Political Perspectives 2016, volume 9 (2), 1-13

Authoritarianism of the Everyday

Identity and Power in Public Space

Robin Trenbath*

Abstract: *This paper intends to explore the role of identity in the relationship between public space and the exercise of authority. By adapting the poststructuralist account of identity construction (Derrida, Tajfel) as a process of binary opposites with assigned normative values to the field of identity politics, we see that the dominant 'Self' claims exclusive power over expressions of meaning in public space and, as a corollary, seeks the authority to regulate the expressions of the alien 'Other'. This framework so defined allows for the analysis of a particular case study of a proposed Eruv (a symbolic boundary of Orthodox Jewish community) in Hale Barns, Greater Manchester. To this end, noted objections to the Hale Eruv will be understood as attempts by the majority identity who, in perceiving a threat to their monopoly on meaning, seeks to reassert their assumed power by rejecting as illegitimate the spatio-cultural meanings of others. This paper concludes with a critical overview, noting that the regulation and domination of minority meaning amounts to an act of political violence, insofar as the identity of the minority is oppressed. By being practiced in a greater variety of spaces and by a greater number of actors than commonly thought, authoritarianism is shown to be an interpersonal experience of the individual within their community, felt and perpetuated in the everyday arena of public space.*

Keywords: *Identity, authoritarianism, public space, Eruvin.*

Introduction

In the context of mass population displacement due to conflicts in the Middle East and Africa, and ever more intense media coverage about refugees under the narrative of 'crisis', a highly charged debate about the integration or assimilation of difference is taking hold amongst the public, politicians and academia in Western Europe. Yet how that difference is understood and treated in public space often reveals more about the idiosyncrasies of 'indigenous' populations than about the perceived failures of the incoming community to integrate and subsume their identities to their hosts.

Through a case-study of an Orthodox Jewish community's attempt to construct an expression of meaning in Hale Barns, Greater Manchester, this article will analyse the objections put forward by the wider 'indigenous' community against it – in particular the liberal claims of secularism and neutrality in public space, and conservative claims regarding integrity and continuity of character. By analysing and refuting each objection this article will show that, to the wider community at least, it is not the argument

*Robin Trenbath, (robin.trenbath@student.manchester.ac.uk) student in Politics at the University of Manchester. Thank you to my lecturers, Dr Christina Masters, Dr Laura McLeod, and Dr Aoileann Ní Mhurchú, and my tutor Henrique Tavares Furtado.

itself that is of prime importance but the ability to maintain a monopoly on the legitimate expressions of meaning in the local public space against a perceived invasion of otherness. This, I argue, amounts to an act of suppression, one that is perpetrated and experienced in the public arena of everyday life – an act, in other words, of 'everyday authoritarianism,' in which the exclusionary dynamics of identity politics works to oppress groups in countries otherwise claiming to be liberal democracies, and in which the secularity of space becomes a fig-leaf for spatial and symbolic dominance.

The first task of this article will be to expound on identity politics by leaning in large part on the poststructuralist account of identity construction as a process of binary opposites with assigned normative values. Although there are long-running and well-founded limitations to this model, the self-other dichotomy is useful in revealing how the dominant 'self' identity, by defining itself in opposition to the alien 'other', seeks to control the expressions of identity in public space. The experiences of Muslim communities in France and Switzerland – in which signifiers of identity such as the wearing of burqas and the building of minarets have been prohibited by law – are relevant to this dynamic and will be discussed in some detail.

In the second section this conceptual framework will be applied to the case study mentioned above: the attempt by a Jewish community to establish an *Eruv* in Hale Barns. The intention of this case is to determine the nuances of potential conflicts between communities on both symbolic and visible levels in a discrete public space in order to determine the composition and dynamics of power within it. From this, three common objections to the *Eruv* will be summarised and evaluated, analysis of which reveals that each objection can be reduced to an unstated desire held by the wider community to regulate the visible expressions of meaning in a discrete public space; ultimately, to privilege their own and suppress others. Finally, the implications of such processes will be applied to the wider context of the 'refugee crisis' and the treatment of minority faith groups more generally.

This article will conclude that by being practiced in a greater variety of spaces and by a greater number of actors than commonly thought, authoritarianism is shown to be not only a practice of the state, but an interpersonal experience of the individual within their community, felt and perpetuated in the everyday arena of public space, in which the expression and realisation of one's very identity is subordinated to the whims of a majority perceiving themselves to be threatened by difference.

Identity

In the study of politics it is sometimes necessary to subordinate the 'what' to the 'who'; to understand dynamics of power and patterns of distribution through the lens of social identity and intergroup behaviour. The reason for this is simple. Who we are – our personal characteristics, our social groups and our political affiliations – determines greatly the ways we make sense of our given socio-political context. They provide archetypes, embalmed in collective mythologies and passed down through cultural artefacts and rituals, that present ideal-typical behaviour for current and future generations to emulate. They are

also a source of meaning, offering a narrative that explains the past and predicting the future, whilst offering blueprints of values to hold. Politics, then, is often a function of identity. But how are identities constructed, and how do we model their role in politics?

Constraints of space prevent a comprehensive account of the different theories of identity construction, and so this article will focus primarily on a poststructuralist understanding. French philosopher Jacques Derrida argued that Western thinking is grounded in the logic of binary oppositions: man/woman; nature/culture; mind/body; free/determined; etc. – and identity is no different, being split between self/other.[1] In this perspective identities are dualistic; they are discursively constructed in reference and opposition to others. As Vivien Burr wrote: "…to give anything an identity, to say what it is, is necessarily also to say what it is not. In this sense, presence contains absence. That is, to say that a quality is present depends upon implying what is absent."[2]

This perspective is backed by experiments in social psychology. In what is now considered a classic study, Henri Tajfel et al. arbitrarily placed Bristol schoolboys in two groups by the toss of a coin.[3] As Bruce Hood characterised it, "Those members in the same group or 'in group' were more positive to each other, and shared resources, but hostile to 'out group' members, even though they were all from the same class."[4] Such experiments show that the construction of identity is often an exercise in exclusion, as the construction of the self is derived from the marginalisation of the other.

Derrida further argued that each binary relation is assigned a set of normative values. In the context of identity, those qualities associated with the self are privileged and deemed good, or civilised, and have legitimate claims to power and resources, while qualities associated with the other are base, primitive, and often perceived to be without meaningful agency. The notion of self is therefore two things: first, constituted in reference to the other and, second, assigned normative values relative to their epistemological status. The dominant identity presumptively gives itself power, whilst the other, minority identity is marginalised in its claims to power and resources.

That the construction of identity requires exclusion is well established, but it is less often discussed how identity also requires expression. In a society that derives meaning from what is visible, the markers of identity such as clothes, language and architecture become the conspicuous expressions of symbolic meanings without which the group would not feel fully realised. The mohawks of punks, the slang of the urban young and the towering spires of churches dominating landscapes all conspire to fill the public space with a rich myriad of expressive meaning. As Henri Lefebvre wrote of the phenomenon of the everyday, public space becomes the 'common ground' or 'connective tissue' of all conceivable thoughts and activities. Thus, space is a socially constructed and historically specific phenomenon, borne of the particular alchemy of divergent social contexts. By the logic of the spectacular society, identity is

---

[1] Derrida, Jacques. (1967). *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences.* Available at *http://hydra.humanities.uci.edu/derrida/sign-play.html* (accessed 01/01/2015).
[2] Burr, Vivien. (1995). *An Introduction to Social Constructionism*. (London: Routledge), p.107.
[3] Tajfel, Henri, Michael G. Billig, Robert P. Bundy, and Claude Flament. "Social categorization and intergroup behaviour." *European journal of social psychology* 1, no. 2 (1971): 149-178.
[4] Hood, Bruce (2011) *The Self Illusion*, (London: Constable), p.141.

tied to space through the medium of meaning, made visible by affectations of clothing or buildings or the spoken word. By extension, if an identity is unable to express its markers of meaning, to perform itself spatially, then it becomes alienated from its own sense of self and dislocated from its lived place.

Examples of this psycho-geography of power are found in recent political events. In France, where the sense of national identity is traced as back to the values of the Revolution and the continuity of the Republic, the reaction against perceived outsiders who supposedly do not share 'common values' of *liberté, égalité and fraternité* is robust. In 2004 a law was enacted that prohibited conspicuous religious symbols in government operated primary and secondary schools. In 2010 the burqa was banned on the grounds that, as Nicolas Sarkozy said, "We cannot accept to have in our country women who are prisoners behind netting, cut off from all social life, deprived of identity."[5] This ban on the visibility of difference in public spaces is applied specifically to clothing, whilst in Switzerland the ban on the visibility of difference was extended to architecture. In 2009 a federal popular initiative was passed that prohibited the construction of Mosque minarets. The most famous image of the campaign – the foreboding silhouette of a woman in Islamic dress in front of a Swiss flag peppered with minarets – showed the iconography of intolerance. Likewise in Germany, where the construction of a mosque was halted when residents and local government officials claimed that Cologne is a "Christian city"[6] and that mosques, seemingly in contrast to churches, are "political statements."[7] The trend is certain: symbols of identity, made visible in the public space, are becoming prohibited by the dominant 'indigenous' community.

The result of this is predictable. The exclusionary dynamics of identity politics suppresses the minority faith group's ability to express its markers of meaning, and so a narrative of injustice has taken root. As was seen in the Charlie Hebdo attack, it does not take much for a radical few to take control of the public space with an act of hyper-visible violence. Viewed through the lens of identity politics, public space becomes the site of power and contestation *par excellence*. Whoever controls the meaning of the space by extension controls the identities of those within it – transforming the regulation of expression into a mechanism of social control. As a result, a nexus of authoritarianism is created within the community, in which the expressions of meaning in local space are controlled and identities of minority groups suppressed. Debates over meaning in space provide the means for analysing the composition of power, and can potentially predict forthcoming acts of violence.

In the countries mentioned above the identities of the dominant groups perceived themselves to be under threat by the visibility of otherness, and so prohibited signifiers of difference using the liberal rhetoric of tolerance, secularity and inclusiveness. The dominant identity assigned itself the authority of regulating meaning in public spaces and, in doing so, handed itself power over minority identities not only in what they may or may not do, but in whether they may or may not be fully realised. On occasion signifiers of difference may be tolerated, but only if their visibility is minimal or if they follow certain

[5] BBC, June 22, 2010 "Sarkozy speaks out against burka". Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/8112821.stm (accessed 31/12/2014).
[6] Hundley, Tom (2007). "Mosque project stirs concerns about the integration of Islam in Germany", *Chicago Tribune*, August 22, 2007.
[7] Lander, Mark (2007) "Germans Split Over a Mosque and the Role of Islam", *New York Times*, July 5, 2007.

unwritten rules maintaining the integrity and continuity of local and national character. Ultimately, what is visible, and therefore what is considered meaningful, is monopolised and regulated by the dominant identity. The same holds true in the United Kingdom.

Case study

On Sunday 30th December 2014 around 300 people attended a public meeting as part of a consultation ahead of a formal planning application – an unusual number of people for a typically mundane task. After two and a half hours of a 'hostile' question and answer session, the proposal was eventually abandoned.[8] The plans were brought forward by the local Orthodox Jewish synagogue, which wished to erect a boundary around the community known as an *Eruv* – a term requiring some explanation.

In Judaism the Sabbath is a particularly important observance, attributed with maintaining the relationship between Jews and "their Torah, their laws, their narrative of a common journey, their Tabernacle (synagogues), and their community."[9] Amongst the observances of the Sabbath is the expectation of refraining from 39 categories of *melakhah* (work or deliberate activity), which includes the prohibition on "transferring between domains", i.e. carrying or pushing objects from a private domain to a public one and *vice versa*. Interpreted literally, by Orthodox Jews who believe the Torah to be the direct revelation of divine law,[10] this includes not pushing wheelchairs or prams, and would prevent young, old, and physically disabled Jews who needed physical assistance from attending their local synagogue on the Sabbath as they otherwise might. For Orthodox Jews, this religious law has historically been circumvented by the erection of a symbolic boundary that negates the public-private distinction by turning the entire area into a single private domain. Within an *Eruv* (Hebrew for joining, combining, or mixing together), wheelchairs and prams can be used as they are being pushed within a single private domain.

There are two important conditions for an *Eruv* to be *kosher.* First, the *Eruv* requires fully contiguous physical limits, and often uses pre-existing natural and man-made features such as rivers, railway tracks, and roads. In America, with municipal permission, utility poles are used to add to the border; but in the UK, new poles connected by wire have to be erected. In this case, the plan under discussion proposed installing 85 six metre tall poles, connected by fine nylon filament, and 700 to 800 metres of one metre high fencing in order to create a 12 mile perimeter around part of the village. The second condition is that the *Eruv* must be checked regularly to confirm its integrity, as any break in the border would mislead Orthodox Jews into violating the Sabbath. With those conditions fulfilled, an "entire

[8] According to their website: "…we confirm that we are widening the consultative process over the coming weeks continuing to listen to everyone's views and that there is no current intention to take any proposal forward to planning." http://haleeruv.org/

[9] Siemiatycki, Myer. (2005). "Contesting sacred urban space: The case of the Eruv." *Journal of International Migration and Integration/Revue de l'integration et de la migration internationale* 6 (2), pp.255-270.

[10] Roughly 25% of the Jewish population according to the Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs, available at http://www.jcpa.org/dje/articles2/demographics.htm (accessed 31/12/2014).

community agrees to reconstruct cognitively a private space otherwise understood to be public."[11] Abraham Wahnon, *Eruv* Programme Manager for Hale Barns, says that *Eruvin* (plural) play an important role in Jewish communities. "You notice a complete sea change in the community when an *Eruv* is in place. All of a sudden mothers are out and about on the Sabbath all the time and there are children galore. It's really lovely to see." According to those in favour, *Eruvin* enhance the quality of life and facilitate community unity with minimal aesthetic or behavioural impact on the wider community.

Like all things in a spectacular society, *Eruvin* are symbolic in meaning but physical in construction and expression, and as such require planning permission to build. As planning permission requires the consent of the wider community, the Orthodox Jewish community depends upon the wider community for the realisation of its own identity. Yet despite the precedent of several such socio-spatial boundaries already in existence in the UK (including eleven miles away in North Manchester), the *Eruv* proposed in Hale Barns created significant controversy amongst the local, non-Jewish community who argued vociferously against it. This begs the question: if the benefit to the Jewish community is so large, and the loss to the wider community so small, then one might think that a liberal and secular community concerned with the tolerance of difference and pluralism of values would be happy to accept it. But that has not been the case.

"Inherent in such disputes", writes Myer Siemiatycki, "are disagreements over such fundamentals as the scope for religion in public space; relations of religion and state; relations between dominant and minority religions; and, not least, competing understandings of religious text and ritual *within* a single religion."[12] It appears that it is not the physical construction of the *Eruv* that presents a problem to the wider community, but what the *Eruv* signifies. And indeed an *Eruv* is rich in symbolic meaning. "It embodies a minority faith community's need to imprint its identity on the urban landscape."[13] As mentioned in the context of France, Switzerland, and Germany, cultural artefacts of minorities signify the presence of difference, and the visibility of such difference signifies the presence of alternative meanings attached to space. In the UK, it would seem, even inconspicuous expressions of meaning can be regulated by the dominant identity.

Objections to the proposed *Eruv* were revealing. On a website comments section that received several hundred responses before being shut down, opponents argued along three main themes. The first came from a place of liberal secularism and argued that an *Eruv* would amount to an unwarranted religious appropriation of neutral public space. The second was a thicker version of the first, and argued that not only does an *Eruv* constitute a threat to the neutrality of the space, but also amounts to one religious community imposing its beliefs and rituals on the wider community. The third came from a place of traditional conservatism, and argued that the introduction of an *Eruv* would undermine the inherent character of the space itself. Each of these objections will be analysed using the framework of identity construction discussed above.

---

[11] Siemiatycki, "Contesting sacred urban space: The case of the Eruv", p.268.
[12] Idem, p.257.
[13] Idem, p.268.

First it is important to gain an appreciation of the space in question. Hale Barns has a total population of 15,316 residents, with the vast majority, 71.2% (10,910), describing themselves as Christian. Hale's population also describes itself overwhelmingly as 'White British', with 93.6% ticking that box on the census. Of those aged 16-74 (the entire adult population of working age), 13.7% had no qualifications, much lower than the national average of 28.9%.[14] When the railway station was opened in 1862, Hale Barns became a commuter area for middle class merchants working in the city, and by 1971 56.3% of the population were middle class – more than double those who identified themselves as middle class nationally.[15] In 2008, Hale Barns was named by The Daily Telegraph as the 12th most expensive place in Britain, with house prices 194% higher than those in surrounding areas.[16] The *Daily Telegraph* summarised the character of Hale Barns as:

> "…the villagey face of Altrincham, intensively sought after and the darling of the Cheshire champagne set, where old pubs have given way to the cappuccino lifestyle… New mansions have been slipped in between the old Victorian villas in the favoured tree-canopied roads, and nine estate agents vie to handle them. Channel 4's series, Goldplated, depicted men here as money-driven and women as youth- and beauty-driven."[17]

If place is, in Yi-Fu Tuan's words, "a spatial index of socio-economic status,"[18] then Hale Barns communicates something about the hegemony of the dominant group: wealthy, well-educated, and predominantly White Anglo-Saxon Protestant. In comparison, 6.9% (1,063) of the population identify themselves as Jewish, and the Hale and District Hebrew Congregation was founded relatively recently, in 1976.[19]

Objection 1: The threat to the neutrality of public space

For some objectors, the very notion of a group (least of all a religious group) reimagining a public space as a private domain is anathema to the liberal political tradition of secular neutrality. As local Councillor Patrick Myers argued, "Hale Barns has a very diverse community with people from many different faiths and no faith living together in harmony."[20] The implication of this objection is that the space should be

---

[14] "Census 2001 Key Statistics - Urban area results by population size of urban area". *ons.gov.uk*. Office for National Statistics. 22 July 2004. Available at http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/census-2001-key-statistics/urban-areas-in-england-and-wales/urban-areas-in-england-and-wales-ks07--religion.xls (accessed 01/01/2015).
[15] GB Historical GIS / University of Portsmouth, Hale UD through time, Social Structure Statistics, Social Class, *A Vision of Britain through* Time. Available at http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10027524/cube/SOC_GEN (accessed 02/01/2014).
[16] "Britain's richest towns: 20-11" *The Daily Telegraph, April 18. 2008,* http://www.telegraph.co.uk/property/3361038/Britains-richest-towns-20-11.html (accessed 03/01/2014).
[17] Idem.
[18] Tuan, Yi-Fu. (1977). *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota).
[19] Hale Shule: History: Available at http://www.hale-jewish-community.org.uk/2010/2_2_History.html (accessed 31/12/2014).
[20] Evan Bleier (2014) "Plans for Eruv to be built in Hale to be discussed at public meeting following objections" *Manchester Evening News*, 27 November 2014. Available at

kept public and neutral, with no one group laying claim to it, symbolic or otherwise. In a community like Hale Barns, the creation of a new community within it appears to the wider community as a self-segregation and an eschewal of engagement with the Hale Barns community at large.

This argument belies the reality. The Councillor's claims to diversity and harmony is simply untrue. First, residents of Hale Barns are vastly more homogenous in terms of religion, ethnicity, and socio-economic background than the general population. And second, if the standard applied to the *Eruv* is applied to 'indigenous' expressions of identity, we find that the landscape of Hale Barns is replete with symbolic resonances of traditional power: churches, for instance, as well as government buildings and schools. This calls to mind G. W. F. Hegel's maxim, 'The familiar is not necessarily the known.' The ubiquitous nature of the dominant identity leads to a kind of blindness, where we may be blind to our own expressions of identity but hypersensitive to the expressions of others. "So familiar and routine, so normal and natural is identity, that possession of one's own identity, and strategies exercised in defence of it, are simply below the horizon of critical awareness."[21] Recall Cologne, where Mosques were considered a 'political statement' but churches somehow not. One might as well quote the Bible: 'And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?'[22]

The space in Hale Barns is not as secular or as neutral as first thought, but is assumed to be so because it conveys a normalised meaning of the 'indigenous' identity. For newcomers to the area, the space is decidedly not neutral, nor harmonious, but communicates in strong architectural terms the socio-spatial dominance of the White, Christian, and middle class identity. Therefore the objection that an *Eruv* would amount to an unwarranted religious appropriation of shared public space fails, as it depends on a presumption of neutrality that does not stand up to scrutiny. Secularity and liberalism are not value-free, and secular-liberal public spaces are loaded with the dominant community's expressions of meaning. The subconscious assumption that they are neutral results in an imposition of dominant identity and value on religious minorities and creates the conditions for potential alienation. The objection on the grounds of protecting liberal secularism becomes a fig-leaf that validates the ongoing hegemony of the majority's own identity and justifies the regulation – and suppression – of others. By virtue of its sheer pervasiveness, the mechanisms of power in public space remains one of the most overlooked and misunderstood aspects of social existence.

Objection 2: The imposition of otherness

The second objection to the erection of an *Eruv* was similar to the first, but thicker in application. It accepts that the public space in Hale Barns is not neutral and argues that any socio-spatial expression of

---

http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/plans-for-eruv-8183040 (accessed 01/01/2015).

[21] Ash, Robert Charles (2000). *Mountains suspended by a hair: Eruv, a symbolical act by which the legal fiction of community is established*. Diss. University of Leicester.

[22] Matthew (7:3).

meaning necessarily imposes on other present identities constraints in their own capacity for meaning-making. The premise to this position holds that, rather than being neutral, the public space is – and should be – a reflection of the composition of identities present within it. The dominant identity should therefore be dominant in space, and the presence of any expressions of otherness represents an imposition of alien meaning that displaces their own. As a result, the dominant identity seeks to reassert power over the space by delegitimising those expressions as unwelcome and insensitive invasions of difference.

And yet, does an expression of identity for one group necessarily detract from the ability of another to express theirs? Is the public expression of meaning a zero-sum game? The flaw of the first objection is compounded in the second. The normalisation of the majority identity's own expressions of meaning results in a wilful blindness to the dominance it imposes on the space, and the consequences of suppression on minority identities. Whether or not the *Eruv* amounts to an imposition of otherness, the objection to its presence can be reduced to a desire by the majority identity to retain its ability to regulate the expressions of meaning in the public space.

Objection 3: The undermining of local character

The third argument raised by the local community in opposition to the proposed *Eruv* regards the character of the area. It implicitly admits that the space is not neutral to begin with but introduces a claim of ownership. Considered the natural inheritors of the space, the 'indigenous' population argue it is they who own it and they who should determine how it looks and feels. Opponents argue that the erection of an *Eruv* would make Hale Barns more attractive, resulting in a rising population of Orthodox Jews and the displacement of 'indigenous' people. In time this would, they argue, change the social fabric of the community and undermine the integrity and continuity of the space.

Since the desire to belong to a place often entails a reciprocal desire for the place to belong to you, to the 'indigenous' community the character of the area is coterminous with the security of their own identity. This mythology of territory draws attention to the absurdity of the notion that urban spaces have primordial characters distinct from the people living within them; that expressions of meaning exist absent of a discursive context with particular socio-temporal conditions. The accusation is one of social engineering, that the Jewish community wish to not only express its identity, but in time force out non-Jews and create an area within the *Eruv* they can exclusively call their own. An *Eruv*, understood in these terms, amounts to a Trojan Horse in which the invading Orthodox Jewish community can occupy the space and make it their own. To counter this fear of displacement the local majority wish to shut down at the first the ability for any other group to consider the space as they like. It is up to the 'indigenous' community to determine the character of the space, and that entails preventing expressions of alternate meanings however small.

Whether or not opponents of this sort hold genuine beliefs about a primordial character to the area, the logic of paranoia envisions a future radically different to the present, and requires intervention

to prevent changes on that scale. Effective intervention entails the majority population retaining hegemony over the ability to constitute the meaning of the space in the face of difference. It is a question for another time whether or not the insecurity of the dominant identity is sufficient reason to prevent minority groups from expressing their chosen meanings; or whether the fear of social change warrants preventing people from moving house to maintain some notion of character. However, understood through this conceptual framework all three objections can be interpreted as the majority identity fearing a loss of hegemony over the ability to regulate meaning in public space. As a result, they seek to reject as illegitimate the symbolic markers of meaning expressed by the minority Jewish identity, in this case the proposed *Eruv*.

Conclusion

The subject of this article is the importance of identity, using an empirical investigation of a proposed *Eruv* in Hale Barns to shed light on the relationship between identity construction and conflict between groups in public space. Recall that Derrida presented identity in dualist terms, arguing that the self is constituted in opposition to the other, and adding that each element is assigned a normative value. Recall also that in a spectacular society identity is a passive value until activated through expression, which must occur spatially. This reciprocal identity-place relationship is mediated by meaning, the currencies of which are the visible markers that communicate belonging and configurations of power. Amongst the privileges associated with the self is the regulation of power and resources, including the ability to impose on the space one's chosen meanings whilst suppressing others. With difference an increasingly salient issue, failure to accommodate and integrate alternative expressions of meaning have resulted in the alienation of minority identities. In communities that witness re-assertions of 'indigenous' power in public space, a narrative of injustice has taken root. And where the expressions of meaning for minority identities have repeatedly been rejected, and markers of difference like apparel and architecture have been prohibited, tragic acts of violence have sometimes resulted.

Disputes over *Eruvin* elsewhere in the world, including the USA and Canada, have seen legal judgements that have had a profound impact on the relationship between religion and state, often enforcing the state's duty to accommodate religious difference. A year after the first *Eruv* was erected in London the wires were intentionally cut, leading to a conviction of racially aggravated criminal damage.[23] That such controversy is caused reveals much about the interaction of identities; in particular conflicts between religious groups and the wider, often self-professed liberal-secular community in which they are situated. Of the three objections to *Eruvin* discussed above, each reduces to a power relation in which the dominant identity rejects signifiers of meaning associated with the minority identity in order to maintain the relative privilege of its own. As Arjun Appadurai wrote: "No modern nation, however benign its political system and however eloquent its public voices may be about the virtues of tolerance,

[23] Marzouk, Lawrence (2004). "Anti-Semitism on the Rise", *Watford Observer*, February 25, 2004. Available at http://www.watfordobserver.co.uk/news/463586.print/ (accessed 02/01/2015).

multiculturalism and inclusion, is free of the idea that its national sovereignty is built on some sort of ethnic genius."[24]

The objections to difference in Hale Barns reveal that the dominant identity strives to monopolise and regulate the visibility of meaning in a public space, being blind to its own expressions and suppressing those of others. Thus the largely homogenous community of Hale Barns demands a monopoly on meaning-making within that particular space. This act amounts to an 'authoritarianism of the everyday' – an epiphenomenon of exclusion – in which the construction of identity prohibits the actualisation of minority identity. Unable to fully express identity in public space, the minority group experiences a kind of alienation from self and dislocation from place, and so it is perhaps unsurprising that groups feel marginalised and tensions arise.

Such tensions associated with the proposed Hale Barns *Eruv* are a snapshot of how identities function and respond to diverse meanings within a context of population movement. It shows that identity plays a large part in how we make sense of ourselves and each other, has significant explanatory power in questions of security and conflict, and greatly determines the way we use space. It also gives rise to the question of how different identities can peaceably coexist with a plurality of meanings. As the 2000 Commission of Multi-Ethnic Britain put it: 'How is a balance to be struck between the need to treat people equally, the need to treat people differently, and the need to maintain shared values and social cohesion?'[25] When the dust of the 'refugee crisis' settles, discovering an answer to this question may be increasingly urgent.

[24] Appadurai, Arjun (2006). *Fear of Small Numbers: an Essay on the Geography of Anger* (London: Duke University Press), p.3.
[25] Parekh, Bhikhu (2000), "The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain: Report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain" (Profile Books: London), p.xv.

References

Appadurai, Arjun (2006). *Fear of Small Numbers: an Essay on the Geography of Anger* (London: Duke University Press).

Ash, Robert Charles (2000). *Mountains suspended by a hair: Eruv, a symbolical act by which the legal fiction of community is established*. Diss. University of Leicester.

BBC, June 22, 2010 "Sarkozy speaks out against burka". Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/8112821.stm (accessed 31/12/2014).

Burr, Vivien. (1995). *An Introduction to Social Constructionism*. (London: Routledge).

Derrida, Jacques. (1967). *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences.* Available at *http://hydra.humanities.uci.edu/derrida/sign-play.html* (accessed 01/01/2015).

Hood, Bruce (2011) *The Self Illusion*, (London: Constable).

Hundley, Tom (2007). "Mosque project stirs concerns about the integration of Islam in Germany", *Chicago Tribune*, August 22, 2007.

Lander, Mark (2007) "Germans Split Over a Mosque and the Role of Islam", *New York Times*, July 5, 2007.

Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs, available at http://www.jcpa.org/dje/articles2/demographics.htm (accessed 31/12/2014).

"Census 2001 Key Statistics - Urban area results by population size of urban area". *ons.gov.uk*. Office for National Statistics. 22 July 2004. Available at http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/census-2001-key-statistics/urban-areas-in-england-and-wales/urban-areas-in-england-and-wales-ks07--religion.xls (accessed 01/01/2015).

Hale Shule: History: Available at http://www.hale-jewish-community.org.uk/2010/2_2_History.html (accessed 31/12/2014).

GB Historical GIS / University of Portsmouth, Hale UD through time, Social Structure Statistics, Social Class, *A Vision of Britain through* Time. Available at http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10027524/cube/SOC_GEN (accessed 02/01/2014).

The Daily Telegraph, April 18. 2008, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/property/3361038/Britains-richest-towns-20-11.html (accessed 03/01/2014).

Matthew (7:3).

Marzouk, Lawrence (2004). "Anti-Semitism on the Rise", *Watford Observer*, February 25, 2004. Available at http://www.watfordobserver.co.uk/news/463586.print/ (accessed 02/01/2015).

Parekh, Bhikhu (2000), "The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain: Report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain" (Profile Books: London).

Siemiatycki, Myer. (2005). "Contesting sacred urban space: The case of the Eruv." *Journal of International Migration and Integration/Revue de l'integration et de la migration internationale* 6 (2), pp.255-270.

Tajfel, Henri, Michael G. Billig, Robert P. Bundy, and Claude Flament. "Social categorization and intergroup behaviour." *European journal of social psychology* 1, no. 2 (1971): pp.149-178.

Tuan, Yi-Fu. (1977). *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota).

Wibben, Annick T.W. (2009), "Who Do We Think We Are?", in J. Edkins, & M. Zehfuss (eds), *Global Politics: A New Introduction*, (Abingdon: Routledge), pp.85-107.