

Protest and Hope

Jim Prentice

Introduction

From this website I believe the newly interested, those involved then and those with memories of these times can obtain a feeling for the events of the Brisbane protests over some 25 years. My account intends to refresh the feelings of participants and open reflections. Yet my other purpose is to construct an accounting system for the hopes expressed in the social movements represented on this website. We aspired to build an effective vehicle of social change in opposition to oppressiveness and for personal freedom. Those aspirations are simplified here into the fate of hope in movement formations, practices and outcomes. It is a way of learning about the nurture of hope in these processes. My own hope for this essay is that it might prove relevant more broadly and today.

However, the way hope turned in this social movement was far from simple. We all had different hopes, if their connections remained profound in mine and many others' estimation. That contention I admit becomes an assumption of my essay. These connections soon appeared obscure for better or worse. Yet what we might have constructed in a platform of mutuality, was equity, participatory democracy, structural transformation and a permanent role for social movements as political players. Still this hardly removes the central fact of disunity as necessary to expressing differing sensitivities, but then also it demonstrates the need for self as well as social reflection, negotiation and ambassadorship in movement participants. We failed to gather those skills as necessities and an ingredient of universality that our sensitivities must acquire in movements, to produce broad solidarity.

For us to realise our hopes beyond our own sensitivities, they had to innervate conflict, new and varied identities, co-ordination and campaigns, media focuses and personal relationships. To better focus on such innervations I suggest four elements existed in these social movements. They were our; sensitivities, highly enriched or dense zones of communication, solidarity and local focus. Hope must oxygenate these key characteristics. Forces in society and within our movements may counteract this oxygenation, so that this oxygenation¹ with hope would be no ordinary task to achieve. This doubles the need for its accounting.

Movements should own these four processes and continue to be mindful of their impact. Accountabilities must operate against them:

¹ The term oxygenation means supply of an openness to growth and effective realisation of hopes through the four processes mentioned and consistent with our values but in reference to lessons learnt. Best practice if you like.

Firstly, each of the movements bundled existing sensitivities and vulnerabilities of groups and individuals, therefore transforming them adequately or not. These are the roots of individual and specific group hopes.

Secondly, the participants formed dense communication zones which structured and broadcast these sensitivities. Contained in these communication zones were practices like demonstrations, organisations like 4ZZZ or Women's House. These zones had an openness and intensity that was remarkable and an experience I try to recapture in talking about "what it felt like". These broadcast hope.

Thirdly, the protesters demonstrated or failed to show, the ability to retain and construct solidarity across groups. Through this enveloping solidarity, our social movement thereby held a key to viability and creative continuity. This could have happened in real historical time, given rising discontent with adversaries. It's a difficult tightrope but inclusiveness and difference must both operate in some accountable balance. Solidarity is the root of movements' collective hopes to change basic structures, because it conveys the hope of strength, if its roots are nurtured. It could be classified as strength that faces outward to adversaries.

Finally, a powerful source for this protest movement was local practices resting on person to person, face to face organisation and protest. Multiple local interactions were a creative source for movements; as experiences and perceptions of effectiveness and willingness to continue. This was true notwithstanding their reliance on theories and ideas dreamt up elsewhere. This local element cuts across the other three but serves the purpose of emphasising how much locality, both its uniqueness and its potential as conduit for emotional depth influenced each of the other dimensions. Local interactions were the source of protests and the source of a spreading of movements. Hope needs its generation here even if the object of protests is distant. The local is a testing ground of hopes and the potential of its sensual emotional embodiment.

Communication zones formed, unleashed our sensitivities and pulled us into the complexities of finding solidarities, which in turn had a local tangible verification and realisation. Such processes lead to the dynamic road of hope. These processes needed our scrutiny through a sense of accountability.

All the above mentioned are hard to account I agree, but surely worth it. We should not leave movements wide open to the fate of being driven by the adversaries' hostility. Nor should we be driven to a place where people will decide radical change is too dangerous. The latter was then and it is now a deeply important obstacle for many people. Who would blame them?

Movement activists so often talk of the accountability of others. My study points to how to retain and advance accountability within movements. However it is a ledger of sensitivities, beliefs, and internal movement relationships. It includes lost and reconstructed aspirations, valuable and destructive communications, and the computation of human variation and

variability. Movements tend to negate or gloss over these complexities by their narrowing demands and aspirations.

Finally I want to place one further matter into our discussion: the times were an historical watershed and so a special opportunity to confront the problem of interconnected movements. Pursuing sensitivities in dense zones of communication, Women's, Indigenous, working class, gay and lesbian, anti-war and civil liberties movements emerged significantly as parallels and overlaps, yet also encompassing different concerns. The interconnections are enlivened by the rise of multiple intentions of social groups within these movements – initially everybody wants change and obviously their version of it.

Viewed personally, what I intend is to piece together activism and reflection now 40 years apart. In recent times I have wanted to emphasise that the key characteristic of this and other movements was the great and unaccounted for shifts of profile, activity and the inter-connection of activist groups, occurring in conflicts. Such shifts then were not only highly transformative and creative but also deeply perverse, given original intentions. Our hope for something better was thwarted by our limitations. The adversaries in this focus readily attracted blame and this should never disappear with hindsight. However hopes produced by activists sometimes fell all too quickly to 'more of the same' – the same as the adversary or worse. This movement embodied both a creative potential of challenging and growing, as well as the parallel potential to lose the source of the movement. This juxtaposition hastened its demise or unrecognisable transformation by elites within it. Yet these movements also ushered in deep changes in the community sector, politics, and women's, gay and lesbian rights. It also gave a new direction or generational impetus to the Indigenous and new directions in government accountabilities. These were signs of acceptance, but our dreams were much more expansive. When our dreams were other how did this splitting of hope happen?

In keeping with the attempt to reconstruct these events in ways that integrate individual sensitivities, group communication, solidarities and the local, I begin as one individual talking about what happened. Subsequently the study examines the relevance of the four key elements of movement activity and the points of concern about its accountability.

What it felt like ... The Emotional Pace and Space

We were embroiled in a drama that felt powerful, disturbing and exhilarating. As a young person those feelings were hard to absorb, easily deal with and articulate. Yet we proved worthy of initiating the events and formulating the outlooks which caused some of these feelings. Many feelings came unexpectedly from events' unpredictable outcomes and experiences both within and outside the movement.

What did the times feel like personally? My reply is simple. I both loved and hated them. What I loved was the sense of freedom, of change enveloping the many things that made me unhappy: the chance to engage with others in less formal or conventional ways. It gave me solidity and stimulated me mentally. Moral beliefs and social concern were much more interesting if they were face-to face discussable and actionable rather than derived from the mark of superiority and wariness.

Oh what a feeling... Participatory Democracy.

It was extraordinary to make friendships which otherwise prove difficult; to feel connection to things I thought I should have an opinion on, and most of all to participate in this dense zone where others took your ideas and contributions somewhat seriously.

The opportunity to take seriously with others what was given, unchangeable and distant was exhilarating. That is what democracy meant and it was a serious engagement. I wanted to be taken seriously and to be serious and I cannot underestimate what a great feeling that was.

The protest movements created these incredible inter relationships on which new ideas and new aspects of communication and human interaction became part of my world. OK, lots of things are extraordinary when you are young but I think older people in the movement felt that too.

Heart and mind are so closely linked in conscience. Often enough, those discussions were handed to the privileged learned, or to Churches riddled with social prejudices. Often there was more to learn from a good joke (and still is) because of the way morality was and is cast in our culture. For Brisbane this new way of talking about social engagement, of beliefs on a continuum of change and of the social labelling of deviancy as just ill informed, all gave fertile nourishment. Such discussion gave courage to those wanting to think about and act on social and moral problems.

I thought the movement gifted me something I never could have imagined. I had never participated in this intense communication in which we talked about moral responsibility, legitimate actions and theories of how societies enveloped you in mythologies. I was stunned at the paltry excuses those in authority gave when unmasked. I received the best education in politics I could ever have wished.

There was a personal interest in study as in wanting to find out about the world I experienced then. I always had some of that interest but here was a strong stimulus. I felt I should know more because it mattered to people around me- the things I studied. (These are exactly the motivations lacking in much education). Many of us had a general love of knowledge. That suited me well.

We protesters shared a bond that came from protests and seeing each other at forums and meetings. Meetings of organisations gave more of this sense. Friendship flowed from action and involvement. It is a warm feeling if soon prone to upset and to the limits of shared sensitivities involved.

I want to stress the positives that I associate with the orientation of the movement to a participatory democracy. I wrap together the intoxicating mix of being taken seriously in discussion about important things normally ignored: I discussed, argued and engaged heart and mind: add to that the camaraderie –it makes for something to cherish and vent.

Yet on the other side we experienced hostility from authorities, the irrationality of the status quo mentality and the indifference of others. Feeling strongly and being ignored sat poorly with our young egos anyway, but when our country had declared war and was sending people to die for political beliefs, it was perplexing and frustrating.

I experienced a sense of powerlessness that started to dwell on my mind and drew me to escapism and hedonism. We became marginalised and our incapacity to diagnose its subtle and not so subtle effects bedevilled us. The exhilaration of contesting, dissolved into defeat and the sense that things wouldn't change. This worked in behind my revolutionary or activist fervour. It wasn't paralysing but edged me towards a sense of danger and precarious location. The newspapers were relentlessly vindictive. The police were threatening and ignorant; but very powerful, presences.

All this felt overwhelming, if at times the cause of humour and solidarity. I think I missed proper description of the psychological power of being denigrated and humiliated. That weighted on me more for its not being dealt with as we lacked the personal capacity to support each other.

Further there were specific attacks or random blows aimed by armed police at individuals in the dark, in their homes and outside our meetings. I hated them. But these emotions were hard to dissolve and articulate into practices and discussions. Anger and suspicion grew exponentially but anger is hard to satisfy. It needs accounting and reconstruction but not forgetting. I needed help with that.

That previously mentioned process of pushing one to the margins also fuelled unresolved exploitation and discrimination within the movement. I think the emotional burdens of some or all these processes were the source of my sense of hopelessness. Yet, by itself, it is quite inadequate to explain that sense of hurt and resentment orchestrated by others who felt our lack of recognition of them, as they withdrew into separate movements. That separation suggests an absent qualitative element lacking in us.

Those with long term discrimination aimed at them reacted differently from me. Mine, driven in the immediacy of protests against particular wars produced a real commitment but less sense of an oppression inhabiting my world, body and mind. We forged our solidarities differently. We, at differing

levels lacked the skills and emotional depth for broader understanding of those apparently in one movement. It was a big ask but I was of course making big asks of others. Women didn't stand for it. The Indigenous didn't imagine a pristine solidarity, I think, nor worker groups as much, I believe. Needless to say, for white heterosexual male students, it was the women's rebellion and separation, which hurt most.

However I believe this focus on gender identities, obscures the other process of marginalisation that protesters male and female, black and white, student and worker felt. I experienced this second dimension of growing loss and dismay at our predicaments, if they seemed more joined at the time. There was an awful sense of the slow marginalisation that befell us. In my mind, defeat which we could not bear to accept, joined the splitting of paths between groups and put the idea of solidarity in disarray.

In this chaos, violence and antagonism and without adequate support of each other, there was a slow descent into a sense of exhaustion and defeat despite only a few years of conflict. To solve it I opened the box of disinhibition (Say it like it is! Let it all hang out!), in this protest movement. Disinhibition is the personal turned into the political in a destructive way. Some took on the most alienated personalities – psycho-pathologies appeared.²

I will generalise to the "we" since I think many others but not all, felt this shift. We became disinhibited ourselves in ways quite contrary to the early Gandhian influence. Of course contempt for moral codes grew as we saw how they implied political indifference. We were tempted to rail against all strictures since the world proved so indifferent. There is a fair piece of youthful intolerance in that and lack of wisdom about how much work was involved in challenging ourselves, others and society, deeply.

Disinhibition and tantrum seem linked now in my mind as I suspect it was already linked in some of those we were to convince. However, few came to our aid – rather deciding it's easier to judge and find fault. Yet it proves what people saw locally about others affects them deeply. I became very isolated and felt that separateness. That was like being swept under in the surf...and finding you are upended, threatened and lost. I didn't know I was 'losing it', but at times I was and saw that evidence in others.

Yet some of these instabilities were short term and some applied very immediately to us with short term goals and grander distant goals. To those permanently more precariously placed, this marginalisation operated more deeply but less immediately perhaps: perhaps more of both for them applied, depending on individual sensitivities. Slow psychological attrition follows marginalisation without successful resistance. The costs were not accounted for. Such was our commitment, our vulnerable and shallow mindset.

² I use this generally rather than as a professional practitioner.

Yet to fight was exhilarating, especially initially and the sense of moral preoccupation very satisfying. Here love and hate mingled in large quantities.

Our excuse - easy: “we were bashed and brutalised” - but not adequate to cover the scope of our disarray.

So how did it feel in summary? Well I found an education and a legitimate amplification of my sensitivities in dense zones of communication. My need to be taken seriously, to indulge curiosity and the desire to understand, all found a satisfying home. I could not have wished for such an exhilarating experience. It carried with it the realisation that unity was very difficult, that you might inhabit the behaviours of oppression covertly, despite the new ideas. My sensitivities were no longer vulnerabilities. It was an epiphany, if orgasmic was then the term – the *Linga Franca*.

If the fracturing of imagined solidarity meant exposures to things that I needed to know, the marginalisation was also very serious for our wellbeing – our many movements’ well being. I and others were scarred by trauma, which the movement failed to address.

In the following I want to reconstruct the movement through accountability applied to the operation of sensitivities, dense communication zones, solidarity and the local: the key processes of movements.

Accounting for Hope

In this section, I want to show how the four elements that make up social movements the existence of sensitivities as individuals (including shared senses of sensitivities as with those who were the subject of racism), the projection of these into discussion where they are mixed with ideas and generalised in different ways then broadcast via intense communication practices, the characteristics of solidarity and the influence of the local. Their value and losses and gains needs accounting.

Sensitivities and vulnerabilities

I argue that the Brisbane protests rested on the broadcasting of individual’s concerns or sensitivities into the public arena. By sensitivities I mean a sense of moral responsibility, care for those in need, recognition of self in the troubles of others and a felt bond like “there by the grace of god go I”, but made into a project to act strongly to change that injustice. Conventional politics failed to make their expression adequate.

Look at the website and open an image - that is what you see: orchestrated sensitivities.

Addressing a failed or missed translation of sensitivity into public concern was the connection which social protests made –if this was not how we described

it then. The denial of the public legitimacy of our sensitivities happened then in war, in reference to Indigenous people, and the privatising of women's capacities to make contributions to society. It was this sensitivity - of self understanding, social connection and empathy - whose trail we find and sometimes lose, where it is corrupted, in the Brisbane Protests. The shifting of sensitivities and the reconstructions of sensitivities within and beyond the anxiety of vulnerability is a good way of looking at these social movements. It is essential to the accounting of hope.

Many models of radical social change bury sensitivities. Such are regarded as effeminate and ineffectual, naive and middle class. Protest in the orthodox left transported such concerns into retaliatory models. These people did not lack sensitivity. Rather they had not digested their own record of filtering social problems in the cold light of practicality and political action. The originating sentiments of concern, they were discarded as residue: not a source of measuring success or failure.

Sensitivity is usually learnt with good parenting and/or community mentoring. With unresolved suffering often it becomes associated with vulnerability and is mostly immediately dismissed as weakness, unwelcome concern for excluded groups, mental instability and 'time consuming' for no good outcome or your own problem. Churches alternatively hold sensitivity in a twilight zone of a strange public privacy.

In reality, sensitivities are characteristics of great intrinsic worth and a necessity without which human society cannot operate. In the Brisbane Protests, the protesters expressed sensitivities in new ways in creating new social protests. Where these had partially reached public attention they faced new interpretation and reassembly by protesters: others had disappeared behind ignorance and prejudice. Our attention here was profoundly important. What our uprising of sensitivity created was our mutual permission for certain vulnerabilities to have expression. That meant new identities emerged, as individuals and groups collected them and transformed vulnerabilities. People were drawn from paths that others, perhaps parents or communities saw as safest, real and realisable. Of course this is an assumption of beneficence and wisdom in the status quo of the community. I think parents sometimes possess those attributes, and societies more likely don't. Certainly this trust and faith alters within such communication nets that we produced.

So, if the characteristics of sensitivities shifted from private vulnerabilities where they were hushed, shared privately or only partially legitimised by the churches means, they only remained part celebrated or suppressed. On the contrary, for us, organisations, relationships, media campaigns became cutting edges of newly permitted sensitivities and influenced by our aspirations.

You need to digest feelings, move with them and outside them, to know them well. This seems almost impossible because of the intensity of conflict, the strength of feeling. Yet I argue it is a necessity and in our case also the product of the non-reflective nature of the emotionality and vulnerabilities we

harnessed: our own. This was especially true of the male dominated, or more ideologically constructed movements: the ones more eroded by cauterised or unexplored sensitivities. The problem remains that in fact sensitivities are part of history, collective and individual and their expression therefore also suggests new movement characteristics should exist. However that is not their only relevance.

We thought about a lot of things but not about what we were doing and how it affected us. Strange or not, exhuming those feelings by talking about what it felt like 40 years on fills a gap caused by never having had that discussion then. Yet these movements still embodied sensitivities that were novel and challenged some tides of victimisation and mistreatment. We weren't all bad!

We gathered our sensitivities in movements. We recreated them through practices of oppositional protests, in the intense dialogue of emerging circles of re-evaluation of self and society, group and elite where our sensitivity appeared no longer as a vulnerability but a strength. The problem was that sensitivities are far reaching they don't bundle easily as individuals don't unless coerced. The 'personal was the political' slogan places them out of the dark and into a twilight zone partly to our credit, but I believe it undermines the separateness of both. It was a good start. A myriad of complexities transpired in that translation from sensitivity to social movement. The road through vulnerability cannot be escaped. Vulnerability is also human self protection, if socially permitted but such vulnerability also requires constructing socially as needs, changes, refocusing, help and resistance.

As protesters therefore we were caught in this trap of delivering that which is in most short supply: a new humanism, sensitivities and a militant self esteem from those once regarded as lesser. Gandhi and King demonstrated this moral superiority, this capacity for commitment which gave hope. The emotional problem of change is to not lose sight of goals of growth. New spiritualities, sensitivity and inner developments which will distract us from materialism must grow and yet survival must be critical too. I think we had no idea that these were the sums we needed to apply. We needed to hold on to our emotions, fertilise their complex character and not lose them nor straightjacket them into loves and hates. That is the necessary accounting procedure.

Sensitivity often associated with inwardness and shyness flourished into intense communication. I think this is partly why youth were so attracted to such movements. For strong protest movements to emerge, agreement must form about deep wrongs, new identities, ways of getting through, sensitivities expressing the retention of ill gotten gains and preserving core characteristics. This can be a negotiation through vulnerabilities and sensitivities without cauterising them or engaging them to the extent that we are confused about our differences.

This balance needs accounting - not least because for us to establish these sensitivities publically, we were drawn to the dense communications zones which allowed us to re-imagine the world using these sensitivities as a

connected platform. Forgotten, they readily turn under the formidable internal tensions and relentless marginalisation orchestrated by the status quo into something quite other: the burial of hope.

I heard it on the Grape Vine: How change happened: Dense Communication Zones

Otherwise locked by vulnerability; failed expression; privacy and oppressive shackling, we liberated our sensitivities through dense zones of communication. Evident on this website is how these zones form through local meetings, face to face interactions, households, communities and protest venues, organisations like Women's House, as well as the formation of local media and cultural events. Additionally this web site shows intense communication at work with pamphlets, media, and marches and how these processes expanded communication. Zones included (like chicken and egg) practical activities. These Brisbane social movements created plans and protests; media and meetings; conferences and personal bonds of love as individuals. The participants of the multiple social movements formed viable households and expanded their concentrations within localities. At its sharpest end, they managed the occupation of public space in defiant opposition and intense community. These communicators were the weavers of dreams and resistances.

In debates, we recognised types of public awareness and concern as legitimate where they were regarded as illegitimate. They constituted a movement's real ability to broadcast a constructive resistance. You can't challenge powerful elites without new versions of the world which represented alternatives carefully drafted against the accepted wisdom. To energise this, the communications were regular, expansive, charged by events, open to new ideas, recreated and reconvened through emotional forces related to sensitivities. These zones required contexts and people open enough and sufficiently under awed with authority. Such formations can't be done without mechanisms of sharing, communication, agreement, acquaintance and action. The resolutions of these zones were steering forces allowing this movement's reconsideration of what was wrong, what were alternatives, how to get there, who to form alliances with and what were our rules of engagement. These discussions happened, if I question their adequacy for the full realisation of hope.

Essentially, what was involved in these dense communication zones was very important. We are talking about a transference of emotional goal posts, a swapping of allegiances and identities, a re-analysis of who are authorities, what and who can be trusted or matters, who might be loved (if that less so), and where to focus future orientations.

So perhaps these zones provide something like new love in a way. It's a new beginning or so it seems.

Collectively we were regaled with a myriad of global and local issues. Issues about Conscriptation; or forced removal of Indigenous people to make way for

mining; or fights for equal wages, or resistance to equal wages for women all surfaced in the 'sixties. This umbrella of change has roots internationally in the defeat of Nazism and the anti-Fascist agenda of all progressive movements after the war. Race, gender, disability, and indigeneity were identified as Fascist related thinking and practice, if existing more benignly than in Nazism. Our sensitivities rooted in historical ground which gave but also formed opportunity.

Such zones crisscrossed through shared concerns through social groupings. Such groupings included those within generation friendships, within ethnicities, classes, locality and household based connections. Diverse groups, whose paths did not so readily cross in other circumstances, began to plan a resistance using placards, marches, street rallies and public presences. Gravitation towards and connections between other groups of resisters shaped a growing awareness of the adversary. Combinations of issue and time, people and place, existing organisations and new congregations made this happen. As a result in Brisbane we saw public demonstrations, new venues of protest, new media and new issues. All these are in the website.

The alternative media had prominence - *4ZZZ* or *Impact* or *Student Guerrilla*. Women's liberation grew and so too its publications and meetings and like Black Power caused great celebration. Our website says a lot about various media avenues, if the most basic was the public demonstration.

These organizations, media, institutions and households were sites for the weavers of dreams. Meetings that went for hours, conferences that went for days and nights, meetings where people yelled, shouted and found new expletives and new ideas were all commonplace. Intensely enthusiastic individuals displayed passions and devotion to theories and strategies. Groups formed to achieve tasks, meet socially, shared pubs, beds and houses. People embraced discussions that no one had dared broach.

Protesters created themselves in oppositional ways. They picked landmark campaigns which expanded their repertoire. Women, concerned with sex education attempted to intervene into school curriculums by the unconventional route of talking directly to school girls. Indigenous activists wanted to address health in their communities. They became empowered to assert their own cultural bases for service provision against orthodox medical administration. We organised in solidarity and as well through forming organisations.

A new identity emerged in the intensity of communication: activist; non compliant; critical from outside the mainstream and preaching non-compromise and open participatory government. That was a new identity whose wearers fought for civil liberties. It soon had male and female dimensions and white and black, if in the form of splintered groups: still this was broadening criticism but fractured.

What then are the measures of accountability suggested here and that through greater awareness, we might have applied more comprehensively? The protesters in Brisbane proved very competent communicators who used resources well. Nevertheless the first step was the formation of places where people began to talk intently, regularly and with the devotion of considerable energies. Such intentions corresponded with historical events, specific oppressions and desires to contest the 'normal' view. There was a great need to foster this dialogue, and think of ways of duplicating the immersion in these dense emotionally charged experiences with references to more immediate examples. The common outlook was to find simpler messages that condensed thoughts and sensitivities, and obscured their uncomfortable complexities. Ideally one apparently should set out a program as if this process is now a one step procedure. Hope was dashed by that loss of dialogue and the elevating of ideology or action oriented projects against that dialogue. They needed not to be mutually exclusive for the construction of a permanently participatory society.

An accounting of the experience of dialogue as inclusive and inquiring, creative and liberating suggests its burial by more formalised organisations, ideologies and informal elites. Growth in hope needed the more open search for identity where these zones remained powerful sources of new images and dealt with a changing sea of problems and ideas. This is so not least in the nature of solidarity as movements grew and coalesced. I don't think Marx told us it wasn't the destination but the journey.

Solidarity

Initially, dense communication zones bathed their participants in solidarity and created a sense of well being brought about by sharing, acting and creating. Solidarity, however is singled out as a key ingredient as others have remarked about social movements. It proves even more important to study this as we notice the variety of movements represented on the web site. They all won't agree because their sensitivities will differ but the capacity of movements to move towards internal understandings marks their longevity and unity and therefore as more resilient forces. Solidarity is a mark of the strength of a movement to negotiate its internal differences and aberrations and ultimately lends a vital clue to the likelihood that the work that occurs in dense communication zones can and will be effective in challenging the society at the widest levels. Rather naively we thought demonstrations brought solidarity. When abandoned by protesters at one point of time as told with and under 'the phantom' image on the web site, greater reflection operated. It was not the only way to coalesce.

As regards solidarity everyone recognises internal conflicts that existed. It was evident then and we see it clearly in the image of the badge and double female symbol on the website. The dense communication zone did not produce unity but new imaginations of a more sensitive world which clashed with recent and prior ones and with each other. These groups became intertwined in the new communication. Then they explosively divided it, finding

ignorance and exploitation within an apparently united movement- dividing and yet enriching it.

While communication occurred, and hope spread, people did not so readily undo lifetimes, however short, of attitudes and behaviours. Such requires complex alliances given different sensitivities. The hopes of one group were still not met by the consensus of the zone that equity was desirable. It is well known that women objected strongly to the way men in the movement behaved. Indigenous people didn't want to be just workers or just women but Indigenous variants of these. Their sensitivity was not negotiable even within apparently sympathetic zones. They noticed a variant of common ground in whites or men they found unacceptable. It was not common after all. The same unresolved sensitivities applied to women cast into the category of workers with a few special requirements such as, for example, maternity leave. These were profound differences causing the unity of the dream to simply disappear – a rude awakening. Women experienced rape, the Indigenous, racism within the movement. Accounting for such a flawed but in other respects justifiably celebrated solidarity suggests the need for profound and prolonged negotiation. Differences in the solidarities abounded: pluralism addressed best by liberalism exploded – as practice and concept.

If we look at the institutions built by the movements mentioned, it is very noticeable that some movements saw care of their own as essential. Both the women's movement and the Indigenous movement as demonstrated by the activities of Women's House and in the letter by Dennis Walker to Killoran, show this capacity and interest. I cannot think of anything equivalent in the movements I participated in as a white male and think we generally were not interested. Of course I mean white heterosexual males and most, not all. Our justification was or might have been that politics and money determined health and well being and so they did. Unfortunately or not these are not the only factors in disease and even less so, I think, in its healing, if such healing is possible.

There were internal conflicts of ideologies, and personalities. We trampled on each other as "they" trampled on us. Of course the battle lines of absent sensitivities were rarely sensitively drawn within movements. There were gender and ethnicity tensions which were sad but necessary to large degree since they reflected realities inside both the movements and our society. Rigid and much older ideologies which seemed traitorous to early hopes and aspirations emerged to complete the loss of the currency of sensitivity. These ideologies had a place in a grim reality where the vulnerability was cauterised or substituted by the adversary. The dream arising from the earliest zones of communication gave joy but the euphoria had declined into kill joy ideologies some with an accent on the kill. Of course they also educated us about how insensitivity is systemically constructed, which was a vital piece in the jigsaw, but not the puzzle resolved.

Out of tensions, conflicts and insensitivities, our mutual dislike, even hatred grew. That is why accountability must operate to strengthen movements working against ignorance and endemic power. We must assess power

relocated in social movements and access the movements' ability to ingest a complex array of sensitivities. Social movements need to elect their own assessors.

Were I female or Indigenous I might not recall the hate aimed at those once sharing to greater extent a unified dense communication zone so clearly. I think that's true but not the whole story. The indigenous differed as the conflict in FCAATSI reveals. Women too felt the pressures within the sisterhood to bury sensitivities and reconstruct them into new sexual orientations and hostility to the goals women were supposed to have. Some chose to embrace these goals voluntarily and out of gender self respect their drive toward motherhood. Women soon railed about femocrats and the great sell out. However, then as well, movements drifted following 'natural' (in fact very much constructed) currents and lost sight of the bigger picture as well.

Needless to say some sort of solidarity accounting should have followed. A variation of this point of the corruption of sensitivity and a misogynist solidarity was made in accusation, by women quite rightly and by the Indigenous and later gays and lesbians on other scores. Nor have I have said anything of personal trauma people suffered in protest events through violent interactions. These happened and were not addressed in any publicly or privately supportive way and so all these costs remain unaccountable to the movement.

Movements employ and further envelop people and social groupings with their own histories and sensitivities. The ledger must include the capacity to accept and respect real differences – individual, sociological, behavioural and intellectual. These can't be reduced to political profits and losses in simplistic fashion. The final combined reference point of self understanding is in the term praxis: theory and action or commitment together. Solidarity accounting might point more strongly to commonalities reflected in such a praxis. Of course that needed a great deal more good will and insight: sorely lacking by some of us and in differing ways, at times.

Why local history?

As focused by Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela, notable world symbols of new moves for social justice became worthy of press attention sporadically. Further signs of ongoing resistances were world-wide, self determination movements surviving under the pall of Cold War conformity. Therefore in the 'sixties, Conscription and war were obviously very powerful national galvanising forces but with global and local contributions adding greatly to a sense of unrest. Yet, I believe the local remains critical to the organising demonstrated in the Brisbane Protests. It is the local which gives substance to communication, transforming self-images with reference to non-local influences as well, and activating people to recognising these as valid sensitivities rather than absent, privatised or denigrated vulnerabilities.

We do not have to dismiss the critical role of national and international events as stimulation of zone formation to advocate the importance of the local. The local aids the trust of face to face experience for the reinvention of sensitivity. Such sensitivity builds around real i.e. fully situated and present, rather than distant (or virtual) people and their viewpoints. Trust and physical proximity are related and interact strongly. The building and repairing of trust has potency at the face to face level which is difficult to duplicate. Group identities form out of immediate bonds as well as common hatreds of near or far power. Solidarity may have its deepest roots in the local much as activists need to imagine its application as widely as possible.

Major campaigns developed about civil liberties, racism, sexism and the nature of the university and unions' right to engage in politics. The place where this resistance flourished was in institutions but more generally in the rather benign inner suburbia of Brisbane at the time. Many of those least connected to the status quo lived there. It was not a ghetto of poverty but a crucial mixture of disparate groups where dense communication amplified; given physical connectivity, and cohesiveness with those close or community connected. Engagement is not just dependent on communication media with broader reach³.

For movements to succeed they need local roots. This movement discussed on the website encompassed others by lateral local inclusion. The dense communication zones were local phenomena built around alliances, meetings protests from which people developed mutual recognition, friendship and of course, unjustified at times, trust. It is hard even in this day and age to imagine movements growing without this real embodied interaction. (I hope that stimulates contemporary reflections about the mobile phone as the cause of the Arab Spring for example).

In Brisbane, people lived in inner suburbia either because they had to or no longer wanted to associate with mainstream suburbia. So the zone was a locality too, a physical dimension since; students, Indigenous people and other outsiders - the artistic, the non-conforming, all shared a destiny, and a class- of- outsiders, location. Shared locality increased the chances of dense communication - the meeting of outsiders the chance to find common background or friendship, the chance to develop the trusts that proximity easily breeds.

We rightly concerned ourselves with the historical circumstances for these zones to operate. They existed in houses and meeting places, pubs and headquarters. However they also existed in debates on the job, at schools and universities and often enough as now, the debate was the protest –the

³ I emphasise the local because we are now so aware of the internet which seems to demonstrate the irrelevance of the local. I hope it is less beguiling because it is far from the full story. Rather I will refer you to two counters: the more connected ; Joe Trippi's use of the internet in the Dean candidacy was taken over by Obama. Use the internet to organise the local meeting and from that local cell, campaign rejuvenation and Party rejuvenation will follow. However an article "How Luther went viral " is fascinating. Luther's condemnation of the Church in 1517 spread with the new technology of the printing press but orchestrated by small groups outside the Church who not only reproduced the message but also orchestrated it through these local cells. So the Protestant revolution and the printing press Luther's condemnation of the Church spread through Europe in less than one year (*The Economist*, Dec 17-30, 2011).

subject matter otherwise unspoken. People set up tent embassies, people's parks, university strikes and occupations. At this point the dense communication zones exposed themselves to public forces and the authorities, just as in Tahrir Square, Cairo recently and just as with the Arab Spring⁴ (displaced unemployed youth in the major cities) physical proximity is critical.

The locality of the inner suburban Brisbane was a vital well spring of interaction and engagement. Household formation was an inevitable outcome of meeting at Protests especially with groups of people who are more fluid in their movements. In Brisbane, the politics of domesticity was then one of the great learning experiences: learnt on site. Exchanges of understandings and practical intimacy tested these meanings at a very local level. The potency of such connections by interaction in real time and space I can only reiterate was then absolutely crucial. Any attempt to grow movements by cobbling together with other cities' movements proved much more unrewarding and seemed like icing the cake. It was still required but less important.

Intimate relationships, household activities, protest manifestations and cultural expressions are evidently local. If their products or these relationships move over space and time and shared via communication nets, the local has played a role.

I think the aphorism that the personal was the political so central to these protests is stripped of much of its meaning if separated from local interactions. The Indigenous above all others recognise place and locality in a very different way in the concept of country and 'skin'. This is a non negotiable recognition by many indigenous.

We all know the limits of the local, idealised not least by the fact that a local is a person living in the environment the adversary created or with some sublime fondness and familiarity. Nevertheless a participatory democracy rests its roots in the local. It is very important to reflect on the translations of sensitivities, the creative viability of dense communication zones and the strength of solidarities. We cannot understand their effect and our affect without their accounting at the local level.

When you think then about this movement you cannot extract the local. It is a matrix or the soup of protest movements. At its pointiest end we see the formation of resisting communities in Tahrir Square or near Stock Exchanges in the 99% movements as we did in Brisbane in Roma Street and elsewhere; a better comparison in the People's Park and the Tent Embassy. These are local, too.

Conclusion

Recasting events in terms of four key factors; sensitivities, dense communication, solidarity and the local, I think we can identify what might go

⁴ Even with the Arab Spring in the major cities, displaced unemployed youths' physical proximity is critical.

wrong at an internal level in movements but really why where they go right, in places that matter. These processes are fundamental to movements purporting deep change. Involved in these processes, protesters must attend to their equitable and successful outcomes. I have stressed how valuable, stimulating and essential, grass roots democratic movements can be. I think that is a tentative or partial indication of how much we all might gain by a version of this, if permanently in our doings, thinking and feelings.

Regretfully, much went wrong. We variously aimed to politically cauterise vulnerability. Surely the temptation to do so grew with the adversaries' cruelties. However that same cauterisation proved fertile ground for the movement's own generation of insensitivity, psychopathology, cruelty, and oppression.

In a platform of mutuality, what all groups might have emphasised was equity, participatory democracy, structural transformation and a permanent role for social movements. Yet this hardly removes the central fact of disunity as both processes welcome the expressing of sensitivities but demonstrate the need for negotiation and ambassadorship. Those skills were necessities for the element of universality that sensitivity must acquire in movements. Its opposite is disinhibition: proof of failure

In reality a sense of psychological disarray in general, and movement meant, there is reason to assume these rekindled and published sensitivities translated into negative political platforms. Such platforms buried vulnerability in translation, caricatured sensitivity in the face of its complex connection to self, resolution of human experiences and interior conflicts. They wrongly implied some sensitivities as naive, or as sentimentality for its own sake. Rather the need for these sensitivities to 'be rewired' into things like hard-nosed acts of violence, or arguments for retaliation ignored our own roots and intentions. Yet many of these sensitivities were preserved and expressed in amazing institutions, solidarities, media outlets, strong manifestations of defiance and disruptive practices. Some interpersonal relationships flourished under new freedoms and permissions. However we lost track of where we began. We were bamboozled by our vast entanglements. Accounting challenges that process.

Those developing an accountability ledger might place the adversary critically as a producer of loss. However such loss also illuminates our entrapment in its terms of engagement but also through our own inability to account for our internal movement. Necessary for us would have been to work through the difficulties inherent in the concept of solidarity and recognise that a local presence and its terms were critical. We needed to experience change not just dream of it. The experience required a ledger to indicate its quality and make it discussable.

The idea of a ledger may be way beyond the capabilities of some movements. Yet where it can't be accomplished, it creates an emotional deficit which can't be balanced elsewhere. Needless to say hope or some other positive attitude or behaviour lies second to some of these deeper psychological processes

present at the time. To sustain these sources in sensitivities requires a complex social infrastructure of survival, involving renewal, trauma, recovery internal protection, education, care and consideration commensurate with new goals. Let's account for that in future.

It is essential that we review the health of us as social movement workers including the manifestations of mental illness and traumatic assault requiring professional intervention. We need to invent a community as well as an organised opposition. Sensitivities don't disappear with resistance but dissipate as they are judged and included into changing societies. Difference will not then disintegrate rather expand and so the dimension of enveloping and understanding must grow rather than harden as the adversary seems to require of us.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Some will recognise the influence of Tarrow, Melucci, Habermas, Greer and Aboriginal History Journal. Also the Australian historian Graeme Davison. But especially, I thank my friends and acquaintances then; some still friends, most estranged, for what I learnt. Thanks to Jennie Harvie and Jan Bell-Prentice for their editorial and edifying comments.