Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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MA (University of Regina, 2008)
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“Unarmed and Participatory: Palestinian Popular Struggle and Civil Resistance Theory”

Department of Political Science

Thursday, April 6, 2017
10:00AM
David Turpin Building
Room A136

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Scott Watson, Department of Political Science, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. James Tully, Department of Political Science, UVic (Member)
Dr. Martin Bunton, Department of History, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Rex Brynen, Department of Political Science, McGill University

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Martin Farnham, Department of Economics, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
This dissertation advances the literature on civil resistance by proposing an alternative way of thinking about action and organization, and by contributing a new case study of Palestinian struggle in the occupied West Bank.

Civil resistance, also known as civil disobedience, nonviolent action, and people power, is about challenging unjust and oppressive regimes through the strategic use of nonviolent methods, including demonstrations, marches, boycotts, strikes, sit-ins, protest camps, and many others (Sharp 2005; Chenoweth and Stephan 2011; Schock 2015). This study employs an approach that minimizes analytical (as well as normative) expectations of perfectly nonviolent forms of struggle (Celikates 2015), and I link this modified pragmatic action model to an organizational principle that has generally been overlooked or discounted in the research literature. On the whole, civil-resistance studies has focused on forms of action to the detriment of exploring forms of organization, or has relegated organization to a subset of action. My research clarifies a participatory approach to organization that is community based, sometimes known as the committee or council system (Arendt 1963). It is radically democratic, yet not necessarily confined to purely horizontal forms of organization. Rather, the model allows, and requires with increasing scale, upward delegation to decision-making and other task-contingent bodies. I argue that without a theoretical framework for apprehending systems of networked and tiered popular governance, Palestinian civil resistance has been insufficiently understood. The dissertation examines Palestinian cases through this framework, linking the conjunction of unarmed action and participatory organization to highpoints of Palestinian struggle. Among the cases is a small civil-society movement in the West Bank that began around 2009 striving to launch a global popular resistance.

My research suggests that civil-resistance theorists consider the non-dominative element of organization as they do the non-dominative element of action, that just as violent resistance strategies can counter the logic of people power, so too can centralized organization. Yet this logic does not require that participatory organization be perfectly horizontal any more than civil resistance must be perfectly nonviolent.