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ABSTRACT

In this article we stress the need for specifically located understandings of the concept of homonationalism, by introducing an analysis of spatial and political power relations dissecting disparate constructions of LGBT arenas. The article explores three spaces: Tel-Aviv—an urban space of LGBT belonging; Jerusalem—the Israeli capital where being an LGBT individual is problematic both in public and in private spaces; and Kiryat-Shmona—a conservative and peripheral underprivileged town in the north of Israel. By showing how local understandings of queer space shape power relations and translate into subjective spaces within wide-ranging power dynamics, we claim that homonationalism cannot be seen as one unitary, consolidated category or logic. Instead, we argue, homonationalism should be considered a multidirectional and multiscale political stance, manifesting cultural practices and political relationship with the state and society in distinct settings. By expanding considerations of the nuanced interplay of state power and LGBT spaces we aim to elucidate some paradoxes of homonationalism.

"A city cannot finance a protest," Efrat Tolkowsky, a city council member, told me to explain why the municipality refused to frame the 2016 Tel-Aviv Pride parade as a demonstration against the government agenda on LGBT issues. The background for this announcement was an NIS 11 million (approximately $2.8 million) campaign by the Tourism Ministry to promote gay tourism to Tel-Aviv, culminating in a press release stating that the Ministry was planning to fly a rainbow-painted airplane with gay bloggers and journalists to Israel. This announcement led to multiple reactions, including calls to boycott the Pride parade, criticism of the government for pinkwashing (portraying Israel as more liberal than its surrounding Middle Eastern states by boasting about LGBT rights), and demands to turn the Pride parade into a protest against the government for not allocating funding to support the local LGBT community organizations' needs. The municipality, which supports LGBT issues, was explicit about the limits of that support —they were willing to support LGBT activists in their struggle to gain

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resources but disapproved of the call to turn the Pride parade into a protest march against government policy.

In the queer activist context in Israel, homonationalism seems like the answer to many questions regarding the dynamics of LGBT politics. Combining nationalism (Bell, 1994; Bell & Binnie, 2006; Richardson, 2000; Seidman, 2001) with assimilationist homonormative politics (Duggan, 2002, a neoliberal politics of gay assimilation), homonational political processes leave little room for contingency, forcing activists and non-activists alike to take a stand either for or against the Israeli government and its actions. Considering the complexity in which Israeli subjects are located politically, we aim in this article to elucidate the paradoxes of homonationalism in local contexts.

Aeyal Gross, an Israeli law professor and an activist, (2016, para. 10) explained in an op-ed:

> The LGBT community's response focused on the gaps between the lack of equal rights for gays and the government's image-building efforts on the issue, and between the funds for the community and the funds for tourism. What's missing has been the heart of the matter: the way the community is being used to facilitate the oppression of others.

Referencing pinkwashing, Gross underlined the Israeli occupation and the linkage of LGBT rights to human rights, specifically Palestinian rights, suggesting that any rights claims that do not take the Palestinian occupation into considerations are homonationalist (Gross, 2015). Gross presented the local critical activist point of view, utilizing the common academic interpretation of homonationalism in which "the state does not disappear […] but rather, homosexuality is incorporated into governmentality, through the combined dynamic of neoliberal consumerist ideology and state intervention" (Gross, 2015). Homonationalism is, as Jusbir Puar (2013b) articulated, "a facet of modernity and a historical shift marked by the entrance of (some) homosexual bodies as worthy of protection by nation-states" (p. 337).

Following recent claims concerning the complicated relationship between state power and sexual minorities and troubling classifications of radical versus assimilationist queer politics (Browne & Bakshi, 2013; Misgav, 2015; Oswin, 2008, 2012), this article explores the ways Israeli activist LGBT spaces are conceptualized, narrated, and formed. Using Jewish-Israeli lenses, we ask how these specific and located formations of queer spaces manage Israeli homonationalist discourses, reflecting on the dynamics of specific power relations.

Since different spaces produce diverse internal politics, discourses, and cultures, understanding how these LGBT spatial politics materialize can also clarify LGBT individuals' and spaces' associations with the state. We argue that broadening the discussion of pinkwashing and homonational politics to

include LGBT politics in the peripheries and in Jerusalem sheds new light on (the sometimes reductionist criticism of) Israel's homonationalism. Moreover, expanding the discussion to include spaces other than Tel-Aviv creates new kinds of local politics that are in relation to the state but are not driven by (Tel-Aviv's) homonational politics and that create other power structures rather than centralization and marginalization. Thus the article answers the call for greater contextual sensitivity and geographic variation of homonationalism.

After a presentation of the latest debates about the meanings and critique of homonationalism and a short methodological section, we will offer findings from three LGBT activist spaces in Israel. Speaking from an activist perspective, each part will show how homonationalism constructs local power relations differently, leading to a nuanced and space-related LGBT politics. These local readings of homonationalism, we will argue, reveal the fundamental significance of using homonationalism as a tool to articulate critique of activist spaces.

Homonational classifications

"Homonationalism has its own intellectual lineage," claimed Schotten (2016, p. 1), attempting to construct an infrastructure for critical debate over its short historical usage and its diverse meanings in place and time. *Homonationalism*, a term coined by Jusbir Puar in her influential book *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (2007), has been zealously used ever since, by both scholars and activists (Greyser, 2012; Puar, 2013a, 2013b). Initially, Puar coined the term to reflect a combination of nationality and normativity: nationality being a mode of belonging to the nation-state and normativity in its specific meaning as "the new homonormativity" (Duggan, 2003)—neoliberal sexual politics and its practice by LGBT individuals. Puar (2007, p. 39) cogitated:

> I am deploying the term homonationalism to mark arrangements of U.S. sexual exceptionalism explicitly in relation to the nation. […]. We see simultaneously both the fortification of normative heterosexual coupling and the propagation of sexualities that mimic, parallel, contradict, or resist this normativity. These proliferating sexualities, and their explicit and implicit relationships to nationalism, complicate the dichotomous implications of casting the nation as only supportive and production of heteronormativity and always repressive and disallowing of homosexuality.

In her analysis, the state is not merely heteronormative and patriarchal, as feminist scholars have claimed (Nagel, 2010; Walby, 1994; Young, 2003); it also confines and constructs homosexuality, by incorporating queers into the national collective. Understanding national security threats through queer grammars disrupts normative usages of nationality and reproduces

homosexuality in new unproductive forms, outside the work-family-citizenship narrative of production and reproduction. This kind of homonational politics Puar (2007) explained as cooperation between the state and its queer subjects. Maya Mikdashi broadened the conceptualization of homonationalism, characterizing it as homogenizing and assimilation politics. Mikdashi delineated:

> homonationalism […] is only one aspect of the reworking of the world according to neoliberal logics that maintain not only the balance of power between states, but also within them. In fact, homonationalism produces normative homosexuality in the same fashion that normative 'heterosexuality' continues to be shaped and regulated internationally through the interventions of human rights corporations, international funding and research agencies, and the foreign and domestic policies of states. (Mikdashi, 2011, para. 4)

Portraying homonationalism as "one of neoliberalism's effects, rather than co-constituted with it or a particular driver of it" (Schotten, 2016, p. 7), homonationalism is defined as identity politics within a Western context. It is extended beyond the United States to express what Schotten (2016) called "homoimperialism." This new comprehensive meaning of "homonationalism as an analytic to apprehend state formation as a structure of modernity" (Puar, 2013a, p. 42) means that states are now judged as pre/modern by their treatment of homosexuals. A state's treatment of LGBT individuals is then an index of tolerance, obscuring any other human rights violations or abuse (Franke, 2012; Gross, 2015).

However, Puar (2013b) rigorously described homonationalism not as an identity or a positionality but as a disciplining ideology and regulatory regime within the structure of citizenship. Homonationalism is an assemblage of political, social, and economic forces:

> Part of the increased recourse to domestication and privatization of neoliberal economies and within queer communities, homonationalism is fundamentally a deep critique of lesbian and gay liberal rights discourses and how those rights discourses produce narratives of progress and modernity that continue to accord some populations access to citizenship—cultural and legal—at the expense of the delimitation and expulsion of other populations. (Puar, 2013b, p. 337)

Thus homonationalism refers to a dynamic binary process of inclusion and exclusion. While specific groups are marked with the "correct" belonging and are deemed legitimate, others are distanced from the public sphere and deemed perverse. That is, inclusion in mainstream society also creates exclusion by ignoring inequality between sections of the LGBT community. Moreover, LGBT subgroups who receive equal rights by adopting hegemonic ideology strengthen the legitimate belonging of LGBT individuals to the nation. Expanding the nation's boundaries and including LGBT, i.e., a deviant group, within it portrays the state as tolerant and liberal while

simultaneously marking other states as intolerant, undemocratic, and illiberal. This process also legitimizes violent policies toward countries portrayed as less tolerant of LGBT and other minorities.

However, Zanghellini (2012) warned that the imprecise or overuse of homonationalism as a master narrative may lead to "inappropriate rhetorical moves and inaccurate or unsubstantiated claims, and to project structural undercurrents of racism onto certain texts or events, rather than unearthing such structures from them." In the same vein, Ritchie (2015) asserted that "Homonationalism has morphed from an argument about the tentative and incomplete incorporation of some (white/citizen) queers by the neoliberal nation-state in a specific time and place […] into a totalizing framework that depends on a dangerously simplistic construction of reality." Yet Ritchie contended that it is the oversimplifications of homonationalism that make it tenable, popular, and, to some extent, universal. Schotten (2016) shared this critique, claiming the diverse formations of homonationalism cause a loss of its unique location-based particularities, making it unproductive in articulating a grounded, distinctive analysis. More importantly, she underscored how homonationalism "becomes unable to function as a critical evaluation of activist work or progressive politics" (p. 2).

Criticizing from a different perspective, Joseph Massad (2002) claimed that while understandings of sexuality are presumed to be universal, in actuality they are culturally based.[1] Sexual discourses are specific, divergent, and place- and time-based; therefore, projections of lesbian and gay identities onto non-Western individuals can be dangerous:

> Gays and lesbians are universal categories that exist everywhere in the world, and based on this prediscursive axiom, the Gay International sets itself the mission of defending them by demanding that their rights as 'homosexuals' be granted where they are denied and be respected where they are violated. In doing so, however, the Gay International produces an effect that is less than liberatory. (Massad, 2002, p. 363)

Framing a large portion of queer activism as the act of imposing Western categories not suited to localized/non-Western cultures, Massad set the stage for a critique of homonationalism and pinkwashing claims, rendering comparisons between cultures, countries, and different spaces futile (see, for example, Franke, 2012).

Taking seriously the call for avoiding meta-categories, we use the term *homonationalism* in this article as a marker of concrete and situated power relations between LGBT spatial politics and the state. Thus we aspire to unearth dominant power structures in order to demonstrate the possibilities, limits, and ramifications of national integration as a means to achieve LGBT rights and belonging in Israel.

Our aim is to dissect the differentiated dynamics and the role of Israeli homonationalism in different locations, showing how local and specific understandings of queer space shape power relations and translate into subjective spaces within wide-ranging power dynamics.

Methodology

This article is based on a research study that investigated LGBT activist spaces in Israel, exploring how power relations are maintained through the uses of homonational politics (Hartal, 2015b). Specifically, it focuses on three LGBT activist spaces: the Tel-Aviv Gay Center, the Jerusalem Open House (JOH), and *Geim-Bagalil* (Proud in/of the Galilee), the northern branch of the *Aguda* (the National LGBT Association) in Kiryat-Shmona.

The first space, the Tel-Aviv Gay Center is located in the center of Tel-Aviv, which is a place of acceptance of queer subjects, a tolerant space allowing "out" queer performances. The municipality holds many LGBT events and supports LGBT organizations. In 2008, the municipality established the Gay Center, which operates a commercial café, and runs community events, group activities, self-help gatherings, a health clinic, an information center, a theater, and the local Pride parade and is funded by the municipality. The three-floor 1,000 square meter renovated building is located in downtown Tel-Aviv, where real estate is very expensive, in a former municipal building inside a park. The city is not only welcoming to Israeli LGBT individuals but was declared the world's best gay travel destination in 2012,[2] leading to an increase in LGBT (mainly gay) tourists, visiting the city during summertime and the Pride parade.

The second space, the JOH, is located in the center of Jerusalem. Jerusalem has historically been considered a holy city to all three monotheistic religions and a segregated and contested space (Adelmane & Elman, 2014; Alfasi & Fenster, 2005; Vinitzky-Seroussi, 1998). In the LGBT context, Jerusalem is thought of as a highly political space where being an LGBT individual is problematic both in public and in private spaces (Adelman, 2014; Hartal, 2016; Wagner, 2013). Public Jerusalem spaces and the municipal establishment itself create a sense of discomfort and un-belonging for LGBT individuals. The JOH aims to serve as a community center and a safe, empowering, and highly visible space for LGBT individuals in Jerusalem. The organization copes with issues that are often unique to Jerusalem, focusing on LGBT visibility in an intolerant space and responding to the Palestinian and ultra-Orthodox community living in the city.

The third LGBT space we studied is in Kiryat-Shmona, the northernmost city in Israel. Located on the Lebanese border, it was a frequent target of cross-border attacks. The city's population of 23,000 is composed mostly of Mizrachi lower-class Jews.[3] *Geim-Bagalil* (proud in/of the Galilee) was the

northern branch of the *Aguda* (National LGBT organization) and served as a center for the LGBT community from 2001–2013.

Data collection was conducted through an ethnographic method carried out by the first author. Ethnography enables the observation of and experiencing of spatial and affective embodiments, and not just documenting emotional and conversational behaviors (Longhurst, Ho, & Johnston, 2008). Our position is based on Browne and Nash's (2010) call to create a dynamic subjective position within the research field as well as Halberstam's (2003) call to blur the opposition between researcher and researched. This resulted in a queer methodology that reflects a commitment to being a part of the research process in a way that is reflexive and sensitive to changes that occurred in all three research locations.

The Tel-Aviv part of the research included participant observations at the Gay Center between October 2011 and October 2012 and 16 open-ended interviews with the Gay Center's staff and key activists. Additionally, two interviews conducted in 2016 for a study on gay tourism to Tel-Aviv were added since they included discussions of LGBT local political issues. The Jerusalem part included 5 months of participant observations between January and May 2010. These were accompanied by 10 open-ended interviews with leading activists in the JOH. The Kiryat-Shmona part of the research included participant observations between February and June 2012 and four open-ended interviews with *Geim-Bagalil*'s key LGBT activists.

All interviews lasted from 2 to 4 hours and were recorded and transcribed, and the transcriptions were sent to the participants for approval. Although it is unusual, all participants gave written consent for the use of their real names in the article, because they are all public, well-known local figures who wanted credit for their statements. Also, the activist LGBT community in Israel is small, and most of the activists are known to each other. Since almost all activists in the three research sites were interviewed, their statements are recognizable. However, by now, most of the participants have left their positions or are former activists.

The interviews, participant observations, transcriptions, and field notes were thematically analyzed, revealing the main concepts and subjects. The central analysis questions focused on the social assumptions concerning LGBT spaces, manifestation of conflicts, and power relations and the way these are narrated, justified, and maintained as well as uses of mainstreaming and homonational frames in LGBT activism.

Conspicuous homonationalism: The Tel-Aviv Gay Center

Tel-Aviv has been frequently framed as a homonational space, both by scholars and by activists (Eisner, 2012; Gross, 2015; Gunther & Collejfe, 2004; Hartal & Sasson-Levy, 2016; Misgav, 2016a). The homonationalist

frame is produced through a dual process: The first is a political and public relations "top-down model of power," as most scholars argue (Schotten, 2016, p. 5); the second process is the social and local activists' self-identification with the national enterprise, which is a bottom-up homonationalism. An analysis of the Gay Center in Tel-Aviv illustrates the social and local self-identification by the activists' aspect of Tel-Aviv as a homonational space. We open with a demonstration of the bottom-up perception followed by a complementary discussion of homonationalism as a top down process.

Avi, a veteran activist, explained LGBT politics' centrality to municipal politics:

> The important thing is that there is a large strong municipality that takes [to produce annual pride events] upon itself, […]. That's the story. The Tel-Aviv pride parade is stunning. What a magnificent mobilization of the municipality… I don't care what they get in return. They send 500 municipal workers to manage my business […] to clean up after the parade or whatever […]. This is exactly what we want, this reflects our success.
>
> […] Look, even today in Tel-Aviv, politically, you cannot ignore it [the commitment to LGBT issues]. I don't think that you can get elected to any kind of official job without relating to the [LGBT] community, it's like… every fourth person on the street [in Tel-Aviv] is… [LGBT].

Avi's words reveal a direct identification with the municipal establishment by the activists themselves. He is enthusiastic about municipal involvement in LGBT activities. Furthermore, Avi reflects on a process in which some municipal politicians are, in fact, LGBT politician-activists who began their political careers within LGBT organizations and currently serve as board members in LGBT organizations. These politicians have made clear that promoting LGBT belonging in Tel-Aviv is imperative, culminating in wide support of the municipality, which later on became a commitment toward LGBT individuals in Tel-Aviv and even a wider sense of responsibility for LGBT individuals in Israel. Thus LGBT individuals have great power within local politics. This local power later trickled up into federal politics. The division into NGO activism (bottom-up) and municipal politics (top-down) is imprecise in describing how local politics work. Shachar, a municipal employee (the LGBT community coordinator and deputy assistant mayor) explained:

> We also have some initiatives which go beyond Tel-Aviv, such as cooperation with the *Aguda* to help small pride parades in Israel […]. Producing Tel-Aviv pride, we have accumulated a lot of knowledge over the years and we want to help them […]. This year we are trying to have a round table in Tel-Aviv with a wide forum of city council members/LGBT community coordinators from all over the country. We want to create a front, that is, we come together in order to boost other places' power.

According to Shachar, Tel-Aviv wants to use its resources to help improve other municipalities' work with the LGBT community. The municipality's position is a direct extension of its "strong community" politics (see also Hartal & Sasson-Levy, 2016; Moreno, 2011). Strong community politics is a conception of Tel-Aviv as the gay capital of Israel, signaling a change in values, marking LGBT politics and spaces respectable, cultural, and family friendly (contrary to common stereotypes about LGBT individuals and spaces as filthy, hypersexual, and dangerous). It is based on LGBT belonging in Tel-Aviv, but at the same time it constructs a power structure and boundaries that lead to the marginalization of others.

Indeed, the activists not only depict the Gay Center as a signal of the municipality's commitment toward LGBT individuals, but also as a space that deepens the inequality and rifts within the LGBT community.[4] Irit, CEO of *Hoshen* (an organization that promotes educating to fight stereotypes regarding sexual orientation and gender identity) elaborated:

> The [Gay] Center is a space of empowerment for the [LGBT] community in the sense of the healthy community, like empowering the ones who are already strong, wealthy, profitable… That is the direction of our city council representatives […]. They are interested in promoting activities that will bring money into the city.

Irit used the distinction between healthy and sick to underscore that the Gay Center and Tel-Aviv Municipality's politics aim to reinforce the image of the LGBT community as strong. With the goal set as financial gain, the Gay Center produces boundaries and obstacles to some LGBT individuals and promotes others' presence due to profitability concerns.

Another aspect of exclusion is the gendered politics at the Gay Center (Hartal, 2015c). In Israel, military service is perceived as a citizenship-conferring institution, which grants civic and symbolic capital to the men and women who serve. Therefore, military service shapes a gendered hierarchy of belonging and loyalty to the state, while at the same time determining one's accessibility to different social resources (Sasson-Levy, 2002, p. 360). This militaristic social structure always glorifies men and masculinities and prioritizes them over women. The conflation of (militarized) sexual and spatial politics with citizenship and, ultimately, with homonationalism is based on correlations between particular (male) bodies and particular spaces. Thus Yoav, a city council member from the opposition, said in an interview:

> [There are] three men at the top. Politically they are very much alike. […] They see themselves as everyone's leaders… as if they can represent everyone […] and any attempt to change this and promote diversity will weaken their ability to lead the way and will only cause dithering and babbling and power struggles, and they think we're lucky that we have them, hegemons, who know how to restore order.

The men Yoav is referring to make it difficult for women, bisexuals, or transgender people to take equal part in local decision-making processes and to achieve symbolic and material capital. This socio-spatial politics is based on the splits in the community (strong-weak, men-women, gay-LBT), producing and reproducing homonationalism through the interplay between masculinist and militarist Israeli culture and neoliberal assimilation processes. This enables homonormative gay men to achieve and sustain power positions, ensuring gay men's control over the Gay Center and its resources, promoting their agenda (which is the municipal agenda) under the guise of being an inclusive community-wide agenda for its benefit.

The Gay Center activists quoted above represent a bottom-up construction of homonationalism, revealing that homonational power relations can be created by the activists themselves, who use this power structure to their advantage. This usage of homonationalism is in contrast to its academic perceptions as a top-down concept such as Puar (2013b) developed (see also Currah, 2013; Ritchie, 2015).

Gross (2015) has claimed that the LGBT community appropriated the urban space of the Gay Center but was, in turn, appropriated by both the city and the state, to serve their own interests. This circular political model brings us to the top-down aspect of homonationalism, which is demonstrated in the grammars of public political and cultural figures such as the prime minister and the Israeli ambassador (see Gross, 2012). Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) convention can be construed to use LGBT rights in Israel as a fig leaf:

> throughout the Middle East, journalists are jailed, gays are hanged and women are denied their most basic rights. So which country does BDS want to sanction? Take a guess. Israel—the only country in the region with a free press, a progressive gay rights record and where women have presided over each of the three branches of government.

Or Netanyahu's remarks at the recent session of the UN General Assembly on September 22, 2016:

> Are the gays hanging from cranes in Iran helped by your denigration of Israel? That same Israel where gays march proudly in our streets and serve in our parliament, including, I'm proud to say, in my own Likud party.

Public officials and others (sometimes wrongly) present gay rights in Israel only to imply that Israel is a liberal state, thus stressing its progressive human rights legislation, in opposition to the "primitive" and traditional Middle East, especially Iran and the Palestinian Authority. Aeyal Gross makes the case that a shooting at an LGBT club in 2009[5] served as the starting point of this trend, claiming:

> The mass rally in Tel-Aviv a week after the murder, at which two senior right-wing cabinet ministers spoke was a significant moment in this process. Although it did include critical and dissident voices, it also brought the homonormative and homonationalist politics together as has never happened before and was thus crucial for the 'deal'. Its terms are that 'we' will be good, normative and Zionist gays, who are willing to partake in the discourse of Israel as a liberal democracy and collaborate, directly and indirectly, in the state's use of gay rights as a fig leaf for Israeli democracy, and in return we will get sympathy and some support from the state. (Gross, 2010, para. 9)

Using gay rights in Israel as propaganda suggests that Israeli LGBT individuals are not only supposed to be grateful for their inclusion and their rights, but they must give back to the state by attracting gay tourists and by being model citizens who serve in the military, have normative families with children, and are obliged to the Israeli state and its right-wing politics. All of which culminates in a homonational politics, a combination of internalized expectations and prescriptive requirements directed at Israeli LGBT individuals. Since Tel-Aviv is considered the best place to be LGBT in Israel, and maybe the only space of belonging for gay and lesbian Jewish Israelis, the space becomes synonymous with manifestations of Israeli homonationalism.

The centrality of Tel-Aviv in Israeli LGBT discourse and visuals results in a generalization: Tel-Aviv as representative of the situation in all of Israel. Not only is this not accurate, as we will show in the next two sections, but we have shown in this section that the homonational stances in Tel-Aviv are more complex, containing a bottom-up aspect to it, as well as the expected top-down model.

LGBT in the capital: Jerusalem as a space of social marginality and serious politics

Contrary to Tel-Aviv, Jerusalem exemplifies a major rejection of LGBT public presence. Jerry, the first chairman of the Jerusalem Open House (JOH), an NGO and a community space for LGBT individuals in Jerusalem, stated:

> Being an LGBT organization in Jerusalem, the center of the three monotheistic religions and the Israeli capital, is different than being a parallel organization in New York, Chicago, London or Paris. It's more like putting up with what our [LGBT] friends in Moscow have to endure, it's dangerous for them out in the streets. […] We are perceived as subversive towards the local regime and towards the reality in Jerusalem.

The city of Jerusalem is characterized by a prominent religious objection to an LGBT public presence. Within this general atmosphere of homophobia, it is difficult for LGBT individuals to enter the JOH and participate in activities.

The JOH aims to ameliorate this situation, but also, because they are in the Israeli capital, the organization is committed to changing legislation and to being a national representative organization of the community. These two formative aspects of the JOH's activities and goals complicate its relationship with LGBT organizations and activities in Tel-Aviv. While the Tel-Aviv organizations seem to be more successful in constructing what it means to be an Israeli LGBT subject, the JOH creates a new kind of LGBT politics. In this section, we will present two different stances of Jerusalem LGBT politics, which reveal an alternate manifestation of the relationship with the state and the nation.

The first kind of Jerusalem politics is what we will call "serious politics," an outgrowth of the JOH's location in the capital city of Israel. As the only Jerusalem LGBT organization, and as the exclusive producer of the Jerusalem Pride parade, it considers itself responsible for LGBT individuals in Jerusalem. In addition, the JOH sees itself as the formal representative of LGBT organizations and individuals to the parliament and the Israeli government.

The Jerusalem Pride parade was designed to be a reflection of the JOH—a space and time of inclusion and political struggle, not a provocative party-like happening. Hagai Elad, the first JOH CEO (2008, pp. 257–58), referred to it as a "space for Palestinians and Israelis […] human rights demonstration […], not under the sponsorship of any commercial brand. Jerusalem marchers march for social change." Yaron, the JOH community coordinator, explained:

> There is a feeling here that the parade is more of a struggle, while in Tel-Aviv it's a celebration. […] Maybe in Tel-Aviv they have gone through cooptation processes […], the city produces the pride parade so they don't really have to protest and claim their rights […]. In Tel-Aviv, during the parade there is a mass gay-lesbian wedding [see Ben-David, 2009], so now they don't have to deal with the fact that there is no civil marriage in Israel because in Tel-Aviv they get their rights…

In Israel, marriage and divorce are solely controlled by the religious orthodox establishment. Same-sex partners cannot marry in Israel, but if they were legally married abroad, they can be registered in the population registry. During the Tel-Aviv Pride parade, a symbolic public marriage is performed, declaring approval of LGBT rights, bolstering municipal promotion of an LGBT presence in the city. From the Jerusalem perspective, the Tel-Aviv culture seems like a silencing of the LGBT rights struggle; the option of giving up on the fights and moving to Tel-Aviv renders political struggles for LGBT rights meaningless.

Jerusalem is one of the main places for political endeavors, protests, and rights struggles. This characterization of the parade led to a discussion by the JOH board whether to frame it as a protest or a cultural happening. Each

frame calls for a different kind of police permit and security organization, significantly changing the cost of the parade. In 2011, for example, the JOH board decided to have a protest-like parade, prohibiting any kind of stalls, with only a limited number of songs played. They also changed the course of the parade, ending across from the Knesset (the Israeli parliament). This advanced public perception of the Jerusalem parade as a political and serious protest space.

This specific framing of the Pride parade as protest enabled new LGBT crowds such as radical and political activists and religious and orthodox LGBT groups to take part in the parade. Eyal, chairman of *Hevruta*, a religious gay organization, described:

> Last year, when we had to decide where to march, it was obvious that it would be in Jerusalem. With or without a sign, we have to be seen in Jerusalem. The Tel-Aviv pride parade is something we're less sure about […] mainly because we're afraid to be perceived as an organization whose members only want to party and take part in that mass orgy.

Here, too, the seriousness of the Jerusalem Pride parade is in opposition to Tel-Aviv's lightheartedness, providing new spaces to form belonging and express identities for various segments of the Jerusalem LGBT community.

Opposing social groups, such as religious and Palestinian LGBT organizations, needing to find a home in Jerusalem led to the second kind of Jerusalem politics: "the politics of holding" (Hartal, 2016). This politics emphasizes the consolidation of public and private LGBT politics, aiming to contain contradictory points of view and incorporate LGBT individuals' diverse embodiments as well as rival political standpoints. The politics of holding emphasizes a dialectic mode of holding, through a constant effort to balance normative politics and discourses of inclusion. It is an attempt to frame the LGBT community space in Jerusalem as a shelter, which is at odds with ongoing blockages, social boundaries, and socio-spatial normative divisions and with the simultaneous attempt to increase LGBT visibility. Hagai Elad (2008, p. 261) stated in a journal article:

> How can we persuade a religious lesbian that the JOH is her home as well? How would a Palestinian gay guy feel the JOH is open for him too? We are making an effort to create a community framework in which everyone can participate, that includes putting a pride mezuzah [a symbol of a Jewish home] on the front door, a dairy kitchen [keeping a Kosher kitchen], signs in Arabic.

The local heterogeneity of Jerusalem, which incorporates Jewish, Palestinian, right- and left-wing political stances, and secular, religious, and orthodox LGBT individuals, make it difficult to produce a unified LGBT politics. Jonathan, the JOH's CEO, elaborated:

> In Tel-Aviv everyone is former-something […] there is no such thing as real and original Tel-Avivians. In Tel-Aviv there are ex-religious, ex-whatever… It turns out it's much more fun to talk about the parties and who had sex with whom…. And here [in Jerusalem] the heterogeneity, the fact that everyone is entrenched in their own identity, maybe a bit too much… the specific Kippa [yarmulke] color…. this is what makes this city so interesting, because in the end, we have to live together. […] These cities can be what they are, only because of this profound contrast.

While Tel-Aviv is portrayed as a space with no roots and no past, symbolizing the identity categories that were abandoned in favor of a fun LGBT party life, Jerusalem is portrayed as a mosaic, a local assemblage of identities and specifications connecting past and present. Shahar, the LGBT youth facilitator at the JOH, also referred to this opposition:

> There is a feeling of bubbliness in Tel-Aviv, a desire to take comfort in its easier reality [its welcoming towards LGBT individuals]. The Jerusalem discourse, the Jerusalem streets are becoming more Ultra-Orthodox, becoming more devout, they're becoming more nationalistic. […] To be here is to be at the front, not at the rear. Many LGBT individuals are leaving for Tel-Aviv and I understand that, but I think that the real story is to stay at the front and understand that some of the soldiers will fall. Outing our voice and speaking from this standpoint is important.

Having to establish and protect pluralism, the JOH works to enhance tolerance in the city but without aiming to create unification or assimilation. This effort is embedded in the politics of holding, making room for diverse identifications and experiences of space, enabling all Jerusalem LGBT individuals a space of belonging.

A concise example of the effort not to leave anyone out and to take others' points into consideration was presented by Jonathan at a JOH board meeting:

> We [the JOH] were invited to participate in a regional [LGBT] activity in Turkey and this is something that never happens. Usually, if someone is trying to have a regional seminar which includes LGBT representatives from the Arab world, then Israeli organizations are not invited […]. So we were invited […]. The first thing I said to them was kudos to you for inviting us. The second thing was that if us coming meant that the Arab LGBT organizations would not attend, then please invite Tel-Aviv [LGBT organizations], not us. We don't like that corner, we don't. We will not have someone not come because we are there.

Jonathan positioned the JOH as an organization that does not want to produce power relations leading to exclusions of Arab LGBT organizations. While portraying this position, he places Tel-Aviv LGBT politics at an oppositional viewpoint, as identifying with Israeli nationalist politics. This position of the JOH places it in the political role of opposition to the government, thus preventing the development of local homonational politics.

In 2016, the Jerusalem Pride parade, in commemoration of Shira Banki, a 16-year-old young woman who was murdered by an ultra-Orthodox man at

the Jerusalem Pride parade only a year earlier, was the largest in Jerusalem, with approximately 25,000 participants. The parade included many Jewish religious participants, protesting the murder and objecting to the rabbis who, shortly before the parade, spoke out against the LGBT community and its public presence. They were also protesting police prohibition of the parade in Beer-Sheva a few days earlier.

These two political framings—the Pride parade as a "serious politics" of opposition and the "politics of holding"—exemplify the ambivalent relationship between LGBT activists' politics in Jerusalem with the nation. The shaping of the Pride parade as a "serious" political protest emphasizes that, in Israel, LGBT politics cannot be detached from national politics. This, in turn, created a nuanced politics inside the JOH, the politics of holding, which represents the pursuit of solidarity among all LGBT individuals in Jerusalem, while state politics constructs symbolic and physical walls of separation.

Hence, homonationalism in the Jerusalem context is portrayed differently than in Tel-Aviv. Here it is determined by the willingness to work with the government to promote LGBT rights, while simultaneously influencing the JOH activists' everyday actions and decision-making processes to establish an inclusive local LGBT community. This reflects a particular and distinct homonationalism, rejecting government politics and its implications for society, guided by a serious politics that aims to work with the government and change legislation on LGBT matters.

Constructing spaces of belonging: LGBT in the northern periphery

Much like the Jerusalem LGBT discourse and politics, LGBT activists in *Geim-Bagalil* in Kiryat-Shmona frame their activities and politics in opposition to Tel-Aviv mainstream and homonational politics. However, this opposition is only partial. Kiryat-Shmona is a conservative and peripheral town; LGBT activists choose to produce their space as respectable. Through respectability the activists aim to get a glimpse of the Tel-Aviv "strong" politics, while at the same time criticize and subvert Tel-Aviv LGBT politics. Thus *Geim-Bagalil* represents a paradoxical space, a politics of ambivalent belonging.

On my visits to *Geim-Bagalil* and during the interviews, I found that activists try to conceal manifestations of sexuality, and instead emphasize identity and LGBT culture. This process is analogous to Tel-Aviv's spatial activism (Misgav, 2015), in which individuals and groups were excluded in order to enforce normative LGBT sexualities (Hartal & Sasson-Levy, 2016). For *Geim-Bagalil*, this process was reflexive and was meant mainly to ensure the LGBT space's longevity. Tal, IGY's youth facilitator, depicted:

[In *Geim-Bagalil*] there were a lot of [sexual] posters and stickers and porn book-lets. We wanted to renovate… and the large amount of porn booklets there…. It was obvious to us [that after we renovate] it won't be there. We left it in some drawer as an archival product. It's exclusively gay male porn […]. Today, if you want to see cocks you press www dot cock dot com and you get lots of pictures in all sizes […]. This is something that you couldn't do [when there was no internet]. We spent so much time taking stickers that said: 'cunt is cool' off the walls, *trying to make this place feel like home*, make it feel comfy, a place that has no condoms on the mattress, or pics of cocks… to turn it into a place you come into and say to yourself: 'Hey, I can sit here, I can talk to someone here, I can play here… I can see this as an alternative home because in my own home I can't speak of my sexuality and be who I am'. So the goal was that if you have a boyfriend or a girlfriend and you want to cuddle, watch TV or anything [you could come here]… We wanted this to become a social space.

Tal expressed disgust with the sexual signifiers in the space, describing a process of cleaning the space up, symbolically placing sexuality in a drawer. *Geim-Bagalil*, which was the only space in which booklets manifesting LGBT sexuality could be placed out in the open and not concealed, became a sexually sterile space. Sexuality is transferred to the virtual space, a private, camouflaged space, and the physical space is "cleaned" of sexuality.

This image of respectability is important to the veteran activists as well, as portrayed by Miki, *Geim-Bagalil*'s founder:

The place looks okay. There is a lot to improve, but generally it gives a warm feeling, it's not a whorehouse or anything…. This is what many people think… that it's a whorehouse. It's not!

An LGBT space in the periphery is imagined as a highly sexual and promis-cuous space. Contrasting the expected with the real, Miki highlights the warm and social characteristics of *Geim-Bagalil*.

Another factor in creating the social space is a sense of safety in a very small town, as Tal described:

Many times, we wondered if meeting at *Geim-Bagalil* was the right thing to do. On the one hand, it's a good thing to show these youths that there is a social space to come to […]. They sometimes stayed after the meetings, and they saw all the people come and they joined other activities, watched TV, played games and more with the older guys. This gave them a sense of belonging. On the other hand, it wasn't that safe… It's a bit problematic because of all the flags hanging out. And where should they ask their mother to drop them off?!? at the soccer field?!? It's complicated… So, after a year everyone will know, friends and friends of friends and people talk and everyone will know, and the address is publicized in the local newspaper and the place becomes un-safe. But we had no other alternative for IGY's group meetings.

The fact that activists aspire to camouflage the space and conceal its visibility raises the possibility that they are not proud of the space and of their sexuality. While in Tel-Aviv, walking near the Gay Center does not directly

reflect on one's sexuality, but being seen near an LGBT space in Kiryat-Shmona does. While being an LGBT person in Tel-Aviv has a measure of respectability, in Kiryat-Shmona it is perceived through affects such as shame, fear, and maybe even disgust.

Geim-Bagalil is the only LGBT space in the north of Israel for LGBT individuals. The attempt to frame the space as decent is not done to accumulate national power, to maintain control over the space, or to generate a capital as in Tel-Aviv. In Kiryat-Shmona, privatizing sexuality is intended to ensure the space's sustainability. In order to keep the space open and to enable LGBT social and cultural activities, the activists needed a degree of legitimacy from their surrounding social space. Copying the Tel-Aviv process of the establishment of the Gay Center, they aim at recreating Geim-Bagalil as a social nonsexual space. However, the space that was created in this process did not serve the specific needs of any of the social groups (youth, adults, students, and women), which led to its eventual closing in 2014.

The second complementary politics in the periphery is manifested in discourses of subversion to the center, i.e., mainstream Tel-Aviv politics. Despite being connected to the center through resource allocation and shared organizations and conflicts, LGBT activists in Kiryat-Shmona see themselves as outsiders—alienated from the center's politics, jargon, and culture. Moreover, they feel a marked sense of discrimination by their colleagues in the center. Adi, IGY's coordinator and the Aguda psycho-social coordinator in the north, criticized the distribution of resources:

> There is a feeling of being discriminated against in the periphery [...]. They [activists from Tel-Aviv] invest so much in the Center [the Gay-Center], if only they would invest some of the resources to help pay the rent here. Basically, they don't understand the periphery; they don't understand what's going on here.

The reason for the lack of resources is ascribed to the peripheral location of the LGBT activities, far from decision-makers' eyes and resources. The periphery's LGBT activities and spaces are vulnerable because of their reliance on a budget decided on by the LGBT organization's office in the center.

The activists in the periphery feel detached from the center because of their different culture, which includes a different jargon, as Rotem, the youth facilitator, described: "I went to Tel-Aviv [for an organization's seminar]; I didn't understand half of the words they were saying." Miki added: "There [in Tel-Aviv] everyone is fighting. [...] Here we favor all sides." Outlining the challenges the youth and youth facilitators face, Rotem described:

> I think an IGY youth facilitator from the center is different; he has different tasks and needs different personal qualities [...]. Here you need a broad perspective in order to understand the space we're at, to understand that the youth in the group have difficulties at school and in their settlements, in the kibbutz or in the city. They have more struggles than LGBT youth from the center; they don't have role-

models to identify with. Therefore, the work that needs to be done here is broader and more intensive.

Regarding standard materials IGY supplies to all facilitators, she stated:

> When Tal and I [the group's facilitators] prepare for the group we always need to make changes, cultural adjustments. I remember us looking at the activities and saying: "This is unsuitable for Kiryat-Shmona." Some LGBT concepts are unfamiliar here, some discourses don't exist here, [and we ask ourselves] should we bring up these subjects? Is this the culture we want to create here? [For example], our youth don't go to night clubs and so we won't talk about club culture. It is different being an LGBT individual here.

Rotem described a particular kind of symbolic boundary construction in which the LGBT periphery does not serve as the Other of the center but as a territory in its own right with its own rules and actors (Herring, 2010; see, for example, Brown, 2015; Gray, Johnson, & Gilley, 2016). Rotem identifies herself, the activities in which she is involved, and the space she and the activists occupy in an alternative and even subversive manner. Being critical of the Tel Aviv center's culture, Rotem sees LGBT activities and individuals in the periphery as capable of producing local cultural norms. Previous understandings of queer experience pointed out that LGBT identities are mainly Western and urban identities (Binnie, 2004; Halberstam, 2005; Marple, 2005; Weston, 1995). However, this perception was undermined by current research, showing nuances of queer life in rural areas, revealing new modes of belonging (Annes & Redlin, 2012; Brown, 2015; Gorman-Murray, Waitt, & Gibson, 2008). Accordingly, Rotem adopts a perspective of the periphery not as a repressive space, bound to the center, but as an empowering one, which diversifies and enriches the possibilities of LGBT corporeality and discourse. Tal revealed a similar take on the situation:

> I thought that this [coming to the periphery for college] would be a good reason to leave home, a good reason to change the atmosphere […] I thought of coming out here and getting to know people who are looking for different things than people from the center.

Rotem further reflected:

> The fact that I'm from the periphery helped a lot. It facilitated new options proclaiming to the group: "It's okay for you to stay peripheral. We're not trying to make you into a Tel-Aviv LGBT group."

This fundamental difference between center and periphery, as Rotem described, is perceived in a twofold manner, both enabling a critique of the center and ratifying its power and politics. The activists articulate the dissimilarities of the periphery, accepting the center's perspective of them and criticizing it. They frame their rootedness and locality as the cornerstones of becoming an LGBT periphery, which is affected by the center and deviates

from it, constructing a local alternative. Striving for a space of LGBT belonging in the periphery, Adi concluded:

> I want them [LGBT individuals originally from the periphery] to come back here later on. […] They need to have the Tel-Aviv experience, they need to know what's there, in Tel-Aviv, that they don't have here, in the periphery—to live their full life with full power—and then to want to come back here.

Albeit accepting the implication that the periphery does not have the means to offer a full LGBT life, Adi aims to produce and empower an autonomous LGBT periphery.

This peripheral perspective suggests that LGBT activist space in the periphery is simultaneously subverted and accepted as a disciplinary mechanism (Hartal, 2015a). Peripheral LGBT space is being produced as a product of the center, a space of internalized homophobia and LGBT absence, while also constructing itself as a space of its own culture and perspective, subverting Tel-Aviv LGBT politics and homonationalism. This center-periphery gap resonates with the contrast Franke (2012, p. 39) highlighted, namely that the emergence of the new "good" gay citizen emphasizes the "others who are not so good," placing them at the margins.

The price of LGBT mainstreaming in peripheral spaces is different from its parallel process in the center, necessitating the concealment of public LGBT visibility and presence. Understanding this, activists try to establish a new kind of local politics, subverting the mainstream politics and culture. It is portrayed mainly through a separation from Tel-Aviv homonational politics and power relations, independently creating activities and decisions, and observing the space, its activists, and their needs through local peripheral lenses.

The separation from Tel-Aviv does not indicate a break with the state and its homonational politics, but rather a positionality concentrating on local culture rather than on political stances. It is driven more by the lack of power —not being part of decision-making processes, having no resources and thus limited power—than by a calculated and articulated strategy. In the Israeli periphery, homonationalism is more a wish than a reality, leaving the activist with attempts to clean the space off, removing sexual associations that do not materialize into spatial and national belonging.

Discussion

Homonationalism is considered an organizing principle in LGBT politics and discourse (Currah, 2013; Gross, 2015; Ritchie, 2015; Schotten, 2016; Zanghellini, 2012). Homonational politics has become a symbol of modern LGBT individuals' aspirations for inclusion within and belonging to the national collective (Puar, 2007, 2013b). Discussing homonational politics'

function in a Jewish Israeli activist context in this article, first, we argued that homonationalism should be characterized as a multidirectional political stance, operating differently in diverse locations and LGBT spaces, that has various manifestations emanating from grassroots and activist spaces (bottom-up).

Second, we contended that including peripheral spaces allows for a deeper understanding of homonationalism beyond its application as a tool for pinkwashing, a disciplining ideology, or an attempt to incorporate LGBT individuals into the nation. In Jerusalem, homonationalism takes the form of a serious LGBT politics that can reject or oppose state politics, while in Kiryat-Shmona it is used to produce a new stance of queer spatial belonging in the periphery, detached from homonational logics.

Offering a critique of homonational politics and the state's regulatory facets, Ritchie (2010) called for the creation of a space "where bodies, desires, and identifications—queer or not—might proliferate, in all their perverse and incoherent glory," a space outside the state's reach, which reflects a notion that there is a profound contrast between state enterprises and grassroots actions. Contradicting Ritchie's vision, the analysis presented here reveals top-down "regular" models of homonationalism, where the state actively uses LGBT individuals to its benefit, but also highlights bottom-up politics where activists try working with or against the state. Both types of homonationalism work to establish homonational belonging and state power. The top-down model refers to when the state initiates and sponsors LGBT visibility and presence (e.g., hanging flags in city streets, organizing Pride parades, running a municipal Gay Center, promoting gay tourism campaigns to Tel-Aviv). At the same time, we found that LGBT politics have a bottom-up configuration, revealing that homonationalism can be generated by activists, some in favor and some against the state and the municipal agenda, but always as a reaction to political power.

Homonational politics empowers the Tel-Aviv LGBT space. It is also a crucial component of all other LGBT spaces in Israel, making homonationalism impossible to ignore. In Jerusalem, the difference is portrayed as a result of the social structure of the city, consisting of Arab and ultra-Orthodox LGBT individuals, leading to a nuanced politics of holding marked in space and in cultural constructions. In Kiryat-Shmona there is a dual politics, both emulating Tel-Aviv and constructing a respectable normalized space of belonging for LGBT sexualities, while at the same time aiming to subvert Tel-Aviv LGBT cultural constructions, leading to a creation of subversive belonging to the periphery, not immersed in homonormative politics.

What is apparent is that in order to construct an LGBT space and cultivate a space for identification and belonging, there is a need to somehow employ homonationalism. This does not mean that homonationalism works in the same manner in all spaces and times, or that it is more influential than

influenced (by a specific spatial politics). Also, this does not erase pinkwashing and the Israeli state's quest for legitimation through its usage of LGBT rights to its benefit.

Homonationalism, as a nuanced and LGBT concept, should be seen as more than a set of assumptions underlining queer subjects' relation with the nation. It relies on internal socio-spatial dynamics and on wider discourses of sexuality, LGBT identities, space, the nation, and local politics. Moreover, using local understandings of LGBT spaces can be useful in producing nuanced LGBT political models, which expand the Western-based politics of liberal versus radical politics, in which homonationalism is always associated with normativity and with the state, working against queer subjects.

Notes

1. For more on the implication of projections of lesbian and gay identities onto non-Western individuals, see, for example, Manalansan (1995) and Altman (2002).
2. See http://www.gaycities.com/best-of-2011/vote.php?page=10.
3. The classification of Mizrachim (literally translated as "Eastern" in the sense of "Oriental") is an ethnic category created by the Israeli government referring to Jews originally from Islamic countries (as opposed to Ashkenazim, who are Jews of European origin, which is similar to Whiteness in the Western cultural context; Shohat, 1988).
4. For a nuanced analysis of the potential of activism "from within" and modes of subversion inside the Gay Center, see Misgav (2015, 2016b).
5. On August 1, 2009 a man entered an LGBT youth meeting at the *Aguda* (The Bar-Noar) in Tel-Aviv, killing two and injuring 14.

Acknowledgments

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