anti-Iraq war allyship formed by 41 well established and diverse organizations, such as social justice, environmental, religious, and anti-war groups. They show how shifting political contexts resulted in weakening or even dismantling coalition groups, by making visible the tension between the coalition groups, and pushing the groups back to their original goal that they deviated from to form the coalition. After the decision of President Bush to militarily attack Iraq, which ignored the global opposition to the war, Win Without War coalition groups were dismantled. Meyer and Corrigan-Brown's

study shows how changing political context (before and after the war) intersects with ideological differences within a particular coalition and leads to the demobilization of a movement.

The interplay between endogenous and exogenous factors are also exemplified in the work of Christian Davenport on the demobilization of Republic of New Africa (RNA) nationalist movement in Detroit in the 1960s. Davenport (2015) examines the impact of state repression on internal dynamics within the movement. He claims that the movement's resource depletion and the state's increased levels of repression, combined with fatigue and mistrust amongst members led to demobilization. More specifically, the state repression rendered the internal problems more visible. He concludes that state repression is not the direct cause for a movement demobilization, but it is a catalyst that interacts with internal factors, heightening and making endogenous tensions explicit.

Understanding sustained solidarity also requires recognizing the interplay amongst multiple ontological understandings and praxis' of political solidarity. Conceptualizations and practices of solidarity are shaped by the political ideology of activists, their political imaginaries of social justice, and the specific range of action available at a given juncture. These are also linked to the dynamics of the political field in which the movement is embedded.

The study of sustained solidarity must also be sensitive to questions of temporality, and the issue of intergenerational movement continuity. Following the work of Karl Mannheim (1952) that conceptualizes generation as a cohort of individuals who, through direct contact with transformative events, has developed distinct political subjectivities, this dissertation argues that the American-led "War on Terror" in the aftermath of the 9/11 events has politicized and shaped the worldview of most of the current BDS activists in Toronto. The "War on Terror" generation

is both linked to earlier activist political generations through shared worldviews and simultaneously distinct and autonomous in their tactics and ways of organizing. Incorporating a temporal intergenerational analysis allows me to trace the continuity and discontinuity that BDS activists carry with the previous political generations and solidarity movements.

Fifth, understanding sustained solidarity requires recognizing the relational, reciprocal, and mutually configuring dynamics at play between movements and counter-movements. The role of counter-movements has been rarely addressed in analyses of sustained solidarity. Past research on counter-movements shows how such movements can use various bureaucratic, legal, political, and financial strategies to silence, demonize, and neutralize their opponents, shaping their strategies and tactics.

Finally, locating this project within an analysis of settler colonialism allow me to understand the particular context that shapes sustained solidarity. Israel and other Western countries, such as Canada, the United States, New Zealand, and Australia share similar logics of settler colonialism that dispossess the land, eliminate the native populations, racialize the remaining natives, and deploy various interconnected tools to keep the silencing and subjugation of the dissident voices. The international character of these connections has led to a deterritorialization of global grievances, and potentially, the expansion of social networks and ties among the marginalized groups suffering from these oppressive dynamics. Accordingly, and in order to understand the contemporary dynamics of solidarity, this study employs the framework of settler-colonialism understood as an overarching logic of racism, colonialism, apartheid, and land dispossession (Sayegh 1967).

In sum, this project seeks to understand the dynamics that surround sustained solidarity, by using an approach that pays attention to both exogenous and endogenous dynamics. This approach is multi-scalar, sensitive to divergences in ontology, temporality, and the interactions with counter-movements and authorities. It builds on earlier work on sustained solidarity, going deep with a single case. In a world rife with injustice, understanding the possibilities and threats to solidarity is both theoretically and politically important. Communities like the Wet'suwet'en of Canada or the Sateré of Brazil, to the Uighurs in China, the Kashmeris in India/Pakistan, or the Kurds in Turkey, are some examples of communities and struggles who seek to build such solidarity, and this project aims to contribute to understanding the conditions that can make this possible.

The Success of the Anti-Apartheid Movement of South Africa

The most extensive existing work on a case of sustained solidarity is that on the “success story” of the struggle to end apartheid in the Republic of South Africa. After almost fifty years of repression and evolving struggle, and despite strong counter-movements to AAM inside and outside South Africa, the movement finally succeeded in formally dismantling the apartheid regime in 1994. The particular history of the global AAM offers important lessons for the BDS. Like the struggle for Palestinian liberation, the AAM emerged out of the broader anti-colonial struggle that swayed the world in the 1950's and 1960's (Thörn 2009; Frieman 2018). From that time into the 1990s, there were strong anti imperialist and anti-colonial solidarity movements with Cuba, Vietnam, Chile, Algeria, and others. This fueled the AAM and solidarity movements with Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua). The multilayered and multiscalar resistance to apartheid lead to its dismantling, after almost five decades of its establishment (1948-1994).

The strategy of the local activists and the translocal solidarity activists changed through time, with tensions and convergences throughout. Locally, the African National Congress (ANC), various unions and their allies mobilized around core “minimum demands” (Frieman 2018, 238), beyond which it does not make any concession. They used a number of tactics, including boycott, a tactic familiar in the South African resistance culture, since it has been used from early in the 20th century to protest the discrimination against Indians (*ibid*).³ However, after the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, and increasing repression, the role of solidarity movements, including those initiated by South African exiles, increased (Wood 2019).⁴

Disagreements emerged amongst anti-apartheid activists about the framing of the movement. In the context of the Cold War, and the surging anti-communist sentiments in the West, the local movement rejected framing its demands as anti-imperialist, as suggested by some leftist transborder activists (Freiman 2018; Thörn 2009), worrying that it could deter potential constituents and allies from participating in the movement. Instead, the use of the universal language of human rights attracted liberal as well as Western, leftist activists. From the 1970s through the 1990s, a strong network of grassroots and organizational activism from diverse backgrounds and ideologies, alongside civil society (unions, churches, and other non-state organizations in more than 100 countries), the United Nations, and the governments of the

³ Gandhi was a lawyer in South Africa before moving back to India (Frieman 2018).

⁴ On March 21, 1960, an estimated 5000 -7000 protestors initiated a civil disobedience and marched towards police stations without their passes. Violence erupted when police killed 69 people and injured 180, most of them when trying to escape the police repression. Local and global outrage erupted, and the South African police detained an estimated 18000 activists in the country. The Sharpeville massacre would be a turning point for the AAM (Wood 2019).

Global South increasingly isolated the South African government and negatively impacted its economy (Thörn 2006a; Klotz 2002; Frieman 2018).

Analysts have shown that building and sustaining solidarity within the AAM depended on the construction of a shared collective identity, and an imagined emancipatory movement, or what Hakan Thörn (2006b) calls an “imagined community of solidarity activists” (295), that were immersed in “politics as a form of life” (Thörn 2006a, 201). His intensive interviews with anti-apartheid activists in four countries reveal how these movements were strengthened by a shared and embodied culture, as activists around the world wore AAM shirts and buttons, boycotted South African products, participated in anti-apartheid events, and attended protests. At the same time, sustained solidarity was enabled by exogenous factors such as the proliferation of mainstream and alternative media outlets and the availability of relatively cheap travel. These helped the dissemination of stories from South Africa to supporters worldwide, and strengthened the communication among activists dispersed across geographical locations (Thörn 2009).

Thörn’s (2009) historical and descriptive approach, his emphasis on ‘success’ and the often-micro scale of memoir account offer useful detail as to how transnational networks were constructed in the 20th century. However, in order to understand local and transborder solidarity is sustained in the contemporary moment, there are five geopolitical shifts that must be understood.

First, during the AAM, the world system was divided amongst multiple centres of power, i.e., the Western bloc, Eastern bloc and the Third World countries. AAM is historically situated during an era where anti-war, anti-colonialism, Pan-Africanism and anti-imperialist movements occupied the global resistance political field. Today, power in the world system has significantly

changed. In the question of Palestine, the main power remains concentrated with the United States. In this unilateral context, the dominant world powers support Zionism and are implicated in the oppression of Palestinians (Maira 2009; Razack 2008).

Second, while neoliberalism was well established by the mid 1990s, its logics have become more pervasive, even within the movements themselves. Neoliberal logics in social movements prioritize individual rights over collective action and “disallow the salience of collective experience” (Mohanty 2013; 971; Giroux 2003). Social movements increasingly embody the form of the corporate world, with the proliferation of not-for-profit organizations, subject to the agendas of funding agencies (Choudry, Hanley and Shragge 2012; Nakhle 2012).

Third, while anti-Communism and white supremacy fuelled counter-movements to the AAM, the resurgence of neo-Orientalism in the aftermath of September 11 attacks (Razack 2008; Maira 2009), and the accelerated rise of Arabophobia and Islamophobia have fuelled opposition to the BDS movement. Most Western political policies suspended the citizenship and human rights of racialized bodies (particularly Muslim or Arab looking men) (Razack 2008; Deb 2016) subjecting them to constant scrutiny and surveillance and portraying them as the “monster - terrorist- fag” (Deb 2016; 54).

Fourth, the solidification of transnational networking and technological advances in communications have strengthened the proliferation of globalized and institutionalized social movements in the last two decades (Pianta 2001; Brecher, Costello and Smith 2000). Globalized social movements provide a cross border network of heterogeneous activists and organizations (such as the Global Justice movement, World Social Forum) and often frame their struggles within a global framework of human rights and civil values. They also articulate mutual

grievances, provide mutual support, through overlapping membership and increased awareness of common interests (Brecher, Costello and Smith 2000). In ways that the AAM activists could only dream of, contemporary solidarity movements are embedded in global networks and operates in the transnational political field.

Finally, the globalization of media and travel facilitated the AAM, the expansion of digital communications offer more powerful communication and mobilization tools to social movements at the global level (Castells 2010). It is easier to recruit constituents into the cause, to communicate with activists and to disseminate information about the struggle. Yet, the development of the digital realm provides challenges to building trust and non-virtual relationships among activists. It also subjects activism to online surveillance and to the power of algorithms and codes in social media (Simpson, Walcott and Coulthard 2018, Etter and Brindusa Albu 2021; Zureik 2011).

The successes of solidarity against apartheid provide insight into the importance of identity, culture, frames, relationships and resources, and the importance of global conditions. The case of AAM allows us to understand both the endogenous and exogenous conditions that facilitate and block translocal, sustained solidarity. However, there are limits to building a more generalizable model of sustained solidarity from one single case. The differences between that historical period and today, and a literature on solidarity that is unembedded in a particular local context, means that we do not yet understand how local practices, interactions and relationships amongst solidarity activists interact with global political forces and authorities to affect *how* solidarity is sustained. In order to move forward, we must look more closely at a single site, one that is the epitome of the challenges and opportunities facing movements against settler colonialism.

The Case: BDS Movement in Toronto

The BDS movement in Toronto provides a ‘best case’ scenario for understanding the translocal dynamics that surround sustained solidarity in today’s world. It faces numerous challenges and opportunities. Like other movements, the trajectory of solidarity is shaped by multiscale social movements and counter-movements, as well as the relations between the various political generations and those with different ontologies. The particularities of Zionist settler colonialism, and the local dynamics within Toronto mean that it has some particular features in its history, trajectory and dynamics.

One of the most dramatic sites of political upheaval in the last century is that of the ongoing settler colonialism of Palestine, and the accompanying violence associated with colonial dominance. Prior to the official establishment of Israel in 1948, and since the end of the First World War, Palestine was under the British Mandate. The British promised to lead the Palestinians to an independent state, while simultaneously promising the Zionist movement a Jewish homeland in Palestine, via the Balfour Declaration in 1917 (Pappe 2006a). Since 1948, Palestinians have been suffering from colonization, ethnic cleansing, forced exile, settlement, imprisonment, systemic racism, daily humiliation, and systematic annihilation (Barghouti 2011; Pappe 2006a). These policies have prompted ongoing Palestinian resistance, both inside and outside the borders of historic Palestine, alongside transborder solidarity movements, including the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement.⁵

⁵ Historic Palestine includes the borders of each of the current state of Israel, Gaza and West Bank.

In 2005, Palestinian civil society officially called on global civil society to support the BDS movement until Israel met its obligations towards Palestinians under international law and principles of universal human rights (BDS movement 2005).⁶ The BDS call brought “unprecedented near-consensus support among Palestinians” (Barghouti 2011, 7) and included the three segments of Palestinian people: Palestinians living in occupied territories, Palestinians with Israeli passports, and Palestinian refugees living in *shatat*.⁷ The movement called for three distinct tactics. First, boycotting, which means refusing to consume the products and services of Israeli origin, or those of international companies that benefit from the violation of Palestinian rights. This includes boycotting Israel’s academic and cultural activities and events. Second, divestment, which urges institutions to withdraw their funds and investments from Israeli and non-Israeli corporations benefiting from the occupation; and third, sanctions, which include

⁶ The BDS call was endorsed by 171 Palestinian civil society groups, representing various factions of society, from trade unions to youth and women’s unions, and refugee rights associations (BDS movement 2005).

⁷ There is a conceptual difference between *Al Shatat*, diaspora, refugees and exile. *Al Shatat* is an Arabic word that is translated into diaspora in English. It literally means dispersal, and more specifically refers to the dispersal and dislocation of groups or nations. *Al Shatat* is more encompassing to the totality of Palestinian experience, and their different legal status recognized under the international law (Abu Shihab 2017; Nabulsi 2007). This should be contrasted with the concept of diaspora, that may not necessarily result from political situations, and does not reflect the inability of the subjects to return to their homeland. In contrast, exile is in general an individualistic experience and may not reflect a collective experience. A person may be in exile due to political reasons or due to criminal records, as was taking place in Europe 16th century (AlQuds Al Arabi 2017). As for refugees, they are protected by the 1951 international convention related to the status of refugees, which is defined as “someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.” (UNHCR, 1953, Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees). Therefore, refugees exclude the internally displaced populations. In this dissertation, I use the concept of *Al Shatat* when referring to the Palestinians in Toronto.

imposing state level policies to isolate Israel, including the cessation of all military, economic and/ or diplomatic links.

Following Charles Tilly's definition of a social movement, this dissertation approaches BDS as a social movement in that it constitutes a sustained, organized, collective challenge to authorities. It uses campaigns and a repertoire that includes rallies, protests, consumer boycotts, disruptive actions, often working to publicly display worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment (Tilly 2006, 53). The movement challenges Israeli settler colonialism and its network, which includes every organization or institution benefiting from settler colonialism. Understanding BDS as a social movement also allows me to examine its connections with other movements for Palestinian liberation. BDS does not work in isolation from other movements, but rather in coordination, and sometimes in tension, with other movements that seek Palestinian liberation.⁸ The characterization of BDS as a social movement, rather than as a mere campaign —as it has been understood at times (Darweish and Rigby 2015; Ayyash 2018)— allows the study to emphasize the multiple dynamics shaping sustained political solidarity.

As an organized transnational movement, the BDS attracted an increasing number of activists, especially since 2009 when Israel launched its three-week military attack on Gaza in its Operation Cast Lead (Chomsky and Pappé 2015; Carter-Hallword 2013; Davis 2016). BDS has forged alliances with a range of anti-racist, indigenous, environmental and labour movements, among others, located mainly in Western countries, which are the epicentre of imperial and colonial powers. Only in the last few years have the movement's efforts been expanded to Latin

⁸ Palestinian history is rich with movements that adopted different strategies and political ideologies to seek to liberate Palestine. For more information, see Heacock and Jaradat 2020; Takriti 2019; Darweish and Rigby 2018.

America, India, and Arab countries.⁹ The movement's constituents hold different citizenship statuses, belong to various political and ethnic backgrounds and importantly, have different visions of Palestinian rights.

The BDS movement is a transborder movement that originated in occupied Palestine.¹⁰ The movement's strategy is developed through the Boycott National Committee (BNC), and then it is disseminated to activists in different countries, who have the freedom to choose the approach they find suitable.¹¹ BDS is not organized centrally, but through coordination between the local movements outside Palestine and the BNC. The BDS movement targets the state of Israel and its founding Zionist movement. This Zionist movement, like the BDS movement, is a transborder movement with strong ties and powerful lobbies, especially in the Western countries. These resources strengthen the counter-movement opponents to BDS, shaping the conditions for solidarity.

⁹ The movement in the Arab countries adopts different strategies and tactics, especially in countries that do not have diplomatic relations with Israel (Sa'd al-din 2020). It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to engage in this discussion.

¹⁰ The focus of this dissertation is on the Palestinian BDS movement, initiated by Palestinian civil society. However, boycott movements in the context of the Palestinian struggle are not new. They started in 1936, before the establishment of the state of Israel (for a comprehensive analysis, read Takriti 2019). This dissertation does not also consider state led boycott movements, initiated by the Arab League states in 1948, which included a strong set of rules boycotting all relations with Israel, and companies related to it (Abu Laban and Bakan 2009, 36). At present, some Arab states have officially ended the boycott, while others do not enforce it.

¹¹ The BDS National Committee (BNC) is the Palestinian coordinating body for the BDS campaign. It emerged in 2007, in response to the rapid growth of the BDS movement. It is formed from representatives of Palestinian civil society, in Palestine and in the *shatat*. For more information, see <https://bdsmovement.net/bnc>

The BDS movement in Canada

BDS activists in Canada experience severe opposition and harassment from the authorities, who accuse them of anti-Semitism, hate, and in opposition to free speech. In February 2016, the Canadian Parliament, under the Liberal government, officially passed an anti-BDS motion “condemn[ing] any and all attempts by Canadian organizations, groups or individuals to promote the BDS movement, both here at home and abroad.” (House of Commons Debates 2016). A candidate to the Canadian federal elections for the New Democratic Party was forced to resign over his criticism of Israeli war crimes on Gaza in 2014 (Engler 2015). BDS activists and the endorsing organizations are often subject to lawsuits, or threats of lawsuits accusing them of discrimination and hate speech (Shupak 2015). On campus, university administrations created hurdles for anti-Israeli activities and conferences and deny funding to pro-Palestinian students (Thompson 2011; Masri 2011; Ziadah and Hanieh 2010).

Some charities that endorsed and mobilized for BDS were subject to defunding from the government. For instance, since 2009, the Canadian Arab Federation has been denied funding and has been accused of promoting anti-Semitism. Activists were also subject to harassment from pro-Israel organizations. For instance, several activists were listed on Canary Mission, which is a website that threatens the reputation of students, educators and professionals that speak up for the rights of Palestinians. In November 2018, during an apology for Canada’s past rejection of Jewish refugees, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau condemned the BDS movement by accusing it of having anti-Semitic attitudes (House of Commons Debates 2018). Despite a hostile political climate, the BDS movement operates in many cities in Canada, and

has the support of numerous national, provincial and local organizations including labour unions, student unions, and religious groups.

The ebbs and flows of solidarity with the BDS movement in Canada can be tied to political economy or to strategic leadership, but its dynamics, for reasons already identified, can best be explained by looking closer at the interactions in a single place. Toronto is the largest and arguably the most cosmopolitan city in the country, with diasporas from across the world. Movements across the political spectrum co-exist in the city, from radical left to radical right. As already explained, Toronto was an early adopter of the BDS, and an initiator of many national and global campaigns. While activists in other Canadian cities mobilize as part of the BDS movement, a large number of these initiatives emerged from Toronto. The campaigns for BDS in Toronto continue to this day, but the movement for Palestine solidarity has lost the vibrancy, and unity it once had. This dissertation seeks to understand how and why this happened.

The BDS movement in Toronto is historically rooted in well-established political relations with some liberation movements, community institutions, and intellectual spheres built since the 1960s. After the 1967 war, a group of Palestinian and other Arab academics formed the Canadian Arab Federation (CAF), which aimed at creating a space for discussing Arab issues, and more specifically the Palestinian cause. It also provided services for the Arab community. CAF was able to outreach to other communities through various cultural activities. In 1984, Dr. James Graff, a professor in philosophy at the University of Toronto, along with a group of Canadian activists, founded the Near East Cultural and Educational Foundation (NECEF) whose aim was to promote an understanding about the Arab world (more specifically the Palestinian cause) through hosting intellectual panels and debates. NECEF also funded humanitarian projects in Palestine and served on the United Nations North American Coordinating Committee

(NACC) for NGOs on the Question of Palestine from 1985 to 1998. NECEF and the Arab community were able to outreach to various churches, Canadian Auto Workers, United Steel Workers, and Canadian Jewish Worker. In the early 2000s and following the fall of the Oslo Accords and “the peace process” between Israelis and Palestinians, a group of Arab students organized Palestine Week at York University, at which they discussed the Israeli occupation and the humanitarian crisis in occupied Palestine. In 2005, they organized Israeli Apartheid Week, using the language of apartheid for the first time. These associations and students’ clubs endorsed the BDS movement in 2005 and currently mobilize under the framework of the BDS’ three tactics.

Zionism as Settler Colonialism

The case of the BDS movement in Toronto is tied to its shared grounding within a context of settler colonialism. As an anti-colonial movement, the BDS movement in Toronto opposes the Zionist settler colonial project, and its oppressive logics and tools, i.e., apartheid, racism, and colonialism.¹² The BDS movement frames its claims using the language of international law. By framing its struggle in this way, the movement has engaged a growing number of international activists into boycotting, and institutions to divesting, from Israeli commerce.¹³ While the BDS

¹² See BDS Movement n.d. <https://bdsmovement.net/colonialism-and-apartheid/settler-colonialism>

¹³ Examples of institutions divesting from Israeli companies and/or international companies benefiting from the Israeli Apartheid include: The United Church of Christ, the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Mennonite Central Committee, the Church of England, US pension fund TIAA-CREF, Norwegian government fund, New Zealand national pension, among others. The academic and cultural boycott was endorsed by the American Studies Association, University of Johannesburg, various student councils in Western universities, over 500 European

original call does not explicitly mention Israeli apartheid, its communications after the initial call, state that Israeli oppression is a crime of apartheid. In 2008, the movement adopted “the strategic position paper “*United Against Apartheid, Colonialism and Occupation- Dignity and Justice for the Palestinian People*” (BDS Movement 2008) and started positioning the Israeli regime as one that combines “colonialism, apartheid and occupation” (*ibid.*)

The settler colonial project in Palestine (similar to North American and Australian context) is based on the logic of an elimination of the native population followed by settler replacement, land appropriation and its transfer to the new population, and the expulsion or genocide of the populations (Wolfe 2006).¹⁴ In the context of Palestine, two modes of settler colonialism co-exist: one aims for the complete elimination of native population and the second rests on the racialization and subordination of the native population (Sayegh 1965).

The first mode eliminates the native Palestinian population of different religions, and replace it with a new Jewish-only population that immigrated mainly from Europe and Russia. Jews were fleeing Europe and Russia in a migration organized by the Zionist movement to settle in Palestine (Qumsiyeh 2011). By 1948, the year when the British mandate ended in historic

a academics, world renowned scientist Stephen Hawking, teachers’ unions of England, and thousands of artists including Pink Floyd. For a comprehensive list, check the BDS Movement website

<http://www.bdsmovement.net/successes/>

¹⁴ Patrick Wolfe recognizes that settler colonialism is not a monolithic project that utilizes the exact same tools on the native population. He differentiates between franchise colonialism (such as the British India) and settler colonialism (such as Australia, the Americas, Algeria, South Africa and Palestine, to site but few). The first is based on racialization and exploitation of the native population (in forms of labor), the transformation of the Indian culture and society, and the recognition that Britain is the ultimate homeland. The second is based on a systemic erasure of the native population, in the form of genocide, land dispossession.

Palestine, and Israel was proclaimed an “independent” state - European and Russian Jewish settlers constituted a third of the population, a significant increase from less than 7% (“most of them non-Zionists”) in 1917 (*ibid*, 50).¹⁵ In the same year, Zionist incursions forced more than half of Palestine’s indigenous population (an estimated 800,000 Palestinians) to flee to neighbouring countries. By then, 531 villages had been destroyed and 11 urban neighbourhoods depopulated (Pappe 2006a, 82). The *Nakba* of 1948 and the various massacres committed exemplify this mode of erasure. Systematic policies of displacement and ethnic cleansing have continued. In June 1967, and after a six-day war between Israel, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt, Israel occupied the West Bank and East Jerusalem, in addition to the Syrian Golan heights and the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula. The *Naksa* of 1967 resulted in further Israeli occupation, the division of Jerusalem, the batustanization of Palestinian land, further land expropriation and annexation, and the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, in a process that started at the beginning of the 20th century and continues till today.¹⁶ By the end of 2021, Israel approved the construction of more than 3000 new homes in Jewish settlements inside the occupied West Bank, in addition to the existing 145 settlements that host 600,000 Israelis (BBC 2021;

¹⁵ Rachid Khalidi’s (2018) historic tracing of various wars on Palestinians suggest that much of the forced displacement of Palestinians and that the depopulation of Palestinian cities took place before the end of the British mandate, which suggests a cooperation between the British and the Zionist movements on this matter. Khalidi argues that 1948, the year of the *Nakba*, is not an event, but rather part of a process. He identifies six main wars on Palestinians, that were declared by both the state of Israel and other western countries, mainly the USA and Britain. These imperialist wars are: 1) the Balfour declaration in 1917; 2) the UN partition resolution 181 of 1947, sponsored by the USA and USSR; 3) the 1967 war; 4) the 1982 war on Lebanon and the siege of Beirut; 5) the Oslo accords and secret negotiations between President Yasser Arafat and Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin; and 6) the different wars on Gaza since 2007.

¹⁶ *Naksa* means setback in Arabic. “Bantustan” was the name given to a territory set aside for black inhabitants of South Africa, to separate them from the whites, as part of the Apartheid policies from 1948 to 1994.

PeaceNow 2021). In addition, there are 100 smaller settlement outposts that are not officially recognized by the government, although many of them receive government assistance. In 2002, Israel began building a wall separating it from the West Bank, claiming it was needed for security. It built eighty percent of the wall on West Bank territories; made possible through continued land annexation. Israel annexed some of the most fertile lands in the West Bank. Both the settlements and the wall are in contravention of international law (ICJ 2004, Article 137 and 160).

Another complementary mode of settler colonialism emerges with the racialization of the remaining native Palestinians who did not leave historic Palestine. Fayeze Sayegh (1967) argues that the racial logic is immanent to Zionist settler colonialism. While the Zionist settler project is based on the elimination of the native Palestinian population and their replacement with mostly white Jewish immigrants from Europe and Russia, Sayegh (1967) adds that the Zionist settler project is also based on racial hierarchy and the perceived and implemented supremacy of Jewish European whites over others (Native Palestinians, Arab Jews, Ethiopian Jews). This racial hierarchy is applied to Palestinians who remained in their homeland and were able to survive the genocide or forced exile. This racialization of Palestinians facilitated the construction of the Israeli economy, specifically after 1967, when Israel occupied West Bank, Gaza, the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula. Palestinians became the cheap exploited labour used to construct illegal settlements. As racialized labour, they earn lower wages than Israelis, work long hours, are often denied leave and benefits, and are subject to arbitrary dismissal if they try to unionize or ask for their rights (*ibid*).

Furthermore, settler colonialism is co-constitutive of apartheid racializing project, as defined in article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (of which Israel is

not a member state) as “inhumane acts committed in the context of an institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime” (ICJ 2002).¹⁷ The oppressive policies followed by Israel consist of a system “of bestowing rights and privileges according to ethnic and religious identity [which] fits the UN definition of the term [Apartheid] as enshrined in the 1973 International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid and in the 2002 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court” (Barghouti 2013, 219). Richard Falk (2013), the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) and professor emeritus of international law at Princeton University, identifies the Apartheid character of Israeli occupation as

the preferential citizenship, visitation, family unification, and residence laws and practices that prevent Palestinians who reside in the West Bank or Gaza or elsewhere in the world from reclaiming their property lost in 1948, 1967, or at other times, or from acquiring Israeli citizenship or even residence rights, as contrasted to the Jewish Law of Return that entitles Jews anywhere in the world with no prior tie to Israel to visit, reside, obtain property and become Israeli citizens (2013, 89).

Falk adds that the apartheid system manifests through the restriction of Palestinian movements through the existence of checkpoints, bypass roads, the separation wall, the permit

¹⁷ Apartheid is an Afrikaans word which means “apartness” or “separateness.” The term was used in South Africa to connote the systematic and institutionalized segregation of African blacks, which maintained and reinforced white supremacy and domination.

system,¹⁸ the direct and indirect discriminatory laws¹⁹ against Palestinian citizens of Israel and Palestinian residents of the occupied Palestinian territories, as well as demolishing only Palestinian-owned homes.²⁰

In addition, the dual legal system in Israel favours illegal Jewish settlers in the OPT with Israeli law while subjugating the Palestinians living in the same geographical area to arbitrary

¹⁸ Israel also restricts the movement of Palestinians inside the occupied territories, through the existence of checkpoints, the construction of the wall and the permit system controlling movement in and out the territories (including the movement between Gaza Strip and West Bank). February 2014 data reveals the existence of 99 fixed checkpoints in West Bank, and hundreds of flying checkpoints, in addition to 65 kilometers of Israeli only roads (mainly for the use of settlers) (B'tselem 2015). In 2002, Israel started building the separation wall of 708 kilometers, snaking into and around the West Bank, separating the farmers from their lands, their kin, schools, hospitals and natural resources. Israel prohibits Palestinians from using 40% of the land in the West Bank, using various reasons (such as “state land”, “abandoned property”, “public or military needs” (B'tselem 2013). As of May 2011, Israel has taken over 77.5% of the Jordan Valley and Northern Dead Sea, which are parts of the West Bank, through land annexation and dispossession (B'tselem 2011a).

¹⁹ In his book *The Forgotten Palestinians*, Ilan Pappé (2011) documents Israeli laws against its Palestinian citizens that separate them from their families (such as expulsion of spouses originally from OPT¹⁹, or oblige them to recognize Israel as a Zionist Jewish state, or ban them from publicly commemorating the 1948 *nakba*, the name given to the catastrophe, when Palestinians were obliged to flee their country to neighboring states). Pappé (2011) and A'dalah (2017) document other discriminatory laws, such as those giving the right to Jewish Israelis not to accept Palestinian residents in their neighborhoods, or the right of the Israeli state to privatize occupied lands in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Golan Heights. For a list of over 65 Israeli discriminatory laws, check A'dalah 2017.

²⁰ Israel uses the demolition of Palestinian homes as one of its oppressive tools to appropriate the land and deny Palestinian urban development. For instance, In Jerusalem, Israel put in place administrative barriers that prohibit Palestinians from obtaining a construction permit (such as lengthy and costly process) or prohibiting the construction of new homes for “security” reasons, or environmental excuses. As a result, Palestinians are obliged to construct their homes without permit, which will ultimately lead to their demolition. In West Bank and Gaza, home demolitions have been justified for “Israeli security” reasons. For more information, see Alhaq (2021).

military administrations.²¹ Yet, some scholars argue that the analogy of apartheid is an understatement. For instance, Pappé (2006b) describes Israeli policies as “incremental genocide”, and Julie Peteet (2009) calls for the necessity of developing new descriptors since there is no term in international law that describes what Israel has done and continues to do.

Despite its importance, its relative normalization among activists, and its heuristic potential as a legal framework, Lana Tatour (2021) warns against the current use of apartheid as a sole way to understand the context of Palestine.²² She highlights the shift in the meaning of apartheid, from a radical concept rooted in anti-colonial wars of Third World Internationalism to a more liberal understanding rooted in the question of equality between people. This shift centers the question of equality between the Israelis and the Palestinians and erases the main problem of settler colonialism and imperialism. Tatour’s analysis implies that the use of apartheid as an exclusive framework in the case of the Palestinian struggle does not tackle the root causes of the Palestinian struggle, and does not provide an encompassing analysis for the experience of all the Palestinians who have various legal status— i.e., Palestinians citizens of Israel, Palestinians

²¹ “As of October 31, 2019, according to Israeli Prison Services, Israeli authorities held 4391 Palestinians from the West Bank in custody for “security” Offenses, including 458 held in administration detention based on secret evidence without charge or trial” (Human Rights Watch 2019).

²² In February 2022, Amnesty International called the Israeli system of oppression as a system of apartheid (Amnesty 2022). Earlier, in April 2021, Human Rights Watch described the Israeli policies and practices towards the Palestinians as crimes of apartheid and persecution (Human Rights watch 2021). Similarly, in January 2021, B’tselem became first Israeli organization to deploy the Apartheid framework in its analysis of the Israeli oppressive system (B’tselem 2021). As a result, the framework became normalized—yet still contested. While activists around the world welcomed both reports, they highlighted the hypocrisy that certain voices (i.e., Israeli and international organizations) are deemed to be more reliable than the voices of Palestinians, who have been deploying the Apartheid language for years, the framework became more legible only when an Israeli organization (B’tselem) and an international human rights NGO (Amnesty) discussed it.

living in the *shatat*, Palestinians forcibly displaced inside occupied Palestine, and Palestinians living in West Bank and Gaza. As a result, an analysis that centers Apartheid as a sole framework renders solidarity movements into a movement of civil rights concerning citizens seeking some equality within the nation-state (Asaad and Muhareb 2022; Tatour 2021). In this dissertation, I use the framework of settler colonialism that BDS uses, and that connects apartheid systems of legislation, racial logic and colonialism. In doing so, it positions its grievances as co-constitutive of settler colonialism, racism and apartheid, and shapes the possibility of sustained solidarity, particularly in Canada.

The BDS movement in Toronto was an active hub of translocal solidarity with the Palestinians. It continues to be a rich site of solidarity. By analyzing the interplay of diverse ontologies, generations, and institutions on the relations of solidarity, and the pressures of counter-movements, including states, we will be better able to understand how endogenous and exogenous dynamics affect the possibility of sustained transborder political solidarity.

Overview of the dissertation

The dissertation intends to analyze the dynamics that shaped the trajectory of sustained solidarity building with the BDS movement in Toronto in seven chapters.

The second chapter explains my methodological considerations and my approach to activist-scholar research. To write about Palestine, on the BDS, and on social movements in general has a high level of complexity that needs to be untangled. In this chapter, I reflect on my positionality, on my “conceptual baggage” (Kirby and McKenna 1989, 32), values and ideas that influenced the research process. I reflect on my analysis, on my interviews, and the challenges

and opportunities I faced during the research. This chapter reflects on the knowledge production on, about, and for social movements, and its usefulness for the movement

The third and the fourth chapters discuss endogenous variables within the BDS movement in Toronto that have had a strong influence on its trajectory. The third chapter illuminates the ontological tensions in conceptualizing and practicing political solidarity. These tensions are manifested in distinct political imaginaries and emancipatory visions and are also related to daily practices to the unequal relationships between activists and to the (un)intentional reproduction of colonial and racist relations. There are three different tensions: 1) between reviving the anti-colonial Third World Internationalism or adopting a pragmatic rights-based approach; 2) between collaborating with others with overall converging political projects versus avoiding those with diverging political projects; 3) between representing (sometimes unintentionally) a microcosm of colonial formations or attempting to decolonize and transform the self.

Chapter four investigates the intergenerational (dis)continuities among the Palestinian and other Arab activists in Toronto. This chapter examines the “War on Terror” generation, which includes Palestinian and other Arab activists whose political consciousness was developed post 9/11. This period included wars on Afghanistan (2001), Iraq (2003), Lebanon (2006), and Gaza (2009, 2014). In Canada, the “War on Terror” resolidified the orientalist view on Arabs and Muslims and excluded some Muslim and/or Arab bodies from their civil rights by passing Bills and laws that threatened the civil rights of these individuals. Building on Mannheimian political generation theory, along with a temporal approach of Mbembe, and putting these theories in conversation with Bourdieu’s conceptualization of habitus, this chapter evaluates the generational cleavages in the BDS activism and challenges the idea of the novelty of Palestine

solidarity, demonstrating the continuity of political conditions between the “War on Terror” generation and previous generations. It also traces the internalization of political ideas transmitted intergenerationally. It finds that the activism of the “War on Terror” generation continue the organizing and advocacy efforts of the previous generation, using some new tools, and adding grievances.

The fifth and sixth chapters examine the relationship between exogenous factors and the dynamics of solidarity with BDS in Toronto. The fifth chapter discusses the weakening of Palestinian and Arab political institutions in Toronto, and the influence that has on sustained solidarity. The chapter argues that the relative weakening of community political institutions is related to the entanglement of multiple factors, such as their financial dependence on the government, the political vision of their board members, the increased surveillance on Palestinians and Arabs in Canada, and the fragmentation of Palestinians and Arabs in the homeland. The current community institutions are government-funded, and therefore subject to the threats of defunding as a consequence of opposing the government’s point of view, where an example includes the defunding of the Canadian Arab Federation and Palestine House in 2009 and 2011. Many of the existing community institutions are explicitly apolitical, or they are fragmented in ways that reflect the fragmentation of Palestinian factions in the homeland, and the different perspectives on the Arab Uprisings and their aftermath. Without these member-funded institutions and relationships, respondents argue that it is difficult to maintain intergenerational solidarity work. These weaknesses are also found to limit the possibilities of safe spaces for networking, learning and disseminating Palestinian narratives.

The transnational character of the counter-movements to BDS and their ability to influence the local political configurations is the focus of the sixth chapter. Zionist counter-

movements work to silence Palestinian voices, and to demonize their activism. They lobby to formulate laws that criminalize the speech and activism supporting Palestine liberation, encouraging surveillance and repression. The chapter gives special attention to ongoing attempts of equating anti-Zionism with anti-Judaism in order to silence the voices of Palestinian advocacy. By outlining the main players within the political field in Toronto around a number of incidents, the analysis demonstrates that the BDS movement challenges the “logic of the field,” which is a logic of settler colonialism that is dominated by the adopters of this logic: the Zionist organizations and Canadian state institutions, as well as its challengers (the BDS movement, other Palestinian advocacy groups, indigenous movements, and other marginalized groups). The chapter demonstrates that while the Zionist counter movements were able to form obstacles to sustained solidarity with Palestinians in Toronto in many cases, they also opened other opportunities of coalition with those who also oppose the dominant logic of the field.

The dissertation concludes by synthesizing the analysis of the ontological, temporal, institutional, and structural analysis provided in the previous chapters to advance a theory of sustained solidarity. To transform solidarity relations into durable relations is an ongoing process of negotiations, conversations, and self-transformations. The implications are both theoretical and political. Theoretically, the dissertation contributes to the discussion of transnational social movements by providing a complex analysis that incorporates the interplay of ontological, temporal and institutional factors in shaping the trajectory of a social movement. The learnings of building sustained solidarity with the BDS in Toronto can be extended to similar transnational social movements that may face comparable dynamics, despite the changing contexts. The conclusion also discusses the limitations of the dissertation.

Chapter 2 - Methodology and Reflexivity

Social movements are sites for knowledge construction and production (Matin 2014), which are embedded in the social relations between the movement's constituents and others, including the researcher. A social movement's knowledge is manifested in disseminating knowledge, producing counter-narratives, and expanding the activists' networks (Choudry 2013), and in documenting its constituents' struggles and daily activities (*ibid*; Brem-Wilson 2014). In order to understand the logics of, and dynamics around a social movement, one must be reflexive and ethical.

Reflexivity is divided into three "interconnected and mutually related" (Haynes 2012, 85) questions, reflecting on the thinking, doing, and evaluating of research. First, a reflective "thinking" of qualitative research asks questions about the researcher's understanding of the nature of reality, challenging their a priori assumptions and their routinized practices, and considering the impact of these assumptions and practices on the research process (Day 2012). Second, a reflective "doing" research contemplates the different methods used in the research and their impact on it. It also includes questions revealing the personal motivations of the researcher (James and Vinnicombe 2002), the personal relationships between the researcher, the research subject, and the participants, as well as questions about positionality and power relations. Third, the reflexive "evaluating" of qualitative research builds on the previous two reflections and searches for ways to construct valid, good quality social research (Day 2012).

Therefore, this chapter illuminates on the backstage of the research, on the researcher's relation to the topic, to the movement, and to the interviewees. The first section of the chapter discusses my methodological approach to data collection and analysis. I then discuss my positionality as a Lebanese Arab woman who was socialized from early age in a politically laden

environment. The third section of the chapter is dedicated to a multi-level reflexivity, where I will highlight my apriori knowledge and assumptions that could have influenced the research. Finally, this chapter ends with an analysis of the tension of the researcher's position standing on both sides of research and activism, between engagement and distanciation.

Reflexivity on the “doing” of qualitative research

One aspect of reflexivity examines the researcher's way of “doing” qualitative research. This includes reflexivity on the methods and the collection and analysis of the data (James and Vinnicombe 2002), as well as self-reflexivity to question the researcher's personal motivations of doing research and the researcher's role and power dynamics during the research process. Finally, reflexivity includes questions about positionality to the research and to the participants and the role it plays during research (Day 2012).

Data Collection and Analysis

Activist Fieldwork

I gradually embedded myself, moving from an observer to those of a participant, from passive to active, from non-participant to complete involvement. Beginning in 2014, I have attended dozens of Palestinian-related events in Toronto. These include seminars, talks, panels, debates, and protests. I have observed and taken fieldnotes about the dynamics and arguments discussed during these events. By 2016, I was actively engaged in a dialogue with the participants. Participant observation was useful to introduce me to the general discussions in activist spaces and allowed me to map the different actors in town. My participation in these events also introduced me to a network of activists from various ideological positions.

To better answer my research question, I employed triangulation as a methodological strategy, by combining in-depth interviews, archival work, and participant observation.

Triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods of data collection that allow the researcher to build a holistic understanding of the topic they study (Ayoub, Wallace and Zepeda-Millan 2014).

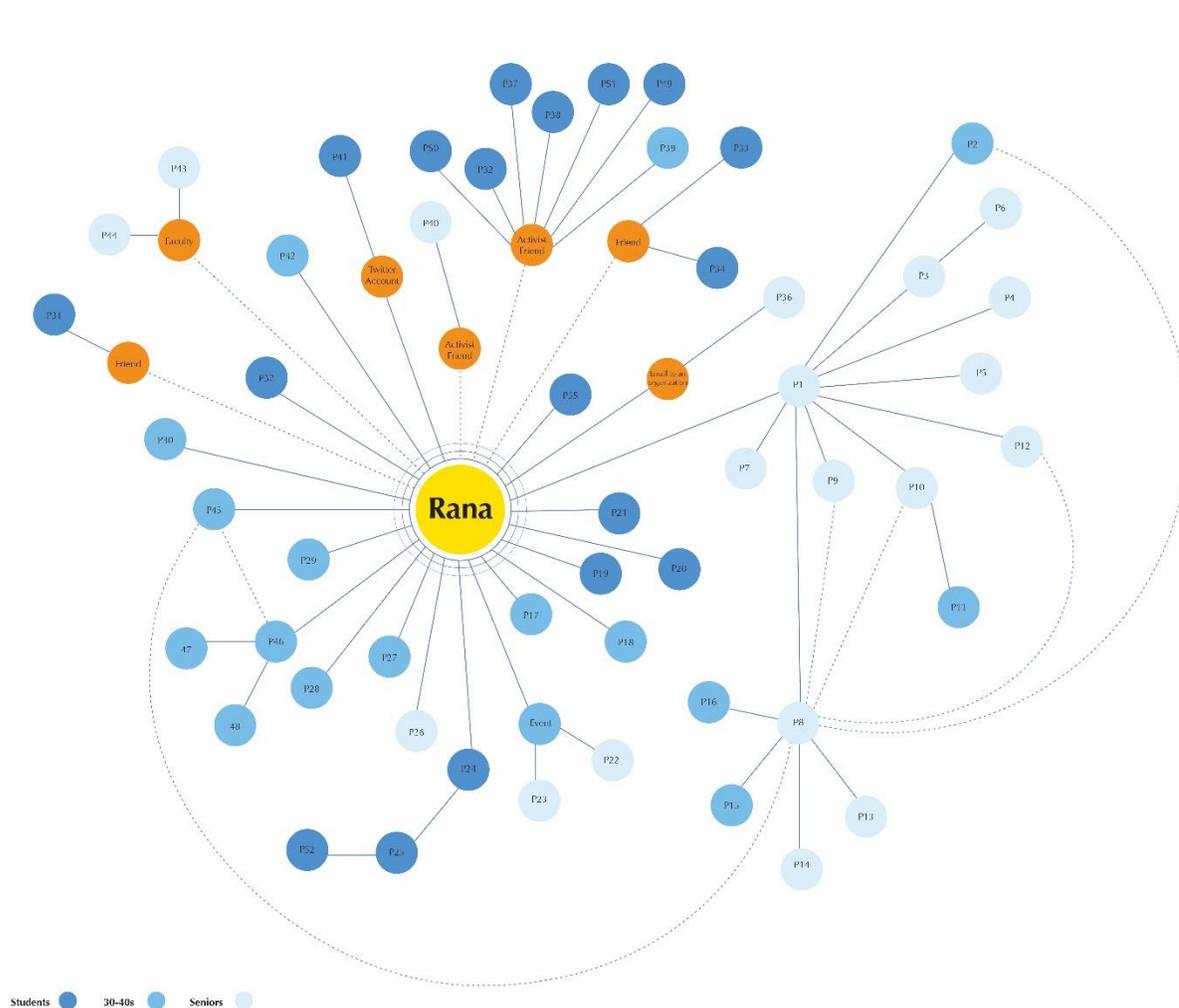
Interviews

I interviewed 52 activists in two main phases. I considered the first phase in 2015 as a pilot study for a conference paper during my master's degree, where I was interested in investigating how transnational activists got involved in Palestine Solidarity movements. During this phase, I interviewed twelve activists about their activism and their engagement in coalition building with others. Only two of the activists were from Palestinian descent, and the remaining ten had no direct historic or kinship connection to historic Palestine. This phase became mainly exploratory, and I used a snowballing technique to expand my circle of potential interviewees. At that stage, my current dissertation research question was not yet within the realm of my interest. My research question changed with time during my intensified involvement with the activism field in Toronto and while completing my doctoral coursework, which allowed me to immerse myself in social movement literatures. My involvement with activism revealed to me the potential of the movement, had there been any continuous work across the years and between the different activist pockets in town, and in Canada in general.

During the second phase of interviews, I contacted key activists who put me in touch with others, as illustrated in the chart below. I rarely experience any difficulties in accessing activists, given the social position of some of my networks, in addition to my own social capital. Most of my introducers were “well perceived within the community” (Francis 1992, 89), as they had

social and cultural capital within the activist community. They are well respected individuals, with long history of activism, especially in the realm of anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, and support for the Palestinian struggle. In figure 2, the nodes represent the direct and indirect connection to my interlocutors. The figure shows the connection between the various interlocutors, and maps my introducers to other activists.

Figure 2: Mapping the researcher's direct and indirect relation to the various interlocutors.



I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews based on the “conversational partners” approach (Rubin and Rubin 2005,7), where both the participant and the researcher were active

listeners seeking to reach a shared meaning and understanding of the issues discussed. During the “inter-view” (Kvale 1996), both the researcher and the participant are engaged in an active exchange to co-construct their understanding of reality. In other words, the interview is not a unidirectional flow of information and data collection, but it is a process of co-constructing a reality, of arguing, of building an argument. After each interview, both the interviewee and the interviewer had an experience that change them in a way. Many of my interviewees informed me directly after the interview or at a later stage that the interview left them thinking about topics and issues they did not think about before the interview.

Unlike the informal discussions that I had with the activists in different encounters, the interviews were intentionally designed to “bring human agency to the center of movement analysis” (Blee 2013, 96) as they allowed me to understand the activists’ perspectives (Blee and Taylor 2002) and delve in the meaning the activists attribute to their actions (della Porta 2014). During these interviews, activists articulate their narratives in their own words. Before arranging any meeting, I introduced myself and explained the dissertation project to my potential interlocutors, as well as my commitment to conducting ethical research, following the code of ethics of the Tri-Council Policy and York University Ethics Review Board, and carefully following the ethics guidelines of York University Ethics Board regarding the anonymity and respect of the interviewees.²³

²³ Both phases of my project followed the guidelines of the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, which requires researchers to ensure “respect for human dignity, respect for free and informed consent, respect for vulnerable persons, respect for privacy and confidentiality, balancing harms and benefits, minimizing harm and maximizing benefit” (2008, i.5-i.6)

The supporters of the Palestinian cause in Toronto could be classified into five categories, depending on their views towards the BDS movement and their engagement and endurance in supporting it.

The first is a set of activists engaged in sustained solidarity. Some of them are of Palestinian origin, others are non-beneficiary activists or what McCarthy and Zald define as conscience constituents. These are “direct supporters of a social movement organization who do not stand to benefit directly from its success in goal accomplishment” (McCarthy and Zald 1997, 1222). Their engagement with the BDS movement is growing. They mobilize, organize events, and build coalitions with other local activists. They may not be affiliated to one particular group, and often have multiple memberships across movements. Some of them have been long time Palestinian liberation supporters. This category has sustained an intense level of solidarity activism with the Palestinian struggle, and with the BDS movement. I interviewed 26 engaged activists, from different age groups, different movements, and political affiliations. They were based in Greater Toronto Area, except four of them based in other Canadian cities and advocating for the BDS movement at the national level.

The second category involves longtime supporters for the Palestinian struggles, and activists working on building sustained allyship and coalitions with other movements. This category is active in their political work, and articulate well the root causes of the struggle, as well as the reasons for supporting Palestine. However, they do not agree with the BDS framework. For them, the BDS’s emphasis on the rights-based approach does not guarantee the rights of the Palestinians. They also critique the BDS movement for changing the original call from “ending the occupation of all Arab lands” to “ending the occupation of all Arab lands occupied in June 1967” (BDS movement n.d.). Despite their critique of the movement, they

participate in most of the Palestinian solidarity work, without publicly critiquing a stance against BDS.

The third are temporary BDS activists, who have actively supported the BDS movement but have since withdrawn from activism due to complex problems with either other activists or with the local alliances' strategies. I encountered several such participants in Toronto. They often decide to be invisible by engaging in boycotting Israeli products only at the personal level. Interviewing individuals from this category sheds the light on some of the barriers to building sustainable solidarity, as was discussed throughout this dissertation. More specifically, this category decided to isolate themselves from BDS activism, and from Palestine solidarity activism in general, due to their critical stance on the internal dynamics of the movement. But their ethical and moral commitment to social justice prohibits them from publicly denouncing the practices of activists in the movement. This category has sustained a low level of solidarity activism with the BDS movement.

The fourth category involves sympathizers with the Palestinian cause and supporters of a fair peace process, but they are opponents to the BDS movement. Two dominant arguments prevail this category: The first argument emphasizes the negative impacts of boycotting Israeli products on the Israeli and Palestinian working class. Due to the heightened pressure of the movement, several companies have since downsized their labour force, impacting the livelihoods of an estimated 92,000 Palestinian workers who work within Israel both legally and illegally (Bassok 2015). Interviewing non-BDS activists allow one to get insights about their opposition to the movement, and its implications on building durable solidarity. This category involves activists with low intensity in solidarity activism with the BDS movement, but they are involved in other Palestinian solidarity activities, such as Palestinian film festival, Palestine Run, and

other cultural related events. Most of the interviewees who belong to this category have affiliation with socialist ideas but had limited knowledge on the exploitation of Palestinian workers even within Israeli trade unions, such as Histadrut. The second argument links the Palestinian struggle to an electoral Israeli issue, mainly associated with the dominance of Israeli conservative parties. For those who adopt this argument, BDS has the potential to harm the Palestinians and Israelis simultaneously. They support selected boycott or divestment campaigns, but oppose the sanctions on Israel, and a comprehensive boycott or divestment campaigns.

Finally, the fifth category involves individuals who passively support the Palestinian cause. They do not engage in solidarity with the Palestinian cause, but they are engaged with other causes, such as- but not limited to- organizations fighting racism, poverty, or others organizing community work with refugees. They act as a weak link between movements, allowing their organizations to endorse a Palestinian solidarity event, or may be to send one representative to these events. Their participation has been mainly symbolic, yet valuable for the potential active political work between organizations and movements.

In terms of racialization, the 52 interviewees were distributed as such: 9 Palestinian Canadians, 5 other Arab-Canadians, 2 indigenous populations of Canada, 19 people of color of different origins (Blacks, Southeast Asians, Latin Americans, non-Arab Middle-Easterns), and 17 white Canadians. Their ages ranged from 19 to 86 years old— 15 interviewees were younger than 30 years old (The majority were university students), 19 interviewees were in their 30's and 40's (some of them were graduate students), and 18 interviewees were older than 50 years old.²⁴

²⁴ I did not ask interviewees about their exact age, but I asked about an age range. I also did not ask about their gender. Some of the interviewees revealed their gender identity during the discussion, and some others did not.

Table 1 summarizes the distribution of the 52 interviews, by age, racial category, and engagement with the BDS movement.

Table 1: The Distribution of the 52 Interviews by Age, Racial Category, and Engagement with the BDS Movement

Distribution of 52 interviews	Racial Category	Palestinian Canadians	9
		Other Arab Canadians	5
		Other people of color (Blacks, SouthEast Asians, Latin Americans, non-Arab-Middle Easterns)	19
		White Canadians	17
		Indigenous Population of Canada	2
	Age	20's	15
		30's	12
		40's	7
		50's	7
		60+	11
	By level of engagement	Actively engaged with Palestinian solidarity	26
		Silently critical of BDS but supporters of Palestinian struggle	6
		Critical of BDS but supporters of Palestinian struggle	3
		Temporary engaged with the BDS	7
		Passively engaged with BDS	10

To respect the anonymity and secure the confidentiality of my interlocutors, I asked my interlocutors to choose a location where they feel comfortable. Ideally the location is not in a public cafe where other people may hear. We met in several places, such as private homes, offices, public parks, and in a corner at a public café. All the names used in the dissertation are pseudonyms, unless the activist decided to use their own name. I also hid all possible identifiable characteristics.

In activist scholarship, the engagement of the researcher in the social justice issue they are working on raises many questions, specifically on the ability of the researcher to produce an objective and rigorous knowledge (Hale 2008). These discussions are rooted in the legacies of

positivism that dominated sociology and social sciences for long time, that separates the subject and the object of research, and that subject communities to “objective” research practices that detach researchers from communities and that may produce distorted knowledge about researched communities and movements. Hale (2008) and Gilmore (2008) do not only refuse the claims of the inability to engaged researchers to produce rigorous studies, but also they seek to reclaim methodological rigor. Their argument is based on the fact that an engaged scholar does not seek to extract knowledge from the social movement they are studying, but to produce useful knowledge that would advance the movement claims and prioritize social justice claims. The involvement of different categories of activists supporting the Palestinian struggle in their own ways was a way of collecting enough data that would advance a rigorous analysis.

Finally, although I transcribed most of the interviews, I nevertheless referred back to the audio recordings to listen again to the emotions expressed during the interviews. Word transcription deprive researchers from identifying the emotional status of interviewees. As for the analysis, a thematic content analysis was followed, whereas the researcher has identified the main themes and collected the insights from the data. Through the thematic analysis, I was able to identify main findings that are used in the analysis of this dissertation.

Archival Research

To complement the data collection especially in identifying main historic events in Toronto, I turned to the archive research. since BDS activism in Canada is rooted in long history of Canadian- Palestinian solidarity since the 1960s, it is imperative to also refer to archival research to construct the historical process for this solidarity. Simultaneously, the counter movements, be they the Zionist movements, the Canadian state or the mainstream media, have also deep historic

roots in opposing activism supporting the Palestinian liberation and in hurdling the initiation and the continuity of solidarity work. Archival work identifies specific events or conjuncture of events (such as major protests, counter protests, and solidarity events related to Palestine) that impact building a sustained solidarity with Palestinians. These events were mainly introduced and discussed during interviews.

I specifically centered my work on the archives of the *Globe and Mail* and *Toronto Star*, two leading newspapers in Toronto, and whose archives are both available at Toronto Public Library. Archival work allowed the analysis of major discourses related to the Palestinian struggle in the Canadian parliament and media. These discourses shape the general political atmosphere and impact the opinions of activists by reinforcing or demobilizing them. I searched for specific keywords (such as BDS, IAW, Palestine solidarity, Palestine House, CAF), and for specific events (such as condemnation of the BDS and IAW events in the Canadian parliament). Following the parliamentary debates related to topics on Palestine or tracing the communication among the City of Toronto staff on the proposed bill to ban Al-Quds Day, or tracking the media coverage of Palestinian or anti-Palestinian events in town are important data that shed lights on the general political debates that shape the public opinion, as well as the discourses used to silence the Palestinian solidarity voices. In addition to the media archival outlets, I consulted the official websites of the City of Toronto to retrieve the debates related to banning Al-Quds Day (chapter 6), and the website of the House of Commons to retrieve the discussions related to BDS.

Researcher's positionality

I grew up in an environment where questions of anti-imperialism, Arab nationalism, anti-occupation resistance, and socialism were discussed on an ongoing basis, at the kitchen table, at

family gatherings, and in the general political atmosphere.²⁵ Members of my family were heavily involved in various political anti-colonial activities. My childhood neighbours were forcibly displaced from their villages in South Lebanon and West Bekaa after Israeli occupation, my school colleague lost her father during one of the Israeli attacks on Lebanon.²⁶ As a Lebanese woman who spent her childhood under Israeli occupation and survived several Israeli wars and invasions, and as someone who volunteered from her early teenage years to help populations forcibly displaced by the Israeli wars, the Palestinian struggle for liberation and other liberation movements around the world were engraved on my political consciousness. The stories of Palestinian refugees to Lebanon who survive with the bare minimum and dream to return to Palestine further politicized me, and reinforced my beliefs in the power of resistance. I followed the news about resistance in Lebanon and Palestine, and during my teenage years I read about Zionist ideology and about various liberation movements in the world. I collected pictures of freedom fighters, and I memorized hundreds of political songs. Over the years, my interest grew when I realized that I could also produce knowledge related to the struggle, and that I can be involved personally in creating a difference, no matter how small. My fascination with the “Westerners” who advocate for Palestinian liberation grew over the years, as they are vocally fighting from the belly of the beast, in the Western-allied countries of Israel.

²⁵ Arab Nationalism emerged as an anti-colonial liberation movement. Therefore, it is different understanding of the narrow conceptualization of nationalism often discussed in Western literature. For a historic tracing of the development of the Arab Nationalist movement, see Chalala 2019.

²⁶ Israel occupied Lebanon from 1978 to 2000, when the militant resistant throughout these years obliged it to withdraw from Lebanon. At the moment, it still occupies Chebaa farms, and Kfarchouba hills in South Lebanon.

I have been involved with the BDS movement since 2012, in various intensities, and in different locations. My involvement stems from my belief in fighting settler colonialism. Palestinians continue to live the effects of settler colonialism, whether they are in the occupied territories living the imprisonment, racism and dehumanization, or in the *shatat* living the forced exile and dreaming of returning back and reclaiming their homes and lands. Ethnic cleansing is embedded in their memory and transmitted intergenerationally. My involvement has intensified over the years, and has involved an increased number of activities, such as research and mobilizing knowledge, writing leaflets, protesting, and expanding a network for coalition building. By the time I started my doctoral studies, I had attended many rallies and political talks related to Palestine, settler occupation, resistance, Indigenous Peoples, imperialism, and related topics, in Toronto, and in Beirut. My intention to write about this research question stemmed from my commitment to contribute to social and political change, wishing that my knowledge production would be engaging for both activists and academics simultaneously.

Given the inseparability of my personal connection to the Palestinian struggle and the research topic itself, I realize that reflexivity is of utmost importance as an epistemological reflective practice on my own possible biases as a researcher, my theoretical dispositions, and my positionality in the subject of study. Guba and Lincoln (2005) define reflexivity as “a conscious experiencing of the self as both inquirer and respondent, as teacher and learner, as the one coming to know the self within the process of research itself” (210). In other words, reflexivity is a dialogue that a researcher engages with the self, questioning the impact of their own positionalities and a priori assumptions on the research process. It is a tool that makes us articulate how our identities, affiliations, ingrained ideas and values, and previous knowledge influenced the knowledge production (from the topic we chose to study, to the data collection

and the dissemination of knowledge). It also reveals the circumstances under which knowledge was produced, by acknowledging the power relations between the researched and researcher, and the influence of the unequal power relations, and the research process on the academic field we are embedded in. Rose (1997) contends that researchers engage in a “double reflexive gaze” (309), an inward gaze towards the self, and an outward towards their relationship with the research process. Throughout this process, researchers keep revisiting their philosophical and theoretical assumptions and their impact on the research design, process, and dissemination.

Bourdieu also informs us on the importance of reflexivity, since as researchers, we embody the field we are embedded in, we adopt its language, its theories, its ways of thinking, and we create what he called an “intellectual bias”. Bourdieu solicits us to break from the fields that we embody, since “the preconstructed is everywhere” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 235). In what follows, I discuss in detail the three types of reflexivity in the context of the field work of this study.

Reflexivity on the “thinking” of qualitative research

As indicated above, reflexivity is a process that researchers engage in to reveal the entangled relationships between knowledge production by the researcher and the researcher’s habitus, capital, social structures, and the general research context. Since researchers are social actors who are embedded in a culture and a social structure that impacts their own perspectives and views, reflexivity is a tool that unsettles the researcher’s taken-for-granted assumptions and unveil the researcher’s epistemological position. Put differently, reflexivity exposes the “conceptual baggage” (Kirby and McKenna 1989, 32) directly implied in the research. By so

doing, it uncovers the factors influencing knowledge production and it examines any conflict between the researcher's assumptions and the respondents' answers.

In the following paragraphs, the chapter unpacks the conceptual baggage that I carried in various occasions across the dissertation journey. I met Majd, a 19-year-old Palestinian student in 2015. A common friend introduced me to her and suggested that Majd has good insights to share. She immigrated with her parents from occupied Jerusalem to Toronto during her high school years. The immigration left unerasable scars in her memory, since she was obliged to leave her homeland with her parents who “left the country for the Israeli occupation instead of staying there and resist the occupation,” as she told me in an interview. At the university in Toronto, she became involved in several activist groups, including the Palestinians and the Indigenous Peoples, since she highlights the similarity between the two struggles and their fights against settler colonialism. As I was interviewing her, Majd asked me where I am originally from. When she learned that I am Lebanese, Majd aggressively confronted me: “and who are you to ask about Palestine and write about Palestine?” Her question astonished me, as I never questioned my position in Palestine solidarity, nor my position as an academic producing knowledge about Palestine. I stuttered and asked to clarify her question. She elaborated that only Palestinians should be the voice of Palestinian struggle, as genuine solidarity works on centering the voice of marginalized and oppressed communities. In my defense, I explained that Israel occupied my country, subjecting it to ongoing Israeli wars, theft of its natural resources, threat and ongoing violation of international law. Zionist thoughts do not restrict their aggression and colonialism to historic Palestine, but it is extended to most Levant countries, including my own Lebanon. Majd retaliated and said that peoples with similar experience of Israeli aggression can speak, but not those who did not experience colonialism.

Majd's comment left me with unease. Although our discussion continued, I wanted to leave the interview as fast as possible, despite the rich insights she shared with me. I did not read about the politics of voice before my interview with her. I felt that all my beliefs crashed with one totally unexpected question: How can I not talk about Palestine? Isn't it a topic engraved in my political consciousness? I do not define myself as a person in solidarity with the Palestinians, but I consider the Palestinian cause as *my struggle*, or *al kadiyya al Oum* (the mother of all struggles). The need to justify my commitment to the Palestinian struggle, especially to a Palestinian person, was unimaginable to me. Majd was critiquing the marginalization of Palestinian voices and the centering of other voices that deemed to be more "objective", and "trustworthy". But I did not see myself as one of these voices. I am a Lebanese Arab woman that experienced Israeli atrocities—albeit with less intensity than what Majd experienced. My background and my internationalist beliefs in solidarity work had overshadowed my thinking about the politics of the voice. Although I was able to convince her about my own position, I felt that my understanding of solidarity is missing. I later understood Majd's position, after reading and engaging in extensive discussions about the topic. Majd wants to amplify the voices of Palestinians, who are often erased in the general political and academic environment. Following the global racial hierarchical logic, some lives are deemed to be more valuable than others, in what Judith Butler (2004) refers to as "hierarchy of grief" (2004, 32). Butler suggests that some lives are worth to be protected and to be grieved, and some others are not counted as humans, and consequently, are not grievable. Similarly, some voices and deaths are deemed more reportable and grievable in the global media landscape. Thus, social movements can leverage this politics of voice, and on the "knowing and trustworthy" (Mahrouse 2014,64) transnational white activists. A number of activist organizations adopt this strategy to "give themselves more

credibility as their activists are not angry biased Palestinians”, as Majd articulated. The selective voices and (white) bodies can be strategically used to illuminate on injustices and promote a specific cause. Simultaneously, the unintended consequence of this is the re-inscription of white superiority, and with it, a maintenance of the feeling of inferior of non-white subjects. The summer of that year, I met with several senior older and long-time Palestinian activists in Lebanon, and I asked for their advice on this issue. They also were astonished by Majd’s comments and explained to me that any knowledge production useful for Palestinian struggle is welcomed.

I met Majd again in 2017 at a conference in Toronto about decolonizing knowledge where I was presenting a paper. My involvement at that time with the BDS movement has intensified, moving from only “back door activism” (Smeltzer 2012, 263), in which the researcher’s work consists of producing research and writing pamphlets, into more visible activism. Majd remembered my interview with her. After a friendly conversation, she commented on a paper presented by an Arab-Canadian researcher at the conference, related to the Palestinian refugee camps in the Arab countries. She considered the topic of Palestinian refugees as an over-researched topic that helps only to build an academic career, and to portray the victimhood of Palestinian refugees, with little discussion on their heroism. Her description of the behaviour of some academics studying Palestinian refugees resembles what Dale McKinley mentioned in an interview as “parachute research, where researchers dip into movements to get little bits of information and then shoot off again into their ivory towers to construct elaborate arguments or theories that are disconnected from the reality of the movements’ politics and mobilisation efforts” (quoted in Dawson and Sinwell 2012, 181). Her comment about a colleague’s research made me question whether my research has an over-researched topic.

My encounters with Majd exposed to me my internationalist assumptions that consider solidarity as universal, and that welcomes activism of all sorts, regardless of identities and differences. My earlier assumptions did not recognize identity politics nor the importance of centralizing of the voices of marginalized communities. To me, any knowledge production about Israeli settler colonialism in historic Palestine and the suffering of Palestinians is solidarity work. I did not think before meeting her and reading about the complexities of solidarity about the daily aggressions that may result from solidarity relations, often unintentionally. My encounters with her also illuminated my need for deeper engagement with the disenfranchised community even after completing the research, and while producing a knowledge in a way that serves solidarity work. Majd's insights informed my discussion guide, which included questions about the voice, asking participants about who they believe has the right to speak, and who can speak in the absence of Palestinian voices.

Most importantly, my interview with her also exposed the complicated dynamics in everyday relations among activists. It revealed the unintended misconducts that activists might be practicing towards the marginalized and oppressed communities, which add tensions to the solidarity relations. In my situation, Majd originally perceived my voice as hijacking to hers and to the Palestinian activists, therefore reproducing a system of oppression that silences the voice of Palestinians. My interview with her also uncovered the importance of ongoing reflexivity that activists should engage in, in order to reveal any oppressive praxis they are involved in. It was this encounter that taught me to be aware of centering the voice of Palestinian bodies, not only Palestinian opinions.

Between powerful and “powerless”

Scholars illuminate tensions between researchers and movements, or researchers and participants, emphasizing the existence of unequal power relationships that can be (re)produced in the field. Unequal power relations become visible in various ways and are related to a number of variables such as educational attainment, professional occupation, age, and fluency in communication. The researcher’s privileged power is also manifested in the dissemination of knowledge and the choice of what to make visible, what to analyze and from which lens to look through. An activist researcher can be (un)intentionally interventionist (Speed 2006), hijacking the voice of their interlocuters or of the community they claim to represent.

In my case, I acknowledge the existence of imbalanced power relations between university student activists and myself, given that most of them are undergraduate students, some of whom are students in classes that I taught (I never interviewed any of my students before they completed the class and received their grade). The hierarchy is based on age, academic position, and educational attainment. I am aware of the existence of these vertical relations, and I have read significant amount of literature, and discussed the matter with several colleagues. I strove not to engage in oppressive or interventionist practices, in order to avoid the objectification of student’s activists and respect their efforts and to avoid imposing myself, which would result in unfavorable outcomes. But that does not work at all time. In one of the events organized by an undergraduate student group at a local university, I introduced myself as a researcher on the BDS movement attending the event. I was accompanied by a student from another university with whom I worked closely in activist-related activities, and who was volunteering with the organizers. Before the event, the organizers expressed their anxiety of potential disruption and escalated violence from local Zionist groups. The event had attracted significant media attention

as it hosted a controversial speaker. Before the event, the university administration had warned students and promised not to interfere unless there was an escalation that could cause safety concerns. An hour before the event, the organizers were discussing tactics of de-escalation and ways of responding to potential violent disruptions, especially after they saw a group of Zionist students waiting outside the event room. Their anxiety seemed to dominate the atmosphere and shadow their ability to come up with proper de-escalating strategies. Seeing this, I intervened to ease their anxiety, and to guide them through some tactics. Although the group appreciated my intervention, I felt as if I had intruded on their space and their event organization. At that moment, I had brief conflicting thoughts about my intervention. These thoughts were immediately erased when I felt that the end objective of my intervention was to make the event successful, and to support the group in its own objectives.

Shannon Speed (2006) addresses the political-ethical tensions and challenges of activist research, reflecting on what may be considered an unethical intervention. Her research illustrates this phenomenon in the lives of Nicolas Ruiz Indigenous community, descendants of Tzeltal Mayans in Mexico, which was facing three interrelated problems. First, they are challenging a historical land struggle against the big corporations and landlords, who were given the land through either fraud or through communal land grants. Second, an internal conflict with a state-supported minority party militants, and third, the denial of the Mexican state of the community's indigenous status since they lost their indigenous language. The Community Human Rights Defenders' Network, for which Speed belongs to, and who has a strong knowledge of the ILO Convention 169 Land Articles, which prioritizes Indigenous culture, suggested that the community use the ILO article 169 to advance their land claims. In this sense, they suggested reframing the claim of Land Rights from a universal human right to a collective cultural rights

framework, through which the Indigenous population could exercise their culture. According to Speed, her political sympathy with the Zapatista movement who supports the Nicolas Ruiz Indigenous community, and her commitment to Indigenous struggles, pushed her to play an interventionist role in the struggle. To be able to achieve their target, the community would have to first regain its Indigenous status. If they were to regain their Indigenous status, they would have their own autonomy over the land and their right for internal decisions. The community agreed with her approach, but “they needed anthropological information and analysis” (2006,70). Speed argues that situated knowledge in a specific position may justify the intervention of an activist researcher, despite its possible tensions with academic theories or the researcher’s ideologies. By intervening and using her expertise in the anthropology of rights to advance the community’s claims, Speed illuminates the reproduction of power relations and the reinforcement of hierarchies of knowledge between the researcher and the community, by positioning herself as the “expert witness” in the land dispute. The final decision to claim the community’s indigeneity as a way to solve their land struggle was a suggestion stemming from the Defenders’ Network, to which the researcher belongs and leads a crucial role, and not the community.

Speed (2006) stresses the importance of ongoing dialogue between researchers and community members in order to negotiate political realities. Speed finally addresses the tension between short-term pragmatic wins and long-term implications. In the short term, their strategy to use the ILO 169 articles did not succeed in returning the lands to the Nicolas Ruiz Indigenous community and did not solicit the Mexican state to recognize the indigeneity of the community. In the long run, the community gained knowledge and experience of using what is perceived as expert knowledge, and their ability to mobilize international available tools to advance their

claims. Since then, the Mexican state did not openly challenge the indigeneity of the community. Speed invites activist researchers to actively engage in critical reflection about their work.

Yet, a nuanced understanding of imbalanced power need to be introduced here in order not to portray student activists as less powerful than the researcher. I wrote earlier that power imbalances put me at an advantage vis-à-vis the student activists, given my academic position, and my age. However, many of the students were my main informants. They have the power to inform me or to hide from me the dynamics in their own circles. They have the capacity to introduce me to other interlocutors, thus expanding my own network, or they have the power to keep me confined to my own network. Put succinctly, I do need the insights of these student activists, their knowledge, and their network to help me develop my argument. Simultaneously, they do need my analysis to further improve their activist work, an objective that we both share together. In this perspective, I argue that discussing power relations during the interview process is complex in that it puts both the interviewee and the interviewer in a position that oscillates between powerful and imagined powerlessness. I use “imagined powerlessness” to demonstrate the non-static position of power, whereas each of the interviewees and the interviewer are both in positions of power and powerlessness.

Anxiety prior or during the interviews can be also derive from other variables, such as the age and health of the participant, which puts the researcher in a less powerful position. During the fieldwork for this dissertation, I interviewed two activist seniors who were sick at the time of the interview. Their health conditions, as well as their seniority in age and in position, made me anxious that my interview with them wouldn't be an engaging conversation. In fact, in one of the interviews, the interviewee who suffered from pneumonic disease was in full control of the interview process, and I had little chance to probe for my questions. These encounters challenge

the dominant belief that researchers exercise power relations on researched. While I did not feel the power relations during the interviews, I felt unable to retrieve all the information I wanted from them, for the fear of exhausting them and impacting their health. In this situation, the seniority in age and the health conditions of the respondent interfered with my ability to conduct a dialogue.

Occupying a double role of activist and researcher: The importance of positionality

As a researcher-activist, acknowledging my positionality and being aware of power relations is of utmost importance. Positionality is defined as “the researcher’s social location, personal experience, and theoretical viewpoint, the relational and institutional contexts of the research, and the bearing of these elements on the research process itself” (Suffla, Seedat, and Bawa 2015, 16).

During the interview process with Lebanese and Palestinian activists of middle to senior age, it was notable that the first question participants often ask me before we start the interview is my kin relation to specific close members of my family who had a long history of supporting Palestinian liberation. This reinforced a sense of trust between us. These “aspects of social identity” (Rose 1997), such as race, nationality, gender, geography and religion influence the researcher’s positionality. My kinship relationships reinforced my identification as a trustworthy person, even among those I met for the first time. They situated me as the daughter, the niece, the relative, the granddaughter of someone they trust, and their trust immediately cascaded down to me, allowing me access to information and to gatekeepers.

My Lebanese nationality has legitimized my research interest in the subject, since most participants were aware of the Israeli occupation of Lebanon and its 1982 invasion. They were

aware of the different Israeli wars on Lebanon, the latest being in 2006, which some of my respondents considered their first political awakening about the Arab-Israeli struggle. Before the interview, some participants asked me about my experience with the Israeli wars and whether I was ever an internally displaced person. Interestingly, many of them also asked me about the liberation of Lebanese territories from Israeli occupation in 2000. Therefore, my identity and the way participants positioned me has had significant impact on the research process, such as legitimizing my position as a researcher on topics related to Palestine and gaining trust to access some of the activists' circles that were unfamiliar to me.

Risk associated with political dissent

Researchers in the social movement field are faced with the challenges of studying “dangerous” topics that confront the dominant power relations in a given society. Researcher’s risk subjecting activists to increased risk of political violence, surveillance, threats, and imprisonment in addition to psychological and physical dangers (Matin 2014; Nassif 2017). These risks vary in their intensity between democratic and democratically restricted environments. In non-democratic environments, the risks for researchers and the movements that they research are typically higher and can lead to increased physical threats (Ryzova 2017). The researcher might therefore choose to obscure some collected insights, or they might refrain from contacting informants for their protection (Rivetti 2017). By contrast, democratic countries such as Canada, attempt to legally restrict movements that challenge dominant political and economic powers by criminalizing their activities and by attributing false accusations against them.

Despite the claims of freedom of expression and democracy in Canada, and as will be analyzed in chapter 6, discussion of the Palestinian struggle still faces an intensified surveillance

from both the Canadian state and Zionist non-state actors (Abu Laban and Bakan 2012). Distorted definitions of hate speech and anti-Semitism act to silence or to penalize Palestinian solidarity activists. For instance, in June of 2019, Canada adopted a new definition of anti-Semitism, which equates Israel and Zionism with Judaism. The new definition considers Jews as one monolithic group, supportive of the state of Israel and its policies. Prior to 2019, supporters of Israeli and the Canadian policies criticized the use of Apartheid as an analytical tool for the Israeli state policies towards the Palestinians (Abu Laban and Bakan 2012; Nadeau and Sears 2010).

In February 2020, the Minister of Foreign Affairs François-Philippe Champagne stated at the House of Commons: “Let me be firm and clear to all Canadians: We condemn BDS” (House of Commons Debates 2020). In February 2016, the Canadian parliament under the same Liberal government officially passed an anti-BDS motion “condemn[ing] any and all attempts by Canadian organizations, groups or individuals to promote the BDS movement, both here at home and abroad.” (House of Commons Debates 2016). Canada joined France, the United Kingdom, and many states in the United States of America in condemning the movement, falsely accusing the movement of inculcating anti-Semitism. At the same time, however, Canada allows the extremist group Jewish Defense League to operate openly (AlJazeera 2010).

Activists are also subject to harassment from organizations supporting Israeli settler colonialism. For instance, a number of activists with whom I am regularly in dialogue are listed on Canary Mission, a website that threatens the reputation of students, educators and professionals who speak up for the rights of Palestinians. This atmosphere of surveillance undoubtedly impacts the general atmosphere in the academy. Abu-Laban and Abigail Bakan stress that “Israel's close association with Zionist ideology has created an informal atmosphere of

surveillance in the Western academy" whereby critical voices "can face intense scrutiny of their motivations" (2011, 279). This surveillance also affects the activist's atmosphere, creating a sense of insecurity.

This atmosphere of surveillance is further reflected in my work, especially in my efforts to assure the safety of my participants. One late evening, I conducted an interview with a key activist and community organizer involved in coalition building with a number of other movements. He had been under scrutiny from Zionist organizations, who publicly attacked him in every event he organized. The interview lasted until 10:00 p.m. and took place on the other end of the city from where I lived. I reached home close to 11:00 p.m. I felt terrified that someone was following me to steal my recording machine. I was constantly looking around, walking at fast pace, and choosing to walk along the main street rather than taking the shortcut alleys to my home. My hand was on the cross strap of my bag. I called a family member to accompany me halfway, to avoid being alone. In another situation, one main interlocutor who connected me to other activists emailed me asking me about the guarantees that interviews would be confidential. This interlocutor knows me very well, as we have organized together a couple of events related to Palestinian solidarity. I do not doubt that he trusted me, but he wanted my further assurance in order to recruit participants for me, some of them I could not have access to without him.

I met another informant, Kamal, at a public café where he agreed to share with me the history of Palestinian solidarity in Canada, given that he has been politically engaged since his immigration to Canada decades ago. He was actively involved in organizing rallies, building coalitions and maintaining relationships to other struggles in Canada. Kamal is vocal about his Palestinian activism on the streets, in the public sphere, and on his social media accounts. I asked

his permission to take written notes instead of an audio recording. I am not sure why I did not ask him if I could record the interview—maybe I did not dare ask. I knew about his activism and I suspected that someone might watch us. I was aware of the intensified surveillance of such activists and I suspected that he could be under surveillance. I myself may have been afraid that a secret police officer would observe and ask for the tapes. Everything he said to me is publicly known and the information he shared can be found in the archives and newspapers. Despite this, I felt more comfortable taking written notes rather than recording our conversation. Kamal guided me by providing me with resources, archives, names, and books. Throughout our long interview, Kamal looked around and observed everyone who entered the cafe. His voice was very low, mumbling every time someone walked by our table. I realized that his physical attitude during the interview influenced my own actions. The lower he spoke, the lower I spoke and the more I hid my notes. In my mind, I was thinking about the person sitting next to our table working on his computer. Could this person be an intelligence spy for the Israeli state? Or for the Canadian police? Or even for the Palestinian Authority who is collaborating with the Israelis? I wrote my notes in Arabic, not only because Kamal spoke to me in Arabic, but also to minimize the likelihood of people understanding my notes (despite my particular attention to hide my notebook). Kamal has a precarious immigration status in Canada, despite having spent several decades of his life here. The main charge against him is mobilization against the State of Israel. Although the conversation with Kamal was very helpful in my research, it caused me anxiety. I thought of the waiter of the cafe and all those who could have observed us. I was wondering if I myself was being watched by the police and/or Zionist movements. Targeted surveillance and implicit state violence can no doubt influence the behavior of activists, and therefore the construction of a lasting solidarity movement.

I met Kamal again in a number of other occasions, including a gathering at his own house with other activists. Discussing Palestinian activism, Kamal reminded me of my interview with him, two years earlier. It was a subject that I did not want to discuss in detail in order to respect the confidentiality of the interviewees. However, Kamal was discussing the different research studies done by doctoral students who interviewed him. I then asked him about his ongoing visible activism and interviews, despite his current immigration precarious situation. He replied:

If you want to work for Palestine, of course you are under surveillance from many organizations: the Canadian state, the Canadian police, the Zionist organizations, the Palestinian organizations, and the Palestinian authority. Just be who you are and be ready to pay the price.

Reflexivity on the “evaluation” of qualitative research

The third component in the multi-reflexivity is related to evaluating the research, by questioning the validity and the truth of the research results. More importantly, I use this space to reflect on my position as an actor in this academic field, and the way my work shapes the university. As an academic field, the university is an arena of struggle where every agent (administration, faculty, students, disciplines) attempt to dominate. The university field has been complicit in silencing solidarity with the Palestinians, by imposing bureaucratic barriers, preventing free space, denying funding for academics and events, denying or rescinding faculty jobs... But the university is simultaneously a space of contention, where the BDS movement is active through the faculty, researchers and students. For instance, the Palestinian Campaign and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) is a main element of the BDS movement.²⁷ Challenging the anti-BDS

²⁷ In April 2002, and in response to Israel’s continuous breaches of international law and UN resolutions, a petition was initiated by the British academics Hillary and Steven Rose. It called for an academic boycott of Israeli

argument that the movement shrinks the academic debate by boycotting Israeli academic institutions, Maira (2017) argues that PACBI expanded academic freedom since it opens a previously closed space for discussing the Palestinian struggle. Following Maira's argument, I think of my dissertation as contributing to the struggle within academia to expand the knowledge on Palestine as a struggle against settler colonialism.

Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to engage reflexively on the ways of thinking about, doing, and evaluating my research throughout the research process. As an activist researcher committed to social justice methodologies, it is crucial to consider my research as a form of resistance, employing a method “not on the marginalized, but research by, for, and with them/us” (Brown and Strega 2005, 7). The ongoing reflexivity in this dissertation revealed how alternate thinking about solidarity opened up new ways of thinking and analyzing about solidarity. The chapter reveals occasions that challenged the researcher's epistemological positions and ontological thinking, and therefore, all the conceptual baggage carried by the researcher and their implications on the research.

universities and research institutions and attracted 130 European academic signatories (Barghouti 2011; Rose and Rose 2009). The European Union has significant research and academic collaborations with Israel. Israel is a member of the European Research Area (ERA). By the end of 2002, the list of European professors and institutions calling for the boycott had grown to include a body of notable institutions and academics (Rose and Rose 2009). Two years later, in July 2004, the Palestinian Campaign and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) was born. Since that time, a growing number of independent academics, researchers, academic institutions, cultural figures, singers and performers, architects and other professional groups adopted the call to boycott. A number of groups emerged, among others, the British Committee for the Universities of Palestine (BRICUP), the US campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (USACBI), European Platform for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (EPACBI).

I pursued this project based on my involvement in the BDS movement and my relative disappointment in the oscillation in intensity of solidarity with the Palestinians in Toronto, despite the long history of solidarity in the city. This disappointment arose from activists' inability to build a strong movement that confronts racism, settler colonialism, and all forms of discrimination. Therefore, I am in a crucial position of navigating the ethical terrain of being simultaneously an activist and a researcher. This double position of activist - researchers invites us to be engaged in ongoing dialogue throughout the research process with the movement to produce relevant and useful knowledge (Choudry and Kuyek 2012; Brem-Wilson 2014; Hale 2001; Martin 2014) and to centralize the activist's voices (Chouliaraki 2011).

My ethical commitment necessitates that I engage in ongoing reflexivity as a tool to ensure I am properly translating the experiences of activists without adopting and analyzing through what I think is a normative way of solidarity work. I face various dilemmas of choosing what to make (in)visible, as I am afraid that some information might present a hurdle to forging solidarity ties within the movement, or might harm the activists who confided their information with me. Activist research is an ongoing process whereby the researcher engages the community or movement in the entirety of the research process in order to bring the movement's interests to the forefront (Brem-Wilson 2014).

This ongoing dialogue also serves to negotiate any potential divergence between the researcher and the movement (Brem-Wilson 2014). Choudry and Kuyek (2012) stress the importance of the activist researcher building trust with the movement's constituents. I am in regular dialogue with organizers in the BDS movement in Toronto and in other places around the world. I believe that knowledge production cannot only be built through formal data collection, but that it is also dialogical and collective. I build my research on ongoing informal

conversations with activists and organizers in various movements and I will continue to construct knowledge along with the other activists in the BDS movement in Toronto.

Chapter 3: Political Imaginaries as an Endogenous Source of Possibilities and Tension

The concept of solidarity is omnipresent in political and public discourses as well as academic literature, but it carries different —sometimes competing— meanings (Bayertz 1999; Kip 2016; Agustín and Jørgensen 2019). The polysemic nature of solidarity can be attributed to many factors. It is a concept used across different political and religious ideologies —such as conservative, liberal, anarchist, and among various religious communities (Kip 2016). It is also used among grassroots activists, state actors, national, and supranational institutions. Although the most actors’ understanding of solidarity broadly relates it to emancipation from various forms of injustice, approaches to solidarity can be civic, social, and political in nature. Moreover, the meaning of solidarity changes between various overlapping traditions each with their own imaginary, such as the socialist, the reciprocal, the anti-colonial, the feminist, and the decolonial. These political imaginaries inform the understanding of political solidarity among activists, and are reflected in the distinctive practices of solidarity movements, and in their ability to build sustained solidarity.

Among the various meanings of solidarity, the distinction between social, civic, and political is particularly relevant to my project. Social solidarity is concerned with the conditions that enable building cohesion in the society. Social solidarity in industrial and pluralistic societies underscores the interdependence between individuals (Durkheim 1933).²⁸ Civic solidarity is

²⁸ Ibn Khaldoun’s concept of *Assabya* (solidarity) is instrumental to understand how groups develop collective identities in order to build cohesive and strong social bonds that are situated beyond kinship and familial relations (Ibn Khaldoun 2005 [1377]). After the Enlightenment, the concept of social solidarity became mainly associated with the work of Emile Durkheim in industrial society (Banting and Kymlicka 2015; Gaztambide-Fernández 2012;

understood as the cohesive social bonds that aim to create a “shared sense of the good” (Pensky 2008, 2) within the liberal state. Individuals work together *with*—and not *in opposition to*—the state and its apparatuses to advance the overall wellbeing of society.²⁹ In contrast to social and civil solidarity, the concept of political solidarity underscores both the aim of achieving social justice but more importantly, *the praxis*, that is, the set of strategies and tactics, through which those aims can be achieved. As noted earlier, these praxes are informed by political imaginaries—ways of imagining the alternative social and political relations that would achieve social justice— that shape different understandings of political solidarity, and result in either coalitional, oppositional, or nil relations between different social movements. This chapter, therefore, attempts to illuminate the ideologies, practices, and strategies that constitute a particular field of differentiated forces that facilitate or hinder sustained solidarity.

The concept of political solidarity is foundational to activism and social movements as it conveys the power of collective agency and action in changing or maintaining a specific social

Cladis 2004), who maintains that “organic solidarity” in modern societies is based on differentiation, rather than homogeneity. He argues that social solidarity grows out of a *spontaneous* division of labour that allows individuals to use their talents and labor in what is *perceived* as a just series of social and economic relationships with others (Durkheim 1933). Individuals’ perception of social justice is fundamental to the building of solidarity in social relations. His theory is informed by the need to understand diversity in a society (Cladis 2004, 394), while simultaneously stressing the importance of shared values.

²⁹ The concept of *civic solidarity* was developed in tandem with the emergence of the modern liberal state. Civic solidarity is therefore characterized by an openness to other cultures, the acceptance of others, and overall mutual respect and tolerance among its members (Banting and Kymlika 2015). The shared purpose of advancing the common good helps garner the support from citizens in the attempt to minimize inequalities through processes such as an income distribution from rich to poor, or through the provision of welfare services (Song 2011). This understanding of solidarity accentuates the interdependence of individuals with each other and with the state (Calhoun 2002).

order. The multivalence of different approaches to political solidarity can contribute to particular relations between social movements. For instance, the socialist understanding of solidarity presupposes an antagonistic relation between the apparatuses of the capitalist state and the laborer, which translates into a political imaginary where a united working class would eventually topple the oppressive capitalist system.³⁰ Overlapping with the socialist approach, reciprocal solidarity forged through political struggles challenge oppression and connects the struggles of various marginalized peoples. Reciprocal solidarity occurs at a multi-scalar level, that is, local, regional, and transborder (Featherstone 2012) and is enacted through informal networks of “physically, culturally, and socially distant people” (Olesen 2004, 259).³¹ Anti-colonial approaches to solidarity aim to liberate previously colonized countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America from its mainly western colonizers, as well as to bring them together to oppose the transnational systems of oppression that dominate them.³² Anti-colonial solidarity

³⁰ Socialist solidarity assumes the existence of a symmetrical relations between economically oppressed in-groups—occupying the same position in the capitalist mode of production—and their antagonists—state, bourgeoisie classes, imperial powers—(Pensky 2008; Olesen 2004; Waterman 1998). Solidarity is enacted through a moral and social bond among the working classes to challenge different forms and sources of domination, within and outside nation-state borders. Socialist solidarity is a bottom-up solidarity that serves to create cohesion among working class members regardless of their national identities. While this approach conceives of solidarity as an emancipatory tool from material injustices, it often disregards the complexity of transnational social relations and the rifts that exists even within the same class, such as the Palestinian and Israeli working class.

³¹ Reciprocal solidarity aims to recognize similarities between different but equivalent causes and to bridge particular and universal struggles.

³² Anti-colonial approaches of solidarity were prevalent in the 1950's- 1970's and encompassed both top-down and a bottom-up practices. The formation of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) included countries from the Global South who alienated themselves from the Cold War and called for global peace and respect for people's self-determination. At the grassroots and social movement levels, solidarity relations were forged between various anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggles. For instance, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was rooted

presupposes the self-determination of the peoples and mutual solidarity as paths toward independence. Feminist understandings of solidarity aim to liberate women from the oppressive systems of patriarchal power (and for some, capitalist system) and relations of domination that discriminate against them. One notion of global sisterhood assumes a women's global shared experience and a common liberating vision to shackle the oppressions.³³ A final approach to solidarity emphasizes decolonial relations. It problematizes solidarity encounters and stresses the persistence of colonial ideas, practices, and imaginaries among activists. Decolonial solidarity warns that racial inequalities are (often unintentionally) reproduced in solidarity work (Mahroos 2014) and calls on solidarity activists to acknowledge their privilege, decenter their voices and knowledge and ultimately to dismantle the system that enables their privilege (Smith 2013, Amadahy 2010). They stress the need for the radical transformation of privileged solidarity actors who may unwittingly reproduce the logics of the very oppressive systems they aim to dismantle (Ferguson 2009).

in Third World Internationalism and in anti-colonial solidarity logics (Tabar 2017) and collaborated with other revolutionary struggles around the world (Tabar 2017; Turki 1972).

³³ Yet, the illusion of a homogenized women's experience and a universalized view of feminist emancipation and politics revealed the complexity and the challenges of solidarity building. The tendency of white bourgeois Western feminists to homogenize non-Western women and to attribute their oppression to cultural and religious practices, —without consideration of the historical and political conditions that lead to contextually situated forms of oppression—has been denounced by a number of feminists (Abu-Lughod 1998, hooks 1994, Lazreg 2000, Mohanty 2003). As a result, understanding of feminist solidarity shifted in accordance with the various waves of feminist struggle: From a homogenous universal politics to an intersectional approach centered on accounting for multiple identities and different forms of oppression. In this sense, solidarity has witnessed a conceptual reorientation with consequential effects on the political imaginaries of activists.

The implications of the existence of multiple approaches to political solidarity are direct in social movements, since activists and movements in the same field may understand and practice solidarity in different ways. The translations of these approaches in solidarity work have either facilitated or hindered solidarity ties. Therefore, this chapter asks the following questions: How does the activists' political imaginaries of emancipation shape political solidarity relations and their (dis)continuity? And, what are the tangible consequences of these different approaches on Palestinian solidarity and the BDS movement? Through answering these questions, I attempt to better understand the dynamics shaping found in both my fieldwork, and interviews.

As mentioned earlier, in conceiving of the BDS movement as a "field", that is a space of differentiated forces, I am borrowing from Bourdieu's theory of practice (2002) which combines the latter with capital, and habitus. The Bourdieusian theory of practice allows one to elucidate the structures within which practices emerge and acquire meaning, along with the various subjective dispositions that come into play as actors engage in solidarity relations across time. Whereas these solidarity practices try to gain capital in order to advance their claims and ultimately transform the field, ideological and strategic convergences and divergences among actors may limit their efforts to sustain solidarity. My analysis of sustained solidarity understood as continuity of solidarity relations over time until the fulfillment of the social justice claims benefits from Bourdieu's theory of practice in that it allows me to examine both synchronic and diachronic aspects of a movement's configuration and the historicity of solidarity imaginaries and strategies as embodied in institutional and individuals' habitus.

The chapter advances three intertwined themes: Solidarity as an imagined idea, solidarity as a practice, and the influence of both the idea and praxis on sustained solidarity. Solidarity is understood as an endogenous factor shaped by habitus, as the set of dispositions of its activists,

who in turn shape the movement, and influence its trajectory. The ways in which the activists' habitus operate in a particular "field of contention" (Crossley 2003,60) in which social movements unfold, shapes both the actors' ways of thinking, feeling, and acting, as well as the agonistic agents, given that activists hold different habitus, i.e. hold different ideologies, emancipatory visions, and positions. The actors strive to promote their own ideas and logic within the field, as well as their tactics and strategies in doing activism. The field itself needs to be understood as the arena that structures activists' ideas and practices. As will be discussed later in this chapter, different political imaginaries result in different conceptualization and practices of political solidarity, and become sources of tension, that can either alienate or reconcile potential collaborators within the groups who endorsed the BDS movement in Toronto.

The next section unpacks the contradictions that emerge as a result of a divergent understandings of solidarity, and the possible tensions or possibilities that materialize out of these contradictions. I use the term "tension" to illustrate that the diverging points of view are not only conceptual, but they have direct impact on solidarity relations. I examine three overlapping tensions related to pragmatism and political imagination (particularism and internationalism), shared or diverse political vision, and the operation of colonial relations and their transformation (decoloniality).

Unpacking the tension in conceptualizing political solidarity

This section unpacks the tensions that exist in conceptualizing political solidarity, as informed by the political imaginaries of my interlocutors, and illuminates the different practices and expressions of solidarity in relation to endogenous and exogenous factors. These tensions are animated by temporal, spatial, ontological and ideological differences between a) anti-colonial

Third World international imaginaries and pragmatic rights-based imaginaries b) diverging or converging political projects and c) the operation of colonial relations and their transformation (decoloniality).

Tension between anti-colonial imaginaries and pragmatic demands for human rights

Following Bourdieu's relational thinking, and his theorization of practice as a dynamic interplay between the field, capital, and habitus, this chapter analyzes the dynamics of the internalized ideologies, practices and strategies on the political imaginary of activists and on the trajectory of building sustained solidarity with the BDS. The articulations and praxis of Palestine solidarity in Toronto provide important insights into the political imaginaries of activists. These imaginaries reveal the relation of activists to other liberation and anti-oppressive movements, to the Canadian state, and to various global systems of oppressions. BDS activists forge solidarity relations with other movements existing in different geographies. By historicizing and highlighting the links between different oppressors, and by reviving historic relations with other movements, BDS activists engage in local, regional and global struggles - be it the struggles of the Indigenous peoples, the labour movements, environmental justice, or anti-racist movements.

The multiplicity of actors and groups within the BDS movement gives rise to multiple conceptualizations and practices of political solidarity, which vary from a "radical" anti/decolonial political paradigm to a pragmatic human rights paradigm. Some imagine solidarity within the imaginary of Third World Internationalism, while others do so within Human Rights and International law traditions. The tensions and possibilities created by these two political imaginaries are discussed in the next section.

Anti-Colonial Third World International Political Imaginaries

Many of my interlocutors understand the Palestinian struggle within a larger framework of fighting colonialism and imperialism in the world. For these activists, Palestine is a transnational struggle embedded in a web of transnational violence, that aims to replicate the dominance of the colonial and imperial powers onto other nations. The transnational violence manifested by the Zionist settler colonial project, is understood to be a microcosm of Western settler colonialism and imperial projects globally. As Alex Lubin (2008) explains, it identifies as “particular sites of state and imperial rule not in isolation but as constitutive of larger global systems and circuits of power” (684). As Ali, a long-time activist and organizer in anti-imperialist and labour rights struggles, eloquently puts it “Palestine is not fighting Israel, but we are fighting America and the whole Western political project and their allies in our land.”

Activists with an anti-colonial Third World political imaginary also understand Palestine to be at the epicenter of global resistance, entangled with all anti-colonial and anti-imperialist projects. As a result, such activists in Toronto emphasize the links between the Palestinian struggle and other anti-colonial movements, and aim to revive or strengthen the ties associated with the grassroots level of Third World Internationalism of the 1950s and 1970s. These relations illuminated the entanglement between different spatial and temporal struggles against imperialism, colonialism, and racism.³⁴ Such anti-colonial revolutions spanned the globe in Africa, Asia and Latin America, where revolutionary strategies, ideas, and military training were

³⁴ Third World countries in a non-aligned movement with neither the West nor the Soviet during the Cold War era. The term “Third World” is political in nature, and was clearly defined in the Bandung conference in Indonesia in 1955 and later in the Non-Aligned Summit Conference in 1961 (Tomlinson 2003).

diffused and exchanged among revolutionaries, from the Algerian to the Maoist to the Cuban and Vietnamese and Ghanaian, among others. These “insurgent geographies of connection”, as David Featherstone calls it (2012,62), cut across state and race borders to create radical global emancipatory political imaginaries. In this context, the Palestinian liberation became one of the iconic causes in the 1960’s, when the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) forged ties with revolutionaries around the world, and these ties were translated morally and materially through funding, training, and the exchanging of human, cultural, and material resources. The Third World liberation Project, of which the Palestinian liberation was an integral cause, embodied an anti-imperial worldview that opposed hegemonic white colonial domination.

Many activists and groups in Toronto, like elsewhere, endorse the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist worldview in what Ali describes as the struggle of marginalized groups against the “white man.” The white man here is a metaphor to describe the western hegemonic dominance over the Other, a dominance rooted in a long history of colonialism, settler colonialism, white supremacy, dispossession and exploitation of the racialized populations.

These anti-colonial emancipatory politics is an awakening of the long tradition of different forms of popular resistance, inside and outside the boundaries of historic Palestine, that the Palestinians have been embedded in prior to the Oslo Accords, the “peace process” that was signed in 1993.³⁵ The Oslo Accords have isolated the Palestinian struggle from other global

³⁵ In September 1993, and under the patronage of the Norway and the United States of America, the PLO and the Israelis signed an interim agreement called the “Declaration of Principles”. The interim agreement followed almost a decade of secret negotiations between the PLO and Israel. The PLO recognized the state of Israel and its right to exist in peace, ending their rhetoric about liberation of historic Palestinian land. Consequently, the PLO gave up 78% of historic Palestine (Falk 2002, xv). In return, Israel recognized the PLO as the representative of the

struggles and diverted the political project from Palestinian liberation to a project of state building inscribed within global neoliberalism. The failure of the Oslo Accords and opposition to the Palestinian Authorities (PA) enabled the emergence of the BDS movement. Some BDS activists are reviving the solidarity relations that share this earlier imaginary, including those with black groups, Filipino groups, Indigenous struggles, Central and Latin Americans, the Tamil, the Kurds, and the Kashmiris. Political configurations among solidarity groups in Toronto have been shaped by reviving old ties and traditions mainly rooted in Third World internationalist relations (illustrated in the connection of struggle between the BDS and Black Lives Matter (BLM), Idle No More, Tamil student association, anti-imperialist Leftist groups or trade union movements among others) or by creating new solidarity anti-imperialist and/or anti-Zionist ties (such as the solidarity with queer groups, sexual violence survivors, and the emerging Jewish non-Zionist activists) (Personal interviews; Maira 2017; Barrows Friedman

Palestinian people. Based on the Oslo Accords, Israel had to gradually transfer power to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Both parties were to engage in further negotiations to discuss the most difficult issues, including the status of “Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, Israeli settlements, security arrangements, borders, mutual relations and cooperation with other neighbouring states, and other issues of interest” (Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements 1993), including water resources (Watson 2000). Further agreements followed the mutual recognition, including economic and security collaborations. Accordingly, the Palestinian authority (PA) was established: a self-governing, temporary, Palestinian body to overlook the power transfer and the establishment of statehood, “for a period not exceeding five years, leading to a permanent settlement based on UN resolution 242” (Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements 1993). Gradual transfer of civil authority over such matters as education, health and tax collection took place in Gaza and the West Bank, excluding the Jewish settlements, military locations and the contested territories of East Jerusalem (Watson 2000). The agreements also gave Israel control over Gaza Strip’s air and sea space (B’tselem 2011). The Oslo Accords did not include all Palestinians. It excluded those Palestinians living in East Jerusalem and those with Israeli citizenship, and the millions of Palestinians in the diaspora (Al Jazeera America 2013). From this perspective, fragmentation of Palestinians was at the core of Oslo Accords, and was institutionalized through the establishment of the PA. Palestinians were segregated into different territories: outside historic Palestine, in East Jerusalem, in the fragmented land of Gaza Strip and West Bank, under the authority of PA, and in pre-1967 Israel.

2014). The shared resources of their constituents, their tactics, their allies increased their opportunity for effective change. On the streets, they march hand in hand in the rallies (such as the yearly protests commemorating the *nakba*), and face the police. At the local universities in GTA, they organize Israeli Apartheid Weeks, and challenge administrative policies. On various campuses, they run for elections together, with one political agenda that translates their movement goals. They support each other grievances, such as the material and non-material support of CUPE 3903 and CUPE 3902 (the unions that represents contract academic workers at York University and University of Toronto respectively) to BDS events in Toronto, and the non-financial support of BDS to the labour unions.

One constitutive aspect of this imaginary of solidarity is the formation of strong relations between Palestinian activist groups in the early 1960's and Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island.³⁶ These relations are carried forward with the BDS movement and its relationship to contemporary Indigenous peoples' struggle, sharing the logic of resistance to settler colonial violence, illustrated by land theft, ethnic cleansing, cultural genocides, erasure of narratives, residential schools, murder and missing indigenous women, and repression.³⁷ This emphasizes the way that the erasure logic of settler colonialism is not unique to Palestine, and that Indigenous peoples in North America have faced similar violent regimes. The shared history and experience of settler-colonial violence, along with the shared history of resistance, demonstrate the interconnected

³⁶ Turtle Island refers to the name that many Indigenous Peoples name the North American continent.

⁴ It is important to differentiate between the indigenous struggle and the various indigenous groups. Similar to the Palestinians, the Indigenous are not homogenous in their ideologies, strategies, and tactics. For instance, some indigenous groups and activists stand in solidarity with the Zionists, such as Ryan Bellerose, a Metis activist. See Bellerose 2013.

temporal and spatial historic contexts, and its translation into stronger solidarity ties between the two groups. For instance, in 1976, a group of Palestinians, indigenous people, Chileans, Filipinos, Ethiopians, and Indians formed a coalition called Third World People’s Coalition (TWPC) responsible of public education and mutual support (Qawas 2021; CPA Vancouver 1976).³⁸ The coalition was later joined by Irish activists in the early 1980’s, and renamed as Coalition of National Liberation Movements (CNLM). During the siege of Kanehsatàke and Kahnawake- also known as the Oka crisis in 1990, in which the Canadian government deployed its army to shut down the indigenous resistance of the Mohawk people, Palestinian solidarity groups from Toronto, Ottawa and Quebec visited the protestors in their land to support them (personal interview). In 2012, the group “Palestinians in Solidarity with Idle No More and Indigenous Rights”— many of its members are BDS activists — issued the statement below, highlighting the entangled structures of oppression between the two contexts:³⁹

“Indigenous people have risen up across Canada in the Idle No More movement, a mass call for Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination and rights, against colonization, racism, injustice, and oppression. As Palestinians, who struggle against settler colonialism, occupation and apartheid in our homeland and for the right of Palestinian refugees—the majority of our people—to return to our homeland, we stand in solidarity with the Idle No More movement of Indigenous peoples and its call for justice, dignity, decolonization and protection of the land,

³⁸ Selected activities and pamphlets are archived on the Canada Palestine Association 1976 on this link <http://cpavancouver.org/1976/01/native-study-group-on-indigenous-and-palestinian-struggles/>

³⁹ Similar statements- coupled with protests and other solidarity actions- were issued during the Wet’suwet’en territory crisis in 2019 and 2020, when the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) invaded the lands of First Nations people living in what is known today as British Columbia, and arrested protesters resisting the order of Supreme Court of Canada to evacuate their ancestor lands in order to allow the construction of the Coastal GasLink pipeline. Selected examples of these statements can be found at BDS 2020; PYM 2020; PSC 2020.

waters and resources.” (Palestinians in Solidarity with Idle No More and Indigenous Rights 2012).⁴⁰

Similarly, Indigenous groups expressed their solidarity with the Palestinian struggle in various ways. In 2020, Idle No More stood in solidarity with the Palestinians “against ongoing Israeli attacks and enforced settler colonialism”. The solidarity statements often stress the shared violence from a settler colonial regime, the reciprocal and historic solidarity ties, and the commitment to justice. The statements also indicate an assumptive solidarity, i.e., a taken-for-granted solidarity relations that arise from the shared structures of violence. However, despite commonalities in the manifestation of the logic of settler colonialism, the shared context is not enough of a catalyst for the creation of sustained solidarity.

The emphasis on the commonalities of the structures of oppression and on the historic relations that tie the two struggles often disregard the particularities of each context, and the unintentional implication of Palestinian *shatat* in the colonization of Indigenous peoples in Canada. In her article “On assumptive solidarities in comparative settler colonialisms”, Dana Olwan (2015) warns against the focus on shared commonalities between the indigenous people and the Palestinians residing in North America, since it portrays the solidarity ties as ahistorical and non-transformative. Her argument arises from the fact that Palestinians in Canada are settlers in the indigenous land, and are complicit and beneficiaries of the ongoing colonialism of Indigenous lands. Olwan calls on Palestinians to acknowledge the settler-indigenous relations and to work on transforming relations.

⁴⁰ The statement was signed by Palestinian activists residing in various countries, by supporters of Palestinian struggle, by BDS Palestinian and non-Palestinian activists living in Toronto, and by Palestinian organizations (Many which are supporters of the BDS). For a list of signatories, see US Palestinian Community Network 2012.

The anti-colonial political imaginaries create a rift among Palestinian organizers in Toronto. The fact that Palestinians are themselves settlers in Indigenous lands in Canada while fighting settler colonialism in their own land generates ongoing discussion and reflection among organizers. It is in this specific context that Laila, a Palestinian student union organiser, thinks about her positionality. Her parents arrived in Canada after the Israeli invasion to Lebanon in 1982, and the destruction of their house in a Palestinian refugee camp in Beirut. She herself was born in Canada. Laila thinks about the complexity of herself and her community as settlers with a unique condition: they cannot go back to their appropriated lands in Palestine, and they occupy a double-position in Canada: They fight against the Zionist settler colonialism in their homeland while they themselves occupy the position of settlers on indigenous lands in Canada. She struggles with her community members and institutions who celebrate Canada Day and insist on holding Canadian flags in every protest related to Palestine. The symbolic raising of the Canadian flags during protests becomes an added fracture in Toronto activism, becoming visible in the organizing of three different “Hands off Jerusalem” protests that took place across the American embassy in downtown Toronto on the weekend of 9-10 December 2017. Activists protested the previous American president Donald Trump’s unilateral declaration that Jerusalem is the “eternal capital” of the state of Israel. At one protest, there were no Canadian flags; but at another, they were everywhere.

The emphasis on the uniting political project of the anti-colonial Third World Internationalism, rather than only on the commonalities of struggle, is also articulated by Lina, one Palestinian organizer with the BDS movement in Toronto, when she suggests the need for a deeper political commitment. Lina states:

“it's not just enough to say that we are being gunned down by the police and we are being gunned down by the IDF [so called Israeli Defence Forces]. It has to be like, well, monopoly capitalism, the transnationalism of violence, like how Israel funds, you know, arms and weapons Ferguson Police, American police. Like it's set of principles, anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, like these are things that unite our struggles together, not just the fact that we are victims of violence and oppression. It's not enough. So you have to derive political analysis on lessons between our communities”.

Lina's conception of solidarity is based on a common set of principles, on a political project, and on political imagination. The principles she refers to are rooted in Third World Internationalism, an anti-imperialist and anti-racist emancipatory worldview. For Lina, solidarity required a shared vision of freedom and justice, shared political imaginary rather than an experience of common injustice. Within a single Palestinian community, there are many visions for Palestinian liberation and a framing of the Palestinian problem. In this situation, the political imaginaries of activists and of movements become an integral element of either solidarity building, or non-cooperative or confrontational relations. For Lina, any vision that does not seek liberation from settler colonialism and gives the complete right to return for all Palestinians in exile is incomplete.

The revival of the Third World anti-colonial political imaginaries re-internationalizes the Palestinian struggle after the process of exceptionalizing it with the onset of global neoliberalism, the fall of the Soviet Union and the Oslo Peace process (Hawari 2020). The ideals of Third World anti-colonialism are built on the interconnectedness of spatial and historical struggles and are tied to the political emancipatory imaginary of activists facilitating shared conceptions and practices. Most of the activists who base their understanding and praxis on solidarity in Third World imaginary politics consider BDS as a movement with tactics that can

unite different struggles, using internationalist solidarity discourses. These activists see it as one movement among others that lead to emancipation. However, many activists do not agree on this anti-colonial strategy, but advocate for a rights-based framing approach.

Pragmatic Human Rights Solidarity Imaginaries

Opposing the revival of what they perceive as “radical” Third World Internationalism, other activists in Toronto have openly advocated the need for a pragmatic politics, especially in Western countries that are complicit with the Zionist regime. The pragmatic politics of this group of activists entails working within the frameworks of international law and human rights, and within the framework of the state of Canada and its institutions. Noura Erakat—a human rights attorney, professor of law, and activist in the BDS movement—defines international law as the “treaties, customs, and general principles that define the rights of states, regulate states’ behaviour towards one another, and establish states’ duties and responsibilities towards organizations and individuals within their jurisdiction” (2019,4). International laws and proceedings of international conventions can be used as a legal tool by social movements to advance the claims of the Palestinian struggle. In fact, the BDS movement specifies the obligation of Israel to recognize the right of Palestinians to self-determination under international law, and the principles of universal human rights (BDS movement 2005). The BDS’s discursive emphasis on using a universal language of human rights and international law attracts an increasing number of grassroots activists globally. The activists’ pragmatic logic is rooted in two rationales: The first rationale is that human rights and international laws are considered the *lingua franca* of global politics and transnational activism. Rights-based discourse is easily

legible for the western public and easily legitimizes the collective claims. The second rationale is the fear of retaliation against their personal lives and the movement. The fierce Zionist counter-movements in Toronto, and globally were able to weaponize newly engineered laws that conflated anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, and negatively affect the lives of activists.

Despite the critique of international law and human rights as a colonial tool, and the politicized use of international legal systems by the imperial powers (Erakat 2019; Çubukçu 2018; Randall 2010), international law can offer prospects for justice (Falk 2019) and has been mobilized to advance social justice claims (Erakat 2019; Hajjar 2001).⁴¹ In fact, Palestinian and other international human rights organizations have deployed international law claims against Israeli occupation (Hajjar 2001). For instance, Al-Haq, a Palestinian human rights organization established in 1979, is a member of international legal networks that use international law to defend human rights. Al-Haq documents the illegal practices in occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) and advocates for the rule of law, the collective and the individual rights of Palestinians (Al Haq n.d). Falk (2019) identifies four main avenues in which international law can contribute to justice. First, the documents of the Fourth Geneva Convention forbid occupation and recognizes Israel as an occupier of Palestinian territories. Since 1967, the UN Security Council issued twenty-six resolutions that obliges Israel to abide by the legal obligations of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Second, international law identifies the temporality of occupation and

⁴¹ Randel Williams (2010) explains that international law is used as a colonial tool to justify the early dispossession of colonial countries before the establishment of international law administered by the UN. In addition, international law is a tool used by western countries to impose their hegemonic agenda. For instance, the UN general security council is monopolized by five countries that have the power to make decisions related to global war and peace.

forbids further annexation, a practice that Israel is constantly doing. Third, the international law deems the construction of Jewish only settlements in occupied territories, and the ongoing annexation as illegal. Fourth, international law gives the right of people to self-determination. For instance, in her ethnography of the *World Tribunal on Iraq* (2003-2005), a transnational horizontalist network of activists that offer a counter argument to the legitimacy of the war on Iraq, Ayça Çubukçu (2018) categorizes the tension between the participants in WTI as between a legalist approach, and a political one. The first deploys international law to legitimize WTI in international courts. Even amongst anti-imperialists, international law holds sway. In contrast, the political approach deploys the language of collective action by global citizens concerned with the imperialist violence.

Adam, a young Palestinian student organizer, advocates for BDS as a non-violent tool to achieve the human rights of Palestinians, because “this approach is accepted in Canada. People may stop and listen to us. It would be wiser to take it one step at a time: let them [potential recruits] be interested, then we provide them with facts and historical learning. We have to be strategic in the way we communicate.” Adam is specifically referring to what Snow and Benford (1988, 199) refer as frame resonance, the appeal of a social movement framing to the cultural values and the meanings that potential recruits may have. It is more likely that recruitment into the movement takes place if the framing is more aligned with the values in society. In this case, deploying a rights-based approach for the solidarity with Palestinians builds on what is perceived to be the values of westerners, promoters of human rights and international law (personal interviews).

My formal interviews and informal discussions with activists, organizers, and sympathizers show the great importance given to the framework of international law and human

rights discourses, as a tool that can be used strategically to address the western audience, but not as the only strategy that can lead to Palestinian liberation. More specifically, deploying international law and human rights approach captures the attention of potential recruits, facilitates the advocacy for Palestine, and enables solidarity building. The deployment of international law and human rights discourses has created many political opportunities for the Palestinians. Jessica, an international law student and activist with the BDS movement, recalled the decision of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the highest international juridical tribunal, in July 2004 on the illegality of the Apartheid Wall. While non-binding, the ICJ verdict rejected the Israeli claim that the wall was built for security reasons. This decision confirmed that the Jewish settlements were illegal and in violation of international human rights laws, and harmed the basic human rights of Palestinians, including access to freedom of movement, food, health services, educational establishments, and water resources. In fact, the BDS call starts by recognizing the “historic advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) which found Israel’s Wall built on occupied Palestinian territory to be illegal” (BDS movement 2005). The decision of ICJ —along with other reasons— enabled the emergence of the BDS movement.⁴² ICJ’s decision exemplifies the reasons to use international law as a tool for liberation.

The deployment of the rights-based approach and international law to advance the claims of BDS activists and expand the movement in Toronto has been the subject of an ongoing internal debate among the activists. For instance, during my fieldwork (2016-2019), there was a debate as to whether some student-led groups like “Students Against Israeli Apartheid” (SAIA), which normalizes the apartheid framework in its description of the relationship that exists

⁴² such as the failure of the peace process between Israel and the PA, the active role of global civil society to advocate for Palestinian rights, and the contribution of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in South Africa to end Apartheid.

between Palestine and Israel and deploys settler colonial discourses in its communications, should be rebranded as “Students for Justice in Palestine” (SJP), or “Students for Palestinian Human Rights” (SPHR). This debate stems from the fact that SAIA has been unable to recruit a large number of students, and some of its members feel attacked by the student body for its “radicalization,” as Anis, one recent graduate Palestinian activist affiliated with a student union, informed me. Although most of the activists agree on the existence of an apartheid regime in historic Palestine, and the need to internationalize the Palestinian struggle as an anti-colonial one, some disagree on the proper framing of the struggle in a western context. Tensions are exacerbated by the existence of strong Zionist counter-movements, an atmosphere of fear and surveillance, and the overall antagonistic atmosphere in Canadian political institutions, Canadian mainstream media, campus administrations, which results in difficulty recruiting of new activists. Anis adds that some small funders might be more willing to donate to a club whose mission is more legible to the wider student population. Anis thinks that using “mild language” is important to enlarge the number of activists involved in the movement and to sustain the longevity of Palestinian student clubs. Additionally, given the fierce opposition from both Zionist movements in Canada and the Canadian state, framing the struggle in what seemingly is a radical frame has severe repercussions for the activists.⁴³ Adam, a Palestinian professional affiliated with a humanitarian aid organization, who is in his early career, reveals his fear of personal repercussions and its impact. He ties his choice of human rights frames to his desire to balance building his career with working for human rights in Palestine.

⁴³ The power of counter movements will be discussed in more details in chapter six.

As discussed earlier, the BDS is embedded in a field of competing struggles for legitimacy, comprised of activists of different political imaginaries, and counter-movements that oppose Palestinian narratives and solidarity. The tension between divergent political emancipatory imaginaries—the anti-colonial discourses and revival of Third World Internationalism on one hand, and the pragmatic rights-based approach on the other hand—are visible within the struggles to impose their logic on the field, through various forms of capital. As a result of these tensions, solidarity work for Palestine liberation becomes fragmented. Promoters of the rights-based approach avoid organizers and events that are seen to be “radical”, while anti-colonial activists reject the rights-based activists as reformist, and overly cautious.

BDS activists strategically deploy rights-based discourses enshrined in the framework of international law. The strategic framing of demands in a universalistic normative discourse, such as human rights, is often considered the “mother of all successful transnational framing efforts” (McCarthy 1997, 246). Universalistic language assumes that human beings uphold the same value and ethical importance, regardless of their diverse experience and identity. Universalist discourse is also intelligible to transnational governance institutions, such as the United Nations and complies with internationally agreed upon international law (despite the issues embedded in international law).

However, the cleavages between the activists of these two political imaginaries might be avoided in the context of the BDS, since the demands of BDS are *de facto* anti-colonial and oppose the core values of Zionism as a settler colonial project that erases the indigenous population and replace it with a Jewish-only state (Maira 2016; Musa 2016). The demands include dismantling the apartheid apparatus, assuring racial equality, and granting the rights of return. All these demands are protected by the international law—if it becomes binding for all

states. If these demands are met, the social conditions in Israel would change as it challenges the Israeli state core values as a Jewish-only state.

Converging and Diverging Political projects: Implications and Dilemmas

Like all Palestine and other solidarity movements in Canada, the BDS movement in Toronto is constituted from a multitude of identities with different markers of differentiation such as race, gender, age, religion, political formation, ideologies, and political experience. These differences are rife with *some perceived* contradictions that create rifts among activists, creating barriers to building solidarity. The tension between a pragmatic human rights politics and a more “radical” anti-colonial political imaginary discussed in the previous section is not a fatal flaw. Tension can also emerge from the ideology and political projects of the solidarity group itself.

John, a young activist in his early thirties and a member of a leftist group in Toronto, focuses on organizing education teach-ins with activists, and on liaising with other movements on the political left. He centers his efforts on the labour movements, but he has also been actively involved in the BDS movement since the 2006 Israeli war on Lebanon, which was the turning point for his active involvement in challenging Zionism. He criticizes the participation of Neturai Karta, a religious ultra-orthodox and anti-Zionist Jewish association, in some of the main rallies across the country. Neturai Karta is a group that rejects Zionism and uses their interpretation of the Torah to seek justice for Palestinians. The group is an ultra religious group, having controversial views on gender equality. From John’s point of view, the inclusion of Neturai Karta rabbis ultimately leads to the exclusion of progressive voices. In his words,

“We should be very careful with whom we are building solidarity, because the inclusion of some groups may mean the exclusion of others. Solidarity is not about increasing the number of protestors for short term gains. It is about the political project in the long run... That’s why I have my doubts about some of the articulations in Palestine solidarity in Toronto.” (John, university graduate, socialist organizer)

In his own words, Neturai Karta’s ideology “rejects the ideas of women’s and LGBTQ rights”. As a result, John’s group—which includes some Palestinians—refrains from participating in certain successful anti-Zionist events, such as the yearly Al Quds day in Toronto, and they disengage from any political activism organized by friends and supporters of Neturai Karta.

In opposition to these exclusionary practices, collaboration between activists with political disagreements was made possible because of their endorsement of the BDS movement. In contrast to John’s views, Madeline, a self-identified Jewish queer who feels marginalized from Neturai Karta’s ideas, focuses on the main struggle against settler colonialism and land dispossession, and confirms the rights of Palestinian liberation. Acknowledging the existence of activists with diverging views and motives within Palestine solidarity movements, Madeline deems the focus on Israeli settler colonialism more important than the exclusionary practices of some activists or groups. Ali, a fierce organizer engaged in several anti-imperialist and numerous other social movements, highlights the exclusionary practices of “radical Left” activists in Toronto. He finds that they do not meet with nor discuss ideas with others who do not share a similar ideology. “If [...radical Left activists] want inclusion, and if they have a long-term political project to achieve, let them meet with us and convince us. Building solidarity is about dialogue. And dialogue happens during interactions.” Ali’s opinion is also shared by Tim, a long-time activist involved in several progressive social movements. Tim explains that solidarity requires ongoing negotiation and dialogue between people who share different experiences.

Individuals get socialized in a specific way, and in a specific context. The experience of each individual differs from another, and an immediate shared understanding is unlikely to emerge from first encounters. Tim's comment highlights the internalized values and experiences in activists, their various habitus and the possibility of a transformative dimension in solidarity. In his words, "People need to unlearn and then learn. Building solidarity is a whole process, it involves a transformation of the self." This is in contrast to the exclusionary practices of some radical Left activists and their unwillingness to engage in dialogue with others which were fighting in the same struggle. Building sustained solidarity necessitates the construction of a shared understanding of specific grievances and social conditions (Snow and Benford 1988; Olesen 2005).

The problematic participation of *Naturai Karta* for some activists and groups is one example among many of the challenges that occur to building sustained solidarity. For instance, during the above-mentioned "Hands Off Jerusalem" protests, supporters of the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan participated in one of the three protests, waving the Turkish flag and holding Erdogan's picture. Their participation (un)intentionally prevented the Kurds and other anti-Erdogan activists from participating in the protests, further fragmenting BDS solidarity relations.

These different conceptions of Palestine solidarity work, and solidarity itself translate into the dynamics of solidarity work in Toronto and challenge the collaborations amongst the various solidarity groups supporting Palestinian rights to fight Israeli settler colonialism. Deedee, who is a long-term organizer who witnessed many of the important discussions in Toronto within the BDS movement, emphasizes the political commitment in solidarity building. She said

“This word [solidarity] is tricky... when solidarity doesn't come from a principled kind of standpoint, it could very much become about other people's ideas about what should happen to Palestine. So Jared Kushner could say, he's in solidarity with Palestine. And the way to bring peace is through the “Deal of the Century”. He might say, this is my solidarity with Palestine. It's crazy.... I think solidarity is a commitment. It's a, it's something for me that is also very embodied.” (Deedee, organizer, educator)

Deedee differentiates between a “solidarity” imposed by representatives of imperial powers to bring “peace” to the region, as was articulated by the unilateral “Deal of the Century” of the Trump era, and the emancipatory political solidarity that stems from the Palestinians themselves, that centers their oppressed voice. Deedee also differentiates between a humanitarian solidarity that does not address the root causes of the problem, and a political principle-based solidarity that has long term potential for political change.

The divergent political visions inherited and internalized by activists and organizers widen the gaps amongst the BDS activists, and fragment the movement. The human and material resources available to the BDS in Toronto get dispersed between the different groups. As this section demonstrates, although the activists and the groups they belong to have endorsed the BDS movement, their divergent political projects contribute to the fragmentation of the movement. The last section discusses the (un)intentional reproduction of racist and colonial relations in solidarity.

Tension Between Reproducing Colonial Relations or Decolonizing

The diversity in activists’ ideologies and practices in the BDS movement, and their socialization in an increasingly discriminatory and Islamophobic atmosphere, may result in the reproduction of discrimination and orientalist attitudes towards Palestinians. As discussed in the

introduction, the 9/11 events have solidified an orientalist representation of the Arab and Muslim world. The negative attitudes towards the Arabs/Muslims that exponentially increased after 9/11, the portrayal of Islam/ Arab culture as barbaric and violent, and the overall divisive rhetoric in political and journalistic discourses gave a surge in Islamophobic and arabophobic attitudes. As a result, some activists supporting the BDS movement alienate themselves from Islamic related groups and slogans and perpetuate the discriminatory attitudes. Other solidarity activists argue that such discriminatory approaches are counterproductive either because they impose specific narratives, tactics and lexicons, or because they decenter the root causes of the Palestinian problem, or limit their support in particular ways,

Islamophobic attitudes in Canadian society became pervasive (Wilkins-Laflamme 2018; Strabac and Listhaug 2008), especially after 9/11 alongside the complicity of the Canadian state with the American-led “War on Terror”. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the United States and its allies initiated military wars against certain Muslim-dominated states, and engaged in discriminatory practices against Muslims, Arabs and other people of color, in order to “counter terrorism” and “spread democracy and human rights in the Middle East”. As a result, Muslim and Arab bodies faced racism across Canada, even among the activist circles. Joanna, an Arab Canadian queer activist, clearly articulated their willingness to maintain a social and political distinction from other activists who use slogans tied to Islam. Joanna informed me that

“I support Palestinian liberation, their right to return and I selectively participate in their events. I really hate it when they say “Allah Akbar” ... I am atheist and I do not support anything religious” (Joanna, Arab Canadian queer activist working at a local company)

Joanna’s approach to solidarity would be criticized as Islamophobic by other activists, as Joanna did not contextualize *Allah Akbar* in the context of facing injustices. Their approach can

be an exercise of symbolic violence against the Palestinians, in Joanna's attempt to impose a specific lexicon during the protests. Opposing their views, Mohammad, a Palestinian community organizer, says "It is my struggle. I say what I want. We use *Allah Akbar* to tell the world that Allah is watching. We will ultimately win one day", As Mohammad told me. Mohammad explains that "*Allah Akbar*", translated into "God is greatest", is a phrase often used by Muslims and Muslim dominated societies in front of injustices.

Solidarity with the Palestinians might also be temporary and aims to achieve divergent-yet related- political gains. During my interview with David, a graduate student and an activist in a divestment from weapons campaign at his university, he explains that his solidarity with the Palestinians is contingent on the presence of a right-wing Israeli government that he opposes. He says, "I think we have a duty to support the Palestinians as long as they are facing the [right wing] government of Netanyahu." David attributes the Palestinian problem to the politics of the Israeli right wing. He considers that the Israeli conservative governments have expanded the illegal settlements, built the separation walls, formulated discriminatory laws and practices against the Palestinians, and launched multiple destructive wars against Gaza and Lebanon. But David attributes the Palestinian problem to the increased conservatism and the rise of the right wing in Israel. He considers the Labour Party in Israel to be "a party seeking peace". David's solidarity practices reproduce colonial relations, as he is normalizing the occupation, erasing settler colonialism and diverting the problem into an electoral politics grievance. Although he is an activist with other student groups within the BDS movement, David is critical of the BDS movement, as he opposes boycotting Israeli small businesses and supports boycotting the weapons industry and the technologies of surveillance.

While some solidarity activists identify limits to their support, others argue that they must center the voice of the oppressed (in this case Palestinians) and to follow their lead and to accept their terms, tactics and terminologies. Francis, a long-term activist elaborates “I think is important for in acting in solidarity to take our cues from the people with whom we stand solid with”. Similarly, Madeleine adds that “if I’m in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle, I’m not going to define what their struggle should be. Yeah, I’m going to listen to what they say their struggles and show my support”. Lubna Qutami and Omar Zahzah (2020) argue that the language deployed for Palestinian liberation in recent years is estranged from the Palestinian grassroots activists and is devoid of the political and historical context of the Palestinian liberation movement. In their reflection on international solidarity, Qutami and Zahzah calls for recentering the Palestinian collective voice by stating that

“resurrection of Palestinian voices/narratives is necessitated and amplified. Yet, while the words that were/are used signify a turn to a more original polity through which Palestinians had long defined their struggle—words such as liberation, anti-colonialism, resistance and so forth—their meaning takes new form.....The words are appropriated, manufactured and consumed in an industry of Palestine/Palestinian word-making that the Palestinian collective tongue has very little engagement with, purpose or profit from. The engagement of Palestinian individuals does not replace the absence of the Palestinian collective from the process” (2020, 72).

The tension described above by Qutami and Zahzah, a tension found in the conflict between solidarity groups and a commitment to the cause by calling to make central the Palestinian voice and to accept their terms, tactics and terminologies, is also articulated by Fatima, a Palestinian Canadian organizer

“Some solidarity groups and Palestinian liberal individuals insist on using languages of peace and coexistence and frame the struggle as a cultural conflict. I do not consider this solidarity at all. They are giving wrong information, and they do not want to listen to us. The real problem is settler colonialism, the real problem is apartheid, the real problem is that neither me nor my parents can go back to Palestine, where my

grandfather used to have a land and a house. This is not solidarity... the problem is that these groups occupy a good space in Toronto. They are vocal, they have media coverage, they receive institutional funds, and they speak on my behalf. How can I collaborate with them if they are distorting the reality?"

bell hooks' (2000) distinction between solidarity and support is useful here. The former requiring "sustained ongoing commitment" (67) while the latter is occasional and temporary. Put differently, solidarity movements are subject to ongoing conflicts that may disrupt their continuity, but activists need to be committed to their long-term political goals in order to overcome these conflicts and build a genuine solidarity (hooks 2000; Kolers 2012). These arguments are in agreement with what Madeline previously explained about the importance of focusing on solidarity building, and leaving aside the micro aggressions in daily life. In the same context, hooks invites activists to "think critically about the self and identity in relation to one's political circumstance" (hooks 1994, 57). Acknowledging one's privilege is not necessarily translated into real change-through undoing the structures of domination which lead to inequality and injustice, unless "individual transformation [necessarily] occur[s] concurrently with social and political transformation" (Smith 2013, np). In other words, sustained solidarity is a process that occurs only when activists with privilege transform themselves and create "a collective structure that dismantles the systems that enable these privileges" (Smith 2013, np). It is a simultaneous process of self and collective transformation. This is obviously not easy as complexities and tensions arise in the daily praxis of solidarity-building. Privileged solidarity actors may be unaware of the "myriad ways the structure of systematic oppression privileges them" (Schotz 2008, 152).

These challenges are not only restricted to privileged groups. Conflict might arise within ethnically identified groups-given the asymmetrical power dynamics among them, for instance among refugees and working-class nationals, women and men, and new immigrants and

unskilled labourers (Agustin and Jørgensen 2016). Lina expresses it eloquently: ““let us face it. We have embedded anti-blackness in our own community. How can I be useful for BLM? I can join them on the streets, I can tweet about it, but I can definitely be effective when I fight racism in my own community”. For Lina, solidarity is translated into a way of life, it is an embodiment of the future imagined political and social practices in the here and now.” In this case, solidarity can be seen as an end in itself, rather than as a means to achieve a political goal. This “prefigurative solidarity” (Featherstone 2012, 186) is about living the practices that you want to achieve in your current daily life. Prefigurative politics involves practicing and experimenting with political ideals in the here and now, instead of these ideals being potentially realized in the distant future. The way of life that individuals live reflect their desired end. Graeber (2006) contends that “In fact, as much as possible, one must oneself, in one’s relations with one’s friends and allies, embody the society one wishes to create” (7).

The myriad forms of difference and inequality among networks of activists, and the entanglement of struggles around race, gender, religion, and identities, may limit the building of a strong and durable solidarity. Scholars of social movements recognise that solidarity-building among disparate and marginalised groups can be rife with contradictions and material challenges (Bandy and Smith 2005). In this view, how can various groups with various directions and objectives sustain a network of solidarity and fight for the same purpose? Even within the same group, there can be challenges. Participants’ multiple identities, imaginaries, and privileges hinder the development of shared analysis and the building of sustained solidarity.

Conclusion

Following a Bourdieusian theoretical framework, this chapter posits that a main endogenous factor shaping the trajectory of the BDS movement in Toronto is the multiplicity in political imaginaries and the solidarity practices among activists. Fieldwork analysis shows competing understandings of solidarity as an idea, and as praxis. More specifically, it reveals the difficulties of (re) imagining and regenerating solidarity relations rooted in long anti-colonial and anti-racist histories of struggle while adopting a pragmatic approach to solidarity that takes into consideration the temporal and spatial specificities of the Palestine solidarity movement. The chapter also reveals the tensions in solidarity relations amongst colonial relations and structures of domination. The emulation of imbalanced power relations, the paternalistic attitudes, the hijacking of the voice of Palestinians, and the mirroring of Islamophobic and Arabophobic attitudes in solidarity relations constitute major barriers for building a sustained solidarity. Each group tries to limit the power of others, and to normalize their approach. Each group aims to impose its logic in the contentious field of the BDS, and contain other perspectives, resulting in fragmentation and reduced cooperation.

The ambiguity in conceptualizing political solidarity in scholarly literature and in activists' praxis can contribute to its non-durability, as confirmed in the fieldwork. As a “floating signifier” (Agustín and Jørgensen 2019, 25) with “no consistent set of parameters” (Gaztambide-Fernández 2012, 46), solidarity carries multiple meanings. At the core of these tensions are questions related to whether activists from different movements could—or should not—have similar self-interests, shared ideologies, agreement on means and ends, interdependent futures, shared enemies, similar moral values, and similar (a)symmetrical relations (Gaztambide-Fernández 2012). In a globalized world where transnational social movements are usually

characterized with the existence of multiple political imaginaries within the movement, the case of BDS is not necessarily unique. The challenge is how can activists unite and accept their differences, in order to challenge the systems of oppressions and build sustained solidarity.

Chapter 4: Intergenerational Continuity and Discontinuity Among Palestinians and other Arabs in Toronto

The previous chapter outlined the tensions in emancipatory political imaginaries among activists and organizers, and their influence in shaping political configurations, through limiting or facilitating collaborative work in the BDS. These tensions have their ontological, temporal, and spatial logics. This chapter focuses on the temporal aspect, looking at generational divisions – with a focus on what I call the “War on Terror” generation which has played a key role in BDS organizing. This generation of activists’ political consciousness and subjectivities were shaped by events following 9/11, including the various wars that were framed as constitutive of the “War on Terror.”⁴⁴ The aftermath of 9/11 was an era of accelerated demonization and intensified dehumanization of Palestinians, other Arabs, and Muslims in the West, which affected the activists’ political identity and their political consciousness, as well as their approach to solidarity.

The activism of the “War on Terror” generation and their advocacy for Palestine solidarity continued certain aspects of previous generations’ forms of activist engagement and initiated new ones with different orientations. Therefore, this chapter investigates the connection between the “War on Terror” political generation and previous political generations (the Oslo Generation and the Revolution generation) as well as the impact of such inter-generational continuities on the practices of solidarity building of the BDS movement, one that is rooted in a long tradition of activism for Palestine in Canada. To understand these dynamics, we must

⁴⁴ The previous American president Georges W. Bush announced on 21st September 2001 the launch of “Global War on Terror” on what he called “radical network of terrorists and every government that supports them” (CNN 2001). US-led wars were launched in Afghanistan, Iraq, South Philippines, North Africa Horn of Africa, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Pakistan.

answer two specific questions: What political events shaped the political consciousness of young Palestinians and other Arabs in Toronto, and how does the “War on Terror” generation perceive itself in relation to previous generations of activists that migrated to Toronto, particularly the Revolution generation (*Jil El Thawra*) of the 1960s and the Oslo generation (*Jil Oslo*) of the 1990s. These questions are important in the context of analyzing the (dis)continuity of political solidarity, since they allow us to shed the light on the temporal dynamics that shape the trajectory of the BDS movement. Most available research on political generation in the diaspora discusses the mobilization of immigrants or asylum seekers, the formation of their political consciousness, or the contributions of the diasporic subjects to social movements *in* their homeland (Geisser and Beaugrand 2016; Hess and Korf 2014), but there has been little work on the formation of a transnational political generation that involves both diaspora and territorially-based solidarity movements and their impact on building solidarity movements across generations in the post 9/11 era.

While it is tempting to approach the concept of “generation” as an age cohort composed of individuals born in arbitrarily defined time-periods (e.g. years, decades, or labels such as “baby boomer” or “millennial”), it is important to emphasize that the concept of generation, as conceptualized by Karl Mannheim (1952[1923]), refers to a generation shaped by a transformative event that shapes the worldview of the individuals who are coming of age during that time period.⁴⁵ This historical approach to understanding a generation adopts a synchronic

⁴⁵ This genealogical approach, in which a generation is considered in a biologically determinist way, is mainly dominant in studies related to family relations, aging, consumption, among others. The strict biological (birth year based) understanding essentializes the category of generation as fixed, unified, and ignores the possible formation of different collective consciousness. This approach considers that one generation follows the other based on which year the person was born (Lueke 2013).

dimension, i.e., it allows for the possibility of the coexistence of multiple age cohorts *within* the same generation . In sociological literature, the concept of generation has often been used as synonym for “age-cohort,” which mirrors the biopsychological development of the individual. The notion of political generation within the historical approach, in contrast, allows one to explore the collective formation of a particular worldview, political imaginary, and practical orientation of a given group of activists as shaped by significant social and historical events. As I will further elaborate, this notion of political generation allows me to trace the relations between the “War on Terror” generation in Toronto’s BDS and previous political generations shaped by the Third World Anti-Colonial Internationalism (i.e., the Revolution generation) and the Oslo peace accords (i.e., The Oslo generation). In so doing, I argue that the BDS movement is a *multigenerational movement* composed by individuals whose political consciousness and activist praxis has been shaped by different social and historical events.⁴⁶ My analysis shows that these political generational differences do not by themselves weaken the possibility of creating sustained solidarity, even when activists reify these political generational differences when explaining the factors that obstruct solidarity continuity .

These perceived boundaries between different political generations surface in important ways in both the theorization of political generation and in the discourses of activists in the BDS,

⁴⁶ Social and historical ‘events’ are here understood as rare happenings that significantly transform structures (Sewell Jr., 1996), leading to a rupture in the continuity of history. These events accelerate changes in social structure, shaping and moulding the thoughts and ideas of the collective, thus resulting in a particular worldview unique to that generation. For instance, the tragic events of 9/11 which led to the killings of thousands of American citizens and residents are considered transformative events that lead to the birth of a new era, along with new laws, policies, practices, beliefs and political discourses, which occurred reciprocally with a resistance to these same policies and discourses.

suggesting the need to reject a linear conception of temporality. Achille Mbembe challenges the idea of temporal ruptures and offers a nuanced analysis of the issue of continuity and discontinuity. In his famous book *On the Postcolony*, Mbembe (2001) advances the concept of entangled temporalities to explain how diverse temporal configurations can co-exist and interact in multilayered ways at specific times and places. The triad of past, present, and future does not correspond to an irreversible linear, and sequential time trajectory that “carries individuals and societies from a background to a foreground” (2001,16). Rather, Mbembe contends that the past-present-future triad is multidirectional and may be represented in three different configurations, depending on the circumstances. The first is a temporal “interlocking,” (16) where the past-present-future may hold the legacies and depths of another past-present-future and so on. The second is a spatio-temporal model which is comprised of “disturbances, unanticipated events, fluctuations and oscillations” (16) whereas certain disruptions should be understood as imminent to the notion of time, and not as a rupture and disruption of time. The third is “reversibility” (16) in which past-present-future configurations are fluid and do not follow the unidirectional linear process of time. Incorporating temporality to the study of political generation allows us to discriminate between legacies, continuity, and repetition, on the one hand, and innovation and newness, on the other, as these actualize in the trajectory of a solidarity movement. The violence of Zionist settler-colonialism and the *nakba* is an ongoing process *lived* by the Palestinian activists in Toronto in their intergenerational transmitted memory, in their inability to return to their homeland, in their sense of uprootedness, and in their commitment to fight for liberation. Therefore, Mbembe’s approach is useful in examining political generations as it challenges the rigid ruptures that transformative events (such as the “War on Terror”) create, and the thickly perceived boundaries between political generations.

A similar critique of the arbitrary break between generations may be advanced by incorporating Bourdieu's concept of habitus, understood as an embodied history that reproduces ideas, thoughts, forms of imagination, consciousness, and practices. While the reproduction of the worldview and practices generate continuities in intergenerational political traditions, the notion of habitus is not fixed or rigid, but it rather carries within it the possibility of change and transformation of the field within which it operates. Put differently, the Bourdieusian notion of habitus is useful to illuminate the worldview, the values, and the practices unconsciously carried forward through various political generations and actualized in the "War on Terror" generation, while simultaneously identifying the autonomous ideas and ways of organizing adopted by this generation. As a result, the "War on Terror" generation carries an assemblage of internalized and embodied knowledge, practices and ideas, as well as newly attained ones. Illuminating this internalized assemblage calls into question many younger BDS activists' deeply rooted perception that they belong to a completely new political generation, disconnected from the previous ones— a belief that limits or disrupts the possibility of coordination with other political generations, which, in turn, impacts the trajectory of the movement and its potential continuity.

My findings, taken in conversation with Mannheim's political generation, Bourdieu's habitus, and Mbembe's entangled temporalities challenge the perceived discontinuity between political generations, and the fiction of the birth / spring of a completely new movement in Toronto, i.e., the BDS movement. To fully unpack the implications of this approach, I show how certain continuities and discontinuities between political generations are either unnoticed or performatively accentuated by the "War on Terror" generation within the BDS activists in ways that effectively shape the trajectory of the movement. Most of my interlocutors in Toronto belong to the "War on Terror" generation, as they grew up in the aftermath of 9/11 events and

amidst the demonization of Palestinian and other Arabs and Muslims in Toronto and the West more generally. The discursive and material production of the “War on Terror” policies moulded their thinking and the different ways they express their “Palestinianess”. I will highlight the operation of intra-generational differences within the “War on Terror” generation. Finally, I will discuss the relation between the “War on Terror” generation, the Oslo generation residing in Toronto, and the Revolution generation who migrated to Toronto. The discussion challenges the presumed newness of this political generation.

In the social movement literature, Nancy Whittier (1997) is the main author who deploys a generational approach to understand collective identity within movements.⁴⁷ Based on a study of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and a radical student-led movement in Columbus, Ohio, she argues that a political generation is a cohort of people who joined a social movement during a given wave of protest (762). Building on Mannheim’s theory, Whittier considers a wave of protest as a transformative event, that helps to form a collective identity and political consciousness. Similar to Mannheim’s conceptualization of a generation, Whittier links a cohort (or political generation) to particular events that shape the consciousness of that cohort. The movement recruits new micro-cohorts who can shape and transform the social movement. The stronger the collective identity is, the longer the movement endures and mobilizes new constituents. Therefore, a main distinction between Whittier’s conceptualization of cohorts and Mannheim’s generation is the former’s emphasis on joining a wave of protest as the

⁴⁷ Research conducted by Mark Ayyash and Ratiba Hadj-Moussa (2017) deploys political generation as an analytical tool to understand the legacies and the emergence of protests in the Middle East and the Mediterranean area between the 1970s to the 2000s. Their analysis challenge the newness of the Arab Uprisings, and reveal the continuity among political generations.

transformative event that defines a cohort. The micro-cohorts are the groups of protestors and activists who join a movement in between different waves of protests. The transformative event for Mannheim may not necessarily be a social movement, and his generational units are the groups within a generation that respond differently to the transformative event. My approach, follows Mannheim, considering the generation producing transformative events to be a conjuncture of multiple happenings that create a change in social structure.

Conceptualizing Political Generation

Most activists in the BDS movement belong to the “War on Terror” generation. As I argue in this section, they share a particular political consciousness shaped by the events in the post 9/11 era, which was characterized by myriad wars waged on various Arab and Islamic states, and increased levels of Islamophobia, Arabophobia, bio surveillance and securitization protocols across the Western world, including Canada. However, and through Mannheim’s concept of generational unit, we can avoid an essentialist and totalizing understandings of generational identity that would homogenize the new political generation of Palestinians and other Arabs in Toronto. How, then, is the “War of Terror” generation a political formation?

According to Mannheim, the formation of a generation is a social process that is contingent on three main elements: 1) the generation’s social location 2) the generation as actuality and 3) the generational unit. A political generation is a collective of individuals who share a “similar location” (Mannheim 1952, 290), and who witness influential events at a close proximity in socio-historical time. Transformative events are markers of the formation of a political generation, and shape the lives and ways of thinking of the individuals experiencing it,

allowing them to develop “certain definite modes of behaviour, feeling, and thought” (Mannheim 1952, 291). More specifically, it is the discursive production of a particular period of time that becomes instrumental to the formation of a generation. The public discourses that are linked to the transformative event create a rupture with the past to establish a new era of thoughts, ideas, representations, and so on (Wohl 1979). The public discourses and the changing political and legal practices that accompany the given event both shape and are collectively shaped by a specific generation to produce a particular consciousness (Fogt 1982 - as cited in Lueke 2013). The new generational consciousness then constitutes a dominant way of thinking and feeling that differentiates one generation from another.

A generation can be transformed into an actuality if individuals in a similar location collectively embody, reflect, and act on the challenges and experiences they face. A collective of individuals starts forming their own political identity in response to the transformative events they witnessed. The generation’s “concrete bond” is formed through their exposure to and participation in the “social and intellectual symptoms of a process of dynamic destabilization” (1952: 303). As a result, their political subjectivity is transformed in relation to and as a consequence of the transformative event. As it will be explained later, and according to Mannheim, no generation is homogenous, and their internal differences are also relevant to the study of intergenerational movements (284).

The “War on Terror” Generation in Toronto

All of the Palestinian-Canadians I have interviewed were either born in Canada, or immigrated in either the early 1990s or after 2010.⁴⁸ The Palestinian 1.5 and second-generation interlocutors were either born in Canada or arrived as young children with their parents in the early 2000s, and therefore they completed their schooling years in Canada. As part of a longer history of *shatat* formation in Canada in general and in the Toronto Greater Area (GTA) in particular, these Palestinian and other Arab generations of immigrants share internalized processes of uprootedness and rootedness that span various waves of immigration.

The first wave of Arab immigration to Canada occurred from the late 19th century up until the Second World War (Abu Laban 1989). During this period, most of the immigrants were from Greater Syria (which include the modern countries of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Palestine) more specifically Lebanese and Syrians. The second wave started with the end of WWII and continued until the 1967 war. These migrants were also mainly from Lebanon and Syria, with a few arriving from Palestine. The third wave, occurring after the 1967 war, saw more Palestinians arriving, as they were forcibly displaced by the Israeli occupation. These new arrivals were able to benefit from an increasingly liberal Canadian immigration system (S. Abu Laban 1989; B. Abu Laban 1983; Asal 2016). The fourth wave started in the aftermath of the first Gulf War in 1990 and the instability of that time lead many Palestinians and other Arabs to migrate to Canada. This new wave of Palestinian and other Arab immigrants left the Arab Gulf host

⁴⁸ In my fieldwork, I interviewed nine Palestinian Canadians: one of them was born in Canada, two of them came to Canada in their elementary/middle school, and the remaining six arrived in Canada as adults. They came either from the occupied Palestine, Lebanon, or the United Arab Emirates. As for the other Arab Canadians, I interviewed five: Three of them arrived in Canada in their middle school, and two of them arrived as adults.

countries because of the various oppressions they faced after the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) supported the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein in the invasion of Kuwait (Van Hear 1998; personal interview). Palestinians in the Gulf fled due to the physical and emotional abuse they faced from both the Gulf states and their citizens (Van Hear 1998), and due to the lack of citizenship rights and security. The fifth and most recent wave of Palestinian and other Arab immigrants arrived after the Arab uprisings in 2010 due to the ongoing military conflict in the region. Many of the new migrants felt the need to integrate into Canadian society, and to endorse their new homeland. However, the arrival of the last two waves of Palestinian and other Arab immigrants coincided with the expansion of security measures against immigrants of Arab and /or Muslim descent in Western countries, which accentuated their feeling of otherness and isolation.

Shaped by a *shatat* (dispersal) inheritance of uprootedness and instability due to precarious citizenship status and the possibility of citizenship revocation, The “War on Terror” generation grew up in parallel with the emergence of the BDS movement in 2005, and its expansion into various Western countries, including Canada. The rise of the BDS movement coincided with a relative absence of a national liberation movement in the Palestinian homeland. There, the Palestinian experience is physically (West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, Palestinians residents of Israel, *shatat*) and politically fragmented between different factions (Fatah, Hamas, DFLP, PFLP, and others).⁴⁹ In addition, the emergence of the BDS movement also coincides

⁴⁹ Edward Said (1995) considered that the Taba Agreement (An interim agreement within the Oslo peace process framework) as giving the Palestinians a “series of municipal responsibilities in Bantustans dominated from the outside by Israel” (413). A bantustan was the name given to a territory set aside for black inhabitants of South Africa, to separate them from the whites, as part of the Apartheid policies from 1948 to 1994.

with more cooperation between the Palestinian Authorities and the Zionist state.⁵⁰ Most of my interlocutors clearly expressed their disgust at the Palestinian partisan divisions and some expressed their inability to understand the fragmentation at a time and place when cooperation and solidarity were most needed. The most active non-partisan organizers were particularly likely to complain about the absence of a clear national liberation project that could encompass the aspirations of all the factions and generations. While they suggested that BDS is a movement they could endorse, BDS did not shape their political awakening, nor is it a movement that translates into a national liberation project. The transformative events that shaped their political consciousness are related to their proximity to the policies of demonization of Palestinians and other Arabs, as well as their witnessing of the various wars in their homeland.

Activists world-wide who have witnessed the convergence of world events and political narratives that arose after the negotiation of the Oslo Accord in the post-9/11 era are very aware of the ongoing and intensified oppression of Palestinians. They organize against Palestinian politics in the homeland (i.e. the aftermath of the Oslo Accords and the negotiation process, and Palestinian Authorities), against settler colonialism (i.e. Zionist settler colonialism and for some, settler colonialism in Canada), against Palestinian political organizations in Canada (i.e. political parties, unions, and governmental and non-governmental political institutions), and against Canadian politics (i.e. Complicity with the Israeli State and imperial foreign policies). Many of these grievances are shared with other activists in Toronto, who are also objecting to interrelated local and global factors. These factors are illustrated in the matrix below (figure 3):

⁵⁰ Read Hilal (2018) for more about the fragmentation of the Palestinian political sphere.

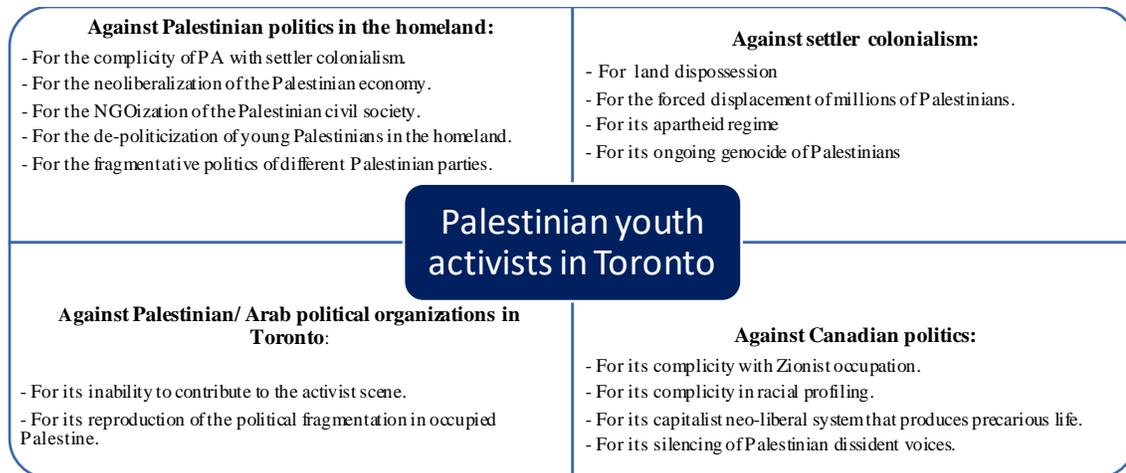


Figure 3: Grievances of Palestinian Youth Activists in Toronto.

The generation of Arabs/ Muslims whose consciousness was developed in a post-9/11 world has been subjected to intense racial profiling and dehumanization. The changing political landscape in the West, specifically in the wake of the 9/11 events, re-ignited and sharpened Orientalist discourses (Razack 2008). Arab, Muslim, and “Muslim-looking” individuals were systematically subjected to discriminatory laws and policies in the name of a “War on Terror” (Maira 2009; Razack 2008). The hegemonic narrative in the media painted them as a homogenous group threatening Western democracy and (re)solidified the “Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim enemy” as a racial category (Naber 2002, 224). Therefore, young Palestinians in Toronto, whether politically active or not, were perceived as threats to the stability of Canadian, American, and other Western democracies (personal interviews; Keefer 2010). This negative and Orientalist perception of and representation of Arabs/ Muslims is ongoing.⁵¹ The proximity of

⁵¹ The enactment of an Orientalist lens in representing the Arabs and/or Muslims in post 9/11 era can be better understood through what Samuel Huntington (1993) calls the “clash of civilizations”. Huntington considers the West to be in a permanent conflict with the homogenous and unchanging Islamic and Confucius worlds which threaten western modernity and represent a worldview antagonistic to western values. Similar arguments have

Palestinian and other Arab activists to the transformative event (the aftermath of 9/11 and the “War on Terror”, or their generational location as Mannheim puts it, accentuated their position as an absolute “Other”. In this sense, the present tense of the “War on Terror” generation is entangled with the past-present-future of previous generations, and does not represent a rupture with their past. The continuous historic racialization of the Arab/ Muslim figure and their portrayal as the enemy of western modernity and liberal democracy is well documented in the literature (Jamal and Naber 2008; Suleiman 1999). Therefore, and although the “War on Terror” constitutes an intensified period of aggression and discrimination against Arabs/ Muslims, it is not a turning point, since the representations of Arab and Muslim in the West deployed here reiterate and resonate with historic portrayals of weakness, terrorism, barbarism, and irrationality.

Being perceived as a threat, exclusionary state measures against Palestinians and other Arabs were justified and implemented. Increased surveillance, the revocation of citizenship and human rights violations, among other policies, became justified in the post-9/11 era as Canada entered into a “state of exception” (Razack 2008), which Agamben describes as the legalization and normalization of the suspension of the state of law in the interests of national security.⁵² It is

been advanced by Bernard Lewis (1990) in his article “The Roots of Muslim Rage.” The “clash of civilizations” belongs to the orientalist discourse insofar as it essentializes differences between the “west” and the “east” and solidifies the rift between the West and the Muslim/ Arab world, to justify the western imperialist gaze and domination. What is specifically disturbing is that the “clash of civilization” concept, and most of the neo-orientalist literature, were advanced in magazines that have had significant influence among policy makers (Foreign Affairs; The Atlantic), and its wide dissemination coincided with imperial foreign policies that waged ongoing wars in the name of “the war on Terror.” For more information, see Edward Said’s critique, in “The Myth of “Clash of Civilizations” (Said 2011).

⁵² National security allegations can have several reasons, such as coup d’états, political violence, terrorist attacks, natural disasters, pandemics.

a paradoxical situation in which the state suspends the laws that protect the rights and freedoms of its citizens and residents, therefore allowing certain groups of citizens that are deemed as a threat to be denied their full rights (Razack 2008). The denial of detainees' rights at immigration centers which would permit them to see allegations against them, or the existence of anti-terrorism acts both exemplify the legal suspension of laws at this state of exception (Razack 2008). Like most western countries, Canada deployed a web of surveillance tools against Muslims and/or citizens of Arab descent. On 7 December 2001, Canada passed the anti-terrorism law, Bill C-36, and introduced new "terrorism" offences (Nagra 2017).⁵³ In April 2013, Bill S-7 extended these powers by passing the Combating Terrorism Law (Nagra 2017). Bill C-24- Strengthening the Canadian Citizenship Act- passed in 2014 and it allowed the federal government to revoke citizenship from citizens accused of "terrorism". This Act has much in common with Bill C-51, which became the Anti-Terrorism Act- passed in 2015, a bill that broadens the surveillance abilities of the state (Nagra 2017). The increased surveillance in the post-9/11 era created fear among Arabs and Muslims of being racially profiled and denied their citizenship rights (Nagra 2017). These bills and their role in silencing activists engaged in the liberation of Palestine are discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

Many of the wars associated with the "War on Terror" have their fingerprints on the politicization of many young activists (Palestinians, other Arabs and non-Arabs) I met, and shaped their generational identity, intensifying the feeling of their otherness in the Canadian society, discovering or reinforcing their Palestinianess/ Arabness. The American-led "War on Terror" included other tragic events, such as the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the detention of hundreds without trial in Guantanamo Bay, the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the prisoner's

⁵³ Canada joined the USA and the UK in designing anti-terrorism laws (Nagra 2017, 98).

abuse in Abu Ghraib in 2004. In the case of Afghanistan, the Americans and their allies deployed discourses of human rights and heroism; saving the oppressed Afghani population in order to justify their destruction of the country (Abu Lughoud 2002). The invasion and destruction of Iraq was based on falsified information about the existence of chemical weapons, and the need for pre-emptive wars to protect the West from the “Axis of Evil” (Maira 2003; Makdissi 2011).⁵⁴ Within the same framework of the continuous “War on Terror” (Makdissi 2011), Israel attacked Lebanon in July- August 2006; six years after the resistance liberated the Lebanese territories from the Israeli occupation that lasted from 1978. The 2006 war destroyed most of the Lebanese infrastructure, killed more than 1,200 citizens and inhabitants, and forcibly displaced more than half a million people (Makdissi 2011). Similarly, Israel’s war on Gaza in 2009 and 2014, as well as its continuous violence against the Palestinians, can be situated within the framework of the “War on Terror” (Makdissi 2011). Using Mannheim’s analysis, these various events have actualized the generation and forged a sense of collective suffering that transcended the identity and ideological differences and the spatial disparities.

The mnemonic effects of the war on Iraq in 2003 shaped the political awakening of most of the relatively young Palestinian and Arab activists I met in Toronto. Like many other Canadian cities, members of different political groups in Toronto such as Stop the War Coalition, Canadian Peace Alliance, the anti-war movement, unions, and churches organized political lectures, public speaking events and protests to oppose the war on Iraq and the participation of the Canadian government in the war. On the 15th of February 2003, activists in Toronto joined

⁵⁴ In his speech on January 29, 2002, the American president George. W. Bush addressed the nation in his State of the Union speech and described the foreign countries who allegedly sponsor ‘Terrorism’ (where ‘Terrorism’ is defined by the United States Code of Federal Regulations in 18 U.S.C. §2331) and allegedly owned weapons of mass destruction as “Axis of Evil” (George W. Bush, 2002 State of the Union Address).

the world in more than six hundred cities to oppose the war (Verhulst 2010). This was an event that would shape the political consciousnesses of my informants. The wars in Lebanon also served to politicize some of my informants, including Adam who spent his summer in 2006 mesmerized by the news channels that were following the war in Lebanon, while reading about the history of the Arab Israeli struggle. His knowledge expanded with his involvement in activism for justice in Palestine at his university, because of his reason: “I cannot enjoy my life here in Canada while my people are being killed”. Adam had distant relatives who were living in Palestinian refugee camps in South Lebanon. He reflected on this period of politicization and confessed how unprepared he was to discuss the Palestinian struggle with any of his colleagues. The 2006 war on Lebanon politicized him and pushed him to learn about the history of the struggle.

Ultimately, it is both the direct experience of living as an Arab-identified person in Canada and gaining knowledge of Western imperialism in Palestine and other countries that politicized my informants. For example, although Lamees and Wafaa, both undergraduate university students and organizers of Israeli Apartheid Week at their university, did not have extensive experience in occupied Palestine (with the exception of short-lived vacations every couple of years), they experienced their ‘Palestinianess’ in the *shatat* as children of forcibly displaced parents and grandparents living in Toronto. They also followed the news about Israeli occupation through their family, relatives, and social media. Lamees and Wafaa experienced firsthand how Palestinians were represented in the media and perceived by the general public. The daily microaggression they faced, and the targeted laws manufactured to penalize their racial category showed them the limit of their citizenship rights. They directed their anger towards settler colonialism and against all the actors complicit in colonization. They questioned the

normalization of relations between the Palestinian Authority and Israel and criticized the complicity of the PA in the security of Israel, and of the fragmentation of Palestinian society.

The catastrophic effects of repeated and continued displacement, uprootedness, and out-of-placeness are internalized in the consciousness of the “War on Terror” generation. Many of the community and student organizers I met are descendants of parents who immigrated to Canada to escape political and economic insecurities in the Arab world due to ongoing imperial and internal wars. Their parents struggled to integrate into Canadian society and to find suitable jobs in an increasingly precarious economy. Their parents also aspired to integrate into Canadian society and to be rooted in one physical place, after several intergenerational experience of uprootedness, from Palestine, and from the multiple Arab countries they lived in after 1948. Most of my Palestinian and other Arab interlocutors reported that they were not “politicized” at home—a statement that I will problematize in the next section—because their parents were afraid of “being sent back” to their country of origin or the country they resided in before landing in Canada. The traumatic experience of ongoing uprootedness, and the fear of losing citizenship is often expressed among first-generation Arab immigrants who tend to suppress their own political views and admonish their children for adopting what is perceived as radical discourses in Canada by demonstrating any anti-Western anti-Zionist political views. As a result, the parents feared political participation in affairs that could be seen as an opposition to the Canadian state and its policies, due to the fear of another experience of physical uprootedness.

The magnified surveillance state impacted different aspects of political mobilization, creating both a political awakening and a fear of expressing dissident points of view. Those who feared expressing their views silenced themselves and further removed their point of view from mainstream discourse. Specifically, first-generation immigrants withdrew themselves from

politics and thus alienated their children. They opted to avoid any possible confrontation with the Canadian state. The majority of Palestinian students that I interviewed or encountered during my activist involvement with the BDS movement expressed their parents' discontent with their political engagement. This discomfort with their own children's political activities was based on the fear of "being destroyed by the Zionists," as Adam, a Palestinian student activist expressed succinctly. I also met the parents of those young activists at Arab cultural events, including *dabke*, Eid festivities, and book exhibitions. They expressed their fears and noted their attempts to restrain their children from being involved in politics in Canada because: "you never know, maybe they will send us back," as Yasmine's mom expressed. Yasmine is involved in student unions in Ontario. She advocates for free education, anti-racist education, Black Lives Matter and Palestine within her work at the union.

The "War on Terror" also overlapped with the emergence of second intifada (2000-2005)—also known as al-Aqsa intifada—a popular uprising of the Palestinians against Zionist settler colonialism, the Oslo peace process, and the weakness and the collaboration of the PA with Israel. Despite the peace process, Israel did not withdraw from Gaza Strip and Jericho, continued its land dispossession, settlement expansion, and daily humiliation and violation of Palestinian rights. The provocative visit of the previous Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon to Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem would ignite the second intifada. The second intifada would result in approximately 4700 Palestinian casualties, and large-scale destruction (B'tselem n.d). In 2002, during the second intifada, the Israeli army besieged and later invaded Jenin refugee camp, resulting in its destruction (Baroud 2006). The Israeli army also besieged the church of nativity in Bethlehem, killing Palestinians inside the church. The

specific destruction of the Jenin refugee camp was a transformative event for some of my interlocutors, due to the extreme violence and destruction.

The activists of the “War on Terror” generation are frequent social media users. Virtual connections constitute a main element (if not the main) in their political organizing, meaning that social media were added to the repertoire of actions and have become an arena for building relations across communities. Social media platforms connect Palestinians in historic Palestine with the *shatat* by building solidarity with marginalized communities (Aouragh 2011; Tawil-Souri and Aouragh 2014). For most of my Palestinian and other Arab informants who belong to the “War on Terror” generation, social media is an essential coordination and education tool, connecting those within and outside the GTA, to transnational activists and to Palestinians living under Israeli occupation. However, locally in the GTA, most of my informants do not rely solely on social media to build ties and bonds with other movements, or to recruit potential activists into the movement. Social media is mainly used to develop regional, federal and transnational connections, and for educational activities.

The formation of the “War on Terror” as a distinct political generation is therefore shaped by the experience of otherness in their everyday lives in Canada, the resurgence of orientalist attitudes towards them, and their representation as a perceived threat. Their perspective was also shaped through them hearing family stories from their original homeland in occupied Palestine or other Arab countries. Despite the unifying features of this shared experience, the “War on Terror” generation developed distinct intra-generational strategies, especially in the context of organizing for Palestinian liberation and building transnational solidarity.

Intra- generational differences

Mannheim posits that further consolidation of a generation takes place when generational units appear as a subgroup within the entire generation. These generational units are the essential agents of change. The distinction found among different generational units is their “identity of responses, a certain affinity in the way in which all move with and are formed by their common experiences” (Mannheim 1952, 306). Generational units may develop different responses to the transformative events they witnessed, and they try to influence the trajectory of their political generation. This is similar to Bourdieu’s theory of the field, whereas occupiers of the field are constantly struggling to increase their power, and shape the field. Consequently, the Palestinian and other Arab activists in Toronto that belong to the “War on Terror” generation can be divided into different groups with various worldviews. Here, incorporating a temporal lens shows that previous identities, affinities and ideas from previous generations have residues found in the formation of the “new” political generation. Figure 4 visualizes the theory of generations by Karl Mannheim.

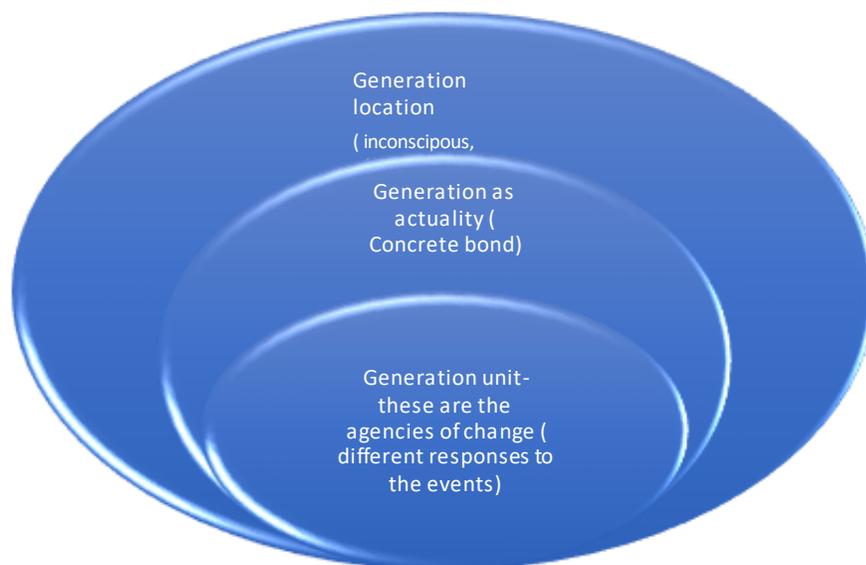


Figure 4: Illustration of Karl Mannheim’s Theory of Generation.

Differences within the “War on Terror” generation

In 2018, a group of Palestinian and other Arab student activists established the “Campuses for Palestine”, a coalition of activists and political clubs working together to promote Palestinian educational activities and to initiate coalition work with other movements across Greater Toronto Area (GTA) university campuses. During the annual IAW events that were held in March 2019, Campuses for Palestine organized a series of events on Zionist settler colonialism, Israeli violations of international law, the humanitarian disaster in occupied Palestine and the solidarity between Palestinians and other marginalized groups in Canada such as Indigenous peoples and the Black population. I met Lamees and Wafaa during one of these events. Both were young Palestinian students in their early twenties at a university in the GTA, organizing a political event for the first time. Both grew up with Palestinian immigrant parents in the GTA in the post 9/11 era where Palestinians and other Arabs, and Muslims were represented and often treated as terrorists (Abu-Laban and Bakan 2012; personal interviews). As discussed earlier, the racial discrimination against Palestinians and other Arabs motivated Lamees and Wafaa’s parents to discourage their children from political involvement, while concurrently trying to push them to become involved with Palestinian cultural practices, such as music and the traditional dance (*dabke*) instead. Despite these efforts by their parents, both Lamees and Wafaa articulated that when they entered university, they met other students and became politicized, becoming involved in organizing political events during the IAW. Both Lamees and Wafaa were anxious about the potential for Zionist backlash at the event, given that most IAW events faced various forms of opposition and harassment.

Although both belong to the “War on Terror” generation, Lamees and Wafaa had differing views on the language that activists should use to advocate for the Palestinian struggle,

and they were debating their divergent political imaginaries. Lamees suggests that a rights-based discourse focusing on the language of human rights and non-violence should be used because of its familiarity in the Canadian. In contrast, Wafaa suggests the need to name Zionist settler colonialism and the settler colonial narrative paradigm. Wafaa does not value pragmatic forms of resistance arguing that they tend to reduce the Palestinian grievances to human rights conflicts. Their divergent point of views illustrate the tensions between a Third World Internationalist approach and a pragmatic rights based approach as explained in the third chapter. A year later, Lamees and Wafaa were mobilizing for Palestinian struggle in different student groups with limited cooperation between them, reflecting the fragmentation of the movement.

As explained earlier, most Palestinian and other Arab immigrants arrived in Canada from their homeland or Arab countries (specifically the Arab Gulf countries where they used to be migrant workers) with the goal of seeking more stability in their life. They left a conflict-laden region in the hope of settling in a place where they could build a better future for their children. Despite Canada's complicity in settler colonial projects in Palestine and in the "War of Terror" more generally, most new immigrants of Arab and/or Muslim descent retreated from involvement in politics out of fear of surveillance, fear of being sent back home, and fear of losing the opportunity to settle in Canada. Instead, their attachment to Palestine and to their homeland is expressed through their participation in cultural events, teaching the Arabic language, and the creation of an enclosed community.

(Dis)continuity with the Oslo generation residing in Canada

In contrast to the "War on Terror" generation that was shaped by the tragic wars on multiple Arab and Muslim countries and by the discrimination against the Palestinian and other Arabs in the West, including Canada, the political consciousness of their parents was shaped by the Oslo

Accords period, during which the dominant discursive paradigm was the negotiation of the so-called peace process (1993-1998). The aftermath of the Accords witnessed a paradigm shift in Palestinian politics, a shift towards state building and an abandonment of resistance strategies that were dominant before Oslo. Despite the “peace” process the Accords supposedly aimed for, Israel continued to intensify its colonization of Palestine through various regime apparatuses including the control of Palestinian movement, control over the Palestinian economy, the settlement and annexation of Palestinian land, the ongoing administrative and military rule over Palestinians, and the continuous occupation of Palestinian territory. The political generation that was formed during the 1990’s was not like the Revolution generation, i.e., the generation of the Palestinian progressive liberation movement that came about during the 1960s-1980s. Rather, they are the generation that witnessed the birth of the Palestinian Authority (PA) that surrendered to settler colonialism and further cooperated with Palestine’s occupation on many levels, especially at the security level. They also witnessed the neoliberalization of the Palestinian economy, and the NGOization of Palestine’s civil society, leading to the dominance of pacified discourses in occupied Palestine during that period (Dana 2015). In this context, different groups (generational units) emerged. The heterogeneity of these groups gave rise to different political worldviews, with some subscribing to the individualistic and apolitical atmosphere of that era, and others challenging the status quo. Their challenge, along with other factors, led to the emergence of the second intifada in 2000 in occupied Palestine.

In Canada, the Oslo generation is associated with “apolitical” practices (Personal interview). The convergence of the “peace process” period—with its dominant discourse about peace and state-building—the event of immigration to Canada, and the intensification of discrimination against Arabs and Muslims in the West, created a generation that tried to distance

itself, and its descendants, from political dissent. Despite internalizing the implicit script of the “docile, grateful, immigrant” and the fear of retaliation from a punitive colonial state, the Oslo generation in Toronto worked to transmit their culture to their children, who described in detail the Palestinian rituals that they were socialized in, such as daily cuisine, traditional songs, the *dabke*, cultural events, traditional clothing, poetry, and so on.⁵⁵ These cultural practices were perceived by the Oslo generation as being insular and apolitical and therefore, as being relatively accepted in a multicultural society that encourages diverse cultural practices. These experiences would continue to anchor the younger generation’s attachment to Palestinian culture, thus ensuring its intergenerational transmission, which includes elements of resistance, steadfastness, attachment to land, and the sacredness of the right to return. Though this intergenerational cultural transmission of resistance is perceived by most Palestinian parents as “safe” insofar as it shields their children from politics, there are clear political meanings, implications, and resignifications embedded in these practices.

Unlike the Oslo generation residing in Canada, the “War on Terror” generation perceives politics in an expansive form, extending it beyond narrow electoral and partisan participation and into a larger field where the articulation of culture and identity are understood to be inherently political. More specifically, engaging in politics and articulating political views need not be through political party affiliation and electoral participation, nor through lobbying governmental institutions. The intertwined relation between politics and music, and the political expressions through cultural production and consumption is widely discussed in the literature related to Palestine. Palestinian cultural productions, whether films or songs, paintings or graffiti, depict

⁵⁵ Dabke is a traditional dance that symbolizes unity and attachment to the land. For more information, see Lucy al Sharif, Ph.D. dissertation, forthcoming 2022.

the political reality under occupation and the dream of liberation (Tawil-Souri 2012). Palestinian aesthetics focus on the *nakba*, on reviving the memories of their forced migration, and the daily struggles of Palestinians under occupation. Edward Said articulated the extent that cultural production is embedded in the political: “In the Arab and specifically the Palestinian case, aesthetics and politics are intertwined” (Said 2003, 164). Consequently, aesthetics in the Palestinian context serves to revive the memory, articulate the struggle, reinforce belonging, create the consciousness of the struggle among Palestinians and others, and aid mobilization for political change and against existential annihilation (Tawil-Souri 2012). Hence, Palestinian cinema portrays the refugee problem, expresses the control of the Israelis over Palestinian movements, documents the annihilation and annexation of land and properties, and articulates a counter narrative to the Zionist one (Tawil-Souri 2012). Similarly, scholars such as Sunaina Maira (2013) or Joseph Massad (2003) situate Palestinian music within a larger context of resistance and liberation. Chiara De Cesari (2012) discusses the flourishing cultural practices in the Palestinian diaspora, reproducing historic Palestine and imagining a nation. The articulation of the Palestinian identity is even articulated in the fashion, through the *tatreez* (embroidery) and the *kuffiyah*, portrayed as stitches of resistance. The politicized aesthetics have served as tools to increase the consciousness about the struggle, and as sites for political engagement and debate, and the expression of grievances as well as emancipatory ideals. The broader understanding and the practicing of politics among youth challenges prevailing views that portray them as politically alienated, demobilized, and in some respects apolitical, both in Palestine and in the *shatat* (Casati 2016; Dana 2015).

This research demonstrates that political participation can be exercised in both manifest and latent ways (Ekman and Amna 2012). Manifest ways include formal and traditional types of

political participation, such as electoral participation, party politics, and different forms of activism such as the participation in protests, rallies, petitions, and political lectures. Latent or nonmanifest ways refer to various expressions of an interest in politics, an awareness of both political debates and general cultural expressions, as well as charitable and community-based work (Ekman and Amna 2012). Others have made similar claims about political mobilization of young individuals in a neoliberal age. For instance, Pickard and Bessant (2017) and Hadj-Moussa (2021) contend that the political involvement of the young generation is articulated in non-partisan and non-electoral forms of participation. They suggest that the young generation is facing a gloomy present and future defined by an unprecedented multiplicity and intersectionality of global crises which are economic, political, environmental and developmental in nature. Facing these combined crises, young people are generally involved in various situated non-traditional political forms of participation and do not trust traditional politics. Non-traditional methods include volunteering, petitioning, boycotting, participating in artistic expressions and so on. Most of my interlocutors have expressed latent forms of political participation by wearing their Kuffiyah to express their Palestinian identity, volunteering in Palestinian or general cultural events, establishing humanitarian clubs to help refugees, and by contributing to small Palestinian student-led funds and so on. In general, for my interlocutors who belong to the “War on Terror” generation, these activities are political forms of community activism, although they are not perceived as such by their the “Oslo generation” in Toronto who label them as “merely cultural” or humanitarian. As Rawan, a young Palestinian student organizer described it to me; “my identity is political, my Arabic name is political in Canada, my Kuffiyah is political, and my activities are political.”

This is not to say the “War on Terror” generation has fully disregarded electoral political participation. For instance, to push the New Democratic Party (NDP) to discuss the boycott resolution in its 2018 annual federal convention, a large number of Palestine solidarity activists joined the NDP for the first time. In this case, their involvement in electoral forms of political organizing was strategic since they could exercise political pressure within the Canadian leftist party. Their strategy, along with the pressure exercised from trade unions within the NDP, and the pressure from Palestinian solidarity organizations outside the party, bore fruit in April 2021 when the NDP called for an arms embargo on Israel and a ban on the importation of products from illegal settlements.

The retention of the cultural values of resistance, steadfastness, and attachment to the land contribute to the Palestinianess of the “War on Terror” generation, standing in clear contrast to the original intention of the Oslo generation residents of Canada to shield their children from what would be deemed risky forms of political participation. The parents’ chosen forms of intergenerational cultural transmission have function, in the eyes and actions of the “War on Terror” generation, as latent ways of politicization which have shaped their current political involvement and their vision for the future of their political participation, both grounded in the transgenerational memory of uprootedness. In this way, the historical legacies are *actualized* in their present and *projected forward* into their imagined futures.

(Dis)continuity with the Revolution generation residing in Canada

The previous section demonstrated the intergenerational continuity between the “War on Terror” and the Oslo generations in Toronto. This continuity is manifested through the transmission of

culture - inherently political forms of aesthetics. The manifest ways of transmitting the Palestinian struggle have contributed to the politicization of the “War on Terror” generation, and the intergeneration continuity between these two political generations. This section focuses specifically on the intergenerational (dis)continuity with the Revolution generation, i.e., the Palestinian progressive generation that came about during the 1950s-1980s and that immigrated to Toronto after the 1990’s.

In contrast with the Oslo generation —which was formed in a global unipolar American-dominant political environment after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the weakening of anti-colonial movements in the world—the Revolution generation in the 1950’s – 80’s was connected to internationalist anti-colonial and anti-capitalist movements. The political structures in the Arab world— which were dominated by anti-colonial pan-Arabist ideologies — and in the Third World countries — which were fighting for their independence — gave rise to anti-colonial revolutionary ideas, in occupied Palestine and in the *shatat* (Abu Samra and Qutami 2020; Pennock 2017). The ideological and material connections between various anti-colonial movements gave rise to a generation whose political consciousness was formed amidst a global Third World solidarity movement, where the struggle of Palestine was one of the principal symbols. Therefore, during this period, the internationalization of the Palestinian struggle, along with the general global political movements, paved the way for the rise of Palestinian Revolution generation, with Third World Internationalist political imaginaries.

The conjuncture of multiple local, national, and transnational events contributed to the emergence of the Palestinian Revolution generation. These events include the occupation of Palestine, the rise of Third Worldism, the strong anti-colonial pan-Arabism, the anti-colonial wars, and the Cold War. As explained in the previous chapter, the Palestinian revolutionaries

with Third World Internationalist political imaginaries internationalized the Palestinian struggle, and “viewed [it] as identical with the one waged by all the wretched f the earth for liberation and dignity” (Turki 1972, 117). This internationalist political imaginaries translated into material, discursive, and praxis’ of solidarity between the different struggles.

In Canada, and despite the strong influence of Zionist movements (this will be discussed in chapter 6) and the general hostile climate for activism, the immigrants from the Revolution generation were able to connect with a network of anti-colonial activists living both in Canada and in the United States.⁵⁶ They formed an institutional infrastructure, including organizations such as The Canadian Arab Federation (which will be discussed in chapter 5), and they lobbied other groups to form coalitions and support anti-colonial movements in their homeland. This generation adopted a Third World internationalist political imaginary, where the struggle of Palestine was internationalized and connected to other anti-colonial and anti-capitalist struggles.

Many activists who belong to the Revolution generation in Canada lived in Palestine or other Arab countries (specifically Lebanon and Jordan) before immigrating to Canada. The influence of the Revolution generation on some generational units within the “War on Terror” generation continues to this day. In Toronto, some activists of the “War on Terror” generation organize reading groups and regular meetings with activists from the Revolution generation. They also meet virtually with organizers located all over the world with similar ideological orientations to learn from and discuss solidarity building strategies. For instance, the Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM) in Toronto, which belong to a transnational network of Palestinian young activists organizing as PYM, participate and learn from the virtual “PYM Popular

⁵⁶ For an autobiography about this period, read Hajjar (2018).

University” which hosts activists, community organizers, and researchers to discuss the Palestinian struggle. Many of the invitees belong to the Revolution generation (Personal interviews), who share learnings and tactics for solidarity building, disseminate historical knowledge about Palestinian liberation movements and solidarity with other struggles, as well as offering political advice.⁵⁷

As my analysis shows, despite this shared affiliation with the Third World Internationalism political imaginaries, the “War on Terror” generation and the Revolution generation diverge in terms of the tactics needed for building alliances and connections with other marginalized communities (such as—but not limited to—the indigenous populations, the black communities, the Kashmiris, the Kurds). The Revolution generation tend to think of virtual connections across the globe as “weak ties” that do not sustain solidarity relations. These long-term activists, some of whom have difficulties adapting to the prevalence of social media and digitally mediated networks in the War on Terror generation seem to dispute whether the efforts taken by younger activists should even be considered as legitimate forms of activism

⁵⁷ In their comparison of the Revolution generation with the PYM—which belongs to the “War on Terror” generation—Abu Samra and Qutami (2020) argue that external political opportunities such as the fragmentation of political parties in Palestine, the Arab uprisings, the dominance of NGOs in Palestine, and the weakening role of unions and students contributed to a divergent trajectory between the Revolution generation and PYM. The Revolution generation was integrated within radical Arab political environment and general transnational anti-colonial movements, whereas PYM that carries many ideas from the Revolution generation, isolated itself from the fragmented Palestinian and Arab political parties and NGOs. Nevertheless, Abu Samra and Qutami (2020) did not specifically discuss the Revolution generation in the *shatat*, neither did not elaborate on the (dis)continuity between these two generations.

Conclusion

This chapter challenges the perception of rigid boundaries that exist among different Palestinian and other Arab political generations in Toronto. More specifically, using the concepts of political generation and theories of entangled temporalities and habitus, this chapter traced the continuity between what I call the “War on Terror” generation whose political consciousness was formed in the aftermath of 9/11, and the Oslo generation living in the *shatat*. Despite the efforts of the Oslo generation in Toronto to shield the “War on Terror” generation from politics in a highly surveilled atmosphere, the latter engages in cultural practices that emphasize cultures of resistance and steadfastness in their consciousness. At the political juncture of the post-9/11 era, and the increased othering and discrimination against the Palestinians and other Arabs, the internalized culture pushed the “War on Terror” generation to redefine their Palestinianess and engage in solidarity work and coalition building with the BDS movement. Despite this continuity, the two generations often have divergent understanding of politics: whereas the Oslo generation understands it in a narrow electoral and partisan sense, the “War on Terror” generation expands its understanding and practices of politics to include artistic and cultural practices.

The chapter also traced the relations between the Revolution generation and some groups within the “War on Terror” generation to demonstrate the intergenerational continuity in solidarity building with the Palestinian struggle, and in coalition building with other social justice struggles. Despite their disagreements on tactics, and their perception that political generational differences create unbridgeable rifts, the two generations share surprisingly similar worldviews and practices.

These findings suggest that more attention must be paid to the bidirectional transnational flows in solidarity organizing, and to the role of political generation in the continuity and temporal articulation of solidarity movements.

The next chapter sheds light on an endogenous factor impacting the trajectory of the BDS movement in Toronto: the role of community political organizations. Acting as a main component of solidarity infrastructure, the chapter discusses the weakening process of Palestinian and other Arab political organizations, due to the fragmentation of the Palestinians and the fierce Zionist and state led counter-movements.

Chapter 5: Palestinian and Other Arab Community Institutions

The previous chapter shows how generational differences, and the perception of those differences limit intergenerational solidarity. It shows how that the BDS movement in Toronto is intergenerational, incorporating the solidarity principles, practices, and ideological orientations of previous political generations, despite activist perceptions that reify intergenerational boundaries and prevent generational continuity. This chapter focuses on the role of Palestinian and other Arab community political and cultural organizations, a component of the solidarity infrastructure which is endogenous to the Palestinian and other Arab solidarity movement in Toronto. This web of community organizations allows activists to express their ethno-national identity, connect to their specific cultural roots and practices, and mobilize with an intention of directly impacting the situated political struggle in their country of origin.

Although the concepts of institutions and organizations are often used interchangeably, I differentiate between them in my dissertation. In the social movement literature, a social movement organization (SMO) constitutes the network of activists that strategize for a particular cause, deploy the resources available to recruit new participants and to advance their grievance claims. SMOs can adopt different decision-making and resourcing structures. They can include horizontalist networks, or organize through a vertical hierarchy (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Polletta 2002). To differentiate the SMO from the non-partisan community establishments, I use *community political institutions* to refer to the legally registered entities (often as not-for-profit or charities) whose mission is to serve a community and advance its claims. Community political institutions are also differentiated from the government institutions, and do not embed social movements into government or state institutions.

In order to understand the importance of community political institutions in building sustained solidarity, this chapter asks three questions: How do Palestinian and other Arab community institutions contribute to and constrain solidarity building? How do the political fields in Toronto shape the position of Palestinian and other Arab institutions? How does the Canadian government funding of most Palestinian and Arab institutions in Toronto impact their activities and the possibility of sustained solidarity?

In addressing these questions, this chapter illuminates the challenges facing Palestinian/ Arab political institutions in Toronto due to an interplay of divergent habitus and political visions within the Palestinian *shatat*— often reflecting the political fragmentation in Palestine— as well as the financial dependency on government funding. The discussion includes the Palestinian and Arab community institutions, originally founded to advocate for the Palestinian struggle, which are targeted by Zionist counter-movements and the Canadian government. The chapter also highlights the paradoxical role of non-governmental institutions that, on the one hand, provide free spaces for activism as a form of active participation in the Palestinian struggle, and preserve the institutional, and movement memory, and on the other, build an institutional habitus that, in the long run, may alienate the institution itself from grassroots innovation. Informed by my participant observation and interviews with activists, this chapter illuminates the complex dynamics responsible for the progressive weakening of Palestinian and other Arab institutions after 9/11.

In the literature on political transnationalism, emphasis has been placed on the role of diasporic organizations and institutions in keeping alive homeland-based cultural or religious practices. These strategies of cultural continuity are implemented in religious institutions that operate in heritage languages, in schools' programs geared towards building linguistic literacy,

as well as in cultural centers, and hometown associations (Goldring 2008, Goldring and Krishnamurti 2007), students' clubs, charity organizations, and advocacy organizations, among others. When approached as transnational social fields, they reveal their political nature (Goldring 2009; Levitt 1997), and the key role they play in building a collective identity, insofar as that they help “carve a new discourse of community through which a particular diasporic imagination is negotiated” (Sökefeld 2006, 275).⁵⁸ It is, therefore, in these diasporic community organizations that ethnic solidarity, political consciousness and solidarity to the homeland, and diasporic identity formation are shaped and fostered (Cheran 2007, Sökefeld 2006). These organizations also work as advocacy centers that articulate the grievances these communities hold either in the homeland or in the newly adopted society.

A first important role that community-based institutions play is the offer of a “free space” for its members to socialize, network, connect, and build potential movements (Polletta and Kretschmer 2013). A free space can be defined as “small scale community or movement settings beyond the surveillance and control of institutionalized authorities that are voluntarily frequented by dissidents and system complainants” (Snow and Soule 2010, 101). Free spaces constitute a needed infrastructure for the creation of new social movements, where activists or constituents have the potential to form or to expand social movements. For instance, in the 1960s black churches in the United States offered free spaces for networking, strategizing, and fostering the development of the civil rights movement (Polletta 1999). In an increasingly surveillance-

⁵⁸ Inspired by the work of Bourdieu, Fouron and Glick chiller (2001) defines a transnational social field as “an unbounded terrain of interlocking egocentric networks that extends across the borders of two or more nation-states and that incorporates its participants in the day-to-day activities of social reproduction in these various locations” (544). This definition allows researchers to transcend methodological nationalism and examine the social relations that develop beyond the borders of nation-states.

oriented environment, free spaces in community organizations are generative venues for the emergence or the strengthening of social movements.

A second important role that community advocacy institutions can provide is their capacity to engage in “archive activism,” that is, to collect and preserve the materials produced by and about social movements. These archives offer a unique lens on the lived experience of activists, social movements, and the general political atmosphere in which the social movements were embedded in. These archives are also a tool for tracing the history of the movement as well as its alliances, framing, challenges, and successes. They can offer teachings to present and future activists, while also providing counter-narratives to challenge dominant narratives about the past and present. Archive activism reveals the fragmented, the forgotten, the robust, and the parallel histories of movements and allies, as well as the tactics used by movements in the past. Therefore, archive activism becomes a pedagogical tool about past actions, movements, and tactics which, in combination, have the ability to generate a collective memory, particularly when accompanied with social opportunities for socializing, learning, and discussing the past (Flinn, Stevens and Shepherd 2009, Chatterton 2008, Sellie et al. 2015). In so doing, archive activism helps shape and maintain an institutional memory that contributes to the intergenerational movement continuity. Here it is important to distinguish between grassroots and community political institutions that preserve the memory of social movements, on the one hand, and the state institutions’ record-keeping, on the other, since state institutions have asymmetrical power relations with the movements and preserve specific narratives (Sellie et al. 2015). By preserving collective memories of grassroots struggle, political institutions contribute to the continuity of social movements and to the connection among activists in a social movement during ordinary moments, or during “momentous times”, moments of temporal

compression and accelerated expressions of collective action. Therefore, the interaction between the past (preserved in data, documentation, and experiences) and the present (through processes of learning, shaping, reinterpreting, revisiting or reviving) is facilitated by community political institutions.

While the literatures discussed above approach community political institutions as relevant sites for enabling the emergence and growth of social movements, other literatures warn of their tendency to “professionalize” activism in ways that may render these institutions rigid and disconnected from grassroots organizers. Bureaucratization and formalization drain key institutional resources in community political organizations which are already financially strained and lacking in personnel (McCarthy and Zald 1987, Staggenborg 1986). In addition, organizations may develop a specific institutional habitus over time, reproducing and consolidating specific social and cultural practices within the community organization, and making them impervious to the reception of new ideas and new individuals (Goodwin and Jasper 1999; Kriesi 2004). This constitutes a paradox for most social movements, as they are faced with the need to establish an institutional infrastructure that sustains their struggle, provides them a free space, and preserves the memory of the movement, while simultaneously allowing the flexible and open flow of new ideas and people. As more community members, activists, and organizers compete for influence within the community institution, and therefore, compete to impose their own ideas, tactics, ways of working; community institutions become agonistic arenas of competing struggle between members wrestling for space, receptivity, and change. These intra-organizational dynamics, along with other exogenous variables, shape the trajectory of the movement, by either solidifying or weakening its position.

An added complexity to the paradox of rigidity and flexibility that characterizes community-based institutions is, in the case of organizing around Palestine, the “free space” is never fully a space safe and free from surveillance. The intensification of surveillance after 9/11 on the Orientalized Other (i.e., the Arab and/or Muslim and people of color) lead to the suppression of their activism and their narratives (Abu Laban and Bakan 2012). As will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, challenging the Israeli narratives and policies became equated with antisemitism in the Canadian parliament, in the public discourse, and among many university administrations (*ibid*). The surveillance apparatus is a “deliberately invisible” (Flesher Fominaya and Wood 2011) political instrument infiltrating and monitoring the activities of civil society associations and “radical” social movements (Alam and Cicero 2019), such as trade unions, community institutions, student unions, and churches (Schlembach 2018; Abu Laban and Bakan 2012). The surveillance creates a chilling effect; generating mistrust among activists, and fomenting self-monitoring among community members, in some cases effectively preventing them from engaging in contentious politics (Brodeur and Leman-Langlois 2006; Monaghan and Walby 2016). For instance, NGO Monitor, an Israeli research center, monitors the activities of civil society related to the Arab Israeli conflict in various countries, including Canada. They write reports and academic publications, and advocate for defunding and delegitimizing what they perceive as Palestinian sympathizing organizations and institutions.⁵⁹

Another way that “free” space is restricted, is the fact that many community institutions are dependent on government funding. Scholarly work indicates a high correlation between government funding for advocacy groups and not-for-profit organizations, and their progressive

⁵⁹ For instance, see Seligman and Steinberg 2012.

disengagement from oppositional political activities (Chaves, Stevens and Galaskiewicz 2004; Stone 1996; Alexander, Nank and Strivers 1999). Financial dependence of community institutions on government funding often leads their leadership to become more cautious, for fear of endangering a main source of financial support (Chaves, Stevens and Galaskiewicz 2004). This demobilization attempts take place either through cooptation or defunding, or through self-censorship by the community institutions themselves, which may moderate their views or practices in order to maintain their funding. This is not to deny the agency of the community institutions, however. As it will be discussed in the next section, financial dependence on the government — as was and is still the case in most Palestinian and Arab community institutions in Toronto — is frequently challenged by the board members of these institutions, and their confrontational politics continue, despite their loss of resources. Put differently, although the defunding of the community institutions creates tension, and a hesitancy among some of its members to continue their political advocacy, it does not totally nor automatically eradicate the place of community institutions in the movement.

The Palestinian and Arab community institutions are situated within the political field of Toronto, which is constantly shaped and reshaped by the transnational Palestinian, Zionist, and contentious political fields. Since their early foundation in the late 1960's, these community institutions have been embedded in an anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist struggle, articulated through a strong unified Palestinian resistance (up to mid-1980s), and the strong presence of anti-war social movements in Toronto. They also share the political field with strong Zionist counter-movements and a hostile Canadian government view of the Palestinian cause. The tendencies and transformations in these multiple fields shape the advocacy strategies of the Palestinian and Arab community institutions, as will be explained through the example of the

Canadian Arab Federation (CAF). At present, Palestinian and other Arab community institutions are fragmented in Toronto.

Overall, this fragmentation is the result of: 1) the fragmentation of Palestinian *shatat* and other Arab diaspora in Canada amongst divergent imaginaries and political parties and the disconnection of these institutions from a large sections of the community (as in the case of Palestine House) 2) the dependence on a government-funded model makes these organizations susceptible to direct and indirect silencing attempts from the Canadian state (as was the case of CAF and Palestine House, explained in the next section). 3) the fierce Zionist counter-movement strategies and their continuous efforts to silence against Palestinian dissent (this will be explained in the next chapter).

The chapter proceeds as follows. In the next section, I provide a brief explanation of the dynamics that shaped CAF, one of the earliest and strongest Arab community institutions in Canada, founded in the aftermath of 1967 war. In the historical overview, the chapter focuses on the interplay between Canadian politics, Palestinian and other Arab states political environment, and the vision of its political members as they shape the dynamics of CAF politics. This will be followed by an analysis for the progressive shrinking of “free space” for BDS activism in Toronto, and the relative lack of institutional memory. I highlight the paradox facing activists, with the need to establish strong community institutions that serve as one component of the solidarity infrastructure, while simultaneously fearing the disconnection of community institutions from grassroots activism.

Arab Community Institutions in Canada

Throughout their history, the Palestinian and Arab community institutions in Canada and in Toronto directed their efforts towards mobilizing, empowering, and defending the Arab Canadian community, lobbying the Canadian state and its institutions for local and transnational Arab related struggles, and building coalitions with other communities in Canada. They defended the citizenship rights of Arab Canadians, confronted discrimination and orientalist discourses, and advocated for the justice in the homeland. As community institutions involved in territorial and transnational issues in local and transnational fields, the focus of these institutions was shaped by the interplay of many dynamics, such as the wider political transformations in the Arab world, the political unity and tensions in Palestinian partisan politics, the surveillance and funding of the Canadian state, and the political imaginaries of the board members in these community institutions.

Before 1967, a limited number of short-lived institutions were established by Arab Canadians, such as the Canadian Friends of the Middle East (CFME). The CFME formed in 1956 in London Ontario after the Israeli-British-French launched a war on Egypt following the announcement of the nationalization of Suez Canal. The objective of CFME was to counter Israeli narratives in the media and to “empower Arab perspectives” (Labelle 2019, 166). During the same period, the Canadian Arab Friendship Society (CAFS) was formed in Toronto. In 1962, these institutions were linked to the League of Arab States Information Center (AIC) in Ottawa (Labelle 2019). AIC connected these institutions with others, such as American Friends in the Middle East (Quaker), the Anti-Zionist American Council for Judaism, and various Arab student organizations (Labelle 2019).

The momentous events that followed the defeat of the Arabs in the 1967 war, the unapologetic siding of Canadian foreign affairs with the Zionist state, as well as the Canadian media's dehumanization of Arabs have led many intellectuals, including the founder of CAFS, to call for the establishment of a national federal institution that would provide counter-narratives to the dominant political discourses about the Arab-Israeli struggle, and that would advocate for the rights of the Arab community in Canada (Labelle 2019; Hajar 2020). Therefore, CFME and CAFS, can both be considered as precursors to the Canadian Arab Federation (CAF).⁶⁰ The 1967 war resulted in Zionist expansion and land annexation in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula, as well as increasing forced displacement and refugees. As a result, a group of Palestinian and other Arab academics formed CAF, a secular, non-partisan, not-profit federal institution which aimed to create a space for discussing Arab issues, and more specifically the Palestinian cause. It also acted as an institution that amplified the concerns of Arab Canadians in Canada while remaining connected to the politics of the Arab world. In addition to advocating for Arab Canadian issues in Canada, for the liberation of Palestine, and for the resolution of other Arab issues in the homeland, CAF offered government-funded services, such as language and job search training, for newcomer communities. CAF reached out to other communities in the GTA area through various cultural activities.

CAF started as a unifying institution for Arab Canadians at a time when pan-Arab nationalist sentiments were still strong in the Arab countries and among new Arab immigrants, and when the Palestinian struggle was the central cause for all Arab Canadians (personal interviews; Ziadah 2017; Hajar 2020). Two past presidents of CAF described its main activities

⁶⁰ The first Arab institution in Canada was the Syrian Canadian Association (SCA) in Montreal, established in 1933. For a history of the Arab institutions all across Canada, see Asa 2016.

as centered around educating and advocating for the liberation of Palestine, as well as nurturing Arab nationalist sentiments that would unify Arabs against colonialism (personal interviews). In its early years, and in subsequent, though interrupted periods, CAF was also active in building coalitions with Third World anti-colonial struggles. The ongoing Palestinian resistance against the Zionist state, the emergence of the strong Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and its advocacy for Palestinian self-determination, as well as the ongoing wars between Israel and the Arab states energized CAF efforts to advocate for the Palestinian struggle. In the mid-1970s, differences amongst CAF members emerged, as fragmentation and political unrest in the homeland became more prevalent in the Arab world. By 2010, CAF had become an umbrella institution for forty ethnocultural institutions (personal interviews; Ziadah 2017). Further divisions within the community coincided with the onset of the Arab uprisings in 2011, particularly around the imperialist interventions in the case of Libya and Syria.

CAF's politics also shifted in response to Canadian political dynamics, policies and actions in the Arab world. In the first Gulf War, which started in August 1990, and which Canada joined, Arab Canadians were subjected to intense interrogation on the part of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and intimidation from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) (Kashmeri 2000; Personal interviews). CAF regularly offered guidance to Arab Canadians on their rights, for instance, by printing pamphlets such as "When CSIS Calls" (Kashmeri 2000; Hasan 2013). During the Oslo Accords when peace related discourses dominated, CAF leadership mainly focused on local advocacy, specifically on the integration of Arab Canadians into Canadian society (Personal interview with a previous CAF president). The concomitant events of 9/11 events, the fall of the so-called peace process, and the emergence of the second intifada would again shift the mix of local and transnational activities within the CAF.

Due to the racial profiling policy that Canada adopted during this time period of heightened levels of Arabophobia and Islamophobia, CAF invested most of its resources challenging new Canadian legislation against Arab and Muslim communities, such as the Anti-Terrorism Act of October 2001 (personal interviews; Ziadah 2013).⁶¹

2006 proved to be a turning point in the relations between CAF and the Canadian state. In 2006, Israel launched a 33-day war on Lebanon, resulting in the killing of thousands, the destruction of infrastructure, and the forced displacement of millions. Regardless, Canada stated its full support for Israel, and in November of 2006, declared Hizbullah—the Lebanese political party represented in the parliament and in the government—as a “terrorist” organization. Simultaneously, Canada listed Hamas—the Islamist political party that won the elections in Gaza in 2006—as a “terrorist” organization and was the first country to stop sending humanitarian aid to Palestinians (Hasan 2013). The discriminatory legislation that targeted Arabs and Muslims and threatened the possible suspension of their civil rights, the orientalist representation of Arabs as terrorists and “out of law” persons underserving of human rights, and the failure of the Oslo Accords and subsequent expansion of the Israeli occupation and atrocities, all led CAF to adopt a new strategy under the leadership of its president, Khaled Moammar (2006-2010). In an interview with Moammar I conducted on July 19, 2019, he explained that their new strategy was to provide explicit support for all forms of mobilization for Palestine, such as the Stop the War coalition and the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA). The support during this period coincided with the emergence and growth of the BDS in Toronto. While this strategy would

⁶¹ The Anti-Terrorism Act “allowed for preventive detentions and issuing of security certificates, and extended the range of the Official Secrets Act; and an immediate increase in the military budget, particularly for the JTF2 Special Forces or rapid deployment and to deploy troops to the Gulf and Afghanistan as a direct contribution to the U.S. War on Terror (Albo 2006, 20).

strengthen the BDS movement and coalition building for Palestine solidarity, it would worsen the relations with the Canadian state and its institutions.

Conflicting visions amongst its board members and internal debates also shaped CAF politics and practices. Positions within these debates oscillated between adopting a Canadian-centric pragmatic approach that would focus on local issues of relevance to Arab Canadians and a confrontational approach that would underscore the transnational aspect and the advocacy of CAF on Arab related struggles in the homeland. The first pragmatic approach would emphasize the needs of Arab Canadians as they integrated into their new adopted homeland and actively participated in its civil society, under the logic that the focus of community institutions should be on the local politics that impact the Arab Canadians. While this vision does not negate the entanglement of local and transnational political dynamics in impacting the situation of Arab Canadians in Canada, they prioritize local dynamics and the use of “Canadian language” in advocating for transnational struggles (personal interviews; Hasan 2013). In contrast, the latter vision insists that the rights and integration of Arabs in Canada is closely entangled with the politics in the Arab world and with the Canadian position vis-à-vis the Arab struggles.

The Canadian government adopted punitive measures towards CAF and the Palestine House, one of its sub-institutions, as a result of their political advocacy which contradicted Canada’s pro-Israel stance. In 2009, CAF was one of the institutions to lose its government funding (2.1 million dollars for a 2-year contract) following the accusation that CAF allegedly supported “extremism” and promoted anti-Semitism.⁶² During the invasion of Lebanon in 2006

⁶² Between 2008 and 2012, and in addition to CAF and Palestine House, several other Canadian based NGOs lost their government funding due to their direct and indirect support of the Palestinians. Zia dah (2013) documents the defunding of KAIROS Canada (a church-base development NGO) who lost \$7.1 million from Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) for its support for BDS movement (CIDA claimed that KAIROS’

and the war on Gaza in 2009, CAF actively advocated the Arab point of view, a perspective that opposed the Conservative Canadian government position. As a result, the Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism unilaterally decided to terminate CAF's funding and denied CAF's request for negotiation (Personal interviews; Hasan 2013). The Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism also threatened to defund any conference that CAF would attend. For instance, in 2009, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Jason Kenney requested the removal of Mohamed Boudjenane, an executive member of CAF, from the African Canadian Legal Clinic (ACLC) conference in Ottawa, under threat of defunding (Personal Interviews; Hasan 2013). Despite the threat, ACLC decided to go forward with the conference and its presenters. In another instance, and in a response to various ethnic community institutions not to withdraw from the Durban 2009 United Nations World Conference Against Racism (WCAR), the ministry's staff agreed to meet with community organizers only if CAF weren't present at the meeting, since the ministry accused CAF of anti-Semitism (Hasan 2013).⁶³ The ministry did not reply to the community organizations who sought clarification around the accusations of anti-Semitism. The accusations of anti-Semitism stem from CAF's President Khaled Moammar's critique of Canada's refusal to treat the

projects do not fit with CIDA's vision). Similarly, Alternatives, who promotes international solidarity, environmental rights and democratic rights, lost \$2.1 million in 2009 for its criticism of Israel. In the same year, Rights and Democracy (R&D)— which was created by the Canadian parliament to support values of human rights and promote democratic rights— stopped funding three human rights organizations in Israel: Al Haq, Al Mezan and B'Tselem. The conservative government of Canada would totally shut down R&D in 2012. Finally, in 2010, The International Development Research Center (IDRC) lost two grants worth \$800,000 for financing Mada al-Camel, a research institute focusing on studies of Palestinians in Israel. For detailed information, see Zia dah 2013.

⁶³ These include members of the ACLC, the Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic, the National Anti-Racism Council of Canada, the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, the Chinese Canadian National Council, the Canadian Council for Refugees, the Jamaican Canadian Association, the CAF, and the South Asian Women's Centre (Hasan 2013).

Palestinian Hamas and the Lebanese Hezbollah as legitimate political parties, even though they were elected by the Palestinian and the Lebanese people respectively and represented in their parliaments. CAF launched a lawsuit against the government, which drained the financial resources, despite the financial donations of community members and other allies.

The financial dependence of CAF—and by extension of most of the Palestinian and Arab community institutions—on government funding meant that these institutions had little political autonomy. The clash between the government and the community institution deprived CAF of its funds. Although the leadership of CAF continued to advocate for the Palestinian cause, the defunding created an internal division between those who promoted a shift of focus toward the integration of the Arab community in Canada independently of the Arab issues in the homeland and Canadian foreign policies towards the Middle East, and those who held on to the focus on Arab issues in the homeland and the critique of Canada's siding with the Zionist state. The latter also advocated for changing CAF into a member-funded political institution that would not offer settlement programs for newcomers. The diverging opinions on the role of Palestinian/ Arab institutions in Canada, along with the deep political divide in the community after the Arab uprisings, weakened CAF's ability to advocate for solidarity with Palestine.

As the analysis above demonstrates, the weakening of the Palestinian and Arab community institutions resulted from the interaction of endogenous factors to the Palestinian and Arab community institutions (The vision of its board members, the financial dependence on the Canadian government, and the mirroring of the trajectory and the politics of fragmentation in the Arab world), and exogenous factors (state surveillance, fierce counter-movements). The endogenous and exogenous dynamics limited the capacity of the solidarity infrastructure to

provide safe space for activists, to build movement continuities and to facilitate intergenerational movement building.

Space as an Infrastructure

Multiple strategies have been deployed by the Canadian government, Zionist institutions, and their allies, to silence Palestinian activism in the city since the emergence of the BDS movement. One of the most effective ones has been to deny space for Palestinian related events, either through imposing bureaucratic and logistical barriers, such as delays to booking venues, or through threatening potential hosts with defunding and bad press (Ziadah 2017; personal interviews). In the absence of financially independent community institutions that share a similar vision with their activism, activists repeatedly expressed the urgent need to create their own space in community social justice venues, for the opportunities it creates to network, organize events and to build ties with others.

The difficulties finding spaces for Palestine solidarity events, including BDS events, triggered the need for a community space that would be relatively independent from anti-Palestinian funding resources.⁶⁴ Given the loss of the “free space” provided by CAF in Toronto, and with the increasing administrative, bureaucratic, and repressive barriers encountered by activist movements, many social-justice community institutions began to serve as meeting

⁶⁴ Examples of barriers created by universities to deny a space for contentious critical discussions include the cancellation of a student conference “Standing Against Apartheid” in October of 2008 at the University of Toronto (Schofield 2009; Ziadad 2013). For more information on events cancelled by the universities, see Ziadah 2013. Outside the university, Trinity St. Paul United Church surrendered to the Zionist pressure and canceled the launch of Palestinian Youth Movement in Toronto in 2019. This incident will be discussed in more details in the next chapter.

venues, including Beit Zatoun, an independent social-justice community space.⁶⁵ Established in 2004, Beit Zatoun began as an event place and developed into a social justice community space where progressive pedagogical events related to multiple causes took place. Beit Zatoun (Arabic), which translates as the house of olives in English, was founded by the Canadian Palestinian Robert Masoud, who also owns the Zatoun brand, a fair-trade olive oil brand from Palestine. In Masoud's words in an interview I conducted with him on July 13, 2019, Beit Zatoun became a space "not just about Palestine. My approach has been about justice. And Palestine just happens to be the grossest injustice and it's not the only one". Beit Zatoun's commitment to addressing diverse social justice issues helped to de-exceptionalize the Palestinian struggle and to situate it in the context of global struggles against settler colonialism, western imperialism, and capitalist expansion. In fact, less than 10% of the events in the space were related to Palestine (Personal interview). Other events discussed Canadian Leftist politics, anti-capitalism, Latin American struggles, Islamophobia, Arab uprisings, American imperialism, mining industry, environmental crisis, and Indigenous struggles among others. Beit Zatoun was the space where "you learn lessons. This is where you bring people and you learn together and you have solidarity, and you work towards a better world" (personal interview).

After hosting more than 1000 events, in 2016, the vibrant intellectual and activist environment at Beit Zatoun succumbed to the ongoing gentrification in the city of Toronto, the increased cost of living, and lack of funding. Its closure was mourned by most of the activists I met, having lost a political space in the city, that offered a space for networking, learning from others, and forging solidarity.

⁶⁵ CAF bought their own private space in North York in 1988 (Personal interview). Prior to that, CAF held their meetings and events in either the houses of its members, or at rented public spaces.

Palestinian and other Arab community institutions are embedded in a field of relations with multiple other ethnic and community institutions with diverse visions, missions, ideas, strategies, and resources. This community institutional field shapes and is being shaped by other fields, locally and transnationally, such as the media field, and by the Canadian social structures of power, and specifically for the Palestinian case, Palestinian politics in the homeland. In light of the relative depoliticization and weakening of CAF and the Palestine House, and the closure of Beit Zatoun, BDS and other Palestine solidarity activists found refuge in other community spaces that had the ability to overcome the threats and challenges of defunding.

Given the multiple endogenous and exogenous variables that shape community institutions, many activists in Toronto look for ways to find resources to operate independent of government funding. They argue that resource-dependence on the government reinforces asymmetrical political relations between these institutions and the Canadian state which will have the potential to shut down those agendas that threaten its ideological and political commitments. As one interlocutor mentioned “the institution becomes at the mercy of the government.”

Institutional Memory as Infrastructure

At their best, community political institutions can function as a vehicle for constituting a *mnemonic infrastructure* (Grever and Jan-Adriaasen 2017) that serves as an essential component for the intergenerational continuity of social movements. Preserving a movement’s archives and collective memory serves as a catalyst for intergenerational and inter-movement epistemological (re)production, for reflexive learning, and for knowledge production in the service of the activist community. Archival activism refers to the systematic use of previous archives and information

for supporting social justice claims (Flinn 2011). As archives related to contentious politics may be at risk of partial or full erasure, or distortion, activists understand that the preservation of the movement's knowledge is necessary to facilitate intergenerational solidarity.

During my fieldwork, important but limited archives existed within Palestinian and Arab community political institutions, mainly in the hands of activists currently living in various parts of the world. Given that students were actively engaged in BDS activist initiatives, and in connection with other movements, the students' relocation out of the city or the country interrupted the continuity of activism, unless they took care of preserving key documents and deliberately made efforts to pass their knowledge to others. As Jenin, a student union and BDS activist, informed me

“Many [documents] have been produced in the last decades. We have very few information left with us. We are left with a big gap; we will have to produce everything from scratch again. Our focus should be on passing down the knowledge to everyone. We cannot keep inventing the wheel” (Personal interview, August 2019).

Jenin is specifically referring to the activist's leaflets, pamphlets, handbooks, and analytical records that were produced in the past, more specifically, since the launch of Israeli Apartheid Week in Toronto and the initiation of the BDS movement. Her comments resonate with my experience. I have visited several organizations in Toronto and its surrounding areas, as well as in Montreal, where activists ask me for basic educational information (such as information about the occupation, apartheid, the treatment of Palestinians, and the demands of BDS) that was produced more than a decade ago and was not passed down to newer cohorts of activists. I have personally developed educational materials for new recruits only to then find out that the materials already exist somewhere else. During my fieldwork, many experienced activists shared with me very rich materials, research studies, and advocacy leaflets developed in Toronto during

the early years of the BDS movement, which were used for both training and recruitment purposes, but these were not circulated among new students and community organizers. This lack of coordination between the different groups endorsing the movement weakens the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and experience and the movement's potential growth.

The reasonable mistrust of activists and organizers in government-funded and academic institutions discouraged them from preserving their archives in these sites. Historically, archives have been used by the colonial powers as “technologies of rule and as force fields of power that excised and excluded” (Stoler 2018,43). Selective materials have been preserved in archives in order to narrate a particular history. This form of erased or distorted knowledge facilitates the exclusion and misrepresentation of certain facts and historical narratives. Ann Stoler (2002) invites scholars to examine the archive “for its regularities, for its logic of recall, for its densities and distributions, for its consistencies of misinformation, omission, and mistake – along the archival grain” (100). Put differently, the unequal power relations in archival work transforms the archive into a power tool in the service of a state apparatus and its vested interest in erasing certain stories and highlighting others. The result would be an archive that produces and reproduces injustices, silences the communities, or promotes prejudices against marginalized groups (Saucier and Wallace 2020). As articulated by some activists and organisers, the memory of social movements maintained through the archives can be better preserved in a trusted community political institution or in emerging grassroots initiatives to create autonomous digital archives. As Jas, a young Palestinian artist and activist, commented, “I do not trust the government funded archival institutions. Canada is compliant with Israeli settler colonialism, and they will not build an archive about Palestinian solidarity movements. We should do it ourselves,

our own institutions, our solidarity groups' centers." Jas learned about the distorted archives of Indigenous peoples and the early European settlers in her university courses.

The use of community political institutions and the collective archives help newer generations to learn from earlier ones, and offers opportunities to re-solidify or re-visit these intergenerational relations. As discussed in the first chapter, most of the solidarity relations with Palestinians are rooted in a long struggle against different forms of oppression. Some of these relations become weakened under the pressure exerted by new local and international political challenges, but are revived and reinvigorated in under different conditions. The collective archival memory allows activists to learn from and about other movements, and to reflect on the relative effectiveness of tactics and strategies adopted in various situated contexts.

Between Institutionalization and Grassrootsness

Community institutions create a paradox for activists, organizers, and the social movement in general. While they form one component of the infrastructures that facilitate continuity of solidarity relations across movements and generations, they are also a source of concern for many activists given their variable ability to stay connected with the grassroots. Despite the possibilities that community political institutions can open up, activists remain skeptical about their ability to maintain a non-bureaucratic and democratic engagement with the community. Especially in the context of the BDS movement, a horizontalist grassroots social movement, activists question the ability of community institution to continue to be accountable to members and their politics.

Institutional culture created over time shapes activists, and in turn, activists shape institutions. With time, this culture tends to become rigid and less susceptible to change, and may become less welcoming to new members. In addition, organizational maintenance is time and resource consuming and may limit creativity. As expressed by an activist who felt frustrated with the modest outcomes of executive meetings, “I prefer to be organizing within the community—it is more effective”.

Concluding Remarks

The importance of community institutions lies their ability to foster public debates around the BDS movement, to guarantee institutional memory that activists across time and space can benefit from, and to offer a physical space for political discussions and events. Activists understand community institutions as sites for learning, information-sharing, intergenerational continuity, and networking. They are also a safe space where they can meet and strategize at a time where continuous attacks have been imposed on Palestinian activism.

The presence of member-funded political organizations provides Palestinian solidarity with the ability to maintain a political relatively free space where activists meet, build networks, learn, and forge ties with others. They can also be a tool for maintaining intergenerational memory through maintaining the movement’s archives, and therefore contributing to maintaining a sustained solidarity. However, they run the risk of becoming bureaucratized and disconnected from the grassroots activists and activist innovation.

In Toronto, a number of Palestinian and Arab associations —such as the Canadian Arab Federation (CAF)— and its sub-organizations —the Palestine House and Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA), among others— have nurtured political debates and promoted

progressive analysis for the liberation of Palestine. These organizations have facilitated building solidarity with the Palestinians, by providing public education, by expanding activists' networks, by forging solidarity relations with others, and in certain periods, by impacting their constituents' efforts in electoral politics. But the political power and influence of these organizations has weakened in the past years, due to the interplay of multiple factors: The general reliance on government funding, the competing positions taken by community members in the institutional field, the fragmentation of the Arab community along political lines of dissent that emerged with the Arab uprisings, and the fierce counter-movements against Palestinian-affiliated activities. The relations between the BDS movement and the Zionist counter-movement is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 6: The Power of Counter Movements

In June 2019, the Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM) planned the official launch of its Toronto branch at a local progressive church, Trinity St. Paul United, in downtown Toronto. The church has historically been known for its support for various liberation and anti-oppressive movements concerned with racial and gender discrimination, and freedom of religious expression. PYM is a transborder Palestinian grassroots youth organization working for the liberation of Palestine (PYM, n.d). During that event, PYM intended to launch its Ghassan Kanafani art project that celebrates the legacy of Kanafani as a revolutionary leader and cultural producer. Kanafani, one of the most prominent radical revolutionary writers, journalists, and theorists of the Palestinian liberation movement, was also a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a Leftist liberation movement. The Kanafani art project also celebrates the creativity of young Palestinians living in North America, and it gives a monetary prize to selected winners. Since the announcement of the event, B'nai Brith and Jewish Defence League (JDL) joined efforts to exert pressure on the church to cancel the event (B'nai Brith 2019). The event drew the attention of the media and raised alarm in the larger political field, and the Zionist counter movements were successful in forcing the Trinity St. Paul's to cancel the booking, and accused PYM of promoting "terrorism," alienating some Palestinian participants from the event.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ The definition of "terrorism" used in this accusation is the Canadian state definition of terrorism, as legislated in the Canadian Criminal law section 83.01 of the Anti Terrorism Act. It defines terrorism as the "that committed, in whole or in part, for a political, religious or ideological purpose, objective or cause and with the intention of intimidating the public or a segment of the public, with regard to its security, including its economic security, or compelling a person, a government or a domestic or an international organization to do or to refrain from doing any act, whether the public or the person, government or organization is inside or outside Canada" (Carver 2016).

Nevertheless, the active intervention from long term activists, as well as the backfire the cancellation generated among activists from other movements, enabled PYM to secure another venue for the event, which was attended by activists and long-term community organizers.

The above-mentioned incident is not an isolated event: it exemplifies the ongoing strategies of the multilayered and relatively unified efforts from the Zionist and state-led counter-movements to silence Palestinian resistance voices, and to prevent them from having a platform to inform, build networks, and forge solidarity. Counter-movements are “networks of individuals and organizations that share many of the same objects of concern as the social movements that they oppose. They make competing claims on the state on matters of policy and politics and vie for attention from the mass media and the broader public” (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996, 1632). Counter-movements seek to strengthen their position in the field, increase their capital, and constrain their opponents. The position-taking of counter-movements within the field provides us with insights into their relationships with the BDS movement. The mutually configuring relations between the BDS and its counter-movements, at the transnational, national, and local levels, shape the trajectory of the BDS movement in Toronto, showing how it weakens the movement’s organizational capacity while simultaneously opening new political configurations and coalition possibilities. The aim of this chapter is to investigate the impact of counter-movements on Palestinian solidarity movements in Toronto, and more specifically the BDS movement.

The pressure that activists supporting the Palestinian cause have endured has intensified alongside the increased visibility of Palestine solidarity activities over the years, specifically around the activities related to the BDS movement. Toronto, in fact, was identified as a “hub of delegitimization” by the Zionist think tank Reut Institute (2010). The cancellation of the PYM

event is significant and demonstrates three ways that counter movements affect Palestinian solidarity movements. First, counter-movements can exert pressure on institutions to enact bureaucratic barriers that force the delay or cancelation of Palestinian solidarity events, and more generally, to intimidate or instill fear among potential participants in the solidarity events. Second, the framing of a political cultural event as “anti-Semitic” or as “promoting terrorism” distorts the image of the Palestinian struggle amongst the general public and discourages them from participating. Third, the cancellation of events and the rationale that justifies these terminations reproduce Orientalist representations of Palestinians as “terrorists” and “hate promoters.” In addition, Zionist counter-movements systematically lobby to design laws that criminalize dissent against Israel. Counter-movements infiltrate organizations and public institutions, cut or deny funding, and prohibit access to physical space; they instill fear among supporters, and criminalize free speech (Palestine Legal 2018; The Lobby 2018). Their tools of silencing the Palestinian movement are deployed in material and discursive ways, by either denying a platform for activists supporting Palestinian rights, or by demonizing them and accusing them of hate speech, of anti-Semitism, and of promoting terrorism. As a result, counter-movement strategies have the potential to exacerbate the fragmentation among activists and activist groups. Counter-movements’ tactics also include political lobbying and funding politicians who support their agendas (Palestine Legal 2018; The Lobby 2018).

To understand the relational dynamics that configure the BDS movement and the Zionist counter-movements, one must examine how these dynamics play out at the local, national and transnational levels. For example, an analysis of the changes in local and transnational fields is necessary to understand how the position-taking of a movement and its counter-movements, strengthen or weaken solidarity relations. The transnational/ transborder nature of both the BDS

movement and the Zionist counter-movement—which is also formed of multiple movements with diverse political ideologies—requires a multiscalar approach to study the interactions of the fields. Nation-bound analysis results in a blindness of social processes at other scales. The transnational field, riddled with contentious politics makes any change at one scale reverberate into other scales.⁶⁷ The shifting nature of field boundaries allows the concept of the field to be used in transnational contexts and not to be confined to methodological nationalism (Go and Krause 2016). For instance, in his analysis of British Jewish groups critical of Israel, David Landy (2015) argues that British Jews are embedded in two interacting fields: The local Jewish religious field in Britain and the transnational “Palestinian field” (2015, 264), which include the Palestinians living in historic Palestine and in the *shatat*. In the first, Jewish critics of Israel have little cultural capital since the field is dominated by Zionists. Their political tourism to occupied Palestine grants them new cultural capital and transforms their social position within the local Jewish field in Britain, as they become expert witnesses of the atrocities of occupation. Their newly gained capital repositions their status and grants them more power in their dealing with the Zionist players in the local Jewish field. Therefore, the interaction between local and transnational fields effectively shifts the position of the British Jewish critics of Israel.

Following Landy’s analysis, this chapter analyzes the multi-scalar interactions between the BDS movement in Toronto and its political antagonists. The BDS in Toronto is embedded in a political field along with other Palestinian solidarity groups, Jewish anti-Zionist groups, such as *Independent Jewish Voices* and *If Not Now*, anti-settler colonialism groups, such as indigenous groups, and the Zionist movements. This field also intersects with other self-differentiated fields,

⁶⁷ “Fielding transnationalism” or “transnationalizing fields”, as Go and Krause (2016,7) call it, has been used in several recent transnational studies. See for instance *The Sociological Review Monographs special issue 2016*.

such as the journalistic field, composed of mainstream, alternative, and other ethnic-centric media, both in print and digital forms. The legal field is occupied by the text of Canadian law, legal institutions, associations, and personnel, as well as the local and the international institutions that lobby for legal changes. These fields are intersecting: They mutually constitute one another through ever-changing relations within and across fields. It is within these intersecting fields that tactics, strategies, actors, identities, and groups shape and are being shaped in relation to each other (Bourdieu 2002; Emirbayer and Johnson 2008). Agents (in movements and counter-movements) are embedded in numerous fields at local (Toronto), national (Canada), and transnational levels that interact with each other and impact the boundaries of the field at each scale. Therefore, my analysis is centered on the multiscalar interaction between the fields, rather than within a specific field.

This chapter argues that Zionist counter-movements have significantly curtailed the efforts and shrunk the resources of the BDS in Toronto, while simultaneously galvanizing new solidarity relations in response to Zionist oppression. The Zionist counter-movements are also deeply entangled with the architecture of surveillance both in Canada and globally. In Toronto, like most other places in Canada, the architecture of surveillance and oppression of Palestinians is multifaceted and multiscalar, and it is designed and implemented in different forms by the Zionist groups, governmental institutions, the legislative and legal system, the media, the educational institutions, and the police. Suppression strategies are multifarious: installing fear among current and potential activists, passing legislation to criminalize Palestinian activism, and falsely accusing activists of hate crimes and anti-Semitism. After 9/11, global surveillance has escalated transnationally, and counter-movements mobilizing Islamophobic and Arabophobic sentiments, including those against the Palestinians (Bazian 2015). Razack (2008) discusses the

strengthening of orientalist discourses that accuse Arabs/Muslim bodies of attacking Western modernity. Therefore, movements in solidarity with the Palestinians find themselves in regular battle with counter movements, and with different state apparatuses and institutions.

The success of counter movements in curbing the progress of the BDS movement is the result of a long and complex process that is hard to assess. Globally, anti-BDS measures have been implemented in many western countries (Palestine Legal 2019). The ability of the Zionist movement to successfully lobby these nations and promote the implementation of anti-BDS laws demonstrates the capacity of these counter movements to place significant constraints on Palestine solidarity movements. This rest of the chapter proceeds in two parts. First, it discusses the historic influence of Zionist organizations and their allies in Toronto and Canada. Then the chapter discusses how the Zionists lobbied various Toronto Council members to ban Al Quds day, the annual global protest against Israel's occupation. After failing to criminalize Al Quds day, the City of Toronto adopted a resolution that placed bureaucratic and financial barriers on the organizers of the event. The second part of this chapter discusses the ongoing transnational Zionist attempts to associate anti-Israel discourses with anti-Semitism by enacting a law that equates anti-Semitism with anti-Zionism, drawing on the definition promoted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). I discuss the localization of the global silencing of Palestinian activism, by discussing the role of the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism- CPCCA in advancing the IHRA definition, thereby illuminating the entanglement between the institutionalization of counter movements in Canada and the international counter movement landscape, which in turn galvanized Palestinian solidarity.

Dominance of the Zionist lobby in Canadian political field

Zionist groups have a long and entrenched history in Canada, dating back to the birth of the global Zionist movement. The formation of B’Nai B’rith in Toronto as a fraternal student religious organization in 1875, and of six Zionist organizations in Montreal between 1898 and 1900 initiated Canada’s support to the formation of Israel (Hilal 1970). These Canadian organizations focused their activities on fundraising to encourage Zionist settlement in historic Palestine, so that by 1912, the highest per capita funding of Zionist settlements originated in Canadian based organizations (ibid., 96). Fundraising activities intensified after the Balfour Declaration that promised the formation of a Zionist state. Since then, the Canadian Zionist organizations –mainly based in Montreal, Toronto, and Manitoba— participated in the World Zionist Congress, contributed to fundraising for Zionist settlements in historic Palestine, and lobbied the Canadian government to facilitate the formation of Israel (*ibid*).

The growth of Zionism in the political field in Canada in general, and in Toronto and other main Canadian cities in particular, continued until the aftermath of the 1967 war. In the aftermath, the Canada-Israel Committee (CIC) — an alliance between B’nai B’rith, the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC), and the Canadian Zionist Organization (Goldberg 1990; Freeman-Maloy 2019a, 2019b)— became the main Zionist body advocating for Israel’s interests in Canada, building strong relations with public institutions, media outlets, and Canadian political parties (Goldberg 1990). They grew without much opposition until the formation of CAF in Toronto, and with the rise of anti-imperialist leftist groups in the country. The struggle between movement and counter-movements became more visible in the early 2000s.

Zionist organizations have built strong alliances with civil society organizations. For instance, there is a long-term funding relationship between United Church of Canada and Zionist organizations, which has forced United Church to surrender to Zionist pressures, as was the case at the PYM event described above. In fact, the then Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) —which merged in 2004 with other Zionist groups— and B’nai Brith signed a funding agreement with United Church in 1973, and succeeded in curtailing the United Church’s vocal support for the Palestinian right to return and its criticism of the Israeli occupation. The story of these challenges is contained in the United Church’s magazine *The Observer* (Engler 2019; Hilal 1978; Rodman 2020; personal interviews). In this way, the CJC was able to limit the expansion of Palestinian supporters by limiting their economic capital.

The failure of the peace process between the PLO and Israel and the violent suppression of the second intifada (2000-2002) in occupied Palestine triggered increasing Palestine solidarity sentiments and responses across Canada. As a result, and in an attempt to regain its hegemonic dominance on the Canadian (and by extension Torontonion) political field, a major restructuring took place within Canadian Zionist organizations.⁶⁸ The United Israel Appeal Federation Canada (UIAFC) formed an “emergency cabinet” to increase funding to Israel’s advocates, curtail growing anti-Israel sentiments (Oakland 2003), and to create a new governing council that would oversee the work of CIC and CJC named “the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs” in 2004

⁶⁸ A major symbolic victory for the Palestine solidarity in Canada was the cancellation of Israel’s former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu scheduled event at Concordia University in Montreal in 2002. Massive demonstrations and instances of violence took place, with participants from Quebec, Ottawa, and Toronto, and included activists belong to a myriad of movements (Freeman-Maloy 2019a; Personal interviews). In late 2002, the Centrale des syndicats du Quebec (CSQ) called for boycotting Israeli products (Freeman-Maloy 2019), and the United Church proposed a boycott of Israeli products and divestment from Israeli companies (personal interviews).

(Freeman-Maloy 2019). This new strategy emerged in direct response to the heightened visibility and increased social position attained by the BDS and other Palestinian solidarity groups in Toronto and in other cities in Canada. The merger solidified the political and social capital of the Zionists within the political field. The new naming—CIJA— was a deliberate attempt at equating Jewish and Israel advocacy, thus suggesting that Israel represents the Jewish population (personal interviews).

In order to further strengthen their social position vis-à-vis the surge in Palestinian solidarity activism and in Jewish anti-Zionist resistance, CIJA and other Zionist organizations located in Toronto —such as B’nai B’rith, Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre FSWC, Herut Canada, and the Jewish Defence League—pushed to enhance their economic and social capital. Freeman-Maloy (2019b) documents the million dollars of funding that campus advocates received in the early months of 2000, through the National Jewish Campus Life (NJCL) initiative organized by UIAFC. The funding of Zionist advocates and organizations was done either directly through monetary donations or through organizing fully paid training trips to Israel, or by appointing consultants to help advocate for the Zionist agenda. Zionist groups also strengthened their links with influential politicians. For instance, CIJA arranged paid trips to Canadian MPs to Israel, and continues to cultivate strong connections with over 600 influential Canadians (Bueckert 2020).

From a Bourdieusian perspective, the dominant position of Zionist organizations within the political field in Toronto —and in Canada in general— is secured by their strong social, cultural, and economic capital, and by their conformity to the logic of the political field, which has a settler colonial logic. The interaction between the Zionist counter-movements, the BDS movement, other Palestinian solidarity movements, and Jewish non-Zionist organizations in

Toronto shape the political dynamics that influence solidarity with the BDS. Both the agents — Zionist and anti-Zionist organizations— fight for legitimacy and other forms of capital within the political field in Toronto. As the impact of the BDS movement in Toronto became noticeable, the Zionist counter-movements adopted tools to limit the BDS expansion by pressuring institutions to create bureaucratic barriers to the Palestinian events, by falsely accusing BDS activists of anti-Semitism, by installing fears of expressing solidarity with the BDS. For instance, some activists are afraid of retaliation and vilification, and the impact of being identified as a pro-Palestinian advocate on their future, as Talia, a feminist activist person of color informed me. Other institutions and NGOs —some working within a social justice platform for marginalized communities —do not openly support any Palestine solidarity causes or events for fear of government defunding (personal interviews). Simultaneously, some activists became more vocal as a consequence of the repression of Palestine solidarity movement (*ibid*). In other words, the increased Zionist pressure led to paradoxical effect – both limiting solidarity relations and extending and creating new ones.

Silencing the challengers- Attempts to Ban Al Quds day

Zionist organizations and their allies adopt many strategies to restrain the work of Palestine solidarity movements. They use their strong economic and social capital within the political field in Toronto to curb the expansion and prevent the visibility of Palestine solidarity events in the city. The repressive measures taken against Palestine solidarity events in universities, institutions, on the streets, in the media, and in the government are well documented (McCaskell 2016; Ziadah 2013; personal interviews). For instance, in 2011, Toronto city officials made

several attempts to prohibit Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA) from participating in the Pride march at the world's largest pride parade, arguing that QuAIA violated the city's anti-discrimination policy by accusing Israel of committing Apartheid (McCaskell 2016, Kouri-Towe 2015, Ziadah 2013, personal interviews). The Mayor of Toronto at the time, Rob Ford, threatened to withdraw city funding from the Pride parade if QuAIA was allowed to participate. This debate continued until 2013. Responding to these critiques depleted QuAIA's resources and diverted the organization's attention away from advocacy and recruitment. In this way, the dominant logic of settler colonialism, via Zionist organizations and their allies within the Toronto City Council, limited the expansion of QuAIA.

A more recent example is the attempt to ban and criminalize Al-Quds day, an annual commemoration day against the occupation of Palestine. Al Quds-day occurs on the last Friday of Ramadan, the fasting month in Islam. It was originally initiated by Imam Khomeini, the supreme leader of Iran in 1979, and it is celebrated in more than a hundred cities around the globe. In Toronto, about 2500 protestors join Al Quds day every year, except in 2014, when the number rose to close to 25,000 participants protesting the war on Gaza. Since 2017, the Zionists have lobbied City officials to ban Al-Quds day. On 19 September 2017, City Councilor James Pasternak sent an administrative inquiry to the city of Toronto, inquiring about viable options to ban "hate sponsored rallies such as Al Quds day." In his inquiry, he specifically asked about the resources that either the Toronto Police Service or the City of Toronto more generally could deploy to stop these rallies. The query mentions other "hate rallies" such as the white supremacist and the neo-Nazi rallies, but deliberately names Al Quds day in its title, and accuses its speakers of "making anti-Semitic and anti-Christian remarks, spreading hatred, inciting violence, and supporting of terrorist organizations such as Hamas" (Pasternak 2017).

Although the inquiry was framed as an attempt to prevent a “hate rally”, it raises suspicions on delegitimizing the burgeoning anti-Israel sentiment in the city. The explicit equation of anti-occupation events with white supremacists’ mobilization, and the demonization and delegitimization of Al Quds day are effective tactics employed by Zionist counter-movements in this field. Al Quds day, along with other Palestinian solidarity events, threaten the hegemony and discursive dominance of Zionist —and their allies—in the political field in Toronto, and challenges the dominant settler colonial doxa of the field. It radically opposes the colonization of occupied Palestine and enlists many anti-racist, anti-imperialist, and indigenous groups. The dominant actors in the field try to protect it from the access and infiltration of other agents and alternative discourse positions (Ancelovici 2019; Ray 1999; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

Counter-movements to Al Quds day include a coalition of Zionist groups, right-wing Hindu supremacist groups and white supremacist such as Wolves of Odin (a Soldiers of Odin splinter group), Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident (PEDIGA), Riders of the Covenant, Jewish Defense League (Engels 2019; personal interviews). Opponents to Al Quds day also include influential politicians, such as Ontario Premier Doug Ford, who tweeted, on 10th June 2018 (three days after his election) “Our government will take action to ensure that events like Al Quds Day, which calls for the killing of an entire civilian population in Israel, are no longer part of the landscape in Ontario. Blatantly racist or anti-Semitic ideology should never be permitted on the grounds of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, or anywhere else in our province” (@Fordnation). Right wing media demonized the rally, describing it as “anti-Israel venom” (Levy 2019; Engels 2019).

The City of Toronto consulted many groups on the issue, including constitutional and charter rights scholars, Toronto police, the city solicitor, the deputy city manager, representatives of the Ministry of the Attorney General of Ontario, human rights groups, Zionist groups, and Palestinian supporters, including many BDS activists. Eighteen months after the original administrative inquiry, Toronto city staff advised the committee that “the City did not identify any additional capacity to prevent public gatherings that promote hate and incite discrimination from taking place on City property” (City of Toronto 2019; personal interviews). Toronto police denied that any hate crimes took place at Al-Quds day. In a letter to the city clerk dated October 17, 2017, the acting inspector of Toronto Police service, Anthony Paoletta, explains that “these events —referring to Al Quds day and other controversial demonstrations— are protected under Section 2 the Charter as a fundamental freedom. Fundamental freedoms include freedom of expression, freedom of religion, freedom of thought, freedom of belief, freedom of peaceful assembly, and freedom of association.” Put differently, protestors at the Al Quds day are exercising their constitutional rights.

Pasternak rejected the report and referred it again to the City Manager on 21st March 2019 (City of Toronto 2019a). Three weeks later, the executive director of People, Equity and Human rights re-affirmed the assessment of Toronto Police and reiterated the absence of hate allegations at Al Quds day (City of Toronto 2019b). He also confirmed the City’s obligation to respect the fundamentals freedoms identified by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (*ibid*).

The attempt to cancel Al Quds Day did not stop there. After attempting to delegitimize the event, Pasternak advanced a resolution on May 1, 2019 that “City Council request the Toronto Police Services Board to request the Toronto Police Service to review procedures on

collecting evidence of hate crimes at rallies, and to review procedures for individuals to report hate crimes, and to review again the events of the 2018 Al Quds Day rally to determine whether a hate crime occurred” (City of Toronto 2019c). The resolution also requested that the organizers pay all the financial expenses incurred by the City and by Toronto Police in carrying any investigations related to hate speech. This resolution was adopted unanimously on May 14, 2019, two weeks before the planned Al Quds day (June 1, 2019). Organizers of Al Quds day refused to comply, and pursued their annual event without permission, like most other protests in town.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, Al-Quds day organizers were forging support with long-term activists from other social movements to advance their claims and to defend the event. The demonization, vilification, and efforts to silence Al Quds day failed since the city of Toronto is obliged to respect the constitutional rights of protestors. However, the Zionist counter-movements and its allies within the City Council found alternative ways to impose obstacles by delaying the administrative and bureaucratic processes, and imposing financial expenses on Al-Quds day organizers. In doing so, the City Council treated this social justice and human rights event as if it were a for-profit corporate event or festival.

Toronto’s political field is embedded within the national and the transnational political fields. At the national and transnational level, the process of delegitimizing and discrediting anti-Israel narratives and actions has taken a legal turn in the last decade, in part through the increasing legitimacy of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism, which conflates it with anti-Zionism. The next section provides a history of this conflation, and an analysis of the impact of IHRA in silencing Palestinian and anti-Israel dissent. As discussed above, it will go beyond the

⁶⁹ In 2020 and 2021, and due to the pandemic and the imposed lockdown, Al-Quds day was celebrated virtually.

nation- and state-centric analyses of the field, since both Palestine solidarity movements and Zionist counter-movements are transnational in nature. Therefore, the dynamics at the transnational political fields shape and are shaped by the dynamics within Canada.

Conflating anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism

Among the many strategies deployed to silence Palestinian solidarity voices —such as the voices of BDS activists— the Zionist counter-movements, along with the support of the Zionist state and its allies, has sought to conflate anti-Semitism with anti-Zionism, so that any criticism of Israeli policies would be automatically framed as anti-Semitism, a hate crime, and an act of discrimination against the Jews. One tool deployed is the new definition of anti-Semitism promoted globally by the IHRA. This section problematizes the IHRA definition by arguing that the Zionist strategy to legalize and institutionalize the conflation between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism aims to suppress any legitimate critique of Zionist settler colonialism and its oppressive policies, while crafting an image of Israel as the “sole representative of Jewish people.” The recent adoption of this definition of anti-Semitism by several Western countries, including Canada, constitutes an operationalization of this strategy.⁷⁰ This section also aims to illuminate the instrumental role played by the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism in advancing the definition of IHRA and equating anti-Semitism with anti-Zionism.

⁷⁰ The following states endorsed the IHRA definition at the national level (sorted chronologically): United Kingdom; Israel; Austria; Romania; Germany; Bulgaria; Lithuania; North Macedonia; Netherlands; Slovakia; Belgium; Slovenia; Moldova; Canada; Luxembourg; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Hungary; Greece; France; United States; Italy; Sweden; Uruguay; Serbia; Argentina; Spain; Albania; Guatemala; Philippines; Estonia; South Korea; Poland; Australia. For more information, please consult the IHRA website (IHRA n.d.)

The IHRA definition

On May 26, 2016, the IHRA issued a policy-oriented, non-legally binding (Bindman 2019; Gould 2018) working definition for anti-Semitism, describing it as “a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities” (IHRA website, n.d). This vague and unrigorous definition was followed by eleven examples that, according to the IHRA, illustrate anti-Semitism. Examples of anti-Semitism, according to the IHRA definition, include

“manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic” (IHRA website, n.d).

and

“denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a state of Israel is a racist endeavor” (*ibid*)

and

“drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis” (*ibid*).

A wave of criticism and protest took place after the IHRA definition was adopted in several countries. There were three main critiques of the definition. First, the definition allows those who use it to shut down criticism of Israel and to silence Palestinian solidarity movements (Gould 2020; IJV n.d; Karasik 2019; Palestine Solidarity Legal Support 2019; Keefer 2010). Second, in its conflation between Israel and Jews, the IHRA equates Zionism with Judaism. It portrays Jewish people as a monolithic group represented by the state of Israel. It also connects

the issue of Jewish self-determination to the existence of the state of Israel, and in this sense, it justifies Israeli colonialism, apartheid, and genocide as the fulfilment of Jewish self-determination. Third, the IHRA definition turns anti-Semitism into an exception, unrelated to other manifestations of racism and discrimination (Karasik 2019). In this way, the definition isolates movements that fight anti-Semitism and prevents them from forming possible coalitions with other anti-racist movements.

Although the IHRA definition is not legally binding in most of the countries where it is adopted, it has been used as an effective tool to suppress Palestinian activism and anti-Israeli narratives, particularly when used by political institutions. For instance, in December 2019, the then American president, Donald Trump, signed an executive order extending title VI of the civil rights act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, colour, and nationality, to include this new definition of anti-Semitism, effectively cutting all federal funding to organizations that, following this definition, are seen as anti-Semitic. In Toronto, B'nai Brith accused Dr. Faisal Bhabha—a professor of human rights law at Osgoode Hall at York University—of anti-Semitism using the IHRA definition (IJV 2020).

The establishment and expansion of the IHRA definition should also be understood in the context of the increasing Pro-Palestinian transnational awareness and resistance unfolding in the early 2000's: an increase in anti-Israel sentiments following Israel's atrocities towards the Palestinians, and an increase in action-oriented global resistance against Israel. Therefore, from the Zionist perspective, there was reason to condemn anti-Israel activism by manufacturing laws that would equate anti-Zionism, anti-Israelism, and anti-Semitism, and that would criminalize criticism of Israel as a "hate crime."

IHRA in Canada

The transnational nature of both the BDS movement and the Zionist counter-movements requires a close analysis of the interaction between the local and the transnational fields in their mutually constituting capacity. The previous section discussed the ongoing attempts to equate anti-Semitism with anti-Zionism, as a strategy to silence supporters of Palestinian liberation. In this section, special attention will be given to the role of Canada in supporting the IHRA, since the definition's inception globally to the actual adoption of the definition.

In June 2019, Canada released a new anti-racism strategy called “Building a Foundation for Change: Canada’s Anti-Racism Strategy 2019–2022.” The strategy aimed to offer equal opportunities for Canadians, regardless of race and religion (Canadian Heritage 2019). In this strategy, the Canadian government adopted the IHRA definition in characterizing anti-Semitism. Similar to other countries, the reception of the IHRA in Canada has been controversial. Zionist movements and their allies welcomed its adoption, considering it a step towards addressing anti-Semitism. The Independent Jewish Voices Canada (IJV) led the battle against the IHRA definition, framing it as a political tool to criminalize Palestinian solidarity rather than an instrument that would address real anti-Semitism (IJV, No IHRA, n.d). The IJV organized rallies, petition processes, lobbying campaigns, and educational events. Since anti-Semitism is a form of racism against the Jews, IJV’s position is that anti-Semitism should be fought along with other anti-racist movements, including anti-Palestinian racism. Through the efforts of IJV and Palestinian solidarity groups, and arguing that the IHRA working definition posed significant threats to free speech, three of Canada’s largest cities—Calgary, Vancouver, and Montreal—declined to adopt it.

CPCCA (Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism)- 2009-2011.

In 2002, along with the rise of grassroots opposition to the Israeli policies, an Inter-parliamentary Coalition for Combating Antisemitism (ICCA)—an international coalition of parliamentarians from different countries around the world— was co-founded by Canadian Professor Irwin Cotler, Israel’s Deputy Foreign Minister Rabbi Michael Melchier, and former Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden Per Ahlmark (Keefer 2010). Then, in February 2009, the ICCA met in London, England, for a conference organized in partnership with the British government. The conference was funded by the Rubin Foundation of London and by the UK Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (Keefer 2010, 27), with the aim of combating new forms of “anti-Semitism” globally.⁷¹

The Canadian delegation team to the ICCA meeting in England was formed under the leadership of the then Citizenship and Immigration Minister, Jason Kenney, the international steering committee chair, Professor Irwin Cotler, and included other eleven Canadian parliamentarians. They signed The London Declaration on Combating Anti-Semitism, which calls on governments around the world to “face the problem of anti-Semitism, especially its manifestations in the media and academia” (London Declaration on Combating Anti-Semitism, as quoted in Keefer 2010, 12). Upon their return from the ICCA London conference, in March 2009, the Canadian delegates formed the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-

⁷¹ In that February conference, one of the steering committee members, Yuli Eldestein, the Israeli minister of Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs, said: We must repeat it a gain and again these basic facts - TO BE ‘anti-Israel’ IS TO BE ANTISEMITIC. TO BOYCOTT ISRAEL, ISRAELI PROFESSORS AND ISRAELI business, these are political acts, these are acts of hate, acts of anti-Semitism! Anti-Israel hysteria is anti-Semitism hysteria. They are one and the same (as quoted in Keefer 2010, 15- capital letters in original).

The words of the Israeli minister reflect the accusation of anti-Semitism for the burgeoning BDS movement.

Semitism (CPCCA) in order to fight anti-Semitism at home. The Bloc Quebecois has since withdrawn from the Coalition after accusing CPCCA of refusing to hear opposing viewpoints (CJPME 2010; Keefer 2010).⁷²

Between November 2009 and January 2010, the CPCCA was open to the public's comments. Members of religious groups, NGOs, police departments, and universities —from Canada and elsewhere, including Israel— were invited to provide input. The CPCCA received more than one hundred and fifty submissions, but some groups and scholars who were vocal in their criticism of Israel's policies were denied participation. Most notable among these omissions were the Canadian Arab Federation (CAF), the IJV, Canadians for Justice in the Middle East (CPJME), Faculty for Palestine, Educators for Peace and Justice, and the Canada Palestine Support Network (Keefer 2010).⁷³ In contrast, mainstream Zionist groups such as B'nai Brith Canada, Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies, and the Canadian Jewish Congress were amply heard (Keefer 2010; Kester- D'Amours 2011).

The CPCCA's emergence as a self-constituted parliamentary coalition —without the authority of the Parliament of Canada—its public hearing that alienated important stakeholders

⁷² The CPCCA was self-constituted (Keefer 2010), and does not operate within the country's parliamentary structure, thus it has not been obliged to transparently disclose its funding sources (Geddes 2011). It organized an international conference in Ottawa in 2011, for which it received a grant from Canada's Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration worth \$451,280 (Briemberg and Campbell 2010; Geddes 2011). The grant, in addition to another \$127,078 from undisclosed private donors, were paid to the Parliamentary Center (Geddes 2011), a registered Canadian NGO that purports to "support the development of inclusive democratic institutions and practices in legislatures, civil society groups and political parties at home and throughout the world." The role of this pre-existing NGO was to organize the conference.

⁷³ Professor Michael Keefer combines the responses of all organizations that were denied testimony in his book "Anti-Semitism Real and Imagined. Responses to the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism".

and scholars who are critical of Israel's policies, and its recommendation to equate the definition of anti-Semitism with criticism of Israel, suggest that the coalition's main objective was to silence criticism of Israel. Keefer (2010) argues that the CPCCA aimed "to create a climate of opinion—in parliament, the judiciary, and the police, as well as among the public at large"—(7) that criminalizes criticism of Israeli's policies as inciting hate, and that may be penalized under Canadian criminal code (section 319) and the Canadian Human Rights Act (Act 13.1).

Independent Jewish Voices went further, arguing, "the CPCCA is an anti-democratic, anti-free-speech inquiry that produces a new form of McCarthyism" (Independent Jewish Voices, 2010).

The CPCCA's Ottawa conference was arranged at a time when Palestinian solidarity in Canada was particularly active on campuses and in the streets. In fact, as explained earlier, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the state of Israel proclaimed Toronto to be one of the most active cities for BDS activism in 2009. Canadian Prime Minister Steven Harper attended the Ottawa conference. In his speech, he clearly articulated that anti-Israel rhetoric and political activities are anti-Semitism:

When Israel, the only country in the world whose very existence is under attack, is consistently and conspicuously singled out for condemnation, I believe we are morally obligated to take a stand. Demonization, double standards, de-legitimization, the three D's, it is the responsibility of us all to stand up to them (Galloway 2010, n.d).

He then added:

Harnessing disparate anti-American, anti-Semitic and anti-Western ideologies, it targets the Jewish people by targeting the Jewish homeland, Israel, as the source of injustice and conflict in the world and uses, perversely, the language of human rights to do so... We must be relentless in exposing this new anti-Semitism for what it is (Galloway 2010).

The final CPCCA report was released on 7 July 2011. It recommended the adoption of the European Union Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia's (EUMC) definition of anti-

Semitism, which was proclaimed in 2005 and which entailed, “any acts or attitudes that are based on the perception of a social subject (individual, group, institution, or state) as “the (‘deceitful’, ‘corrupt’, ‘conspiratorial’, etc.) Jew” (EUMC 2005, 13). In May 2016, the IHRA would further advance the EUMC’s definition, and add eleven examples of what they described as falling into the category of anti-Semitism. Seven of these examples are directly related to condemning, vilifying, and even criminalizing, Israel’s critics. Borrowing from the testimony of Irwin Cotler, the co-founder of ICCA and CPCCA, the report states that anti-Semitism in Canada is manifested in “marches...under the protective cover of the United Nations, under the banner of human rights, and under the struggle against racism itself” (CPCCA 2011, 15). This was a clear though implicit condemnation of the BDS movement, which was not named, since the movement operates under the banner of international law and the framing of human rights.

The report adds that “Criticism of Israel is not antisemitic and saying so is wrong. But singling Israel out for selective condemnation and opprobrium —let alone denying its right to exist or seeking its destruction— is discriminatory and hateful, and not saying so is dishonest” (CPCCA 2011, 8). This comment specifically targets activists working for Palestinian rights since they focus particularly on the genocidal and discriminatory practices of Israel.

The CPCCA commend “the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for passing a motion condemning Israeli Apartheid Week and recommend that Canadian politicians openly condemn Israeli Apartheid Week on campus and the intimidation that it creates” (CPCCA 2011, 60). Although the report mentions that the committee respects free speech, it describes IAW events as “discourse, events, and speakers which are untrue, harmful, or not in the interest of academic discourse” (CPCCA 2011, 67). Therefore, the CPCCA portrays activism against settler colonialism and in favour of Palestinian rights as anti-Semitic, and as such, as a form of racism

that should be criminalized as hate crime. Critics of the CPCCA report focused on its violation of free speech, on misrepresenting all Jews as supporters of Israel and its policies, and on its inability to address real anti-Semitism (IJV 2011; CJPME 2011). In addition, Canadian activists and lawyers highlighted the existence of hate crime laws in Canada, which prosecute and punish any racist and hate crime activities, including anti-Semitic activities.⁷⁴

Conclusion

This chapter argued that the dynamics between the Zionist counter-movements and the Palestinian movements are dynamic and fluid, and take various legal, discursive, and institutional forms. These forms are often steeped in orientalist discourses and translate into mechanisms of erasure of Palestinians and their supporters. However, these strategies often have paradoxical outcomes: While they successfully silence Palestinian narratives of resistance through intimidation, fear, vilification, and retaliation, they also compel the emergence of new forms of resistance and opportunities for coalition building.

⁷⁴ For instance, Criminal Code section 319 states that:

319 (1) Everyone who, by communicating statements in any public place, incites hatred against any identifiable group where such incitement is likely to lead to a breach of the peace is guilty of

- (a) an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years; or
- (b) an offence punishable on summary conviction.

Marginal note: Wilful promotion of hatred

(2) Everyone who, by communicating statements, other than in private conversation, wilfully promotes hatred against any identifiable group is guilty of

- (a) an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years; or
- (b) an offence punishable on summary conviction. (Justice laws website, 2020)

Deploying a multi-scalar analysis of the interaction between the local and transnational fields that frame the BDS movement, the chapter demonstrates the mutually constitutive relations that shape the BDS and the Zionist counter movements. The interaction between the local and transnational fields, and the shifting boundaries between these fields, shape the positioning of the BDS and its counter-movements, through either limiting their expansion and weakening their legitimacy and resources, or through solidifying their position and strengthening relationships in reaction to this demonization.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This dissertation began by telling the story of how the BDS movement in Toronto started to fragment and weaken in 2012, after a number of years of increasing momentum and solidarity. Events became smaller and less frequent, factions developed, recruitment of new members became harder, community institutions became fragmented, and spaces like Beit Zatoun closed. This project shows how endogenous and exogenous dynamics facilitated, and foreclosed, the possibility of building sustained solidarity. The BDS movement in Toronto, composed of a multiplicity of identities, movements, political imaginaries, and ideologies, launched many global campaigns, strengthened old solidarity relations, and initiated new ones. This movement was a distinctive experiment igniting the imagination of multiple generations of activists across movements, and involving different levels of engagement. The BDS movement was compelling in the way that it encompassed such a range of political imaginaries, and different forms of activism. This diversity was simultaneously a source of its strength and its weakness. The BDS's embrace of these multiple imaginaries and tactics demonstrated its political commitment to social justice issues across a wide spectrum of struggles that went far beyond the Palestinian struggle, and therefore, it opened new possibilities for alliances that challenged systems of oppression. This richness was also a source of tension between activists and groups, who tended to exercise pressure to dominate and to exclude those who had a different political vision, or solidarity praxis.

This research examined solidarity dynamics in Toronto, using a relational analysis of political fields at the local, national, and transnational scale. Through deploying the Bourdieusian theory of practice, with its triad concepts of field, capital, and habitus, the dissertation analyzed

the spaces of contention in which the BDS is embedded, by specifically focusing on the battlefield within the field, where the various actors work to dominate the field by strengthening their position-taking, their capital and their logics.

The dissertation advanced several arguments: The fragmentation of the BDS movement in Toronto reflected larger transformations in the local and the transnational political fields that shape multi-sited transnational movements. In the words of one of my informants “Earlier, we can find BDS events everywhere around us. Now, we have to look for these events” (personal interview). This trajectory was shaped by an interplay of dynamics, which were informed by ontological (political imaginaries), temporal (intergenerational), and institutional (community institutions) and agonistic (counter-movements) logics. I argue that sustained solidarity could be built when activists were able to turn the short-term solidarity practices that usually become visible at times of crisis (war for example), or at times of political milestones (elections for example), into sustained structural ones. This transformational work is usually performed by ongoing dialogue and conversations during ordinary non-eventful times (moments of non-accelerated temporal compression). As Francesca Polletta (2002) argues, “Freedom is an endless meeting”.

The research found that four different dynamics shaped sustained solidarity in the case of the BDS movement in Toronto.

The first is the multiplicity of activist political imaginaries. Chapter 2 specifically highlights the tensions, and the possibilities for solidarity emerging from divergent political imaginaries and political ideologies and their implications on the BDS movement in Toronto. These political imaginaries are rooted in the distinct conceptualizations and practices of political solidarity, both the revival of anti-colonial Third World internationalism, and the more pragmatic

rights-based approach. The first locates the struggle for Palestine within the tradition of struggles against colonialism, and builds on historical processes of Third World solidarity. The second is an approach that uses international law to advance Palestinian claims, without alienating the mainstream Canadian citizen. Tensions also arose from diverging political visions, and new political configurations develop out of converging interests.

The second finding is the significance of temporal dynamics. The changes in political contexts, the role of political generations, and the intergenerational (dis)continuities amongst activists in the political fields mattered. By challenging the linear assumption of temporality in theories of political generation, and by illuminating the influence of inherited values, ideas, and praxis from previous political generations, this dissertation suggests that an entangled temporality should be considered in the context of solidarity with Palestine, contesting the rupture nature of transformative events associated with the formation of new political generations. Adding a temporal dimension into the analysis allows activists to differentiate between transformative events, and continuity of ongoing social structures and relations. The incorporation of a temporal dimension to understanding sustained solidarity has theoretical and political implications: it illuminates the inherited values and ideas that the “War on Terror” generation received from the previous generations, i.e., the Oslo generation and the Revolution generation, and it challenges the reified boundaries that activists *themselves* build between generations. These boundaries limit the intergenerational collaboration, and the ability of the BDS to build sustained solidarity.

The third finding is the role of community institutions as providing fundamental infrastructure for sustained solidarity. While most activists recognized the importance of these bodies, the formation of member-funded community institutions constitutes a paradox for a

horizontalist grassroots social movement such as the BDS. Although community institutions have the potential of offering a space for networking, learning from the past, and building relations, the surveillance from the state and counter movements and vulnerabilities around funding constrain this potential. These institutions offer consistency, but this sometimes limits their ability to stay connected to grassroots activists, with new ideas, and tactics.

The final dynamic that shapes sustained solidarity is the influence of transnational, national and local counter-movements. This dissertation argued that the Zionist counter-movements use multiple tactics to weaken the BDS movement and to silence solidarity with the Palestinian struggle. These tactics are shaped by both the local and transnational scales, and they include vilification, and false accusations of anti-Semitism and hate crimes, leveraged to put bureaucratic pressure on Palestinian solidarity events. In recent years, the specific conflation of anti-Semitism with anti-Zionism created a fear among activists, and limited potential coalitions, but it simultaneously mobilized new political configurations.

The influence of these four dynamics on sustained solidarity within the BDS movement in Toronto raise questions about the conditions that make possible or hinder sustained solidarity more generally. These findings show that understanding the durability of solidarity amongst social movements requires an analysis of both exogenous and endogenous dynamics, temporality and the operation of multiple scales. Through a triangulated qualitative methodology that combined in-depth interviews, archival research, and participant observation, my research offered a novel understanding of the interplay of multilayered and multiscale endogenous and exogenous factors that shape the trajectory of the movement.

As a transnational multi-sited movement with a multiplicity of identities, ideologies, ethnicities, classes, gender and other markers of differences, the BDS movement in Toronto is not unique. While recognizing that each movement in each context has its particularities, those seeking to understand the dynamics of sustained solidarity can nevertheless benefit from this research.

First, the recognition of the way diverse ontologies and imaginaries influence taken-for-granted conceptions of solidarity that we rarely question is useful for those seeking to understand why coalitions amongst actors with different traditions, goals and cultures are so challenging. In recent years, new attention has been paid within social movement research on the role of the radical imagination, but there has been less work done on the interplay of different imaginaries within movements. Whether it's the solidarity in support of indigenous sovereignty on Turtle Island, or around struggles against gender-based violence, attention to the ways that diverse ontologies play out will offer insight.

Second, attention to temporality, in the form of political context, political generations, and the (dis)continuities amongst generations offers insight into why intergenerational solidarity can face difficulties and offer opportunities. The social movement literature is only beginning to engage with questions of temporality, and the incorporation of Mbembe's entangled temporalities and Mannheim's approach to political generations can help to illuminate the conditions that surround activist habitus and praxis. In an era of accumulating crisis, political generations and their component generational units may multiply, offering both opportunities and threats to sustained solidarity.

Third, the significance of community institutions, and their funding for sustaining solidarity contributes to a broader discussion about resources, and movement infrastructure. This work contributes to the social movement research on the importance of resources, and complicates it with a sensitivity to temporality, imaginaries and relations with states, by showing how these resources may both benefit and undermine sustained solidarity.

Fourth, the impact of counter-movements on solidarity dynamics offers great potential for scholars and activists seeking to understand contemporary movements. The research showed how these opponents influenced the movement through challenging its legitimacy and limiting its funding and finding ways to constrain its activity. Counter-movement research is growing, and these findings offer a way of articulating both a potential repertoire of counter-movement activity and its effects.

The Bourdieusian approach used in this research emphasizes the intertwined and relational endogenous and exogenous dynamics that shape movements. It allows the interplay between various factors, and their impact on activist knowledge (habitus), struggles for capital and the shaping of the fields in which social movements are embedded. The approach offers complexity and emphasizes context and relational conditions. However, it also offers insights that can be taken up by future researchers, looking at this, and other cases.

The project is one I am both theoretically and politically committed to produce knowledge that is simultaneously useful for academia and for advancing social justice. This dissertation bridges both academic theoretical work with the activist work, from its interest to the data collection to the future dissemination of knowledge. Some of the challenges analyzed are endogenous to the movement, giving the impression that some activists are conspiring against

themselves. Avery Kolers (2012) suggests that “to be in solidarity, it must be durable in the face of some counterfactual disagreement within the group over ends and means” (365). I find that some of the tensions among activists can be overcome if solidarity is understood as a process that necessitates a transformation of the self, and an acceptance of the movement without the need for a total consensus about the tools needed to achieve political goals. Perceived as a social justice pedagogy, this dissertation forces us to think about the practices that activists, organizers, and solidarity communities are involved in, and the strategies they collectively *should* deploy to be able to persist in the face of counter-movement pressure, and to learn from and about each other. Gaztambide-Fernandez (2012) differentiates between “to be in solidarity” and “to solidarize oneself with” (54). The former suggests a feeling of relationship that requires minimal to no action, while the latter describes the modifications that someone undertakes to show their true solidarity in action.

As an activist-researcher trying to bridge both academic and activist worlds, I understand the importance of engaging in reflexive practices to reflect on my own practices, my beliefs, my a priori knowledge, and their impact on the research process. Margaret Archer (2010) suggests that reflexivity is characterized by a “bending-back some thought upon the self,” (2) whereby the researcher engages in self-exploration by questioning the taken-for-granted assumptions they made throughout the research process. They do this by interrogating their self-motivations, their theoretical assumptions, their relations with the research and the research subjects, their relation within the academic and the activist fields, as well as the way both the academic and the activist fields shape each other. and by unveiling power relations throughout the process. In addition to the reflexivity, an activist-researcher stands at the borderline of both the academic and the

activist field, which necessitates a reflection on how the boundaries of each of these fields are being shaped by the research.

I completed the fieldwork in August 2019, after which major political events occurred in Toronto and in the world, with major implications for the BDS movement. The threat of expulsion of eight families from Sheikh Jarrah in Jerusalem in May 2021 initiated a Palestinian uprising during May-July 2021. This “Unity” uprising mobilized the Palestinians holders of the Israeli citizenship, in West Bank and Gaza, and in the *shatat*. The general strike on May 18, 2021 saw the highest levels of participation since the Oslo Accords (AlJazeera 2021). New formations are emerging in Palestine and the *shatat*, such as the emergence of youth-led and feminist groups.⁷⁵ In Toronto, the counter-movement attempts to silence the BDS movement have accelerated. At the University of Toronto, there was a decision to rescind a job offer to Professor Valentina Azarova due to her criticism of Israel. At the Toronto District School Board, an anti-oppression educator Javier Davilla who distributed information on the difference between anti-Semitism and criticism of Israel was suspended. These and other incidents in the city (such as the lawsuits against the catering company Foodbenders), create both a sense of fear, and increased opportunity for solidarity.⁷⁶ Despite all the forces against it, the BDS movement is regaining strength in Toronto, offering hope for the future of sustained solidarity.

⁷⁵ Examples include: the *shatat* radical feminist movement *Tal’at* (Women stepping out) (Marshoud and AlSa nah 2020), the Palestinian Feminist Collective (<https://www.facebook.com/palestinianfeministcollective>), the Manifesto of Dignity and Hope (The Unity Intifada 2020).

⁷⁶ For more information, see CAUT 2021; CJPME 2021; and Klein 2021.

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APPENDIX A- DISCUSSION GUIDE

(a) Locate:

- Tell me about yourself and your activism in general.
- What is your relationship to the Palestinian struggle?
- What brought you to support the Palestinian struggle?
- Are you aware of many movements related to the Palestinian struggle?
- What is the difference between them?
- What is your relation to the BDS movement? What do you think about it?
- What are the demands of the BDS movement?
- Why did you choose / or did not choose the BDS movement to engage in, among others?

(b) Understanding solidarity

- What is your understanding of solidarity with a distant struggle?
- What influenced your understanding of solidarity?
- How do you solidarize with the Palestinian struggle?
- In what way is solidarity reciprocal?
- What activities are you involved in your solidarity with the Palestinians?
- How do you articulate the solutions for a just solution for the Palestinian cause?
- How do you understand sustained solidarity?

(c) How has your support for BDS changed through time?

- What exactly has changed?
- Why has it changed?
- Are there specific events that contributed to this change? (local and international events).
- How does time impact the solidarity with Palestinians in Toronto? explain
- Have you tried to recruit activists into the movement?
- Where have you tried to recruit/ have recruited activists into the movement?
- If not, why?
- If yes, when have you tried to recruit/ have recruited activists into the movement?
- What do you think are the enablers to recruit new members into the movement?
- How does the university (Or the union/ church...) facilitate solidarity work with the BDS movement? Give specific examples.
- How does the university (Or the union/ church...) hinder solidarity work with the BDS movement? Give specific examples.
-

(d) How do you assess the BDS movement in Toronto?

- Can you tell me about one coordinated campaign among the BDS activists in Toronto?
- What is missing in solidarity circles with the Palestinians in Toronto? With BDS?
- Where do you see the movement next year? In five years?
- What do you think is the major problem facing the BDS movement in Toronto? Do you suggest a solution to this problem?

- What makes it easier for you or your organization to support BDS?
 - What do you think is the strength of the movement in Toronto?
- (e) What makes it harder for you or your organization to support BDS?
- Does the government helping / inhibiting solidarity work? Explain how.
 - Does the different types of media helping / inhibiting solidarity work? Probe for mainstream media, jewish conservative, Arab media, conservative media).
 - Do counter movements impact the intensity of your solidarity with the Palestinians?