

KARIM MAÏCHE

Autonomous Trade Unions in Algeria

An Expression of Nonviolent Acts of Citizenship

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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

There are dozens of autonomous trade unions in Algeria, forming a heterogeneous political body within the dispersed opposition in the country. Autonomous trade unions are social movements that aim to defend workers' rights through multiple organizational networks that consist of human rights groups, civil society associations and political parties. None of the single oppositional groups, whether autonomous trade unions, oppositional political parties or civil society actors, have succeeded in the formation of a credible, cohesive and unified alternative force to the state authorities in order to challenge the power elite in the country.

In mapping and analyzing the trade union movement, its networks and development in Algeria as well as problematizing its functioning and contribution to social change through normatively expressed democracy building, this thesis concentrates on the most conspicuous oppositional unions and their created confederations over the last 30 years, since their official establishment amid 1989 constitutional reform. Secondly, it contemplates how the state authorities manage peaceful societal protest and the challenge presented by these oppositional unions. Thirdly, it explores how the citizenship demanded by these autonomous union activists are negotiated through nonviolent acts of citizenship in the public space.

The empirical material of this thesis comprises ethnographic fieldwork, participant observation, interviews and media analysis. Through partial knowledge, it is possible to understand social phenomena such as trade unionism and political activism. While autonomous trade unions are observed as social actors within the societal level, this study approaches individual activists through the theoretical framework of acts of citizenship. It enables us to understand citizenship as transformation through acts instead of perceiving citizenship as an institutional status.

I analyze interviews and other existing research material, such as media articles and other available literature, through discourse analyses, concentrating on the historical and contemporary construction of antagonistic discourses. Various identities and hegemonic discourses are shaped within nodal points, forming understanding and representations of the world, as well as dislocated discourses within ruptures and the emergence of split subjects.

Political engagement involves activists around the country, from cities and villages. They depict and stress their political participation via social grievances especially related to work, working conditions and contracts of employment. Autonomous trade unions bring together members from varied backgrounds, breaking certain stereotypes related to religion, political ideology and gender associated with Muslim-majority countries.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Algeriassa toimii kymmeniä autonomisia ammattiyhdistyksiä. Niiden muodostama monitahoinen poliittinen ryhmä on osa maan hajanaista oppositioliikettä. Autonomiset ammattiyhdistykset ovat sosiaalisia joukkoliikkeitä, joiden tarkoituksena on puolustaa työläisten oikeuksia ihmisoikeusjärjestöjä, kansalaisyhteiskunnan yhdistyksiä sekä poliittisia puolueita järjestöverkoston kautta. Yksikään oppositioryhmä, olivatpa kyseessä autonomiset ammattiyhdistykset, poliittiset puolueet tai muut kansalaisyhteiskunnan toimijat, ei ole onnistunut muodostamaan uskottavaa, yhtenäistä vastavoimaa valtaapitäville.

Algerian ammattiyhdistysliikkeen kartoittamisen ja analysoinnin avulla hahmotetaan liikkeen verkostojen muotoutumista. Samalla sen yhteiskunnallisen muutoksen panosta problematisoidaan normatiivisen demokratian rakentamispuheen kautta. Tässä väitöskirjassa keskitytään viimeisten 30 vuoden aikana toimineisiin näkyvimpiin hallituksen vastaisiin ammattiyhdistysliikkeisiin, jotka perustettiin asteittain vuoden 1989 perustuslaillisen uudistuksen yhteydessä, sekä yksittäisten ammattiyhdistysten muodostamiin konfederaatioihin. Väitöskirja tarkastelee, kuinka maan viranomaiset hallinnoivat rauhanomaista sosiaalista protestia ja hallituksen vastaisten ammattiyhdistysten luomaa haastetta. Lisäksi pohditaan, kuinka autonomisten ammattiyhdistysliikkeiden aktivistien vaatimista kansalaisoikeuksista keskustellaan väkivallattomina kansalaisuustekoina (nonviolent acts of citizenship).

Työn empiirinen materiaali koostuu etnografisesta kenttätyöstä, osallistuvasta havainnoinnista ja media-analyysistä. Osittaisen tiedon filosofian (partial knowledge) avulla on mahdollista ymmärtää sosiaalisia ilmiöitä kuten ammattiyhdistystoimintaa ja poliittista aktivismia. Samalla kun ammattiyhdistysliikkeitä tarkastellaan sosiaalisina toimijoina yhteiskunnallisella tasolla, tutkimus lähestyy yksittäisiä aktivisteja kansalaisuustekojen teoreettisesta viitekehyksestä. Se mahdollistaa kansalaisoikeuksien muotoutumisen ymmärtämisen tekemisen kautta sen sijaan, että kansalaisoikeudet hahmotetaan institutionaalisenä statuksena.

Analysoin haastatteluja ja tutkimusmateriaalia diskurssianalyysillä keskittyen vastakkaisten diskurssien rakentumiseen. Erilaiset ”solmukohdissa” (nodal points) muodostuvat identiteetit ja hegemoniset diskurssit – myös katvealueille jääneet

diskurssit ja hajaantuneet toimijuudet – ilmentävät ymmärrystä sekä representaatioita maailmasta. Etenkin työhön, työoloihin ja -sopimukseen liittyvät sosiaaliset epäkohdat osallistavat eritaustaisia aktivisteja poliittiseen toimintaan ympäri maata rikkoen stereotypioita, joita liitetään uskontoon, poliittiseen ideologiaan ja sukupuoleen muslimienemmistöisissä maissa.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Beginnings

Dozens of oppositional autonomous trade unions in Algeria operate within the civil society level, organizing nonviolent protests, rallies, sit-ins, demonstrations, hunger strikes, petitions and media coverage. Activists occupy public spaces for their political activities and demand their citizenship rights. Created officially one after another since the August 1990 and in the aftermath of October 1988 uprisings¹, autonomous trade unions form a significant part of the dispersed opposition movement in the country. They challenge the state authorities on democratic practices in general and on issues related to work or working conditions in particular. Their existence and vigour emanate from the 1988-1992 period of democratization, or “opening” as they call it, and continue systematically to demand the actualization of democratic reforms guaranteed by the constitutional reform of 1989.

Oppositional autonomous trade unions aim at democracy building through contestation by civil servants and claim equal rights for all workers, while protesting against any form of discrimination, inequality and exclusion. One of the main normative objectives of the autonomous trade union movement is to gather Algerians into organized unions, social movements, to struggle for better quality in public services to improve their working conditions by protecting their interests to gain better livelihoods. Promoting unity of collective action with other forces of social movements, the union is seen not only as an entity in itself, but also as a tool for workers.

This thesis, anchored in peace research (PR), examines nonviolent acts of citizenship and the contribution of the independent trade union movement to social change in the post-conflict environment as their claimed objective of implementing normative characteristics of sustainable democracy building. This research focuses

¹ The October uprisings, also called the “October riots” or “bread riots”, erupted 4-10 October 1988, showing the depth of the discontent amongst the youth. The army fired on the demonstrators leading to the deaths of hundreds and imposed the state of emergency for the first time since the end of Algerian War of Independence (Volpi 2003, 38-45; Liverani 2008, 27, 71). I prefer to define the incidents of 1988 with the term October uprisings, which is, I believe, a more neutral concept regarding for the events.

on the oppositional social movements underlining the role of autonomous trade unions. I conducted the major part of my fieldwork by interacting and interviewing mostly the members of independent trade union SNAPAP² and the *General Autonomous Confederation for Algerian Workers* (Confédération Générale Autonome des Travailleurs Algériens, CGATA³).

While other independent trade unions, especially in the public sectors of education and healthcare are included in the analysis, I have concentrated mainly on SNAPAP, the most active and visible autonomous trade union since the 2000s. In addition, my interviews included members from CNES⁴, SATEF⁵, CNAPEST⁶ and human rights association LADDH⁷, all of which play an important role in the network of autonomous unions. SNAPAP functions in all public sector establishments and works in close cooperation with many salient movements, unions, associations, confederations and groups in the context of larger network of the oppositional social movement. My analysis starts from the 1988 October uprisings and ends in 2018, before the mass demonstrations of February 2019.

SNAPAP was officially the first autonomous trade union since the enactment of laws 90-14 and 90-02 in 1990, though various autonomous unions existed already before constitutional change. The official creation of SNAPAP, in connection with the political pluralization and the birth of multipartyism, broke the monopoly of the long-standing *General Union of Algerian Workers* (Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens UGTA), which had played important role in the liberation war (1954-1962) and served as the only representative of Algerian workers since independence in 1962. Autonomous trade unions challenge the hegemonic position of UGTA, which is supported by the state authorities. According to the members of oppositional autonomous trade unions, the Algerian official authorities tolerate, but do not accept the pluralism of the trade unionism. UGTA and oppositional autonomous trade

² *The National Autonomous Union of Public Administration Staff* (Syndicat National Autonome des Personelles de l'Administration Publique).

³ CGATA was established in 2013 and is affiliated by five autonomous trade unions: SNAPAP, SESS (Syndicat des enseignants du supérieur solidaire), SNATEG (Syndicat national des travailleurs de l'électricité et du gaz), SNAP (Syndicat national des postiers) and SAATT (Syndicat autonome algérien des travailleurs de transport).

⁴ *The National Council for Higher Education Professors* (Conseil National des Professeurs du Supérieur).

⁵ *The Autonomous Union of Workers of Education and Training* (Syndicat Autonome des Travailleurs de l'Éducation et de la Formation).

⁶ *The Autonomous National Council of Secondary and Technical Education Teachers* (Conseil National Autonomes des Professeurs de l'enseignement Secondaire et Technique).

⁷ *The Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights* (La Ligue algérienne pour la défense des droits de l'homme).

unions accuse each other of unpatriotic behaviour, political manipulation, and the destabilization of the country. Using discourse analysis, I contextualize and deconstruct these antagonistic polar discourses and locate them against the historical and contemporary social framework they are produced by.

Due to the atrocities during the civil war in the 1990s, the reforms of the democratic period (1988-1992) were halted and the activities of the autonomous trade unions diminished, although some major demonstration and rallies, organized especially by the CNES, took place in the education and healthcare sectors. During the civil war and especially after the peace process, SNAPAP also started to be accommodate a more oppositional stance. The civil war and weakened security situation marginalized the independent unions and their achieved position guaranteed in the constitutional reforms in 1990. After the war gradually came to an end, after the 2000s, fierce struggles took place between the autonomous trade unions and state authorities. Trade union pluralism, according to oppositional autonomous trade union activists, was no longer self-evident. This phase can be considered the most ferocious period of contestation. It entailed a severe confrontation between SNAPAP, other autonomous trade unions, and the state authorities. The members of the independent unions argue that they were not able to function as traditional trade unions, which transformed the network of various associations, unions, political parties, and human rights groups into more of a political protest movement that started to demand the fulfillment of their political rights. Due to asymmetric power relations, this oppositional protest movement organized demonstrations in the public space to pressure the authorities to make political concessions and to gain popular support through the mobilization of the Algerian public for their objectives.

During the 2000s, the peace process gave the hope of achieving a gradual sustainable democratic development. The attempts of the autonomous trade unions to challenge the state authorities lost endorsement due to the increasing socio-economic improvements related to increased energy incomes. Political passivity, at least from the formal manifest perspective⁸, can be considered as a significant phenomenon. The autonomous trade unions struggled to achieve the status of trade union pluralism, while the authorities held the advantage due to higher energy prices, which meant more income and investments for socio-economic development.

⁸ Ekman, Joakim & Amnå, Erik (2012, 295) Political Participation and Civic Engagement: Towards a New Typology. *Human Affairs* 22, pp. 283-300. Ekman and Amnå argue that there exist active forms of political disengagement that may depict well the context in Algeria. While youth and population in general demonstrated passive manifest political engagement, various forms of active political disengagement took place in Algeria within sport (football) and cultural (literature, arts, music) spheres.

Simultaneously, unions functioning within public sector suffered from the strengthening role of the private sector in the Algerian economy⁹. This structural environment, where dialogical process takes place, needs constant attention within this analysis.

In 2011, long-term rulers stepped aside, one after another, in Tunisia and Egypt, due to pressure from millions of people who filled the symbolic public spaces in their respective countries. The non-state actors and civil society (trade unions and other social movements), often initially led by young activists, played a significant role in mobilizing the mass demonstrations. While the socio-economic factors — rapid population growth and the “youth bulge”, youth unemployment, marginalization and lack of prospects, oppression, corruption and rapid neoliberal economic programs — have often been considered as the key factors regarding the dissatisfaction and challenges, they alone cannot fully explain the timing and the complex processes that were behind the mass gatherings.

While I consider the autonomous trade unions as one actor among many in the larger picture of Algeria’s political environment, I argue that they do play a prominent role in the construction and formation of state-society and employee relations in contemporary Algeria. For example, SNAPAP, which has activities across the country, has claimed to comprise about 300 000-500 000 members, of which 40 000-50 000 are contributive members, while the membership of the confederation CGATA is claimed to be 268 000¹⁰. Its management insists on its independence from the Algerian government as well as from all political formations. On its website¹¹ in 2012, SNAPAP defined its mission: *To defend material and moral interests of the workers in the public functional sector; to defend syndicalist liberties; to promote action and syndicalist culture; and to sensitize the actors to defend the social gains*. SNAPAP’s purported aim has been to offer the space for dialogue, exchange and solidarity, and it cooperates with other social movements in defending the trade union freedoms and rights, working for the construction of pluralistic and federalist trade unionism that accept diversity of opinion and struggles for broader social improvements. In addition, SNAPAP has also been behind the creation of numerous other social movements (See Chapter VII) around the country that challenge the authorities, on matters ranging from unemployed workers to opposing the drilling of the shale gas.

⁹ The Report. Algeria 2017. Oxford Business Group.
<file:///C:/Users/km412377/AppData/Local/Temp/the-report-algeria-2017.pdf>

¹⁰ www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/15_01_22_list_affiliates_14th_gc-3.pdf

¹¹ <http://www.maisondessyndicats-dz.com/historique.php> (Retrieved in 7.2.2012, website does not function anymore).

In 2011, when the protests were depicted in the mainstream media as “the Arab Spring” began to spread, the autonomous trade unions in Algeria participated in creating the *Coordination for Democratic Change* (Coordination nationale pour le changement démocratique, CNDC) among opposition political parties, major political figures, youth and student groups, district committees, and human rights associations. SNAPAP and a few other autonomous trade unions comprised an important element inside the CNDC and called for reforms and peaceful democratic regime change. However, the Algerian protests were strictly controlled and never gained large participation, and CNDC soon split into two elements: political parties on one side, and civil society organizations, youth groups and autonomous trade unions on the other. The government responded by lowering the cost of cooking oil and sugar and by lifting the state of emergency that had come into effect in February 1992 alongside the Islamist insurgency. For the CNDC, these announced reforms were not enough and they continued peaceful protests each Saturday until the movement gradually melted away. While these so-called “reforms” did not bring any real structural changes towards sustainable democratic development, it is similarly apparent that demonstrations never initiated large-scale support from the Algerian people.

Since the 2011 uprisings, the autonomous trade union movement in Algeria has continued to challenge the authorities, although armed conflict and spirals of violence in the southern Mediterranean and in the Middle East have transformed the high hopes of achieving democracy and social justice into pessimism and despair. Today, the legacy of these popular demonstrations post-2011 seems modest after the power transitions turned into chaos and violence or into new forms of authoritarian rule within weakening socio-economic conditions. In Algeria too the attempts of the autonomous unions to mobilize Algerians gradually faded year by year and democratic social change seemed an ever more distant prospect. The dispersed oppositional trade union movement was not able to function efficiently or benefit from the growing discontent among the population related to the economic difficulties that the government was facing due to falling energy prices since 2015.

1.2 International dimensions

In this study, written at the *Tampere Peace Research Institute* (TAPRI) in Finland, I want to highlight the immediate proximity and economic importance of North Africa regarding the EU’s southern policies. Algeria has been an important energy supplier

for the EU, which is struggling to strengthen European energy security¹². While many of the problems underlying the 2011 popular uprisings in the neighbouring countries were also present in Algeria, this role as a major energy supplier remained stable¹³, at least during the years of instability in the region. Attempts to mobilize the masses in the streets lacked popular support from among the majority of Algerians and the occasional protests that did occur did not result in crucial pressure for major changes of a social, economic or political nature. Many trade unionists were losing hope that social change would lead to sustainable democracy building, until the February 2019 uprisings, or the “Smiling Revolution” spurred massive mobilizations around the country that led to birth of the so-called “Hirak movement” and the resignation of the President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. The election of Abdelmadjid Tebboune as President in December 2019 on a relatively weak voter turnout did not halt the mobilizations, which took place on Mondays and Fridays.

The context of trade unionism in different states of North Africa is varied and I would not suggest positing too many similarities among them. While it is probably too early to draw far-reaching conclusions on the role of the autonomous trade unions in instigating the February 2019 mobilizations in Algeria, some autonomous union activists believe that their contribution seemed to be quite limited. In Egypt and Tunisia, on the other hand, the impact of the trade unions can be considered crucial in ousting the governments of Hosni Mubarak and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in 2011. Trade union participation in the protests paralyzed societal functions, which further increased the pressure that led to the dismissals of the former Presidents. The 2011 uprisings prompted many scholars to pose questions concerning agency and change in relation to the definition of new social spaces to track emergent social and political settings¹⁴. Trade unions were a significant force, especially in Tunisia and Egypt. They showed the capacity to mobilize broad participation of the workers during the uprisings that increased the societal pressure leading to the ousting of two longstanding presidents¹⁵. The uprisings and the socio-political upheaval that

¹² According to *the Green paper: a strategy for sustainable, competitive and secure energy* (2006, 3) half of the gas consumption in the EU comes from three countries (Russia, Norway and Algeria) and on current trends the imports will increase to 80% over the next 25 years. Currently Algeria is the third largest natural gas supplier and an important oil supplier of the EU (European Commission 2019).

¹³ Silvia Colombo (*The Southern Mediterranean: Between Changes and Challenges to its Sustainability*, MEDPRO Technical Report no. 1, November 2010) separates sustainability from stability, arguing that the apparent stability internally and externally can take place without sustainable development covering development processes within institutions, norms and values.

¹⁴ Bayat, Asef (2013, x) *Life as politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. Cairo: AUC Press.

¹⁵ Bishara, Dina (2014) *Labor Movements in Tunisia and Egypt: Drivers vs. Objects of Change in Transition from Authoritarian Rule*. SWP Comments 1. January 2014; Yousfi, H  la (2015) L'UGTT,

followed in the southern Mediterranean continue to evoke a preoccupation with the conditions, organization, mobilization, and the structures of the social movements and especially trade union movement.

There are many reasons for the resilient and ongoing functioning of the autonomous trade unions in Algeria. However, one seems to be the inefficiency of the UGTA to separate itself from the ruling authorities and identify itself as oppositional organization and to offer reliable protection for workers living in challenging social conditions and who perceive critical posture towards the so-called power elite or power (*pouvoir*)¹⁶. Low salaries and rising living costs prompt many Algerians to rely on interpersonal networks to cope with the conditions of daily life. During the civil war of 1992-2000, Algeria was exposed to structural adjustment programs through loans from *the International Monetary Fund* (IMF) and neoliberal austerity politics that undermined the public sector¹⁷. These processes have naturally weakened trade unions operating within the public sector. For example, UGTA lost much popularity and credibility in the 1990s when it was powerless to prevent the weakening of the public sector in preference to international organizations that were able to interfere with Algerian societal structures.

In 2013, SNAPAP and other autonomous trade unions formed a new confederation, CGATA, to challenge more widely the hegemonic confederal position of the UGTA. The new confederation is still waiting for official authorization to function legally. CGATA and many other oppositional autonomous trade unions were missing from the list, published in March 2018 by the Ministry of Employment, where 66 trade unions were officially (re)recognized. However, the affiliation of the CGATA to International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)¹⁸ as a second Algerian trade union confederation alongside with UGTA was considered an important victory for the autonomous trade unions and shows the internationalization of the struggle of autonomous unions. Gaining international recognition of their existence, while unauthorized in Algeria, sends an important message to the Algerian authorities while further accelerating the power struggle and

Une passion Tunisienne: Enquête sur les syndicalistes en révolution 2011-2014. Tunis: Institut de recherche sur le Maghreb contemporaine (IRMC).

¹⁶ The word power (*pouvoir* in French) is often used to depict the state authorities or “those who have power”.

¹⁷ Liverani, Andrea (2008, 24) *The Civil Society in Algeria: The political functions of associational life*. Oxon: Routledge.

¹⁸ ITUC is world's largest trade union federation, formed in 2006 and represents 175 million workers within 156 countries (www.ituc-csi.org). ITUC emerged from the assimilation of International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the World Confederation of Labour (WCL).

agency related to projection of nationalism, workers' rights and democratic sustainability.

Autonomous trade unions and various international non-governmental organizations reported regularly about the restrictions and even violent harassments related to the running of the autonomous trade unions in Algeria. They have argued, and continue to argue, that autonomous trade unions, including SNAPAP, are facing serious challenges vis-à-vis the Algerian authorities. According to ITUC's Annual Survey of violations of trade union rights, Amnesty International, EuroMed Rights and the Solidarity Center, the activities of the autonomous trade unions are hampered and activists are persecuted, threatened and harassed. Additionally, these independent unions have experienced exclusion from the official collective bargaining and social dialogue in the context of annual tripartite meetings (labor unions-employers-government). Since the asymmetric power relations have prevented autonomous trade unions to achieve their objectives, they are increasingly have to ensure that they can function with the help of international organizations. Many consider these international responses as external meddling in Algerian internal affairs, while others are disappointed at the lack of stronger support from these international organizations.

1.3 Nonviolence

I relate the Algerian autonomous trade unions at the larger societal level to social movement theories (SMT). Autonomous trade unions stress their nonviolence and democratic objectives when highlighting their objectives in the context of normative sustainable democracy building. The nonviolence techniques practiced by autonomous trade union activists are pragmatic, normative, expressive, and communicative and it would be therefore reductive to deduce their content only in terms of the traditional rejection or opposition to violence and deprivation of human life. Within this more versatile tradition, communication in the public space and social movement are tools, whereas peaceful techniques are used to struggle for stated normative aims such as freedom, democracy and respect for human rights.

Social change, independence and freedom struggles are often highlighted as part of violent combats, though social change can generate through nonviolent processes as well¹⁹. In Algeria, the armed struggle of Islamist groups have understandably

¹⁹ Bartkowski, Maciej J. (Ed.) (2013, 4) *Recovering Nonviolent History – Civil Resistance in Liberation Struggles*. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers; Vinthagen, Stellan (2015a, 4) A

gained more visibility over recent years than the civil and nonviolent resistance of the autonomous trade unions, human rights associations and some political oppositional parties around them²⁰. One of my goals in this thesis is to shed light on the apparent and natural heterogeneity of Algerian society instead of underlining dichotomies such as “Islamists and others”. Therefore, I stress that individual actors that operate within autonomous trade unions are young, old, female, male, leftist, communist, nationalist, of diverse ethnicities, rightwing, Islamist, secular and even anarchic, and so forth. I understand the concept of social change in this study extensively as being related to democracy building or processes of democratization in general that comprise social factors, the establishment of democratic institutions and other determinants of democratic sustainability (See Chapter II).

Autonomous trade union members and activists use democracy-oriented rhetoric related to their activities and aim for social change to improve their personal position as a citizens, workers and family members. In numerous events they exercise their civic rights and participate in negotiations, debates and struggles about the meaning of *citizenship*. Therefore, it was natural to connect the theoretical framework of this thesis to citizenship studies. The demanded, defined and constructed understanding of citizenship articulates through acts in the public space and therefore citizenship is not understood here as simply status or practice. Engin F. Isin and Greg M. Nielsen argue that citizenship is shaped through motion or movement, an actor is formed through acts²¹. Mobilizing and organizing political nonviolent actions (sit-ins, strikes, rallies) as well as public events (meetings, demonstrations) around the country, can be considered as communicative performance taking place in the public space, to have an impact on Algerian popular public opinion through contingent articulation to win the support of citizens for their cause. These acts are approached via the theory of the *acts of citizenship* developed by Isin and Nielsen. When autonomous trade unions organize a demonstration in the public space to push the government to improve citizenship rights, they aim to communicate with the audience, the Algerian people, to mobilize them for their contestation. Simultaneously they transform themselves as citizens, or more accurately activist citizens, through acts.

To achieve their goals, activists are obliged to perform within hegemonic asymmetric social structures. They use democracy-oriented rhetoric for change and

Theory of Nonviolent Action: How Civil Resistance Works. London: Zed Books. Benamrouche, Amar (2000, 11) Grèves et conflits politiques en Algérie. France: Éditions Karthala.

²⁰ Benamrouche, Amar (2000, 11) Grèves et conflits politiques en Algérie. France: Éditions Karthala.

²¹ Isin, Engin F. & Nielsen, Greg M. (Eds.) (2008) Acts of Citizenship. London & New York: Zed Books.

use nonviolent practices, because that seems to be the only option available within the asymmetric power relations, where authorities have a monopoly on violence through the management of the police and armed forces. This does not imply that asymmetric power relations are the only reason exclusively why these activists use democracy-oriented rhetoric or that they would not genuinely aspire for sustainable democratic social change and citizenship rights. There are various other peaceful repertoires at their disposal, such as nonviolent protests, non-cooperation, interventions, civil disobedience and negotiation.

There exist many examples of negotiations between autonomous trade unions and the government. During the 1990s and 2000s especially, multiple acts of dialogue took place. In recent years the Ministry of Education negotiated with several autonomous trade unions to halt protests that affected the continuity of studies and the possibility to receive education without strikes and other forms of action that disrupted the school year whether in the levels of elementary or higher education. While the outcome was often estimated as modest, they show the weight these unions can generate to achieve minimum dialogue with the authorities. Simultaneously, most vocal oppositional unions were excluded from the latest negotiations.

In my interviews (see Chapter III) I have been interested in why Algerian activists joined autonomous trade unions and how they understand the concept of citizenship. I have also sought to outline the larger experience of the interviewees regarding their background, political views, future prospects and construction of historical perspective to understand more profoundly the motives behind their activism. I am therefore interested in those Algerians who participate in social movements, aim at social change, and are ready to act to fulfill their objectives. However, it would be incorrect to claim that these individuals represent the majority of Algerians. Being an activist in Algeria has been a marginal phenomena and many surveys, as I will later show, confirmed that evident political disengagement was relatively widespread in the country before the 2019 uprisings. This does not mean that political passivity as such is considered as a marginal phenomenon or that Algerians are not interested in politics.

1.4 Outline of the study

This thesis is divided into theoretical (Chapter II), methodological (Chapter III) and analytical sections (Chapters V, VI and VII) to separate the more profound discussions from each other. This does not mean that they are not interrelated; however, I wanted to treat certain detailed thematics separately, such as the genealogies of the concepts, development of theories and decisions on which methodological tools were adapted, to concentrate on each topic in a respective chapter with as few interruptions as possible during the analysis of autonomous trade unions. The research questions are presented in the final section of this introduction.

In the second chapter, I introduce the theoretical framework of this study. My objective is to increase knowledge about the autonomous trade union movement, its networks and development in Algeria. I use *social movement theory* (SMT) at the societal level when approaching the unions as actors, while the theory of *Acts of citizenship* introduced by Engin F. Isin²² and Greg M. Nielsen, is used when reflecting agencies of individual activists. The act of a trade union activist ruptures the given moment breaking their habitus forming the actor. Actors actualize acts and themselves through action. Simultaneously, acts and action are separated categories, while concurrently related classes of phenomena, because as Isin and Nielsen stress, acts can have a virtual existence while action is always actual, as I will discuss in more depth later on²³.

I then turn to the methodological discussion, where I introduce major tools of this thesis, fieldwork and discourse analysis, and conclude the theoretical discussion. I mainly use the discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe²⁴ when I problematize the discourses from the interviews with the union activists as well as of other material, such as the media, governmental reports and existing public responses. They shape historical and contemporary antagonistic *nodal points* that are formed through various identities within hegemonic discourses, social antagonism, dislocated discourses within ruptures, and the emergence of split subjects²⁵.

²² Isin, Engin F. & Nielsen, Greg M. (Ed.) (2008) *Acts of Citizenship*. London & New York: Zed Books.

²³ Isin (2008, 36).

²⁴ Laclau, Ernesto and Mouffe, Chantal (2001, xiii) [1985] *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London and New York: Verso.

²⁵ Torfing, Jacob (2005, 14-17) Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments, and Challenges, in David Howarth and Jacob Torfing (Eds.), *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

I narrate the background of the development of trade unionism through existing literature as well as its implications for Algerian worker's movement in particular in Chapter IV. This part can be considered as the historical framework where I develop my understanding of the birth of the contemporary autonomous trade union movement. My intention is not to write historiography about trade unionism in Algeria. I rather stress the examples of historical discussions, with an eye to the relevant features to contextualize this thesis within broader phenomena and to understand contemporary trade unionism in Algeria in relation to wider debates related to the capitalist economic order, political practices, balance of power relations and functioning of social movements.

The three analytic chapters deal with the contemporary autonomous trade union movement. In Chapter V, I approach the emergence of these unions starting from the 1988 October uprisings that led to constitutional reform, which enabled political pluralism. I analyze the development of the autonomous trade union movement during the civil war, which halted the democratic period 1988-1992. In the chapter VI, I elaborate the position of these unions during the peace process and its aftermath, which I consider as the fiercest period within the contestation. In the post-conflict societal environment the autonomous trade union movement struggled forcibly to maintain political rights guaranteed within constitutional reform before the civil war. Finally, in the chapter VII, I problematize the positive connotations that were often connected to 2011 uprisings reflecting the regional upheaval in the Algerian context. I end my analysis at 2018, which marked despair and frustration among oppositional trade union movement about achieving social change, sustainable democracy building, and citizenship rights. Finally, I conclude with my findings of this thesis.

1.5 Research objectives

In this thesis, my aim is to analyze the Algerian autonomous trade union movement, to define accurate concepts to understand and explain this phenomena, and to respond to the following research questions:

What are the nonviolent acts of citizenship of the autonomous trade unions in Algeria?

This question yields three secondary research questions:

- What are the contributions of the independent trade unions to social change in Algeria and how do they implement the democracy building?
- How the Algerian ruling authorities manage the nonviolent acts of citizenship conducted by the autonomous trade unions?
- How the citizenship demanded by independent trade union activists is negotiated through nonviolent acts of citizenship in the public space?

Each of the three secondary questions will be approached separately within the analytical chapters five, six and seven. However, after the question is presented it is carried along within other sections, due to the relational and interconnected character of the social world.

Civil society in Algeria can be described as versatile and manifold. It includes a diverse range of voluntary associations and grassroots groupings. Following the official figures for the numbers of associations, Algeria represented in the past one of the most rich and “association dense” states in the eastern and western Mediterranean²⁶. The emergence of associational life that coincided with the failed liberalization process of 1988-2000 have led to the success of numerous association to represent a mechanism to expand political freedoms in the forms of collective empowerment and political participation, while the regime has been averse in tolerating oppositional autonomous groups whether traditional, religious or professional²⁷.

Various movements (women’s organizations, trade unions, environmental groups, solidarity organizations, and peace movements) use nonviolent tactics to advance their interests, world views and ideas to achieve social change that promote their aspired objectives. The main goal of autonomous trade unions in general has been to develop their independence from the state-led UGTA, the only such partner for the Algerian state, to enter the tripartite negotiations (labor unions-employers-government). Members of these unions argue that UGTA serves as a strategic partner for the state authorities in exercising governmental sovereign power in the organization of the labor market and state affairs in the wider scope of economic policies, both in the domestic and foreign domains. The concept of ‘autonomous’²⁸

²⁶ Liverani, Andrea (2008, 1) *The Civil Society in Algeria: The political functions of associational life*. Oxon: Routledge

²⁷ Liverani (2008, 5).

²⁸ In this thesis I understand the words “autonomous” and “independent” as synonyms. During the interviews the word autonomous was referred to being independent from the state, UGTA and the power (pouvoir). I was not able to trace any direct links between the Algerian autonomous trade union movement and the so-called movement of “autonomism”, which was heterogenous international

refers mainly to actions beyond the UGTA, meaning the independence from the official authorities.

movement influenced by ideas of Italian Autonomists related to Italian workers struggles during 1960s-1970s. However, this does not mean that the Algerian autonomous trade unions are without influence like, for example, the French autonomous movements (*mouvance autonome en France*), consisted of communists, anarchists and Situationists since the 1960s, whether related to ideas or operations.

2 ACTS OF CITIZENSHIP IN THE PUBLIC SPACE

The activists of the autonomous trade unions in Algeria explain their unionizing within normative arguments of democracy, freedom and equality, or citizenship rights, in the context of work and society at large. Their explicitly expressed aim is to achieve social change, or re-launch the process of democratization, which was according to their narrative halted due to 1990s civil war (See Chapter V). Social change can generate through violent or nonviolent processes. Algeria captures decades long tradition within non-violent resistance during the colonial period. While violent independence and freedom struggles receive often more attention, such as the Independence war of Algeria (1954-1962) or armed struggle of Islamist groups (1992-2000), the nonviolent civic resistance of the autonomous trade unions, human rights associations and some political oppositional parties around them should not be neglected.

Social movement operating in the wider societal context forms through participant members and activists, thus individuals. Their motives, aspirations and desire to engage into movement are interlinked to their interpretation of experienced social and political environment. I use Social Movements Theory (SMT) in my approach on dozens of autonomous trade unions functioning in contemporary Algeria. These movements challenge the Algerian government and the largest trade union confederation, the close partner of the governmental authorities, *General Union of Algerian Workers* (Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens, UGTA)²⁹. In general, the stated objective in addition with politicizing the workers' rights in various sectors of the autonomous trade unions, has been developing their independence from UGTA, the only accepted partner of the state in tripartite arrangements (unions-employers-government). The concept *autonomous* refers to these oppositional movements mainly labor actions outside the activities conducted by the UGTA and the government, as I will later explain more in details.

The objective of this research is firstly to map and analyze the trade union movement, its networks and development in Algeria. Secondly, to problematize its functioning and contribution to social change through normatively expressed

²⁹ Founded in 1956 by activists situated in Algeria and France during the Algerian Independence war (Bourouiba 1998, 203-258), as explained in the previous chapter.

democracy building. Thirdly, to look at how the state authorities manage peaceful development in Algeria and respond to the challenge of these oppositional autonomous unions. Fourthly, to explore how the citizenship demanded by these autonomous unions is negotiated through nonviolent acts of citizenship in the public space?

While I consider the social movements as actors in the societal structures, at the individual level, dealing with agency of individuals, I operate within the theory of *Acts of citizenship* introduced by Engin F. Isin³⁰ and Greg M. Neilsen. Their theory enables us to theorize the acts conducted by individual trade union activists, because they do not conceptualize citizenship as a general legal category or practice, but consider it as a phenomenon that comes into existence through motion and experience. The action performed by the movements are shaped from the singular, or individual, acts that are motivated in certain specific moments by longer-term historical conduct of social reality — the habitus. Therefore, the acts that creatively temporarily break the habitus and flourish in a specific moment in particular social circumstances form the aspired citizenship that represents the desired positionality in the society.

Acting subjects actualize acts and themselves through action. Simultaneously, acts and action are distinct and separate (but related) classes of phenomena. In some occasions, they carry similar meanings. It is important to stress the importance of rupture: acts rupture or break the given orders, practices and habitus. Various creative ruptures and breaks, such as disagreements, take different forms that cannot be reduced or simplified. What actualizes an act cannot be decided in advance. However, actualization of acts provokes both responsibility and answerability, because acts always concern others and the Other. As I will show later on, it is the tension between responsibility and answerability that produces acts as ruptures in the given orders. Regarding ethics and politics, it is necessary to separate ethics and the ethical, politics and the political, though they are related but reducible aspects of acts.

Based on mobilization, contestation, collective action and negotiation, members of the autonomous trade unions claim to represent justified political struggle to achieve social change. Activists or members, the actors, aim to gain more visibility for their cause by communicating in the public space to encourage Algerian fellow citizens to join organized union and engage for nonviolent peaceful social change. Contributive members bring in financial resources needed to continue the action

³⁰ Isin, Engin F. & Nielsen, Greg M. (Ed.) (2008) *Acts of Citizenship*. London & New York: Zed Books.

because most of the oppositional autonomous unions do not enjoy any financial state support.

To implement the theoretical approach more concretely, it is necessary to reflect the definition of principal concepts presented above. I am not aiming to make all-inclusive universal definitions or fundamental and pervasive explanation regarding vast and context-related phenomena such as social change, social movement, citizenship, civil society and public space. Each concept will be articulated within their contexts and in relation with other social characteristics.

This chapter starts by introducing the relevant literature on trade unionism in Algeria and situating this thesis in the context of transdisciplinary peace research. I consider the performances of autonomous trade union movement as nonviolent in the post-conflictual societal space. I will then elaborate various interpretations on social change and stress the normative characteristics of sustainable democracy building. I go to some lengths to discuss the theory of acts of citizenship, which I consider as the main theoretical framework for this thesis. Finally, the relevancy of public space as a site for mobilization and actualization of citizenship rights are approached from socio-economic perspectives as part of social theory.

This theoretical background of this thesis concludes in Chapter III, after the methodological discussion. It is necessary to reflect the discourse analysis and its interplay with the theoretical framework to have a full picture how the social world, its functioning and experience of its interpretation is perceived. While some might call my approach as poststructuralist, hermeneutic or constructivist, I retreat from any such kind of labeling, maintaining the potentiality to operate within different tendencies and streams when necessary and fruitful. I understand social theory as an ever changing and transforming field that springs from multiple historical, recognized or non-recognized, traditions.

2.1 Situating the thesis into transdisciplinary peace research

There is a shortage of scholarship regarding the trade unionism in the Southern Mediterranean and a significant amount of it contains conceptualization and approaches that can be considered as Eurocentric or more broadly the so-called Western³¹. There is also a lack of academic articles or research conducted related to

³¹ Beinin, Joel and Vairel, Frédéric (2011, 20) *Social Movements, Mobilization, and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

the contemporary trade union movement in Algeria. There is even a broad vacuum concerning the history of the labor movement in the country. The works written by famous trade union activists Boualem Bourouiba³², Lakhdar Kaïdi (interview)³³, Abdelmadjid Azzi³⁴ and two books about Aïssat Idir written by Mohamed Fares and Hassan Aïssat (brother of Aïssat Idir) have tried to fill the gap. Also René Gallissot³⁵ and Charles-Robert-Ageron³⁶ have written great analyses about the emergence of the Algerian trade union movement. In addition, there are a few other more historic perspectives on Algerian participation on French confederations CGT and CFTC and workers in general³⁷, more related to the period of workers' self-management committees (1963-65)³⁸ and about the student union movements³⁹.

These major contributions, however, disclose little about the actual contemporary trade union movement in Algeria, especially the autonomous trade union movement. They are mostly descriptive, historically oriented works. In general, only a few works exist that deal with contemporary trade union pluralism in Algeria; a few of them are interview-based body of literature and some of them research articles⁴⁰. I would like

³² Bourouiba, Boualem (1998) *Les syndicalistes algériens. Leur Combat. De l'éveil à la libération*. Paris: L'Harmattan and Bourouiba, Boualem (2012) *L'UGTA dans les premières années de l'indépendance (1962-1965): Un témoignage post mortem*. Alger: Alger-Livres Éditions.

³³ Djabi, Nasser (2005) *Kaidi Lakhdar, Une histoire du syndicalisme algérien: entretiens*. Alger: Chihab Editions.

³⁴ Azzi, Abdelmadjid (2012) *Le Mouvement Syndical Algérien à l'Épreuve de l'Indépendance*. Alger: Alger-Livres Éditions.

³⁵ Gallissot, René (1969) *Syndicalisme et nationalisme: La Fondation de l'Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens, ou du syndicalisme C.G.T. au syndicalisme algérien (1954-1956-1958)*. *Le Mouvement social* No. 66 Jan.-Mar., 1969, pp. 7-55.

³⁶ Ageron, Charles-Robert (1989) *Vers un syndicalisme national en Algérie (1946-1956)*. *Revue d'Histoire Moderne & Contemporaine*, Année 1989 36-3, pp. 450-463.

³⁷ Bentabet, Fathi (2016) *Salaries, Patronat, Cgt Et Cftc En Algérie (Oranie) Du Front Populaire Au Gouvernement de Vichy (1936-1941)*. Creatspace Independent Publishing Platform; Bourdieu, Pierre; Darbel, Alain; Rivet, Jean-Paul and Sebel, Claude (1963) *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie*. Paris: Mouton.

³⁸ Clegg, Ian (1971) *Workers' Self-Management in Algeria*. New York- London: Modern Reader; and more sources from the following link: <https://autogestion.asso.fr/2238/>

³⁹ Clement, Moore Henry (2010) *UGEMA: Union générale des étudiants musulmans algériens*. Alger: Casbah éditions; Mahi, Ahmed (2014) *De l'UGEMA à l'UNEA : Témoignage sur le mouvement étudiante (1959-1965)*. INAS Éditions; Alger; Wallon, Dominique (2015) *Combats étudiants pour l'indépendance de l'Algérie : UNEF-UGEMA (1955-1962)*. Alger: Casbah Éditions.

⁴⁰ Chikhi, Said and El Kenz, Ali (1991) *Workers' Perceptions and Practices in Algeria: The Cases of the El Hadjar Iron and Steel Works and Rouiba Industrial Motor Car Plant*, in Inga Brandell (Ed.) *Workers in Third-World Industrialization*. London: Macmillan, pp. 31-48; Chikhi, Said (1993) *Question ouvrière et rapports sociaux en Algérie*. *NAQD* no 6, septembre 1993 – mars 1994, pp. 3-19; Benamrouche, Amar (2000) *Grèves et conflits politiques en Algérie*. France: Éditions Karthala; Djabi, Abdennacer (2000) *L'Algérie, du mouvement ouvrier syndical aux mouvement sociaux*. Alger: Institut national du Travail (In Arabic); Chouicha, Kaddour (2008) *Évolution du pluralisme syndical*, in Mohammed

to highlight the importance for my study of the works of Amar Benamrouche, Inga Brandell, Said Chikhi, Kaddour Chouicha, Nacer Djabi, Larbi Graïne and Ali El Kenz. They have been a great help for me in trying to increase my understanding about complex organizational networks, histories and trade union practices in Algeria.

There are a few academic studies available, though they concentrate on the opposition movement⁴¹ or civil society⁴² in general. I was also able to benefit from a few wide-ranging works in the context of employee relations in Algeria that set the structures for work related issues and employment policies⁴³ as well as few studies that concentrate on female labor in the country⁴⁴. Some of these contributions offer good descriptive documents, insightful interviews and deep philosophical and historical processing about trade unions and the major figures of the autonomous trade union movement in contemporary Algeria. Furthermore, current data in terms of contemporary collective actions of autonomous trade unions in Algeria relies

Chentouf (Ed.) *l'Algérie face à la mondialisation*. Éditions Dakar: Codesria, pp. 277-300; Graïne, Larbi (2010) *Algérie: Naufrage de la fonction publique et défi syndical – entretiens*. Paris: L'Harmattan; Badoui, Mohamed Sofiane and Alimazighi, Kamel (2013) *Le mouvement syndical algérien: origins, réalités et volonté d'autonomie*. www.sciencelib.fr; Djabi, Nacer (Ed.) (2016) *La cartographie syndicale algérienne... Après un quart de siècle de pluralisme*. Editions Les Amis de Abdelhamid Benzine: Alger.

⁴¹ Redjala, Ramdane (1988) *L'Opposition en Algérie depuis 1962: tome 1 : le PRS-CNDR et le FFS*. Paris: l'Harmattan; Islam Derradji (2012) *La coordination nationale pour le changement et la démocratie algérienne et la réveil arabe: griefs, ressources et opportunité*. (McGill University Thesis); Baamara, Layla (2017) *La contestation institutionnalisée. Sociologie d'un parti d'opposition en contexte autoritaire : Le cas du Front des forces socialistes algérien*. Thèse de doctorat en Science politique, Aix-Marseille Université.

⁴² Liverani, Andrea (2008) *The Civil Society in Algeria: The political functions of associational life*. Oxon: Routledge; Addi, Lahouari (2011) Les obstacles à la formation de la société civile en Algérie, in Anna Bozzo and Pierre-Jean Luizard (Eds.) *Les sociétés civiles dans le monde musulman*. Paris: La Découverte; Galleze, Ouiza (2011) *Evaluation du system associatif en Algérie : L'Importance de la formation sur le développement des acteurs associatifs*. Algérie: Editions Dar Khettab; Salhi, Mohamed Brahim (2013) *Reconstruire et produire du lien social dans la société civile algérienne du 21ème siècle : engagement citoyen et modes de mobilisation des jeunes dans les organisations de la société civile*. Réghaïa – Algérie: ENAG; and Taïb, Essaid (2014) *Associations et société civile en Algérie*. Alger: Office des publications universitaires.

⁴³ Musette, Mohammed Saïb and Hammouda, Nacer Eddine (Eds.) (2006) *La question de l'emploi au Maghreb central*. Alger: CREAD; Branine, Mohamed; Fekkar, Ahmed Foudil; Fekkar, Otmane and Mellahi, Kamel (2008) *Employee Relations in Algeria: A Historical Appraisal*. Employee Relations. Vol. 30 No. 4. pp. 404-421; Lassassi, Moundir and Muller, Christophe (2013) *Reseaux sociaux et insertion sur le marche du travail en Algérie*. Working Paper No. 756. The Economic Research Forum (ERF): Egypt; Benghabrit-Remaoun, Nouria (Ed.) (2012) *Quelles formations pour quelles emplois en Algérie?* Oran – Algérie: Éditions CRASC; and Musette, Saïb Mohamed (2014) *Employment Policies and Active Labour Market Programmes in Algeria*. European Trading Foundation (ETF).

⁴⁴ Rezbani, Mohammed (1997) *La vie familiale des femmes algériennes salariées*. Paris – Montréal: L'Harmattan; Moghadam, Valentine M. (1998) *Women, Work, and Economic Reform in the Middle East and North Africa*. Boulder – London: Lynne Rienner Publishers; and Moghadam, Valentine M. (2013) *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East*. Boulder – London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

largely on reports elaborated by international organizations and NGOs, such as Human Rights Watch, EuroMed Rights, and Amnesty International. It has been challenging to find any official data on Algerian trade unionism, amount of strikes and so forth.

This work is situated in multi or transdisciplinary peace research⁴⁵. While it would seem relatively easy to contextualize nonviolent autonomous trade unions, operating in a post-conflict society, within the body of peace research literature, there are many aspects, choices and practices that I want to stress more concretely. From the larger standpoint, my aim is to depict how the Algerian authorities manage oppositional movements, such as autonomous trade unions, to sustain peaceful development in the country, and how these nonviolent movements act. Being a fragmented field of study, Peace research has a close relation to neighboring disciplines in social sciences⁴⁶. In this study, the theoretical and methodological framework shifts within other disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, economic studies and international relations. I want to stress that from the ontological and epistemological perspectives, social phenomena can be approached from the scopes of multiple social science traditions and their methodologies and theoretical frameworks do not exclude each other.

Peace research has been transformed over the decades. It started as a movement criticizing longer established fields of studies, such as the realist tradition of international relations (IR) and strategic studies⁴⁷. In general, peace research concentrates on multiple forms of experienced political violence, peace building and mediation, and observes the construction of everyday peace from various aspects. However, political violence, or war and peace, tends to bring up new dimensions within different timeframes and power relations, which direct and bring new elements on peace research related to security and violence, war and peace. It is especially relevant to reflect what we mean when discussing about peace: peace for whom? And what does acting for peace mean? It is also immensely important to question who has the power to speak on behalf of peace: what are the power relations and contexts in which peace is defined?

⁴⁵ Galtung, Johan (1964, 4) An editorial. *Journal of Peace Research*, 1(1), pp. 1-4; Alger, Chadwick F. (2000) Peace Studies as Transdisciplinary project, in Charles Webel and Johan Galtung (Eds.) *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*. London and New York: Routledge. pp. 299-318.

⁴⁶ Jutila, Matti; Pehkonen, Samu & Väyrynen, Tarja (2008, 624) Resuscitating a Discipline: An Agenda for Critical Peace Research. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 36(3) pp. 623-640.

⁴⁷ Jutila et al. (2008, 626).

Ranabir Samaddar⁴⁸ argues that when we deal with the theory of “democratic peace”, we automatically direct our views as if “western democracies” are inherently genuine peacemakers worldwide aiming at spreading the peace and prosperity. Of course, one can argue that the so-called western democracies put efforts in peace building and mediation through international and non-governmental organizations, however, some of the colonial wars and military interventions, more recently in the form of humanitarian interventions and democratic exportations, have also been conducted in the name of peace. Samaddar has stated that perhaps we should acknowledge “the duality of *their peace studies/our peace studies*” to restore the fundamental values of peace studies, such as justice, dignity, equality, reconciliation and democracy⁴⁹.

The aforementioned “us and them” reflections are becoming increasingly common, mostly due to inherent Eurocentric or Western-centric dimensions in contemporary social sciences⁵⁰. Today, many prominent scholars speak about the US and, on a smaller scale, European dominance in literature on political studies or international relations⁵¹. One could add that social sciences in general are suffering from Eurocentric premises due to substantial contributions that have been made in the universities in Europe and North America over past centuries. According to Amitav Acharya⁵², this tendency cannot continue in the future. Alongside the transition of power and new international order, what some call multiplex⁵³ or pluri-

⁴⁸ Samaddar, Ranadir (Ed.) (2004, 12) *Peace Studies: An Introduction to the Concept, Scope, and Themes*. New Delhi – Thousand Oaks – London: Sage Publications.

⁴⁹ Samaddar (2004, 12).

⁵⁰ Said, Edward (2003) [1978] *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Books; Abdel-Malek, Anouar (1981) *Civilizations and Social Theory. Volume 1 of Social Dialectics*. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan; Said, Edward (1993) *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books; Gran, Peter (1996) *Beyond Eurocentrism: A New View of Modern World History*. New York: Syracuse University Press; Hall, Stuart (1999) *Identiteetti*. Tampere: Vastapaino; Chakrabarty, Dipesh (2000) *Provincializing Europe*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press; Hobson, John (2004) *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Corm, Georges (2009) *L'Europe et le mythe de l'Occident: La construction d'une histoire*. Paris: Éditions La Découverte; Mignolo, Walter D. (2000) *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press; Goody, Jack (2010) *The Eurasian Miracle*. UK and USA: Polity Press; Hobson, John (2012) *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics. Western International Theory, 1760-2010*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Cupples, Julie and Grosfoguel, Ramón (2018) *Unsettling Eurocentrism in the Westernized University*. London and New York: Routledge.

⁵¹ Acharya, Amitav and Buzan, Barry (2010) *Non-Western International Theory: Perspectives Beyond Asia*. London and New York: Routledge; Acharya, Amitav (2014) *The End of American Order*. UK: Polity; Acharya, Amitav (2016) Regionalism Beyond EU-Centrism, in T.A. Börzel ja T. Risse (Eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Regionalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 109-130.

⁵² Interview of Amitav Acharya on 12.9.2018 in Tampere.

⁵³ Acharya (2014).

verse⁵⁴, experiences and “realities” of the so-called non-Western world are becoming increasingly relevant. Acharya speaks today about Global International Relations, where concepts and theories are reflected from more global perspectives and do not only reflect images of the Euro-American imagined communities⁵⁵, constructed identity politics of “the West”. This is also the direction where I have sought to orient this thesis.

In general, I will avoid large and inaccurate cultural generalizations such as “West”, “Africa” and “Islamic World” as much as I can, even though they can be useful in some instances where the connotation is rather to describe wider assumptions and stereotypes or officially approved geographical locations and states. Algerians share at least African, Arab, Mediterranean and Maghrebin identities. Their history is connected with ancient civilizations, Sahelian kingdoms, Arab and Turkish conquests, and European imperialism. Therefore, my intention is also to present a more pluralist view of Algerian society, which is along with other Muslim-majority countries often represented as predominantly “Islamic”. Religious emphasis, and especially Islam, is regularly presented in the media, movies and even academic literature as “anti-Western”, whether from historical, political or cultural premises⁵⁶. By showing the heterogeneity of autonomous trade union -membership and presenting their objectives (freedom, democracy, human rights, women’s emancipation etc.), will hopefully rupture certain Islamic centered narrations that were common especially during the 1990s civil war, where armed conflict was depicted via confrontation between government and Islamist armed resistance.

I share in many ways the basic arguments presented in postcolonial and subaltern studies, especially related to social and political power relationships and anti-essentialism that are produced through cultural narrations⁵⁷. Nevertheless, I would like to stress that even though colonial structures, and especially more recent neocolonial constructs, still widely affect colonized populations and their respective societies, there are decades of independence and internal processes in previously colonized countries, and therefore it would be too reductive to emphasise their contemporary performances exclusively through colonial heritage. I also take a very

⁵⁴ Mouffe, Chantal (2013, 22) *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*. London and New York: Verso.

⁵⁵ Benedict Anderson (2006) [1983] *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

⁵⁶ Said, Edward (1997) *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*. New York: Vintage Books; Männistö, Anssi (1999) *Islam länsimaisessa hegemonisessa diskursissa: Myyttis-ideologinen ja kuva-analyttinen näkökulma sivilisaatioiden kohtaamiseen*. Tampere: Rauhan- ja konfliktitutkimuskeskus TAPRI.

⁵⁷ Hall (1999); Chakrabarty (2000).

critical view of the concept of the West, which is repeatedly operationalized in postcolonial studies among other fields of studies in social sciences at large. I understand the concept of the West as an imagined community⁵⁸ that emerges as a political actor, historical narrative, geographical location and assumed value-based construction. I believe that such generalizing and rigid cultural concepts reproduce Eurocentric connotations and are inaccurate to describe social phenomena whether in the micro or macro levels.

Unfortunately, peace research is not immune to these ingredients either. For example, the concept of popular peace developed by David Roberts integrates self-evident ontological assumptions of normative understanding of peace in the frames of liberal institution-building⁵⁹. Democratic principles are taken for granted and international institutions such as the World Bank are seen as their promoter. The same goes for Adaptive Peace Building, connected to the United Nations' nurtured Sustaining Peace, which integrates institutions such as World Bank as central actors⁶⁰. In Algeria, the Bretton woods system was seen as foreign intervention that privatized the public sector, demanding more private investments deteriorating workers' social conditions and was fiercely opposed by the very civil society actors that should be strengthened according to normative aims within both Popular and Sustaining Peace. However, their understanding of complexity in the social world and highlighted importance of the civil society actors and everyday peace practices are useful for this work.

Philippa Williams has rightly argued that while peace is often the main focus in studies, little effort has been given to the actual concept, as if peace is a "trouble free product" worthy of mention⁶¹. Similarly, she considers the concept of *Liberal Peace* in general as a "*Western* vision for what peace should look like and how it should be done"⁶². In the 1950s Quincy Wright started a tradition of a negative definition of peace, containing the idea of the absence of violence, while later on Johan Galtung framed the concept *Positive Peace*, which referred to the absence of structural violence

⁵⁸ Anderson, Benedict (2006) [1983] *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

⁵⁹ Roberts, David (2011) Post-Conflict Peacebuilding, Liberal Irrelevance and the Locus of Legitimacy. *International Peacebuilding*, 18:4, pp. 410-424.

⁶⁰ De Coning, Cedric (2018) Adaptive Peacebuilding. *International Affairs* 94:2, pp. 301-317.

⁶¹ Williams, Philippa (2015, 4-5) *Everyday Peace? Politics, Citizenship and Muslim Lives in India*. Chichester – West Sussex – UK – Malden – MA – USA: Wiley Blackwell.

⁶² Williams (2015, 5).

at large⁶³. Williams stresses that peace should be grounded in a place; peace is political, peace is a process and peace should be approached from the ground within anthropologic fieldwork⁶⁴. According Kanti Bajpai, peace is hegemonic of deterrent (more than just absence of war), transactional (functional and economic interaction) and integrative or perpetual (social condition)⁶⁵. Therefore, it is also relevant from which direction peace is approached and different fields of studies enable multiple perspectives and tools to study peace from manifold perspectives.

The work of Chantal Mouffe related to agonism has led many peace researchers to conceptualize *Agonistic Peace*. For Mouffe, liberal democratic politics need discussion and struggle with adversaries (agonism), not struggle between enemies (antagonism)⁶⁶. The distinction of political and politics (see more at the end of this chapter) helps in integrating antagonism as a constitutive part of social life in the context of post-structuralism resting on the relational comprehension that identities are contingent over different spaces of disagreement. Therefore, conflicts, if they are managed in a correct and respectful way, can be considered positive elements that merely develop society within peaceful progress⁶⁷. Or, they can be seen as vital in the development of sustainable democracy that integrates various perspectives and discourses.

According to Malika Rahal⁶⁸, features of nonviolent resistance in Algeria be can traced to the popular resistance of the French colonial period (1830-1954). These forms varied within multiple contexts of domination. In the beginning, the Algerians emigrated in the 1830s to Morocco, Tunisia, Syria, Palestine or Egypt to avoid the imposition of non-Muslim authority⁶⁹. Later, other forms of nonviolent action contained rejection and boycotts, withdrawal (behavior, clothing and family roles), and political nonviolent resistance within Sufi brotherhoods, nationalist political

⁶³ Jutila et al (2008, 627); Galtung, Johan (1969, 183) Violence, Peace and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6, pp. 167-191.

⁶⁴ Williams (2015, 5-6).

⁶⁵ Bajpai, Kanti (2004, 38) A Peace Audit on South Asia, in Samaddar, Ranadir (Eds.) *Peace Studies: An Introduction to the Concept, Scope, and Themes*. New Delhi – Thousand Oaks – London: Sage Publications.

⁶⁶ Mouffe, Chantal (2013, 7) *Agonistics. Thinking the World Politically*. London – New York. Verso.

⁶⁷ Aggestam, Karen, Cristiano, Fabio and Stömbom, Lisa (2015, 1738) Towards agonistic peacebuilding? Exploring the antagonism-agonism nexus in the Middle East Peace Process. *Third World Quarterly*, 36:9, pp. 1736-1753.

⁶⁸ Rahal, Malika (2013) Algeria: Nonviolent Resistance Against French Colonialism, 1830-1950s, in Maciej J. Bartkowski (Ed.) *Recovering Nonviolent History. Civil Resistance in Liberation Struggles*. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publisher. pp. 107-124.

⁶⁹ Rahal (2013, 110-111).

parties and Islamic Reformism⁷⁰. However, it is beyond the scope of this study to connect such forms of nonviolent activities to today's Algerian autonomous trade union movement.

Nonviolence, in the context of contemporary autonomous trade unions and the acts of citizenship, can be understood as a *pragmatic tradition* that includes nonviolent action as a collection of techniques that are considered as important and effective⁷¹. It captures elements such as communication and social movements as tools where peaceful techniques are used to fight for normative objectives, such as freedom, democracy, and respect for human rights⁷². This pragmatic way of understanding nonviolent action in contemporary social sciences is in many ways a consequence of important work conducted in the early 1970s by Gene Sharp⁷³, who was highly influenced by the work of Mohandas K. Gandhi.

Stellan Vinthagen⁷⁴ introduces an altered view of nonviolent action, while recognizing the importance of Sharp's work. He criticizes Sharp's overemphasis on pragmatism, because "it reduces nonviolent action to a matter of power struggle, and power is conceptualized pre-Foucault" and in addition, Vinthagen argues that nonviolent action should be approached from a multidimensional perspective, where pragmatism is only one aspect⁷⁵. Vinthagen is after a complex, flexible and forceful understanding of nonviolent action, which enables to adapt it within acts of citizenship –theory, used in this study after theorizing acts vis-à-vis action. During the field work in general and in the interviews, nonviolent actions was not elicited as moral philosophical ideology. Whether or not nonviolence conducted by union activists is part of larger political philosophy or pragmatic tactic, is not in the main issue of this study, though questions related to nonviolence sometimes capture questions related to underlying motives: is it a lifestyle or tactic, pragmatic or principled action⁷⁶. The idea is to understand nonviolent acts of citizenship of autonomous unions as the collective birth of citizenship rights of those involved in

⁷⁰ Rahal (2013, 111-119).

⁷¹ Johansen, Jørgen (2007, 145-146 and 148) Nonviolence: More than the absence of violence, in Charles Webel and Johan Galtung (Eds.) *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*. London and New York: Routledge. pp. 143-159.

⁷² Johansen (2007, 148).

⁷³ Sharp, Gene (1973) *Politics of Nonviolent Action*. Boston: Porter Sargent.

⁷⁴ Vinthagen, Stellan (2015b) The 4 Dimensions of Nonviolent Action: A Sociological Perspective, in Kurt Schock (Ed.) *Civil Resistance: Comparative Perspectives on Nonviolent Struggle*. The University of Minnesota Press (Series on Social Movements, Protest & Contentions): Minneapolis, pp. 258-288.

⁷⁵ Vinthagen, Stellan (2015a, 41-44) *A Theory of Nonviolent Action: How Civil Resistance Works*. London: Zed Books; Vinthagen (2015b, 259-260).

⁷⁶ Vinthagen (2015, 7-8).

particular, and its social impact, instead of seeing it only as an organized or individual process as such. Questions related to ideology, psychology, tactics and pragmatism are of only secondary importance. As Vinthagen stresses:

Nonviolence is commonly motivated by externally imposed philosophical moral systems. However, I use morality in another sense, one that affects social norms, sanctioned contexts and legitimate rules of action, as it refers to the development of moral representation among concrete, collective communities⁷⁷.

Vinthagen stresses the role of various social theories, such as the *Theory of Communicative Action* developed by Jürgen Habermas or other late “modern” social theories developed by Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault and Anthony Giddens among others, connecting them more fixedly to nonviolence studies and allowing more relational, constructivist and pragmatic excerpts⁷⁸. By combining these elements within Habermas’s social theory, Vinthagen introduces four nonviolent rationalities. These are *goal rationality* (how well material objectives are achieved within strategic planning); *normative rationality* (how normative actions are regulated by the norms, institutions and morals); *expressive rationality* (self-expressive action articulating aesthetic views on how subjects feel and experience); and *communicative rationality* (how language is used in social relations and the coordination of social action)⁷⁹. Nonviolence as a concept has two dimensions: without violence + against violence⁸⁰.

As Vinthagen⁸¹ stresses, it is not relevant here whether we agree or not on Habermas’s social theory completely. Likewise, I use the theory of *public sphere* theorized by Habermas, but only partially, adding elements from the Nancy Fraser’s *transnational public sphere* and from others, as I will show later. What is central is that we can apply various social theories when analyzing nonviolent action. In addition, Vinthagen points out “the weak utilization of studies of social movements and revolution, despite their relevance for those who seek to understand how (nonviolent) movements bring about (nonviolent) revolutions”⁸². In this study, I apply the social movement theory to connect the nonviolent action of autonomous trade unions into larger social units within the level of analysis. However, as I will

⁷⁷ Vinthagen (2015a, 10).

⁷⁸ Vinthagen (2015b, 260).

⁷⁹ Vinthagen (2015b, 264-265).

⁸⁰ Vinthagen (2015a, 12).

⁸¹ Vinthagen (2015b, 265).

⁸² Vinthagen (2015b, 262).

show later, I draw a distinction between “the act” and “the action” in the context of acts of citizenship theory, which enables the main theoretical framework for this thesis.

2.2 Conceptual frameworks

2.2.1 Aiming at social change and sustainable democracy

Social change is a diverse and versatile concept that contains historical connotations. Our lives are surrounded by changes; change is everywhere. Social change encapsulates the notion of change in the larger social context but includes also effects related to individual life-worlds and memories. Social change therefore means everything between phenomena, such as the births and deaths, marriages and divorces as well as deterritorialization and globalization, localization and urbanization.

Aspects of and interest in understanding social change can be tracked already from the works of the Ancient Greece philosophers and from India for example in the Arthashastra of Kautilya (circa 4th century BCE)⁸³. According to Nessim Joseph Dawood⁸⁴, *The Muqaddimah* (prolegomena or introduction) of Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) in 1370 may have been the first attempt by any historian to elucidate “the pattern in the changes that occur in man’s political and social organization”. Ibn Khaldun’s view about the social change was cyclical⁸⁵, while some social scientists have perceived social change as linear process⁸⁶. There are also many ways to characterize the social change: community change, universal phenomenon, essential law, continuous change, speed of change within various time factors, chain-reaction sequence and so forth⁸⁷.

⁸³ Kautilya (1992): *Arthashastra*. India: Penguin Books.

⁸⁴ Dawood, Nessim Joseph (2005) [1967] *Introduction*, in Ibn Khaldun (translated by Franz Rosenthal and Bruce B. Lawrence) *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*. [1370]. New Jersey, United States: The Princeton University Press.

⁸⁵ Oswald Spengler and Arnold J. Toynbee also had cyclical understanding of social change.

⁸⁶ See Auguste de Comte, Emile Durkheim, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Karl Marx and Max Weber only few to mention.

⁸⁷ Maheshwari, M.A (2016) *The Concept of Social Change*. <http://www.vkmaheshwari.com/WP/?p=2163>

However, while writing about change has been common in the past, understanding the logic, forms and timing has proved to be more challenging. In his famous work *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of our Time* (1944) Karl Polanyi writes:

Nowhere has liberal philosophy failed so conspicuously as in its understanding of the problem of change. Fired by an emotional faith in spontaneity, the common-sense attitude toward change was discarded in favor of a mystical readiness to accept social consequences of economic improvement, whatever they might be⁸⁸.

In the 1970s, Don Martindale⁸⁹ and Günter Wiswede & Thomas Kutsch⁹⁰ argued that one of the oldest divisions in sociological scholarship can be tracked to the separation of social structure and social change, and held that the weakest branch in sociological study relates to its theory of social change.

Today the contemporary theories of social change aim at a more generalized, evolutionary and far-reaching analysis of change. Hans Haferkamp and Neil J. Smelser⁹¹ stress the structural determinants of social change (e.g. population growth, the dislocations as a result of warfare), processes and mechanisms of social change (e.g. precipitating or accelerating mechanisms, social movements, political conflict and accommodation, and entrepreneurial activity) and directions of social change (e.g. structural changes, effects and consequences). However, social change should not be understood as only taking place via structural transformations. It is also a positive trend that climate change and its impacts in the societies are becoming increasingly popular in the studies of social sciences.

According to the Valentine M. Moghadam⁹², research related to social change repeatedly highlights selected societal institutions and structures. While social change and social development are seen as realized through technological advancements, class conflict and political action, she stresses that these processes are often gendered. The change strengthening, for example, women's position "has come

⁸⁸ Polanyi, Karl (1944, 33) *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of our Time*. United States of America: Rinehart & Company.

⁸⁹ Martindale, Don (1976, ix-x) Introduction, in George K. Zollschan and Walter Hirsch (Eds.) *Social Change: Explorations, Diagnoses, and Conjectures*. New York – London – Sidney – Toronto: Schenkman Publishing Company.

⁹⁰ Wiswede, Günter and Kutsch, Thomas (1978, vii) *Sozialer Wandel*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

⁹¹ Haferkamp, Hans and Smelser, Neil J. (1992, 2-4) *Social Change and Modernity*. Berkeley – Los Angeles – Oxford: University of California Press.

⁹² Moghadam, Valentine M. (2013, 1) *Modernizing Women: Gender and Societal Change in the Middle East*. Boulder – London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

about through a combination of long-term macro level processes – notably industrialization, urbanization, proletarianization, the demographic transition, globalization – and forms of collective action that include national liberation movements, revolutions, and social movements⁹³.

Trevor Noble⁹⁴ has highlighted six key elements for theories of change that show various dimensions of change. First, he describes the characteristics of change (1) *endogenous – exogenous*, whether the change is related to the social system itself or not; (2) *inevitable – contingent*, where the patterns (cyclical-linear) or questions related to progress come out. Then he introduces the notion of social and reflect (3) *sociological realism (structure) – methodological individualism (agency)* aspects as well as dichotomy between (4) *materialism and idealism*. The last phase discloses the character of explanation, where (5) *possible objectivity (science)* meets with *inescapable commitment (ideology)*, positioning the debate towards epistemological questions about the theory of knowledge and to discussion about satisfactory explanation (6) *rationalism – empiricism*.

In this study, I stress the concept of social change extensively within democracy building or processes of democratization, whether in the structural or ideational levels, that comprise social factors, the establishment of democratic institutions and other determinants of the state's democratic sustainability. Therefore, social change can take place in the mindset of the individuals as well as in the structural level attached to the social. *The esprit de corps*, or *Asabiyyah*⁹⁵ as depicted by Ibn Khaldun⁹⁶, is sacralized to the point where it becomes the basic institution of the community and the guiding principle of its very existence⁹⁷. This community attached individual is socialized within social institutions, such as the family, education, religion and that market that can also be understood as solid components of the state⁹⁸. At this stage, it is enough to recognize the poststructuralist or constructivist premises, where both levels, individual and societal, are connected through constant but contingent interaction, without stressing either's decisive position to determine the other. The social subjects are able to change the structures while the structures effect on the social subjects.

⁹³ Moghadam (2013, 1).

⁹⁴ Noble, Trevor (2000, 5) *Social Theory and Social Change*. New York: St Martin's Press.

⁹⁵ *Asabiyyah* or "group feeling" is understood here as social solidarity, unity and social cohesion. It is needed for community as the bond of cohesion.

⁹⁶ Ibn Khaldun (2005 [1370], 47, 97-109 and 16).

⁹⁷ Boutefnouchet, Mostefa (2004, 23) *La Société Algérienne en Transition*. Alger: Office des Publication Universitaires.

⁹⁸ Boutefnouchet (2004, 22).

The activists of the autonomous trade unions in Algeria argue that they gather into unions to precipitate the processes of democratization to advance working conditions in the structures of the state aiming to increase personal freedom and political space. Meanwhile, they can suffer or benefit from larger social processes such as the economic situation that is effected by external factors: international energy prices, national or international military conflicts or challenges, and opportunities brought about by social factors, such as the rapid population growth, bureaucratic elements, family relations, and so forth.

Social change can be generated through violent or nonviolent processes. Independence and freedom struggles are often highlighted as part of violent combats⁹⁹. Independence in 1962, October uprisings in 1988 and civil war (1992-2000), were the results of various parallel socio-economic processes, violent and nonviolent, in connection with internal and external developments. Individuals mobilized, some in the name of *thawra* (revolution), some in the name of *jihad* (holy war), to achieve better material or idealistic living conditions through social change. Both structure and agency matter, as well as their interaction.

The starting point is the need of the autonomous trade unions, consisting of individual activists, who choose to struggle through nonviolent means to change the asymmetric hegemonic power structures into a more pluralist field, and for a more inclusive social space where they can act and conduct chosen syndicalist performances. To achieve their goals they use democracy-oriented rhetoric for change, because in the asymmetric power relations that seems to be the only viable option. This does not denote that asymmetric power relations would be the only reason why these activists use democracy-oriented rhetoric and aim at sustainable social change, as if the activists or members of these unions would not aspire for genuine democracy building as such.

It is common to depict the Algerian political system within the stability-instability nexus. Stability, as a discourse, is also a central concept and a part of the discourse analysis (See Chapter V) in this study. Therefore, I use the distinction between

⁹⁹ Bartkowski, Maciej J. (Eds.) (2013, 4) *Recovering Nonviolent History – Civil Resistance in Liberation Struggles*. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

sustainable democratic development¹⁰⁰ and stability, proposed by Silvia Colombo¹⁰¹. She argues that it is possible to have “apparent stability internally and externally without sustainable development”. While the state, as in the case of Algeria, can present itself as stable and ensure the continuation of the sovereignty and use of power, it is possible to present political and socio-economic aspects that show simultaneously the lack of sustainable democratic development, which can lead into turmoil in the longer run in the processes of development. In the chapter IV, I discuss more profoundly how the political change evolved in Algeria during the colonial period and after the independence in 1962.

Today many nations organize presidential and parliamentary elections to build up an image of democratic practices. Nevertheless, does organizing elections mean that the nations are democratic? What are the conditions for a democratic state? Colombo argues that the stable state is, in general, governed by “the regime” while the sustainable nation state is organized around democratic structures by “the state”. She stresses that the state involves the society more extensively in the state’s affairs, while the regime is concentrated to secure its own interests. Colombo strengthens her argument by asking the question “sustainability for whom?”

Accredited, but contested due to its political motivation, the Democracy Index elaborated by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), based in London, classifies Algeria as an authoritarian state¹⁰². Of 167 countries, Algeria is ranked 126th behind Tunisia (69th, flawed democracy), Morocco (105th, hybrid regime), Mauritania (117th, authoritarian) exceeding only war-torn Libya (155th, authoritarian) in the Maghreb context. What do such reports really tell us about democracy, whether in the United States, EU-countries or particularly in Algeria? The *Arab Human Development Report*, published regularly since 2002 by UNDP, has depicted and explored the democratic deficit, alongside knowledge, gender equality, and youth integration deficits that exist in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

Moghadam¹⁰³ highlights the problematic approaches related to the body of political science literature that endorses a “Middle Eastern or Muslim

¹⁰⁰ The roots of the sustainable development can be derived from the Brundtland report (Our Common Future, Chapter II: <http://www.un-documents.net/ocf-02.htm>) in 1987 drawn by commission that was appointed by former United Nations Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuellar in 1983. This organizing principal aiming to correspond with human development goals are also playing important role in the agenda of United Nations (Our Common Future, Chapter II: <http://www.un-documents.net/ocf-02.htm>).

¹⁰¹ Colombo, Silvia (2010, 2) *The Southern Mediterranean: Between Changes and Challenges to its Sustainability*. MEDPRO Technical Report No. 1/November 2010.

¹⁰² Democracy index (EIU): <http://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>

¹⁰³ Moghadam (2013, 5).

exceptionalism” that concludes that the problem is either oil, or sharia law or gender inequality. She argues that researchers who conduct such reports and studies often lack a wider understanding of the peoples of the region, its culture and traditions. While she recognizes some basis for these claims she refers to studies¹⁰⁴ that show a high endeavor for democratic practices in the region, recalling events such as June 2009 Green Protests in Iran, and the 2011 uprisings and democratic elections in Tunisia. What do the 1988 October uprisings in Algeria and democratic elections tell about the preference of democratic practices among Algerians?

How well did the normative ideal democratization of the Middle East and North Africa through military invasion turned out in Iraq, for example? Why are democratic principles stressed on some occasions (Iraq, Iran, Libya, Syria) but less so in the others (Saudi-Arabia, Morocco, Jordan)? The diversity that exists in the region ranging from Morocco to Iran is so extensive that is it even meaningful to approach the so-called MENA as one singular object of analysis? Democracy is nowadays a highly politicized and contradictory concept, but it does not mean that this prevents us from exploring its meaning and forms of actualization.

While it is hard to predict when social change or change in general takes place, it is possible to evaluate and propose a measurement for sustainable development. Drawing on Bruce Gilley’s work on the determinants of the state legitimacy¹⁰⁵, Colombo has introduced a categorization for such performance and stresses the concentration on ideational assets as well as governance structures that spring from the actors and action, defining how and what kind of governance structures are requisite and available¹⁰⁶. She classifies the major determinants of sustainability into four categories: social factors, economic factors, political factors and contextual factors. These normative adjustments are worth introducing to illustrate further the aspect of democracy building linked to social change and to understand more generally the endeavors of the normative democratic rhetoric used by autonomous trade union activists, although not directly connected or cited by the autonomous union activists in Algeria.

Firstly, Colombo¹⁰⁷ stresses three social elements. Starting from *equality* (incorporating gender equality as well), assets that aim to reduce inequalities (income, gender) should be developed. In addition, there should be a governance structure

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.arabbarometer.org/>

¹⁰⁵ Gilley, Bruce (2006) The Determinants of State Legitimacy: Results for 72 Countries. *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 27, No 1, January, pp. 47-71.

¹⁰⁶ Colombo (2010, 3).

¹⁰⁷ Colombo (2010, 4).

created to strengthen the juridical system that guarantees the equal treatment of the people. In order to develop *social capital* (networks and relationships), a term coined by Pierre Bourdieu, the levels of human resources should be evolved, transparency should be increased to tackle corruption and guarantee access to basic infrastructures. Of major importance for the autonomous trade unions is the revision of the multiparty system and creation of new autonomous spaces. *Civic interest and engagement with politics* can be improved via the opening of new channels to engage in politics, which require the transparency of political processes, strengthening accountability and openness of the political environment in general.

Secondly, Colombo¹⁰⁸ divides economic factors into three groups. Strengthening the *welfare level* means ensuring the necessary basic services to the population in health and education. The access to infrastructures should be facilitated, while formal employment, youth education and the power of trade unions should be developed. *Poverty reduction* has an impact on individual and societal levels, while the *economic governance and stability* (GDP, inflation, level of foreign direct investment, private property, debt rates, public deficit and macroeconomic stability) should be liable. However, I believe that some of the so-called “structural build up” recommendations that include liberalization and privatization measures are closer to the ideals of the Bretton Woods system than to the goals of the autonomous trade unions in Algeria.

Thirdly, the political factors that Colombo¹⁰⁹ discloses, relates to *political stability*, which requires elite accountability, quality of leadership, political dissent, the question of succession and space for political opposition. In the framework of *general political governance*, the role of bureaucracy, “state class” and emergence of intellectual elite offer major assets, while on the structural levels of governance transparency, control of corruption, promotion of the rule of law, independent judiciary and neo-patrimonialism are major questions to be developed. *Democratic rights and civil liberties* are crucial ideational and structural components for sustainable democracy.

Finally, Colombo¹¹⁰ divides the contextual factors in four categories. The capacity to receive and distribute *external aid* and *trade relations* are crucial. Colombo stresses market-friendly reforms, competition, the role of foreign direct investment, association agreements (e.g. Algeria-EU association agreements) and so forth. The *Rhetoric of democracy* means conceptualizing the democracy, securitization of foreign policy and sufficient migration policies. *Military support and rhetoric of conflict*

¹⁰⁸ Colombo (2010, 4-5).

¹⁰⁹ Colombo (2010, 5).

¹¹⁰ Colombo (2010, 5).

encompasses military expenditures and training offering flexibility in the ever-changing international political context.

These aforementioned multidimensional determinants that can be used to describe state legitimacy and sustainable development cover “objective” and subjective socio-economic proportions where it is possible to contextualize the demands of the autonomous trade unions. They are normative aspects that depict the legitimacy and sustainability of the states’ conduct of governance, while being debatable in contemporary international politics. Democracy is argued to be the most developed system of governance because it mobilizes the majority to defend its legitimacy. It is also debatable how well Algeria complies with these determinants and what is the objective state of democracy in the country. It is also open to discussion, how widely these normative democratic premises are endeavored in Algeria and how much the oppositional forces would be committed to their realization if they were in power. What is more, one can also debate how well the democratic ideals are present in practice within the oppositional movements themselves.

2.2.2 Nonviolent acts of citizenship

As I will later show in the analytic chapters, autonomous trade union activists use democracy-oriented rhetoric through declarations, interviews and media statements related to their action and aim social change to improve their position as a citizens, workers and family members. In recurrent occurrences they call for civic rights and participate in negotiations, debates and struggles about the meaning of *citizenship*. Their demanded, defined and constructed understanding of citizenship articulates through acts in the public space. Mobilizing and organizing political nonviolent actions (sit-ins, strikes, hunger strikes, rallies) as well as public events (meetings, demonstrations) around the country can be defined as *the acts of citizenship*. These collective political participatory actions at the individual level are reported mostly in the alternative and oppositional media¹¹¹, whether newspapers, internet publications or webpages, bringing public attention to their activities both inside Algeria and abroad especially through international and national labor movements and civil society organizations.

¹¹¹ Algérie Focus, El Watan, Journalistes Citoyens d’Algérie, La Tribune, Le Matin, Le Soir d’Algérie, Le Quotidienne d’Oran, Liberté and Tout sûr l’Algérie (TSA).

The concept of the citizenship within contemporary Algeria remains ambiguous. It is articulated through hegemonic processes¹¹² intrinsically linked to social antagonism between different actors (e.g. oppositional movements and state authorities). Mustapha Medjahdi¹¹³ has studied the educational aspect of the citizenship in the Algerian media in the context of agenda-setting theory. He stresses that citizenship constitutes a two-pronged meaning. The pro-government newspapers stress the responsibility aspect of the citizens towards the state, while the critical oppositional media highlight the rights and responsibility of the state towards the citizens. It is obvious, that autonomous trade union members and activists share the opposite, or at least different, view on actualization of citizenship vis-à-vis governmental authorities and especially related to their argument about the performances of nonviolent acts of citizenship.

The concept of citizenship has been ambiguous in the past too. Therefore, it is necessary to have a more past-oriented approach to the development of the concept of citizenship and its genealogy in Algeria. Historically, the concept of citizenship, according to dominant “western” centric literature, dates back to Athenian (*polites*) and Roman (*res publica*) roots as an active participation in collective self-rule and legal status of freedom as a part of territorial jurisdiction.¹¹⁴ Aristotle's definition of the concept can be viewed as an important starting point for scholars¹¹⁵. According to Aristotle, the phenomenon was known already in the trading cities such as Carthage and therefore has its roots most likely somewhere in the Mediterranean¹¹⁶, while we do not know accurately whether there were such connotations during the periods of early civilizations in Mesopotamia, ancient Egypt or elsewhere Asian continent and the Mesoamerica.

Since the emergence of the territorial sovereignty in the 17th century and the nation state in the 18th century, the meaning of the citizenship became in many ways

¹¹² Laclau, Ernesto and Mouffe, Chantal (2001) [1985] *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. Verso: London and New York.

¹¹³ Medjahdi, Mustapha (2012) *Le discours sur la citoyenneté à travers les quotidiens nationaux: production et réception*. (Ed.) Hassan Remaoun, *L'Algérie aujourd'hui: Approches sur l'exercice de la citoyenneté*. The Pages 53-74. Editions CRASC. Medjahdi has studied the discussions related to the concept of citizenship in the newspaper *El Khabar* established in the wake of October uprisings in 1988 and governmental newspaper *El Moudjahid*, closely linked to the government.

¹¹⁴ Pocock, John G.A. (1992, 31-55) *The Ideal of Citizenship Since Classical Times*. *Queen's Quarterly* 99/1, pp. 31–55.

¹¹⁵ Parolin, Gianluca P. (2009, 17) *Citizenship in the Arab World: Kin, Religion and the Nation-State*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

¹¹⁶ Remaoun, Hassan (2012, 33) *Le Concept de citoyenneté à travers la pensée politique et l'histoire: éléments pour une approche*. in Hassan Remaoun (Ed.), *L'Algérie aujourd'hui: Approches sur l'exercice de la citoyenneté*. Oran: Editions CRASC, pp. 31-52.

synonymous with nationality, as the “fact”, which was criticized by Giorgio Agamben¹¹⁷ in the 1990s, leaning on the earlier work of Hannah Arendt¹¹⁸. According to Arendt: “This was the unfortunate result of the transformation of the *citoyen* of the French Revolution into the *bourgeois* of the nineteenth century on one hand, and of the antagonism between state and society on the other”¹¹⁹. After the Age of Enlightenment, interpretations of citizenship transformed, along with revolutions, into so-called modern sovereign representative democracy that is constitutionally constrained by the rule of law. It included values or ideals such as state of nature, natural law, religious tolerance, social contract, human and citizenship rights, equality among men, freedom, civil society, sovereignty, democracy, secularization and laïcization. However, against this so called Eurocentric narrative, John G.A. Pocock (1992), Gianluca P. Parolin (2010) and Hassan Remaoun (2012), among others, emphasize that neither the so-called “classical” ideal citizenship exists nor does the solid tradition that has led to a unilateral understanding of its meaning. French colonial rule in Algeria gives a perspective on the debate, often an idealistic and romanticized picture, systematically linked to the Age of Enlightenment and its achievements.

The concept of citizenship, within this genealogy, and its development in Algeria can be traced back at least to the colonial period. Today, the French legacy still plays a significant and complex role in Algeria around various social, political and economic dimensions, linking citizenship to the construction of discourses, especially antagonistic ones, within various frameworks. According to Remaoun, Algerians became familiar with the French concept of citizenship since the French occupation of 1830¹²⁰, even though they did not have access to it. The Algerian *natives* (the *indigènes*) were recognized as French but were rejected as citizens since nationality and citizenship were legally separated¹²¹. They were governed under the *Muslim Status* enacted by the *sénatus-consulte* of 14th of July 1865, which established the Muslims of Algeria as French. Algerians could request full rights as French citizens,

¹¹⁷ Agamben, Giorgio (2001, 19-28) *Keinot vailla päämäärää* (Originally: *Mezzogi senza fine - Nota sulla politica 1996*). Helsinki: Tutkijaliitto.

¹¹⁸ Arendt, Hannah (1973 [1951], 55, 255, 272 and 293) *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. San Diego – New York – London: Harvest Book.

¹¹⁹ Arendt (1973, 255).

¹²⁰ Remaoun, Hassan (2012, 46-47) Le Concept de citoyenneté à travers la pensée politique et l'histoire: éléments pour une approche, in Hassan Remaoun (Ed.), *L'Algérie aujourd'hui: Approches sur l'exercice de la citoyenneté*. Oran: Editions CRASC, pp. 31-52; Parolin, Gianluca P. (2009, 94). *Citizenship in the Arab World: Kin, Religion and the Nation-State*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

¹²¹ Blévis, Laure (2001) Les avatars de la citoyenneté en Algérie coloniale ou les paradoxes d'une catégorisation. *Droit et Société*. 48-2001, pp. 557-580.

but only if they were willing to abandon their *personal status* (statut personnel) as Muslims and accept French law in matters such as marriage and inheritance¹²². Similarly, as Marnia Lazreg points out, citizenship and the position of women are often covered under the religious paradigm that provides explanatory power in describing the development of the citizenship in general in Algeria¹²³.

The 1860s is an interesting period, being an example of varieties during the repressive colonial period. It is characterized as the epoch of *the Arab Kingdom* (Royame Arabe), where the ruler of the Second French Empire Napoleon III and his counselor Ismaël Urbain conducted more sympathetic policies towards Algerians at the expense of settlers, integrating Algerians in the construction of a common society that aimed at smoother coexistence. Algeria would be transformed into an Arab kingdom rather than staying a colony, where the practices and religion of the Algerians were respected while, on the other hand, any inherent suggestion of cultural autonomy was opposed¹²⁴. Nonetheless, while the policies of Napoleon III were targeted at improving the lives of the Algerian population, they ultimately turned out to be more harmful than beneficial.

Gradually, since the 1840s, Algeria had started to assimilate into France. The collapse of the Second Empire, as a result of the loss of the war with Prussia (1870-71), was rejoiced by the French settlers in Algeria¹²⁵ but it also boosted the revolt¹²⁶ of the Kabyles of the Biban Mountains. In 1881, the *Indigenous Code* or *Native Penal Code* (code de l'indigénat) created 110 offences, providing for special penalties of imprisonment, probation, collective fines, and individual or collective confiscations that further divided Algerians as second-class citizens from the European settlers¹²⁷. On the 4 February 1919, *the Jonnart Law* (Loi Jonnart), controversial and unpopular in France¹²⁸, offered some scope for Algerians, on the enhancement of political

¹²² Ageron, Charles-Robert (1991, 39) *Modern Algeria: A History from 1830 to the Present*. Hong Kong: Africa World Press.

¹²³ Lazreg, Marnia (1990, 756) *Gender and Politics in Algeria: Unraveling the Religious Paradigm*. *Signs*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Summer, 1990), pp. 755-780.

¹²⁴ Lorcin, Patricia M. E. (1999, 76-96) *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Race in Colonial Algeria*. London: Tauris; Ageron (1991, 37-44); Melasuo (131-132).

¹²⁵ Ageron (1991, 47).

¹²⁶ Revolt, or Mokrani revolt, in 1871 was led by cheikh Mohamed El Mokrani (1815-1871) and lasted seven months and was eventually crushed by the French army (Ageron 1991, 50-53).

¹²⁷ Ageron (1991, 69-70); Remaoun (2012, 47-78).

¹²⁸ Ruedy, John (2005, 112-113) *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

rights, to acquire positions in the army and to work in the civil service. However, this required the abandonment of Muslim status¹²⁹.

The national movement and the visible figures such as the leader of the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulemas Abdelhamid Ben Badis and Ferhat Abbas, the leader of Federation of Elected Natives, tried during 1930s to find a way for the national movement to achieve harmony regarding basic citizenship rights, stressing that the settlement should include democracy, citizenship, social justice and respect for Islamic identity. After the Second World War, equality of rights and duties were proclaimed by the Ordonnance of 7 March 1944 and later confirmed by *the Lamine Guèye Law* in 7th of May 1946. It granted French citizenship to all subjects around French territories and departments overseas. However, it was the Law of 20 September 1946 that granted French citizenship to all Algerians, and this time they were not required to renounce their Muslim personal status. This equality did not extend to electoral legislation, which provided for the continuation of the separate and unequal system of representation in the Algerian Assembly and the French Parliament. In summary, Algerians were first considered as indigènes, then subjects and finally French Muslims¹³⁰.

Gradually the national movement became radicalized and led to a formation of the National Liberation Movement (FLN) that proclaimed the start of the revolutionary struggle and claimed for “liquidation of the colonial system”, “the abandonment of all relics of reformism” and “national independence through the restoration of the Algerian state”¹³¹. These formulations concentrated on the liberation of the country and political rights, such as the position of women, were not a priority¹³². Lazreg, who separates citizenship as “status” and citizenship as “practice”, criticizes the process, in which individuals were considered unproblematically as citizens after independence, though nationality law privileged men while discriminating against women¹³³. The year after independence, an Algerian Nationality Code, subject to Islamic law, was passed, on 27 March 1963,

¹²⁹ Ageron, Charles-Robert (1979, 270-276) *Histoire de l'Algérie contemporaine*. Tome II: De l'insurrection de 1871 au déclenchement de la guerre de libération (1954). Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

¹³⁰ Parolin (2009, 94-95).

¹³¹ Ageron (1991, 108); Remaoun (2012, 50-52).

¹³² Bouatta, Cherifa (1997, 1) *Evolution of the Women's Movement in Contemporary Algeria: Organizations, Objectives and Prospects*. *The United Nations University – Wider, Working Papers* No. 124, February 1997.

¹³³ Lazreg, Marnia (2000, 60) *Citizenship and Gender in Algeria*, in Suad Joseph (Ed.) *Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East*. New York: Syracuse University Press.

which imposed Algerian nationality in article no. 6 by filiation of an Algerian father, who had to have at least two ascendants in the paternal line born in Algeria. As a result, all *Pieds-noirs* (French and other European ancestry or Jews who lived in French North Africa) were deprived of Algerian nationality. In 1970, the Code was repealed but maintained the pre-eminence of (paternal) *jus sanguinis*¹³⁴, the requirement of strong assimilation for naturalization and strict control to avoid cases of dual nationality. It was not until 2005 that the Code was amended by the Order 1/2005 to allow the attribution of Algerian nationality by maternal *jus sanguinis* and the acquisition of Algerian nationality by marriage¹³⁵. Despite this, the revision did not bring about social change regarding the deficits of citizenship and gender rights¹³⁶.

According to Lazreg, “formal citizenship precludes the emergence of substantive citizenship, which includes the protection of civil and social rights”¹³⁷. She argues, in highlighting the situation of women, that autonomy and agency play central role within the realization of substantive citizenship¹³⁸. Similarly, the members and activists of the autonomous trade unions insist that citizenship rights are not implemented concretely, because contemporary Algeria lacks democratic practices, such as freedom of speech and actualization of individual rights, that prevents the exercise of substantive citizenship. In their view, natural resources are confiscated by the oppressive elite and Algeria is ruled by an oppressive oligarchy that practices nepotism and corruption. They claim that natural resources belong to the people and that profits should be distributed on a more equal basis. Activists believe that their dignity is on the line and they do not have anything to lose. They are motivated to act within unions to defend workers’ rights and fulfillment of the citizenship. Sometimes gender questions are also raised, but mostly union activists concentrate on working conditions in general and undemocratic practices in particular.

However, do they exercise responsibility towards Algerian state? If so, how? This argument is occasionally raised by the state authorities in response to the demands of these various oppositional groups. Union activists claim that their action as such contains the fulfillment of their responsibility towards all the Algerian citizens and

¹³⁴ *Jus Sanguinis* (right of blood) and *Jus Soli* (right of the land) are two traditional categories that give access to the nationality. Previous illustrate German tradition, latter French tradition (Remaoun 2012, 43).

¹³⁵ Parolin (2009, 95).

¹³⁶ Cheriet, Boutheina (2010) The Ambiguous State: Gender and Citizenship as Barter in Algeria. *Diogenes* 2010 57: 73.

¹³⁷ Lazreg (2000, 60).

¹³⁸ Lazreg (2000, 59).

to Algeria in general. SNAPAP is portrayed by the governmental forces as the group of “Trotskyists” or “Islamists”, whose aim is to destabilize Algeria in the favor of hostile foreign countries that want to take control of Algerian natural resources. On the other hand, autonomous trade union activists describe authorities as “Harkis” or “*biżb fransa*” (the Party of France) and blame them for working as puppets of France and other hostile foreign governments while viewing their own actions as the continuation of Algerian liberation struggle. By using the symbols of and references to the Algerian liberation war (1954-1962) they challenge the monopoly of state authorities to benefit from the sacrifices of the “moudjahidines”, veterans of the liberation war. Both sides argue that they represent the real nationalist Algerian image and accuse the other of unpatriotic performances while stressing the sacrifices of the “moudjahidines” for their own cause. The concept of citizenship emerged many times when interviewees spoke about their individual motivation for their activism.

When autonomous trade unions organize demonstrations, sit-ins and rallies in the public space to push the government to improve and strengthen citizenship rights, they aim to communicate with the audience, the people in Algeria and those outside part of the international human rights networks. I approach this communicative performance in the public space within the theory of *Acts of citizenship* of Engin F. Isin¹³⁹ and Greg M. Neilsen. They describe citizenship as a phenomenon, which is neither status nor practice. By this, they mean that citizenship is not a static status or state, but something that exist and shape through motion and experience.

Isin and Neilsen stress the concrete *acts of citizenship* of the different actors amongst various social groups:

We propose to shift focus from the institution of citizenship and the citizen as individual agent to acts of citizenship – that is, collective or individual deeds that rupture social-historical patterns. Acts are not passively given, nor do they emerge from a natural order; as such, they can be opposed to the naïvely formulated definition in which to be a citizen simply means to exercise rights or fulfil obligations, as if these neutral forms of individual choice could be sanctioned outside multiple networks of authority. Whereas citizenship practices like voting, paying taxes or learning languages appear passive and one-sided in mass democracies, acts of citizenship break with repetition of the same and so anticipate rejoinders from imaginary but not fictional adversaries¹⁴⁰.

¹³⁹ Isin, Engin F. & Nielsen, Greg M. (Ed.) (2008) *Acts of Citizenship*. London & New York: Zed Books.

¹⁴⁰ Isin and Neilsen (2008, 2).

The effect of this turn or shift from the passive institutional understanding of citizenship to practices has been production of studies related to routines, rituals¹⁴¹, customs, norms and habits of everyday life through which subject transform into citizens. Studies on citizenship in general have focused on three modes: *jus sanguinis* (a child inherits citizenship via parent), *jus soli* (a child inherits citizenship via birth) and *jus domicile* (a person acquires citizenship by naturalization)¹⁴².

Isin stresses that citizenship cannot be seen reductively as a legal status, in the case of Algeria possessing an Algerian passport and embracing rights as citizen of a given country, but as a notion that further involves social, political, cultural and symbolic practices that can constitute citizenship as a legal status.

[...] formal citizenship is differentiated from substantive citizenship and the latter is seen as the condition of the possibility of the former. Yet, whether the focus is on status or practice, it remains on the doer rather than the deed. To investigate citizenship in a way that is irreducible to either status or practice, while still valuing this distinction, requires a focus on those acts when, regardless of status and substance, subjects constitute themselves as citizens or, better still, as those to whom the right to have rights is due. But the focus shifts from subjects as such to acts (or deeds) that produce such subjects.¹⁴³

It is the acts that create the actor, not vice versa. Isin prefers to investigate citizenship as a negotiated and contested field of contingent possibilities and impossibilities rather than only focusing on content, the form and extent of rights and obligations or on apparent exclusions and inclusions¹⁴⁴.

Isin is interested in the process how a subject transforms into citizen that acts for his/her rights and the places where the process actualizes: “how the emergence of this figure is implicated in the emergence of new *sites*¹⁴⁵, *scales*¹⁴⁶ and *acts* through which *actors* claim to transform themselves (and others) from subjects into citizens as claimants of rights”¹⁴⁷. The main idea is to increase knowledge how the acts, sites

¹⁴¹ See e.g. James C. Scott (1990) *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

¹⁴² Isin, Engin F. (2009, 369) Citizenship in flux: The Figure of the activist citizen. *Subjectivity* Issue 29, pp. 367-388.

¹⁴³ Isin & Nielsen (2008, 1-3).

¹⁴⁴ Isin, Engin F. (2008) *Theorizing Acts of Citizenship*, in Engin F. Isin and Greg M. Nielsen (Eds.) (2008) *Acts of Citizenship*. London & New York: Zed Books, pp. 15-43.

¹⁴⁵ Isin (2008, 370) understands sites of citizenship (bodies, courts, streets, media, networks, borders) as fields of contestation, where issues, interests, stakes, themes, concepts and objects gather.

¹⁴⁶ Isin (2008, 370) sees scales (urban, regional, national, transnational, international) as “scopes of applicability” that are proper to fields of contestation or “sites”.

¹⁴⁷ Isin (2009, 368).

and scales (that are overlapping) generate new political subjectivities and “transform themselves and others into citizens by articulating ever-changing and expanding rights”¹⁴⁸.

Citizenship is, therefore, understood as a complex web of rights and responsibilities that materialize contingently as every state, and according to Isin: “exists in social, political or economic integration and is implicated in varying degrees of influence and autonomy”¹⁴⁹. The acts of citizenship are an attempt to theorize the claim for citizenship rights through concrete acts that are “those constitutive and disruptive moments when rights are claimed, responsibilities asserted and obligations imposed”¹⁵⁰. This could be then connected to Vinthagen’s understanding of nonviolence, which “entails a moment of disobedience or a breach with the requirement of submission”¹⁵¹.

We can therefore view citizenship as a discourse. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, whose discourse theory is used in this thesis and will be further examined in the Chapter III, argue that social actors possess “differential positions within the discourses that constitute the social fabric”¹⁵². Therefore, citizenship is comprised here as a discourse, which is constitutive of our world through signs, or *elements* as Laclau and Mouffe¹⁵³ call them in their discourse theory. These elements, which have multiple potential meanings, are transformed in discourse into moments, never entirely, to reduce their polysemic character to a fully fixed temporal meaning¹⁵⁴. This happens through articulation of those acts of citizenship and construction of identities that are affected by political dimensions. It is useful to notice that Laclau and Mouffe do not put so much weight, as for example Norman Fairclough does¹⁵⁵, on the idea of the actions and reflexivity that human agents reproduce in transforming the social world.

¹⁴⁸ Isin (2009, 368 and 377).

¹⁴⁹ Isin (2008, 15).

¹⁵⁰ Isin & Nielsen (2008, 1-3)

¹⁵¹ Vinthagen (2015a, 15-16).

¹⁵² Laclau, Ernesto and Mouffe, Chantal (2001, xiii) [1985] *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London and New York: Verso.

¹⁵³ Laclau and Mouffe (2001, 105).

¹⁵⁴ Jorgensen, Marianne and Phillips, Louise J. (2002, 28). *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. London – Thousand Oaks – New Delhi: Sage Publications.

¹⁵⁵ Torfing, Jacob (2005, 9) Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments, and Challenges, in David Howarth and Jacob Torfing (Eds.) *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

What is of major importance here and ought to be underlined is the difference between the *act* and *action* that is highlighted in the theorizing of *acts of citizenship*. This distinction is also important to transform Vinthagen's *nonviolent action* into *nonviolent acts of citizenship*. As Isin argues, it is rare to find previous scholars that have paid attention to the difference between act and action¹⁵⁶. He describes some inputs of Robert Ware, Jacques Lacan and Mikhail Bakhtin, but is not fully satisfied with their outcomes. The same critiques can be made of Vinthagen, who does not seem to differentiate between act and action but uses both terms interchangeably when depicting social action¹⁵⁷. What is then the difference?

Following Adolf Reinach's¹⁵⁸ work *The A priori of Foundations of Civil Law*, Isin¹⁵⁹ separates ontologically the concepts of *action* and *act*. The concept of act can be understood as a verb (to put in motion, move to action, impel, actuate, influence, animate, to bring into action, bring about and so forth) or as noun (actuality of a condition, state, quality, the process of doing, action or operation). Isin argues that the word act, both as verb and noun, "implies and evokes an impressive range of conduct and outcomes that are related to but irreducible to action"¹⁶⁰. An act is similar but something more than an action because an act has also some kind of virtual existence: an act of forgiveness, for example, which can happen before the actual performance itself.

Finally, Isin¹⁶¹ concludes six differences between acts and action:

- 1) Acts and action are distinct and separate (but related) classes of phenomena. While acts have a virtual existence, action is always actual.
- 2) Acts rupture or break the given orders, practices and habitus¹⁶². Creative ruptures and breaks take different forms that are irreducible. They can, for example, take forms of resistance or subservience. What actualizes an act is not determinable in advance.
- 3) Acts produce actors and actors do not produce acts; actors actualize acts and themselves through action.

¹⁵⁶ Isin (2008, 23).

¹⁵⁷ Vinthagen (2015b, 263).

¹⁵⁸ Reinach, Adolf (1983) [1913] *The Apriori Foundations of Civil Law*. *Aletheia*, 3, 1-142.

¹⁵⁹ Isin (2008, 21-22).

¹⁶⁰ Isin (2008, 22).

¹⁶¹ Isin (2008, 36-37).

¹⁶² I will further reflect the concept of habitus in the pages 43-44.

- 4) Actualization of acts provokes both responsibility¹⁶³ and answerability¹⁶⁴. Acts always concern others and the Other. The tension between responsibility and answerability produces acts as ruptures in the given.
- 5) Responsibility and answerability are distinct and separate (but related) classes of phenomena. While responsibility invokes the given, immediate and calculable, answerability orients acts towards the Other.
- 6) Ethics and the ethical, politics and the political are distinct and irreducible (but related) aspects of acts that one must investigate separately while keeping them together.

In short, Isin separates routinized social actions, such as voting, taxpaying and enlisting, from acts, because acts break routines and on the contrary make difference underlining the difference¹⁶⁵. This difference takes place when acts are actualized with actions: “[m]aking difference introduces a break, a rupture”¹⁶⁶. Therefore, acts and action, acts and habitus should be separated and perceived as isolated acts that create a scene by incorporating those actors that continue to stay in the scene¹⁶⁷. When Isin uses the term *theorizing acts*, he means “[A]n assemblage of acts, actions and actors in a historically and geographically concrete situation, creating a scene or state of affairs”¹⁶⁸. Like the concept of political or the concept of power, an act is actualized by certain articulated action. Due to their transcendent qualities (e.g. act of forgiveness) they do not necessarily need concrete deed or action. By theorizing acts one must “focus the rupture that enables the actor (that the act creates) to remain at the scene rather than fleeing it [...]”. Isin also differentiates *activist citizens* and *active citizens*¹⁶⁹. For him “activist citizens engage in writing scripts and creating the scene” while “active citizens follow scripts and participate in scenes that are already created”. To act is to engage on creation of a scene through creation of oneself. The observation and exploring of the citizenship should take place in acts, not practices or institutions.

In the Algerian autonomous trade union context, this can be interpreted in the way that union activists are not satisfied by settling only for state led political processes (voting and participating elections, paying taxes, developing society as

¹⁶³ *Responsibility* is ontic (physical, real or factual existence) and action-oriented (Isin 2008, 28).

¹⁶⁴ *Answerability* is ontological and acts-oriented (Isin 2008, 28).

¹⁶⁵ Isin (2009, 379).

¹⁶⁶ Isin (2009, 379).

¹⁶⁷ Isin (2008, 27).

¹⁶⁸ Isin (2008, 24).

¹⁶⁹ Isin (2008, 38).

civilian family members). They want more. They want to organize themselves as responsible agents and act through rupture from their own individual premises to have an impact on the national conduct of policies. They are ready to act within the moments of uncertainty even though it can mean for them drifting into confrontation with the state authorities. To act means setting the unexpected and unpredictable¹⁷⁰. Autonomous union activists use nonviolent protests, non-cooperation, nonviolent interventions and civil disobedience¹⁷¹ as tools to pressure the government to reach their set demands without knowing the outcome. They are ready to change the conditions. They do not want to vote or pay taxes under certain conditions. Through these acts, they fulfill their experienced social responsibilities and transform into activist citizens. However, acts of citizenship also integrate the virtual desires that drive the activists to risk their social positions. Why some Algerians activate around the autonomous trade unions while others do not?

Isin¹⁷² claims that “[a]cts cannot happen without motives, purposes, or reasons, but those cannot be the only grounds of interpreting acts of citizenship”. While acts of citizenship include decisions, they should not be reduced to calculability, intentionality or responsibility. Therefore, Isin¹⁷³ stresses that:

- The first principle of investigating acts of citizenship is to interpret them through their grounds and consequences, which includes subjects becoming activist citizens through scenes created.
- The Second principle of theorizing acts of citizenship recognizes that acts produce actors that become answerable¹⁷⁴ to justice against injustice.
- The third principle of theorizing acts is to recognize that acts of citizenship do not need to be founded in law or enacted in the name of law.

There has been much attention given to the status and habitus of citizenship, which Isin¹⁷⁵ sees as ways of thought and conduct internalized over long period of time; acts of citizenship should be understood as related but distinct from them. They see a distinction related with the everyday creative momentous acts as breaks regarding

¹⁷⁰ Isin (2009, 380).

¹⁷¹ Johansen (2007, 149-151).

¹⁷² Isin (2008, 38).

¹⁷³ Isin (2008, 38-39).

¹⁷⁴ By the answerable act, Isin (2008, 30) means: the ‘actualization of a decision – inescapably, irremediably, and irrevocably’.

¹⁷⁵ Isin (2008, 15).

structural and even determinist concepts of habitus and practice¹⁷⁶. What about those acts that may not be considered, in some contexts, as political or related with citizenship rights?

Thomas H. Marshall classic formulation divides citizenship into civil, political and social categories¹⁷⁷. However, Isin and Nielsen stress the requirement to focus on the exact moments, regardless of status and substance, when subjects constitute themselves as citizens. There are no fixed identities nor solid habitus or practice but more various fluid subject positions. When autonomous trade unions organize nonviolent sit-ins, or demonstrations, they become actors through acts they commit, perceived as the acts of citizenship. As Laclau and Mouffe write in the context of their discourse theory: “where every element has been reduced to a moment of that totality – all identity is relational and all relations have a necessary character”¹⁷⁸.

This leads us to recall that Laclau and Mouffe have received criticism regarding their conception of subjectivity and political agency¹⁷⁹. While Laclau and Mouffe have tried to find a middle path between structuralism and post-structuralism regarding the understanding of political agency, they have been accused of reducing the subject from the political agency and substance, where subject is only approached by already existing discursive structures¹⁸⁰ or reduced to an ensemble of subject positions marked upon a subject in discursive structures¹⁸¹. This is a very Foucauldian way to see that subjects are created in discourses¹⁸². However, the critical discourse theory gives more liberty in this sense related to the understanding of *the social nature of individual creativity* as Norman Fairclough pronounce:

[T]he creativity of the subject is socially determined, in the sense that creativity flourishes in particular social circumstances, when social struggles are constantly de-structuring orders of discourse; and the creativity of the subject is socially constitutive, in the sense that individual creative acts cumulatively establish restructured orders of discourse¹⁸³.

¹⁷⁶ Isin (2008, 18).

¹⁷⁷ Marshall, Thomas H. (1950) *Citizenship and Social Class*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁷⁸ Laclau and Mouffe (2001, 106).

¹⁷⁹ Howarth, David (2000, 121). *Discourse*. Buckingham UK: Open University Press.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Torfing (2005, 16).

¹⁸² Howarth, David and Stravarakakis, Yannis (2000, 13) Introducing discourse theory and political analysis, in David Howarth and Yannis Stravarakakis (Eds.) *Discourse theory and political analysis. Identities, hegemonies and social change*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. pp. 1-23.

¹⁸³ Fairclough, Norman (1989, 142-143) *Language and Power*. Routledge: London and New York.

Laclau and Mouffe aim to give more space within the conception of *split subject*, where the subject is seen as internal to the structure but without complete structural identity, meaning that the structure of identity is ontologically open. In this dislocation, the subject appears as a split subject, which means that the subject may carry numerous identities at a time¹⁸⁴. Still Marianne Jorgensen and Louise Phillips¹⁸⁵ argue that even in these postures where subject's agency and role in social change are highlighted, they are surrounded by the discourses limiting the latitude of the subject to generate action.

So it is fruitful to remind how Pierre Bourdieu strived to surpass the complex ontological structure-agency layout. Bourdieu tried to show the complementary role of relationship between structure and agency through the concept of habitus¹⁸⁶. He defined habitus as something that is “the product of history, [and] produces individual and collective practices, and hence history, in accordance with schemes engendered by history”¹⁸⁷. Habitus, “which restores to the agent a generating, unifying, constructing, classifying power¹⁸⁸” as a conduct of social reality, while itself socially constructed. “[I]his capacity to construct social reality [...] is not that of a transcendental subject but of a socialized body, investing in its practice socially constructed organizing principles that are acquired in the course of a situated and dated social experience¹⁸⁹”. As Brian C. J. Singer¹⁹⁰ explains in the context of acts of citizenship theoretical framework: “It does not mediate between position (structure) and position-taking (agency), but precedes both position and position-taking, status and practices”.

Related to act and creativity, Melanie White¹⁹¹ poses a question: “[c]an an act of citizenship be creative?” She refers to works by Henri Bergson and Gilles Deleuze to show how creativity expresses itself as *duration* and cutting itself from obligation

¹⁸⁴ Torfing (2005, 17).

¹⁸⁵ Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, 17).

¹⁸⁶ Bourdieu, Pierre (2011) [1972] *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; and Bourdieu, Pierre (1984, 101) [1979] *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

¹⁸⁷ Bourdieu (2011, 82).

¹⁸⁸ Bourdieu, Pierre (2000, 136) *Pascalian Meditations*. Stanford California: Stanford University Press.

¹⁸⁹ Bourdieu (2000, 136-137).

¹⁹⁰ Singer, Brian C. J. (2008, 114) Citizenship Without Acts? With Tocqueville in America, in Engin F. Isin & Greg M. Nielsen (Eds.) *Acts of Citizenship*. London & New York: Zed Books. pp. 95-120.

¹⁹¹ White, Melanie (2008, 44) Can an act of citizenship be creative?, in Engin F. Isin & Greg M. Nielsen (Eds.) *Acts of Citizenship*. London & New York: Zed Books. pp. 44-56.

that in turn gain its strength from habit that keeps the so-called “closed society¹⁹²” together and reinforce the already existing societal structures. She argues that when citizenship is understood as organized exclusively by habits, our aptitude to consider the creativity of citizenship is obstructed by limitations to challenge, debate, critique and reflect our recurrent action and such engagement to our habits, or stagnation, generate miscalculation regarding our ways of envisage futures from antecedent action. A creative act of citizenship requires openings “where citizens break or destabilize the bonds of habitual activity”¹⁹³. That can take place through *encounters*, the meetings and confrontation between other human beings, where habitual activity is interfered. White concludes, by saying that: “in the encounter one exercises a degree of choice over whether to act one way and not the other – and it is in this context, I want to suggest, that a creative act is born”¹⁹⁴.

When activists and members of autonomous trade unions possessed with habitus constructed over long period of time make a decision to become a claimant of their citizenship rights and in a way break temporarily out with habitus in a specific momentum, they show creativity in imagining the possible social transformation. Therefore, Isin argues that the “difference between habitus and acts is not merely one of temporality but is also a qualitative difference that breaks habitus creatively”¹⁹⁵. He is also interested in what conditions subjects act as citizens, how they transform into actors, how they become claimants of rights, entitlements and responsibilities, how should we name those acts and how to investigate them and their transformation into citizens?¹⁹⁶

Finally, in my interviews I have been interested to find out why Algerian activists joined autonomous trade unions, and how they understand the concept of citizenship. I have also aimed to outline the larger experience of the interviewees regarding their background, political views, how did they find their way into union, future prospects and construction of historical perspective. Being an activist in Algeria, whether a female or male, young or old, can be considered as marginal phenomena. Many surveys¹⁹⁷ show that manifest political disengagement is

¹⁹² By “closed society” White means the state of society that preserve its own existence through obligation and habit. Obligation, habit and pressure work in conjunction to stabilize the social. (White 2008, 48).

¹⁹³ White (2008, 52).

¹⁹⁴ White (2008, 54).

¹⁹⁵ Isin (2008, 18).

¹⁹⁶ Isin (2008, 18).

¹⁹⁷ Moulai-Hadj, Mourad (2011) Espace public et participation politique en Afrique: le cas de l’Algérie. *Afrique et développement*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 1, 2011, pp. 63-73; Robbins, Michael (2014) *Skipping the Arab*

widespread in Algeria, though I admit that these kind of studies contain manifold challenges. What then transforms some individuals, an assumed minority, to act and in what context? I define the acts of citizenship following the definition of Isin¹⁹⁸ as:

[T]hose acts that transform forms (orientations, strategies, technologies) and modes (citizens, strangers, outsiders, aliens) of being political by bringing into being new actors as activist citizens (claimants of rights and responsibilities) through creating new sites and scale of struggle.

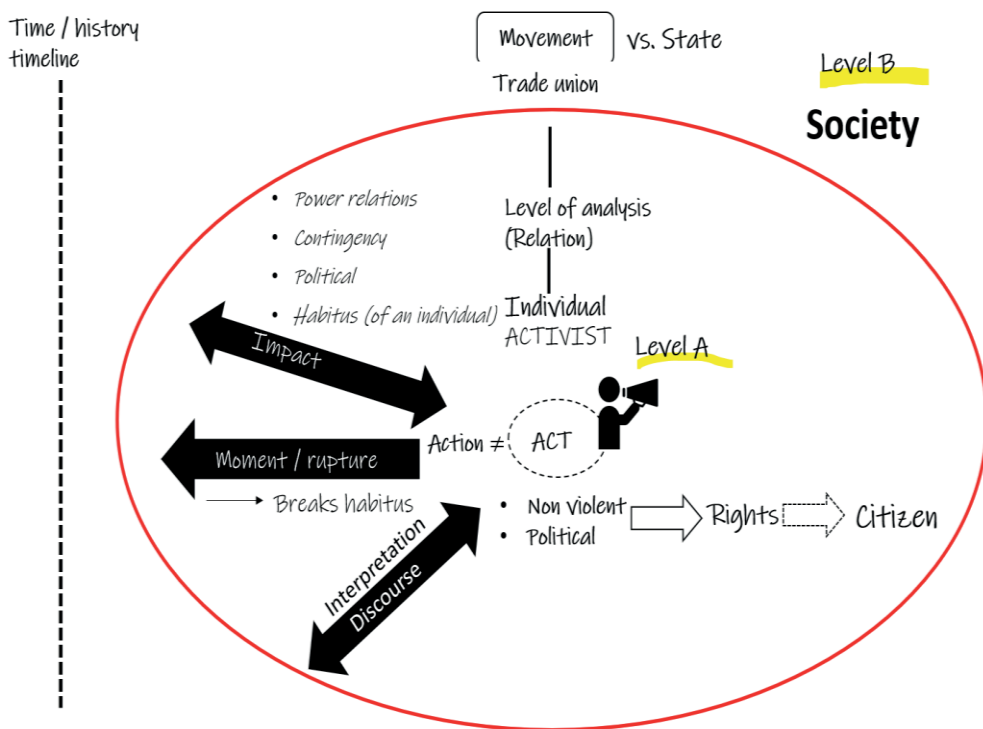


Figure 1. Picture 1. Theoretical framework

Spring? The Arab Barometer surveys a Changing Algeria. April 2014; *SAHWA National Case Study (Algeria)* (2016) Centre de Recherche en Economie Appliquée pour le Développement (CREAD). Alger: Algeria; Thomas, Kathrin (2018) Civic Engagement in the Middle East and North Africa. *Arab Barometer*, October 2018.

¹⁹⁸ Isin (2008, 39).

The theory of acts of citizenship is applied in this study at the individual level when approaching single activists. These individuals form larger units when they organize into autonomous trade unions and hence within this level of analysis these actors function in the larger societal structures. Next, I will expand my theoretical contemplation and reflect how the social movement theory is applied in the context of Algerian autonomous trade unions.

2.2.3 The Relevancy of Public Space in the Mobilization

Based on the mobilization, contestation, collective action, negotiation and communicative performances, autonomous trade unions claim to represent normative virtues and work against all forms of discrimination and exclusion of civil servants and workers. At the same time, they encourage Algerian citizens to join organized union to form united collective action in the struggle for better quality in the different fields of public services in particular working conditions. The goal is to return to the process of democratization that started in 1988 and to demand the redemption of the promises promulgated in the constitution. They want to break from the generally accepted repertoire of collective actions and signal to other Algerians that they should not be afraid to express their potential discontent, and even encourage their fellow citizens to unionize to all-inclusive struggle for the protection of workers' and citizenship rights.

The stated general objective of the autonomous trade unions is nonviolent democratic transformation and social change. Therefore, I define the action of autonomous trade unions, consisting of set of individual citizenship acts, as nonviolent movement due to their activities, methods and elements, such as communication and social movement as a tool where peaceful techniques are used to fight for normative objectives such as freedom, democracy and respect for human rights¹⁹⁹. I connect the Algerian autonomous trade unions in larger societal level to social movement theories (SMT). In order to bring more diversity to the SMT framework, developed mainly in the European and North-American contexts considered by some as Western societies, I may contextualize and locate its theoretical background more widely regarding the Algerian cultural and socio-economic specificities to pay attention not overemphasize them, when required. While I consider autonomous trade unions as one actor among many in the larger picture of the Algerian political environment, they play an active and visible role

¹⁹⁹ Johansen (2007, 148).

within Algerian oppositional movement and contribute to the construction and formation of state-society relations.

When social movements come to exist, the most frequently asked questions have been why or how did they emerge and who joins them. SMT has developed and transformed during the past years as any other field of research connected to the social, political and economic world. The so-called collective behavior theories, before the 1960s, tended to assume or consider the political engagement or activism as an unconventional or irrational type of behavior, meanwhile “Mass society” theorists insisted that social movements took place due to the failure of society to sustain “intermediary” organizations that kept individuals socially detached²⁰⁰. Many studies that stressed personality traits, marginality and alienation or grievances and ideology were conducted and the general outcome or conclusion was that the social movements emerged due to dissatisfaction²⁰¹.

Since the early 1960s, an important body of literature related to SMT began by a collective attempt of William Gamson, Charles Tilly and Mayer Zald. Converting the previous focuses on collective behavior, they formulated explicit organizational and political arguments linked to social unrest. They stressed the phenomena such as collective action, social movements and social movement organizations (SMOs)²⁰². Therefore, the main body of work on social movements has gone from collective behavior theory to resource mobilization theory (RMT)²⁰³ while new social movements (NSM) interpretations such as action-identity figurations have become more common during recent years.

As a reaction to collective behavior theories, which focused too heavily on what attracted people to participate in social movements, RMT opened another perspective that stressed more structural factors: availability of resources to gain membership in a community and position of individuals in various social

²⁰⁰ Goodwin, Jeff and Jasper, James M. (Eds.) (2003, 11) *The Social Movement Reader. Cases and Concepts*. The United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing.

²⁰¹ Klandermans, Bert (1984) Mobilization and Participation: Social-Psychological Expansions of Resource Mobilization Theory. *American Sociological Review*, Vol 49, No. 5, pp. 583-600.

²⁰² Davis, Gerald F., McAdam, Doug, Scott, W. Richard & Zald, Mayer N. (2005, 4-40) *Social Movements and Organization Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

²⁰³ *The resource mobilization* approach can be seen as critical responses to *collective behavior* and *mass society* interpretations and emphasizes both societal support and constraint of SMT phenomena. It stresses the variety of resources that must be mobilized, the linkages among the groups, the dependence of movements upon external support for success, and the tactics used by authorities to control them. They see movements as extensions of rational and institutionalized “conventional” politics (McCarthy and Zald 2003, 169; Pakulski 1991, 12-14).

networks²⁰⁴. Unlike the collective behavior theories, RMT stressed movement action as “rational, normal behavior, subject to the decision-making constraints of all behavior”²⁰⁵. As the founders of RMT, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, argued already in 1977, there are always potential participants in reserve, but the resources that are available explain more how the movements emerge²⁰⁶. McCarthy and Zald moved away from questioning “why” collective action takes place to “how” the processes take place²⁰⁷.

According to McCarthy and Zald, the RMT relied more on political sociological and economic theories than on the social psychology and collective behavior²⁰⁸. Bert Klandermans argued in the mid-80s that RMT was able to gain a dominant approach in the field while criticized it for drifting too far from social-psychological analysis²⁰⁹. He argued that social psychology could contribute in a consequential way to reveal processes of participation on the individual level, for example giving attention to the interaction among the individuals generating mobilization²¹⁰. I will not draw on social psychological theories such as expectancy-value theory but I am interested in how the members of autonomous trade unionists construct discourses related to their society and political development, which impacts to their participation and agency.

A perennial question in SMT relates to the interest to understand *when, why* and *how* social movements emerge²¹¹. In this regard, large body of social movement theory corresponds well to my research problem to process autonomous trade unions in Algeria. Jeff Goodwin and James M. Jasper²¹² describe social movement studies as a window into a number of aspects of social life and movements as the

²⁰⁴ Klandermans (1984).

²⁰⁵ McCarthy, John D. and Zald, Mayer N. (1987, 11) Resource Mobilization Theory, in Mayer Zald and John D. McCarthy (Eds.) *Social Movements in an Organizational Society*. New Brunswick and Oxford: Transaction Books.

²⁰⁶ McCarthy, John D. and Zald, Mayer N. (2003, 171) Social Movement Organizations (from “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory), in Jeff Goodwin and James M. Jasper (Eds.) *The Social Movement Reader. Cases and Concepts*. The United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 169-186.

²⁰⁷ Tarrow, Sidney (2011, 24) *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

²⁰⁸ McCarthy, John D. & Zald, Mayer N. (1977, 1213) Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory. *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 82, No. 6 (May, 1977), pp 1212-1241.

²⁰⁹ Klandermans (1984, 583-584).

²¹⁰ Klandermans (1984, 584).

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Goodwin & Jasper 2003, 3-4.

main source of political conflict and social change. They define social movement as “a collective, organized, sustained, and non-institutional challenge to authorities, power holders, or cultural beliefs and practices”. Thus, through this definition I also approach Algeria’s autonomous trade unions in general, various human rights organizations and other civil society organizations around them.

McCarthy and Zald²¹³ defined social movement as “a set of opinions and beliefs in a population, which represent for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society”. Social movement does not automatically promote social change. They can support or oppose social change as well. Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, on their behalf, define social movement as “sustained campaign of claim making, using repeated performance that advertise the claim, based on organizations, networks, traditions, and solidarities that sustain these activities”²¹⁴.

I consider SNAPAP and other autonomous trade unions as a *social movement* because they are:

Collective, organized, sustained, and non-institutional independent trade unions that spring from a set of opinions and beliefs of Algerian workers and challenges the Algerian authorities to achieve the sustainable democratic social change through protecting workers’ rights via networks, traditions and solidarities.

According to resource mobilization theory, it is relevant to discuss how SNAPAP accumulates the variety of resources such as time, money, organizational skills and certain social and political opportunities that permit the movement to conduct its function achieve its long-term objectives, sustainable democratic social change that allows protection of workers’ rights. McCarthy and Zald²¹⁵ stress the study of the aggregation of resources to be able to reflect social movement activities and resources available for their use, engagement and social change. Resource aggregation requires organization as well as individual participation, which is crucial regarding the success or failure of the social movement within societal structures. The action conducted by the authorities influences the outcome as well. Therefore, the attempts of the Algerian authorities in controlling the autonomous trade unions as well as societal structures in the cultural context that enable contingent interaction

²¹³ McCarthy, John D. & Zald, Mayer N. (1977, 1217-1219) Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory. *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 82, No. 6 (May, 1977), pp 1212-1241.

²¹⁴ Tilly, Charles & Tarrow, Sidney (2015, 11) *Contentious Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

²¹⁵ McCarthy & Zald (1977, 1216).

certainly has a significant impact on social movements such as SNAPAP and its members from the individual point of view.

While RMT offers one possible aspect to approach the resources available in the processes of mobilization, the criticism introduced by David A. Snow, Louis A. Zurcher and Sheldon Ekland-Olson²¹⁶ argue that it focuses too much on formal organizational networks and ignores the importance of contingent social settings that are relatively free from state control²¹⁷. Nevertheless, I believe that RMT can be also useful aspect regarding the understanding of the structure of SNAPAP. Despite that, I recognize the criticisms by Daniel M. Cress and David A. Snow²¹⁸ that RMT is insufficient if it is understood as a catalogue of the resources used by social movements:

The problem with this strategy is that it seldom goes beyond identifying the general categories of money, legitimacy, people, and occasionally expertise. As a consequence, it is usually unclear whether the listed resources include all resources mobilized or only those deemed critical by the researcher. Thus, the resource concept remains nearly as ambiguous as it did when it was introduced more than 20 years ago.²¹⁹

Keeping this aspect in mind, I will introduce the organizational structure of SNAPAP²²⁰ to give an idea about one autonomous trade union from the reductive structural point of view. SNAPAP activists often pointed out how the union's structure can be described from horizontal and vertical perspectives, from the base to all sectors within the public sector. The information that was distributed on SNAPAP's webpages in 2012 gives a formal and normative picture about the movement while I am critical regarding the continuous functioning of its organs. Firstly, I am not aware of whether all the organs are functioning and with what intensity. Secondly, from the individual activist viewpoint, being a human means that individuals have multiple life spheres and periods of life, which prevents the possibility of constant activity, as Florence Passy and Marco Giugni has argued in

²¹⁶ Snow, David A., Zurcher, Louis A. and Ekland-Olson, Sheldon (1980) Social Networks and Social Movements: A Microstructural Approach to Differential Recruitment. *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 45, No. 5 (Oct., 1980), pp 787-801.

²¹⁷ Beinin & Vairel (2011, 9):

²¹⁸ Cress, Daniel M. and Snow, David A. (1996) Mobilization at the Margins: Resources, Benefactors, and the Viability of Homeless Social Movement Organizations. *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 61, No. 6 (Dec., 1996), pp. 1089-1109.

²¹⁹ Cress and Snow (1996, 1090).

²²⁰ <http://www.maisondessyndicats-dz.com/statut.php> (Retrieved in 7.2.2012, website does not function anymore).

combining structural and cultural factors²²¹. Sometimes activists are active, sometimes not due to their personal life courses.

The horizontal structure of SNAPAP can be approached from four levels: the national level²²², the regional level²²³, the provincial (Wilaya)²²⁴ level and the base level²²⁵. The National Congress is the supreme organ of SNAPAP and it assemble in every five years in the capital Algiers. National Guidance Council is also the supreme organ, which meet in every two years in between the assemblies of the National Congresses. The National Executive Council is the supreme executive body, which meets regularly once a year, while the National Office is the executing body that congregates regularly every month. Regular meetings can increase commitment, which according to Passy and Giugni strengthen the sustained participation of the members²²⁶. All the organs can assemble in an emergency situation. The National Councils Sectors are members of each federation sector nationally. McCarthy and Zald point out that when social movement wants to achieve its goals in larger environment, like in this case SNAPAP in Algeria, it may establish federative associations:

A SMO [social movement organization] which desires to pursue its goals in more than a local environment may attempt to mobilize resources directly from adherents or to develop federated chapters in different local areas. Federation serves to organize constituents into small local units²²⁷.

At regional level, SNAPAP is divided into two components: the Regional Council (C.R), which is the supreme organ of the regional groups of three to five different provinces (wilayas)²²⁸, depending on the size of the region, and the sessions are held

²²¹ Passy, Florence and Giugni, Marco (2000) Life-Spheres, Networks, and Sustained Participation in Social Movements: A Phenomenological Approach to Political Commitment. *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Mar., 2000), pp. 117-144.

²²² The National Congress (C.N), the National Guidance Council (C.N.O), the National Executive Council (C.N.E), the National Office (B.N), the National Councils Sector (C.N.S.), the Committee of Women Workers, the Youth Committee.

²²³ The Regional Council (C.R) and the Executive Regional Office (B.E.R).

²²⁴ The Congress of Wilaya (C.W), the Executive Council of Wilaya (C.E.W), the Office of Wilaya (B.W) and the Councils Wilayas Sector (C.W.S).

²²⁵ The General Assembly of Members (A.G), the Trade Union Council Section (C.S.S) and the Executive Board of the Section (B.E.S).

²²⁶ Passy and Giugni (2000).

²²⁷ McCarthy and Zald (2003, 179).

²²⁸ Algeria is divided into 48 wilayas (provinces), 553 dairas (districts) and 1541 baladiyahs (municipalities).

in every six months; and the executive organ of the Regional Council (RC), which is elected by the latter within it.

The provincial level is divided into four elements: the Congress of Wilaya (C.W), the Executive Council of Wilaya (C.E.W), the Office of Wilaya (B.W) and the Councils Wilayas Sector (C.W.S). The Congress of the Wilaya is the supreme body across the provinces that meets every five years, while The Executive Council of the Wilaya is the supreme organ of the Wilaya level between Congresses. The Office of Wilaya is the executive organ of the Executive Council of Wilaya, which is elected by the latter within it. Councils Wilayas Sector is a federation of bodies in each sector across the wilayas. Finally, there is the Base level, The Union Section (S.S), which is divided into three structures: The General Assembly of Members (A.G), The Trade Union Council Section (C.S.S) and The Executive Board of the Section (B.E.S).

The Union Section is the base Structure of the Union composed of all members at the place of work (Institution and Public Administration "IPA", Common, Educational Institutions, Offices and Administrative Institutions with characters). The General Assembly of Members, is composed of members from the same workplace, whereas The Trade Union Council Section is the organ of the Union Base, elected by the General Assembly. The Executive Board of the Section is the executive organ of the Trade Union Section, elected by the General Assembly for a term of four years. In addition, SNAPAP is organized from the vertical structure aspect into different bodies of federations called the National Council Areas²²⁹. This introduction of SNAPAP's structure is just one example of how the autonomous trade unions can be structured within wider societal components.

In general, the collective action conducted by the non-state actors in North Africa and the Middle East have been studied both as a part of the civil society and, more recently, in the context of SMT. While social movement studies mostly concern

²²⁹ The National Council of Interior Area, the National Council of the Commons, the National Council of Education, the National Council of Health Sector, the National Sector Council of the Moudjahedin, the National Council Sector of the Posts and Telecommunications, the Council Nation Sector of the Housing, Planning and Construction, the National Board of Public Works Sector, the National Council of the Water Sector, the National Council of the Energy Sector and Industry, the National Council of the Transport Sector, the National Council of the Trade Sector, he National Council Sector of the Youth and Sports, the National Council of the Culture Sector and Communication, the National Council of the Vocational Training Sector, the National Council Sector of the Labor and Social Security, the National Council of the Retired, the National Council of the Solidarity and Employment, the National Council of the Justice Sector, the National Council of the Higher Education Sector and the Scientific Research, the National Council of the Financial Sector, the National Council of the Agricultural Sector and Fisheries, the National Board of the Forestry Sector, the National Council for the Civil Protection, the National Board of the Customs Sector, the National Sector Council planning, the National Council of the Environment Sector, the National Committee for Working Women IPA and the National Council of the Personnel Services Public Service.

North American traditions, and emphasize especially RMT, it seems that less data has been gathered on the Middle East and North Africa. Joel Beinin and Frédéric Vairel²³⁰ have stressed that instead of generalizing social movements in the Eastern and Western Mediterranean in the unbalanced category of hostile “anti-Western” terrorist movements, the geographically defined location can offer a “fascinating laboratory” to test the SMT’s feasibility and to increase the theoretical knowledge of social movements in general. They believe that “the disinterest of the dominant currents in comparative politics or sociology in collective action and social movements in the Middle East and North Africa is striking”²³¹.

Autonomous trade unions operating in the civil society claim to mobilize around social grievances and injustices in the context of work and campaign for a better treatment of workers at workplaces as well as the public space at large. In general, civil society can be approached from various perspectives. In general, it can be considered as third sector or associative sphere that is independent from the state. Its normative functioning and linked “romanticization” owes in many ways to Alexis de Tocqueville’s (1805-1859) depiction of associative structures in 19th century United States. He manifested free institutions and political rights in democratic America against aristocratic Europe. He described public associations and civil life in America:

Only those associations that are formed in civil life without reference to political objects are here referred to. The political association that exist in the United States are only a single feature in the midst of the immense assemblage of associations in that country. Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions constantly form associations. They have not only commercial and manufacturing companies, in which all take part, but associations of thousand other kinds, religious, moral, serious, futile, general or restricted, enormous or diminutive. The Americans make associations to give entertainments, to found seminaries, to build inns, to construct churches, to diffuse books, to send missionaries to the antipodes; in this matter they found hospitals, prisons, and schools²³².

Tocqueville²³³ highlighted the connection between the public associations and newspapers. He stressed the stabilizing political role of civil associations and their facilitating role regarding political associations: “In civil life every man may, strictly

²³⁰ Beinin, Joel and Vairel, Frédéric (2011, 2) *Social Movements, Mobilization, and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

²³¹ Beinin and Vairel (2011, 2).

²³² Tocqueville, Alexis de (1998, 215) [1840] *Democracy in America*. Wordsworth Classics of World Literature: Ware.

²³³ Tocqueville (1998, 221, 224).

speaking, fancy that he can provide for his own wants; in politics he can fancy no such thing”²³⁴.

Meanwhile, it is often neglected that Tocqueville was openly advocate for French colonial rule in Algeria (1830-1962) though tried to adapt majority of the values he presented in his famous work *Democracy in America*. Tocqueville’s writings on Algeria such as *Deuxième lettre sur Algérie*²³⁵ (1837), *Travail sur l’Algérie*²³⁶ (1841) or *Premier rapport sur l’Algérie*²³⁷ (1847) disclose the development of his view on the colonization of Algeria within ten year timeframe. According to John W.P. Veugelers²³⁸, Tocqueville maintained his position regarding the support of French colonization in Algeria due to international and strategic reasons, but gradually lost his belief in the possibilities of integrating French population with Algerians. While it would be an exaggeration to argue that Tocqueville supported an apartheid kind of societal division in Algeria, he explicitly brings out the superiority of European civilization in comparison with the “Arabs”:

One can easily imagine that a nation as powerful and civilized as ours exercises by its superiority of enlightenment almost invincible influence on small, nearly barbaric tribes; and to annex them requires that established power creates lasting relations with them.

The Frenchmen and the Arabs inhabit the same areas, and thus it would be logical to apply for both people such a legislation they can understand and they have learned to respect. The political leader would be the same for both races, but for a long time everything else would stay different; fusion would become later by its own force.²³⁹.

Ten years later, Tocqueville was more explicit regarding his position on French occupation. Simultaneously, he praised the French army and conduct in Algeria. Tocqueville was worried that French settlers were not taken care of in the colony,

²³⁴ Tocqueville (1998, 224).

²³⁵ Tocqueville, Alexis de (2002) [1837] *Deuxième lettre sur Algérie (La première lettre portait sur l’histoire antérieure de l’Algérie)*. Un document produit en version numérique par Jean-Marie Tremblay: Chicoutimi, Québec.

²³⁶ Tocqueville, Alexis de (2002) [1841] *Travail sur l’Algérie*. Un document produit en version numérique par Jean-Marie Tremblay: Chicoutimi, Québec.

²³⁷ Tocqueville, Alexis de (2002) [1847] *Premier rapport sur l’Algérie. Extrait du premier rapport des travaux parlementaires de Tocqueville sur l’Algérie en 1847*. Un document produit en version numérique par Jean-Marie Tremblay: Chicoutimi, Québec.

²³⁸ Veugelers, John W. P. (2010) Tocqueville on the conquest and colonization of Algeria. *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 10(4), pp. 339-355.

²³⁹ Tocqueville (2002, 12) [1837].

which might result as similar uprising that took place in America. He stressed international power politics and the French position in the international world order:

Without a doubt, it's advisable to employ natives as agents of government, but they must behave like civilized men, and with French maxims. This hasn't been the case always and everywhere, and we could have been accused of having less civilized native administration; we have only lent European structures and intelligence to its barbarism.

Sometimes the actions have combined with the theories. In various writings, one has promoted this doctrine that the native population, who have reached the last stage of depravity and vices, is forever incapable of any change and progress; thus we shouldn't enlighten them, but rather deprive them the lights they possess. Far from just sitting on our ground, we should push them little by little away from their territory and take their place; expecting nothing else from them than submission, and there's only one way to obtain that: submit them by force²⁴⁰.

Still, it is important to contextualize the positions, whether of practicing statesman or citizen, that Tocqueville represented when writing his works²⁴¹. Meanwhile, the abrupt contradiction that lies between his studies in the United States and Algeria particularly related to the timeframe should not be ignored either: he was already writing *Democracy in America* when he published his work about Algeria²⁴². In general, normative values and ideals materialize differently when brought into practice. As Dipesh Chakrabarty explains in the context of British colonial India: "The European colonizer of the nineteenth century both preached this Enlightenment humanism at the colonized and at the same time denied it in practice"²⁴³. As if one says: we are superior to you due to our universal liberal values, democracy and freedom, but you must wait until you have achieved our stage of development before they are applied to you.

The civil society and its institutional core are understood here as non-governmental and non-economic connections and voluntary associations that according to Jürgen Habermas²⁴⁴ "anchor communication structures of the public

²⁴⁰ Tocqueville (2002, 17) [1847].

²⁴¹ Richter, Melvin (1963, 362-363) Tocqueville on Algeria. *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (July 1963), pp. 362-398).

²⁴² Richter (1963, 363).

²⁴³ Chakrabarty, Dipesh (2000, 4) *Provincializing Europe*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press

²⁴⁴ Habermas, Jürgen (2012 [1996], 474-475) Civil Society and the Political Public Sphere, in Calhoun, Craig, Gerteis, Joseph, Moody, James, Pfaff, Steven and Virk, Indermohan (Eds.) *Contemporary Sociological Theory*. United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 469-489.

sphere in the society component of the lifeworld²⁴⁵”. Civil society can bring up socio-economic problems and challenges from the so-called grass-root level to the political decision making processes and inform authorities or decision makers about them to develop the society. According to Habermas, civil society is “composed of those more or less spontaneously emergent associations, organizations, and movements that, attuned to how social problems resonate in the private life spheres, distill and transmit such reactions in amplified form to the public sphere”²⁴⁶. He continues: “The core of civil society comprises a network of associations that institutionalize problem-solving discourses on questions of general interest inside the framework of organized public spheres²⁴⁷”. Because the political system or authorities (political parties) are sensitive to public opinion due to the electoral processes, they need to listen what comes up from the civil societal level.

Hassan Hanafi²⁴⁸ argues that the civil society is considered as a “Western” concept. According to this historical narrative, it was coined by the famous English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) who saw the civil society as an alternative to kingdom and church where the “human being was neither a subject of the king nor a believer in church” but “a citizen of a state”²⁴⁹. Many well-known historical political philosophers have processed the concept from European premises²⁵⁰. For Hegel, civil society meant a widely described type of mediation between private and public life (churches, synagogues, labor unions and political parties, while Locke emphasized constitutional democracy and therefore institutions that helped maintaining balance of power²⁵¹. However, I support the idea proposed by Hanafi that citizenship is not alien to Islamic countries or other non-European locations in general such as Algeria, dominated by Muslims (99%).

Regarding the existence of civil society in Muslim dominated countries, Hanafi splits the understanding of the civil society from its Islamic basis into three categories. Firstly, there are those who reject the very idea of civil society connected

²⁴⁵ Habermas (2012, 474).

²⁴⁶ Habermas (2012, 474-475).

²⁴⁷ Habermas (2012, 475).

²⁴⁸ Hanafi, Hassan (2002, 57-58) Alternative Conceptions of Civil Society: A Reflective Islamic Approach, in Sohail H. Hashmi (Ed.) *Islamic Political Ethics: Civil Society, Pluralism, and Conflict*. United Kingdom: Princeton University Press, pp. 56-76.

²⁴⁹ Hanafi (2002, 57-58).

²⁵⁰ John Locke (1632-1704), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1779), Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Max Weber 1864-1920, only few to mention.

²⁵¹ Kelsay, John (2002, 3) *Civil Society and Government in Islam*, in Sohail H. Hashmi, (Ed.) *Islamic Political Ethics: Civil Society, Pluralism, and Conflict*. United Kingdom: Princeton University Press, pp. 3-37.

to Islam. Secondly, some affirm the universality of the concept, approaching it as a global idea, irrespective of its so-called Western origins. Finally, it is possible to develop the idea of civil society from classical Islam or historical perspective to reflect the concept in contemporary social needs. I embrace the third approach. It is not only useful, but it would be unconvincing to argue that the civil society would be alien to Algerian social life especially recalling the versatile history of the country as an inseparable part of Mediterranean historical development whether Numidian, Phoenician, Roman, Byzantine, Islamic, Ottoman, French or independent state.

The 132-year French occupation built its structures on previous social constructions, which created a distinctive spatial body that separates Algeria from some other Muslim majority countries. Omar Carlier²⁵² argues that since the enactment of the Law on Freedom of Association (Loi Waldeck-Rousseau) in 1901 offered a more liberal environment and autonomous social space that encouraged group solidarity. It paved the way for more common ground for elites (*kbassa*) and mass (*'amma*) through associative sociability even though the presence of Algerians in the associations established by the European settlers was in fact rare²⁵³. However, Algerians founded their own clubs (*nadi*) and constituted substantial public spaces around the *cafés* (See Chapter IV). It was especially in these cafés, situated in the cities, where workers and traders met up, met newcomers and offered working possibilities. These spaces can be most likely described as hyper-masculine, where gender restrictions probably prevailed reflecting the gender positions of the society more generally. I have not found literature related to women's presence in these spaces. Newspapers were an integral part in generating public and political discussions. Therefore, it was also in these public spaces where Algerian nationalism was able to develop and generate until the stage of Independence war in 1954.

If the public enables to reflect moral dimensions of democratic policies such as public interest, public goods or public policies, its counterpart, the private, denotes individual freedoms and possible participation in the public sphere²⁵⁴. I am interested in the actual social space and the forms of collective action generated by the trade union activists. This is due to the notion that the civil society does not represent an automatically solid stage on the sustainable path towards democracy in many Eastern and Western Mediterranean countries, or elsewhere in the world.

²⁵² Carlier, Omar (1995,151) *Entre nation et jihad. Histoire sociale des radicalismes Algériens*. Paris: PFSP.

²⁵³ Carlier (1995, 152) and Liverani, Andrea (2008, 14-15) *The Civil Society in Algeria: The political functions of associational life*. Oxon: Routledge.

²⁵⁴ Nash, Kate (2014, 1) *Transnationalizing the Public Sphere*. UK: Polity.

While I recognize the concept of *public sphere*²⁵⁵ developed by Jürgen Habermas, I would replenish it with Nancy Fraser's²⁵⁶ concept *transnational public sphere*, which contains a focal criticism of the public sphere theory of Habermas. However, I will not use the concept transnational public sphere either, but *public space*, an expression employed neither by Habermas nor Fraser. The public space is, what Antonio Gramsci²⁵⁷ would call, the sort of intermediate state between the civil society and political society, or the state. Still, the social theory of Habermas and its key components are applicable and utilized per se though added with complementary modifications, especially from Fraser. Therefore, it is relevant to illustrate some of the elements of his social theory.

To start with, my interest to public space started by the contentious action generated by the autonomous trade unions in the public political space. Frédéric Vairel defined *contentious space* as: “a part of the social world built at the same time against and in reference to the political field and its formal institutions”²⁵⁸. According to Vairel, social actors struggled in the contentious space by believing possibilities to change political climate via mobilization and political activism such as writing statements, organizing sit-ins and gathering people around various issues. Activists share friendship and political comradery and exchange ideas. However, contentious space as such is not sufficient to elaborate social space as a spatial location, whether virtual or non-virtual, or to explain thoroughly who are the actors, what are the actions or acts taking place and for what aims. There are many other points to be linked to social space that is considered here as being more than just a space for contentious politics. It comprises meeting, experiencing, eating, running, driving, and other everyday activities. It covers inanimate spatial places, such as parks, buildings, nature and yards. And what is more, it is especially and most

²⁵⁵ In 1962, Jürgen Habermas introduced his concept of *Public Sphere* in his book *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* which was translated into English in 1989 as *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. According to Peter Uwe Hohendahl, Habermas continued analysis of mass culture by Adorno and Horkheimer, who lacked the concept of public sphere though separated culture and politics. (Hohendahl, Peter Uwe (1979) *Critical Theory, Public Sphere and Culture*. Jürgen Habermas and His Critics. *New German Critique*, No. 16 Winter, 1979, pp. 89-118.)

²⁵⁶ Fraser, Nancy (2014) *Transnationalizing the Public Sphere: On the Legitimacy and Efficacy of Public Opinion in Post-Westphalian World*, in Kate Nash (Ed.) *Transnationalizing the Public Sphere*. Polity: UK, pp. 8-42.

²⁵⁷ Gramsci, Antonio (1999, 145) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. London: Elecbook.

²⁵⁸ Vairel, Frédéric (2011, 27) “Protesting in Authoritarian Situations”, in Joel Beinin and Frédéric Vairel (Eds.) *Social Movements, Mobilization, and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

interestingly a space for representation, as depicted by Don Mitchell in his book *The Right to the city: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*²⁵⁹.

To start with Habermas²⁶⁰, he separates *the public sphere* as “a communication structure rooted in the *lifeworld*²⁶¹ through the associational network of civil society” and *the political public sphere* as “a sounding board of problems that must be processed by the political system because they cannot be solved elsewhere”. Habermas sees the public sphere as a “warning system with sensors” that is sensitive regarding the social problems within the society. In the context of nation state²⁶² democratic theory, Habermas stresses that the public sphere should “detect and identify problems” and “convincingly” and “influentially” thematize them while trying to seek possible solutions as well as to take them to the political decision-making because “the capacity of the public sphere to solve problems *on its own* is limited”. However, he believes that this potential should be exercised to exceed the challenges within the political system.

What is the relation between civil society and public space? Habermas uses the concept of civil society to outline some barriers and power structures inside the public sphere, as he operationalizes the concept and argues that in critical situations the barriers can be surpassed with “escalating movements”. He defines public sphere as a “social phenomenon” that is “just as elementary as action, actor, association, or collectivity”, but which “eludes the conventional sociological concepts of social ‘order’”. Habermas distinguishes an institution, an organization or a framework of norms (competences, roles, membership regulations) from it. The public sphere is best described by Habermas as “a network for communicating information and points of view” and is “reproduced through communicative action”, which he disconnects from everyday communicative practices and refers rather to the social space that is “generated in communicative action”.

Communicative action is symbolically mediated interaction where things are performed via linguistic expressions especially in intersubjective way²⁶³. As lifeworld, public sphere is reproduced through communicative action, which results in the processes of communication filtered and synthesized to fuse into clusters of

²⁵⁹ Mitchell, Don (2003, 35). *The Right to the city: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*. New York: The Guilford Press.

²⁶⁰ Habermas (2012 [1996], 469-470).

²⁶¹ According to Saila Anttonen, by *lifeworld* Habermas means interpretations of historical product implemented by former generations (Anttonen, Saila 2002, 46. *Valta, Moraali ja yhteiskunnallis-historiallinen oppiminen*. Oulun yliopisto: Oulu.)

²⁶² Problematic concept that assumes states as consisted with homogenous populations.

²⁶³ Anttonen (1998, 45).

“topically specified public opinions”. In the Algerian context, Mourad Moulai-Hadj²⁶⁴ argues that we cannot imagine public space without its contribution to the formation of public opinion, which is considered side by side with other institutions such as schools, factories, universities and mass media, as well as other institutions of socialization or re-socialization in different social categories. Therefore, public space is understood here as a form of development of civil society that can be envisaged as a theatre of confrontation of the ideas, discussions and negotiations among various social strata.

Nevertheless, Habermas²⁶⁵ stresses that while public sphere expands to the politically relevant questions, it leaves their resolving to the political system itself: the public sphere “refers neither to the functions nor the contents of everyday communication but to social space generated in communicative action”. People meet each other in simple or episodic situations where they shape together negotiated interpretations of gestures and language and form spatial structure that transforms into larger public assemblies, performances and presentations. The physically gathered audience in local places offer a more clear understanding of shared public sphere and detached public’s physical presence transforming the experience into virtual presence (readers, listeners, viewers).

Next I present a supplementary review of literature to complement and update the concept of public sphere theorized by Habermas. John Hartley²⁶⁶ has criticized the demand of physically gathered audience by reminding of the current media landscape (television, popular newspapers, magazines, photography and internet) in the public sphere. Likewise, Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge have decentralized and multiplied the public sphere to enable the critique towards understanding of public sphere of Habermas as exclusively bourgeois in its nature by constructing another conceptualization of space that allows for the proletarian counter-public sphere that permits concurrently room for new political tools within political debate culture, extremely essential regarding this thesis²⁶⁷. Often when Habermas has been contradicted and criticized, it has happened within the framework of public sphere theory itself²⁶⁸. This is also the case with Negt and Kluge. They utilize critically the

²⁶⁴ Moulai-Hadj, Mourad (2011, 66) Espace public et participation politique en Afrique: le cas de l’Algérie. *Afrique et développement*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 1, 2011, pp. 63-73.

²⁶⁵ Habermas (2012, 470).

²⁶⁶ Hartley, John (1992, 1) *The Politics of Pictures: The Creation of the Public in the Age of Popular Media*. New York: Routledge.

²⁶⁷ Negt, Oskar and Kluge, Alexander (1988) The Public Sphere and Experience. *Selections*. October, Vol. 46, Autumn, 1988, pp. 60-82.

²⁶⁸ Hohendahl (1979, 104).

framework of disintegration theory developed by Habermas, but continue developing it even further. This is also my intention. Negt and Kluge show that the concept of proletarian public sphere is no less ambiguous than bourgeois²⁶⁹. They argue that the concept of bourgeois “does refer to a strategic position that is substantively enmeshed within the history of the emancipation of the working class”²⁷⁰. This example is especially relevant in the context of autonomous trade unions. However, there are many other elements as well: gender, historical narrations, culture, normativity and so forth.

Joan B. Landes²⁷¹ has asked in relation to the public sphere theory of Habermas: “One public or many? Where are the women?” What about other spheres such as global public sphere and Islamic public sphere? My main frame in developing the understanding of public space comes from Nancy Fraser²⁷² and her aforementioned concept of *transnational public sphere*. She has introduced remarks that challenge the application of the public sphere theory of Habermas in globalized, multicultural and the so-called post-western world views. She has presented critiques of at least six major presuppositions included in the public sphere theory of Habermas regarding the formation of public opinion that are connected to the “blind spot” of the Westphalian democratization of the “modern territorial nation state”²⁷³. Fraser is mostly keen to question the normative legitimacy and political efficacy of the constructed public opinion and especially inclusivity of its formation. The major challenge of Habermas’s concept of public space is connected to its pursuit of universalizing the discourse in exclusive male, bourgeois and white spaces²⁷⁴. These reductive and exclusive constructions do not fit into Algerian autonomous trade union context.

First, the assumption of the Westphalian nation state bounded on territory and ruled by the undivided sovereign is doubtful in the light of international institutions, intergovernmental networks, transnational and nongovernmental organizations (NGO’s) operating within the structures of contemporary states²⁷⁵. Second, the assumption that the ‘public’ encapsulates national citizens excludes immigrants,

²⁶⁹ Negt and Kluge (1988, 61).

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Landes, Joan B. (1995, 97) *The Public and the Private Sphere: A Feminist Reconsideration*, in *Feminists Read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse*, (Ed.) Johanna Meehan. New York and London: Routledge, pp. 91-116.

²⁷² Fraser (2014)

²⁷³ Fraser (2014, 11-12, 19).

²⁷⁴ Mitchell (2003, 34).

²⁷⁵ Fraser (2014, 20-21).

paperless, diasporas and dual or triple-citizenship holders and their capabilities to participate the formation of public opinion as equal, efficient and legitimate members²⁷⁶. Third, the formation of the major topics in the shaping of public opinion within political communities in the larger picture of the structural transformations (organization of the labor relations or environmental laws) in competition with global neoliberal 24/7 electronic financial markets and their supported institutions²⁷⁷. Fourth, the supposed role of the national media in generating public opinion in the era of social media seems absurd, but actually its reduced capacities were challenged even before the internet due to international private TV and radio channels that opened possibilities for international public opinion development²⁷⁸. Fifth, a single national language has probably never been option in the Mediterranean countries such as Algeria even though hardly elsewhere either²⁷⁹. Finally, the national literature that contributes to the creation of national imaginary is also at the odds with multiculturalism and cultural hybridity²⁸⁰.

Therefore, Fraser depicts the formation of the public opinion as *transnationalizing the public sphere*. She does not introduce a brand new theory, but operates within the foundations created by Habermas and stresses the role of the participants of the formation of the public opinion, which she considers as significant political force²⁸¹. In her previous studies, she has highlighted the role of social movements as “the only way to reduce disparities in political voice”²⁸². Still, even if everyone can participate from equal premises to the formation of solid public opinion, does it emerge from rational inference, as Habermas believes regarding his deliberative speech?

In this regard, Jacques Rancière²⁸³ presents a counter-model to Habermas claiming instead that disagreement of rational deliberative speech act, sets the democratic foundations:

We should take disagreement to mean a determined kind of speech situation: one in which one of the interlocutors at once understands and does not understand what the other is saying. The disagreement is not the conflict between one who says white and

²⁷⁶ Fraser (2014, 21-22)

²⁷⁷ Fraser (2014, 22-23).

²⁷⁸ Fraser (2014, 23-24).

²⁷⁹ Fraser (2014, 24-25).

²⁸⁰ Fraser (2014, 25-26).

²⁸¹ Fraser (2014, 9).

²⁸² Fraser (2014, 16).

²⁸³ Rancière, Jacques (1999) *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

another one who says black. It is the conflict between one who says white and another who also says white but does not understand the same thing in the name of whiteness”²⁸⁴.

However, disagreement does not mean misconstruction, nor does it stem from indefinite words or different languages, because in numerous speech situations disagreement does not have anything to do with misconstruction or misunderstanding²⁸⁵. According to Rancière, disagreement has more to do with the power and politics, while Habermas stresses mainly ideal speech situation free from power captives. Disagreement can be understood as a rupture in a given situation as an act that breaks habitus. Rancière does not look after rationality or consensual politics, but views politics as channel to make people heard and visible²⁸⁶, while political parties as a part of political system and political processes disappear. Similarly, Mouffe stresses agonism, the need for debate and struggle in liberal democratic politics instead of the totalitarian condition of full agreement and unanimity²⁸⁷.

The understanding of politics by Rancière²⁸⁸ seems to fit with *the aspectual view of politics*. He criticizes the understanding of politics as action that is only taking place at the institutional level or by demonstrators in the public space. Laclau and Mouffe stresses the political processes and political articulation that they insist, determine “how we act and think and thereby how we create society”²⁸⁹. Therefore, it is necessary to define what is *the political*. Mouffe²⁹⁰ divides between *the political*, ontological dimension of antagonism, and *politics*, ensemble of practices and institutions that aim to organize human coexistence. I approach the construction of discourses from the aforementioned *aspectual view of politics*²⁹¹. Aspect politics draws on a broader understanding of politics than the so-called *sectoral view*, where politics is understood as a field or sector (formal institutions such as parliament, government

²⁸⁴ Rancière (1999, x).

²⁸⁵ Rancière (1999, x-xi).

²⁸⁶ Rancière, Jacques (2004, 66) *The Politics of Aesthetics*. Bloomsbury: London – New Delhi – New York – Sydney.

²⁸⁷ Mouffe (2013, 7).

²⁸⁸ Rancière (1999, 30-33).

²⁸⁹ Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, 34).

²⁹⁰ Mouffe (2013, xii).

²⁹¹ Linjakumpu, Aini (2007) *Political Islam in the Global World*. UK: Ithaca Press; Palonen, Kari (1988) *Tekstistä politiikkaan*. Tampere: Vastapaino; Schmitt, Carl (1976/1932) *The Concept of Political*. New Brunswick & New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

or municipal council), where political action is conducted by those who in general consider themselves as politicians.

In the aspectual view of politics, the world is seen in a similar configuration as Michel Foucault depicts power: power is not in one place intrinsically, where some can use it over the others, but it actualizes in specific contingent events and produces the social²⁹². All aspects and phenomena of social life potentially has a political aspect, which can actualize in certain particular contexts. Social life is conflictual, the political potentiality of a phenomenon can actualize through conflicts and therefore enable spaces for political action. The same phenomena can seal in non-political and political aspects through interpretation and articulation, which actualize in the process of politicization. As Foucault depicts the existence of power, the political operates in a similar pattern: it is potentially everywhere, but it is actualized only through articulation and interpretation. This supports also how Laclau and Mouffe view the political related to their discourse theory stressing that politics should not be understood narrowly, as for example party politics, but as we constantly constitute and reproduce the social²⁹³. As Rancière stresses: “Politics is not made up of power relationships; it is made up of relationships between worlds”²⁹⁴. William Gamson²⁹⁵ has introduced three interconnected sequences in the processes of politicization. First people cogitate a moral indignation in front of an experience they consider as inequitable. Next, they construct collective cognition regarding the iniquitous problem. Eventually, they obtain interest to act solving it. Therefore, Gamson applies three frames: injustice frame, identity frame and agency frame.

Finally, I see public space and public sphere, as action and act, intertwined and overlapping, but different. I prefer to operate in this thesis through the concept of public space, because it enables to show that public opinion can also be formed in the de-spatialized spaces and non-physical environments, such as internet and social media. Rancière does not seem to pay attention to the difference of space and sphere and often uses both terms, when he displays the examples of the disagreement effected by power and politics. I argue that the usage of public space also helps to withdraw from the Habermasian discourse of deliberative speech act and gives more room to describe citizenship acts that aim rather to provoke contradictive attention in the form of space of representation than strive to political consensus. As Mitchell describes the attempts of marginalized groups to be heard:

²⁹² Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, 37).

²⁹³ Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, 34).

²⁹⁴ Rancière (1999, 42).

²⁹⁵ Gamson, William (1992) *Talking Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Without occupation of the space, without taking it ... the kinds of protests that came to a climax in Tiananmen, Leipzig, Seattle or People's Park would have remained invisible. The occupation of space is a necessary ingredient of protest [...]²⁹⁶.

One of the aims of SNAPAP and other autonomous trade unions is to gain visibility through organizing performances in the public space to impact on public opinion that would increase the political engagement of Algerian citizens leading to an increase in future mobilizations. In the Maghrebin context, Mohamed Nachi²⁹⁷ argues that the concept of public space enables the realization of the various components of the civil society at large, such as associations, organizations, political groups and social movements, and reflects them intelligibly within the processes of formation and engagement. It is a concept that integrates participative elements that are not so much involved in the concept of public sphere that had connotations of managing general phenomenon around social life. However, at the same time I recognize the fluidity of the differences between the concepts and admit that neither should be overtaxed.

While civil society can be considered as rich and versatile in Algeria, according to Arab Izerrouken²⁹⁸, only 5 000 out of 81 000 registered associations in Algeria were functional in 2004. He believes that despite the initial enthusiasm, many projects were left unfinished due to the lack of funds and maturation as well as due to the difficult security situation during the 1990s. Andrea Liverani²⁹⁹ has similarly stressed identical concerns in his work on Algerian civil society and emphasizes that the reported official number of functioning associations on the paper is distorted and not in concord with the realities in the field. Liverani also argues that against the general belief, associative sector seal in mistrust among Algerians, meaning that it is not automatically considered as genuine political participation that instigates its roots within authentic aspiration of the population³⁰⁰. This is one of the greatest challenges regarding SNAPAP's attempts to mobilize Algerians for social change.

²⁹⁶ Mitchell (2003, 148-149).

²⁹⁷ Nachi, Mohamed (2013, 21) En guise d'ouverture: Les espaces publics au Maghreb. Éléments pour la construction d'une problématique sociohistorique contextualisée à partir du cas tunisien, in Hassan Remaoun and Abdelhamid Henia (Eds.) *Les espaces publics au Maghreb*. Oran: CRASC and DIRASET.

²⁹⁸ Arab, Izerrouken (2012, 88) Mouvement associatif en Algérie: vers un nouveau départ?, in Hassan Remaoun (Ed.) *L'Algérie aujourd'hui: Approches sur l'exercice de la citoyenneté*. Oran: Editions CRASC, pp. 75-94.

²⁹⁹ Liverani, Andrea (2008, 163-170) *The Civil Society in Algeria: The political functions of associational life*. Oxon: Routledge.

³⁰⁰ Liverani (2008, 55).

3 ENGAGING WITH TRADE UNION ACTIVISTS IN URBAN AREAS

This chapter discusses methodological choices, challenges and their improvisation. Fieldwork and the ethnographic oriented method that played an important role regarding the collection of research material in this work is depicted as a process that integrates various measures and arrangements other than conducting interviews, field notes and participant observation itself. Regarding ontological and epistemological questions, I stress situated and partial knowledge, while highlighting the importance of hermeneutic process of analyzing the phenomena.

As Allaine Cerwonka writes, ethnographic research requires “improvised strategies and ethical judgements”³⁰¹. After I have introduced the research material and conduct of the interviews, I describe fieldwork and the unexpected situations that emerge during research from ethical perspectives. I raise ethical challenges in the processes of fieldwork and ethnography, because the researcher is intrinsically part of the research and therefore it is necessary to ponder my positionality regarding the research topic, interpretation and outcome. My main motives in this research are to increase the knowledge of Algerian society, to have better possibilities to connect myself to Algerian civil society, and to show the heterogeneity of Algerian social life at large.

My intention is to interpret the acts of citizenship of the autonomous trade unions from the interviews with union activists as well as through participant observation, media analysis, governmental reports and existing public discussions. I will also introduce more deeply how I apply the discourse theory formed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe³⁰² to track discourses from the interviews of the members of SNAPAP (and other autonomous trade unions) and pro-governmental actors. I am after how historical and contemporary antagonistic *nodal points* form through various

³⁰¹ Cerwonka, Allaine (2007, 20) *Nervous Conditions. The Stakes in Interdisciplinary Research*, in Cerwonka, Allaine and Malkki, Liisa H. (eds.) *Improvising Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork Theory*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, pp. 1-40.

³⁰² Laclau, Ernesto & Mouffe, Chantal (1985/2001) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London and New York: Verso.

identities within hegemonic discourses, social antagonism, dislocated discourses and the emergence of split subjects³⁰³.

I use *stability*, *political* and *patriotism* as nodal points (or master signifiers) in the following analytical chapters. Stability reflects the socio-economic transformation and aimed social change. The concept of the political plays important role in the discourses of autonomous trade union activists and state authorities when justifying their acts. Finally, patriotism emerges as an aim for action by political agents. I end this chapter by presenting some background for the media landscape in Algeria reflecting how media analysis is practiced in this study. Press articles play important role in this thesis to reflect 30 years long journey of the Algerian official autonomous trade union movement.

3.1 Collection of research material

3.1.1 Ethnographic challenges

This is a qualitative research study and the primary research material consists of ethnographic oriented fieldwork, during 2013-2015, including participant observation and personal interviews as well as media analysis. I wrote field notes during the field trips. I have collected articles from various media³⁰⁴ (newspapers, internet articles, videos) concerning the autonomous trade unions (between 1993-2018) to support the analysis of the development of the independent labor movement that consist also dozens of interviews from the activists and researchers.

In 2008, I attended the Euromed Civil Forum in Marseille as part of group constituted by various Finnish non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives. Participants came from the European Union (EU), eastern and western Mediterranean countries. While the forum mainly accentuated immigration related issues, many activists and scholars represented multiple non-governmental organizations without special programs in that regard. During the forum I met with the President of the National Autonomous Union of Public Administration Staff

³⁰³ Torfing, Jacob (2005, 14-17) Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments, and Challenges, in David Howarth and Jacob Torfing (Eds.), *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-32.

³⁰⁴ I was also given permission to archive press book collected by one long-time SNAPAP activist, which gave me an access to various news articles related to trade unionism in Algeria between 1993-2011.

(Syndicat National Autonome des Personelles de l'Administration Publique, SNAPAP), Rachid Malaoui. I remember parts of our exchange of ideas about the political situation in Algeria and information I received about the contestation of the trade union movements aiming at syndicalist pluralism and rights pledged in the constitution. However, I could not foresee that a few years later the popular protests and demonstrations would erupt in North Africa and I would start preparing my doctoral thesis about the autonomous trade unions in Algeria.

Everything has its beginnings. However, I do not know whether my interest to start research on autonomous trade unions in Algeria is a consequence of aforementioned meeting in Marseille, or how much this path relates to my Finnish-Algerian roots. The cultures of North Africa and especially Algeria have played an important role throughout my life from various perspectives through growing up in Finland. Entering into worlds of trade unionism opened intriguing access to explore the civil society and social movements through manifold encounters and experiences. Participant observation enabled views and perspectives, power positions and narrations that might have stayed uncovered without conducting fieldwork on the topic.

As mentioned above, I started the fieldwork in 2013 and stayed at first one month in Algeria. I met Algerian scholars in Algiers and Oran and held discussions how the subject of Algerian autonomous trade unions could be studied. I also met some activists, such as Rachid Malaoui and Kaddour Chouicha, in a café and travelled with group of activists to the border of Tunisia, where the continuation of the trip towards World Social Forum organized in Tunis (2013) was prevented by the authorities at border stations near Tebessa and El Kala. The following year I returned for two and half months (2014-2015) and conducted my fieldwork mainly in Oran while regularly conducting interviews and participating in meetings in the capital Algiers. I was simultaneously a visiting researcher at the National Center of Research in Social and Cultural Anthropology (Le Centre national de recherche en anthropologie sociale et culturelle, CRASC), in Oran, which gave me a substantial possibility to interact with Algerian researchers. Many important personalities to whom I had connection related to SNAPAP and LADDH were resided in Oran as well. Due to these synergies, Oran was natural choice for me to conduct the fieldwork. In addition, I participated in the World Social Forum organized again in Tunis in 2015, where I was able to continue my study among Algerian activists participating to the forum. I travelled since few times to Algeria, but I do not consider them as strictly part of the field research and directly related to this thesis.

Clifford Geertz³⁰⁵ argues that ethnography can be understood as a process rather than a methodological doctrine³⁰⁶. I see the “field” as the space, floating in time, that incorporates the system of social positions formed by social practices in relation of inclusion and exclusion rather than just a set location³⁰⁷. Afterwards, I could say that fieldwork always started already from the airport, or from the local train that carried me to airport, because leaving home and family behind and heading off to encounter trade union activists encapsulated emotions, thoughts and assumptions that were more connected to field research than my private personal being. Participating in meetings, conducting interviews and writing notes are only one element in the larger processes of fieldwork. On top of that, as it seems to often be case, the most fruitful conversations and discussions took place in unexpected situations without the recorder while many notable moments and occurrences were occasionally set out in a non-explicit way³⁰⁸. Therefore, I wrote notes after meetings and interviews and drew pictures of some of those that I met to remember better the various encounters.

While I want to separate as much as possible my personal life and work-related research, I cannot but agree with those who argue that the researcher cannot escape his or her personal impact on the research topic, research process and analysis³⁰⁹. The subjectivity of the researcher is “always” out there. Donna Haraway³¹⁰ has depicted the assumption of objective claims related to information produced in scientific research in social sciences as “situated knowledges”. We carry out our social position and habitus throughout meetings and interaction with people we meet and similarly all knowledge we produce project particular social conditions. In order to understand a specific culture or phenomena, one benefits a lot from personal experiences and encounters. I believe that I would have missed many context related details and versatile viewpoints related to Algerian autonomous trade unions, if I had

³⁰⁵ Geertz, Clifford (1973, 5-6). *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.

³⁰⁶ Cerwonka, Allaine and Malkki, Liisa H. (2007, 20) *Improvising Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork Theory*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

³⁰⁷ Pierre Bourdieu (2000, 11) *Pascalian Meditations*. Translated by R. Nice. Stanford California: Stanford University Press.

³⁰⁸ This is reflected to what Bourdieu (2000, 15) calls as the doxa: “a set of fundamental beliefs which does not even need to be asserted in the form of an explicit, self-conscious dogma”.

³⁰⁹ Cerwonka (2007, 23); Kynsilehto, Anitta (2011, 62-68) *The Politics of Multivocality. Encountering Maghrebi Women in France*. Tampere: Tampere University Press; Lefort, Bruno (2013, 75) *A Recited Community: Figures of an Identity Foretold – Narrating Heritage and Positioning Boundaries among Student Partisan Groups in Plural Lebanon*. Tampere, Rauhan- ja konfliktintutkimuslaitos TAPRI; Onodera, Henri (2015, 49) *Being a Young Activist in the Late Mubarak Era*. Helsinki: Unigrafia.

³¹⁰ Haraway, Donna (1988) Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 14, No 3 (Autumn, 1988), pp. 575-599.

only worked through secondary sources, media articles, policy papers and official documents. Sufficient sensibility or disposition requires a genuine plunge towards the phenomena, object of research.

According to John Van Maanen³¹¹, “ethnography is a storytelling institution. It is one that carries a good deal of cultural legitimacy because its stories are commissioned and approved by the leading scientific and educational organizations of the day”. There are many important questions raised on ethnography related to power and the politics of representation, who has the right to represent whom and for what intention?³¹² Eric Luke Lassiter asks an important question: “[c]an the disparity between the academy and the communities in which we work be narrowed further through ethnographic practice and writing?”³¹³ I should stress that the outcome of this thesis springs from my subjective and selective understanding that originates from my socio-economic background and experience. I am convinced that I am only able to bring one perspective to the subject. Therefore, I emphasize that my conclusion in this thesis represent partial knowledge and is free from demands of a positivist insistence on objective knowledge, though I do not in principle oppose ideals related to objectivity as such³¹⁴. I adopt a critical stance toward the possibilities of arguing that one’s work represents the objective truth within the premises of social sciences at large.

When studying a social movement, it is hard to choose who should be interviewed. As Matti Hyvärinen³¹⁵ argues, there does not exist the unanimous understanding of a central core of a movement, or understanding of it, which would be shared unanimously by all the researchers to get an “objective” sample of it through interviews. On the contrary, the vagueness of boundaries and the controversy are already linked to the concept of social movement itself. It was also often out of my hands to pick the interviewees and was not always easy to set meetings for interviews with autonomous trade union activists.

I faced many challenges during my fieldwork journey. Some interesting activists that I would have wanted to interview were not keen. The representatives of UGTA³¹⁶ were reluctant to give recorded interviews. In general, they were the most

³¹¹ Van Maanen, John (1995, 3) *An End to Innocence: The Ethnography of Ethnography*, in John Van Maanen (Eds.) *Representation in Ethnography*. Thousand Oaks – London – New Delhi: Sage Publication.

³¹² Lassiter, Luke Eric (2005, 4) *The Chicago Guide to Collaborative Ethnography*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

³¹³ Lassiter (2005, 6).

³¹⁴ Cerwonka (2007, 31-32).

³¹⁵ Hyvärinen, Matti (1994, 40) *Viiimeiset taistot*. Tampere: Vastapaino.

³¹⁶ *The General Union of Algerian Workers* (Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens).

reluctant to interact when I informed them that I was preparing research on autonomous trade unions in particular. In the end, my contacts with them remained rather distant, though I wanted to interact with them to have various approaches on autonomous trade unions. While I was not able to record our discussions, I can use the field notes written up after the meetings. In general, they had a very antagonistic relation vis-à-vis autonomous trade unions and these prejudices were taking place actually in both directions: autonomous trade union activists were often extremely suspicious of trade union activists working in UGTA as well. Meanwhile I met some members who were critical towards their membership in UGTA and had a lot of sympathy towards autonomous trade unions.

In addition, it was sometimes challenging to conduct formal interviews with female autonomous trade union activists. This work would have benefitted greatly if I had been more successful in this sense and able to conduct more interviews with female activists to reflect more deeply gender related questions and female perspectives. Christine L. Williams and E. Joel Heikes³¹⁷ have underlined the importance of the interviewer's gender, because interviews as well as any social interaction occur in a "gendered context", and therefore interviewees behave differently vis-à-vis the interviewer's gender. In general, I mostly had chance to dialogue with males, older and younger. This does not mean that female activists were not present, or that I did not want to interact with them, but rather that I got more chance to conduct recorded interviews with males. I cannot ascertain whether the reluctance of the women to give recorded interviews resembles Willy Jansen's³¹⁸ experiences in the late 1980s, when she felt that during her fieldwork related to her study of Algerian women, that Algerians in general were suspicious of social research? However, I was able to speak and discuss with many female activists in various situations, so I have research material in my fieldwork notes even though our discussions were not recorded.

3.1.2 Interviews and the photo elicitation

I recorded 20 interviews with members of various trade unions in Oran, Algiers and various other places during our trip from Algiers to Tunis. I mostly interviewed those

³¹⁷ Williams, L. Christine and Heikes, E. Joel (1993, 282-283) The Importance of Researcher's Gender in the In-Depth Interview: Evidence from Two Case Studies of Male Nurses. *Gender and Society*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (June 1993), pp.280-291.

³¹⁸ Jansen, Willy (1987, xv) *Women without men*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

related to SNAPAP³¹⁹, however I also interviewed members of CNES³²⁰, SATEF³²¹, CNAPEST³²² and LADDH³²³. I also conducted interviews, for example with members of UGTA in Oran that I was not permitted to record. In addition, I have 20 interviews that I have collected from various newspapers and websites. I was mostly interested in the members of SNAPAP due to its visible role in the public sector and important role in the civil society as a part of the larger oppositional movement. Many were now functioning under new confederation the *General Autonomous Confederation for Algerian Workers* (Confédération Générale Autonome des Travailleurs Algériens, CGATA³²⁴). Some of the interviewees had dual memberships in the aforementioned organizations, meaning that they were active in both SNAPAP and LADDH.

Before conducting the interview, I explained to the interviewees about my research and my personal background. In general, I felt that autonomous trade union activists were most usually pleased about my interest regarding their activities and for their cause. I also told them that I have been active in the Finnish Peace Committee (Suomen Rauhanpuolustajat), a leftwing peace movement, since the beginning of 2000s and that I believe that my activist background offered many positive experiences related to my possibilities to understand certain processes regarding their activism in general and also related to their attitudes towards my questions and interests.

Ten of the recorded interviews were conducted using visual methods. I had seven different photographs, equipped occasionally with dates or small descriptive sentences that directed the interview. I chose the photographs according to discourses that came up during the previous rounds of interviews. Instead of asking direct questions, I aimed to give more space for the interviewee to narrate more specifically and openly certain events and political figures in the context of their own

³¹⁹ The National Autonomous Union of Public Administration Staff (*Syndicat National Autonome des Personnelles de l'Administration Publique*)

³²⁰ *The National Council for Higher Education Professors* (Conseil National des Professeurs du Supérieur).

³²¹ *The Autonomous Union of Workers of Education and Training* (Syndicat Autonome des Travailleurs de l'Éducation et de la Formation).

³²² *The Autonomous National Council of Secondary and Technical Education Teachers* (Conseil National Autonomes des Professeurs de l'enseignement Secondaire et Technique).

³²³ *The Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights* (La Ligue algérienne pour la défense des droits de l'homme).

³²⁴ CGATA was established in 2013 and is affiliated by five autonomous trade unions: SNAPAP, SESS (Syndicat des enseignants du supérieur solidaire), SNATEG (Syndicat national des travailleurs de l'électricité et du gaz), SNAP (Syndicat national des postiers) and SAATT (Syndicat autonome algérien des travailleurs de transport).

chosen timeframe. As Douglas Harper has suggested, photo elicitation can “be regarded as a postmodern dialogue based on the authority of the subject rather than the researcher”³²⁵.

My aim during the process of conducting interviews was to give more room to identify and understand how to approach more objectively the interviewer’s subjective construction of “discursive reality”³²⁶. Direct questions may already orient the answers towards the interviewer’s own aims. While the use of the photographs encapsulates similar challenges, these semi-directive interviews nevertheless leave more space for the interviewee to navigate the discussions and bring up elements that might be delimited within the contexts of direct questions. That worked well especially when the photos already directed the discussion to more specific cases, but simultaneously enabled space around them, while direct questions, which were additional in some cases during the interview, may have directed the discussion too much.

According to Harper³²⁷, a photo elicitation³²⁸ interview that contains text and images differs from interviews that uses only words, being a process that generates even different kinds of information, notably more symbolic representation. He argues that: “images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness that do words; exchanges based on words alone utilize less of the brain’s capacity than do exchanges in which the brain is processing images as well as words”³²⁹. While photos were a part of ethnography since the early years of anthropological research³³⁰, I encountered this method by accident in the doctoral dissertation of Bruno Lefort,³³¹

³²⁵ Harper, Douglas (2002) Talking about pictures: a case for photo elicitation. *Visual Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2002, pp. 13-26.

³²⁶ It is sufficient here to understand the discursive reality as separate quality of a phenomenon from one’s own subjective construction of discourses (Berger and Luckman 1966, 1).

³²⁷ Harper (2002, 13).

³²⁸ See more researches where photo elicitation is used: Collier, John (1957) Photography in anthropology: a report on two experiments. *American Anthropologist* 59, pp. 843-859; Messaris, Paul and Gross, Larry (1977) Interpretations of a photographic narrative by viewers in four age groups. *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication* 4(2): pp. 99-111; Bunster, Ximena (1978) Talking pictures: a study of proletarian mothers in Lima, Peru. *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication* 5(1), pp. 37-55; Calderola, Victor (1985) Visual Contexts: a photographic research method in anthropology. *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication* 11(3), pp. 33-55; Chiozzi, Paolo (1989) Photography and anthropological research: three case studies. In Robert Boonzaier Flaes (Ed.) *Eyes Across the Water*. Amsterdam, Het Spinhuis; Lavabre, Marie-Claire (1994) *Le fil rouge, sociologie de la mémoire communiste*. Paris, Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques.

³²⁹ Harper 2002, 13.

³³⁰ Harper, Douglas (2003, 241) Framing photographic ethnography: A case study. *Ethnography* Vol. 4(2), pp. 241-266.

³³¹ Lefort (2013).

who used photo elicitation in his interviews with Lebanese student partisan groups. The empirical and descriptive approach stresses the multivocality of the photographs and subjective experience of everyday life in general and permits the observation of systems of representation and the construction of discourses from both cognitive and sociological perspectives³³².

When the interviews started, I explained to the interviewee that I am about to put seven pictures on a table and that the interviewee is expected to take one picture at a time and start discussing his experiences related to his activities around trade unionism. I feel that I was able to construct trust at least at some level with the interviewees in the sense that they were very open and vocal in their speech and critics. In general, the interviewees spoke freely about their activism and backgrounds. While I already had an idea of what elements I was searching for through the interviews, the photo elicitation fitted well, naturally broadening the discussion around the connotations I had in mind. The interviewees did not have any specific form or pattern in narrating the photos and when answering my questions. On some occasions their thinking and formation of opinions contained identical argumentation and incorporated some repetition.

These seven pictures encompass, presented in fluid chronological order. A photo of the flag of Algeria, which generated discussion related to national devotion and nationalism in general, patriotism, trust, history and the Independence war (1954-62). A photo of former President Chadli Bendjedid (1979-92) aimed to evoke reflection or memories regarding the October uprising of 1988 and the constitutional reform that enabled the creation of autonomous trade union movement. A photo of two leaders of the Islamic Salvation Front (*Front Islamique du Salut*, FIS) Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj symbolize in this photo elicitation Islam and religion in general, but also the democratic process that was intercepted and the civil war (1992-2000) that followed. The fourth photo, of former Major-General of Algerian army Khaled Nezzar, was intended to spark reflection regarding the civil war and especially the role of the army in the country.

³³² Cognitive stresses the subjectivity of the interviewee and sociological the socio-economic background (Lefort 2013, 52).



Picture 1. Photos used in the semi-directive interviews.

The last three photos concentrated on more recent events and phenomena. One of those presented election posters of the President Abdelaziz Bouteflika in 2009 when he was elected for his third term after the constitution was changed to allow the president to maintain the position for more than two terms. This photo sought discussion on the development of the democracy in the country as well as on the reliance on Algerian authorities to maintain the order. A photo of the Secretary General of UGTA, Abdelmadjid Sidi-Saïd, stressed the role and the relations of the UGTA and the autonomous trade unions. The last photo showed trade union and other activists waving their passports as a protest in the border of Tunisia in 2013 when they were prevented to participate to World Social Forum in Tunisia. Here the idea was to direct the interview towards questions of citizenship and citizen rights.

I chose these pictures when I was searching visual representations for aforementioned themes. I found most of these photos from internet. The photo that depicts activists waving their passports was taken by myself. Afterwards when the fieldwork was already finished, I understood that I could have tried to choose

pictures with gender objectives. Now all the photos present male figures, which of course relates also to masculinity related to the main political figures and politics in Algeria in general. I understood this deficit after the fieldwork was conducted.

As previously mentioned, I have collected about 2 700 press articles that consist of publications that I have collected myself during the process dissertation as well those given to me and collected by the SNAPAP activists themselves from their press book since 1993. I organized those articles, as a part of my analysis, in the chronological time order. Then I went them through searching for concepts, historical and contemporary discourses, visions, official statements, non-violent citizenship acts in the public space, links to globalization, employment policies, gender, class, various social dimensions from food prices to representations of power and conditions of the youth that formed categorizations and research material for my analysis. I categorized each article according to aforementioned group in the chronological time order, which helped me to search out different discourses later on in the research and writing process.

It was possible to make comparisons regarding oppositional or governmental oriented newspapers about the same events and their various differential ways of narrating them. While I navigated the articles and organized them into categories (concepts, historical and contemporary discourses, visions and so forth), I searched certain discursive master signifiers (stability, politics and patriotism) to contextualize and analyze the articulations of these discourses. Before I start discussing about discourse analysis any further, I want to write few words about ethics related to this study.

3.1.3 Ethical and moral responsibilities

Ethical questions are intrinsically part of the qualitative and ethnographic research. As Elizabeth Murphy and Robert Dingwall³³³ argue, it is challenging to dismantle the nodes of the interlinkage of ethics and politics. This means that ethics are related to individual ethnographer's way of perceiving the nature of reality, conduction of research and other philosophy-methodological orientations that effect on research outcome. Therefore, due to the lack of consensus related to the ontological and

³³³ Murphy, Elisabeth and Dingwall, Robert (2001, 339) The Ethics of Ethnography, in Paul Atkinson, Amanda Coffey, Sara Delamont, John Lofland and Lyn Lofland (Eds.) *Handbook of Ethnography*. Sage Publications, pp. 339-351.

epistemological questions, it is also debatable to argue how the research effects on social world in connection to research results.

My main ethical principle related to this thesis is reliable scientific conduct. I follow *the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity* that has produced the guidelines for the responsible conduct of research (RCR guidelines)³³⁴. They provide an exemplar for the responsible conduct of research, which is however unfortunately grounded on a voluntary commitment of the research community to pursue them³³⁵ while the justifications for universal and commonly agreed ethical standards continue to be the object of debate³³⁶. Following official guidelines of scientific conduct does not make research automatically ethical. The social world is versatile and complex, leaving space for various interpretations.

According to Marilys Guillemin and Lynn Gillam³³⁷ research ethics can be divided into procedural ethics and ethics in practice. With procedural ethics, they mean applying permission from relevant ethics committee for conducting the research in sensitive situations that involve human beings. The most intractable question related with ethics may nevertheless sprout from more immediate everyday situations and encounters. As Murphy and Dingwall write:

Most controversy about the ethics of ethnography has, however, arisen at the level of practice, rather than principle. Professional ethical codes have been developed in an attempt to give effect to the abstract propositions of ethical theory. There has been wide criticism of the mechanical application to ethnographic research of codes and regulatory systems, including human subjects review, devised for biomedical and/or quantitative research³³⁸.

Murphy and Dingwall argue that the process induces at least two problems:

First, ethical codes that are not method-sensitive may constrain research unnecessarily and inappropriately. Secondly, and just as importantly, the ritualistic observation of these codes may not give real protection to research participants but actually increase the risk of harm by blunting ethnographers' sensitivities to the method-specific issues which do arise. This is not to suggest that different ethical standards should be applied

³³⁴ <http://www.tenk.fi/en/responsible-conduct-of-research>

³³⁵ *Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland* (2012, 28). Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity.

³³⁶ Benatar, Solomon Robert (2002, 1135) Reflection and recommendations on research ethics in developing countries. *Social Science & Medicine* 54 (2002) pp. 1131-1141.

³³⁷ Guillemin, Marilys and Lynn, Gillam (2004, 263) Ethics, Reflexivity, and "Ethically Important Moments" in Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, Volume 10 Number 2, 2004, pp 261-280.

³³⁸ Murphy and Dingwall (2001, 340).

to different kinds of research so much as to recognize that common principles may need to be operationalized in different ways³³⁹.

Hence, it is much on the responsibility of the researcher's willingness and responsibility to be aware of and recognize the specific moments where ethical dimensions of research practice arise and to take them seriously by responding them appropriately³⁴⁰.

Fieldwork that contains paradoxes, ambiguities and dilemmas differs from positivist and impersonal quantitative research inquiry, because in the field the researcher is in direct contact with the interviewees and form relationships that require confidence and respect³⁴¹. Having had possibility to interact with many autonomous trade union activists, who have lived and experienced many significant phases alongside the development of the autonomous trade union movement, I want to express my appreciation regarding their efforts. I am in a great debt to those who shared their experiences with me.

The researcher may possess some expert knowledge that is lacking among interviewees, while these relationships also incorporate power and personal relations that relates to world views and identities. In my case, that was occasionally the case regarding the theoretical understanding of the social world in social sciences and methodological disposition. However, many of the activists were so much more experienced and theoretically advanced that those aforementioned positions were rather the opposite.

Qualitative research, in particularly fieldwork, suffers from a variety of technical and methodological dilemmas, especially when it concentrates on sensitive social phenomena in sensitive locations³⁴². According to John D. Brewer³⁴³, five different types of challenges appeared when he was studying the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) in East Belfast, Northern Ireland: technique, methodology, ethics, social context, and personal security. In his research, problematics regarding the integrality of the context and security were linked due to the personal security challenges that

³³⁹ Murphy and Dingwall (2001, 340).

³⁴⁰Guillemin and Gillam (2004, 269).

³⁴¹De Laine, Marlene (2000, 16) *Fieldwork, Participation and Practice: Ethics and Dilemmas in Qualitative Research*. London – Thousand Oaks – New Delhi: Sage Publications.

³⁴² Fielding, Nigel G. (1990, 608) Mediating the Message. *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 33 No. 5, May-June 1990, Sage Publications, Inc, pp. 608-620; Lee, Raymond M & Renzetti, Claire M. (1990, 511) The Problems of Researching Sensitive Topics: An Overview and Introduction. *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 33 No. 5, May-June 1990 Sage Publications Inc., pp. 510-528.

³⁴³ Brewer, John D. (1990, 579-580) Sensitivity as Problem in Field Research. *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 33 No. 5, May-June 1990 Sage Publications, Inc., pp. 578-593.

were a direct result of the spatial, geographical and socio-economic context. However, Brewer emphasizes that personal security risks may be existent without any serious contextual problem.

While conducting research in a complex, conflicting and contradictory environment, I have reflected my own position and activities as a researcher during the fieldwork. I have avoided any direct political participation while attending various events related with trade union activism. My research results also discuss the wider implication of researcher's positionality and implication, while it is hard to avoid that processed research-material could not be used for unilateral and political purposes. However, my main concern has been to emphasize and prevent any risks of generating harm, whether physic or material on the part of the interviewees and reflect seriously on their safety in terms of my work³⁴⁴. Responsibility does not end when the researcher quits the field. Protecting collected research material during and after the analyzing process is always in the responsibility of the researcher.

Due to the perilous nature of the activism and political environment of participants in autonomous trade unions in Algeria, I will not disclose all of the personal details of the interviewees. I will guarantee the anonymity and privacy of those connected to my research to avoid any harm to them or their families. While the interviewees gave me vocal permission to narrate them with their own names, I will use pseudonyms to ensure the anonymity of those who I felt should not be directly involved due to their age or minor visible position in the movement. Situations change over time but written text as such, not interpretations, stay unchanged. On some occasions, interviewees were young adults and their political orientation may be in process. I consider it important to guarantee the anonymity, privacy and confidentiality of those interviewed as part of my own professional conduct of fieldwork.

Nonetheless, Marlene de Laine³⁴⁵ points out that it is too generalized and narrow to consider research ethics in its entirety within the priorities of ethic committees or by potentially harmful interaction between researcher and researched. She stresses the ethical problems and dilemmas that arise from “unanticipated consequences, not outcomes from a researcher intent to deceive and betray the trust of others”³⁴⁶. As Murphy and Dingwall argued, de Laine also emphasises that ethical codes and guidelines are merely generalizations that cannot present detailed case studies that

³⁴⁴ Haggerty, Kevin D. (2004, 398-403) Ethics Creep: Governing Social Science Research in the Name of Ethics. *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol. 27, No. 4, Winter 2004. pp. 391-414.

³⁴⁵ De Laine (2000, 17).

³⁴⁶ De Laine (2000, 17).

emerge in the practices of actual fieldwork. It is the moral duty of the researcher to take proper action and act according the ethical principles. In some occasions, the researcher has to make quick decisions while in some occurrences researcher understands only afterwards that different mode of operation would have been recommendable. These require, according to de Laine, “One’s obligation to a discipline” that “need[s] to be balanced with one’s moral and professional standards, feeling and intuitions³⁴⁷.

I also faced some ethical challenges during my fieldwork. Friendship in the research field opens up possibilities to receive connections and information³⁴⁸. Some of the relations that I constructed through meetings, interviews and interaction transformed into personal relationships. I had occasionally possibilities to meet their families and I was accustomed to some of their everyday social challenges, even though limitedly. As a researcher, I was not ready to mix research objectives with personal dimensions especially when analyzing the research material. In some cases, I was invited and offered dinner and we spent evenings together in their homes or in relation to assemblies. While in ethnographic research interaction and friendship is common and sometimes even recommended³⁴⁹, it is also challenging for the researcher to take distance from personal affective feelings and concentrate on research.

I did not conduct covert research in any forms. On some occasions I wondered about how to deal with incidents where a third party got involved in my research. There were situations, where I was spending time in a café or elsewhere with an activist or activists who were aware of my research, while their friend or friends joined us for a while or longer period and I did not have always possibility to inform them about the research. In general, I was strictly informing about my work and I explained more thoroughly the content, methods and aims of my study when necessary. However, sometimes I got interesting information from situations where I was not able to inform all the participants and it is ethically questionable whether such material can be used because people who were present were not aware of my motivation, or at least not as far as I know.

Sometimes I heard complaints or information related to their internal debate or personal conflicts, which I consider too personal to integrate into my study even though it might have some content relevance. It is clear that when actors work

³⁴⁷ De Laine (2000, 29).

³⁴⁸ De Laine (2000, 30).

³⁴⁹ Juntunen, Marko (2002, 16) *Between Morocco and Spain: Men, migrant smuggling and a dispersed Moroccan community*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Printing House.

together they are not all the time agreeing and have their own power related, personal or other conflicts. There are strict and clear cases when ethics can be taken into consideration within clear contexts, but there are also more fluid, personal or emotional contexts, where those dimensions are more flyaway.

Ilkka Pietilä stresses the role of the researcher and interaction between the interviewer and the interviewed in the process of analyzing the process of producing knowledge³⁵⁰. While my goal has been to produce knowledge about the autonomous trade unions in Algeria, I simultaneously felt that different parties wanted to see my research as some kind of support for their opinions, narratives and struggle. How to process understanding of the role of autonomous trade unions in Algeria and not to violate or offend either counterpart but still keep academic ambitions as a principal objective? As de Laine states, the disclosure of the research may generate moral pressure for the researcher to fulfill alleged “expectations when one party demands loyalty and allegiance and conflicts with another”³⁵¹.

Language posed particular challenges especially related to transcription and translation, but also occasionally regarding participant observation. Most of the interviews were conducted in French and some in Arabic with additional help. Being born in Finland and living most of my life in the country of my birth, Finnish is my native language. However, this dissertation is written in English. That of course creates challenges regarding capturing the essence and nuances of the interviewees and complicate my interpretation, coding, classification and analysis especially regarding discourses and narrative.

Simultaneously, French does not play the role of the native language for some of the interviewees, especially the younger generation, and therefore the interviewees were not always capable of expressing them as accurately as they wanted. My knowledge of Arabic was helpful but I mostly relied on help of a third party when interaction was held in Arabic. In consequence, my role as an interpreter emphasizes the capture of the small nuances that interviewees aimed to transmit. Additionally, while observing non-verbal communication such as facial expressions and gestures it is worthwhile to note their significance also have an effect to my interpretation, even though I find challenging to show them in textual form.

³⁵⁰ Pietilä, Ilkka (2010, 414) “Vieraskielisten haastattelujen analysointi ja raportointi”, in Johanna Ruusuvuori, Pirjo Nikander and Matti Hyvärinen (Eds.) *Haastattelun analyysi*. Tampere: Vastapaino.

³⁵¹ De Laine (2000, 30).

3.2 Discourse analysis and antagonistic configurations

In this work, as already mentioned, my intention is to interpret the acts of citizenship of the autonomous trade unions through construction of discourses from the interviews of the SNAPAP activists as well as through participant observation, other press material, governmental reports and existing public responses. The research material in its entirety is therefore complex and manifold. The discourses from the interviews (conducted by myself or from other literature) of the members of SNAPAP (and other autonomous trade unions) and pro-governmental actors shape historical and contemporary antagonistic *nodal points*, theorized by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe³⁵², that form through various identities within hegemonic discourses, social antagonism, dislocated discourses and the emergence of split subjects³⁵³.

I use *stability*, *political* and *patriotism* as a nodal points (or master signifiers) in the analytic chapters five, six and seven. Stability reflects the socio-economic transformation and aimed social change. The concept of political plays important role in the discourses of autonomous trade union activists and state authorities when justifying their acts. Patriotism emerges as an aim for action for political agents. I am interested in how these discourses are constructed among both competing and antagonistic actors. Therefore, I use conducted interviews, statements and press articles as primary research material to trace various and constantly transforming discourses. I am interested in how these discourses are shaped through articulation within hegemonic struggles of meaning to justify the acts and action among both of these competing and antagonistic actors that differentiate each other from another.

My approach can be considered as a two-step process. Interviews and the collection of research material are conducted within ethnographic oriented method, but part of the research material was found from existing literature (media, books, reports). Of course, fieldwork and ethnographic oriented methods had an impact on the collection of research material but implementing discourse analysis within the aforementioned theoretical framework took place in the second stage, when all the research material was examined. Two-step process allowed flexibility in implementing discourse analysis, instead of conducting, say, the narrative analysis,

³⁵² Laclau, Ernesto & Mouffe, Chantal (1985/2001) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London and New York: Verso.

³⁵³ Torfing, Jacob (2005, 14-17) Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments, and Challenges, in David Howarth and Jacob Torfing (Eds.), *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-32.

and probably more often used within ethnographic approach. Before I continue further with this problematic, a few words about what discourse is, how it is constructed, and what its connection is to the social world.

There are various possibilities to define the discourse. Probably the most usual and general way is to understand discourse as a text or a way of speech related with the specific situation or context where the knowledge is circulated³⁵⁴. Discourses in general, are practices that allow interpretation of the constructed “reality”, normatively speaking, from various hegemonic and non-hegemonic aspects whether cultural, social or political, and also reproduce power relations³⁵⁵. As Stuart Hall argues, discourse means producing knowledge through language while being itself simultaneously product of these certain practices that produce meaning³⁵⁶. Marianne Jorgensen and Louise J. Phillips³⁵⁷ define “[d]iscourse as a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of world)”.

Within poststructuralist theory, Laclau and Mouffe argue, that discourse constructs the social world in meaning, which can never be definitively set due to “fundamental instability of language” and therefore discourse shapes constantly in contact with other discourses³⁵⁸. The discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe concentrates on “*how* the structure, in the form of discourses, is constituted and changed”³⁵⁹. They call the discourse as “[t]he structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice”³⁶⁰. There are various possibilities to articulate the surrounding social world. Laclau and Mouffe define articulation as “any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call discourse”³⁶¹.

Laclau and Mouffe challenge the idea of Ferdinand de Saussure³⁶² and structuralism in general regarding the so-called “closure” of the linguistic model in

³⁵⁴ Fiske, John (1993, 14-15) *Power Plays, Power Works*. London: Verso.

³⁵⁵ Fiske (1993, 14-15).

³⁵⁶ Hall, Stuart (1999, 99) *Identiteetti*. Tampere: Vastapaino.

³⁵⁷ Jorgensen, Marianne and Phillips, Louise J. (2002, 1) *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. London – Thousand Oaks – New Delhi: Sage Publications.

³⁵⁸ Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, 6).

³⁵⁹ Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, 30).

³⁶⁰ Laclau and Mouffe (1985/2001, 105).

³⁶¹ Laclau and Mouffe (1985/2001, 105).

³⁶² Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) pioneered the understanding of language as a system of structural linguistics (*langue*) and situated language use (*parole*). Saussure argued that this structure was an unchangeable social institution. Later, poststructuralism agreed with the argument that signs derive

the sense that they depress all *elements* to the internal *moments* of a particular system³⁶³. They see that discourse closes the meaning of the discourse, but only temporarily: “The differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse, we will call moments. By contrast, we will call element any difference that is not discursively articulated”³⁶⁴. Laclau and Mouffe intercept, or in a way snatch, discourse from the environment in which it is developed or articulated, and call the rest, or the remaining reservoir, as *the general field of discursivity*³⁶⁵.

Outside any discursive structure, it is obviously not possible to speak of fragmentation, nor even to specify elements. Yet, a discursive structure is not merely “cognitive” or “contemplative” entity; it is an articulatory practice which constitutes and organizes social relations. We can thus talk of a growing complexity and fragmentation of advanced industrial societies – not in the sense that, sub specie aeternitatis [under the aspect of eternity], they are more complex than earlier societies: but in the sense that they are constituted around a fundamental asymmetry. This asymmetry existing between a growing proliferation of differences – a surplus of meaning of “the social” – and the difficulties encountered by any discourse attempting to fix those differences as moments of a stable articulatory structure³⁶⁶.

As mentioned earlier, in the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe discourse is shaped as partial fixation of meaning around various *nodal points*: “[a]ny discourse is constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre. We will call these privileged discursive points of this partial fixation, *nodal points*”³⁶⁷. This privileged sign, nodal point, gathers other signs around it in certain order through hegemonic processes in the social structures. The meanings of these other signs are fixed according to nodal point³⁶⁸. Jorgensen and Phillips further describe the importance of the nodal points regarding discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe, which also explains why I chose to integrate it to my thesis:

What discourse or discourses does a specific articulation draw on, what discourses does it reproduce? Or, alternatively, does it challenge and transform an

their meanings through internal relations within the structure but rejected the view, held intensely in structuralism, that language is a stable, unchangeable and totalizing structure (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 10).

³⁶³ Howarth, David (2000, 104) *Discourse*. Buckingham UK: Open University Press.

³⁶⁴ Laclau and Mouffe (1985/2001, 105).

³⁶⁵ Laclau and Mouffe (1985/2001, 135).

³⁶⁶ Laclau and Mouffe (1985/2001, 96).

³⁶⁷ Laclau and Mouffe (1985/2001, 112).

³⁶⁸ Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, 26).

existing discourse by redefining some of its moments? As a starting point for answers to these questions, the nodal points of the specific discourses can be identified: what signs have a privileged status, and how are they defined in relation to other signs in the discourse? When we have identified the signs that are nodal points, we can then investigate how other discourses define the same signs (floating signifiers) in alternative ways. And by examining the competing ascriptions of content to the floating signifiers, we can gradually map the partial structuring by the discourses of specific domains³⁶⁹.

In the chapters below I will further develop the nodal points (stability, politics, patriotism) that I have chosen to explain the antagonistic discourses that belong to fields of discursivity, constructed by activists of the autonomous trade unions and official authorities to depict the diverse “realities” experienced. I argue that they experience their action and existence from antagonistic perspectives. The objective of the discourse analysis of the Laclau and Mouffe is to plot those processes where the struggle of the meaning of sign is set and endeavored to become naturalized. In order to justify their accounts, autonomous trade union activists and governmental representatives struggle to produce meanings of social and political processes and the ways of understanding the social world more largely. As Jorgensen and Phillips argue, the social world changes through transformations of discourses³⁷⁰: “Struggles at the discursive level take part in changing, as well as in reproducing, the social reality”³⁷¹.

Therefore, I am not aiming to claim nor engage with the question of whose understanding and experience of the world is more real, true or correct³⁷². However, this does not mean erasing subjects’ names, biographies or histories. For Michel Foucault³⁷³ the truth does not exist through the confluence of language and reality but is a discursive construction related to power. From the “archaeological” perspective, Foucault is interested in what defines why some arguments are considered more reliable than others in specific historical era:

³⁶⁹ Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, 30).

³⁷⁰ Gillen, Julia and Petersen, Alan (2005, 148) Discourse Analysis, in Bridget Somekh and Cathy Lewin (Eds.), *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*. London - Thousand Oaks - New Delhi: Sage Publications, pp. 146-153.

³⁷¹ Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, 9).

³⁷² Laclau and Mouffe are not arguing that the so-called reality does not exist, on the contrary. They believe that social and material objects exist but we are able to approach them through understanding of the construction of discourses and the meaning that they create (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 35).

³⁷³ Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, 12).

[...] We shall call discourse a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation; it does not form a rhetorical or formal unity, endlessly repeatable, whose appearance or use in history might be indicated (and, if necessary, explained); it made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. Discourse in this sense is not ideal, timeless form that also possesses a history; the problem is not therefore to ask one-self how and why it was able to emerge and become embodied in this point in time; it is, from beginning to end, historical - a fragment of history, a unity and discontinuity in history itself, posing the problem of its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality rather than its sudden irruption in the midst of the complications in time³⁷⁴.

Thus, Foucault distinguishes *discursive practice* from the expressive operations such as an idea, a desire or an image or planned rational activity and competence. “[I]t is body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function³⁷⁵”. Power is always present in our way of approaching things, an integral element that is propagated through all social practices. While Foucault argues that “[w]e must conceive discourse as a violence that we do to things, or, at all events, as a practice we impose upon them³⁷⁶”, he does not, however, generalize power exclusively as agonizing but also as productive, something that induces “pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse”. Discourse “is in this practice that the events of discourse find the principle of their regularity”³⁷⁷. Nevertheless, my use of discourse analysis is closer to Laclau’s and Mouffe’s discourse theory, though there are many overlaps with Foucault.

I take Foucault’s warning related to “discourse as violence” seriously. When operating with discourse analysis, I am aware that my connotations drifts meanings and experiences away from my interviewees. However, similar problematics are contained also for example in narrative analysis, and as stated already before, in principal, I renounce from normative endeavor to positivist objectivity stressing researchers’ subjective effect within the research process. Related to applying of discourse analysis, mostly influenced by Laclau and Mouffe, I have to be extremely

³⁷⁴ Foucault, Michel (1971, 131) *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London and New York: Routledge.

³⁷⁵ Foucault (1971, 131).

³⁷⁶ Foucault, Michel (1971, 55) *L'ordre du discours*. Paris: Gallimard.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

careful not to subsume “particular events and their variable initial conditions, under causal laws [...]”, as David Howarth cautions³⁷⁸.

I am after discursive formations through recorded semi-directive photo elicitation interviews, more general question-answer interviews, fieldwork observations as well as various statistics and other research produced from the societal structures in Algeria. They provide important primary data regarding individual contribution of the members of autonomous trade unions and official authorities to deconstruct their “discursive experiences” and to understand the relation of these texts within larger societal surroundings through observation.

This work is ethnographic oriented research, because important body of research material is not conducted through purely ethnographic method, let’s say participant observation, relatively unstructured interviews, self-reflection and writing of the field notes. In general, I understand ethnographic research more widely and heterogeneously than the aforementioned description. Discourse analysis is applied to my fieldwork and ethnographic oriented research material as well as to other media and literature containing interviews and statistics. Even though some commentators may argue that ethnography and discourse analysis could not be combined, I think it depends on how these two approaches are defined. Despite some challenges exists within application of discourse analysis and ethnography, it is possible to emphasize convergence as well, as Maria Tamboukou and Stephen J. Ball³⁷⁹ and Graham Smart³⁸⁰, for example, do. According to Clifford Geertz³⁸¹, who explored a specific social group’s discourse practices, the aim of interpretive ethnography is “to aid us in gaining access to the conceptual world in which subjects live”.

Regarding the application of the discourse analysis of Laclau and Mouffe, it is extremely important to remember what Ernesto Laclau wrote in 1991 related to myth of methodology:

There is a widespread opinion that there is a spread of orderly procedures to be followed in carrying out any particular research. Nothing could be more erroneous.

³⁷⁸ Howarth, David (2005) Applying Discourse Theory: the Method of Articulation, in David Howarth and Jacob Torfing (Eds.), *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

³⁷⁹ Tamboukou, Maria and Ball, Stephen J. (Eds.) (2003) *Dangerous encounters: genealogy and ethnography*. New York: Peter Lang.

³⁸⁰ Graham, Smart (2008) Ethnographic-based discourse analysis: Uses, issues and prospects, in Vijay K. Bhatia, John Flowerdew and Rodney H. Jones (Eds.), *Advances in Discourse Studies*. London, New York: Routledge.

³⁸¹ Geertz, Clifford (1973, 24) *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic.

[...] [T]he important point is that these are tools that the researcher can decide ad hoc to use in each case for pragmatic reasons, and that they are not unified in an established and orderly system of procedures called “methodology”. A lot of time will be saved if the researcher knows from the beginning that nothing can substitute his/her personal intuition.³⁸²

To understand any kind of social order, it is fundamentally important to recognize the role of “hegemonic nature” and “hegemonic practices” which through articulation in given order create or fix meaning in social institutions³⁸³. Power enables the condition of contingent possibilities for the social that produces the subjects through discourses. Laclau and Mouffe adhere to Foucault’s understanding of power and the way it engages the formation of discourse and discursive space, or the social as a discursive construction³⁸⁴. Power is not in one place, where some can use it over the others, but it actualizes in specific contingent events producing the social³⁸⁵. In every situation, the order is temporal and complex articulation of contingent proceeding, which includes and excludes accepted configurations through hegemonic power struggles that can be politicized.

Processes of articulation need to be approached through the Gramscian theory of hegemony³⁸⁶, which offers great inspiration to Laclau and Mouffe. The question is about the struggle of the meanings in the context of antagonistic conflicts that are affected by power relations. According to Jorgensen and Phillips, “A social antagonism occurs when different identities mutually exclude each other”³⁸⁷. Every subject, of course, carries various identities and that does not automatically mean that these diverse identities should exclude each other. Exclusion and antagonism can nevertheless take place when competing discourses conflict. The hegemonic power has superiority to win those battles by defining what is right and wrong, true or false, beneficial or harmful, democratic or authoritarian or objective and political.

Michelle Barrett defines the concept of hegemony as: “*the organization of consent* – the processes through which subordinated forms of consciousness are constructed

³⁸² Laclau, Ernesto (1991) Intellectual Strategies; Memorandum to PhD Students in the IDA Programme, Essex University. <https://thatsnotit.wordpress.com/library/ernesto-laclau-phd-thesis-recommendations/>

³⁸³ Mouffe, Chantal (2013, 2) *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*. London - New York: Verso.

³⁸⁴ Laclau and Mouffe (1985/2001, 105); Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, 17-18 and 37).

³⁸⁵ Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, 37).

³⁸⁶ See Gramsci, Antonio (1999) Selections from the Prison Notebooks. London: Elecbook.

³⁸⁷ Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, 47).

without recourse to violence or coercion”³⁸⁸. Through the production of meaning hegemony can mask political aspirations or interests and stress for example the topics, content and perspectives related to social consciousness to sustain, develop or increase power relations: who has the hegemony to decide about what we discuss? Laclau and Mouffe stress the political processes and political articulation that they insist, determine “how we act and think and thereby how we create society”³⁸⁹.

3.3 Using media as a source of information

Regarding the research material that I have accumulated related to press articles, this information stands as a vital source of information, because there does not exist deeper historical or contemporary analysis about the formation, beginning and development of autonomous trade unions in Algeria. In many cases, I must rely on past press articles that contain specific information that is challenging to audit, but indispensable to construct narrative understanding related to their functioning.

However, I mainly use them as secondary sources or as material for discourse analysis, while in certain cases I was able to conduct media analysis when possessing several articles from different newspapers about one specific event. I use media coverage, mostly newspaper articles, to describe how certain events and occurrences were represented in various media outlets. In those cases, I employ critical discourse analysis as a tool to approach what kind of world views articles represent, what social identities, relationships and systems of knowledge and meanings they set up³⁹⁰. I also reflect them against the reminiscences of the past that came to prominence in the interviews, especially among senior members of the trade union movement.

When I approach the newspaper articles and interviews, I apply both the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe and the critical discourse theory of Norman Fairclough. Fairclough’s critical discourse theory operates discourses referring to discourse as language use as social practice, as the kind of language used within specific field and as a way of speaking which gives meaning to experiences from a particular perspective³⁹¹. The communicative event and the order of discourse are playing the key roles while language use can be considered as communicative event,

³⁸⁸ Barrett, Michele (1991, 54) *Ideology, politics, hegemony: from Gramsci to Laclau and Mouffe*, in Michelle Barrett (Eds.) *The Politics of Truth. From Marx to Foucault*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 51-80.

³⁸⁹ Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, 34).

³⁹⁰ Fairclough, Norman (1995, 5) *Media Discourse*. London: Edward Arnold.

³⁹¹ Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, 66-67).

as a text, as a discursive practice and as a social practice from the wider perspective³⁹². In Fairclough's³⁹³ three-dimensional conception of discourse, all the elements are interconnected in every level of analysis and in relation to the order of discourse (the configuration of all the discourse types used in within a social institution or a field)³⁹⁴.

Today, the new forms of media are gaining increasingly more ground. Many interesting elements regarding information of social movements occur in the digital world and in social media in general. For example, SNAPAP mostly informs about its actions on the website *Journalistes Citoyens d'Algérie*³⁹⁵ or on their Facebook pages. Individual activists also use their private Facebook accounts for activism. In the uprisings of 2011 in Tunisia and Egypt, the social media was playing important role in the mobilization of the various social movements by offering new kind of online virtual spaces³⁹⁶. In Algeria, the use of social media has been more modest compared to Tunisia and Morocco while in general the youth in eastern and western Mediterranean countries gets their daily news more often from Facebook than TV news channels, online sources, or print³⁹⁷.

When dealing with the articles, I approached what is written and by whom critically and reflect the implications of the larger media struggle in Algeria, because it is important to analyze and recognize each journal or media in general context where the article is published³⁹⁸. The Algerian official media plays important role in distributing the news, but independent newspapers, online channels and TV channels are emerging increasingly that contain a critical approach to state authorities. The advent of satellite television 30 years ago was important regarding the media coverage of Algeria because it enabled Algerians to understand and interpret the world more significantly. Until the mid-1980s, only the national broadcaster ENTC was available³⁹⁹.

The French language newspapers in Algeria have a long history, which dates back to 1830, when France occupied Algiers. The French soldiers brought to Sidi Ferruch

³⁹² Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, 67-68).

³⁹³ Fairclough, Norman (1992, 73) *Discourse and Social Change*. United Kingdom: Polity Press.

³⁹⁴ Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, 67 and 70).

³⁹⁵ <http://www.jcalgerie.be/>

³⁹⁶ Herrera, Linda and Sakr, Rehab (2014, 1) Introduction: Wired and Revolutionary in the Middle East and North Africa, in Linda Herrera and Rehab Sakr (Eds.) *Wired Citizenship: Youth Learning and Activism in the Middle East*. New York – London: Routledge, pp. 1-16.

³⁹⁷ Arab Youth Survey 2017. *ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller*. <http://arabyouthsurvey.com/index.html>

³⁹⁸ Hadj-Moussa, Ratiba (2003, 453) New Media, Community and Politics in Algeria. *Media Culture Society* 2003, Vol. 25, SAGE Publications, pp. 451-468.

³⁹⁹ Hadj-Moussa (2003, 451).

*L'Estafette d'Alger*⁴⁰⁰. During the period of colonialism, many French newspapers appeared in Algeria. The first Algerian newspaper *Al-Mubashir* (direct) was established in 1847⁴⁰¹. The newspaper *El Moudjahid* (the freedom fighter), was established by Algerian independence movement FLN in 1956. Today it is still the mouthpiece of the biggest political party FLN and therefore governmental officials⁴⁰². In Arabic there was a newspaper called *Ech-Cbaab* (the people) available and the French weekly *Algérie Actualité* (Algeria News)⁴⁰³.

In April 1990, the new press law followed by the political pressure that emerged after October uprisings in 1988 and started the period of liberalization of the press. It permitted establishment of number of new newspapers such as: *L'Hebdo libéré* (1990), *El-Watan* (1990), *Le soir d'Algérie* (1990), *Le Matin* (1990), *Liberté* (1992), *La Tribune* (1994), *L'authentique* (1994), *L'indépendant* (1995), *Le quotidien d'Oran* (1995) among others⁴⁰⁴. However, during the civil war in the 1990s the press faced many restrictions while authorities established “reading committees” observing mediation of the conflict⁴⁰⁵.

El Watan, *La Liberté* and *Le Soir* have been considered as one of the most influential oppositional, or critical newspapers regarding the authorities, though, some older autonomous activists told me that even *La Liberté* was gradually losing its oppositional status. All of them follow and mediatize regularly the events related to the civil society and autonomous trade unions. The main pro-governmental newspaper is *El Moudjahid*. Some governmental representatives have told me that even though *El Moudjahid* is explicitly pro-governmental, it contains numerical facts that makes it significant source within media landscape. Other such a kind are *L'Expression* and *L'Horizon*. In 2014, 43 newspapers (20 in Arabic, 23 in French) existed in Algeria⁴⁰⁶. According to my personal experience, Algerian media coverage is in many ways versatile and comprehensive. Occasionally, I have been surprised

⁴⁰⁰ Kraemer, Gilles (2001, 16) *La press francophone Méditerranée*. Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose – Servedit.

⁴⁰¹ Romero, Christina (2014) Media Landscapes: Algeria. EJC.NET.
http://ejc.net/media_landscapes/algeria (Annexed 16.4.2014)

⁴⁰² Kraemer, Gilles (2001, 23).

⁴⁰³ The columns of *Algérie Actualité* was major host for young Algerian intelligentsia in the turn of 1990s that offered significant space for emerging associative movement after the 1988 October Riots and liberalization process (Liverani Andrea (2008, 30 and 179) *The Civil Society in Algeria: The political functions of associational life*. Oxon: Routledge.)

⁴⁰⁴ Kraemer, Gilles (2001, 26).

⁴⁰⁵ Campagna, Joel (1999) Siege Mentality: Press freedom and the Algerian conflict. *Refworld* (UNCHR), February 1999. <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=printdoc&docid=47c567c232>

⁴⁰⁶ Romero (2014).

how much political critic is presented through various daily newspapers, television channels and web publications.

Regarding the newspapers in Arabic, *El khabar* and *Echorouk* are widely read especially among the younger generation. There are many so-called liberal media as well and it is not possible to label these simply into one category. However, as Fairclough's critical discourse theory suggests, the text should never be analyzed in isolation from its social background⁴⁰⁷. The relation of communicative speech (article, film, video or interview) and order of discourse (the configuration of all the discourse types) should be understood as dialectical, meaning that communicative events do not just reproduce orders of discourse, but can change them as well through creative and innovative use of language⁴⁰⁸.

There are also different websites that are getting more and more popular in parallel with the use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, short messaging services SMS, blogs and Dailymotion) via internet such as *Tout sur Algérie* (TSA), *Algérie 1*, *DZ Activiste*, *Algérie-Focus* to mention only a few. Many of them offer significant resources for the mobilization that can be approached via resource mobilization theory (RMT), because they offer interesting less-confined political spaces in addition to more traditional or conventional political spaces.

The newspaper articles contain many interesting question-answer interviews and other quotations that I subjected to discourse analysis. When citing⁴⁰⁹ interviews (and articles in general) conducted by journalists and reporters I can never be fully assured about the exact content of the interviews, because they tend to be stylized and refined and therefore may lose essential nuances focal to this thesis. In addition, I found many content errors regarding dates, names and abbreviations while going through the newspapers articles and especially when comparing them to one another. Nevertheless, the media language analysis is important to analyze the processes of social and cultural change⁴¹⁰ and ask how the world is represented, what identities are set up for those involved and what kind of relationships exist between them⁴¹¹.

⁴⁰⁷ Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, 70).

⁴⁰⁸ Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, 71).

⁴⁰⁹ When I cite newspaper articles, two capital letters in the end of the source indicates the first letters of the forename and surname of journalist who wrote the article.

⁴¹⁰ Fairclough (1995, 2).

⁴¹¹ Fairclough (1995, 5).

4 BACKGROUND OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR MOVEMENT AND ALGERIA

Work as a social phenomenon has multiple of dimensions. I examine work from individual and social perspectives. Therefore, work is a multidimensional concept and touches many different fields of social life. My aim is not to examine work too meticulously, but it is necessary to recognize its importance and wide-ranging socio-economic effects on daily basis of human life. Unionizing, seen as a social phenomenon, is based on those daily experiences and expectations for improving individual and communal conditions.

In general, work should guarantee our basic income to sustain a meaningful life and to fulfill our everyday basic needs. Work should be motivating and considered as congenial to our beliefs and values. Work should not damage our health and our working conditions must satisfy basic security requirements. Work has important impact on how we reflect our position in a society. It reflects educational background and networking capabilities. Implying how valuable our contribution to the society may be and how precious our time is regarding the amount of money we are worth. So work depicts our social status more largely and influences our potentiality to achieve our various individual objectives. All these characterizations are of course relative and related to our locations, time and space.

To begin with, work as a part of the spectrum of human life, can be approached at least from four elements or clusters: economics, politics, psychology and sociology. While these four elements are separable from each other, they should not be dealt entirely separately. They closely affect each other from various perspectives in the larger societal structures. Flora Gill⁴¹² argues that economics and socio-economic features should be examined more cohesively and the social field or creative endeavor should be integral part of Economics. This requires, of course, a multidisciplinary approach and combination of social psychology, sociology and political theory⁴¹³. This study focuses on autonomous trade unions from larger social

⁴¹² Flora Gill (1999) The meaning of work: Lessons from sociology, psychology, and political theory. *Journal of Socio-Economics* 28. pp. 725-743.

⁴¹³ Gill (1999, 727).

actor perspectives and does not incorporate psychological tools in the analysis. Nevertheless, individual output is integrated and psychological aspects are a significant part of one's social orientation, which this study recognizes.

4.1 Politicization of the work: background of the international labor movement

Trade unions are the tools that workers use to organize themselves to improve their working conditions, salaries and social position. According to Sidney and Beatrice Webb, trade unions can be defined as “a continuous association of wage-earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives”⁴¹⁴. The first trade unions, as we define them in contemporary research literature, possibly appeared in 18th century in Britain alongside with the process of industrialization⁴¹⁵. According to Karl Kautsky (1854-1938)⁴¹⁶, trade unions embody elements that spring from guilds where old-time journeymen organized in medieval Europe. This does not mean that before industrial revolution there were not action related working and worker-employer relationships. As Webbs write:

Strikes are as old as history itself. The ingenious seeker of historical parallels might, for instance, find in the revolt, 1490 B.C., of the Hebrew brickmakers in Egypt against being required to make bricks without straw, a curious precedent for the strike of the Stalybridge cotton-spinners, A.D. 1892, against the supply of bad material for their work. But we cannot seriously regard, as in any ways analogous to the Trade Union Movement of to-day, the innumerable rebellions of subject races, the slave insurrections, and the semi-servile peasants revolts of which the annals of history are full⁴¹⁷.

Alain Touraine, Michel Wieviorka and Françoise Dubet also argue that these earlier forms of work related to resistance should neither be confused with actual worker's movement⁴¹⁸. While I partly agree with previous arguments, it is nonetheless also challenging to find an analogy with the British trade union movement and

⁴¹⁴ Webbs (1920, 1).

⁴¹⁵ Webb, Sidney and Webb, Beatrice (1920) [1894] *History of Trade Unionism*. Longmans and Co: London. ch I. <https://archive.org/details/historyoftradeun00webbuoft>

⁴¹⁶ Kautsky, Karl (1901) Trade Unions and Socialism. *International Socialist Review*, Vol. 1, No. 10, April 1901. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1901/04/unions.htm>

⁴¹⁷ Webb and Webb (1920, 2).

⁴¹⁸ Touraine, Alain, Wieviorka, Michel and Dubet, Françoise (1987, 3) *The workers' movement*. New York – New Rochelle – Melbourne – Sydney: Cambridge University Press.

contemporary labor struggles from a global perspective either. History seals in various struggles, assemblies and prototype kind of associations that have gathered workers to protect their rights. From the global perspective, colonial struggles and slavery, for example, integrate various forms of work-related resistance as well and their connection to liberation movements and nationalism, as was the case in Algeria in the beginning of 20th century. The context of colonization in the development of trade union movement in decolonization processes may offer a more relevant basis for their observation than the interaction and influence of European trade unions and their emergence in Britain.

According to the dominant narrative, Britain is often used as an example regarding the formation of labor movement. Since 1350, the state in England regulated apprenticeship, wages, and hours⁴¹⁹. Yet, within decreasing wages in structures of nascent capitalism, a new class of wageworkers challenged this trend. However, managers that surrounded the government with petitions managed to effect on parliament that passed Combination Acts of 1799-1800⁴²⁰. Labor was subjected to exploitation by industrial capital that left little choice, breaking the law or submit to a slave⁴²¹. Luddite textile workers' uprisings (1811-1816) and the aftermath of Napoleonic wars (1803-1815) that followed thousands of returned soldiers and various other struggles challenged the position of the ruling elite in Britain. The period prior to 1824, encapsulates the incipient trade union movement that according to the Webbs represented the starting point of the contemporary trade union movement⁴²².

The Combination Acts repealed in 1824 legalized trade unions and gave right for workers to organize and associate even though the following acts enabled the continuation of prosecutions and persecution of the unionist⁴²³. Strikes and associations that were not directly linked with wages and working hours were considered as illegal⁴²⁴. The July 1830 revolution in France, two months after the French soldiers arrived to Algeria and begun colonization process that lasted 132 years, led according to Rudolf Rocker⁴²⁵ to a recovery of the English reform

⁴¹⁹ Rocker, Rudolf (2004, 26) [1938] *Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice*. Edinburgh – London – Oakland: AK Press.

⁴²⁰ Rocker (2004, 26).

⁴²¹ Rocker (2004, 26).

⁴²² Webb and Webb (1920, 64).

⁴²³ Aris, Rosemary (1998, 24) *Trade Unions and the Management of Industrial Conflict*. Great Britain.: Palgrave Macmillan.

⁴²⁴ Aris (1998, 24).

⁴²⁵ Rocker (2004, 31).

movement and was followed by the Reform Bill of 1832 that eventually left the workers, again, betrayed and without further achievements.

Being integral part of many ancient civilizations⁴²⁶ alongside the Mediterranean, Algeria and its inhabitants are influenced by various historical, cultural, political and economic tendencies. Today Algeria is often seen unilaterally as an Islamic country, especially because officially 99 percent of its population adhere to Islam. Algeria experienced gradual Islamization since the 7th century and have also been inspired by the so-called medieval Islamic political thought and its various Islamic trends ever since⁴²⁷. Therefore, the Islamic political tradition has also significant implication on Algerian political philosophy. While it may be challenging to track the overall impact of Islamic political thought in contemporary Algeria, a number of well-known political theorists⁴²⁸ have certainly left traces on its contemporary political and cultural tradition. Ibn Khaldun started the writing of his famous *Muqaddimah* in Algeria near Freneda (currently Wilaya de Tiaret) during 1375-1379⁴²⁹.

The Algerian system of industrial relations can be considered as an outcome of various historical interactions and intersections between variable circumstances, institutional arrangements and configurations that are linked to the state's effort to maintain its power and control on trade unions⁴³⁰. Before the French colonial occupation, Algeria was loosely a part of the Ottoman Empire (1518-1830) under the regency that had Algiers as its capital. Charles André Julien⁴³¹ describes the role of Algeria as exploited colony ruled by Turk minority and local notables. Algeria was at the time a traditional tribal rural society animated by a cultural network of village assemblies (*jama'ât*) as well as religious lodges (*Zaouïas*) and brotherhoods (*turuq*) that linked the country to other regions in North Africa and the Muslim world in general.

⁴²⁶ The Mediterranean location has meant that Algeria, consisted with its indigenous Amazigh populations, has been part of various empires and dynasties such as Numidian kingdoms, Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, Vandals and Byzantines before the arrival of Islam in the 7th century.

⁴²⁷ The most notable trends and periods would be Umayyads, Abbasids, Idrisid, Aghlabids, Rustamid, Fatimids, Zirid, Hammadids, Almoravids, Almohads, Spaniards and Turkish Ottomans.

⁴²⁸ Such as al-Farabi, al-Ghazali, Ibn Rushd and Ibn Khaldun only few to mention.

⁴²⁹ Wuthnow, Robert (Ed.) (1998, 359) *The Encyclopedia of Politics and Religion*. London and New York: Routledge.

⁴³⁰ Branine, Mohamed; Fekkar, Ahmed Foudil; Fekkar, Otmane and Mellahi, Kamel (2008) Employee relations in Algeria: a historical appraisal. *Employee Relations*. Vol. 30 No. 4. pp. 404-421.

⁴³¹ Julien, Charles André (1964, 1) *Histoire de l'Algérie contemporaine Tome 1. Conquête et colonisation*. Paris: PUF.

Ottoman Turks brought the idea of borders and territorial sovereignty that transformed the approximate shape of the area into contemporary Algeria⁴³². From the 19th century onwards, the Grand Vizier of Ottoman Empire appointed the *deys* that ruled as monarchs with the help of *divan* (council) consisted of five Turkish officials and the regency was split into *dar al-sultan* (the region of Algiers) and three *beyliks* (principalities): Constantine in the East, Oran in the West and Titteri in the center⁴³³. Constantine was, according to Mahfoud Kaddache, the most important due to amount of its population and riches⁴³⁴. This mode of governance worked mainly in the areas directly connected to deys and the Ottoman power was mainly present in the cities nearby⁴³⁵. The Turks “established the clear modes of production and employee relations according to different types of land ownership”, which was “divided into private land (*melk*), communal land (*arab*), religious land (*habous*) and the public land (*baylek*)”⁴³⁶.

Éric Gobe⁴³⁷ argues that trade unions in the Southern Mediterranean are distant inheritors from the Ottoman Empire's professional unions, carrying the name in Arabic *niqaba mihniyya*. These unions gathered participants and formed sections according to various professions. Before the French arrival, Algeria was already facing regression and 90 percent of its 3 million of population were rural, while the numbers of inhabitants in the cities such as Algiers (30 000), Constantine (25 000), Tlemcen (7000) or Oran (5000) were declining⁴³⁸. The French largely destroyed during the occupation (1830) the collective forms of ownership of the land and profited from cheap indigenous workforce to accumulate capital within “form of centralized and exploitative production system, for colonial purposes, which shaped the structure and functions of management and employee relations during most of the colonial period”⁴³⁹.

⁴³² Ageron, Charles-Robert (1991, 2) *Modern Algeria: A History from 1830 to the Present*. New Jersey : Africa World Press Inc.

⁴³³ Ageron (1991, 3).

⁴³⁴ Kaddache, Mahfoud (2003, 149) *L'Algérie durant la période Ottomane*. Alger : Office des Publications Universitaires.

⁴³⁵ Melasuo, Tuomo (1999, 47-48) *Algerian poliittinen kehitys 1800-luvulta vapaussotaan 1954*. Tampere: Rauhan- ja konfliktin tutkimuslaitos TAPRI.

⁴³⁶ Branine et al. (2008, 405).

⁴³⁷ Gobe, Éric (2006,184) *Corporatismes, syndicalisme et dépolitisation*, In Élisabeth Picard (Eds.), *La politique dans le monde arabe*. Paris: Armand Colin, pp. 171-192.

⁴³⁸ Guerid, Djamel (2007, 31) *L'Exception Algérienne: La modernisation à l'épreuve de la société*. Casbah Éditions: Alger.

⁴³⁹ Branine et al. (2008, 406).

4.2 Formation of the working class movement in the 19th century

In order to understand the development of trade unionist practices in Algeria and its French influences necessitate analyzing the transformation of the concept in 19th century Europe. It is also possible to track similar developments that took place at that time in Europe from independent Algeria: the political orientation of trade unions and their relation to political parties. Therefore, I raise questions about the historical development of the labor force and labor unions that are also actual in employment relations in contemporary Algeria, and elsewhere in the world.

A major attempt to analyze the politics of labor came from the text, written by Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) in 1845. In his famous book, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, Engels concentrated on industrial workers and stated in economic terms that the value of trade union action was highly limited⁴⁴⁰:

The History of these Unions is long series of defeats of the working-men, interrupted by a few isolated victories. All these efforts naturally cannot alter the economic law according to which wages are determined by the relation between supply and demand in the labor market. Hence the Unions remain powerless against all great forces which influence this relation. [...] If the employer had no concentrated, collective opposition to expect, he would in his own interest gradually reduce wages to a lower and lower point; indeed the battle of competition which he has to wage against his fellow-manufacturers would force him to do so, and wages would soon reach the minimum⁴⁴¹.

Engels was able to capture the very essence of trade union struggle in the industrial capitalist framework that is still relevant in contemporary economics. He continued his work famously with Karl Marx (1818-1883). In their joint works Marx and Engels argued that ruling class was also able to dominate ideational field and should be considered as hegemonic intellectual force, because those who lacked the means of mental production were subjected to the ideas of the ruling class⁴⁴².

In general terms, Marxist ideology stresses the mode of production where conflict oriented dialectic al class struggle persists through the division of labor and integrates also the division of mental and material labor⁴⁴³. In this context, it is also interesting

⁴⁴⁰ Hyman, Richard (1971, 5) *Marxism and the Sociology of the Trade Unionism*. London: Pluto Press Limited.

⁴⁴¹ Engels, Friedrich (1846-47) *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (Labour Movements) <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/condition-working-class/index.htm>

⁴⁴² Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich (1846-47) *The German Ideology*. (Ruling Class and Ruling Ideas) <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01b.htm#b3>

⁴⁴³ Marx and Engels (1846-47).

to return to the 14th century to reflect what Medieval North African thinker Ibn Khaldun had to say about the labor and capital especially with its connection to Algeria, North Africa and Mediterranean in general:

[...] labour is the real basis of profit. When labour is not appreciated and is done for nothing, the hope for profit vanishes, and no (productive) work is done⁴⁴⁴.

Everything comes from God. But human labour is necessary for every profit and capital accumulation. When (the source of profit) is work as such, as, for instance (the exercise of) a craft, this is obvious. When the source of gain is animals, plants, or minerals, human labour is still necessary. Without it, no gain will be obtained, and there will be no useful (result)⁴⁴⁵.

For Marx, the level of wages “only settled by the continuous struggle between capital and labor, the capitalist constantly tending to reduce wages to their physical minimum, and to extend the working day to its physical maximum, while the working man constantly presses in the opposite direction”⁴⁴⁶. Without trade union organization the capitalist would cut wages, increase working hours and benefit from the worker’s contribution as much as possible. Marx and Engels saw the role of the unions as substantial barrier to halt the greediness of the ruling class and their target was the very fundamentals of the capitalism and its political economy⁴⁴⁷. As Engels wrote in the *Conditions of the Working Class in England*:

[W]hat gives these Unions and the strikes arising from them their real importance is this, that they are the first attempt of the workers to abolish competition. They imply the recognition of the fact that the supremacy of the bourgeoisie is based wholly upon the competition of the workers among themselves; [...] And precisely because the Unions direct themselves against the vital nerve of the present social order, however one-sidedly, in however narrow a way, are they so dangerous to this social order. The working-men cannot attack the bourgeoisie, and with it the whole existing order of society, at any sorer point than this. [...] Wages depend upon the relation of demand to supply, upon the accidental state of the labour market, simply because the workers have hitherto been content to be treated as chattels, to be bought and sold.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁴ Ibn Khaldun (2005 [1370], 119) *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* (translated by Franz Rosenthal and Bruce B. Lawrence). New Jersey, United States: The Princeton University Press.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibn Khaldun (2005, 298).

⁴⁴⁶ Marx, Karl (1865, 443) *Wages, Price and Profit*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Selected Works, 2 Vol edition 1958, Vol I.

⁴⁴⁷ Hyman (1971, 5).

⁴⁴⁸ Engels (1846-47) *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (Labour Movements) <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/condition-working-class/index.htm>

According to the Richard Hyman⁴⁴⁹, the interpretation of the trade union action of Marx and Engels can be considered as optimistic. By this, he means that Marx and Engels believed that workers' organization strikes at the very core of the capitalist system and is significant step towards the revolution within collecting the masses to struggle against the ruling class, as written in *the Communist Manifesto*⁴⁵⁰. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe take a critical view regarding the lack of explanation how this transformation of workers' consciousness spring⁴⁵¹? What if workers do not recognize their real position in the capitalist societies? According to Sidney Tarrow, neither Marx nor Engels never really asked, how individuals make a choice to engage in collective action and argued that Marx and Engels underestimated the resources needed to engage, its cultural factors and the political environment⁴⁵².

Therefore, Marx and Engels can be depicted as traditional structuralists, who stressed the capitalist structures and "false consciousness" within "objective conditions" instead of reflecting individual interpretation in dialogue with surroundings⁴⁵³. Hyman simplifies the Marxist approach regarding collective action into deterministic process, where the development of industrial capitalism is considered as a precondition for the collective organization of the workers that form a unity through class consciousness, which is transformed into a method of struggle that creates a threat to the stability of capitalism and challenges "directly the whole structure of class domination"⁴⁵⁴.

During their lifetimes, Engels and Marx were possibly disappointed at the failure of "People's Spring" revolutions in Europe in 1848, which gave them more space for detailed attention beyond Europe⁴⁵⁵. There are interesting connections and less Eurocentric connotations, especially related to the explicit writings of Engels on Algeria⁴⁵⁶. In 1848, Engels rejoiced the French conquest and capture of Emir

⁴⁴⁹ Hyman (1971, 4).

⁴⁵⁰ Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich (1848) *Manifesto of the Communist Party*.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm#007>

⁴⁵¹ Jorgensen, Marianne and Phillips, Louise J. (2002, 31). *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. London – Thousand Oaks – New Delhi: Sage Publications.

⁴⁵² Tarrow, Sidney (2011, 17) *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁴⁵³ Tarrow (2011, 17).

⁴⁵⁴ Hyman (1971, 8).

⁴⁵⁵ Nimitz, August (2002, 68) The Eurocentric Marx and Engels and other related myths, in Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus (Eds.) *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁴⁵⁶ See more Galissot, René and Badia, Gilbert (1976) *Marxisme et Algérie. Textes de Marx/Engels présentés et traduit par Galissot/Badia*. Paris: Inédit.

Abdelkader⁴⁵⁷ as “an important and fortunate fact for the progress of civilization”, but nine years later in 1857, he had ended up in opposite view and praised Algerian resistance against French colonial rule⁴⁵⁸. While Marx never wrote directly about Algeria, he visited the country to gain strength shortly in 1882, a year before his death⁴⁵⁹.

The Saint-Simonians, dismissed by Marx and Engels as “utopian socialists”⁴⁶⁰, believed that growth in industrialization and scientific research would develop civilizations. They were mainly the only ones who theorized the French colonization of Algeria while rejecting liberalism endorsed by Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859), who also promoted French colonial objectives⁴⁶¹. Abdallah Zouache argues that in contrast with Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825), who rejected colonization in principal, the Saint-Simonian movement with its heterogeneity established the relationship of domination between the French and the Algerians believing in hierarchical difference whether individual or “racial”⁴⁶². Patricia M. E. Lorcin depicts Saint-Simonian vision⁴⁶³ in Algeria as: “doctrine of the achievement of well-being through economic endeavor under the paternalistic guidance of a natural elite”⁴⁶⁴.

In 1864, a significant number of socialist and anarchist activists organized a meeting in London. According to Gary K. Busch⁴⁶⁵, they had all suffered a surge of repressive actions by the authorities since the 1848 uprisings (the Spring of Nations/People’s Spring). They founded the International Workingmen’s Association (IWA) that was later named as the First International or the Black International. It was led by two visible figures, Marx and Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876), and consisted mostly of British liberal unionists (mostly hostile to socialism, anarchism and revolution), the French republican democrats, Italian revolutionary followers hostile to Marxism of Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872), Proudhonist

⁴⁵⁷ Emir Abdelkader (1808-1883) led the resistance against French conquest during 1832-1847.

⁴⁵⁸ Nimitz (2002, 68).

⁴⁵⁹ Galissot and Badia (1976, 289-373).

⁴⁶⁰ Ryan, Alan (2012, 879) *On Politics. The History of Political Thought from Herodotus to the Present*. New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company.

⁴⁶¹ Zouache, Abdallah (2009, 433) Socialism, Liberalism and Inequality: The Colonial Economics of the Saint-Simonians in the 19th-Century Algeria. *Review of Social Economy*, 67:4, pp. 431-456.

⁴⁶² Zouache (2009, 453).

⁴⁶³ It is also vital to take into account the content variation and heterogeneity between significant Saint-Simonian writers such as Prosper Enfantin, Ismaël Urbain, Ernest Carette and many others.

⁴⁶⁴ Lorcin, Patricia M. E. (1999, 50) *Imperial Identities. Stereotyping, Prejudice and Race in Colonial Algeria*. London – New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers.

⁴⁶⁵ Busch, Gary K. (1983, 6) *The Political Role of International Trade Unions*. London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press ltd.

anarchists and other exiled revolutionaries and activists around the Europe⁴⁶⁶. While the accomplishments of the First International can be considered as modest, the main characterization could be the internationalization of the developing worker's movement.

The First International decomposed in its fifth congress in Hague in 1872, when anarchists left the International. Bakunin and James Guillaume (1844-1916) were dismissed from the IWA⁴⁶⁷. Bakunin had accused Marx of authoritarianism and the First International was not even able to find common view regarding the Paris Commune a year earlier⁴⁶⁸. Marx probably feared the anarchist seizure of the IWA and its headquarters was moved to New York where it persisted until 1879. The dissolution of the First International did not mean an end to the worker's movements, nor to the functioning and the development of the trade unions. Actually, the loosely organized and spontaneous "labor movement" reached its peak around Europe and North America⁴⁶⁹ during the 1880s⁴⁷⁰.

Another interpretation regarding the start of the contemporary labor movement is introduced by Gerald Friedman⁴⁷¹, who argues that the modern labor movement was born in 1889, exactly one hundred years after the French Revolution of 1789. In Paris, 391 delegates from twenty countries, met to form the Second Socialist International, or the Socialist International in the "spirit" of the French Revolution. The leading theoretician behind the Second International was Kautsky, who stressed the democratic connotations instead of socialism and highlighted the interaction between socialism, labor and "bourgeois democracy"⁴⁷². European socialist and social democratic parties were emerging and were able to achieve legitimized societal positions and power, while simultaneously dominant in their national trade union movements, except in Britain⁴⁷³. According to Busch, in Austria and Germany the socialists were able to construct their unattached parallel societies that included book

⁴⁶⁶ Busch (1983, 6).

⁴⁶⁷ Dutt, Palme R. (1973, 89) [1964] *Internationaali*. Helsinki: Kansankulttuuri.

⁴⁶⁸ Busch (1983, 7).

⁴⁶⁹ In the United States the Knights of Labor was formed consisting for the first time both skilled and unskilled workers. They had international branches and became major political force within the US. (Busch 1983, 7).

⁴⁷⁰ Friedman, Gerald (2008, 4) *Reigniting the Labor Movement: Restoring means to ends in a democratic Labor Movement*. Routledge: London and New York; and Busch (1983, 7).

⁴⁷¹ Friedman (2008, 1).

⁴⁷² Friedman (2008, 2).

⁴⁷³ Busch (1983, 8).

and hiking clubs, singing societies, socialist housing co-operatives and cultural societies, newspapers, socialist drama societies and even schools⁴⁷⁴.

Workers, worried about their economic management, began to distinguish the interests of activity in trade unions from interests of the political parties and started to establish separate national centers to emphasize distinct identities of their contribution⁴⁷⁵. In 1886, about eight months after the Haymarket affair⁴⁷⁶, craft unions established American Federation of Labour (ALF), in France General Confederation of Labour (*Confédération générale du travail*, CGT) was created in 1895, The Belgian Labour party formed its national center in 1898 and the social democratic unions established the general commission in Germany in 1890⁴⁷⁷. In Britain, the Trade Union Congress (TUC), founded already in 1868, was kept separated from the political parties. The Second international aimed to form the unity among these various political parties and unions. According to Friedman, only from the 1880s the loose protests, contentious events and strikes transformed into a well-orchestrated, organized and bureaucratized “labor movement”⁴⁷⁸. British, Austrian and German parties were the dominant due to their large membership⁴⁷⁹.

4.3 Trade unions, colonies and bureaucratic challenges

To understand the development of trade unionism in Algeria, it is necessary to sift through the history of the development of associational life and especially its gradual emergence. It is also worthwhile stressing that the official policy in Algeria vis-à-vis autonomous associations has changed and transformed in the past. While associational life in its contemporary form can be seen as originating from the French occupation since the 1830 and, more formally, from the enactment of the 1901 Law

⁴⁷⁴ Busch (1983, 8).

⁴⁷⁵ Busch (1983, 9).

⁴⁷⁶ Haymarket affair followed the bombing at Haymarket Square in Chicago in May 4 at a labor demonstration. The demonstration was peaceful support rally for workers who were striking for an eight-hour working day. An unknown individual threw dynamite on police forces that followed gunfire leading to the deaths of civilians as well. Eight anarchists, later raised as martyrs, were condemned to death in a widely reported legal process though evidence of their involvement have been considered weak. Later on the 1 May was declared as International Worker’s Day.

⁴⁷⁷ Busch (1983, 9).

⁴⁷⁸ Friedman (2008, 4).

⁴⁷⁹ Busch (1983, 10).

of Association, diverse forms of associations, such as Freemasonry⁴⁸⁰, and collective action took place before the French conquest. In other words, associational life has deep roots in the history of Algeria⁴⁸¹.

According to Andrea Liverani, even though associational life flourished under French colonial rule (1830-1962), the participation of Algerians in the settlers' associations was generally rare, if not exceptional⁴⁸². The colonial structures prevented Algerian workers from setting up trade unions. However, this did not prevent Algerians from establishing their own associations. Arab Izerrouken⁴⁸³ asserts that since the 1901 Law of Association there were three different types of ethnically composed associations. Firstly, there were mixed associations that were cohabited by Algerians and European settlers such as schools, trade unions and to a lesser extent colonial army. Secondly, associations composed exclusively of colonial European settlers and thirdly those that were composed of colonized Algerians. Ironically, the first trade unions that were established by Algerian workers themselves were not formed in Algeria, but by Algerian immigrants in France where Algerian workers were connected to trade unionism through French trade unions⁴⁸⁴.

It is assumed that the first trade unions were established in Algeria between 1880-1890 in the city of Constantine by the French settlers working in the printing business and spread gradually to other cities as well though limiting always to the same economic sector⁴⁸⁵. The first strike organized by typographers took place in Algiers in 1888, which lasted 14 days and led to increase of their salaries by six francs in the nine hours of working day⁴⁸⁶. These unions functioned under the aegis of the French

⁴⁸⁰ Yacono, Xavier (1969) *Un siècle de franc-maçonnerie algérienne (1785-1884)*. Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose.

⁴⁸¹ According to Andrea Liverani (2008, 14), the associational life was taking place in the form of different independent corporations outside the sphere of the state such as religious lodges (*Zaouïas*), brotherhoods (*Turuq*) and village assemblies (*jama'ât*). However, the modern word "association" (*jam'iyyat*) is derived from the French colonial system (1830-1962) and means a private, generally non-profit organization that is considered independent from the state and whose establishment and operations are nonetheless regulated by the law.

⁴⁸² Liverani, Andrea (2008, 14) *The Civil Society in Algeria: The political functions of associational life*. Oxon. Routledge.

⁴⁸³ Izerrouken, Arab (2012, 79-80). *Mouvement associatif en Algérie: vers un nouveau départ?* (Ed.) Hassan Remaoun, *L'Algérie aujourd'hui: Approches sur l'exercice de la citoyenneté*. Oran: Editions CRASC, pp. 75-94.

⁴⁸⁴ Bourouiba (1998, 33) and Djabi (2005, 9).

⁴⁸⁵ Bourouiba, Boualem (1998,33) *Les syndicalistes algériens. Leur Combat. De l'éveil à la libération*. Paris: L'Harmattan; and Azzi, Abdelmadjid (2012, 29) *Le Mouvement Syndical Algérien à l'Épreuve de l'Indépendance*. Alger: Alger-Livres Éditions.

⁴⁸⁶ Bendiab, Taleb A. (1978, 127-128) La pénétration des idées et l'implantation communiste en Algérie dans les années 1920, in Réne Gallissot (Ed.) *Mouvement ouvrier, communisme et nationalismes dans le monde arabe*. Paris: Les Éditions Ouvrières, pp. 127-146.

CGT⁴⁸⁷. Unions were organized in three departments: Algiers, Oran and Constantine and were all led from Paris⁴⁸⁸. In the beginning of 20th century CGT was consisted of 1043 unions and 100 000 members in 1902, 2399 unions and 300 000 members in 1906 and 2837 unions and 600 000 members in 1912, according to its own congress reports⁴⁸⁹.

The relations of the state and trade unions and their development in various societal contexts has raised many important questions regarding the functioning of social movements and trade unions in general. The problematic trade union-state-political party relation, which plays important role in this thesis as well in connection to contemporary Algeria, severed alongside with the institutionalization process. As the political situation in Europe started to get closer to total warfare in 1914, it also reflected the disparities within the labor movement⁴⁹⁰. National obligations surpassed socialist internationalism, which infuriated the radicals within the movement. The anarchists did not participate anymore in the Second International. In 1913, the famous anarchist Emma Goldman wrote that the fundamental difference between the trade unionism and the old organizations was that the latter function invariably inside capitalistic pay system and recognize the necessity of it⁴⁹¹. Established labor leaders, such as Samuel Gompers (ALF), Léon Jouhaux (CGT), Carl Legien (the German labor federation) and Walter Citrine (TUC) believed in their capacity to dissolve impulses within democratic system through collective bargaining and their control over rank-and-file assured mature action instead of strikes⁴⁹². Strikes were considered as an early “militant stage” form of action that would erupt only within undeveloped unions, not in mature ones⁴⁹³.

The Russian communist revolutionary Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924), who argued that the labor movement institutions should be centrally controlled, represent according to Hyman a pessimistic interpretation regarding the functioning of the trade unions⁴⁹⁴. Lenin stressed that normal activities of the trade unions such as strikes and demonstrations to fight for the wages and working hours were not

⁴⁸⁷ Azzi (2012, 29) and Ridley F. F. (1970, 67) *Revolutionary Syndicalism in France: the direct action of its time*. Cambridge: University Press.

⁴⁸⁸ Azzi (2012, 29).

⁴⁸⁹ Ridley (1970, 78)

⁴⁹⁰ Busch (1983, 10).

⁴⁹¹ Goldman, Emma (2009 [1913], 113) *Syndicalism: Its Theory and Practice*, in *Maailman vaarallisimman naisen puheita ja kirjoituksia*. Helsinki: Työväen tuotantokomitea.

⁴⁹² Friedman (2008, 5-6).

⁴⁹³ Friedman (2008, 6).

⁴⁹⁴ Hyman (1971, 11).

enough, posing no threat to the capitalist order, and therefore he emphasized the sectional nature of the trade union struggle⁴⁹⁵. Lenin stressed the leadership and organization: organization would solve the challenge of collective action, because without it workers would be left on the mercy of trade unions⁴⁹⁶. The relation between the political party and trade union is currently extremely relevant in the context of Algerian contemporary trade union movement. According to Lenin, Marxists needed to establish a political party, which required the development of Social-Democratic consciousness and recognition that there would not be possibility to find middle-way between bourgeois ideology and Social-Democratic consciousness (with Social-Democratic consciousness Lenin meant revolutionary socialist consciousness)⁴⁹⁷. The labor movement, without political party, was only able to develop trade union consciousness, which was not leading to disposal of bourgeois order. Lenin's view, especially that presented in the influential *What is to be Done* in 1902, on trade union politics differs from that of Marx and Engels⁴⁹⁸. While Lenin agrees that trade unions are capable of achieving victories within the economic framework of capitalism, they however endogenously preserve orientation that leads to the integration of them within the system.

The pessimist interpretation, according to Hyman, also integrates the understanding of Robert Michels (1876-1936) that coincided with Lenin's concern about the trade union's tendency of adapting too readily within ruling order⁴⁹⁹. In his book, *Political Parties*⁵⁰⁰, Michels approach trade unions and other social institutions from psychological perspectives. He argued that "in the trade-union movement, the authoritative character of the leaders and their tendency to rule democratic organizations on oligarchic lines, are even more pronounced than in the political organizations"⁵⁰¹. He also added that "[i]n the trade union, it is even easier than in the political labor organization, for the officials to initiate and to pursue the course of action disapproved by the majority of the workers they are supposed to represent"⁵⁰². Michels believed that direct democracy in the unions was impossible, negotiations and strikes needed an organization orchestrated by official with special

⁴⁹⁵ Hyman (1971, 12).

⁴⁹⁶ Tarrow (2011, 18).

⁴⁹⁷ Hyman (1971, 12-13).

⁴⁹⁸ Hyman (1971, 14).

⁴⁹⁹ Hyman (1971, 14).

⁵⁰⁰ Michels, Robert (2001) [1911] *Political Parties: The Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracies*. Kitchener: Batoche Books.

⁵⁰¹ Michels (2001, 91).

⁵⁰² Michels (2001, 91).

experience and that the larger the union was, more it demanded bureaucratic leadership⁵⁰³.

For Michels it was obvious that even though union leaders had to cope with regular elections to keep their position, they became step by step bound to their spot for economic and professional reasons⁵⁰⁴. The special expertise that leaders acquire make them irreplaceable while workers start to believe that they owe for the leaders their “sacred duty”⁵⁰⁵. Gradually union leaders start to impose their own policies and claim they know better the situation of the workers than the workers themselves⁵⁰⁶. This oligarchic control is consolidated by mass apathy that results when the workers begin to alienate from the organization, while leaders forget their original class where they originated from, and lose the sense of solidarity towards the union leaders, and other way around, that have transformed into “petty bourgeois”⁵⁰⁷.

According to Rosa Luxemburg (1870-1919), the working class could only overturn capitalism if it preserved its commitment to a revolution⁵⁰⁸. It was the ultimate socialist vision as a goal that kept alive the political struggle within trade unions and parliamentary work⁵⁰⁹. Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) argued that vanguard forms of organization, supported by Lenin, would not be enough to instigate revolution⁵¹⁰ and stated his concern regarding the bureaucratization of the trade union movements:

The workers feel that the complex of ‘their’ organization, the trade union, has become such an enormous apparatus that it now obeys laws internal to its structure and its complicated functions, but foreign to the masses who have acquired a consciousness of their historical mission as a revolutionary class. They feel that their will for power is not adequately expressed, in a clear and precise sense, in the present institutional hierarchy. [...] These de facto conditions irritate the workers, but as individuals they are powerless to change them: the worlds and desires of each single man are too small in comparison to the iron laws inherent in the bureaucratic structure of the trade-union apparatus⁵¹¹.

⁵⁰³ Hyman (1971, 15).

⁵⁰⁴ Michels (2001, 128).

⁵⁰⁵ Hyman (1971, 15).

⁵⁰⁶ Hyman (1971, 18).

⁵⁰⁷ Hyman (1971, 16).

⁵⁰⁸ Friedman (2008, 64).

⁵⁰⁹ Friedman (2008, 64).

⁵¹⁰ Tarrow (2011, 19).

⁵¹¹ Gramsci, Antonio (1968) [1919] Unions and Councils – II. *New Left Review* 1/51, September-October 1968. <https://newleftreview.org/1/51/antonio-gramsci-soviets-in-italy>

Gramsci stressed that the development of workers' own consciousness and their movement, collective intellectual, should create working-class culture⁵¹². Bourgeoisie hegemony should be replaced with constitutive of the subjectivity⁵¹³, or countercultural consensus of the workers⁵¹⁴.

The Marxist revolutionary Lev Trotsky (1879-1940) also suggested that only through fundamental transformation of society could workers' economic needs be fulfilled⁵¹⁵. He did not see future prospects for the trade unions within the framework of capitalist society in Great Britain and criticized corrupt union leaders who were affected by bourgeois ideology:

It would be radically wrong to think, to imagine, that bureaucratism rises exclusively from the fact of the conquest of power by the proletariat. No, that is not the case. In the capitalist states, the most monstrous forms of bureaucratism are to be observed precisely in the trade unions. It is enough to look at America, England and Germany. [...] The bureaucracy of the trade unions is the backbone of British imperialism. It is by means of this bureaucracy that the bourgeoisie exists, not only in the metropolis, but in India, in Egypt, and in the other colonies⁵¹⁶.

The chaos of the First World War was continuing when the revolution in Russia of 1917 took place. Around Europe, the socialist and the social democratic parties that had worked alongside before the war were now holding antagonistic position against each other. What separated them deeply was how to operate with their respected governments⁵¹⁷. In 1919, the Bolsheviks created the Third International, or better known as the Communist International or Comintern, that declared the proletarian dictatorship and demanded the proletariat to struggle against European socialist parties⁵¹⁸. According to Busch, Comintern had a clear policy to aim to fulfill the interests of the Russian Communist party and the demands of Russia first⁵¹⁹.

In Algeria, the year 1920 witnessed number of strikes and upheavals due to the end of the First World War. The Third International created by the Bolsheviks split the French labor movement into revolutionaries and reformists. Those who wanted

⁵¹² Tarrow (2011, 19).

⁵¹³ Laclau and Mouffe (2001, xii).

⁵¹⁴ Tarrow (2011, 19).

⁵¹⁵ Hyman (1971, 17).

⁵¹⁶ Trotsky, Lev (1923) *The Errors of Principle of Syndicalism*.
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1931/unions/4-errors.htm>

⁵¹⁷ Busch (1983, 11).

⁵¹⁸ Busch (1983, 12).

⁵¹⁹ Busch (1983, 13).

to join to Leninist Third International created the United General Confederation of Labour (*Confédération générale du travail unitaire, CGTU*), while CGT gathered most of the unions in France. Three departments in Algeria (Algiers, Oran and Constantine) chose CGTU and resumed therefore more revolutionary orientation⁵²⁰. Algeria was an integral part of France and the colonial structures in the country were even deeper than in other colonialized Northern African states, as Joel Beinin states:

The dominant position of foreign or resident European capital and the national/racial component of relations between labor and capital were central features of colonial capitalism and the formation of working classes in both Tunisia and Egypt. But there were also significant differences. Egypt was nominally independent, a far richer prize, and strategically located at the crossroads of the British Empire. Tunisia was a settler colony, albeit on a much smaller scale than neighboring Algeria⁵²¹.

Charles-Robert Ageron⁵²² argues that the history of the development of Algerian trade union movement is often written about with an over emphasis on French perspectives and impacts. Without rejecting or neglecting the importance of French influence, Ageron underlines that it is necessary to contextualize the Algerian trade union model also closely within the Maghrebin environment related with trade union movements in Tunisia and Morocco. The trade union movement did not only develop in Maghreb within socialist and communist inspiration, but was also exceedingly influenced by anti-colonial struggle and nationalism. Like Destour⁵²³ in Tunisia and Istiqlal⁵²⁴ in Morocco, Algerian labor movement also politicized and evolved in conjunction with nationalist political movements.

Since the 1920s, in particular, Algeria experienced a multiplication of associations called *nadi* (Arabic word for circle, society or club) in connection with the political group *the Young Algerians*⁵²⁵, who endorsed the idea that Algerian society should integrate into French colonial structures and claim similar citizenship rights to both

⁵²⁰ Azzi (2012, 29-30).

⁵²¹ Beinin, Joel (2016, 14) *Workers and Thieves: Labor Movements and Popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

⁵²² Ageron, Charles-Robert (1989, 450) Vers un syndicalisme national en Algérie (1946-1956). *Revue d'Histoire Moderne & Contemporaine*, Année 1989 36-3. pp. 450-463.

⁵²³ Destour (the Constitutional Liberal Party) was a Tunisian political party established in 1920.

⁵²⁴ Istiqlal (Independence Party) is Moroccan political party established in 1937.

⁵²⁵ The Young Algerians (Jeunes Algériens), established in colonized Algeria in 1907, were a small, secularized élite of Muslims from the cities who turned into metropolitan liberals. They never formed a single, coherent movement, but organized discussion groups and associations and published newspapers during 1910-1920. (Ageron, Charles-Robert (1979, 232-241) *Histoire de l'Algérie contemporaine*. Tome II: De l'insurrection de 1871 au déclenchement de la guerre de libération (1954). Paris: Presses Universitaires de France; Melasuo 1999, 163-165).

Algerian and French settlers. Young Algerians consisted of a liberal well-educated elite that sought to acquire approval of being treated equally as French and Algerians. In general, Algerians were living under French occupation and lacked the citizenship rights⁵²⁶ that were guaranteed for the European colonial settlers. Main reason for their marginalization was due repressive *Indigenous Code*⁵²⁷ (*Code de L'indigénat*) that was enacted in 1881 and gave the French authorities the power to fine or imprison the Algerians individually or collectively without trial and set up a number of humiliating regulations.

In France, a Communist party organization of North African workers, initiated with the concept of syndicalism, formed a party called Star of the North Africa (*Étoile nord-africaine*) in 1926, though Ageron suggests that origins of the organization are contested and not well known⁵²⁸. However, it is affirmed that the movement was in connection with French Communist party and CGTU⁵²⁹, while Jacques Berque has noted that Algerian workers suffered from the rift between CGT and CGTU⁵³⁰. The period 1920-1936 involved strikes and protests organized by unions within sharpen political context, while according to Berque all of them did not target the colonial system⁵³¹, and finally gave approval for Algerians to join unions as well⁵³². Gradually CGT and CGTU united alongside other left-wing parties to counteract the rise of far-right movement only to be dissolved by Vichy government few years later. Around the time of Algerian Muslim Congress (CMA)⁵³³ in 1936, the popularity of nadi was also at its highest. Nadis were formed around sporting, philanthropic and cultural circles and were consisted of emergent new Algerian elite such as liberal professions, teachers, intellectuals, public servants and Muslim clergy⁵³⁴. The more

⁵²⁶ Unless they did not renounce their *statut personnel*, their rights and obligations under Islamic Law (Ageron 1991, 39).

⁵²⁷ Ageron (1991, 53) and Melasuo (1999, 145-146).

⁵²⁸ Ageron (1979, 349).

⁵²⁹ Ageron (1979, 349).

⁵³⁰ Berque, Jacques (1967, 269) *French North Africa*. New York – Washington: Frederick A. Praeger.

⁵³¹ Berque (1967, 269).

⁵³² Azzi (2002, 30).

⁵³³ The Algerian Muslim Congress reflected the development of the programmatic organization of Algerian nationalist movement and was called by the Federation of Elected Natives (formed by the Young Algerians), the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulema and the communists. The Congress introduced a political charter that called an end to all discriminatory laws and institutions, unification of Algeria and France, a single electorate and the representation in the parliament. The main nationalist movement Northern African Star led by Messali Hadj boycotted the Congress insisting the independence from the France (Ageron 1991, 96 and Melasuo 1999, 312-336).

⁵³⁴ Carlier, Omar (1995,42-46) *Entre nation et jihad. Histoire sociale des radicalismes Algériens*. Paris: PFSP. and Liverani (2008, 14-15).

popular equivalent for nadi was called *café*⁵³⁵, which was more meaningful for gathering masses (the city workers and traders met in the café and welcomed new people in town). Both nadi and café offered new spaces alongside with the *mosque*, *market* and *hammam* that formed the modern foundation for new social and political movements in Algeria⁵³⁶.

The well-known Algerian communist trade union activist Lakhdar Kaïdi⁵³⁷ elucidates the significance of the café at the beginning of his political activism in the city of Mila in the Northeast of Algeria in the late 1930s:

At one time, I even worked as a coffee boy at the café at "river gauche". There I learned much frequently and more closely with the Europeans who came to the café, and also with Muslim population who, by their professions, visited the café and played belote etc.

[...] I've mentioned that we went to café at "rive gauche", it was called that even if it wasn't called that at all in that era, and we played belote there. The café was owned by an European, a French socialist who was an influential member of "France Combattant". The French and the Algerians met each other there, and played belote. Sometimes we teamed up, Europeans against Algerians, the some took coffee, and others took a beer, and it didn't bother anyone. And there was also Boussouf, one of them because the Boussoufs is a whole tribe. He was one of those who promoted the idea of Etoile Nord Africaine.

Nadi and the café resulted from urbanization but, despite their geographic location in the cities, they were socially rather exclusive and supposedly male-dominated spaces of congregation⁵³⁸.

⁵³⁵ Café was a modern invention of the Ottomans and arrived as a such to Maghreb in the period of Soliman the Magnificent (1520-1566) in the beginning of the 16th century. The Saadian dynasty of the Marrakech in Morocco was not part of the Ottoman empire, which also explains the stronger traditional adhesion to the culture of the drinking of tea. *Café Maure* was fundamentally a masculine public space and in many ways it has stayed as such until today much more than for example *the mosque* or *the souk*. It also had a strong urban characteristic. It offered a substantial space for social meetings and conversation. Café as a political space was constantly monitored by agents of the dey. Since the occupation 1830, the concept of the café changed. It spread gradually to the rural areas but stayed as a rare and expensive product. Carlier, Omar (2012) *Le café maure, lieu de sociabilité et instance politique*. (Ed.) Bouchène, Abderrahmane, Peyroulou, Jean-Pierre, Tengour, Ouanassa Siari, Thénault, Sylvie [2012] *Histoire de L'Algérie à la période coloniale [1830-1962]*. Paris and Alger: La Découverte and Éditions Barzakh, pp. 412-415.

⁵³⁶ Melasuo (1999, 244).

⁵³⁷ Djabi, Nasser (2005, 43 and 63) *Kaidi Lakhdar, Une histoire du syndicalisme algérien: entretiens*. Alger: Chihab Editions.

⁵³⁸ Carlier (1995, 42-46).

Omar Carlier⁵³⁹ describes the Algerian public space of the 1930s as a meeting point formed and re-invented by the encounters, not solely through institutions of the national state of the colonial power France. Carlier emphasizes that in Muslim Algeria politics encompassed an autonomous public space by building a new relationship between speech and writing and was reinvented by the meeting of voice, gestures and oral culture (*téléphone arabe* or *le passe-parole*), not only by forming institutions, scriptural culture and texts, as the dialogue between famous Algerian unionist Lakhdar Kaïdi and Nasser Jabi affirms⁵⁴⁰:

Kaïdi L.: At that time there were few radio sets. Even in 1939-1940 the radio wasn't very developed. To listen to the radio you had to go the only café that had a radio to listen some music [...]

Djabi N: So, to a young person like you the only contact one could have at that time was a direct one, humane. It is to say that when you got an idea, it came when you spoke and discussed directly with people or through the bus that came by, from where they distributed newspapers, and through trips?

Kaïdi L.: Yes, absolutely! And when the bus broke down, there was practically no contacts. [...]

It is also striking that the café was a substantial meeting point between Algerians and French settlers. Carlier⁵⁴¹ stresses that within the French colonial rule the idea of nationalism was build up into modern collective expression and mirrored French associational culture. Similar projection can be viewed regarding the trade union movement as well.

Related to the workforce in colonized Algeria, factories and workshops employed, according to Charles-Robert Ageron⁵⁴², 110 000 workers in 1924 and 264 000 in 1954. The non-agricultural sector encompassed circa 120 000 independent Muslim workers and 463 187 wage-earners. As Ageron writes:

The former were craftsmen or small tradesmen with fewer than 30,000 employees; the net earnings of some 100,000 Muslim businesses came to no more than 33 billion frs., compared to the 375 billion frs. of some 65,000 European enterprises. As for the wage-earners in industry, commerce and public employment, there were 131,110 out of work, 172,000 unskilled labourers of whom 84,000 were partially unemployed, and 75,000 skilled workers; 68,000 were professionals, minor civil servants or other employees, while there were 12,000 in managerial or technical positions. Muslims thus

⁵³⁹ Carlier (1995, 125).

⁵⁴⁰ Jabi (2005, 42-43).

⁵⁴¹ Carlier (1995, 125)

⁵⁴² Ageron (1991, 89).

constituted 95 per cent of the unskilled labour force and 68 per cent of the skilled, but only 17,6 per cent of those in technical grades and 7,2 per cent of executives⁵⁴³.

Ageron⁵⁴⁴ states that due to unreliable and contradictory statistics it is more difficult to analyze rural Algerian society. However, he is surprised how little the wage labor grew compared to vast population growth and even more astonished related to those out of work and unemployed (400 000 in 1954). Regarding the 4 609 177 women, according to a colonial administrative statistic of December 1954, only 45 000 had jobs, which was most usually household keeping, cleaning or in the rural areas agricultural worker or craftswomen⁵⁴⁵.

It is interesting to see how another famous trade union activist, from the ranks of nationalist PPA/MTDL⁵⁴⁶ and later one of the founders of *Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens* (UGTA) in 1956, Boualem Bourouiba⁵⁴⁷ divides the development of Algerian labor movement into four stages in his comprehensive work *Les syndicalistes algériens: Leur combat de l'éveil à la libération* (Algerian trade unionists: Their Struggle from Awakening to Liberation). First, starting in the beginning of the 20th century when the first trade unions were established until 1936 when the constitution of the Popular Front was drawn up and Algerians could join to unions. Algerian workers, excluded from CGT and CGTU, were actually the most vulnerable to suffer from the sanctions imposed on workers during the Great Depression since 1929⁵⁴⁸. Algerian workers faced problems in organizing themselves in unions due to lack of resources, illiteracy and lack of awareness regarding employment rights that belonged to them⁵⁴⁹. However, from 1936 on the CGT, dominated by the socialists and anarchists, started to recruit Algerian workers influenced by the French Communist Party (PCF)⁵⁵⁰.

⁵⁴³ Ageron (1991, 89).

⁵⁴⁴ Ageron (1991, 86-88).

⁵⁴⁵ Rebzani, Mohammed (1997, 41) *La vie familiale des femmes algériennes salariées*. Paris – Montréal: L'Harmattan.

⁵⁴⁶ Political party, transformed from the Northern African Star of Messali Hadj.

⁵⁴⁷ Bourouiba (1998, 37-39).

⁵⁴⁸ Bourouiba (1998, 45).

⁵⁴⁹ Branine; Fekkar; Fekkar and Mellahi (2008, 406).

⁵⁵⁰ *Parti communiste français* (PCF) was founded in 1920 by a split from the French socialist political party *Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière* (SFIO) by the members that supported the Lenin's Communist International (Komintern). *Parti Communiste Algérien* (PCA), called as *Région Algérienne du PCF*, emerged in Algeria in 1920 within the Congress of Tours as an extension of PCF and was officially established as separate entity in 1936 (Melasuo 1999, 273). However, communists in Algeria were at odds with Third International and PCF, because they refused to support decolonization of Algeria (Melasuo 1999, 276).

The Second period (1936-1945) witnessed the end of the Second World War and many trade union activists were liberated by the allied forces from prisons and camps where they were imprisoned by the Vichy regime. Women were also integrated to the nationalist movement. Three associations of women emerged between 1934-1947 under the umbrella of political parties: the women's section of the Algerian People's Party (PPA⁵⁵¹), the Union of Algerian Women, and the Association of Muslim Women of Algeria⁵⁵². These associations, or their programs, dealt more with labor issues or anti-colonial struggles than questions related to emancipation of women⁵⁵³. However, the second period saw the massacres in Sétif and Guelma in 1945 that were followed by vast demonstrations organized by Messalist movement and Algerian trade unionists calling for the liberation of their country and led to the radicalization of the worker's movement at large. The massacres killed between 20 000 and 30 000 Algerians⁵⁵⁴, while the French authorities recognized the deaths of a few thousand in contrast to the nationalists' claims of 45 000 fatalities (some even speak of up to 80 000 dead)⁵⁵⁵. A year before, Algerians had obtained the right to associate and even manage their own unions⁵⁵⁶. The French authorities used the Sétif protests as an excuse for tightening their grip on political activities in Algeria banning the *Friends of the Manifesto and Liberty* (Amis du Manifeste et de la Liberté, AML)⁵⁵⁷, latest major attempt to form political unity among Algerian nationalist movements gathering more than 300 000 members⁵⁵⁸.

During the third period (1946-1953) the Democratic Union of the Algerian Manifesto (UDMA)⁵⁵⁹ of Ferhat Abbas and the Algerian People's Party/the Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties (PPA/MTDL)⁵⁶⁰ of Messali

⁵⁵¹ *Parti du Peuple Algérien* (Algerian People's Party) formed by Messali Hadj in 1937.

⁵⁵² Bouatta, Cherifa (1997, 1) Evolution of the Women's Movement in Contemporary Algeria: Organizations, Objectives and Prospects. *The United Nations University – Wider, Working Papers* No. 124, February 1997.

⁵⁵³ Bouatta (1997, 1).

⁵⁵⁴ Planche, Jean-Louis (2010) *Sétif 1945. Chronique d'un massacre annoncé*. France: Perrin.

⁵⁵⁵ Remaoun, Hassan (2015, 330) Mai 1945 (manifestation et répression), in Hassan Remaoun (ed.) *Dictionnaire du passé de l'Algérie de la préhistoire à 1962*. Réghaïa: Edition DGRST/CRASC.

⁵⁵⁶ Azzi (2012, 31).

⁵⁵⁷ AML, which supported creation of autonomous Algeria, established by the initiative of Ferhat Abbas in 1944, included PPA of Messali and ulama-movement, while communists stayed outside (Ageron 1991, 101; Melasuo 1998, 356).

⁵⁵⁸ Ageron (1991, 101).

⁵⁵⁹ Union Démocratique du Manifeste Algérien (UDMA), was created by Ferhat Abbas after the dissolution of AML.

⁵⁶⁰ *Parti du Peuple Algérien/Le Mouvement pour le triomphe des libertés démocratiques*.

Hadj gained popularity and succeeded to have presentation in the French National Assembly and Municipal Councils. Simultaneously the first congress of the MTDL gave birth to the Central Commission of the Social and Trade Unionist Affairs led by Aïssat Idir, major figure in the creation of the UGTA in 1956. The Cold War broke the French CGT again, as Communists were removed from the French government and Léon Jouhaux established the Workers' Force (*Force ouvrière*, FO) with the assumed help of American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)⁵⁶¹. In 1947 a general strike in France influenced in Algeria as well impacting on various sectors such as the ports, mines, transportation, railways, banks, construction and agriculture⁵⁶². Nevertheless, in 1952 the participation of Algerian workers to trade unions was weak, roughly estimated as 43 000, while 35,750 majority (83 percent), were affiliated to CGT⁵⁶³.

Finally, the fourth period (1954-1962) during the Algerian War of Independence encapsulates the creations of three major Algerian trade unions that also reflect the wider political struggle and the competition among national movements. Ageron⁵⁶⁴ explains the slower development of trade union movement in Algeria, compared to Tunisia and Morocco, by repression committed by French authorities. For example, Messalist PPA/MTDL had been forced to cooperate within French CGT, meanwhile algerianization of CGT and the Algerian Communist Party (PCA) was in a good tune, but since 1952 started to challenge it more openly⁵⁶⁵. CGT did not enable itself as a platform to raise certain themes into discussion, especially related to independence struggle, but the pressure of the growing nationalism was felt. This led to the establishment of the General Union of Algerian Trade Unions (*Union générale des syndicats algériens*, UGSA) in June 1954, which is often described as UGSA (CGT) due to its close ties within French union⁵⁶⁶. Most of those Algerian trade unionists who switched to UGSA (CGT) were simultaneously members of PCA, though many party members of the MTDL also joined to its ranks⁵⁶⁷.

⁵⁶¹ Wall, Irvin (1991, 109). *Americanizing the French: The United States and the making of postwar France*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁵⁶² Azzi (2012, 32).

⁵⁶³ Ageron, Charles-Robert (1989, 456) Vers un syndicalisme national en Algérie (1946-1956). *Revue d'Histoire Moderne & Contemporaine*, Année 1989 36-3. Pages 450-463.

⁵⁶⁴ Ageron (1989, 459).

⁵⁶⁵ Ageron (1989, 456).

⁵⁶⁶ Gallissot, René (1969, 11 and 13) Syndicalisme et nationalisme : La Fondation de l'Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens, ou du syndicalisme C.G.T. au syndicalisme algérien (1954-1956-1958). *Le Mouvement social* No. 66 (Jan.-Mar., 1969). Pages 7-55.

⁵⁶⁷ Gallissot (1969, 15).

Members of the MTDL wanted to create their own union, but the creation of National Liberation Front (*Front de libération nationale*, FLN) in October 1954 and its declaration of the war of independence on 1 November retarded the process⁵⁶⁸. The independence war that started on 1 November followed arrests of Algerian trade unionists⁵⁶⁹. Finally, on 11 February 1956, the new Messalist politico-military organization *Le mouvement nationale algérien* (MNA), that had replaced former MTDL, established Union of Algerian Workers (*Union syndicale des travailleurs algériens*, USTA). The creation of USTA broke the unanimity of Algerian trade union movement and was followed by the third union: *Union générale des travailleurs algériens* (UGTA). It was established 24 February by famous trade unionist figures, such as Aïssat Idir, Attalah Ben Aïssa, Boualem Bourouiba, Ali Yahya Madjid and Rabah Djermane. UGTA refused to cooperate with UGSA (CGT) and USTA⁵⁷⁰ and it was UGTA that was able to lead the combat for the workers' rights in the severe conditions during the independence war. Its members were arrested and most of them sent to camps such as Berrouaghia, Bossuet, Serkadji and Birtraria⁵⁷¹. Aïssat Idir was one of those who died in detention.

After the independence of Algeria in 1962 led to gradual transformation of UGTA as the unique representative of trade unionism in Algeria as part of the one-party rule societal order. Kaddour Chouicha⁵⁷² accuses the Algerian official historical narrative of highlighting the creation of UGTA in the frames of FLN while simultaneously excluding the formations of UGSA and USTA. Likewise, René Gallissot⁵⁷³ argues that according to reports between UGTA and FLN, one can discover an autonomous position of the trade union vis-à-vis the liberation movement.

Nowadays, autonomous trade union activists argue that the field of trade unionism in Algeria was plural since the beginning⁵⁷⁴. The eclectic creation and the gradual monopolization of trade unionism of the UGTA in Algeria, is explained

⁵⁶⁸ Ageron (1989, 462).

⁵⁶⁹ Gallissot (1969, 16).

⁵⁷⁰ Ageron (1989, 462).

⁵⁷¹ Gallissot (1969, 25).

⁵⁷² Chouicha, Kaddour (2008, 280) *Évolution du pluralisme syndical*, in Mohammed Chentouf (Ed.) *L'Algérie face à la mondialisation*. Éditions Dakar: Codesria, pp. 277-300.

⁵⁷³ Gallissot (1969, 38).

⁵⁷⁴ Interview with Salim Mecheri in Oran December 2014.

further in detail by Boualem Bourouiba⁵⁷⁵, Lakhdar Kaïdi⁵⁷⁶, Abdelmadjid Azzi⁵⁷⁷, René Gallissot⁵⁷⁸ and Charles-Robert Ageron⁵⁷⁹ in their comprehensive contributions regarding the historical development of Algerian trade union movement. This study concentrates on the development of the autonomous trade union scene.

4.4 Rise and decline of trade unions in the 20th century

By the mid-twentieth century, labor movements built up providing enormous power and gathered millions of workers in their ranks. Employers mostly shared the consensus that everyone is better off when workers are organized and social unrest is controlled through negotiations between union leaders, employers and state officials. Over the century since 1880, unions grew at a rate of about two percent per year⁵⁸⁰. Union leaders tend to return from palaces of power after successful collective bargaining.

In the 1980s, Gary K. Busch⁵⁸¹ argued that international trade unions are the most important of the international non-governmental voluntary organizations. He also projected various levels of abstraction whereby trade unions function. First, the organizational level that look after the fulfillment of working practices and compensation schemes. Second, the national organizational level, where trade unions form mutual representation and collective bargaining (autoworkers, engineers, farmworkers). Third, the national centers that are considered as political organizations of the sectoral unions that foster regular contacts with responsible governments and political parties. In centralized economies, such as in Eastern Europe or many Third World countries (according to Busch), there often exists only

⁵⁷⁵ Bourouiba, Boualem (1998) *Les syndicalistes algériens. Leur Combat. De l'éveil à la libération*. Paris: L'Harmattan and Bourouiba, Boualem (2012) *L'UGTA dans les premières années de l'indépendance (1962-1965): Un témoignage post mortem*. Alger: Alger-Livres Éditions.

⁵⁷⁶ Djabi, Nasser (2005) *Kaidi Lakhdar, Une histoire du syndicalisme algérien: entretiens*. Alger: Chihab Editions.

⁵⁷⁷ Azzi, Abdelmadjid (2012) *Le Mouvement Syndical Algérien à l'Épreuve de l'Indépendance*. Alger: Alger-Livres Éditions.

⁵⁷⁸ Gallissot (1969)

⁵⁷⁹ Ageron (1989).

⁵⁸⁰ Friedman (2008, 56).

⁵⁸¹ Busch (1983, 1-3).

one national center. In most developed industrial countries there tends to be a variety of trade union centers.

In general, the role of trade unions is often underscored when political parties and especially oppositional parties are weak, lacking funding, manpower and organizational skills and settings. Due to their central position, influence and strategic roles within the industrial relations of the singular nation states, trade unions often instigate external interest from abroad. Thus, Busch argued that: “There is probably no area of concern, outside of military intelligence, which is more vital to the security of a nation than activities within and through the international trades (sic) union movements”⁵⁸². It is also quite rare that external states attempt to interfere the state policies via trade unions, even though international union assistance and various civil society actors work closely with trade unions. Nevertheless, since the 1980s the growth of the trade unions have declined. As Friedman⁵⁸³ argues, to grow labor unions and other radical political movements must successfully mobilize workers and activists for collective action. In addition, unions must convince employers that it is in their interest to accept the demands of the workers unions. It is of course in the interest of the employers as well as state authorities to prevent unrest and maintain tranquility.

The labor movement with its multiple organizations challenge the authorities and employers using the principles of democracy and justice. Within the political democratic system, unions cooperate with political parties and other civil society actors. In the end, labor unions stand against the wealth, authority and the prestige of the established order, if hostile for their endeavors, and the arguments unions have, are normative appeals related to dignity, respect and human rights⁵⁸⁴. Activists play vital interest for union leaders in mobilizing the collective action, because as Sidney Tarrow explains, they “resolve the social transaction costs of collective action; creating focal points for people who have no sources of compulsory coordination”⁵⁸⁵. Activists invest a major amount of resources and time sitting in popular cafés, distributing literature, conducting debates and organizing events that work for the benefice of the unions⁵⁸⁶. However, what happens if union leaders

⁵⁸² Busch (1983, 4).

⁵⁸³ Friedman (2008, 55-56).

⁵⁸⁴ Friedman (2008, 55 and 59).

⁵⁸⁵ Tarrow, Sidney (1994, 189). *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁵⁸⁶ Friedman (2008, 59).

integrate too closely to perceive world views and arguments of the employers and state officials and drift away from the premises of workers' conditions?

Associational life was gradually renewed in Algeria after the war with the promulgation of the Law of Association in 1962⁵⁸⁷. Several associations were brought under the direct control of the FLN's one-party system. One of the most important events was the take-over of the government regarding workers' self-management committees during the years of the post-independence⁵⁸⁸. The government introduced the "March Decrees" in March 1963 and a special governmental commission was appointed to prepare an official program over the self-management committees that resulted to taking control of the election process⁵⁸⁹. According to Branine et al. "the party-appointed leadership of the UGTA was detached from the militant local trade unions and the workers they represent" while "often the local unions organized strikes that the UGTA leadership officially disapproved"⁵⁹⁰.

Newly independent Algeria faced many challenges: the uprisings by the *Socialist Forces Front* (Front des Forces Socialistes, FFS) guerrillas⁵⁹¹ in October was followed by Moroccan intervention a few days later⁵⁹². While formally independent, the Algerian economy was still highly dependent on France⁵⁹³. Meanwhile, Algeria attracted sympathizers and leftist militants from France who wanted to participate in its reconstruction and development⁵⁹⁴. According to another well-known trade unionist, Tahar Gaïd⁵⁹⁵, Algerian socialism can be considered very specific, because Algeria did not have typical working class, capitalism and bourgeoisie. The colonial France did not implant industries in Algeria and the colonized Algeria was merely reserve of discharge already for finalized products that were installed from the "metropolis". According to Gaïd, Algerian economic structures could be described

⁵⁸⁷ Its principal aim was to reinstate the 1901 law of freedom of association (Liverani 2008, 16).

⁵⁸⁸ Clegg, Ian (1971) *Workers' Self-Management in Algeria*. New York: Monthly Review Press; Porter, David (2011) *Eyes to the South: French Anarchists and Algeria*. AK Press: Oakland.

⁵⁸⁹ Branine et al. (2008, 408).

⁵⁹⁰ Branine et al. (2008, 408).

⁵⁹¹ FFS was created by Hocine Aït Ahmed in Tizi Ouzou in September 1963 to oppose Ben Bella government.

⁵⁹² The border war called *the Sand War* (Guerre du sable) took place in October 1963, when Moroccan forces invaded to Algeria due to area requirements.

⁵⁹³ El Mili, Brahim (2017, 67-69) *France-Algérie: 50 and d'histoires secrètes. Tome 1 (1962-1992)*. Italie: Fayard.

⁵⁹⁴ El Mili (2017, 73).

⁵⁹⁵ Gaïd, Tahar (2012, 11) *Lettre-Préface*, in Azzi, Abdelmadjid, *Le Mouvement Syndical Algérien à l'Épreuve de l'Indépendance*. Alger: Alger-Livres Éditions. pp. 9-18.

as more colonial than capitalist. It is also important to note that French colonialism had destroyed the traditional system of hierarchies in Algeria and the new elite class and the class system in general was only about to emerge and transform after the independence. Finally, Gaïd argues that Algerian socialism did not embrace the same characteristics as in industrialized European countries.

Inga Brandell⁵⁹⁶ has pointed out that the classical vision that was mainly constructed on European and North American experience of proletarianization and industrialization was challenged by the research conducted in Third-World countries. The forms of trade unions and their patterns diverge regarding the economic and political impacts. Trade unions were attached tightly to the state after the independence while access to certain basic human rights that were explicitly demanded during the colonial struggles within independent movements were not guaranteed. Brandell⁵⁹⁷ recalls that “elements of classical theories have been questioned also from within the highly industrialized societies”.

By the end of 1965, when Houari Boumedienne seized power from Ahmed Ben Bella in a bloodless coup⁵⁹⁸, the majority of the UGTA's top militants were in jail or in exile⁵⁹⁹. Meanwhile the government prepared new legislation to minimize the role of UGTA and to replacing the self-management committees by tripartite elements (the state, the party and workers representatives in each individual enterprise)⁶⁰⁰. In 1968, trade unions were formally under the control of the state and next year UGTA became attached to the organs of the party FLN⁶⁰¹. According to Farid Cherbal⁶⁰², the independent trade unionists suffered from repressive actions during 1965, 1968 and 1971. Members of UGTA had to be members of the FLN, which helped to minimize the members of Socialist Vanguard Party (*Parti de l'avant-garde socialiste*, PAGES) and other carrying similar ideologies⁶⁰³. Every category, whether youth

⁵⁹⁶ Brandell, Inga (1991, 1-3) Practices and Strategies – Workers in Third-World Industrialization: An Introduction, in Inga Brandell (Eds.) *Workers in Third-World Industrialization*. Macmillan: Hong Kong.

⁵⁹⁷ Brandell (1991, 4).

⁵⁹⁸ Le Sueur, James D. (2010, 19). *Between Terror and Democracy – Algeria since 1989*. London – New York: Zed Books.

⁵⁹⁹ Branine et al. (2008, 411).

⁶⁰⁰ Branine et al. (2008, 411).

⁶⁰¹ Branine et al. (2008, 412).

⁶⁰² Cherbal, Farid (2004) *Analyse du Mouvement syndical autonome en Algérie*. El Watan 30.11.2004.

⁶⁰³ Chouicha (2008, 281).

(UNEA⁶⁰⁴ or UNJA⁶⁰⁵), trade union (UGTA), politics (FLN), or women (UNFA⁶⁰⁶), had their own representation that was controlled by the state. Still, the state was not able to efface the autonomous trade union movement completely.

Nevertheless, the worker's movement was weak and Said Chikhi even stress the difficulty of applying the term "working class" in Algeria in the first place for describing actions taking place merely as contestation organized by groups of workers: dockworkers, railway workers, steelmakers and metallurgists organized strikes categorically separately⁶⁰⁷. Chikhi and Ali El Kenz⁶⁰⁸ argue that:

[I]t does not seem as if the history of Algerian society and industry has led to the formation of a working class with an organic character. The strong presence of an unstable population, who are workers yet refuse to belong totally to the factory and to identify themselves with the values strictly linked to the industrial world, seems in fact to be a symptom of heterogeneity and absence of collective identity.

Branine et al.⁶⁰⁹ argue that the state's and party's control over the UGTA took its final phase when "large state-owned companies managed by the state-appointed directors and the introduction of state-imposed system of worker' participation – Socialist Management of Enterprises (*Gestion Socialiste des Entreprises*, GSE)" were set. While most of the local trade unionists opposed the prescription, it was introduced on 16 November 1971 as the official charter of the GSE, brought about as a result of massive nationalization processes. UGTA's role was to integrate its local and enterprise unions in the execution of the GSE. As a result:

[A]fter the introduction of the GSE, trade union membership increased from 62 percent of the working population in 1973 to 85 per cent in 1980, putting the socialist enterprises at the heads of the unionized sectors. [...] However, this level of membership reflected the role of nationalized trade unions as state agents in a state capitalist system. Having a membership card is a key to social and material privileges, not a sign of workers unity and solidarity⁶¹⁰.

⁶⁰⁴ *National Union of Algerian Students* (Union nationale des étudiants algériens) was established in 1963 from *General Union of Muslim Students of Algeria* (Union générale des étudiants musulmans algériens, UGEMA). It was dissolved in 1971 and re-established in 1989.

⁶⁰⁵ *National Union of Algerian Youth* (Union nationale de la jeunesse algérienne) was established in 1969.

⁶⁰⁶ The National Union of Algerian Women (Union nationale des femmes algériennes) was created in 1963.

⁶⁰⁷ Chikhi (1993, 8).

⁶⁰⁸ Chikhi, Said and El Kenz, Ali (1991, 34-35) Workers' Perceptions and Practices in Algeria: The Cases of the El Hadjar Iron and Steel Works and Rouiba Industrial Motor Car Plant, in Inga Brandell (Ed.) *Workers in Third-World Industrialization*. London: Macmillan, pp. 31-48.

⁶⁰⁹ Branine et al. (2008, 412).

⁶¹⁰ Branine et al. (2008, 412).

As a result, workers' action remained low-key from 1967-1974. After 1976 strikes were prohibited, except in the private sector, which however did not mean the ending of the strikes and political protests that were usual especially at the end of the decade in 1977 and 1979⁶¹¹. In 1977 Boumedienne promised democratization of the trade union movements, which resulted in calm during 1978⁶¹².

Many remember the reign of Boumedienne in a positive light, because Algeria had the highest growth rate (8,5 percent) in 1970s compared to other oil exporters, and embarked broad reconstruction, education and development programs⁶¹³. In the years when Boumedienne was in power, Algeria witnessed significant economic development in various specific sectors such as heavy industries, construction, mining and hydrocarbons⁶¹⁴. Algeria had adopted a form of socialism and was playing visible role in the international politics and the non-aligned movement. In 1971, Boumedienne nationalized the oil industry, which severed the complex relations between Algeria and France. He introduced various socialist reforms and integrated former members of the PAGS into the government. Nationalization proceeded together with stateization.

The 58 years old autonomous trade union and human rights activist Mohamed Haimouni remembers the period during 1970s under the presidency of Boumedienne. The reminiscence of the Haimouni, currently working in *the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights* (La Ligue algérienne pour la défense des droits de l'homme, LADDH), regarding the beginning of his activism during the 1970s in the cinema club depicts how the leftist youth looked after the social space to express themselves and their political aspiration:

Starting from 1973-74, there was a single party rule. There was only the cultural action where we could function. It was the dictatorship. There was only the FLN and the mass-movements of the FLN such as the women's union movement, peasant movement and so forth. Every socio-professional category had its own movement. The youth had UNJA. So all the people who wanted to conduct activism had to do it through mass movements of the FLN. In 1971 during the nationalization of the land and oil, Boumedienne started to conduct state socialist politics. In order to be successful he needed the youth and the left, because the left believed in nationalization of the land and oil. Simultaneously Boumedienne left a little bit space for the left to express itself. There were of course various tendencies of the left at the

⁶¹¹ Chouicha (2008, 281-282) and Benamrouche, Amar (2000, 95) *Grèves et conflits politiques en Algérie*. France: Éditions Karthala.

⁶¹² Benamrouche (2000, 97 and 119).

⁶¹³ Lowi, Miriam R. (2009, 3) *Oil Wealth and the Poverty Politics: Algeria Compared*. New York: Cambridge; Le Sueur (2010, 20).

⁶¹⁴ Le Sueur (2010, 21).

times. We were Maoists, Trotskists or one could say extreme left. We invested into cinema club. Through cinema we could pass our message. I functioned in the cinema during 1973-74 until 1990. We were a bit divided: Maoists and Trotskists. Sometimes we worked together⁶¹⁵.

Chikhi⁶¹⁶ depicts more profoundly the condition of the worker's movement in the Algerian social context during 1970s in his article *Question ouvrière et rapports sociaux en Algérie* (Labor Question and Social Relations in Algeria). He argues, that the so-called *Social Pact* that embodies social relations during the reign of Boumedienne contain a combination of and close relation between social democracy and political despotism⁶¹⁷. This meant that the public space was emptied from any open confrontation while individuals renounced from the charges of sovereignty to have an access to distribution of the state's resources: the state enabled satisfaction on social demands and in exchange prohibited public freedoms⁶¹⁸. Whilst successful industrialization and development during the period of Boumedienne meant larger social justice and paved the path to improve social position for many, it meant also collective atomization of social movements and weak identity and consciousness for the worker's movement more widely⁶¹⁹.

The associational field and the attitude towards independent associations changed after the death of President Boumedienne in 1978⁶²⁰. Bendjedid Chadli became the President and questioned with renewed entourage previous conduct of policies and some of the popular achievements⁶²¹. Chadli's presidency also witnessed major global changes⁶²² in the international economic structures while Chikhi and El Kenz⁶²³ stress the unique situation for the working force in Algeria, when its numbers increased from 240 000 almost to 1 100 000 during 1970-1983. This meant the increase of 21 percent in 1967, 33 percent in 1978 and 37 percent in 1983⁶²⁴. Meanwhile women's employment remained modest reaching to 15 percent among

⁶¹⁵ Mohamed Haimouni. Interviewed in Oran in January 2015.

⁶¹⁶ Chikhi, Saïd (1993) *Question ouvrière et rapports sociaux en Algérie*. *NAQD* no 6, septembre 1993 – mars 1994, pp. 3-19.

⁶¹⁷ Chikhi (1993, 2-3).

⁶¹⁸ Chikhi (1993, 1-3).

⁶¹⁹ Chikhi (1993, 4-7).

⁶²⁰ Bouatta (1997, 3); Cherbal (2004); Liverani (2008, 16-17).

⁶²¹ Chikhi (1993, 11-12); Benamrouche (2000, 97).

⁶²² Chikhi (1993, 12).

⁶²³ Chikhi and El Kenz (1991, 33).

⁶²⁴ Chikhi, Saïd (1989, 179) *L'Ouvrier, la Vie et le Prince ou la Modernité introuvable*, in Ali El-Kenz (Eds.) *L'Algérie et la Modernité*. Dakar: CODESRIA.

25-29 years old in 1985 and until 1995 women aged between 15-65 represented only 8 percent of the labor force⁶²⁵.

The increasing numbers related to industrialization focused mainly on heavy industry. From a broader perspective, economic and social changes in Algeria such as urbanization and rural exodus, the generalization of schooling, the growth of wage labor, the emigration and the patterns of consumption of the elites “provoked an inexorable loss of symbolic values of the traditional universe and doomed local patterns and the ‘village’ hierarchy to gradual extension”⁶²⁶. According to Chikhi, these societal transformations during the mid-1970s to early 1980s led to destabilization of the Algerian working class⁶²⁷.

In 1980, the so-called Berber Spring broke out in Kabylia and Algiers, claiming recognition for Amazigh identity, but more importantly in the context of this study it embodied local strike movements⁶²⁸. The Berber associative movement was not meant to pose a veritable challenge to the Algerian authorities, but it gathered internationally recognized intellectuals to its ranks, such as Pierre Bourdieu⁶²⁹. On the contrary, the Chadli government was able to profit from it because it divided the political left⁶³⁰. Meanwhile another upheaval took place at the Rouiba industrial motor car plant⁶³¹. According to Chikhi and El Kenz the workers in Rouiba could not voice their demands through union and it was obvious that the “distance between workers and the trade union” was remote because “[t]he union has proceeded to patron-client practices”⁶³². This recalls of course about the larger debate on the integration of the trade unions in general as part of the societal structures and governance concentrating more on methods of collective bargaining while alienating the leadership from the occasional challenges of the workers affiliating them to other responsibilities.

Otherwise, the years 1981-1987 were relatively calmer despite a few larger popular uprisings in Oran (1982) as well as in Constantine and Sétif (1986) and the amount

⁶²⁵ Moghadam, Valentine (1998, 179 and 188) *Women, Work, and Economic Reform in the Middle East and North Africa*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

⁶²⁶ Chikhi and El Kenz (1991, 33).

⁶²⁷ Chikhi (1989, 181).

⁶²⁸ Benamrouche (2000, 119).

⁶²⁹ Volpi, Frédéric (2003, 37) *Islam and Democracy – The Failure of Dialogue in Algeria*. London: Pluto Press.

⁶³⁰ Brand, Laurie (2014, 155) *Official Stories: Politics and National Narratives in Egypt and Algeria*. Stanford, California: Stanford California Press.

⁶³¹ Benamrouche (2000, 120).

⁶³² Chikhi and El Kenz (1991, 45).

of strikes decreased⁶³³. Worker's resistance was considered as destabilizing factor that ought to be suppressed⁶³⁴. Among others, the former activists of the UNEA, which was dissolved in 1970⁶³⁵, managed to transform the independent unionism into autonomous student committees in the university campuses during 1976-1989⁶³⁶. Strikes that were 922 record high still in 1980 decreased to 648 in 1987⁶³⁷. While governmental political forces were able to dominate the social environments and collective action, it meant that the political contestation moved from the factories to the streets,⁶³⁸ though Amar Benamrouche argues that some of the larger protests in the public spaces in the 1980s were connected on some occasions to the strikes that started in the factories too⁶³⁹. When the October 1988 uprisings spread from the Rouiba protests, they ended up bringing extensive social instabilities that eventually led to the collapse of the dominant political system and finally to civil war.

However, this also instigated the process of democratization that opened the door for autonomous trade unions and pluralistic understanding of unionizing regarding both political parties and associations. As a consequence, some of the autonomous trade unions are today challenging the unique position of UGTA, which they continue to blame being too close to the power elites or even being solid part of the power apparatus. Concerning the larger picture that relates to the certain pattern of how trade unions develop from radical basis and end up integrating or being part of the institutional machinery working for the government and employers, can be considered I believe, too deterministic. Therefore, I suggest that each nationally or geographically located case should be approached distinctly in special socio-economic environment within specific timeframe to be further analyzed from unique premises.

⁶³³ Benamrouche (2000, 120 and 122).

⁶³⁴ Chikhi (1993, 13).

⁶³⁵ Benamrouche 2000, 96).

⁶³⁶ Cherbal 2004.

⁶³⁷ Chikhi (1993, 13).

⁶³⁸ Chikhi (1993, 14).

⁶³⁹ Benamrouche (2000, 123).

5 REMEMBERING SOCIAL CHANGE: PATH TO DARK DECADE

The October uprisings of 1988 brought to the surface the social discontent that had been gradually developing in Algerian society under one-party rule since independence. There were various socio-political factors behind the 1988 uprisings but one major element was the combination of socio-economic challenges to social change and restricted social space that prevented social contestation and therefore gradual improvement. The youth revolts instigated the process that triggered the beginning of the ongoing democratic transition in the contemporary Algeria. Constitutional change in 1989 legalized the official creation and functioning of the autonomous trade unions.

In this chapter, I will reflect on this constitutional change and the emergence of autonomous trade union movement and ask: What are the contributions of independent trade unionism to social change in Algeria and how do they reflect democracy building in the country? While I concentrate on this question in this chapter, it will be carried on within two previous chapters as well to provide a more profound analysis at the end of this thesis. As I explained in the second chapter, the concept of social change is understood as sustainable democracy building or as processes of democratization comprising social factors and establishment of democratic institutions. It can take place on the mental level of the individuals involved as well as at an institutional level, connected through contingent interaction without any determinist dominance relationship, as part of the social. The autonomous trade unions, associations and the multi-party system emerged simultaneously within the democratic state building, which contained ideas and demands that were formulated already in the past within various platforms and movements. The 1988 uprisings enabled possibility to common promotion of heterogeneous claims that conjoined as major demand for reform for political liberties.

Therefore, the 1988 October uprisings started a democratization process, which was nonetheless halted after the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) won in September the 1990 municipal elections and would have probably won the general elections in January 1992, if the process would not have been suspended. After interruption of

the democratization process Algeria drifted into bloody civil war, which also sustained the process of the development of autonomous trade union movement. I will describe how those unions struggled to maintain their action during the *décennie noir* (black decade) during 1990s within destabilizing societal structures through promoting democracy building within the context of work.

To describe the background for the emergence of autonomous trade union movement I use the interviews I conducted and relevant literature in the context of collective memory. I am interested in how the 1988 uprisings and the democratization process were politicized by various actors, including autonomous trade unions. I analyze the interviews via discourse analysis illustrating antagonistic relations around the reference points, or nodal points, to reflect how the discourses around the stability, the political and the patriotism are formed, how do they reflect the construction of “reality” and justify the acts and action conducted by the autonomous trade union activists and the state authorities.

In addition, I will show how the autonomous trade unions use and define the contested public space, the space of representation, where they organize activities sensitizing citizens to increase their mobilization in the future actions. These acts of citizenship, which turns actors into citizens in the contentious space, integrate assumption that they have power to change the politics through mobilizations creating pressure towards official state authorities and other decision makers in the policy making. There are diverse ways to interpret the social and public space while some activists that I interviewed argued that free public space does not exist in Algeria due to control of state authorities.

Finally, I will discuss the various backgrounds of the membership of these unions. I am interested in how ordinary citizens transform into political actors by joining autonomous trade unions. I will also reflect on the versatile background of the membership and generational experiences through interviews. Regarding their agency, I define the acts conducted by the activists as manifest political participation. While activists typically give individual reminiscence related to their engagement, I will stress the importance of their interplay with societal structures and trajectories.

This chapter describes the early development of the autonomous trade union movement until the end of 1990s, when gradual launch of the peace process took place. The period of civil war strained the development of the autonomous trade union movement. The peace process and the gradual termination of the violence between Islamist groups and the government resulted into new situation where autonomous trade unions were again demanding citizenship rights and liberties they felt were lost during the civil war.

5.1 Towards a reform of political liberties

As in 2011 uprisings in the North Africa and the Middle East, glossed in the global media as “the Arab Spring” or “Arab Awakening”⁶⁴⁰, the 1988 October uprisings⁶⁴¹ in Algeria raised hope and expectations for achieving sustainable democratic state building and strengthened pluralistic official forms of political representation. The destabilization that followed the uprisings in 2011 have been ever since stronger argument by the state authorities and some of the citizens in the area to denounce the agency of the oppositional social movements that denounce the conduction of state affairs in their respected countries. In Algeria, the democratic reforms that were launched after October uprisings also led to destabilization and civil war though some major democratic development within political system was achieved.

In the 1980s, during the presidency of Colonel Benjedid Chadli (1979-1992), the economy of Algeria was subjected to profound liberalization programs⁶⁴² due to fears of fiscal crisis⁶⁴³ amid the strengthening international liberal economic paradigm. The factors behind the October uprisings originate mainly from the combination of socio-economic and demographic development in Algeria⁶⁴⁴: liberalization of the economy during the Presidency of Chadli accelerated youth unemployment, lack of housing and corruption⁶⁴⁵ on the one hand, enrichment of the others on the other. Laurie Brand⁶⁴⁶ stresses also the aftermath of the death of President Houari Boumedienne and the power struggle between two “diametrically

⁶⁴⁰ Talbott, Strobe (2012, vii) Foreword, in Cesare Merlini and Olivier Roy (Eds.) *Arab Society in Revolt: The West's Mediterranean Challenge*. Washington: Brookings Institution Press.

⁶⁴¹ There are various ways to describe “the events of 1988”. It is common to use the “October Riots” (see e.g. Volpi 2003; Le Sueur 2010; Brand 2014), “events” (see e.g. Quandt 1998; Stora 2001) and “popular explosion” (Ali-Yahia 2007). I use the term 1988 October uprisings due to its more neutral content compared to “riots” that include in my opinion too strong emphasis for chaotic and disorder functioning of the society. Simultaneously “uprisings” describe the occurrences more than simple “events” that also has a negative connotation of describing the French political interpretation of Algerian Independence war.

⁶⁴² Balta, Paul (1990, 99) *Le Grande Maghreb: des indépendance à l'an 2000*. Alger: Laphomic; Ait-Chalal, Amine (2000, 82, 174) *L'Algérie, les États-Unis et la France: Des Discourses à l'action*. France: Éditions Publisud; Lowi, Miriam R. (2009, 3) *Oil Wealth and the Poverty Politics: Algeria Compared*. New York: Cambridge; Porter, David (2011, 190) *Eyes to the South: French Anarchists and Algeria*. Oakland – Edinburgh – Baltimore: AK Press.

⁶⁴³ Le Sueur, James D. (2010, 31) *Between Terror and Democracy – Algeria since 1989*. London – New York: Zed Books.

⁶⁴⁴ Carlier, Omar (1995, 340-341) *Entre nation et jihad. Histoire sociale des radicalismes Algériens*. Paris: PFSP.

⁶⁴⁵ Hadjadj, Djillali (2001, 37) *Corruption et démocratie en Algérie*. Paris: La Dispute.

⁶⁴⁶ Brand, Laurie (2014, 153-154) *Official Stories: Politics and National Narratives in Egypt and Algeria*. Stanford, California: Stanford California Press.

opposed tendencies” that effected on the role of private sector in the coming years: those who preferred rigid political control and those who supported discontinuation of socialist policies. The first group were roughly defined the officers, UGTA, the leftist student groups, section of the *arabisants*, members of the Socialist Vanguard Party (*Le Parti d'avant garde socialiste*, PAGS)⁶⁴⁷ and sections of the press, while the latter were formed by administrative and technocratic elites, the private sector and liberals⁶⁴⁸.

Gradual “de-boumediation” made President Chadli, who supported strengthening the role of the private sector, gather gain support from *arabisants* close to strengthening Islamist movement, which meant for example courting conservative Islamists in the context of promulgation of the Family Code in 1984⁶⁴⁹. Meanwhile, state revenues suffered from low oil prices due to the 1986 collapse of the world oil market when the oil prices fell from \$US30 (1983) to \$US15 in 1986⁶⁵⁰ and in the summer 1988, the price of food increased radically⁶⁵¹. State export revenues were down by 40 percent and harmed the country, which was strongly subsidized, while economic growth was -3,6 per cent⁶⁵². Governmental assistance for basic goods ceased while black market flourished and housing shortage deepened in a country, where 60 per cent of its nearly 30 million population were under the age of 20⁶⁵³.

During the period of President Chadli the military nationalists, the left and the communists were politically marginalized, while the worker’s movement was considered as a destabilizing factor that was suppressed under political observation and restriction by the police forces⁶⁵⁴. According to Said Chikhi, trade unions were

⁶⁴⁷ PAGS was established in 1966 in place of Algerian Communist Party (PCA).

⁶⁴⁸ Brand (2014, 153).

⁶⁴⁹ Mimouni, Rachid (1992, 42) *De la barbarie en général et de l'intégrisme en particulier*. France: Le Pré aux Clercs; Bouatta, Cherifa (1997, 4-6) Evolution of the Women’s Movement in Contemporary Algeria: Organizations, Objectives and Prospects. *The United Nations University – Wider*, Working Papers No. 124, February 1997; Quandt, William B. (1998, 37-38) *Between Ballots & Bullets: Algeria’s Transition from Authoritarianism*. Washington: Brookings Institution Press; Brand (2014, 153-154).

⁶⁵⁰ Yaici, Farid (2005, 44) Le marché pétrolier: situation, acteurs, stratégies, quelles perspectives pour l’Algérie? In Amor Khelif (Ed.) *Dynamique des marchés et valorisation des hydrocarbures*. Alger: CREAD, pp. 39-70.

⁶⁵¹ Garçon, Jose (1991, 386-397) Algérie: bouleversement après 25 ans d’immobilisme, in Camille Lacoste and Yves Lacoste (Eds.) *l’Etat du Maghreb*. France: La Decouverte, pp. 383-386; Volpi (2003, 37-39).

⁶⁵² Volpi, Frédéric (2003, 39) *Islam and Democracy – The Failure of Dialogue in Algeria*. London: Pluto Press.

⁶⁵³ Le Sueur (2010, 33).

⁶⁵⁴ Chikhi, Said (1993, 12-13) Question ouvrière et rapports sociaux en Algérie. *NAQD* no 6, septembre 1993 – mars 1994, pp. 3-19.

under the influence of the urban petit bourgeois, worker elites and employers close to state's one party-system meanwhile the social actors in general were weakly represented with few more visible exceptions such as cultural Amazigh movement, the Women's movement and small groups of human rights defenders⁶⁵⁵. The strikes had gradually decreased simultaneously with the increase of the youth unemployment⁶⁵⁶. Chikhi argues that the passivity of the trade union movement among others led to absence of social movements and contestation in the public space. This development transformed political frustration and action into more dispersed agencies within the youth in the football stadiums, mosques and the streets where they expressed their dissatisfaction to various grievances such as the lack of water and sanities, electricity, housing and jobs⁶⁵⁷. I consider the restriction of social space, weakening social structures and new liberal economic policy-making as the main factors for October uprisings.

Social and political contestation and destabilization of political structures existed already before 1988. Two years earlier, In November 1986, important manifestation took place in various cities in the Eastern Algeria, especially in Constantine and Sétif⁶⁵⁸. The number of strikes hit a record high in 1988 until in September a major strike took place in the state-owned motor-industry complex of Rouiba, near the capital Algiers⁶⁵⁹. As mentioned in the chapter IV, the workers in Rouiba had lost their capacity to voice their demands through unions due to patron-client practices, which resulted to mobilization and manifestation⁶⁶⁰. Violent riots led to violent clashes between workers and the police force⁶⁶¹. PAGES was active organizing the demonstrations⁶⁶². The unrest spread rapidly to urbanized areas. A steep rise in the price of school materials at the beginning of the school year led to clashes between

⁶⁵⁵ Chikhi (1993, 13 and 17).

⁶⁵⁶ Chikhi (1993, 13).

⁶⁵⁷ Chikhi (1993, 15-16).

⁶⁵⁸ Hadjadj (2001, 70-71); Benamrouche, Amar (2000, 122) *Grèves et conflits politiques en Algérie*. France: Éditions Karthala.

⁶⁵⁹ Volpi (2003, 39).

⁶⁶⁰ Chikhi and El Kenz (1991, 45).

⁶⁶¹ Volpi (2003, 39).

⁶⁶² Ilikoud, Ouali (1999, 139) *Le Printemps berbère et Octobre 88*, in Didier Le Saout and Marguerite Rollinde (Eds.) *Émeutes et mouvements sociaux au Maghreb: Perspectives comparée*. Paris: Karthala. pp. 137-146.

the police and youth, especially high-school students and unemployed young males aged between 12 to 20 years old, leading to strikes in the schools and universities⁶⁶³.

On the 4 October, the youth led manifestations erupted in the popular quarter of Bab El Oued, a suburb of Algiers, and quickly spread around the city⁶⁶⁴. Students and unemployed youth raved the elitist commercial and cultural center Ryad-el-Feth while during the clashes with the police led to deaths of several children and instigated rumors of police brutality quickly spread⁶⁶⁵. Next day schoolchildren, students and unemployed youth organized a protest march around several suburbs of capital Algiers (e.g. Harrach, Belcourt, Kouba, Ben Aknoun), which rapidly shifted into riots and violation of public facilities, state-owned supermarkets and FLN offices⁶⁶⁶. Demonstrating youth blamed President Chadli for impaired social conditions, who in turn blamed the financial speculators⁶⁶⁷. The youth claimed they wanted to mobilize public opinion⁶⁶⁸. The violence targeted especially the governmental facilities because the youth considered the state authorities responsible for their problems and difficulties in life and injustice (hogra)⁶⁶⁹.

On Thursday the 6th, just before the Friday prayers, the government imposed the state of emergency in the Algiers region while all the civilian authorities were positioned under the military control for the first time since the independence⁶⁷⁰. Some elements of the Islamist movement used the situation for their own benefice to increase their visibility enforcing the mobilization⁶⁷¹. They had not been present during the first days of manifestations, but started to be more involved after the Friday prayers on the 7th. More the protests grew, more these Islamists became visible wanting to show that they were in charge⁶⁷².

The new contemporary Islamist movement had at least since the 1970s been active political actor in Algerian society mobilizing against certain configurations of

⁶⁶³ Volpi (2003, 39); Ait-Aoudia, Myriam (2015a, 33). *L'expérience démocratique en Algérie (1988-1992)*. Paris: SciencePo les Presses.

⁶⁶⁴ Ilikoud (1999, 139).

⁶⁶⁵ Volpi (2003, 39); Ait-Aoudia (2015a, 32).

⁶⁶⁶ Ilikoud (1999, 139); Volpi (2003, 39-40).

⁶⁶⁷ Volpi (2003, 39-40).

⁶⁶⁸ Volpi (2003, 40).

⁶⁶⁹ Likoud (1999, 139-140).

⁶⁷⁰ Volpi (2003).

⁶⁷¹ Le Sueur (2010, 33).

⁶⁷² Quandt (1998, 39).

social secularism aiming for the implementation of Sharia law⁶⁷³. While Islamist movement during the 1980s is often depicted by their gains regarding the 1984 Family Code or The Algerian Islamic Armed Movement led by Mustapha Bouyali during 1982-1987, Said Chikhi⁶⁷⁴ recalls how the Islamist movement managed to cover various empty social spaces with satellite organizations and cells⁶⁷⁵. Besides, the Islamist movement was able to evoke response by offering simple answers to complex questions related to life in general, they were also present in various initiatives in community support work helping the sick people in hospitals, needy in villages and victims of natural disasters⁶⁷⁶. During the 1980s, they had been able to strengthen their position functioning as an asset for Chadli to consolidate his power⁶⁷⁷. Simultaneously it is important to stress, as Myriam Ait-Aoudia recalls that the Islamist movement, like other agents (authorities, students, doctors, journalists, trade unionists, human rights activists, intellectuals and so forth), should be rather seen as heterogeneous movement than one single compact body of organization⁶⁷⁸.

On Friday 7 October 1988, the manifestations spread to Oran, Tizi-Ouzou and various other districts and outside from Algiers the security forces were unprepared to face such extensive protests, which led to bloody confrontation with the demonstrators⁶⁷⁹. Order was attained on 10 October after violent clashes and casualties⁶⁸⁰. The government was concerned due to heavy force used and invited number of major Islamist leaders, some of whom were organizing the manifestations: Ahmed Sahnoun, Mahfoud Nahnah, Abassi Madani and Ali BelHadj⁶⁸¹. As a conclusion, it seems that the state was in impasse.

Then President Chadli went on television to announce that government would immediately decrease the prices and increase subsidized goods⁶⁸². What was even

⁶⁷³ Al-Ahnaf, M; Botiveau, Bernard and Frégosi, Franck (1991, 26) *L'Algérie par ses islamistes*. Paris: Éditions Karthala; Le Sueur (2010, 29).

⁶⁷⁴ Chikhi (1993, 22-23).

⁶⁷⁵ Zerrouky, Hassane (2002, 97-99) *La Nébuleuse islamiste en France et en Algérie*. Paris: Éditions 1.

⁶⁷⁶ Chikhi (1993, 23).

⁶⁷⁷ Mimouni (1992, 78-79 and 97).

⁶⁷⁸ Ait-Aoudia (2015a, 44-46); Ait-Aoudia, Myriam (2015b, 66-67) Des émeutes à une crise politique: Les ressorts de la politisation des mobilisations en Algérie en 1988. *Politix* Volume 28 – no 112/2015, pp. 59-82.

⁶⁷⁹ Volpi (2003, 41).

⁶⁸⁰ Brand (2014, 168); Martínez, Luis (2000, 84) “Youth, the street and violence in Algeria”, in Meijer, Roel (Ed.) *Alienation or Integration of Arab Youth– Between Family, State and Street*. Richmond: Curzon Press.

⁶⁸¹ Volpi (2003, 43).

⁶⁸² Volpi (2003, 43).

more significant in his speech was that he raised the political challenges the country was facing and promised reforms:

BC: In my opinion, it is the time to introduce the necessary reforms, even in the political field, and review certain structures and constitutional bases to adapt them towards a new course. [...] As citizens, you have to react to those political reforms that will be submitted to you. Those reforms must take place in a calm and serene atmosphere, so that we can overcome the familiar economic and political difficulties. That is the only way to resolve our problems. Any other way would be undoubtedly rejected by sincere citizens. [...] In front of our nation, I am committed to respect the voice of the people with regard to the broad political reforms. I personally believe that the proposed reforms allow us to resolve many of our political and economic problems, and open the way towards real national competences, without excluding anyone. Thus, we will eliminate the monopoly of responsibility and allow the official institutions of the state, be it the parliament or any other institution, to play their role in the control and monitoring⁶⁸³.

The main importance of the speech was to calm down massive demonstrations to establish peace and secure the stability of the country. It also showed patriotic sacrificing for the sake of national interest through sectorial political reforms, improvement of structures and constitutional foundations. It also incorporated connotations of genuine dialogue with those sincere citizens, who would aspire the best for the country and construct Algeria within peaceful environment.

President Chadli therefore announced his intention to hold a nationwide referendum on the 1976 constitution to allow wider freedoms and to democratize political institutions, which included the formation of political opposition groups⁶⁸⁴. It is possible to reflect this change also within the wider international context of the collapse of the Soviet Union, and thus Algeria was a little bit ahead with its form of “*glasnost*” policies simultaneously spreading around the Eastern Europe⁶⁸⁵. The marginalized youth were successful where institutionalized social elites such as trade unions and other social movements had failed: instigating democratization process⁶⁸⁶. The new amendments, enacted 23 February 1989, to the Algerian Constitution, opened the window for new political parties, strongly opposed by many members of the FLN⁶⁸⁷.

⁶⁸³ *El Moudjahid* 9.10.1988: Profonds changements: annoncés par le Président Chadli Bendjedid.

⁶⁸⁴ Le Sueur (2010, 36); Volpi (2003, 42); Naylor, Phillip C. (2000, 166) *France and Algeria: A History of Decolonization and Transformation*. Florida: University Press of Florida

⁶⁸⁵ Le Sueur (2010, 37); Quandt (1998, 43).

⁶⁸⁶ Chikhi (1993, 17).

⁶⁸⁷ Aït-Aoudia (2015a, 92-101).

The beginning of the democratization process was launched in an atmosphere of enthusiasm and mobilization. Autonomous trade unions were inherited from laws 90-14 and 90-02 of February 1989 in an entirely new ratification of constitution, where the right to found associations of a political nature was recognized and inaugurated into formal political pluralism. The scattered working class and civil society found many obstacles in the way in front of dominant state apparatus and it was difficult to form a counterbalance among precariat workers, poor, unemployed and excluded who were more in numbers than those in work⁶⁸⁸. The state controlled trade union UGTA was considered by many as corrupt, too close to those in power, and this meant the emerge of the independent labor movement: the average amount of strikes during 1983-1987 had been less than 800, in 1989 the Ministry of Employment registered 3389 strikes⁶⁸⁹.

Trade union activists had already been active in the student movements, especially inspired by the former members of the *National Union of Algerian Students* (Union nationale des étudiants algériens, UNEA), that were behind heavy strikes before and during the October uprisings. Aït-Aoudia⁶⁹⁰ has shown how multiple anti-governmental groups (including some groups of imams, lawyers, teachers, students, doctors, journalists and other human rights activists) denounced the violence used by state authorities during the October uprisings and meantime politicized the youth protests according to their own political narratives. She argues that these former groups and movements transformed the acts conducted by the youth according to their aims turning the youth as their spokesmen through politicization of the demonstrations. In addition, she also argues that the 1988 uprisings have been politicized by researchers themselves too through construction of various narrations related to these events attaching political dimensions that may not have been present. She believes that there does not exist much concrete evidence to show that spontaneous and unorganized youth demonstrations had either similar objectives that are often connected to these narratives, or that these uprisings were simply caused by frustrated youth due to weaken socio-economic structures⁶⁹¹. In addition, referring to Abed Charef's research, she believes that the youth did not maintain any liaison to youth, Islamist, FLN or leftist movements⁶⁹².

⁶⁸⁸ Chikhi (1993, 20).

⁶⁸⁹ Chikhi (1993, 18-19).

⁶⁹⁰ Aït-Aoudia (2015b, 60).

⁶⁹¹ Aït-Aoudia (2015b, 60-61).

⁶⁹² Aït-Aoudia (2015a, 33).

5.2 Emergence of the autonomous trade unions

When dealing with the worker's movement in Algeria, and particularly autonomous trade unions, it is important to locate them within the wider context of Algerian society to reflect their capacity to conduct collective action, to estimate the degree of their independence regarding the state and to reflect their political significance⁶⁹³. They can also be analyzed according to their reach and range whether they function in the level of enterprise, local wilaya level or national territory at large⁶⁹⁴. Some of these unions are working closely attached with political parties, some in the specialized field of sector or profession⁶⁹⁵.

Through the democratization process, President Chadli's government sought to reconstruct the state's relationship with civil society actors on various levels and pardoned those arrested during the uprisings and condemned by military tribunals⁶⁹⁶. FLN lost its state-party status and cut its special relationship with the military in March. It also lost the ideational monopoly to define the national identity, which had significant consequences regarding its image as patriotic political representation⁶⁹⁷. The Islamists, on the other hand, formed the Islamic Salvation Front (*Front Islamique du Salut, FIS*)⁶⁹⁸ challenging FLN's religious representation. Similarly, about 50 new political parties appeared in the speed like mushrooms after the rain⁶⁹⁹. From the February 1989 to June 1990 14 new political parties were officially registered, while between June 1990 and December 1991 36 new parties came into existence⁷⁰⁰.

On 12 June 1990, the first multiparty elections, in local level, were held and newly formed newspapers mediatized the process within crisp political environment⁷⁰¹. Algerian electorate was divided into local and provincial levels that consist of 48 *wilayas*, which have representative assemblies (*Assamblées Populaires de Wilaya, APW*),

⁶⁹³ Chikhi (1993, 1).

⁶⁹⁴ Chouicha (2008, 290).

⁶⁹⁵ Chouicha (2008, 291).

⁶⁹⁶ Liverani, Andrea (2008, 20) *The Civil Society in Algeria: The political functions of associational life*. Oxon: Routledge; Volpi (2003, 46).

⁶⁹⁷ Naylor (2000, 164); Stora, Benjamin (2001, 15) *La guerre invisible: Algérie années 90*. France : Presses de Sciences PO; Brand (2014, 4).

⁶⁹⁸ Volpi (2003, 46).

⁶⁹⁹ Djeghloul, Abdelkader. (1990) Le multipartisme à l'algérienne. *Maghreb-Machrek, no. 127, 1990, pp. 194-211*.

⁷⁰⁰ Volpi (2003, 47).

⁷⁰¹ Martinez, Luis (1998, 20). *The Algerian Civil War 1990-1998*. The United Kingdom: Hurst and Company.

and 1539 municipal councils (*Assamblées Populaires Communales*, APC)⁷⁰². FIS won the elections receiving 4.3 million votes (54 per cent of the vote nationwide from the 65 per cent voter turnout)⁷⁰³ compared to 2.25 million votes of the FLN⁷⁰⁴. FIS was the most popular in the urban areas in the north, not in the Amazigh areas (such as Kabylia) and Saharan regions, and won in 32 *wilayas*⁷⁰⁵. The electoral victory of the FIS increased their confidence, which was reflected by their toughened rhetoric. For example, young and charismatic leader Ali Belhadj hinted in his speeches of establishment of a Caliphate and started to criticize the entire democratic process as redundant: why majority would decide while all the necessary societal answers can be sprang from the sacred book Coran?⁷⁰⁶

After the elections, the UGTA held its 8th Congress on 27 June 1990. Due to its reputation being solid part of power apparatus UGTA decided to cut all its formal ties to political party FLN, which started new independent, at least formally, period in its relatively long history. In the late 1980s, UGTA gathered only few industrial worker⁷⁰⁷. Abdelhak Benhamouda was chosen as the new Secretary-General. According to Chikhi, UGTA condemned opening of the syndicalist pluralism to maintain its monopoly⁷⁰⁸, but Benhamouda stated his more detailed opinion few weeks after his election:

AB: [...] I am not against pluralism, but I must point out that I don't agree with those who think that political pluralism should automatically lead to several trade union organizations. However, I prefer to look at this through the present situation and the interests of workers. What advantage several trade union organizations would give? At best, one majority trade union organization would be vis-à-vis the other social actors, be whatever their number. So, trade union pluralism, but only one organization to negotiate with leaders and bosses. Worse option would be many small trade unions fighting for the status of unique or privileged negotiator with the government or other social partners. This battle would endanger not only the demands of the workers but also the trade unions because the ambition to represent all the workers is likely to result in the opposite: the vast majority of workers would remain outside trade unions that couldn't defend them. The new laws are clear. To enter negotiations, the representation must be over 20 % of the collectives. It's possible that no one reaches this threshold [...]⁷⁰⁹.

⁷⁰² Le Sueur (2010, 43).

⁷⁰³ Volpi (2003, 48); Le Sueur (2010, 43).

⁷⁰⁴ Quandt (1998, 52); Le Sueur (2010, 42).

⁷⁰⁵ Volpi (2003, 48); Le Sueur (2010, 43).

⁷⁰⁶ Le Sueur (2010, 44).

⁷⁰⁷ <http://www.benhamouda.com/1990-1997/#1450697021539-1d4c7970-d62fbbad-8b3d>

⁷⁰⁸ Chikhi (1993, 18).

⁷⁰⁹ <http://www.benhamouda.com/1990-1997/#1450697174770-7699e633-fc8abbad-8b3d>

This statement by Benhamouda shows the antagonistic relations between UGTA and autonomous trade unions from the beginning. His statement integrates various subjectivities into common project and politicize major element in the context of trade unionism: who defends the workers. He argued that only UGTA was big enough to protect the interests of the workers while autonomous trade unions were too small and scattered. From his position, being the head of the largest trade union in a country, it is normal to stress the unity of the workers, who should gather into one representative body instead of creating numerous weak unions that are easy to deal with separately by those in power. Simultaneously, Benhamouda's statement depicts frighteningly well the current trade unionism platform in Algeria, where dozens of unions function without massive representation and coordinated action due to governmental divide-and-rule tactics as well as due to their internal discrepancies.

According to official documents about those autonomous trade unions that are still operating today (2019) show that 13 union were established in 1990⁷¹⁰, 16 in 1991⁷¹¹, five in 1992⁷¹² and six in 1993⁷¹³. Until the beginning of the 1991, the

⁷¹⁰ Syndicat National Autonome des Personnels de l'Administration Publique (SNAPAP), Syndicat des Travailleurs de l'Education, de l'Enseignement primaire (STEEF), Syndicat National des Travailleurs de la Santé (SNTS), Syndicat des Pilotes de Lignes Algériens (SPLA), Syndicat Autonome des Personnels des Affaires Etrangères (SAPAE), Syndicat des Journalistes de la Télévision (SJT), Syndicat National Autonome des Postiers (SNAP), Syndicat National du Secteur des Industries (SNSI), Syndicat Autonome des Travailleurs du Pétrole (SATP), Syndicat National des Magistrats (SNM), Syndicat National des Greffiers (SNG), Syndicat National de l'Office Algérien Interprofessionnel des Céréales (SNVFAP) and Syndicat National des Travailleurs de la Protection Civile (SNTPC).

⁷¹¹ Syndicat Autonome des Travailleurs de l'Education et de la Formation (SATEF), Syndicat National des Personnels de l'Intendance de l'Education (SNPIE), Syndicat National Autonome de l'Orientation Scolaire et Professionnelle (SNAOSP), Syndicat Autonome des Fonctionnaires des Impôts (SAFI), Syndicat National des Praticiens de la Santé Publique (SNPSP), Syndicat Autonome des Gestionnaires des Etablissements de Santé Publique (SAGESP), Syndicat National des Gestionnaires de la Santé (SNGS), Confédération Syndicale des Forces Productives (COSYFOP), Syndicat National des Personnels de la Circulation Aérienne (SNPCA), Syndicat National du Secteur des Transports Ferroviaires (SNSTF), Syndicat Autonome du Patrimoine Archéologique Historique et Muséal (SAPAHM), Syndicat National du Secteur Ammoniac/Engrais (SNSA), Syndicat des Travailleurs du Textile (STT), Syndicat National du Secteur de la Commercialisation et de la Distribution des Produits Pétroliers (SNSCDPP), Syndicat Autonome des Travailleurs de KANAGHAZ (SAT/KANAGHATZ) and Syndicat National: Union des Magistrats Algériens (UMA).

⁷¹² Union Nationale des Personnels de l'Education et de la Formation (UNPEF), Syndicat National des Techniciens de la Maintenance Avions (SNTMA), Groupement Syndical des Architectes (GSA), Conseil National des Enseignants du Supérieur (CNES) and Syndicat National Autonome des Journalistes et assimilés de l'APS (SNAJAAPS).

⁷¹³ Syndicat National des Chirugiens Dentistes de Santé (SNCDSP), Syndicat National des Praticiens Spécialistes de la Santé Publique (SNPSSP), Syndicat National des Electroniciens et des Electrotechniciens de la Sécurité Aérienne (SNESA), Syndicat National du Personnel Navigant

number of trade unions (UGTA including) in Algeria was multiplied to 28⁷¹⁴. I do not have information about all of the autonomous trade unions that were established since the enactment of the laws 90-14 and 90-02 and my intention is not to list all of them. However, a few of them, those most central to this thesis, require a little more introduction. The National Autonomous Union of Public Administration Staff (*Syndicat National Autonome des Personelles de l'Administration Publique*, SNAPAP) was the first autonomous trade union that came into existence during the process in September 1990. The current President of SNAPAP, Rachid Malaoui, recalled the birth of the first autonomous trade union in Algeria's modern history:

RM: When SNAPAP was founded in 1990, I wasn't involved there yet. It was the first accepted trade union after the one-party system was abolished. It was registered as number 1. SNAPAP was founded by officials of the interior of the country who form the majority of public officials. Previously, the civil servants from different wilayas haven't been able to organize. Thus, even UGTA has been absent in this sector. Now the civil servants at the level of the local branches of the state could set up an union that would represent the whole of the public service⁷¹⁵.

The creation of autonomous trade unions did not only meant competition and occupying positions of the UGTA, but also establishing unions to the sectors where UGTA had been absent. SNAPAP was officially the first autonomous trade union that was established and it has been one of the most visible oppositional union in the country during the last two decades. However, at this stage, it gets a little confusing, because some of the activists that are currently operating in SNAPAP argue that in the beginning SNAPAP was merely just one autonomous trade union that had close links with state authorities denying its oppositional nature. Long-term SNAPAP trade union activist Salim Mecheri⁷¹⁶ even argued that SNAPAP was created by the power (*pouvoir*). He stated that it was in 1995 that more oppositional elements started to conduct activism within its ranks and the leadership transformed more into oppositional character after Malaoui was elected as Secretary General in 1999.

Meanwhile these new autonomous trade unions were supposedly independent, at least from the single-party system, and organized by actors who used their new rights to organize themselves and create new independent movements? All these

Commercial Algérien (SNPNCA), Syndicat National de l'Ingénierie (SNI) and Syndicat National des Cadres de la Mutualité Agricole (SNCMA).

⁷¹⁴ Chikhi (1993, 19).

⁷¹⁵ Rachid Malaoui interviewed by Larbi Graïne (2010, 26) *Algérie: Naufrage de la fonction publique et défi syndicale*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

⁷¹⁶Salim Mecheri. Interviewed in Oran in December 2014.

definitions, “what is independent and what is not”, or, “who is the real defender of the workers”, mainly remind me about the power politics and politicization of the work at large. It also suggests that power structures can change in the autonomous trade unions. According to those that are active today in SNAPAP argue that only after Malaoui and other unionists around him became in charge in the movement in the turn of 2000s, it transformed into “real defender of the workers’ rights”.

It is also necessary to stress that the autonomous trade union movement was not born from the post-October uprising processes, as Secretary General of *the Autonomous Trade Union of the Workers of Education and formation* (Syndicat Autonome des Travailleurs de l’Éducation et de la Formation, SATEF), Mohamed Salem Sadali, argued:

MSS: To claim that the idea of autonomous syndicalism came from nowhere, that it suddenly emerged in Algeria after October 1988, would be an insult to those brave trade unionists who at the first congress of UGTA in January 1963 were beaten when they tried to free UGTA from the omnipotent FLN. It would also ignore the student unionism of the 70s and 80s (recall the assassination in 1982 of the student Kamel Amzal at Ben Aknoun when he was attaching a poster calling for the democratic election of the university committee). There was a model of structure that would bring about activists who were behind the creation of autonomous unions and even political parties after October 1988. Let us also recall the major role played by autonomous collectives of workers of the ENIEM and COTTTEX at Tizi Ouzou in the Berber Spring in 1980. Let’s not forget also that the events of October 88 were preceded by a strike at the SONACOME in Rouiba⁷¹⁷.

The aforementioned SATEF was not the first autonomous union that was authorized, but it was one of those unions that gathered activists that had a longer background in trade unionism and was created already in 1989, authorized in 1990 and conducted several important strives on the ground in the field of national education and professional formation⁷¹⁸. SATEF was also significant because of its cultural homogeneity locating in the center of the Northern Algeria among Amazigh population while its leadership functioned closely with the political party FFS led by Hocine Aït Ahmed⁷¹⁹.

The National Council for Higher Education Professors (Conseil National des Professeurs du Supérieur, CNES) was also created already in 1989 but was not authorized until

⁷¹⁷ Mohamed Salem Sadali interviewed by Larbi Graïne (2010, 102-103).

⁷¹⁸ Graïne (2010, 175-176).

⁷¹⁹ Chouicha, Kaddour (2008, 291) *Évolution du pluralisme syndical*, in Mohammed Chentouf (Ed.) *l’Algérie face à la mondialisation*. Dakar: Éditions Codesria, pp. 277-300.

January 1992. It was consisted, according to Larbi Graïne⁷²⁰, of leftist elements such as members of PAGES, who had been active in autonomous student committees already during 1970s and 1980s. In addition, it incorporated activists from *The National Union of Algerian Students* (l'Union nationale des étudiants algériens, UNEA), *Berber Cultural Movement* (Mouvement Culturel Berbère, MCB) and *The National Union of Algerian Youth* (Union Nationale de la Jeunesse Algérienne, UNJA). CNES was one of the most, if not *the* most, active autonomous trade unions that functioned in Algeria during the civil war in 1990s and well-known trade union figures such as Farid Cherbal, Kaddour Chouicha and Nacer Djabi, only few to mention, were active in its ranks.

In October 1989 in the Eastern Algeria *the National Union of the Educational and Training Staff* (Union Nationale des Personnels de l'Éducation et de la Formation, UNPEF) was established in Annaba by the teacher group based in Constantine integrating all the levels in the sector of education⁷²¹. UNPEF was authorized in June 1990 and is closely linked to the Islamist political party *Movement of Society for Peace* (Mouvement de la société pour la paix, MSP⁷²²) ex-Hamas⁷²³. In the educational sector emerged in 1991 emerged also *the National Federation of Education Workers* (Fédération Nationale des Travailleurs de l'Éducation, FNTE). It was created in the summer 1991 and was affiliated with UGTA, because it became apparent that the autonomous trade unions gained followers in the educational sector⁷²⁴. FNTE was serving according to critical observers as an instrument to intermediate in the sector for the benefit of the UGTA⁷²⁵.

The autonomous trade unions emerged also separately in the sector of health care. In 1991 *the National Trade Union of the Practitioners in the Public Health Care* (Syndicat National des Praticiens de la Santé Publique, SNPSP) was established to function in national level gathering doctors and specialized doctors, surgeons, dentists and pharmacists in the CHU's (Centre Hospitalier Universitaire), or teaching hospitals⁷²⁶. The health care sector is important arena for the trade unions because

⁷²⁰ Graïne (2010, 170-172).

⁷²¹ Graïne (2010, 183-184).

⁷²² MSP was created in 1990 after the FIS had won local elections. MSP was led by Mahfoud Nahnah, who believed that Islamist movement should progress gradually and aim to reform from the inside. Since 2003, after the death of Nahnah, MSP has been led by Bouguerra Soltani.

⁷²³ Graïne (2010, 184).

⁷²⁴ Graïne (2010, 174).

⁷²⁵ Werenfels, Isabelle (2007, 75) *Managing Instability in Algeria: Elites and political change since 1995*. London and New York: Routledge.

⁷²⁶ Graïne (2010, 180).

its pressure and strikes are immediately felt widely in society. However, due to internal disagreements related to diverse demands regarding the salaries between majority general doctors and minority of those specialized, led in 1992 to the establishment of *the National Trade Union of the Specialist Practitioners in the Public Health Care* (Syndicat National des Praticiens Spécialistes de la Santé Publique, SNPSSP)⁷²⁷.

In many ways, the emergence of the autonomous trade unions had their roots in the previous social movements such as Amazigh cultural movement, students, doctors, human rights movement and so forth, who had already long time aspired from formation of independent professional associations⁷²⁸. As Myriam Aït-Aoudia⁷²⁹ has shown, since 1988 their official claims, programs and documents have included surprisingly similar formulations and inferences that existed already during earlier years, even decades in some cases.

During the beginning of 1990s, democratic claims and demands continued and there were important number of recorded strikes: 2290 in 1990 and 2023 in 1991⁷³⁰. For example, CNES went to the front paralyzing the universities in November 1991 in spite of police violence directed to their peaceful action⁷³¹. The contestation developed especially in the public sector: education, services and administration (teachers, hospital staff, transport workers and communications⁷³². From the geographic point of view, most of the strikes took place in Kabyle (Bejaia and Tizi-Ouzou), but the wilaya of Algiers had important amount of strikes and lockouts as well while Oran and Constantine stayed relatively calm⁷³³.

Another important actor within the field of autonomous trade unionism in Algeria that ought to be analyzed is the Islamist movement, which is also a pluralist movement bringing together various personalities and groups, as I will show below. The Islamists had a longer tradition of being more concerned with social matters linked to religion, moral or politics in general while the issues related on labor were rather ignored⁷³⁴. After the 7th Congress of UGTA in March 1990, FIS also decided to create its own labor union called *Islamic Trade Union of Work* (Syndicat Islamique

⁷²⁷ Graïne (2010, 154-155).

⁷²⁸ Aït-Aoudia (2015a, 52-56).

⁷²⁹ Aït-Aoudia (2015b, 76-82).

⁷³⁰ <http://laborsta.ilo.org/STP/guest> (Retrieved 13.2.2013).

⁷³¹ Graïne (2010, 170).

⁷³² Benamrouche (2000, 144).

⁷³³ Benamrouche (2000, 145).

⁷³⁴ Chikhi (1993, 26).

du Travail, SIT). According to Hassane Zerrouky⁷³⁵, it was member of the board of FIS Ikhlef Cherati, surrounded by Saïd Makhloufi, Omar Eulmi, Bouras Slimane and Ahmed Ghitry, who announced the creation of SIT in 20 July 1990 in the Ferhani stadium of Bab el-Oued, Algiers. It aimed to displace UGTA in the workers zones in various cities such as Algiers, Oran, Annaba and Skikda. SIT, created within the structures of FIS, was composed of ten leagues implanted in the postal office (PTT), Sonelgaz, sector of chemical and petrochemical industries, administration of social and health affairs, Air Algérie ground staff, Islamic municipalities, public transports, tourism, education and the banks.

Zerrouky⁷³⁶ analyzes how the SIT was organized differently from traditional trade unions. At the bottom was the so-called trade union family (*ousra nakabia*) that was led by sergeant (*arif*). Together these families formed leagues of Islamic Work to every branch or sector that were managed by the captain (*naquib*). Between the latter and the upper levels were commanders (*muqadem*) and at the top colonels (*amid*) who formed the national office. Colonels, such as Omar Eulmi and Ikhlef Cherati, were obliged to be members of the consultative assembly, governing body of the FIS. SIT explicitly announced that its aim was to support the creation of Islamic state governed along the Sharia law⁷³⁷. In February 1991, SIT held its first national conference among 140 members behind the closed doors. The meeting was presided by important figure in the FIS Hachemi Sahnouni⁷³⁸.

Chikhi argues that the fundamentals of trade unionism and methods of action stressed by the SIT were constructed on religious basis, where class struggle or citizenship did not have a visible role to play and therefore Muslims should unionize within Islamic union⁷³⁹. SIT stressed the unity of the Muslims instead of social classes, fraternity (or brotherhood) instead of citizenship: worker and employee were brothers. From the beginning SIT formed antagonistic approach on UGTA. Its trade union action was clear example of politicization related to trade union performance and working life in general, while its patriotism was rather religious than nationalist oriented. Chikhi also argues that most of the actions conducted by the SIT were rather directed to oppose the activities of the UGTA than to support the

⁷³⁵ Zerrouky (2002, 101-104).

⁷³⁶ Zerrouky (2002, 102-103).

⁷³⁷ Zerrouky (2002, 102).

⁷³⁸ Ibid.

⁷³⁹ Chikhi (1993, 26-27).

mobilization of the working class⁷⁴⁰. When UGTA organized extensive general strike in March 1991, SIT published statement:

Algerian workers have been able to attend the funeral of the UGTA since independence, its treacherous fingerprints have been erased forever from the annals of history. By their gesture, the workers once again proved their attachment to the Islamic ideas, hence their mistrust of this dubious union. They continued their normal activity and boycotted categorically and unequivocally this anarchic strike. [...] Thank God, the appeal launched by the SIT received a very favorable response. This reflects the adherence of all workers to the foundations and ideals of the SIT, which in their eyes is the only legitimate representative and also the only guide to the establishment of an Islamic regime that should lead to their well-being.⁷⁴¹

However, is it really possible to frame SIT as unpatriotic possessing only religious aims when SIT defined the national strike organized by the UGTA as “contrary to Islam” and as “communist maneuver”?⁷⁴² In a way, their nationalist or patriotic aims may just have been politicized differently? According to their political goal, Islam was seen as salvation for Algerians and Algeria. SIT did not share traditional labor and worker ideology, but that did not prevent them to politicize trade unionism to their own ends, as all the other actors were doing as well.

The Algerian military observed developments in the country with concern. FIS showed determination in its governed municipalities to prohibit alcohol, require women to wear the hijab, and to separate boys and girls in schools, therefore implemented concretely its political program⁷⁴³. Military Commander Khaled Nezzar, who had played significant role during October uprisings, was appointed as Minister of Defense⁷⁴⁴. The state tried to contain the power obtained by the FIS by doubling the number of constituencies that increased the power of rural areas where FIS did not enjoy vast support⁷⁴⁵. FIS called for general strike⁷⁴⁶.

FIS organized a general and unlimited strike in May 1991, not just to close down factories but also to gather their supporters to the streets⁷⁴⁷. This was a major show of force taking place in the public space. According to members of SNAPAP, especially the older ones who were already active during the period, SIT managed to

⁷⁴⁰ Chikhi (1993, 28).

⁷⁴¹ Chikhi (1993, 29) referring to Communiqué no 11 du SIT 12.3.1991.

⁷⁴² Zerrouky (2002).

⁷⁴³ Quandt (1998, 57); Volpi (2003, 44).

⁷⁴⁴ Le Sueur (2010, 44).

⁷⁴⁵ Volpi (2003, 50); Le Sueur (2010, 47).

⁷⁴⁶ Quandt (1998, 55-58); Volpi (2003, 50); Le Sueur (2010, 47).

⁷⁴⁷ Quandt (1998, 56).

become the major force in new pluralistic arena of trade unionism. As solid part of the Islamist movement, SIT was able to challenge UGTA, which transformed various oppositional secular elements of the associative movements to side with the state authorities⁷⁴⁸. The academic research aiming to problematize the years of instability (1988-1992) in Algeria, especially related to strikes organized by SIT in the context of development of pluralistic trade union scene, has in many ways been covered relatively superficially, with few exceptions.

However, during the early period of emergence of autonomous trade unions SIT had major impact within the scene. Salim Mecheri, 51 years old, whom I interviewed in Oran in December 2014, recalled the beginning of the pluralist trade unionism and the role of the SIT:

SM: In 1990 started the trade union pluralism. SNAPAP was the first trade union that was created. It was created 16th of September 1990 [officially 9.9.1990]. It was registered as the number 001. After SNAPAP came the SIT. Then, if I remember correctly, there was one trade union related to hydrocarbon [COSYFOP⁷⁴⁹]. Nevertheless, the essential was that there were two major trade unions present: SNAPAP and SIT. I was contacted by SIT and asked whether I was interested in joining in their union. I personally believed in the spirit of solidarity of trade unionism. I said, I am not against but I cannot affiliate with their trade union because I support the whole trade union movement. I am ready to support the whole trade union movement that is engaged to the protection of the workers' rights, which is very important, and to defend the institution, because it is ... how to call it ... it is our bread (khobz). They said to me that: "we totally agree with you but we would hope you could join us...". At the time, they had a policy where they identified persons that had certain credibility. What is essential is that SIT established itself in large scale. They called a strike. Why FIS wanted to organize a strike? If I remember well, it was because the power (pouvoir) wanted to reform the law regarding the electoral code. They invited the experts to elaborate one of the texts so that they could preserve their sustainability in the system. FIS was against this reform and called a strike and SIT responded to its call. Automatically we said to SIT that you are not autonomous because you responded to the FIS. They said no. SIT is the creation of the FIS but the law, the Algerian legislation prohibit the political party to create ... because one the texts in the legislation ... to create its own trade union organization. That is really one of the advantages of the Algerian legislation. I personally consider it as an advantage for the autonomous trade unions. It is not like the other Arab countries such As Morocco for example where political parties are authorized to create their own trade union organizations. [...] In Algeria, we can take a look to SATEF. Before,

⁷⁴⁸ Liverani (2008, 111-112).

⁷⁴⁹ I believe he meant COSYFOP, which was an important federal union that was established into vital hydrocarbon sector but was suspended by the authorities and, according to Kaddour Chouicha (2008, 291), by the UGTA and leftist Ettahadi party (ex-PAGS). COSYFOP was relaunched in 2019 within the process that started since February uprisings of 2019.

when SATEF was aligned to FFS it was very strong. When FFS exploded [meaning the weakening of FFS during the 2010s], SATEF disappeared⁷⁵⁰.

While Mecheri stresses the roles of SNAPAP and SIT, the autonomous trade union scene was more heterogeneous. Mecheri brings up the politicization of trade unions, SIT with FIS and SATEF with FFS, and their problematic connection to political parties, stressing the importance of solidarity among the worker's movement at large. Trade unions and workers should not be politicized and used as political tools for parties. However, Secretary General of SATEF, Mohamed Salem Sadali, argues that SATEF has always been independent actor from FFS:

When FFS was a leftist oppositional movement, we carried out many struggles together. There was also PT [the Workers' Party, Parti de travailleurs] before it changed. It is a party that was close to the workers so we had cooperation. However, there were never organic relations, never. It was impossible. We have a council of more one hundred persons who represent all the political tendencies. However, in 1997, there was Secretary General of SATEF who was candidate in the list of FFS. Meanwhile there were many members in UGTA who had membership in RND and FLN and so forth. What is more, we were mainly labeled as trade union of the Kabylia, because in the beginning everything started from the Kabylia. Then we were attached to FFS. Then we were connected to external powers because we were part of international institutions related to education, human rights and so forth. However, in the streets it is impossible to be prolongement of one political party because it gathers all the different tendencies⁷⁵¹.

Wider strikes began on 25 May 1990. I asked Mecheri to describe the participation and atmosphere in those manifestations that took place in Oran:

SM: You mean those that were organized by the SIT? I assisted in those that were held in Oran because of my curiosity. As far as I am trade unionist, I went out with them. There is nothing better than to see from the inside. I think that they marked something very important. They were able to do the marches. I can assure that the march surpassed ten thousand in Oran. After that, they had a strategy where they regrouped and occupied public space (lieu public) in every neighborhood, or by what we mean a small square, where they stayed until Isha-night prayer before they finally dispersed. However, in Algiers they did not disperse. In Algiers, they occupied Shahid Shuhada for 24hours⁷⁵².

⁷⁵⁰ Salim Mecheri. Interviewed in Oran December 2014.

⁷⁵¹ Mohamed Salem Sadali. Interviewed in Algiers in January 2015.

⁷⁵² Salim Mecheri. Interviewed in Oran December 2014.

The importance of occupying various public spaces meant important showing of force by the FIS. They were able to show that they have great number of supporters, which probably increased their popularity even more, as Mecheri continues:

First, second, or third day after, the protest started to grow. Then they called workers in the SONATRACH to stop the gas exportation. It was the affair of Italy. When they responded to this strike ... the workers of the Tamanrasset and the workers of the south in general ... they were warranted by the army. It was Khaled Nezzar, who gave the instructions to evacuate participants from the public spaces with repression. They used even the real bullets. I remember, more than 500 wounded. There were 50-100 dead [I have not been able to verify the numbers]. Especially in Algiers. They prohibited to conduct marches and strikes in other wilayas. They proceeded the arrests of Abassi Madani and Ali Benhadj, those considered as responsible. They were put in prison. The young engineer called Hachani replaced them. He took the presidency. There were parliamentary elections. The state stopped the electoral process⁷⁵³.

Mecheri clearly stresses the show of force of the SIT, often forgotten in the history of the development of autonomous trade unions. The presence in the public spaces, which I will take a closer look at in the next section, were also part of constructing an image of popularity, strength and power. SIT also wanted to effect the state's own oil and gas company SONATRACH. This was strategically extremely important, because energy exports cover great majority of Algerian income. Today, the autonomous trade unions are almost totally absent from the economic sector. State authorities have managed to keep them away to prevent their abilities for economic pressure. When Mecheri highlights the problematics related to close link of political party to trade unionism, this reminds me of the Leninist approach (More in Chapter IV⁷⁵⁴), where a political party was seen on the contrary as vital tool for the workers' movement. This recollection also depicts the uncertainty and complexity of the situation and how autonomous trade union activists observe organized action in the public spaces that may lead to their own possible acts in the future.

The general strike never took place due to reluctance of the other trade unions to support FIS but turned out to transform into large series of demonstrations showing the strength of the Islamist movement. It also proved to the state authorities that FIS had the capacity to occupy public spaces in the capital⁷⁵⁵. SIT renounced that their aim was to bring down the government and called for better wages and working

⁷⁵³ Salim Mecheri. Interviewed in Oran December 2014.

⁷⁵⁴ Hyman, Richard (1971, 12-13) *Marxism and the Sociology of the Trade Unionism*. Pluto Press Limited: London.

⁷⁵⁵ Volpi (2003, 50).

condition⁷⁵⁶. According to Malaoui, the strength of the SIT within the economic sector sprang from the weakness of the UGTA:

RM: Workers, especially those in municipal and wilaya administrative services, have invested heavily in SNAPAP. At the same time, so-called Islamist trade unions were allowed to operate but without being able to penetrate the sector. Without a past, the Islamist unions could not enter. But on the other hand, they managed to make an incursion in the economic enterprises since it is the UGTA - true empty shell - which had to assume the union supervision. Since the people at the central trade union had a bad press, it was easy for the Islamist militants to enter in droves. Continuing their infiltration into the economic sector, Islamists eventually decide to infiltrate SONATRACH. But what may have happened in this sector was hardly possible in the public service⁷⁵⁷.

The capacity of the SIT to expand on the economic sector made it extremely challenging for the state authorities. If the strikes are organized only in the public sector, they cannot cause serious economic damage and do not have significant international impact regarding energy exportations.

However, Chikhi does not share the view of the great impact of the SIT strike on the economic sector. He argues that SIT's general strike had only a minor resonance among the workers and in the vast industrial centers, such as Arzew, Rouiba, El Hadjar, as well as in main harbors, which did not follow the strike⁷⁵⁸. Even the cities were FIS had presumably support experienced modest turnout: Tlemcen 8.5 percent and Blida 7.5 percent⁷⁵⁹. However, the sectors of administration, local communities and education involved higher rates of participation as well as some Southern regions such as El Oued and Hassi R'Mel that suffered from precarious life conditions⁷⁶⁰. What is more, the strike disclosed divisions among the types of supporters among UGTA and SIT: those who followed SIT were mostly excluded and precarious workers, while UGTA's supporters were more included in the system of regular salaries, organized labor and benefits⁷⁶¹.

There are various interpretations regarding the success of SIT in general from the historical point of view. According to Andrea Liverani, SIT managed to acquire dominant position in an organized labor in a quite short period of time and severely

⁷⁵⁶ Quandt (1998, 56).

⁷⁵⁷ Rachid Malaoui. Interviewed by Larbi Graïne (2010, 27).

⁷⁵⁸ Chikhi (1993, 30); Zerrouky (2002, 103).

⁷⁵⁹ Chikhi (1993, 30).

⁷⁶⁰ Chikhi (1993, 30).

⁷⁶¹ Chikhi (1993, 30-31).

menaced the power position of the UGTA⁷⁶². Especially during the first half of 1991, FIS was eager to show its power calling strikes and showing force and they benefited from the attempts of those, considering themselves as reform politicians, trying to show their distance from the FLN⁷⁶³. According to Malaoui, the Islamists were not able to gain an influence in the public sector, where longer tradition of trade unionism and presence was needed. However, SIT was able to gain for a short period of time an important position in the new pluralistic arena of trade unionism and had the force to occupy important public spaces, such as Place des Martyrs and Place du 1er Mai in Algiers, as Mecheri also recounted.

The government considered the demonstrations organized by the SIT in major public spaces as a threat to the stability of the country but wanted to avoid the repetition of the use of force during October uprisings⁷⁶⁴. Nevertheless, was the official approach unanimous regarding their management of crisis? It seems that there were different opinions how to maintain the stability and simultaneously continue democratization process. Prime Minister Mouloud Hamrouche argued that FIS should be allowed to continue the strike as long as it refrained from violence and tried convince through negotiation to halt the action⁷⁶⁵. Meanwhile, President Chadli was reluctant to ban the FIS⁷⁶⁶. Gradually various spokesmen within FIS started to refer to jihad and the overthrowing of the government. It resulted the so-called “Nezzar Plan”, which meant replacement of Prime Minister Hamrouche by the Sid Ahmed Ghozali, the imposing of a state of emergency (for three months) and the arrests of FIS leaders of the Islamist party such as Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj⁷⁶⁷.

In order to break the spiral of radicalization and repressive measures by the government, the FIS nominated a moderate Abdelkader Hachani as their new president at the Batna Conference in August 1991⁷⁶⁸. When the democratic political process and constitutional reform led to a landslide victory of the FIS (*Front du Salut Islamique*) in the first round of parliamentary elections in December 1991, both the domestic and international actors were surprised⁷⁶⁹. FIS occupied nearly 188 seats

⁷⁶² Liverani (2008, 111-112).

⁷⁶³ Quandt (1998, 56).

⁷⁶⁴ Nezzar, Khaled (1999, 215-258) *Mémoires du Général Khaled Nezzar*. Algiers: Chihab Editions.

⁷⁶⁵ Quandt (1998, 56); Volpi (2003, 51); Le Sueur (2010, 47).

⁷⁶⁶ Nezzar (1999, 215-258) ; Volpi (2003, 50).

⁷⁶⁷ Volpi (2003, 50); Le Sueur (2010, 48).

⁷⁶⁸ Volpi (2003, 51); Le Sueur (2010, 49).

⁷⁶⁹ Volpi (2003, 52).

(out of a total of 430 seats) against FLN 15 and FFS 25, independent candidates took what was left⁷⁷⁰. The victory of FIS rang the alarm bell among the army and political elites and the Prime Minister Ghazali warned about the continuation of the electoral process, even though first supported the continuation of democratic transition⁷⁷¹. Later in his published interview with Mohamed Chafik Mesbah, Ghazali explained his concern that the motivation of the voting Algerians were more driven by the hatred towards FLN than supporting the Islamist agenda: the majority of the votes were abstentions and zero ballots, in the end only 26 per cent voted FIS⁷⁷².

On 11 January in 1992, President Chadli announced his resignation and the dissolution of the parliament probably to sustain the stability of the country while the army decided to cancel the democratic transition⁷⁷³. This move has been considered by autonomous activists among some others as *the coup d'état*. These measures indicate that the situation was slipping from the control of state authorities and leading towards destabilization. Already immediately after the election in December there were many voices, such as the Secretary-General of the UGTA Abdelhak Benhamouda, who called army to halt the democratic transition and to stem the FIS despite the opposition from the ground root level of the union⁷⁷⁴. How does it reflect the official position within UGTA related to stability and democratization? For many autonomous trade union activists it is one prove that UGTA opposes plural trade union environment and even opposition to whole democratization process, UGTA was not the only civil society actor that wished the intervention from the army.

How do the autonomous trade union activists, young and old, recall the 1988 October uprisings? Approaching the collective memory and its social dimensions, requires studying those social conditions where the individual constructs his/her understanding of cognitive the social space structured by inter-individual relations⁷⁷⁵. Therefore, when searching after the collective memory of contemporary youth activists within autonomous trade unions, it means localized construction of collective memory of an event, because as Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945), considered as founder of the collective memory studies, argued, individuals

⁷⁷⁰ Volpi (2003, 52); Le Sueur (2010, 51).

⁷⁷¹ Le Sueur (2010, 51)

⁷⁷² Ghazali, Sid Ahmed (2009, 267-268) *Question d'Etat: Entretien avec Mohamed Chafik Mesbah*. Alger: Casbah Editions.

⁷⁷³ Volpi (2003, 55); Le Sueur (2010, 51).

⁷⁷⁴ Volpi (2003, 52).

⁷⁷⁵ Gensburger, Sarah (2016, 401-402) Halbwachs' studies in collective memory: A founding text for contemporary "memory studies"? *Journal of Classical Sociology*. Vol. 16(4). pp. 396-413.

“remember as a members of a group”⁷⁷⁶. Reminiscence is a product of human being, who is effected by social conditions that are structured by collective memories in this context. The October 1988 uprisings, are often dealt by the young activists more as an opening of the window to democracy than destabilization; a possibility that was confiscated by *the power* and ruined by the Islamists.

While conducting an interview with photo elicitation, the picture of President Chadli Bendjedid instigated the remembrance of the October uprisings, whether personal memories or historical informative beliefs. This is what young activist Samir Baroud, 29 years old, had to say about the picture of President Chadli:

SB: He became the President after the Boumedienne. When we see his picture, we think about the events of 1988. There were 500 deaths. When we see picture of Chadli Bendjedid, we think immediately the drop of oil prices and the opening of the democracy in Algeria in the context of October 1988⁷⁷⁷.

There are different estimates of how many died during the October uprisings. Aït-Aoudia⁷⁷⁸ has drawn attention to the official numbers using El-Moudjahid (21-22 October 1988) as a source, where 159 were killed and 154 wounded. Then she raises another number, given by hospitals and various associations, that counted approximately 500 dead. Another activist and the spokesperson of the Pre-Employment Committee Idriss Mekkideche, 33 years old, clearly saw the 1988 uprisings and the democratization process as a positive experience that was nevertheless lost, or postponed:

IM: October 1988 ... he is part of those generals [showing picture of President Chadli]. Maybe it was due to national and international atmosphere what Algeria went through. However, he participated to this small opening [beginning of the democratization process]. In the end, it was adjourned. Still, it is somehow positive in the sense that the multitude of the trade unionism and party politics exist as well as civil society and the associations. We can say that during this epoch there were small opening, but after started enormous pressure that led to his resignation. However, it was unique experience in anyway. It was an experience, from which we were not able to profit immediately because it drove us towards the cycle of violence. However, we can always learn from the history and not repeat the same mistakes⁷⁷⁹.

Against this background, the democratic opening was not taken away only by the power (*pouvoir*). Samir Baroud accuses the Islamists of wasting the possibility of

⁷⁷⁶ Halbwachs, Maurice [1950] (1997, 94-95) *La mémoire collective*. Paris: Albin Michel.

⁷⁷⁷ Samir Baroud (name changed). Interviewed in Algiers in December 2014.

⁷⁷⁸ Aït-Aoudia (2015, 65).

⁷⁷⁹ Idriss Mekkideche. Interviewed in Algiers in December 2014.

democratic sustainable development in Algeria, when picking the picture presenting two FIS leaders, Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj:

SB: Two leaders of the FIS. They left negative mark in the history of Algeria. They gave nothing to the country. In 1988, we had opening of the democracy in this country but because of these two men, we went off the track. They drifted Algeria to the path of violence⁷⁸⁰.

The younger generation do not refer to SIT as does the older generation. They were too young and mostly their personal memories are scattered and constructed from inter-personal experiences or historical documents. Mekkideche was a child when the 1988 uprisings took place. Therefore, he merely connect his clouded personal memories with narrations he has heard, read or studied afterwards:

IM: Here we can see the leadership of the FIS, the party that was activated during opening of the democracy in Algeria, which enabled the creation of political parties and autonomous trade unions. There were also the SIT and a strike, but I do not remember very well ... I was still very young. I remember few small thing, but not very well, what really happened. However, regardless of ideologies and such, what I remember is that in Algeria there is really a huge recession regarding the individual and collective freedoms. Because since 87-88 we expressed ourselves normally. We had a right to the public space. There were marches of hundreds of thousands of people. There were of course serious incidents during the strike as well. They opened fire towards people with real bullets. In the end, the power (*pouvoir*) used it to show like look what it brought now. Be careful! Today, there are no more manifestations or marches. That is the problem. Simultaneously there were those leaders, not the people, but those Islamist leaders who misused the space or atmosphere that existed. We moved too fast and that caused the problems. The violent verbal use led to violent physical use⁷⁸¹.

Instead of referring to destabilization these young activists rather constructed visions that are more related to the positive connotations regarding the events that due to some actors, generals and the Islamists, led to an impasse and contemporary complex situation.

It is also pivotal to notice the generational variations between the experiences of the older generation of trade union activists, who experienced the October uprisings, and the younger generations who mainly reflect versatile trajectories formed by various discourses. An 58-year-old activist Mohamed Haimouni, currently working in *the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights* (La Ligue algérienne pour la

⁷⁸⁰ Samir Baroud. Interviewed in Algiers in December 2014.

⁷⁸¹ Idriss Mekkideche. Interviewed in Algiers in December 2014.

défense des droits de l'homme, LADDH), was more linear regarding his views. About the picture of President Chadli, Haimouni said:

MH: He was a colonel, who became a head of the state. He is a general like the rest of them. He is a dictator. He was known as big idler. He liked to fish to live and so on. He left his ministers to... Chadli wanted to compose with the Islamists, but the generals refused and threw him out⁷⁸².

Haimouni believes, that it was the army generals who sustained the power in Algeria, not the President. About the picture of General Khaled Nezzar, he said:

MH: He was the Minister of Defense in 1988, when the army shot the demonstrators. There were, I don't remember exactly, but around 1000 deaths. He is also the craftsman of the coup d'état over Chadli. After he retired, and now he writes books⁷⁸³.

Haimouni doubled the amount of those who died during the October uprisings, arguing that the death toll during the 1988 uprisings was as high as 1000. He argued that FIS and the whole Islamist movement was instrumentalized by the power (*pouvoir*) to halt the democratization process:

MH: FIS is a product. Terrorisme (*l'intégrisme*) is a product of Algerian power (*pouvoir*) during Chadli. Product of the United States and Saudi Arabia. It [FIS] was created to finish all the social demands and democratic aspirations. They created the monster called FIS with many other satellite parties that also were Islamists. Its only purpose was to block the democracy in Algeria. It happened just after the democratic opening in 1988 when there were also the creation of autonomous trade unions and political parties⁷⁸⁴.

Many activists in autonomous trade unions come from leftist backgrounds, or can be considered as sympathizers of the social left. They criticize political Islam already from principle, while taking a more supportive stance towards SIT and its struggle for pluralism within the trade union movement. However, I also met activists, a minority, who were more sympathetic towards the Islamist movement or those who were religious and practiced Islam in their private lives, reflecting the larger social identities within the Algerian society.

After the resignation of President Chadli, the army transferred temporarily legislative and executive powers to *the High Security Council* (*Haut Conseil de Sécurité*,

⁷⁸² Mohamed Haimouni (name changed). Interviewed in Oran in January 2015.

⁷⁸³ Mohamed Haimouni. Interviewed in Oran in January 2015.

⁷⁸⁴ Mohamed Haimouni. Interviewed in Oran in January 2015

HCS)⁷⁸⁵ that established *the High Council of the State* (Haut Comité d'Etat, HCE)⁷⁸⁶, which received presidential powers to function as a provisional government and restore the stability⁷⁸⁷. Both the HCS and HCE received official support from the neighboring countries Tunisia, Libya and Egypt⁷⁸⁸. Mohamed Boudiaf, a former prominent figure in the Independence War (1954-1962) now exiled in Morocco, was invited as the new head of state only to be assassinated few months later, on 29 June, in Annaba by his bodyguard⁷⁸⁹. The assassination was immediately politicized by the authorities and HCE authorized the arrest of the FIS leader Hachani⁷⁹⁰. The state of emergency was imposed again and became effected in 9th of February in 1992. In March, the FIS was banned and in a few weeks about 10 000 alleged FIS members were arrested and removed to prison camps in the Sahara desert⁷⁹¹. SIT, that was never formally authorized, functioned until 1993 preparing logistics for the armed struggle against the official authorities⁷⁹². It became therefore officially a party of war. The cancellation of the elections, the exclusion of the Islamists and finally the assassination of the President Boudiaf led to a process that plunged Algeria into civil war⁷⁹³. Stability was lost.

Against this narrative background, I trace and depict the socio-political context where autonomous trade union movement emerged. While the discourses in Algeria, related to stability and instability, can be tracked until the independence and ever since, the October uprisings mark significant reference point regarding the history of the autonomous trade unions. Similarly, as Aït-Aoudia has argued, William B. Quandts wrote in the mid-1990s, past and future narrations will shape the October

⁷⁸⁵ The members of this pre-existing consultative body on security issues was consisted of the Prime Minister Ghozali, the Minister of Defence Khaled Nezzar, the Minister of the Interior Larbi Belkheir, the Minister of Justice Hamdani Benkhelil, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Lakhdar Brahimi and the Chief of Staff Abdelmalek Guenaïzia (Volpi 2003, 55).

⁷⁸⁶ The members that constituted the HCE were Mohamed Boudiaf (President), Ali Haroun (the Minister of Justice), Tidjani Haddam (a former Minister of Religious Affairs), Khaled Nezzar (Minister of Defense) and Ali Kafi (the General Secretary of Veteran Affairs) and ruled Algeria during the 1992-1993 (Le Sueur 2010, 54).

⁷⁸⁷ Volpi (2003, 56-57).

⁷⁸⁸ Volpi (2003, 57).

⁷⁸⁹ Zahraoui, Saïd (2000, 83-98) *Entre l'horreur et l'espoir: 1990-1999 Chronique de la nouvelle guerre d'Algérie*. Paris: Robert Laffont.

⁷⁹⁰ Le Sueur (2010, 51).

⁷⁹¹ Volpi (2003, 62).

⁷⁹² Zerrouky (2002).

⁷⁹³ Armed conflict in Algeria since 1992 have cost approximately 150 000 lives (Liverani 2008, xxviii).

uprisings and its meaning, when discussing about democratization process that led to the civil war in Algeria:

All Algerians who lived through the events of October 1988 have a theory of what happened. Where the precise truth lies is impossible to say, but the mass protests of October 1988 proved to be one of those turning points that define a country's political trajectory for years to come. Those events become a reference point, a source of bitter debates by those who defend the actions of the protesters, and those who feel they were dupes being manipulated by occult forces within the regime. How to ensure this never happens again, or how to ensure that it happens peacefully next time, are the dividing lines between the partisans of order and the partisans of democratic politics. There is little middle ground⁷⁹⁴.

It is also important to keep in mind, as David Reiff stresses, that it is common practice for nations to revise and rewrite history and their collective memories⁷⁹⁵. However, he also argues that it is not enough to acknowledge that social memory is a social construct because it does not tell anything about the moral of the remembrance nor what should be remembered or forget⁷⁹⁶. Rather the collective memory is often instrumentalized for national and political purposes and therefore the memory itself transforms into object of history⁷⁹⁷. Construction of collective history is a consequential social process, where selectiveness regarding its details, nuances and power structures reflect the settings, social conditions and boundaries, where it constructs. It is also a process that carries on interests of those participating in its build-up⁷⁹⁸.

5.3 Contentious politics in the public space: the years of uncertainty

Aïssa Kadri⁷⁹⁹ believes that the political transformations at the turn of 80s and 90s in Algeria opened significant socio-political development, where different

⁷⁹⁴ Quandt (1998, 39).

⁷⁹⁵ Reiff, David (2011, 15) *Against Remembrance*. Australia: Melbourne University Press.

⁷⁹⁶ Reiff, David (2016, 24) *In Praise of Forgetting: Historical Memory and Its Ironies*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

⁷⁹⁷ Lavabre, Marie-Claire (1994, 15) *Le fil rouge. Sociologie de la mémoire communiste*. Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques.

⁷⁹⁸ Lavabre (1994, 25).

⁷⁹⁹ Kadri, Aïssa (2011) Associations et ONG au Maghreb. Aux origines des contestations. *Revue d'études et de critique sociale NAQD*, No 29.

associations, independent trade unions, foundations and non-governmental organizations emerged. However, “the explosion” of associations, as Kadri describes, occurred mainly in urban centers (80%). Only 7% were established in rural areas while 13% in semi-urban areas. It is clear that social movements wanted to occupy and contest public spaces to be able to communicate with wider audiences, to generate pressure and to have an impact on decision makers who compose legislation that finally produce the public space. The civil war, nevertheless, slowed down, if not paralyzed the democratic process.

The next ten years of violence caused the death of 100 000-200 000⁸⁰⁰ Algerians and started by targeting members and supporters of the FIS transforming the conflict into urban civil war during 1992-1994 between security forces and Islamist groups and finally into civil war during 1994-1998⁸⁰¹. The first Islamist guerrilla movement that confronted the regime was *the Armed Islamic movement* (Mouvement Islamique Armé, MIA) led by Abdelkader Chebouti. MIA was supported by other guerrilla groups, formed by the former Algerian Afghan conflict (1979-1988) veterans⁸⁰². The MIA mostly fled the Algiers region into rural areas aiming to form solid guerrilla bases meanwhile mobilizing among radicalized youth⁸⁰³. In 1993, a new organization, *the Armed Islamic Group* (Groupements Islamiques Armés, GIA) reorganized a loose network of guerrilla groups in the Algiers area and started attacks on civil servants, members of the government, and foreigners in the country⁸⁰⁴. The dissents between MIA and the GIA led to a formation of the *the Islamic Salvation Army* (Armée Islamique du Salut, AIS) with the help of MIA that represented as the official military wing of the FIS and was built within the remnants of the MIA and other independent groups⁸⁰⁵.

In January 1994, the Minister of Defense Liamine Zéroual was appointed to head of the HCE. Simultaneously Algeria tasted the sweet and bitter bowl of international economic globalization in the forms of trade liberation and privatization, when Algeria agreed with International Monetary Foundation (IMF) debt-rescheduling

⁸⁰⁰ There are various estimates of how many were killed during the civil war. According to Werenfels (2008, 48 and 183) the official figure in Algeria was 37 000 in 2002 while human rights organizations have set up numbers as high as 100 000. The US committee for Refugees estimated in 2001 the death toll above 100 000 and Algeria Watch put the figures up to 200 000. In 2005, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika said according to Al-Jazeera (24.2.2005): “The number of victims has reached 150 000”.

⁸⁰¹ Lowi (2009, 126); Werenfels (2007, 48).

⁸⁰² Volpi (2003, 68).

⁸⁰³ Volpi (2003, 68-69).

⁸⁰⁴ Volpi (2003, 69-70).

⁸⁰⁵ Volpi (2003, 71).

deal⁸⁰⁶ to settle its fiscal imbalance that was encumbering macroeconomic stability⁸⁰⁷. In May 1994, Algeria reached a deal with IMF on the economic structural adjustment program (SAP) which included 5 billion dollar debt from the Paris Club, that represent the world's 19 wealthiest nations, and one billion stand-by loan from the IMF⁸⁰⁸. Next year IMF and Algeria renegotiated 1.8 billion dollar per year loan over the next three years and another 5 billion loan from the Paris Club while private creditors of the London Club granted an 3-billion dollar loan⁸⁰⁹.

In return, it meant economic austerity measures and massive public sector downsizing, reductions on subsidies, and other governmental cutbacks⁸¹⁰. According Frédéric Volpi⁸¹¹, state planning had already been incoherent in the past. Now it led to even further deterioration of suburban districts due to rapid urbanization: the disposition of roads and railway lines were merely in the wealthy privileged areas. Volpi and Isabelle Werenfels argue that the 1994 IMF deal exposed the public services to private “oligopoly” enterprises owned by military-bureaucratic apparatus at low price, which further deteriorated social conditions⁸¹². Austerity policies that included privatization of the state enterprises meant loss of 380 000 jobs in three years⁸¹³. The dinar was devalued by 40 percent⁸¹⁴. Military expenditure went up due to armed struggle, while oil prices fluctuated between 15-21 dollars per barrel during 1992-1997⁸¹⁵. While by 1995 Algeria had become Europe's third largest natural gas producer, it was indebted to the tune of 25-billion of dollars, an astonishing foreign debt⁸¹⁶. In November 1995, Zéroual was elected as the fourth President of Algeria

⁸⁰⁶ Algeria had already signed the first “standby agreement” with IMF in 1989, which meant commitment from IMF to give assistance to reform its economy (Le Sueur 2010, 101). In 1990, the Law of Money and Credit (Ordonnance relative à la loi monnaie et au crédit) was enacted to ensure Algeria's debts on the condition that the economy was liberalized within the context of economic austerity policies (Le Sueur 2010, 101).

⁸⁰⁷ Volpi (2003, 95); Liverani (2010, 24).

⁸⁰⁸ Volpi 2003, 112); Le Sueur (2010, 106).

⁸⁰⁹ Volpi (2003, 112-113).

⁸¹⁰ Liverani (2010, 24).

⁸¹¹ Volpi (2003, 97).

⁸¹² Volpi (2003, 97); Werenfels (2007, 49).

⁸¹³ Volpi (2003, 97-98).

⁸¹⁴ Le Sueur (2010, 105).

⁸¹⁵ Lowi (2009, 127).

⁸¹⁶ Le Sueur 2010, 106).

and clearly overpowered other candidates⁸¹⁷. He won 61 percent of the vote in an election with 75 percent voter participation⁸¹⁸.

The civil war years, or *décennie noir* (black decade), created massive challenges to Algerian society as a whole. Algerians experienced an abrupt outbreak of political violence and economic hardship. It was very difficult for autonomous trade unions to develop their operations, action, and mobilization amidst the deteriorated security situation and the antecedence of governmental military operations. The autonomous trade unions had just emerged and lacked stable ground to establish their presence, as Malaoui explains:

RM: SNAPAP had no time to assert itself on the ground among the newly emerging trade unions because of the worsening political situation the country has not yet recovered. In 1992, after the victory of FIS at the parliamentary elections, the UGTA, certain political parties and state institutions created the National Committee for the Saveguard of Algeria (CNSA). The state of emergency was established, the elections were canceled. This way the UGTA decided to stop the nascent trade union movement. The UGTA thus posed itself as a decision-maker in the institutions of the state at the very moment when it capsized. Subsequently, we entered a situation of lawlessness. The war sets in and it's total anarchy⁸¹⁹.

This interpretation of Malaoui shows an antagonistic position vis-à-vis UGTA accusing it of preventing the development of a pluralist trade union scene working in cooperation with state authorities. Meanwhile this contradicts with the collective memory of some of those active in UGTA. They, on the contrary, stress the role of the UGTA behind the birth of the pluralist trade union movement and struggle against the Islamist take over⁸²⁰. It is important to note that UGTA really played an important role in the confrontation with the political Islamist movement. In the early 1990s, UGTA was also struggling with the SIT (FIS) and payed heavy price, when in the civil war 800 of its managerial staff and activist were assassinated between 1993-1997⁸²¹. In addition, the Secretary-General of the UGTA, Abdelhak

⁸¹⁷ Quandt (1998, 72-73).

⁸¹⁸ In the first plural Presidential elections, Liamine Zérroual (National Rally for Democracy, RND) won 61% of the votes, Mahfoud Nahnah 25% (Hammas), Said Saadi 9% (Rally for Culture and Democracy, RCD) and Nouredine Boukrouh 4% (Algerian Renewal Party, PRA) (Quandt 1998, 73).

⁸¹⁹ Graïne (2010, 27).

⁸²⁰ *Le Soir d'Algérie* 17.1.2017. Dialogue social: l'UGTA et les syndicats autonomes autour de la même table. Abder Bettache.

⁸²¹ Zerrouky (2002, 103).

Benhamouda, was assassinated in January 1997⁸²². Current Secretary-General Abdelmadjid Sidi-Saïd was elected as his successor.

However, the period of civil war in Algeria was also extremely difficult time for the young independent trade union movement, what the well-known activist Kaddour Chouicha compared to “crossing the desert” regarding the maintaining the activities of the CNES during 1993-1996⁸²³. President Malaoui of SNAPAP recalls widespread rumors, manipulation and conspiracy that polluted the air. In addition, he stresses the active role of autonomous trade unions in the fight against the Islamist movement as well:

However, the SNAPAP activists have not given up even if the authorities are giving them hard times. The climate is riddled with rumors, it was said that the SNAPAP is against the state at the very moment when it was engaged in a fierce fight to reduce the power of FIS. In a context marked by conspiracy and suspicion, the repression is soon coming down on the SNAPAP and other unions likes of CNES and SATEF. Unions with a strong backbone must resist, that is, fight for their survival. This pushed them to defend priorities that are neither those of the workers nor those of the law of democracy. In the end, the priorities of the war prevailed. Despite the strong pressure they had to face when keeping up the flame of protest⁸²⁴.

Malaoui highlights SNAPAP, CNES and SATEF as important autonomous unions that were struggling against Islamist movement and the austerity measures imposed by international institutions. Regardless of the severe living conditions due to atrocities and austerity measures, it was more than difficult for the autonomous trade unions to organize strikes and manifestations in the public space, influence on public opinion and mobilize Algerians. Violence combined with economic distress and various limitations to press, even the killing of journalists, put the autonomous trade unions on winter wool⁸²⁵.

The autonomous trade unions were not entirely silent during the civil war, although the state of emergency was declared in February 1992. Strikes still existed but less in the field of public administration, education, health, and transport while fields of manufacturing and construction experienced more strikes and lockouts. Since the interruption of the electoral process, the leadership of the CNES took shortly more subservient position towards state authorities and in March 1994, this trend was confirmed officially when its secretary general was designated a member

⁸²² Quandt (1998, 75).

⁸²³ Chouicha (2008, 292).

⁸²⁴ Graïne (2010, 27-28).

⁸²⁵ Chouicha (2008, 288).

of *the National Transitional Council* (Le Conseil national de transition, NTC) that functioned as the quasi-parliament until its dissolve in 1997⁸²⁶. The secretary general was forced to live in isolation from the union, when in 1996 its root level organized continuous strike that lasted three months (15.10.1995-15.1.1996). This famous strike gave a possibility to reconstruct a more oppositional identity within the CNES⁸²⁷.

Table 1. Table 1. Strikes in Algeria in various sectors 1993-2000⁸²⁸.

Year	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Strikes	537	419	432	441	292	195	173	187
Manufacturing	63	59	68	93	64	37	45	50
Construction	253	217	244	253	145	51	52	56
Transport	29	30	22	10	5	7	6	10
Public administration	3	12	9	9	8	2	6	7
Education	52	21	17	18	27	36	16	30
Healthcare and social work	18	8	8	6	10	4	3	6

SATEF was able to continue its struggle during the whole 1990s and kept the social debate on regardless of persecutions while in 1994, their headquarter was set in fire⁸²⁹. SATEF took actively part with CNES and SNAPAP in creation of *the*

⁸²⁶ Graïne (2010, 170); Werenfels (2007, 45 and 87).

⁸²⁷ Graïne (2010, 171).

⁸²⁸ <http://laborsta.ilo.org/STP/guest> (Retrieved 13.2.2013).

⁸²⁹ Graïne (2010, 176).

Autonomous Trade Union Confederation (Confédération des Syndicats Autonomes, CSA), which nevertheless never managed to receive the official authorization⁸³⁰.

SNAPAP pushed administrative reform of the public admin that had suffered from the austerity policies to transform it for the service of the citizens and opposed the NTC that obtained power to impact on the new communal code that was drafted in the spirit of austerity policies⁸³¹. SNAPAP worked for the sensitizing the base to enrich the status of trade unionism and to install the regional offices and national coordination sectors, as the then National Secretary M. Ammar stated in an interview⁸³²:

Our first objective is to raise awareness of the union's principles and positions, as well as its orientations and working methods regarding the exercise of the right to organize, and the orientation of the relations with the employers while keeping highlighting the necessary defense of the moral and material interests of civil servants and workers⁸³³.

Due to obstacles, such as the civil war and state of emergency, it was challenging to organize rallies or demonstrations in the public space, though austerity policies offered possibilities for mobilization in the context of increased dissatisfaction among the workers in the public sector.

Ratiba Hadj-Moussa⁸³⁴ argued at the beginning of 1990s, that three principal challengers competed about controlling the public space in Algeria at the time. First was of course the state, which pursued a quasi-monopoly over radio and television and was challenged by the independent press⁸³⁵. The second contender, according to Hadj-Moussa, was the “media-savvy” Islamist groups who had an access to significant resources of communication through newspapers, magazines and other technologies of audio-cassette tapes and Friday prayers. The third force was formed by the satellite television, which was introduced to Algeria in the mid-1980s. Before

⁸³⁰ *La Tribune* 7.10.1995. Le CNES-USTO et le SNAPAP rejoignent la CSA: La Confédération des syndicats autonomes élargit sa base. A.K. (A.K. indicates the first letters of the forename and surname of journalist who wrote the article).

⁸³¹ *El Acil* 4.1.1995. Pour une réforme de l'administration : Réunion du conseil national de la SNAPAP. Zoheir B.

⁸³² *Ouest Tribune* 27.3.1995. Sensibiliser la base... Conseil régional du SNAPAP. Ounezar Med ; *El Acil* 4.1.1995. Pour une réforme de l'administration : Réunion du conseil national de la SNAPAP. Zoheir B.

⁸³³ *Ouest Tribune* 27.3.1995. Sensibiliser la base... Conseil régional du SNAPAP. Ounezar Med.

⁸³⁴ Hadj-Moussa, Ratiba (2003, 453) *New Media, Community and Politics in Algeria. Media Culture Society* 2003, Vol. 25: SAGE Publications, pp. 451-468.

⁸³⁵ Even though the state owned the main printing house, *La Société d'impression d'Alger*, that maintained almost a monopoly on the import of paper (Hadj-Moussa 2003, 453).

Algerians had only access to the national broadcaster ENTV, which was referred as *l'Unique*. Satellite television was in the beginning an urban experience and was available for the ruling class (including the comfortable middle class). Gradually it reached lower classes around the country. The spread of the internet, especially since the 2000s in Algeria, had a major impact on public space as well.

During the civil war in the 1990s the contestation and mobilization relocated from the streets to indoor spaces and workplaces. For example, one of the most visible struggles took place during the 90s in CHU Oran, where SNAPAP, or its section called Ahmed Zabana, made number of protests and strikes to claim socio-professional reforms⁸³⁶. Sometimes protests and hunger strikes continued for several days.

At the time, SNAPAP was still considered by many as to be close to power (pouvoir), even though in its ranks there existed more radical sections. In general, it was CNES that represented as the most radical and visible oppositional union that was able to organize large protests regardless of the atrocities during the civil war. Kaddour Chouicha recalled how the government tried to use the civil war as an excuse to blackmail CNES to halt its activities. He also explained in our interview how 1996 strikes enabled CNES to get rid of the leadership, considered too close with state authorities, with the help of grass-root activists and overall sensitization:

KC: As if, others should not do anything? No, we told “that it is your problem. You created it. Try to handle it”.

KM: What was SNAPAP doing at the time?

KC: It was still derailed. They had not decided yet about their strategy because it was full of the people who each pulled it into his own direction. We [CNES] had been from the beginning introduced people by the authorities and they were able to calm us in 1993-1994. We managed to maintain our aims, until we were able to launch massive national strike in 1996. It enabled the cleaning of the CNES and the formation of the new direction that was more radical. Since 1996, we conducted activism in the radical way and we were an example for many socio-professional categories in Algeria, especially among the officials. 1996 was important because there was the first massive strike. It continued more than three months and it started from here [Chouicha points himself], because I launched it. Immediately the military security arrested me, and my 3- year-old son. However, the strike in 1998 was also

⁸³⁶ *Ouest Tribune* 29.10.1996. Hopital d'Oran: Le SNAPAP appelle à un rassemblement aujourd'hui; *Ouest Tribune* 20.4.1997. CHUO: Section syndicale gelée depuis 4 mois; *Le Quotidien d'Oran* 20.11.1997. À trois jours de grève. E. Khadidja; *Ouest Tribune* 2.12.1997. Grève du CHUO: Reprise du travail mais ... ! Dey B.

important. It continued more than four months. It obliged the intervention of the National Commission of Arbitration⁸³⁷.

Through its activities CNES was able to gain ground, use public space as contested space⁸³⁸. Seeing public space as a space of representation⁸³⁹, and through its contestation, CNES saw a possibility to change politics through mobilizations and political activism. If one assumes that the society can be roughly split into private and public space, what is then public space in Algeria? According to Salim Mecheri:

In Algeria, the public space is defined as the street (la rue). That is the public space. The gardens also. However, the squares like Martyr's Square, are not defined as the public space. The public spaces must be defined. Those are the streets. The squares are not considered as the public space like those places, where you cannot stop the car. Hospitals and fire stations are considered as the public space⁸⁴⁰.

Surprisingly, Mecheri do not consider squares as public space. However, he as well as many others that I interviewed often referred "the street" as the public space in Algeria. "The street" in general and "the Arab street" in particular has long tradition in encapsulating many negative, even orientalist, connotations such as volatility and irrationality and is often used as metaphor when referring to (Arab) public opinion⁸⁴¹. According to Mourad Moulai-Hadj, we cannot imagine public space without its contribution in the formation of public opinion, which is considered side by side with other institutions, such as schools, factories, universities and mass media, as well as other institutions of socialization or re-socialization in different social categories⁸⁴².

Asef Bayat sees the street as a central space in urban settings for contestation and political struggle⁸⁴³. He has initiated the understanding of the concept "Street Politics" to analyze how urban public space is used as space to communicate the

⁸³⁷ Kaddour Chouicha. Interviewed in Oran in January 2015.

⁸³⁸ More about definition of contested space by Vairel in chapter III: Vairel, Frédéric (2011, 27) "Protesting in Authoritarian Situations", in Beinin, Joel and Vairel, Frédéric (Eds.) *Social Movements, Mobilization, and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

⁸³⁹ Mitchell, Don (2003, 34) *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*. New York – London: The Guilford Press.

⁸⁴⁰ Salim Mecheri. Interviewed in Oran in December 2014.

⁸⁴¹ Regier, Terry and Khalidi, Muhammad Ali (2009, 12) *The Arab Street: Tracking a Political Metaphor*. *Middle East Journal Volume* 63, NO. 1, Winter 2009, pp. 11-29.

⁸⁴² Moulai-Hadj, Mourad (2011, 66) Espace public et participation politique en Afrique: le cas de l'Algérie. *Afrique et développement*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 1, 2011, pp. 63-73.

⁸⁴³ Bayat, Asef (2013, 12) *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*.

discontent and to mobilize citizens for political action⁸⁴⁴. Therefore, as Don Mitchell suggests, an uncontrolled public space can instigate fear as well⁸⁴⁵. Contested public space as site of resistance for oppositional groups and movements generate fear or concern by those who are in power.

In Algeria, during the 1988 October uprisings, demonstrators by multiple movements occupied public spaces in numbers generating popular unrest and leading to crumbling of the political order and instability. The political chaos and civil war led to setting of state of emergency, which denied expression of opinion or communication regarding the discontent in the public spaces invoking to security concerns and fears for further instability. This leads me to understand two competing discourses that shape partial fixation of meaning, nodal point or empty signifiers, to contemplate the different meanings that are attached by Algerian authorities and autonomous trade union activists, antagonistic forces, in regard of stability-instability nexus. Competing discourses form within the field of discursivity “to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a center”, as Laclau and Mouffe theorized⁸⁴⁶. Through hegemonic processes that involve politicization through articulation define dominant discourses.

It is clear that stability-instability nexus are constructed as opposite things for state authorities and autonomous trade union activists. My aim is not to judge or take a sides but rather discover the opposite interpretations related to specific contexts to track the construction of the discourses related in the context of production of empty signifiers, that temporarily intercept the flow of various meanings and differences⁸⁴⁷. I will further show in the coming chapters, how this stability-instability nexus plays role even nowadays through construction of collective trajectories of 1988 October uprisings and civil war that followed.

For the authorities, the stability is the argument that is regularly used to construct their political position, which enable critical approach on oppositional social movements such as autonomous trade unions. Both sides use available media and other communicative tools to strengthen their interpretation of social processes to justify their own activity through hegemonic struggles. Because autonomous trade unions criticize governmental conduct of policies, the state authorities confront

⁸⁴⁴ Bayat (2013, 12).

⁸⁴⁵ Mitchell (2003, 13).

⁸⁴⁶ Laclau, Ernesto and Mouffe, Chantal (2001, 112) [1985] *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. Verso: London and New York.

⁸⁴⁷ Howarth, David R. (2013, 193) *Poststructuralism and After: Structure, Subjectivity and Power*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

these oppositional groups as their political opponents aiming to undermine their activities. Simplifying, one could say that the state authorities use the 1988 October uprisings, as an event and collective memory, to argue that autonomous trade unions present a danger of instability.

On the other hand, the autonomous trade union activists view the stability-instability nexus from the opposite perspective: with the repressive conduct of politics and obstruction of sustainable democratization, the government is drifting the country towards destabilization and chaos, as young, about 20 years old, activist of the SNAPAP Mustapha Larbi argues:

In Algeria, the pacific politics do not exist. The Algerians are now in madness. Therefore, we trade unionist or human rights defenders are afraid. We ask from this power (*pouvoir*) to give rights for the people, because if these people boil over, it will burn everything. We do not want to have similar revolution what happened in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria or Libya. Because, they did already a revolution, but nothing came out of it. The same problems and questions still exists: who governs?⁸⁴⁸

Young activist Larbi is also concerned about the instability, especially in the context of the 2011 uprisings that shook the North Africa and the Middle East. However, he accuses the governmental policies that are creating anger and despair among the population, which will sooner or later explode and lead to similar disastrous situation that Syria and Libya, or especially Algeria during the 1990s, experience. This is of course nothing new. Already in 2003, Malaoui stated:

Today, if we do not try to find seriously appropriate solutions to the problems that arise on the political scene, we are heading towards disaster.⁸⁴⁹

The major concern of gathering the masses to streets points to public space. As Bayat argues, “[A]ny active or participative use infuriates officials, who see themselves as the sole authority to establish and control public order”⁸⁵⁰. Simultaneously, the autonomous trade unions use the public space to generate collective political pressure because that is the only space they have to achieve visibility, as Samir Baroud states:

Because the media is closed, dialogue is closed there is only the streets left to invest so that people can hear our demands⁸⁵¹.

⁸⁴⁸ Mustapha Larbi (name changed). Interviewed in the bus heading from Algiers to Tunis World Social Forum in March 2013.

⁸⁴⁹ *El Watan* 8.9.2003. SNAPAP: « La bibartite est un échec ». Nabila Amir.

⁸⁵⁰ Bayat (2013, 12).

⁸⁵¹ Samir Baroud (name changed). Interviewed in Algiers in December 2014.

Factors that mobilize Algerians to political participation in the autonomous trade unions generates importantly from the vague daily social challenges they face in their everyday life: work and working conditions, salaries, youth unemployment, marginalization and lack of prospects, corruption and housing. Movements stress the importance to maintain the right for peaceful demonstrations to express social discontent. Mohamed Haimouni also stress the importance to come out in pacific way from offices to the streets, so that Algerians can see and hear them:

We must get out our demands. The power (*pouvoir*) wants that we close ourselves inside the halls and our offices so that our demands would not get out to the streets. We have always privileged the street but in a peaceful and organized way to sensitize the authorities and the people so that they can see that there exist people who claim for different issues such as work, salaries or difficulties with housing. In any case, even without us, the Algerians always get out for any cause or problem. They go out. If you follow the press, you will see that there does not exist one day when our citizens do not go to the streets demanding better housing, sanitations or living conditions. The street is the public space. There is not any other definitions for it⁸⁵².

Haimouni explained that public space is a necessity for activism and resistance to raise their experienced social grievances such as those related to work, salaries and housing. He also stressed autonomous trade union action as nonviolent. Regarding the connection between the action conducted by the autonomous trade union activists and sustainable democracy building, Mitchell combines civic rights directly to public space. He argues that one must struggle to gain space to achieve just laws that guarantee aspired rights and freedoms:

Social action is structured through law, and social action creates abstract or differentiated spaces in proportion to the power possessed by each side in a struggle. So social action – including oppositional work by social movements – always operates simultaneously to influence the production of law and the production of space. [...] Rights themselves, therefore, are part of the process of producing space⁸⁵³.

The streets can be used as “the ultimate arena to communicate discontent”⁸⁵⁴. Bayat argues that the social conflict is most apparent in the streets⁸⁵⁵. They can also be

⁸⁵² Mohamed Haimouni (name changed). Interviewed in Oran in December 2014.

⁸⁵³ Mitchell (2003, 29).

⁸⁵⁴ Bayat (2013, 12).

⁸⁵⁵ Bayat (2013, 52).

considered, as Jürgen Habermas⁸⁵⁶ depicted public sphere, “warning system with sensors” meaning that streets are sensitive to social problems within society. Therefore, public space is an important component of development of civil society, which can be considered through politicization as site of resistance, a theatre of confrontation of the ideas, discussions and negotiations between different social strata that is imminent in the heterogeneous public space.

Meanwhile, trade union and human rights activist Kaddour Chouicha denounced the existence of the whole concept of the public space in the country, at least in its form of political space:

Public space [in Algeria] is not a public space. It is governmental space, in reality. Nothing is permitted in the public space if you do not have accordance from the authorities. We do not have real notion of public space, because normally the society have right to use this space. Of course, according to the conditions that are defined by the space itself. We have totalitarian space that does not left us even margin of it to exercise⁸⁵⁷.

Chouicha referred to the ban on organizing demonstrations in the capital Algiers and restrictions protester face elsewhere as well. However, Algeria is not the only country in the world where demonstrations are restricted, as Occupy Wall Street in United States and protests of the so-called Yellow Vests in France have shown.

Autonomous trade unions emerged in the first place due to various socio-economic challenges that workers faced in their daily lives. Autonomous unions aim social change. They use public space to spread their demands and increase future mobilizations. During the civil war, the public space was controlled with the state of emergency that blocked the manifest actions. Michel Foucault famously wrote: “Where there is power, there is resistance”⁸⁵⁸. From the 1980s until today, the autonomous trade unions struggle for this space to get attention and because they want to show that public space belongs to the citizens, not only to the power (pouvoir), Hamid Derradji, 26 years old activist of SNAPAP, also argued pessimistically:

In reality, the public space does not exist in Algeria. Everything is squatted by the power (pouvoir). If you speak politics in the café, your risk being arrested. In the bar as well. Therefore, when you go out to the street with demands in the sign, you risk a

⁸⁵⁶ Habermas, Jürgen (2012 [1996], 469-470) *Civil Society and the Political Public Sphere*, in Calhoun, Craig, Gerteis, Joseph, Moody, James, Pfaff, Steven and Virk, Indermohan (Eds.) *Contemporary Sociological Theory*. United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 469-489.

⁸⁵⁷ Kaddour Chouicha. Interviewed in Oran in January 2015.

⁸⁵⁸ Foucault, Michel [1976] (1990, 95) *History of sexuality. Volume 1: Introduction*. New York: Vintage.

lot. Unfortunately, they have managed to depoliticize our society. This means that to speak politics in Algeria has become a taboo or something very sensitive. The people do not get mixed up, they disengage from everything. People have lost the solidarity. People are afraid to engage into dynamics of demands and claims, because our power (pouvoir) is known. How many of our activists are in prison? How many of our workers has been fired? How many students have been excluded. Therefore, they have really invested on the ground so that they stay in power. People are left in mayhem to die like a flies. Of course, today through social media we can see certain information and hear how certain decision makers own the villas in foreign countries, in France or elsewhere. They have bank accounts in Switzerland⁸⁵⁹.

This quote from Derradji clearly contain exaggeration, politics is common subject of discussion in the cafés in Algeria. However, his argument on de-politicization is interesting. Various surveys⁸⁶⁰ indicate that political passivity, in the sense of manifest political engagement, is widespread in the country especially among the youth, while politicization of the youth can be considered more constitutive within environments of football stadiums and various genres of music. Therefore, participation within sectorial politics such as voting or taking part in party politics may not illustrate the whole picture, but indicate rather the process of politicization itself? Asef Bayat argued in the context of the 2011 uprisings:

“[T]he discontent subaltern groups – the poor, the youths, women, and the politically marginalized – do not sit around passively obeying the diktats of their police states, nor did they tie their luck to the verdict of destiny. Rather, they were always engaged, albeit in mostly dispersed and disparate struggles in the immediate domains of their everyday life – in the neighborhoods, places of work, street corners, courthouses, communities, and in the private realms of taste, personal freedom, and preserving dignity”⁸⁶¹.

Similarly, Daho Djerbal described in an interview how multiple non-sectorial political mobilizations take place in public space in Algeria:

One occupies the street, sets up barricades, stops traffic. Sometimes these contests point to a social struggle, but sometimes they are for more general demands—such as the demand for housing. The young generation who are coming of age want housing, employment, a legitimate future. Since the unions, political parties, and

⁸⁵⁹ Hamid Derradji (name changed). Interviewed in Oran December 2014.

⁸⁶⁰ Moulai-Hadj (2011); Robbins, Michael (2014) *Skipping the Arab Spring? The Arab Barometer surveys a Changing Algeria*. April 2014; *SAHWA National Case Study (Algeria)* (2016) Centre de Recherche en Economie Appliquée pour le Développement (CREAD). Alger: Algeria; Thomas, Kathrin (2018) *Civic Engagement in the Middle East and North Africa. Arab Barometer*, October 2018.

⁸⁶¹ Bayat, Asef (2013, xi) *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. Cairo: AUC Press.

parliament no longer play their role, protests and riots have become the most common mode of negotiation between various groups and the state.⁸⁶²

Regarding the fieldwork, Derradji was interesting individual to interview because social movements are often sites that attract individuals who lean on the so-called secret histories that are typical in the environment of political repression. However, these embellished metaphors, such as “People are left in mayhem to die like flies” did not represent the majority view of those who I was in contact with. On the contrary, they had in many ways quite a realistic understanding of society and how various actors, such as security guards, acted during protests.

Bayat stresses that streets reflect the power relationships: “streets are also the public places where the state has the most evident presence, which is expressed in police patrol, traffic regulations, and spatial divisions – in short, in public order”⁸⁶³. Samir Baroud described how, according to him, the authorities use oversized police force to prevent demonstrations in Algiers:

[...] as in 27th of February [2013] in front of the Ministry of Labor, imagine more than 10 000 police men surrounding the ministry preventing independent trade unionist of claiming the worker’s rights. That is a real example. There are videos in Facebook where you can see them. There were more than 10 000 police men surrounding the ministry and that is contradiction regarding the Algerian constitution and its article 57 that provides right to unionize and claim the rights⁸⁶⁴.

When Baroud is saying that there were 10 000 police men, I understand him meaning a lot of police men, not exactly 10 000. However, young SNAPAP activist Madjid Rezag from Mostaganem said that in other cities than the capital it is possible to organize action in the public space:

In our wilaya [Mostaganem] we can conduct actions such as sit-ins, but in the capital it is very difficult. They say that the capital is always under the state of emergency, so they can commit the repression, corruption, the police... it is serious. Last sit-in 17th of March in front of the Grande poste they aggressed six members of the national bureau (office) ... they entered inside the Mustapha Pacha hospital where they arrested 75 members and moved them to the police station. We made an investigation, they were released six a clock in the night. I was injured. One police aggressed me when I entered Mustapaha Pacha. I took certification of ten days. I

⁸⁶² Davis, Muriam Haleh (2012) Knowledge and Power in Algeria: An interview with Daho Djerbal on the Twentieth Anniversary of NAQD. *Jadaliyya*. <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/25201>

⁸⁶³ Bayat (2013, 52).

⁸⁶⁴ Samir Baroud (name changed). Interviewed in the bus heading to World Social Forum in Tunis in 2013.

informed other medias such as El Magharibia, I did some broadcasts. My other friends were also aggressed⁸⁶⁵.

The descriptions of police violence that activists face during their protests is common and they are publicised in various human rights reports⁸⁶⁶. State authorities deny acts of violence. It seems that there is not a lot of space left to protest. Still Derradji argued that protesting in the streets is the only way to draw attention. All the institutional channels are closed:

If you try to have an effect by writing, they do not answer. When you denounce them in administration, they do not take it into account. Therefore, the only thing that is left is the street. In the street, you are able to gain attention. You can also reach the journalists. Those journalists who work with their hearts and rapport the message as it is. In our country, they manipulate the media as well. The TV channels are there only to protect the Presidential project. They censure or won't tell the message the people are sending in the streets⁸⁶⁷.

In Algeria, one can find vast variety of newspapers and growing number of electric media and blogs that cover the action conducted by the autonomous trade unions and transmit their message. The largest widely spread newspapers that often broadcast critically towards the government are El Watan and Liberte (in French) and El Khabar and Echorouk (in Arabic). Today social media and internet news sites give more space to oppositional civil society actors to convey their message. These virtual spaces offer the possibility for critical social movements and their activists, especially the youth, to communicate with each other without interference or other institutional constrains⁸⁶⁸. This is important for those movements and associations that are most contentious, and whose access to social space in concrete public sites is restricted⁸⁶⁹.

As Habermas⁸⁷⁰ articulates, the diffusion of information through media is not the only important factor in the public processes of communication. However, Algerian society is not different from any other society, where the media has the power to

⁸⁶⁵ Madjid Rezag (name changed). Interviewed in the bus heading from Algiers to World Social Forum in Tunis in 2013.

⁸⁶⁶ International NGOs such as Human Rights Watch, EuroMed Rights and Amnesty International.

⁸⁶⁷ Hamid Derradji. Interviewed in Oran in January 2015.

⁸⁶⁸ Herrera, Linda and Sakr, Rehab (2014, 2) Introduction: Wired and Revolutionary in the Middle East and North Africa, in Linda Herrera and Rehab Sakr (Eds.) *Wired Citizenship: Youth Learning and Activism in the Middle East*. New York and London: Routledge. pp. 1-16.

⁸⁶⁹ Taib, Essaid (2014, 382) *Associations et société civile en Algérie*. Alger: Office des publications universitaires.

⁸⁷⁰ Habermas (2012, 471).

impact on culture of discussion and exchange of ideas. In Algeria, citizens are very critical towards different media outlets while simultaneously they have plenty of political perspectives available in heterogeneous, wide-ranging and versatile news landscape. Therefore, it is often common to see Algerians consuming those media outlets that are supporting their worldview and understanding of the political development, which may not make easier for different opposite political actors to exchange ideas and to understand opposite perspectives and opinions.

One of the aims of the autonomous trade unions is to gain visibility: every protest or demonstration can have an effect on future mobilizations. They want to find new ways to impact on public opinion to show to other Algerians that they should not be afraid to join them to express their potential discontent towards state authorities and to participate the construction of more effective and coherent social movement that have capacity to struggle for workers' and citizenship rights. Meantime, authorities control these public actions to maintain social order in general and stability of the country in particular, as Idriss Mekideche explained:

In Algeria, the Algerians need to reappropriate the public space. Because it is closed. [...] We have conducted maybe 50 different actions or more especially since 2011. We organized them in Algiers and elsewhere. Every time we were repressed and arrested. Maybe there were few occasions in some places, where they left us untroubled for a while, when they saw that we were only 20 to 50 participants. In general, they stop us quickly and then question us. Even when they leave us untroubled, they make some arrests further away to prevent some demonstrators to participate. That is for sure. So regarding the public space, the Algerians are prevented to express themselves in the streets and in the public space⁸⁷¹.

Stability, as a floating signifier, seems to be part of ongoing struggle between antagonistic discourse construction of state authorities and autonomous trade union activists. Joel Beinin and Frédéric Vairel⁸⁷² highlight the importance of investigating “what people do when they protest and contest”. Beinin and Vairel urge the study various repertoires of collective action, especially in authoritarian contexts when the contention is never self-evident, to approach and explain internal structures, functioning and behavior of protest movements. For example, autonomous trade unions continue to organize public sit-ins and demonstrations aiming to reappropriate the public space, as Kaddour Chouicha states:

Therefore, this is new mode of contestation that demand that public space must be given back for the public and permitted for the use of the people so that they can

⁸⁷¹ Idriss Mekideche. Interviewed in Algiers in December 2014

⁸⁷² Beinin and Vairel (2011, 13-15).

create their demands according to their will, ambition and claims. It is new form of contestation that refuses this one (showing picture of Bouteflika)⁸⁷³.

As Beinin and Vairel stress, the repertoire of methods also comprises “symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views, which may [be used] in varying configurations to solve different kind of problems”⁸⁷⁴, which open access to process diverse agencies through identities and positions. As previous quote from Chouicha demonstrates, he wants that the public space is returned for the use of ordinary Algerian people, to whom he seems to identify himself, so that they can voice their needs and demands.

Mostefa Boutefnouchet⁸⁷⁵ writes about the process of transition and democratization of public life and public opinion in Algeria among the ruling authorities and oppositional forces in the 1990s. He argues that the majority of Algerians rejected political violence, aspired for peace, wished to pacify the struggle between different political groups and hoped to return back to their normal lives without curfew, attacks, sabotage or roadblocks. In the general context, Boutefnouchet underlined three main characteristics related to public opinion in Algeria during the civil war:

- 1) The distrust regarding democratic experience that brought only misery.
- 2) The low interest regarding political dialogue between competing political forces so that strong mutual interest could be found for common political interest.
- 3) Expectant attitude regarding the short-term political orientation of the country.

Social change, which I link to sustainable democracy building, suffered a major setback in Algeria due to the civil war, which instigated violence and restrictions on already achieved political rights guaranteed in the constitutional reform in 1989. Due to atrocities and economic challenges, politically active Algerians became reticent and sceptical. According to Boutefnouchet, they found themselves in the middle of confused political scene not knowing how to emerge from the conflict⁸⁷⁶. This entanglement can be viewed as one important factor that has transformed into low political participation in national electoral processes and participation in the street activities within social movements.

⁸⁷³ Kaddour Chouicha. Interviewed in Oran in January 2015.

⁸⁷⁴ Beinin and Vairel (2011, 14).

⁸⁷⁵ Boutefnouchet, Mostefa (2004, 94) *La Société Algérienne en Transition*. Alger: Office des Publication Universitaires.

⁸⁷⁶ Boutefnouchet (2004, 94-95).

5.4 Members and political participation: mobilization and collective action

I will now analyze the various backgrounds of autonomous trade union activists and the environment in which they started to engage in autonomous trade unionism or in other social movements, such as student groups or human rights associations. I am interested in the factors behind and the moments that transform ordinary individuals to activists through acts of citizenship. Autonomous trade unions recruit members from various backgrounds: teachers, the unemployed, women, men, old, young, leftist, communist, anarchist, Islamist, secular, rural and urban citizen. Therefore, I am interested in their backgrounds, whether socio-economic, gender, religious, ideological, religious or ethnic.

Sidney G. Tarrow⁸⁷⁷ argues that “people engage in contentious politics when patterns of political opportunities and constrains change, and then by strategically employing a repertoire of collective action, creating new opportunities, which are used by others in widening cycles of contention”. In Algeria, the 1988 October uprisings offered societal change that enabled young politically concerned youth and other age groups to join different social movements to advance their social interests. Secondly, Tarrow stresses engagement in contentious politics when “struggle revolve around broad cleavages in society”. Without extensive socio-political problems it is challenging for social movements to grow and maintain their popularity. Thirdly, Tarrow argues that mass engagement requires “inherited cultural symbols”, that has strongly been present within Islamist, Amazigh and leftist movements, but also within political parties close to state authorities as well. Finally, Tarrow highlights capacity to construct “dense social networks and connective structures”. However, it is also necessary to observe politicization of afore mentioned “broad cleavages”.

How should we conceptualize political participation and approach multiple agencies that the political actors conduct? I define the action conducted by the autonomous trade unions as nonviolent manifest political participation according to critical conceptualization introduced by Joakim Ekman and Erik Amnå⁸⁷⁸, who argue that there exists different forms of disengagement⁸⁷⁹, involvement, civic engagement

⁸⁷⁷ Tarrow, Sidney (2011, 28-29) *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁸⁷⁸ Ekman, Joakim & Amnå, Erik (2012) Political Participation and Civic Engagement: Towards a New Typology. *Human Affairs* 22, pp. 283-300.

⁸⁷⁹ Ekman and Amnå (2012, 295) divide disengagement into active and passive forms, which means that sometimes disengagement can be a conscious action to boycott elections, newspapers or conduct non-political or non-consumerist lifestyles.

and political participation. Ekman and Amnå⁸⁸⁰ distinct latent⁸⁸¹ and manifest⁸⁸² political participation. They argue that nonviolent manifest political participation is mostly legal in its collective level, but that it can include forms of illegal extra-parliamentary manifest political participation in the individual level.

I mainly interviewed activists of SNAPAP, and asked about their individual motives in joining an autonomous trade union and to conduct activism, because while Engin F. Isin⁸⁸³ argues: “[a]cts cannot happen without motives, purposes, or reasons [...]”, the acts cannot be reduced only to calculability, intentionality or responsibility. SNAPAP often claims to cover⁸⁸⁴ about 300 000-500 000 members of which 40 000-50 000 contributive members. The *General Autonomous Confederation for Algerian Workers* (Confédération Générale Autonome des Travailleurs Algériens, CGATA) is claimed to gather 268 000⁸⁸⁵ members. I spoke with younger and older activists who situated their engagement on different timeframes between 1980s and 2000s. How did they start nonviolent acts of citizenship in autonomous trade unions? Who are they?

In 2013, I met the President of SNAPAP Rachid Malaoui with few other long-term trade union activists, one of them was Kaddour Chouicha, in a café in Oran. I had, a few years earlier, read an article in which the chairman of the *Algerian Business Leaders Forum* (Forum des Chefs d'Entreprise, FCE) stated that he had nothing against autonomous trade unions in general, except those empowered by

⁸⁸⁰ Ekman and Amnå (2012, 292).

⁸⁸¹ Latent political participation encapsulates two forms of action: *Involvement* (personal interest and attentiveness to politics and social issues at the individual level and a sense of belonging to a group or life-style in the collective level). *Civic engagement* (activities based on personal interest in and attention to politics and social issues in the individual level and voluntary work to improve conditions in the local community in the collective level).

⁸⁸² Manifest political participation seal in: *Formal political participation* (electoral and contact activities at the individual level and organized political participation such as membership of conventional political parties, trade unions and other civic organizations in the collective level). *Activism, extra-parliamentary participation*, they split into: *Legal activism* (signing petitions in the individual level and participation to loosely organized forms of networks such as demonstrations, strikes and protest in the collective level). *Illegal activism* (politically motivated illegal acts in the individual level and illegal violent activities and protests such as demonstrations, riots, squatting in buildings, damaging property, and confronting the police or political opponents on a collective level).

⁸⁸³ Isin, Engin F. (2008, 38) *Theorizing Acts of Citizenship*, in Engin F. Isin and Greg M. Nielsen (Eds.) (2008) *Acts of Citizenship*, London & New York: Zed Books, pp. 15-43.

⁸⁸⁴ <http://www.maisondessyndicats-dz.com/historique.php> (Retrieved in 7.2.2012, website does not function anymore); Graine, Larbi (2010, 44) *Algérie: Naufrage de la fonction publique et défi syndicale*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

⁸⁸⁵ www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/15_01_22_list_affiliates_14th_gc-3.pdf

“Trotskyist” class-war perceptions⁸⁸⁶. I had also read another article, dating from 2008, where the head of the *Workers’ Party* (Parti des travailleurs, PT) Louisa Hanoune in turn accused autonomous trade unions of threatening destabilization in Algeria⁸⁸⁷.

Malaoui on the other hand referred to Hamiani as “le patron des patrons” referring to mafia equivalent to the *capo di tutti* (the boss of all bosses) and told me in March 2013 in Oran:

RM: Hamiani said we are Trotskyists, Hanoune said we are agents of the west, governmental women organizations said we are Islamists, so you can choose. At least we are not said to be agents of the government. You have to take all these accusations together and ask “who we are?”

KM: Who are you?

RM: We are independent.

RM: Hamiani is part of the power (*pouvoir*). He is a former minister and he represents the power (*pouvoir*). He was removed and became the boss of all bosses. He is the boss of Forum of bosses [The Algerian Business Leaders' Forum FCE]. So, he was a minister. He supported Bouteflika. He is a man of power (*pouvoir*). So, a man of power attacks us. These associations of the power (*pouvoir*) attack us and call us Trotskyists. Louisa Hanoune, who has now become a woman of the president, attack on us too and calls us the agents of NATO. It is the power (*pouvoir*) that attack on us because we are independent⁸⁸⁸.

When SNAPAP activists underline their independence or autonomy, they mean independence from the UGTA and the state. Malaoui was hinting that political parties such as PT of Louisa Hanoune is part of machinery of power (*pouvoir*). Her attack and accusation of autonomous trade unions of destabilization, or being “agents of NATO”, spring from the interests of power (*pouvoir*). While Hanoune often criticizes governmental policies in Algeria, Malaoui and others did not buy the argument that PT led by Hanoune was a genuine oppositional actor, at least not any more from their perspective. Real oppositional action was not taking place within political sector neither, because everything was controlled by those in power.

Political multipartyism in Algeria generates extensive criticism among autonomous trade unionists. What is more, various reports show that Algerians are

⁸⁸⁶ *El Watan*. 7.10.2011. Réda Hamiani: Oui aux syndicats autonomes, mais on ne veut pas de surenchère de type trotskyste.

⁸⁸⁷ *L'Expression* 6.4.2008. Les syndicats autonomes dérangent: attaqués de toutes parts. Farouk Djouadi.

⁸⁸⁸ Rachid Malaoui. Interviewed in Oran in March 2013.

in general weakly organized within political parties. According to Arab Barometer⁸⁸⁹, in 2011 the majority (87%) of respondents said that none of the political parties represent them or their political, social and economic aspirations. The greatest support were political parties often considered as close to the power (pouvoir) such as the National Liberation Front (FLN, 6%) and the National Rally for Democracy (RND, 3%). The youth are even less active than the older populations. Similarly, scholars have criticised political multipartyism in the country⁸⁹⁰. They argue that the political parties do not offer alternatives, and are distant from the people or citizens. The authorities are able to integrate parties to their political interests, or if they confront the power (pouvoir), they are neutralized. The weakness of the political parties to represent citizens seems to drive individuals from different political backgrounds to engage within autonomous trade unions, which have been more successful in protecting the citizens in matters related to salaries, for example⁸⁹¹.

In another interview Malaoui described the political scale of the members in SNAPAP: “In the SNAPAP there are Benflists, Bouteflikists, FFSistes, everybody are represented”⁸⁹². My personal experience of those members of SNAPAP that I met affirm what Malaoui depicted. In many ways, multiple identities of Algerian society was represented. It would be difficult to generalize the members of the SNAPAP as Islamists or Amazigh activists. Similarly, the President of SNPSP, Lyès Merabet, describes the membership of their union: “There are Islamists, people from the left, Communists, atheists, centrists, nationalists, etc. SNPSP gathers practitioners who are academic, open minded people”⁸⁹³. Similarly, leader of CNAPEST, Larbi Nouar, depicted their membership: “All the fringes of Algerian society are represented. We have Islamists, democrats, who are all unified in defending the teachers’ and school’s interests”⁸⁹⁴.

When I was able to have deeper and more personal discussions in 2013, some of my interlocutors hinted that they supported FFS. However, they insisted that their

⁸⁸⁹ Robbins, Michael (2014) *Skipping the Arab Spring? The Arab Barometer surveys a Changing Algeria*. April 2014.

⁸⁹⁰ Djerbal, Daho (2001a) L’Algerie ou la democratization impossible. *TransEuropennes*, Automne 2001; Djerbal, Daho (2001b) Interview of Daho Djerbal in *La Tribune: L’Algérie donne l’image d’un pays qui va dans tous les sens. Ne pensez-vous pas que c’est là le signe d’une crise ?* Noureddine Azzouz and Ahmed Kaci ; Addi, Lahouari (2006) *Les partis politiques en Algérie. Les partis politiques dans les pays arabes. Tome 2 Le Maghreb*; Liverani, Andrea (2008, 97-102) *The Civil Society in Algeria: The political functions of associational life*. Oxon: Routledge.

⁸⁹¹ Hocine Bellaloufi. Interviewed in Algiers in October 2019.

⁸⁹² Rachid Malaoui interviewed by Larbi Graïne (2010, 36).

⁸⁹³ Lyès Merabat interviewed by Larbi Graïne (2010, 53).

⁸⁹⁴ Nouar Larbi interviewed by Larbi Graïne (2010, 100).

belonging to the FFS did not affect their activity in the autonomous trade union and they felt that their activity in both bodies as separate. Therefore, it was natural, not preferred, that one could be a member of SNAPAP while being member of the political party as well. Some criticized the FFS and its popularity among Algerians. In addition, I was asked many times whether I have an Amazigh background. I answered that majority of the Algerians have Amazigh roots and represent today a mixture of various ethnical backgrounds as a result of multiple historical chapters.

Women were also visible in the ranks of SNAPAP. However, as I wrote in Chapter III, I managed to conduct fewer interviews with them due to a multiplicity of reasons such as my gender, scant suitable occasions, the environment and socio-cultural role expectations. Therefore, it would be too reductive to explain the limited amount of interviews with female activists exclusively related to gender. However, I believe that a female researcher might have had better access to obtain more female perspective regarding the women activists in the context of autonomous trade union performances. Though I was not more successful in conducting recorded interviews with women activists, it does not mean that they were not strongly represented. In general, women activists have many role models in Algeria. Amazigh warrior queen Dihya (or Kahina) was a religious and military leader in the 7th century who formed significant resistance against the Muslim conquest in Numidia while Lalla Fatma N'soumer and Lalla Khadidja bent Belkacem participated to the combats against the French occupation in the 19th century⁸⁹⁵. During the Independence War (1954-1962) Djamila Boupacha and Hassiba Ben Bouali, to mention only two, became internationally known revolutionaries⁸⁹⁶.

With Malaoui, we spoke about the gender and the role of the women activists in SNAPAP. I told him that I have heard some critics from the governmental women organization about the religious conservatism among the SNAPAP women. Naturally, Malaoui did not agree with the critics:

RM: General Secretary of SNAPAP General Office is a woman [Ghozlane Nassira]. I am the president. In the General Office, we are six, three men and three women. Our women who entered into field and started hunger strike, have you heard of them? [...] Our women have nothing to do with the Islamists. When you meet them, you can ask them. They represent Algerian reality. They are Muslims but not Islamists, as 99% of Algerians are Muslims and they are Muslims who defend the values of democracy and the human rights as trade unionists. They go to the streets and combat

⁸⁹⁵ Rebzani, Mohammed (1997, 28) *La vie familiale des femmes algériennes salariées*. Paris – Montréal: L'Harmattan.

⁸⁹⁶ Lazreg, Marnia (1990, 767) Gender and Politics in Algeria: Unraveling the Religious Paradigm. *Signs*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Summer, 1990), pp. 755-780.

the police and occasionally these Muslim women share the same office day and night with other men activists. [...] The women in our ranks are the women who combat. They organize gatherings. They are beaten by the police. Their wages are suspended due to their activities in the trade union movement. They are not women appreciated by the Ministries or upper crust⁸⁹⁷.

Generally speaking, SNAPAP activists represent mostly the lower or upper middle class. It is of course reductive to generalize about the membership of the trade union after meeting only handful of its members. However, this description would become to my mind, if I had to generalize according to my understanding of Algerian society.

In my interviews, I asked how the interviewees started to conduct activism or join to SNAPAP. I was interested in the concrete act, how did they register in practice, but also what were the larger factors behind: why someone start to think about joining to trade union or why did they chose particularly autonomous trade union instead of UGTA for example. According to Charles Tilly⁸⁹⁸, political actors typically give individualized accounts of their participation, though they could be seen to be bounded as collective actors through communities, classes, armed forces, firms, unions, interest groups or social movements. Young activist of SNAPAP, Mustapha Larbi, explained his participation in SNAPAP as follows:

I was in probation [beneficiate de pré-emploi] with miserable salary. I could not find anybody, who could help us to integrate into workstation. In the end, we only found SNAPAP who took over the topic of probation [pré-emploi], which is a political related to employment that has been practiced in Algeria. After we searched other trade unions that could speak on our behalf but we did not find. That is why we chose SNAPAP, which has given us many things. They have organized seminars to instruct trade union methods. During the time I have worked with SNAPAP, two years, I have felt free having around people, who help. It is also the question of socialization⁸⁹⁹.

Larbi showed gratitude regarding the help that SNAPAP was able to offer him. It is also interesting that he justifies his choice of joining SNAPAP due to the lack of other actors available for help related to his problem of integration. Why SNAPAP? Where are political parties? Next Larbi's account stressed the role of social networks, friendship and belonging to a group, which supports the participation and mobilization in general after individual enters to a movement. Similarly, Tarrow highlights the importance of face-to-face groups, social networks and connective

⁸⁹⁷ Rachid Malaoui. Interviewed in Oran in March 2013.

⁸⁹⁸ Tilly, Charles (2002, 115) *Stories, Identities, and Political Change*. United States: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group.

⁸⁹⁹ Mustapha Larbi. Interviewed in El Kala in March 2013.

structures as significant factors that sustain participation⁹⁰⁰. However, it is also the societal grievances that trigger the desire to improve one's social condition:

I believe SNAPAP wants to be free. It wants freedom of expression. It wants dignity. It is like more than a work. Now when I am within SNAPAP, I do not search for work anymore. Work is our right, but today we speak about other things such as dignity (karama). We are against the indignity (hogra). In Algeria, there is no other trade union that can speak out of probation (pré-emploi) or precarious work. There is not, only SNAPAP. Even the political parties are afraid to speak about the precarious work. Only SNAPAP exists. Even the parties such as PST (Parti socialiste des travailleurs) or PT (Parti travailleurs) are afraid to announce that they are against these employment policies. [...] I work as a contractual but without any rights. There is no right to unionize or to participate on strike. You cannot even have the basic rights regarding the work. They say we are not contractual. What are we then? When we demand our rights, they say you are not worker. What are we? It is a clear message that we are not considered as workers, but as modern slaves. That is why I chose SNAPAP, because it gave us possibility and helped us to fight for a contract⁹⁰¹.

Larbi's account reinforces the image that autonomous trade union activists share a critical relationship towards political parties that are considered too weak and cautious to take action. Autonomous trade unions have managed to ground their role and activity as one of the oppositional movements through politicization of work and working conditions. Similarly, Larbi's account shows well how he no longer tries to find work but invests his time in protesting in SNAPAP. In many ways, the autonomous trade unions have become transformed more into political protest movements rather than functioning as a traditional trade union movement. Researcher Nacer Djabi argues that this is due to the restrictions that autonomous trade unions face:

The increased use of strikes, long or cyclical in some cases, is a way for these unions to compensate for a lack of recognition and social rights for their members. The civil servant, new to trade union activity, continues to believe that the single trade union has abandoned many of its rights. Added to this is the negative attitude of the various political elites in power in Algeria, who continue, to this day, to deny the right to use trade union power, and they push the trade unions to manifest through protest to express their existence and voice their demands as long as the channels of dialogue and negotiation remain hermetically closed. In Algeria, we are faced with neoliberal political elites who either reject trade union activity or simply ignore it⁹⁰².

⁹⁰⁰ Tarrow (2011, 30).

⁹⁰¹ Mustapha Larbi. Interviewed in El Kala in March 2013.

⁹⁰² *El Watan* 27.11.2013. "Le pouvoirs a encore besoin de l'UGTA" Nacer Djabi. Sociologue, enseignant à l'université d'Alger. Nabila Amir.

Neoliberalist economic policies started to spread increasingly already during the presidency of Bendjedid Chadli during the 1980s and were strengthened in the 1990s due to the economic structural adjustment program (SAP) orchestrated by IMF. Djabi constructs typical leftist antagonistic relation between neoliberal political elites and autonomous trade unions, where unpatriotic capitalists accumulate state's wealth behind the faceless capital for their own benefit at the cost of Algerian workers.

The young SNAPAP activist Samir Baroud similarly describes the beginnings of his activism in SNAPAP. He also starts from the individual account related to social grievances that he faced, but moves to instruction and the importance of collectivity:

I finished my studies in 2010, so the first thing that I was interested in was the working place. I found myself in the situation, where I had contract for three years. I worked from 8.00h to 17.00h with the salary of 15 000 dinars. I tried to demand after the worker's rights such as increase of the salary. I searched from the Facebook and I found one autonomous trade union, SNAPAP. I went there and we created committee, which was affiliated with the union. It gave us many things. It showed how to conduct activism. How to demand after our rights. We regrouped and started to participate to the sit-ins in Algiers and in wilayas like the trade unionist who demand for their rights and for the increases of salaries⁹⁰³.

Baroud's account shows how contentious politics does not emerge from nothing. As Tarrow argues, it is "culturally inscribed and socially communicated"⁹⁰⁴. Young activists learn from the conventions of contention, part of a society's public culture, through the older generation of activists through instruction and obtain knowledge of particular routines⁹⁰⁵. SNAPAP also organizes training on trade union practices and to increase awareness of workers' rights. It is also noteworthy that at first Baroud found information about the SNAPAP through the internet and Facebook. The young trade union activist of SNAPAP, Mohamed Lazri about 20 years old, also found information about the SNAPAP first time from the internet:

The founders of SNAPAP have created the committee of Pre-Employ. They organized lot of sit-ins. I read about it on the internet. I was on Facebook when I heard about it. I contacted them. We met in Algiers and we had many meetings. We achieved something, but not really much⁹⁰⁶.

⁹⁰³ Interviewed in the bus heading to World Social Forum In Tunis in 2013.

⁹⁰⁴ Tarrow (2011, 29).

⁹⁰⁵ Tarrow (2011, 29).

⁹⁰⁶ Mohamed Lazri. Interviewed in the bus heading to from Algiers World Social Forum In Tunis in 2013.

To show the resemblance of these youth activists, Idriss Mekideche also explains how he got involved in trade union activism in SNAPAP:

First, in general the life of the workers in Algeria is catastrophic. For example, I am not permanent, I am contractual. There are violations against the law because the precarious work is a very dangerous phenomenon, even more dangerous than the unemployment. It is very dangerous because when you are unemployed, the state is afraid of unemployed because they have time. They can create problems. But when you are precarious worker and you work every day from 8.00 to 16.00 while your salary is derisory and miserable, you are always preoccupied to take care of your basic needs. That is not normal. A person cannot blossom, start the projects, do politics or to do anything. He can just work from 8.00 to 16.00 and we do not have means. Therefore, if we are able to eat it is a wonderland. You can work years after years but you cannot do anything. You cannot get married, live or rent an ... so the majority of precarious workers gain 12 000 to 17 000 dinars and the rent is 20 000 dinars or more. With your monthly income you cannot even rent a home. How can someone live? So being aware of all these problems I did some research on the internet if there is something that takes care of these ... for example the other union. I mean state unions do not take care of these branches of issues in the society. There is only SNAPAP that looks after these unemployed, precarious workers, pre-employs, unemployed graduates and so forth. It creates committees for these branches in the society because what is the worst is that unemployed and precarious workers do not have right to unionize and to organize themselves. We speak about marginalized people. Therefore, SNAPAP established institutions for them through unionism. Within the SNAPAP there are the committees of the women, the youth, the pre-employ, the unemployed, the unemployed graduates etc. It creates committees trying to integrate marginalized people. Therefore, I did the research on the internet and found that there are one committee of the Pre-employ within SNAPAP and I found a telephone number. I called them and I joined them⁹⁰⁷.

These examples originate from injustice and societal grievances, such as working hours, the lack of housing, unemployment, corruption, oppression, marginalization and lack of prospects that are experienced by Algerians youth in the SNAPAP. In general, these grievances can be linked to the concept of *waithood* that describes the living condition of the youth in the eastern and western Mediterranean area in general. According to Djavad Salehi-Isfahani and Navtej Dhillon⁹⁰⁸, waitthood results from demographic pressures (youth bulge), unequally distributed oil income, rigid institutions as well as from rigid social norms. They define the waitthood as: “a long phase which refers to the bewildering time that a large proportion of Middle Eastern

⁹⁰⁷ Idriss Mekideche. Interviewed in the bus heading from Algiers to World Social Forum in Tunis in 2013.

⁹⁰⁸ Salehi-Isfahani, Djavad & Dhillon, Navtej (2008, 6) Stalled Youth Transitions in the Middle East: A Framework for Policy Reform. *The Middle East Youth Initiative*. Number 8. October 2008.

youth spends waiting for a full state of adulthood”⁹⁰⁹. It is experience of transition, which is not directly linked to the age, but as complex reality that prevents obtaining adult status in the everyday life due to economic hardship. Diane Singerman⁹¹⁰, who coined the term, link the waithood to prolonged adulthood meaning that the youth struggle with financial costs related to marriage (housing, dowry, jewelry, celebrations and furniture) that prevents the youth to establish their independent private lives.

Young Algerian autonomous trade union activists blame the state authorities for their economic discomfort. They accuse the officials not fulfilling their guaranteed constitutional rights, as young SNAPAP activist Madjid Ferras explained when he recounted how and why he joined SNAPAP:

The article 55 states that every Algerian citizen has a right to work and live in dignity. Therefore, I, pre-employed working three years according to the contract non-renewable, struggle with the salary of 120 euros per month. I work as the permanent worker paid 300 euros per month, and I am after all graduated from the university, while others maybe from other educational institutes. We may have diplomas, but we do not have chance to work as the permanent workers. Therefore, I entered to the SNAPAP to ask after my rights, to have a work⁹¹¹.

It is interesting to see generational differences among the activists and their political subjectivity. While younger generation often memorize the direct causes to their political participation, the older generation saw it as longer process from larger perspective that often included their childhood, youth and friend or family member that inspired them to acquire knowledge, join to social movement or to reflect critically the social environment in general. The youth often locates the beginning of their activism within a more subjective perspective, while the older generation seem to more often describe various personalities and characters that inspired them at different periods of their lives.

The current President of SNAPAP Rachid Malaoui explained in an interview that during the 1980s students movements were important starting grounds for many current trade unionists and activists:

RM: I belonged to the student activist movement of the 1980s. My activism at the university got me arrested during the events of October 1988. I was among those

⁹⁰⁹ Salehi-Isfahani & Dhillon (2008, 6).

⁹¹⁰ Singerman, Diane (2007, 5-6) The Economic Imperatives of Marriage: Emerging Practices and Identities among Youth in the Middle East. *The Middle East Initiative*. Number 6. September 2007.

⁹¹¹ Madjid Ferras (name changed). Interviewed in the bus heading Algiers to World Social Forum in Tunis in 2013.

young people of the time who had been tortured while others were killed. As long as we campaigned for democracy, we were considered shady individuals⁹¹².

Salim Mecheri recalled how he got involved in political participation in the 1980s:

Since 1986, I started working. I had an uncle, who was revolutionary. One of those that were sentenced to death during the French colonialism. He was an oppositionist. After we gained our independence, he held a position as the secretary general within the department of the moudjahids. That was during the period of Ben Bella. When they processed for the coup d'etat of the Ben Bella, he stuck with the supporters of Ben Bella. He worked at the health sector, where I work now. When I was reintegrated to my actual post in CHU, it enabled me to be closer to my uncle. He gave me advices how the politics were developing in Algeria About the period of colonialism. I was really attached to my uncle. He was one of the founding members of the UGTA in Oran. I remember when I reintegrated to my job in 1986, he asked me three things: “avoid approaching the UGTA which is a trade union organization that endorse only polishing the portrait, and which is an illegitimate organization. You should never approach UGTA. I advice you to concentrate to the function of your work. You are servant of the sick. Avoid joining or affiliating with political parties such as FLN or others. I advice you to follow the development of Algeria”. He knew that there would be an explosion in 1988. It was 1986 and he told me that there will be a popular revolt and we will enter to the multi-party system. I was young. I was 23. However, I was student activist and committee member among the paramedics. Then in 1988, there was an explosion. I remember we were called by the FLN party. [...] There were sections of the FLN implanted in every establishment whether public or ... I remember we were called by these sections of the FLN and at the same time by the UGTA. FLN was the single party and the UGTA was an organization part of it. So I remember that we were called out to say us that we should be discreet, that we should not respond to these calls to destabilize the country. They were against it. They wanted to obstruct and halt this haemorrhage. We were young and we said to them that no, you are responsible. When we said that you are responsible, we were arrested by the police. When I returned to my work, me and our group not more than 10 persons, were arrested and interrogated by the police: “why did you support the...” we said: “we haven’t supported anyone. We just said that it is one party system that pushed this revolt”. However, we were arrested. They did PV [procès-verbal] or [statement of the facts of the case] and returned ... [...] ⁹¹³

Salim Mecheri explains, how his uncle was extremely important to him, and how deep the impact his uncle had regarding the formation of his political views and outlook. Mecheri also remember how the country was ruled by single party and how the UGTA was considered as part of it. As part of the power (pouvoir). It is also important to notice, how Mecheri and authorities construct opposite discourses

⁹¹² Rachid Malaoui. Interviewed by Larbi Graïne (2010, 25).

⁹¹³ Salim Mecheri. Interviewed in Oran in December 2014.

about the destabilization. He argues, that it was the conduct of one-party rule that led to destabilization of the country. He goes back to 1992 when President Chadli resigned:

For example, when they called for the interruption of the electoral process, we went out with Kaddour Chouicha, Rachid Malaoui and the whole movement of the activist that existed and conducted the protest in Place d'Armes where we said no to the termination of the electoral process⁹¹⁴.

Chouicha, Malaoui and Mecheri are still active in the trade union movement and it is a good example of how friendship and networks are constructed alongside activism, and plays an important role in attachment of the movements. Mecheri also linked the events of 1992 to the contemporary situation:

Regarding these events looking from the position of autonomous trade union organization, we are today paying the price of the interruption of the electoral process. This means the period from 1992 until 2000. Because there were the laws that were created after 1992, such as the famous 59-83 decree where no more than five persons could regroup. When you read the decree 59-83, it says that the gatherings (atroupement) are forbidden. Assemblies and marches are forbidden. General assemblies are forbidden. Gatherings are forbidden. Everything except from the autonomous trade unions. But we had huge difficulties because we were said: "no, even the trade unions must have authorization and we cannot give you that ... ". It means that they forbid or they do not correspond favorably for your request to general assembly or to protest peacefully using this famous decree: "because we were on this state of emergency or we are afraid that the terrorist will come and ...". What it means is that we have passed last 20 years. One cannot say that we were "stand by" but that we have tried to be listened. We have hoped especially that the international opinion would listen us⁹¹⁵.

This recollection shows how the autonomous trade unions can gather religious and non-religious activists together. Mecheri argues that trade unions are the only platform available, because public space is restricted. Similarly, it shows how the older generation of activists construct their personal development and activism in general from childhood, and the influences they were surrounded by home and in societal structures in general. Another older generation activist, friend of Mecheri Kaddour Chouicha, also described the start of his activism:

KC: I was born and I grew up in Oran. My father was responsible for the family and was working as a docker (at the bottom level, under middle class). However, because many French left Algeria after 1962 there was room for promotion for many

⁹¹⁴ Salim Mecheri. Interviewed in Oran in December 2014.

⁹¹⁵ Salim Mecheri. Interviewed in Oran in December 2014.

Algerians. My father was one of those who benefitted from this promotion and was able to rise socially in the port of Oran. However, to be honest, I was a bit estranged from our family who were the moudjahids. In our family, we did not have this certain kind of atmosphere where I learned to combat. No, I was a child of independent Algeria. An Algeria of socialism, Algeria of pan-Africanism more influenced by what happened in Algeria after the independence. Because during the independence, I was six years old. So during the time when I was at school we were surrounded by the values of socialism, but simultaneously Algeria non-aligned. Therefore, I was influenced by those values. I was also influenced by the religious values because I come from the family, like many families. However, very early I broke out because what I saw it did not correspond with what I was taught. When I was 17 years old, I dreamed that I was climbing towards God. During the climbing, I saw all the handicaps who told me to say to God “why we are like this”. “What have we done to merit this”? That is when I pushed the religion aside. This is my personal view, but I understand those who need its values simply to continue their lives. Because the religious question is above all answer to the existential question. What are we doing on the earth. What does life mean and so forth. Some people need a clear and evident answer at once. Others can accept that there is no answer. We are simply here⁹¹⁶.

Meanwhile, before the 1988 October uprisings Algeria lacked a clear and visible oppositional movement, which made it more difficult for the earlier generations to start political participation. It is of course wrong to therefore conclude that such movements did not exist at all. For example, the student movement was prominent, even though it was controlled in many ways by the FLN and its youth mass organization UNJA:

KC: I was lucky to have one great teacher [in the highschool] who opened my spirit. It is fortunate to have those. He was a kind of teacher that did not have to brainwash you, while there are those as well. Nevertheless, he told that we must speak, discuss, debate. I was lucky to have good teachers, whether they were French or Algerians. At the time, there were also many French teachers. They helped me to open myself to various things and to be critical. After that, everything else comes naturally. At university, already very early, I mean two months after I went to a course, I found the Union National de la Jeunesse Algérienne (UNJA), who were organizing an exposition. They were linked to FLN, which mean that they were what we call mass organization. I remember, when I debated with them saying that “I don’t believe you”. Student movement must be autonomous in the regards of power (*pouvoir*). It was 1973. I remember it very well, because the one I debated is currently one of my colleagues. He tried to explain me the necessity to be part of the UNJA. However, because I really pissed him off, he told me: “if you want autonomy prepare yourself for what we will do to you with a bottle”. At the time, the most humiliating that they could do to you in torture was to force someone to sit down on a bottle.

KM: Torture existed in the 1970s?

⁹¹⁶ Kaddour Chouicha. Interviewed in Oran in January 2015.

KC: Of course. There have always been torture. That is why I really remember that occasion. However, I passed through university refusing to join the UNJA. I am not saying I confronted them, but I refused to play their game. During the end of my studies, when the Islamism started, we were a small group of youngsters while the Islamists had closed the university on the national level in 80 or 81. At the time, UNJA was under influence of the PAGS and was considered as a communist movement. After we understood, that it was the military security who helped the Islamists break the influence of the PAGS. The whole university was closed. I remember that when we met with my friends in the morning in our institution, there were three bearded (barbus, name to describe an Islamist) who told us that it was closed. We were together with four or five colleagues when we returned next day. I had an iron chain and ax with me and we went to open the university. It was easy. Those three fellow men did not resist when we told them that if the university will be closed, it will take place according to our [students] own decision, not that you say it is closed. Then we organized a general assembly, which decided to close the university, maybe because they were afraid. Then we said ok, let's close it then. However, that was one of those moments when I really hated the PAGS and its movement. I participated in one march in Oran organized by UNJA that was against the Islamists and we were many. We demanded opening of the university. It was 1980 or 81. The period of the culmination point of the rise of Islamism in the university⁹¹⁷.

Kaddour Chouicha, among many other autonomous trade union activists, believes that the Islamist movement was long used by the national security officers. He also remembers how the Islamists insulted the Amazigh activists at the university and the violence they used.

Therefore, I had an idea of the Islamist violence before 1988, because I had lived it already in the beginning of the 1980s in the university. I also have to admit that I had not understood how much the elements of the security service intervened to strengthen the Islamists. At the time, I was not convinced or did I feel it completely. However, already then I knew that it was not FLN but the army who decided. One of my current colleagues who was then a student told me that I was one of the few, already then when we were students, who said that the problem is the army not the FLN. We were not very well formed at the time because I did not follow the formation of activism in the political party or else. Everything I know is through self-learning. I have done everything by myself. I have learned everything by myself through debates with my colleagues and so forth. That is how I got through my studies at university in 1981⁹¹⁸.

Then Chouicha moved to France for five years, where he encountered the anarchist movement and other European left groups. It is important to note that the French activist scene and literature have had a significant impact on contemporary Algerian

⁹¹⁷ Kaddour Chouicha. Interviewed in Oran in January 2015.

⁹¹⁸ Kaddour Chouicha. Interviewed in Oran in January 2015.

activism. Chouicha stressed the importance of getting wider perspective of meeting with others, who share different socio-economic background, different nationality and religious viewpoints:

One year in Paris and four years in Toulouse. It helped me a lot. I cannot deny that. I was there from 1981-1986. It helped me because I met many people. I learned a lot about the politics, trade unionism, about the left and the extreme left and so forth. Especially when I was in Toulouse, which is close to Spain and where many people from the Spanish anarchist movement who had escaped to France. Therefore, I worked a bit with the so-called libertarians in France. For me those five years were determinant. It was important for me to live with the people who were not Muslims and who did not know about Islam. It shapes the mind. Instead of staying in your small corner thinking that there is nobody else than you, your family. It is bad. However, when you open yourself you find out what is essential in being human.

I neither received any kind of political education. I worked with the people. I conducted a few radio broadcasts. All my political education is self-taught. Especially through books. I have read a lot. Already when I was a kid. When there were not a lot entertainment I read. Not about politics. In the beginning, I was not interested in politics. I read novels. About two novels a day. I really read a lot. Gradually I started to be interested in other things and wanted to understand more. Especially when I was in France. Through various debates, I wanted to know more. If you are afraid to speak, it means that you are not sure what you want to say⁹¹⁹.

Chouicha, as well as many other especially older generation activists in SNAPAP can be considered as intellectuals. They have a vast knowledge of various theories in social sciences and know profoundly many famous scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu and others. After five years in France Chouicha moved back to Algeria.

First, when I came back in 1986, I was searched one year because of the military service and because in Toulouse I knew people who were extreme left and had been imprisoned due to Berber Spring in 1980 in Algeria. They had left to France to get political education. We met and became friends. Because of that, I was filed. Then when I came back, I worked one year. Then I went to make my military service. I was lucky to make it civil. It means that I did 45 days of military service, and the rest I was able to compensate by teaching. I did not receive salary from it. It was a bit difficult year, because 1988 was the year of the events of 1988, but I was in the army. All of us who were in the army were kept inside.

KM: How would you describe the events in 1988?

KC: I was not able to participate. In any case, there was no participation. It was the youth. It was not political. However, I went out with my wife, who was working as a journalist and had to go out to discover what happened. We went out to the city and

⁹¹⁹ Kaddour Chouicha. Interviewed in Oran in January 2015.

to the districts that were a bit dangerous. We were even afraid. However, we observed all that. I was still in the army and I did not have a right to speak⁹²⁰.

It is important to acknowledge that Chouicha argued that the 1988 October uprisings were not political from the outset, but were led by the youth and became politicized afterwards. Then Chouicha described how he entered to establish among others the important autonomous trade union CNES, which was the most visible oppositional autonomous trade unions during the civil war in the 1990s:

Six months before finishing the army, the teachers in our university started to plan to launch a trade union. I joined this union. I did not have a right because I was in the army, but I joined in the meetings. I told them not to put my name in the papers (laughing), but I assisted the meetings. My adventure of trade unionism started from there. It was in 1989. Simultaneously, I was also a president of the committee in an association of our district where I lived. [...] I even tried to regroup other quarters in the city level of Oran. By the way, many years later, one elected from the FLN told me that: “we knew what you was going to do and we stopped you”. Because I was trying to create a coordination of the associations in the city level. However, I was stopped. I always knew that there were something but I did not know who.

Chouicha participated in the autonomous trade union CNES, known for its central and high-profile role during the emergence of the autonomous trade union movement, and especially during the civil war:

KC: We started to work around 1990. However, we received authorization in 1992. But we were active even before.

KM: How many autonomous trade unions existed at the time?

KC: I do not know. Maybe we were sixth, seventh or eighth? In any case, we started in 1990. We did not even thought about the registration. It came later. I remember well, when we were in the meeting with the head of the government Ghozali [Prime Minister Sid Ahmed Ghozali] in 1991 or 1992, and many started to speak about the registration. He told us: “the question regarding the registration will not arise because we can clearly see that you are representative. Every time you organize a strike at the university, everything stops”. For him the registration was nothing else than administrative formality and it was right because at the time when we organized a strike every national university was closed.

KM: Did you practice activism during the black decade?

⁹²⁰ Kaddour Chouicha. Interviewed in Oran in January 2015.

KC: Oh yes. One of our biggest particularities was that we conducted activism in a radical way during the most difficult periods during the civil war. During the state of emergency, we went out to the streets to demonstrate⁹²¹.

Chouicha explained how CNES occupied public spaces even during the most violent years during the 1990s. While the autonomous trade unions emerged in 1989 as a result of 1988 October uprisings, it is clear that they maintained their activities, even under difficult and challenging conditions, during the 1990s civil war and aimed to strengthen the pluralism of the trade unionism. This meant of course demanding citizenship rights through trade unionism and supporting the acquired gains in the fields of press, association and multiparty democratic political system in general. Malika Rebai Maamri⁹²² stresses that Algeria is one of the rare states in Southern Mediterranean area that “possesses the important preconditions for a transition to democracy”: economic and social background conditions; consensus among Algerians to desire democracy; conflict and resolution mechanisms; and politicians that can be committed to democratic transformation. She believes that while the decision-makers endeavor to revitalize the public space in promoting the capabilities and activity of citizens, the decline of social capital negatively influences citizens’ confidence in political institutions (political parties and parliament).

⁹²¹ Kaddour Chouicha. Interviewed in Oran in January 2015.

⁹²² Maamri, Rebai Malika (2014) *The Dimensions of Democratic Citizenship in Algeria*. Germany, GRIN.

6 GOVERNMENTAL RESPONSES

My aim in this chapter is to continue to describe the development of autonomous trade union movement through discourse analysis and to concentrate on Algerian governmental responses regarding the collective action organized by them. For sources, I continue to use the interviews, newspaper articles and other descriptive literature available to contextualize the development of the autonomous trade union movement from the national peace process and reconciliation during the end of 1990s until the regional 2011 uprisings. This period can be considered arguably as one of the most intense phase of the struggle of autonomous trade union movement so far.

General employment policies organized by the state include various programs that aim to decrease poverty and precariousness of workers, and consist of tripartite negotiations with UGTA, considered by the state authorities as the sole representative of the workers. In addition to being responsible for the formation and maintenance of labor relations and general employment policies in the country, the Algerian authorities seem to use multiple forms of action in controlling the functioning and the visibility of the autonomous unions. Therefore, I ask: How the Algerian ruling authorities manage the non-violent acts of citizenship conducted by the autonomous trade unions?

The peace process that began in the late 1990s, was followed by the transformation of the various autonomous trade unions, such as SNAPAP in the public sector, towards more oppositional character of political action. During the 2000s, the civil war calmed down and Algeria witnessed major economic development due to high oil and gas prices. This development helped the government to gather support and justify its policy making under the leadership of Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who was elected President in 1999 elections with promise of bringing peace and prosperity.

Meanwhile, the autonomous trade unions blamed the state authorities for systematic violations of the trade union rights. They argued that their functioning was deterred and their access in public spaces was restricted, which prevented their possibilities to organize activities. The conduct of tripartite negotiations exclusively with UGTA was criticized for marginalizing the autonomous trade unions and

bringing down trade union pluralism in general. While I introduce some of the repertoires used by the authorities to control the autonomous trade union movement, I will also present the employment policies in contemporary Algeria to better understand the demands and critics of the independent unions and governmental practices. I will also show how active labor market programs and main features are constructed in Algeria⁹²³ in comparison within the context of Maghreb⁹²⁴.

Concerning discourse analysis, I am interested in how the antagonism appears in the context of the political. Autonomous trade unions frequently accuse UGTA for functioning as a political asset of the authorities. Meanwhile, the autonomous trade unions are themselves accused for transformation towards political opposition movement instead of conducting traditional trade union action. Each accuses the other for politicizing the work and trade unionism. Therefore, the acts of citizenship are politicized: whether functioning in the autonomous trade unions can be considered as acts of citizenship, or whether it is oppositional political action, as state authorities allege.

I approach this politicization by examining how these antagonistic discourses are constructed, the context in which they are constructed, and how the concept of political functions as nodal point reflecting the construction of these discourses at large. I will show through different examples how certain social question are politicized for embellish one's own action, which is on the contrary often disconnected from political purposes. I will process this problematic using the complex and versatile concept of the political reflecting how asymmetric power relations come into effect in qualifying something as political, and what consequences it encapsulate.

6.1 Asymmetric negotiation: tripartite dialogue during the years of prosperity

The turn of 2000s was a difficult phase for the young autonomous trade union movement. The security situation was still weak and the state of affairs was unstable due to insurgency of Islamist militant groups. The civil war had caused a setback

⁹²³ Musette, Mohammed Saïb (2014) Employment Policies and Active Labour Market Programmes in Algeria. *European Training Foundation ETF*.

⁹²⁴ Musette, Mohamed Saïb & Hammouda, Nacer Eddine (2006) *La question de l'emploi au Maghreb central – Volume 3*. Alger: Office des publications universitaires.

regarding democratic reforms that were extremely important for the functioning of autonomous trade unions and other civic organizations. On the other hand, unstable social conditions could have offered an opportunity to the autonomous unions to increase their popularity as critics of governmental policies and possibility to increase their membership through mobilization. However, Algerians seemed to be tired of large-scale contestation after a decade of violent acts and preferred stability and gradual pacification of civil war.

Regardless of the peace process, which quelled the military and terrorist activity and gave more space for civic action, the economic improvement that followed challenged the criticism introduced by the oppositional trade union movement. The independent trade unions struggled to put in practice the achieved rights in the constitution in 1989. Nevertheless, autonomous unions, especially SNAPAP, were able to challenge the hegemonic position of the UGTA through various repertoires of action, such as strikes, hunger strikes, sit-ins and demonstrations. The beginning of the 2000s also witnessed the creation of the new autonomous unions⁹²⁵ that were able to challenge UGTA in the educational sector, though their emergence dispersed the coherent autonomous movement even further. Creation of new unions and dispersal of trade union movement weakened the position of the UGTA even further. Simultaneously, it complicated the common action of the autonomous trade union movement as well.

Next, I will analyze the peace and national reconciliation process in the context of civic movements such as autonomous trade unions, which stayed quite inactive in the turn of 2000s, as the current President of SNAPAP, Rachid Malaoui, stated in 2010:

SNAPAP did remain somewhat "dormant" between 1998 and 2001. It became under the spotlight as a result of the change in management in 2001. The trade union, it is true, had suffered the absence of a trade union culture among its former executives. The new leadership emerging in 2001 is characterized by the refinement of a trade union strategy. The emergence of SNAPAP is due to the effort that it has continued to deploy to the field to be the spokesman of the workers and due to the ability to publicly state its claims. But also because of the analysis and reflection that it has done regarding the country's social reality. It is particularly impressive in sounding the alarm on the precarious situation of the public service and workers in this sector. It can be

⁹²⁵ Syndicat autonome des travailleurs de l'Éducation (SNTE), Syndicat National des Médecins Généralistes de Santé Publique (SNMG SP), Syndicat National Algérien des Psychologues (SNAPSY), Syndicat Algérien des Paramédicaux (SAP), Syndicat des Gestionnaires de la Santé (SGS), Syndicat National des Vétérinaires Fonctionnaires de l'Administration Publiques (SNVFAP), Syndicat National des Travailleurs de l'Énergie (SNT Énergie), Syndicat National du Personnel au Sol d'Air Algérie (SNPS Air Algérie), Syndicat National des Officiers de la Marine Marchande (SNOMMAR) and Syndicat National des Journalistes Algériens (SNJA).

said that the claims and strikes that illustrate this period are at the origin of the revision of the legal arsenal. Revision that led to the texts we are referring to today⁹²⁶.

Malaoui stressed how SNAPAP was passive during 1998-2001 until new leadership with his lead took over and SNAPAP started to invest to the grassroots level as a strategy to protect the workers' rights. Malaoui also stressed the analysis that the new, more radical, leadership of SNAPAP conducted regarding the social situation in the country. Due to so-called "social reality" on the ground, as Malaoui argued, SNAPAP invested on street demonstrations and other protests in the public space. Understanding of the precarious working conditions in the public sector, SNAPAP was able to mobilize young activists, as the interviews showed in the previous chapter. Likewise, it is interesting how Malaoui is using the term "reality" to reconstruct the discursive "reality"⁹²⁷. From the point of view of discourse analysis, it is not crucial here to investigate whether the analysis of the SNAPAP is accurate or not but to reflect how different perception of the so-called "realities" effect on representations and construction of discourses.

Even during the peaceful years of the end of 1990s, there were contestation and strikes organized by the SNAPAP, especially affiliated to its association in the hospital CHU Oran⁹²⁸. Similarly, SATEF was able to widen since 1997 its action from Kabylia to nationwide under leadership of Arab Azzi, who was elected as the member of Parliament from the ranks of FFS⁹²⁹. Nevertheless, it was CNES, that was the most able to exert pressure on the social front on the state authorities until the end of the decade. In addition, there were some attempts to form common confederation and joint activities between SNAPAP and CNES related to common interests in the distribution of social housing related to higher education and especially after setting aside of the housing allocation commission, supported by the autonomous unions, in 1998 by the state authorities⁹³⁰. SNAPAP was even brave enough and pressed charges on Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia, whom they accused of anti-constitutional act when signing the decree that affected the distribution of

⁹²⁶ Rachid Malaoui interviewed by Larbi Graïne (2010, 28-29) *Algérie: Naufrage de la fonction publique et défi syndicale*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

⁹²⁷ Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, 9).

⁹²⁸ *La Tribune* 28.9.1998. Le SNAPAP exige une démocratisation des œuvres sociales du CHU d'Oran. O.M.; *Le Soir d'Algérie* 16.8.1999. Le compte bancaire des œuvres sociales bloqué. S.H.A.; *Ouest Tribune* 9.9.1999. Guiddoum se rétracte. H-Nora.

⁹²⁹ Graïne (2010, 110).

⁹³⁰ *La Tribune* 25.5.1998. Le SNAPAP et le CNES à Oran montent au créneau. Mohamed Ouanezar.

housing⁹³¹. This act shows the confidence of these unions in challenging the state authorities and politicizing social issues.

Confrontation between UGTA and SNAPAP was common. In March, then the General Secretary of SNAPAP Boumkhila Hamena condemned terrorism, destruction of economic infrastructure and accused UGTA of being “a fireman in service of power” that opportunistically searched for recover of the vast movement of discontent. UGTA was considered as partly guilty for the weak socio-economic condition, due to its position in the tripartite meetings showing antagonistic positions between UGTA and autonomous unions⁹³². After 1990 the government had opened tripartite negotiation with UGTA, which was the only union accepted to official collective bargaining and social dialogue in the context of annual tripartite meetings (labor unions-employers-government)⁹³³. However, the government was negotiating with various autonomous trade unions as well, even though they were excluded from the tripartite meetings. Negotiations between the government and autonomous trade unions can be considered as asymmetric due to differences in size and power, especially when power can be seen as ingrained in the structure of interaction⁹³⁴. The Algerian authorities have all the means of force at their disposal. According to Marwan Daoudy, power asymmetries impact on bargaining processes, which mean that weaker counterparts have to find innovative solutions to achieve their objectives⁹³⁵.

Kaddour Chouicha from the CNES explained the strategy used by the CNES with the state authorities in these asymmetric negotiations during the major strike in 1998:

KM: Were you in contact with the government during this occasion?

KC: No, we were all the time in dialogue. We met the President Chadli. We met Prime Minister Hamrouche. We met all the Ministers of Education. We met the Prime Minister Ghazali. We met Boudiaf when he arrived. We were a force that was hard to bypass.

KM: How many were you in the National office?

KC: I think we were nine. Maybe eleven. However, what saved us was that from the beginning we decided that we would not work like the other trade unions. Especially

⁹³¹ *L'Authentique*, 14.3.1998. Plainte contre Ouyahia: Distribution de logements sociaux.

⁹³² *El Watan* 14.3.1998. SNAPAP: Reconversion en confédération des syndicats sectoriels. Ziad Salah.

⁹³³ Benamrouche, Amar (2000, 155) *Grèves et conflits politiques en Algérie*. France: Éditions Karthala.

⁹³⁴ Daoudy, Marwan (2009, 365) *Asymmetric Power: Negotiating Water in the Euphrates and Tigris*. *International Negotiation* 14 (2009) pp. 361-391.

⁹³⁵ Daoudy (2009, 366).

in the beginning when we launched the strikes, we set three spokespersons. I was the spokesperson in the west. There was another colleague in the center and one in the east. Being a spokesperson means that you do not make decisions. You will go to discuss with the minister. You come back to the National Council and you introduce what you have obtained and what the others think about it. Even in the National Council, we said that it cannot make decisions before you go the General Assembly. Therefore, already from very early on we applied a method to prevent possibility of having CNES in the hand. Because I remember very well when at the time we were meeting the minister of Education [Aboubakr] Benbouzid, and immediately when we entered, we were spokespersons at the time, we were asked: “did you come here to make decisions or to discuss?”. I responded: “can you make decision or is it the Prime Minister who will decide?” Then he got a bit angry and said: “I am the Minister of the Republic ... “. We held this debate with our hands. Therefore, we applied this tactic, which disturbed them⁹³⁶.

William Zartman argues that negotiation in the first place is realized when neither counterpart to a conflict possesses enough power to impose its interests unilaterally⁹³⁷. Negotiation is needed to achieve long-term solutions. In asymmetric power relations, the weaker party often tries to avoid direct confrontation and conduct flexible performances, such as “borrowing of power”, where power actualizes to the needs of negotiation itself and this condition is beneficial to the underdog⁹³⁸. The negotiating process can include different stages, where symmetry-asymmetry positions manifest and weaker counterpart aim to negotiate on more equal terms⁹³⁹. Meanwhile, the stronger counterpart may seek to control the oppositional movements via influencing on its leadership. Chouicha explained how CNES avoided sending or electing the president for the governmental meetings due to fear of pressure, but sent a coordinator that did not have any executive powers. This was a clear negotiation strategy that yielded good results and enabled the continuation of action within asymmetric power relations:

We organized a congress in 1997. We did not elect a president. We only elected a coordinator. Therefore, we elected the national coordinator and two national deputy coordinators to express that there did not exist only one person that could represent the CNES. In addition, those three cannot represent the CNES until they go to National Council. The National Council cannot decide until they go to General Assembly. It was tiring to travel back and forth. Especially travelling with the train

⁹³⁶ Kaddour Chouicha. Interviewed in Oran in January 2015.

⁹³⁷ Zartman. William (1997, 1) *The Structuralist Dilemma in Negotiation*, in Lewicki R. Greenwich (Ed.) *Research on Negotiation in Organizations*. CT, USA: JAI Press.

⁹³⁸ Pfetsch, Frank R. and Landau, Alice (2000, 23) *Symmetry and Asymmetry in International Negotiations*. *International Negotiation* 5 (2000) pp. 21-42.

⁹³⁹ Pfetsch and Landau (2000, 29).

during the civil war. However, it was as if we were able to combat and train thousands of teachers with us, who were the workers of the middle class. We opened a new course regarding the trade union activism. It is not the model of the UGTA or any other but a model where every voice was heard and taken into a consideration.

KM: So we can say that the CNES was in the center of activism of the autonomous trade unionism?

KC: Of course. From the beginning there were other trade unions as well but the one that conducted hard combats was the CNES. In addition, it represented a bit kind of academic cultural elite so there was symbolism when people from the university organized a strike. At the time, it was an extra-ordinary opening in the world of trade unionism in Algeria.

KM: And in the office, how did you solve the problems? Where you always agreeing?

KC: The people who observed from the far distance believed that the CNES was almost a political party. They thought that people in CNES were agreeing about everything. However, it was absolutely wrong. There were always debates and they were very open in the CNES. Nevertheless, when we made a decision, we made them together and only after then we advanced. Majority of us were leftist. I want to be clear. Some were related to PAGS, others to PST. I was also considered as leftist, but merely as social leftist that represented social movements. Then there were those who came from the Kabyle movement⁹⁴⁰.

Political parties and their representatives were acting in close relationship with autonomous trade unions. Meanwhile, as Chouicha explained, autonomous unions offered possibility for political action without necessity of taking part into sectorial politics, in this example party politics. Being in the left, not participating in leftist party politics, was possible through autonomous trade unions for those who felt that they shared common leftist values (were part of the so-called social left) but did not necessarily agree with the party politics of the left. Meanwhile, it is also revealing that autonomous trade unions are quite closely connected to political protest movement.

In August 1998, CNES and SNAPAP organized a conference in Oran, where they threatened to increase their activities and demanded increase on salaries⁹⁴¹. Then Deputy National Coordinator of the CNES Kaddour Chouicha and National Secretary of the SNAPAP Rachid Malaoui were interviewed in the newspaper *Le Soir d'Algérie*, where they accused the Minister of Labor, Social Protection and Vocational Training Hacène Laskri for the exclusion and marginalization of

⁹⁴⁰ Kaddour Chouicha. Interviewed in Oran in January 2015.

⁹⁴¹ *Le Matin* 3.8.1998. "Rentrée sociale explosive".

autonomous unions⁹⁴². They insisted that autonomous trade unions should be heard within the modification of general status in the public services. Malaoui also stated that SNAPAP was collecting money to affiliate into International Labor Organization, where UGTA had been the only representative from Algeria. This had enabled UGTA, according to Malaoui, to receive four billion centimes a year⁹⁴³. This move could be interpreted as the internationalizing of domestic conflict, which has been one major aim of autonomous trade union movement.

The peace process and the gradual end of the civil war ushered in a new phase in the development of the autonomous trade unions in Algeria. From the peace research perspective, the post-conflictual society and formation of oppositional movement in Algeria offers an interesting case study. The functioning of non-violent autonomous trade unions in post-civil war Algeria have not been studied before. Meanwhile, the theoretical frameworks, e.g. popular peace and adaptive peace building, are problematic to contextualize within Algerian autonomous trade union movement, because while autonomous trade unions promote democratic institutional peace building, they confronted institutions such as International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, often highlighted as major contributors to democratic institutional peace building in the two aforementioned theoretical frameworks. These theoretical frameworks in peace research approach societies too reductively from certain macro-economic perspectives colliding with more grassroots based orientation of autonomous trade unions and the civic movement at large, which their aimed institutional building programs should on the contrary strengthen.

The peace and reconciliation process as well as the application of amnesty needs to be further approached to gain a better idea of the social context in post-war Algeria. The immense atrocities that were committed during the civil war shaped the Algerian collective experience and memory in the context of the construction of societal structures for years to come. Civilians, families, journalists, academics, foreigners, musicians, writers and intellectuals in general had been murdered. It is therefore not possible to overemphasize the collective trauma that Algeria experienced during these violent years.

⁹⁴² *Le Soir d'Algérie* 4.8.1998. "Nous condamnons le silence des pouvoirs publics": Point de presse du CNES et du SNAPAP à Oran. B.B. (B.B. indicates the first letters of the forename and surname of journalist who wrote the article).

⁹⁴³ *Le Soir d'Algérie* 4.8.1998. "Nous condamnons le silence des pouvoirs publics" Point de presse du CNES et du SNAPAP à Oran. B.B. (B.B. indicates the first letters of the forename and surname of journalist who wrote the article).

The antagonism between the army and the Islamists pushed aside various other societal discrepancies on a mental level and aggravated other social contradictions present in the Algerian social culture: Francophony, Arabophony and Berberophony⁹⁴⁴. Intellectual elites that could have stand in as mediators between cultures, languages and morals were silenced, imprisoned, exiled or even killed. This of course complicated the potential openings for the national dialogue and reconciliation on the societal level⁹⁴⁵.

Nevertheless, attempts to start national dialogue to end the spiral of violence existed during the civil war. President Liamine Zeroual worked behind the scenes, holding private negotiations with the Islamists but with little success⁹⁴⁶. In January 1995, an Italian Catholic ecumenical Community of Sant'Egidio invited all the major societal counterparts⁹⁴⁷ and the parties at war to Rome on a platform of starting negotiations to halt the atrocities. The meetings included the Algerian oppositional forces such as Rabah Kebir and Anwar Haddam (FIS), human rights activist and former Minister Ali Yahia Abdennour, Hocine Aït Ahmed and Ahmed Djeddaï (FFS), Louisa Hanoune (PT), former President Ahmed Ben Bella and Khaled Bensmain (MDA), Ahmed Djaballah (Islamic Renaissance Movement/al-Nahda), Ahmed ben Mouhammed (JMCA) and Abdelhamid Mehri (FLN). President Zeroual, who considered the platform an embarrassment, refused the offer out of hand, appealing the menace of foreign intervention to Algerian internal affairs.

In 1996, President Zeroual turned down public negotiations with the Islamist groups, but secretly conducted dialogue between the army and the maquis⁹⁴⁸. He released some political Islamist leaders from the prisons and offered “rahma” (clemency) and reintegration into society for those elements who would lay down their arms⁹⁴⁹. In October 1997, an agreement was signed between the military command and the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS). This agreement, which was kept secret from the public and whose content is still largely unknown, was the foundation

⁹⁴⁴ Bensmaïa, Réda and Melehy, Hassan (1997, 90) Reflections on the Nature of the Violence in Algeria. *Diacritics*, Vol. 27, No. 2, Writing between the lines (Censored). Summer, 1997. pp. 85-97.

⁹⁴⁵ Bensmaïa and Melehy (1997, 86-90).

⁹⁴⁶ Le Sueur, James D. (2010, 65-66) *Between Terror and Democracy – Algeria since 1989*. London – New York: Zed Books.

⁹⁴⁷ Le Sueur (2010, 66 and 87).

⁹⁴⁸ Maquis can be translated as bush, meaning land that is covered by shrubs (shrubland) used by armed groups to hide. This Corsican word was used to depict French Resistance fighters (maquisards) fighting against Nazi occupation of France during the Second World War.

⁹⁴⁹ Hidouchi, Ghazi (2006, 2) “The Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation” in Algeria: Threatening Contradictions. *Arab Reform Initiative*. July 2006.

for the peace process that came into effect with the arrival of the new President, Abdelaziz Bouteflika⁹⁵⁰.

In September 1998, President Zeroual unexpectedly announced his resignation. Brutal massacres during 1997-1998 had weakened his credibility in Algeria and in the international community⁹⁵¹. The Presidential elections were set for the April 1999. In September 1998, the central trade union UGTA led by Abdelmadjid Sidi-Saïd, not satisfied with Zeroual's decision to resign, had been in an impasse regarding its negotiations with the government⁹⁵². SNAPAP and other autonomous trade unions used the situation to their advantage. While SNAPAP expressed its concern and stressed its support for the organization of new elections, it simultaneously announced a protest march to be organized in October⁹⁵³. In addition, it started the organization of its structures at national and regional level to organize national congress and to gain support from the congress to the project of creation of autonomous trade union confederation with other autonomous unions⁹⁵⁴. This confederation sought to challenge the position of the UGTA, first through a forum of organizations, which included⁹⁵⁵ with CNES, SNAPAP, SNM⁹⁵⁶, SNPDSM⁹⁵⁷, SNAPO⁹⁵⁸, UNPEF⁹⁵⁹, SPLA⁹⁶⁰, UNEP⁹⁶¹ and ANPMC⁹⁶².

It was the second attempt⁹⁶³ by the autonomous trade unions to challenge the UGTA by trying to search possibilities to combine fragmented forces in concentrated forum to establish confederation, which could counterweight UGTA

⁹⁵⁰ Hidouchi (2006, 3).

⁹⁵¹ Le Sueur (2010, 74-75).

⁹⁵² *Ouest-Tribune* 20.9.1998. L'Inter-syndicale: Naissance d'un forum. B. Mokhtaria.

⁹⁵³ *Ouest-Tribune* 20.9.1998. L'Inter-syndicale: Naissance d'un forum. B. Mokhtaria.

⁹⁵⁴ *Ouest-Tribune* 20.9.1998. L'Inter-syndicale: Naissance d'un forum. B. Mokhtaria.

⁹⁵⁵ *Soir d'Algérie* 20.9.1998. Un forum d'organisations est préconisé: A défaut d'une confédération intersyndicale.

⁹⁵⁶ The National Union of Magistrates (Le Syndicat national des *magistrats*, SNM).

⁹⁵⁷ The Union of Professors and Docents in Medical Sciences (Le Syndicat des professeurs et docents en sciences médicales, SNPDSM).

⁹⁵⁸ The Union of Community Pharmacists (Le Syndicat des pharmaciens d'officine, SNAPO).

⁹⁵⁹ National Union of Personal Education and Training (Union Nationale des Personnels de l'Éducation et de la Formation, UNPEF).

⁹⁶⁰ Union of Airline Pilots (Syndicat des pilotes de ligne, SPLA).

⁹⁶¹ The union of public entrepreneurs (L'union des entrepreneurs publics, UNEP).

⁹⁶² National Association of Professors and Heads of Conferences (l'Association nationales des professeurs et maîtres de conférences, ANPMC).

⁹⁶³ The first attempt took place in 1995, when SATEF sought to create a confederation, CSA, but which was blocked by the authorities.

and achieve access to negotiation tables, such as tripartite, with the governmental officials. Forum signatories also expressed their support for the President of the SNM, Tayeb Louh, who was brought before the disciplinary council of the National Council of the Judiciary due to his political positioning. It is worth mentioning that four years later, in 2002, Louh became the Minister of Labor and Social Security, which was considered a setback among the autonomous trade unionists, as is shown in an interview with Malaoui published in 2010:

A former trade unionist that I personally have helped when he was forced to his “turnaround” behind of which are none other than the ministry of justice and the UGTA. That's how he was pressed to form a new team. Louh was transferred from his post while he was preparing to organize its general meeting. He had constantly consulted us at the time we had to create a coordination among trade unions. He got help and assistance from us, especially for the publication of his press releases. In short he was our friend and partner, we supported him fully. He was among those present at the Oran congress in 1999. He delivered a speech in which he announced the creation of SNATA (I still have the videotape to show it). But since becoming a member of the government, he has changed⁹⁶⁴.

In March 1999, SNAPAP held its second National Congress in the family center of Aïn el-Turck, Bouisseville (Oran) that transformed SNAPAP into National Autonomous Trade Union of Algerian Workers (Syndicat national autonome des travailleurs algériens, SNATA)⁹⁶⁵. Around 400 participants from 25-30 wilayas⁹⁶⁶ and representatives from the political parties such as FFS and RCD with the President of the SNM Tayeb Louh and National Coordinator Kaddour Chouicha from the CNES witnessed the new orientation where SNATA announced to target economic sector in the future. The economic sector is the most protected by the state authorities, because it opens vulnerabilities for the state vis-à-vis oppositional autonomous trade unions. In addition, on the contrary from the UGTA, which had supported officially the election of Zeroual in 1995 and now the election of Bouteflika, SNATA refrained from any political declaration regarding presidential elections. SNATA did not support the candidacy of the Bouteflika, or any other candidate, and wanted the workers to make their own decision whom to vote⁹⁶⁷. This

⁹⁶⁴ Rachid Malaoui interviewed by Larbi Graïne (2010, 44).

⁹⁶⁵ *Le Soir d'Algérie* 30.3.1999. Deuxième congrès: Le Snapap investit le secteur économique. S.M.A; *Le Matin* 31.3.1999. Le SNAPAP est devenu SNATA. A.T. Hassen.

⁹⁶⁶ In the article of *Le Soir d'Algérie* the number of the wilayas was 25, while in the article of *Le Matin* the number of the wilayas was 30.

⁹⁶⁷ *Le Soir d'Algérie* 30.3.1999. Deuxième congrès: Le Snapap investit le secteur économique. S.M.A; *Le Matin* 31.3.1999. Le SNAPAP est devenu SNATA. A.T. Hassen.

was also meant to be a clear message for the apolitical nature of the SNATA compared to the position of UGTA, while this apolitical stance contained an entire political aspect. SNATA did not want to support the authorities formally or informally.

In April 1999, the experienced former Foreign Minister (1963-1979) of Houari Boumédiène, Bouteflika, who had been out of the country for many years, was elected as the fifth President when other candidates withdraw their candidacy⁹⁶⁸. During his election campaign, Bouteflika had promised to bring peace to Algeria: he won 74 percent of the votes while election turnout was a little over 60 percent⁹⁶⁹. Bouteflika met with autonomous trade union representatives, as long-time SNAPAP activist Salim Mecheri recalled:

SM: There was leader of the government [Smail] Hamdani. It was either 1998 or 1999. When Bouteflika arrived, he submitted the status of public sector to the Popular National Assembly (APN) and we organized a protest in front of the APN to say No! We called Bouteflika to freeze the file regarding the future of the work of the public sector. Fortunately, he froze it and that it should go via... because if he would have passed that status in 1999, there would have been an explosion. Because there was poor attention that it could have ended in firing around 500 000 workers. Because it was sector that gathered around 1 400 000 workers. They froze it and Bouteflika was lucky. The oil prices got up. In 1999, we met with Bouteflika in Oran. During his first mandate he came out a lot. He called out all the associations of the civil society and conducted a campaign of sensitization. Concerning SNAPAP, there were questions that were posed to many other organizations as well. UGTA was the first organization that exposed a problem related to the installation of holding. The representative of the UGTA enrolled his response and then there was one representative of one autonomous trade union within healthcare sector SNPSP [Syndicat National des Praticiens de Santé Publique]. [...]Malaoui posed two problems.

KM: Did he meet Bouteflika?

SM: Yes, in Oran, when he met all the organization. We gathered in the prefecture of the city of Oran. It was big hall where all the associations regrouped. They made the chain.

KM: When was it?

SM: In 1999 or 2000.

KM: After Bouteflika became president?

SM: Yes. Rachid Malaoui asked for the reintegration of all the trade unionists dismissed by the SIT. Because all the trade unionists of the SIT were evacuated in the

⁹⁶⁸ Le Sueur (2010, 75-76).

⁹⁶⁹ Le Sueur (2010, 76-77).

south in concentration camps in Reggane. [...] SNAPAP, because we believe in pluralist syndicalism ... [...] He (Bouteflika) said: "I am preparing that Algerians can live. I did not come to give you work, housing or anything for free. I came to restore the peace, or *musallah al watania*, amnesty. I do not have money. I am interested that you can live". For the question related to the health care he said: "I don't trust to this system of health care. I only trust to my brother". He had a brother who was a doctor. He said: "I trust a doctor only enough for one injection". In a way, he denounced the whole Algerian system of health care. Bouteflika was clear and it is prerecorded. Concerning the response to Rachid Malaoui, he said. "I salute you. You spoke from the bottom of your heart. I will give instructions to reintegrate all those trade unionists". Because among the basic principals to restore reconciliation was the reintegration of these trade unionists. To show benevolence. To be honest, in ten days they were all reintegrated. We had a great rival within these workers. They came to us and asked if they could join to SNAPAP and we said we cannot because we are trade union that present public sector. UGTA used this for their advantage. They had one or two year-long campaign to discredit SNAPAP. They said that SNAPAP was nothing else than regrouping of the old members of the SIT. Unfortunately we declined. That is why we had an idea to create a confederation. Before it was SNATA, *Syndicat National Autonome des Travailleurs Algériens*.

KM: That was the first confederation?

SM: It was the first.

KM: When was it created?

SM: It can be found from the press book. In 2001 or ... I think. I remember. We made a campaign. We organized the first constitutional congress of the confederation SNATA. Congress was held in Oran. There was also Tayeb Louh, who is now minister of work and social security. That time he was representative of autonomous trade union.

KM: Where there other unions as well?

SM: Yes. It was a congress⁹⁷⁰.

SNATA was never formally authorized by the state officials, which prevented the continuation of its functioning. However, new attempts to create common confederation as a counterweight to UGTA followed. Mecheri explained how President Bouteflika froze the file after pressure from autonomous trade unions regarding the status of the public sector, which would have defined the future of work and led to a "social explosion". This is again an interesting example how patriotism acts in the context of destabilization in the formation of discourses and how autonomous trade unions helped the president to understand what is the best

⁹⁷⁰ Salim Mecheri. Interviewed in Oran in December 2014.

for Algeria. Mecheri's account also illustrates how the President Bouteflika showed an interest in meeting and negotiating with oppositional autonomous trade unions at the beginning of his Presidential term, and how he perceived the societal situation in Algeria after a decade of civil war. To achieve peace was vital, top priority.

Bouteflika soon introduced the Law on Civil Concord (or Civil Harmony Law, CHL), which included partial amnesty, grace *amnistiante* (grace conferring amnesty) for those Islamist fighters, who had not killed, raped, caused permanent disability or placed bombs in public spaces⁹⁷¹. This meant that the peace agreement would wipe away crimes committed during the black decade. This, partial amnesty, was widely criticized in the oppositional media as well as by some secular oppositional movements⁹⁷². Nevertheless, SNAPAP declared in June that: "the dialogue as an civilizational instrument is the only way to dispel misunderstandings and block the way from opportunists of all kinds, whose interest is to see the country with fire and blood"⁹⁷³. In September, SNATA declared that it supported the CHL, though instead of only to conduct Civil Concord they called all the active forces in the country to struggle for the Social Concorde, because the real peace was only possibly through construction of trust between citizens and administration in all levels⁹⁷⁴. For example, Rachid Malaoui argued that the authorities should have taken into consideration related to the peace process the role of the unfairly incarcerated cadres who had been dismissed, instead of freeing terrorists who had left thousands of victims without financial resources and without a future⁹⁷⁵.

Valerie Arnould has approached the peace process in Algeria critically. She has reminded about the contentious nature of amnesties in the context of international law and transnational justice processes arguing that "amnesties are rejected because they are in contradiction with current international law and the international community's stated objective of combatting impunity for international crimes and massive human rights violations"⁹⁷⁶. Meanwhile, she believes that amnesties involve

⁹⁷¹ Arnould, Valerie (2007, 228) Amnesty, peace and reconciliation in Algeria. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 7:2, pp. 227-253.

⁹⁷² Hidouchi (2006, 3).

⁹⁷³ *Ouest Tribune* 9.6.1999. Satisfaction du SNAPAP: Accord avec l'PAIS.

⁹⁷⁴ *Le Quotidien Oran* 4.9.1999. Syndicalistes du SNATA: Pour la suppression des oeuvres sociales. F. Naima.

⁹⁷⁵ *Le Soir d'Algérie* 4.8.1999. Conférence de presse du SNATA: Le pluralisme syndical en danger. S.H.A. (S.H.A. indicates the first letters of the forename and surname of journalist who wrote the article).

⁹⁷⁶ *Le Soir d'Algérie* 4.8.1999. Conférence de presse du SNATA: Le pluralisme syndical en danger. S.H.A. (S.H.A. indicates the first letters of the forename and surname of journalist who wrote the article).

more complex questions than international law. They should be approached from a larger societal perspective, because prosecution processes are essential for longer-term sustainable peace, integrating retribution and deterrence, recognizing the suffering of the victims, restoring dignity, re-establishing the rule of law, promoting reconciliation and marginalizing those who maintain the conflict⁹⁷⁷. However, what other choices were available for Algeria: continue the civil war? Should the leaders charge those elements who fought against radical Islamist movements while possibly committing atrocities?

Nations like Algeria often rationalize and justify the application of amnesties by pragmatic reasons: acts of violence and atrocities must halt. In many ways, the Algerian authorities had a legitimate reason to stop the conflict by all the means available, to stop the atrocities and start the post-conflict reconstruction. Nevertheless, while Arnauld's argument can be considered as arrogant from the Algerian governmental and citizen's perspective, she brings up two vital questions regarding Algeria: does peace exist without justice and should the aim for peace and stability prevail over normative pursuits for justice? ⁹⁷⁸ She argues that amnesty is acceptable only if it can be considered as responsible amnesty⁹⁷⁹. This means that human rights violations, such as torture, genocide and crimes against humanity, should be excluded from responsible amnesty. In 2003, the National Consultative Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (Commission nationale consultative de promotion et de protection des droits de l'Homme, CNCPPDH), was established under Farouk Ksentini⁹⁸⁰. Two years later in 2005 a referendum⁹⁸¹ was organized about the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation (Charte pour la paix et la réconciliation nationale, CPNR) and accepted after the popular vote⁹⁸². But, Arnauld⁹⁸³ argues, in Algeria the exercising of amnesty is only partially justified in the contexts of balance of power, the nature of human rights violations and the state of the judicial system.

⁹⁷⁷ Arnauld (2007, 230).

⁹⁷⁸ Arnauld (2007, 229).

⁹⁷⁹ Arnauld (2007, 231).

⁹⁸⁰ This instance is often considered by the members of SNAPAP and LADDH as unserious governmental tool without any credibility in practice.

⁹⁸¹ With participation of 79.76 percent, Peace and Reconciliation Project was favored by 97, 36 percent of the voters (Bustos 2006, 121). Meanwhile, independent sources estimated that the turnout was merely 40 percent (Arnauld 2007, 236).

⁹⁸² Arnauld (2007, 228); Bustos, Rafael (2006, 121) The Algerian National Reconciliation Referendum of 2005. *Med.2006*, pp. 119-121.

⁹⁸³ Arnauld (2007, 232).

Since the 2000, the economy of Algeria started to strengthen due to increasing oil prices⁹⁸⁴. That did not, however, prevented autonomous trade unions to continue their claims on pluralist trade unionism and rights guaranteed in the 1989 constitution. The civil war started to calm down due to the weakness of the armed Islamist movements and successful management of peace process. 2001 September 11 attacks in the United States instigated understanding from international powers to Algerian state in eradicating remaining armed groups that did not join the peace process⁹⁸⁵. It was a crucial time for the autonomous trade union movement to demand the realization of constitutional rights regarding the pluralism of trade unionism and to challenge the position of the UGTA as the official bargaining partner of the government. The civil war that had prevented the possibility to develop their socio-political significance was no longer an obstacle. In many ways, I consider this period as the most intense phase related to the combat between autonomous trade unions and state authorities. Struggles gained much media attention and autonomous trade unions manifested themselves as an important social and political force. Nevertheless, the autonomous trade unions were not able to construct a large popular movement especially, because they lacked the capacity to mobilize the youth, which comprised a significant force from the demographic perspective.

The field research conducted in Oran in 2001-2004 by Mourad Moulai-Hadj⁹⁸⁶ explained the challenges for the youth mobilization. As Moulai-Hadj argues, the 1988 October uprisings in Algeria, and in wider international arena that followed after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, enabled the potential success for sustainable democratization alongside the formation of the multiparty system and electoral pluralism. After the civil war and atrocities ended, there was a genuine possibility for the shaping and construction of the dynamic public space, including associative movements, new citizenship, new forms of management of political conflicts as well as potential blossom of political culture.

However, research material⁹⁸⁷ gathered by Moulai-Hadj examines the low political participation and widespread passivity of the youth in Oran, where 63

⁹⁸⁴ Lowi, Miriam R. (2009, 127) *Oil Wealth and the Poverty Politics: Algeria Compared*. New York: Cambridge.

⁹⁸⁵ Moulai-Hadj, Mourad (2011, 68) Espace public et participation politique en Afrique: le cas de l'Algérie. *Afrique et développement*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 1, 2011, pp. 63-73.

⁹⁸⁶ Moulai-Hadj (2011).

⁹⁸⁷ Research group of CRASC, directed by Moulai-Hadj, conducted the survey during the years 2001-2004 with a sample of 500 young Oranese in the context of research project called: "*Jeunes Algériens entre marginalisation et intégration*".

percent of the respondents considered politics as “not so important” in their lives, while only 12.8 percent considered politics very important. It is also depicting that 36.2 percent were not interested in politics while 40.2 percent were “not at all” interested in politics. The aftermath of the October 1988 uprisings and the civil war of the 1990s can be considered as the most prominent factor leading youth to lose hope possibilities to impact on political system. Simultaneously, traditional social movements had mostly failed to convince the necessity of participation for the youth. Meanwhile increasing oil income enabled state authorities to distribute the wealth and conduct social reforms.

Therefore, regarding political participation, only 0.8 percent were members in trade unions or political parties, while 77.4 percent had never took part in trade unions, political parties or charity associations. These results reveal, of course, many consequential particularities vis-à-vis Algerian society and public life. Other, more passive natures of political participation, were also remote, while 69 percent rejected signing petitions, 69.4 percent never took part in boycotts, 67.4 percent never took part in organized demonstration, 60 percent never participated in strikes, 72 percent never occupied offices or factories as a form of protest. Therefore, we can ask what was left from the 1988 October uprisings, the culture of political democratization and broad participation of Algerian citizens to develop the country?

At the same time, Moulai-Hadj stresses that low participation is not only Algerian phenomenon. It is wider problem of de-politicization in the North Africa and Middle East in general, which has become common in many countries regardless of their traditionally vivid political culture in the past. Due to restriction and exclusion by state authorities, it was hard for autonomous trade unions to function in the traditional way. They were forced to find ways to politicize democratic practices and human rights deficits to decrease obstacles for their functioning. Simultaneously, both parties, the UGTA and autonomous trade unions, blamed each other for neglecting the interests of the workers and concentrating on conducting politics. Meanwhile, they both explicitly resigned from political practices due to that negative connotation that “doing politics” contained. Both counterparts politicized events according to their interests and for their benefits, which offers for this study an interesting space for discourse analysis. The presidential elections were politicized by both actors. Supporting President Bouteflika was seen as political, while not supporting Bouteflika was seen as political as well, depending on one’s perspective and political position. UGTA was accused of supporting both Zeroual and Bouteflika during their presidential campaigns, and even before, as in the article published in 1999 by the oppositional newspaper El Watan shows:

Beyond their large number, the autonomous trade unions fail to emerge as a major force to solve different problems that we still see at the working life. Work in the field is harder, knowing that the UGTA has not only lost its credibility but has also turned towards politics. That is not its role. The central trade union, in fact, associates with the “employers and intellectual elites of the country to found a Committee for the Safeguarding of Algeria and demand the cancellation of the parliamentary elections where FIS was victorious in December 1991”. Furthermore, “this drift of UGTA’s work towards a strictly political action is accentuated even more since the government of Belaïd Abdesselam [...]”⁹⁸⁸

Autonomous trade unions were active on various fronts in trying to challenge the UGTA, such as on housing⁹⁸⁹ and health. Extremely long-term struggles were conducted in CHU Oran, where SNAPAP (Section Ahmed Zabana⁹⁹⁰) challenged UGTA (Section Aïssat Idir⁹⁹¹) and the leadership of the hospital for the distribution of the budget and transparent conduct of the management. The names of both sections, Ahmed Zabana and Aïssat Idir, reveal patriotic connotations, where the past and the collective memory were politicized. In February 2000, 19 persons, most of them women, started a hunger strike due to mismanagement and silence that the management of the hospital showed concerning their demands, for the Hogra (humiliation or dignity) regarding working conditions and treating of the patients and requested the interference of the responsible Minister⁹⁹². Meetings and the results with the Ministers of Health and Population Yahia Guidoum and Amara Benyounés remained modest, as Salim Mecheri, the Secretary General of the SNAPAP Chu Oran, stated in the interview in March 2000⁹⁹³. There were fierce struggles in the media, in the Administrative Council and on the streets, where

⁹⁸⁸ *El Watan* 29.4.1999. Syndicats autonomes: En quête d’une force incontournable. A. Idir.

⁹⁸⁹ *Ouest Tribune* 13.2.2000. SNAPAP: Prélèvement sur salaires de 700 milliards de centimes pour PUGTA. B.M.; *Quotidienne Oran* 12.9.2000. Université: Protesta des travailleurs non-logés. S. Ghada; *Ouest Tribune* 5.12.2000. Le SNAPAP accuse l’UGTA. Pour une histoire de 1000 logements. B. Soumya. *La voix de l’Oranie*. 20.6.2001. Pour des logements sociaux. Rencontre des syndicats autonomes autour des LSP. Him. (B.M. indicates the first letters of the forename and surname of journalist who wrote the article).

⁹⁹⁰ Ahmed Zabana was Algerian independence activist from Oran, who was executed by guillotine on June 1956 by the French authorities.

⁹⁹¹ Aïssat Idir was well known trade unionist and one of the founders of the UGTA.

⁹⁹² *Ouest Tribune* 23.2.2000. Grève des membres du SNAPAP au CHUO : « On exige la présence de premier responsable ». B. Ibtissem; *La voix de l’Oranie* 24.2.2000. Centre hospital universitaire: Les raisons d’une grève. M. Hocine.

⁹⁹³ *La voix de l’Oranie* 2.3.2000. La section SNAPAP du Chu d’Oran denonce: « On veut casser la santé ». B.N. (B.N. indicates the first letters of the forename and surname of journalist who wrote the article).

SNAPAP organized demonstrations, sit-ins, strikes and hunger strikes. Revealing interview of Mecheri was published in December 2000:

[...] The working conditions are miserable and there is a lack of basic equipment. How can the nurse do his job if, for example, he is given two syringes to take samples from ten (10) patients or if the radiology machine is out of order? [...] The public must react to such situations. These practices must be denounced. The patient is, in principle, protected by law. He can choose the doctor and he has to pay only a symbolic sum of the service. In reality, we are trying to suffocate the hospital. Of course, it is necessary to start by changing the attitudes, but this is not achieved by the reform from above, by establishing traditions of relations of the type ill-team of care⁹⁹⁴.

CHU Oran, where fierce battles were fought during the years, is great example how autonomous trade unions, SNAPAP in this case, sensitized working conditions in the public sector and acted directly in the working places. Mecheri stressed the social conditions aiming at revolution of the dispositions (mentalities) to politicize Algerian public life. Regarding the privatizations, Mecheri tried to defend the position of the public hospital, which recalls contemporary struggles in the context of neoliberal economic reforms caused by IMF structural adjustment programs (SAP), and stressed the decrease of confidence among citizens in the public welfare system in general:

Lack of resources has led to a lack of trust towards the hospital, but we must not forget that the quality of care is better there. The hospital is still credible. It is open to everyone even if it cannot meet all the needs⁹⁹⁵.

This interview can also be considered from the way that Mecheri presented himself as a patriotic defender of Algerian public health care that is credible and open to everyone, for all Algerians. All Algerians should join the struggle to defend public hospitals, because in the end they were only fighting for their own rights and health. Meanwhile, Mecheri stated that Administrative Council did not have power or any assets of control regarding the action plan and they were only able to effect on budget, which was actually composed based on repetitive routines. Meanwhile, the leader of the CHU Oran, Oukil Abderrahman, criticized by the SNAPAP, argued that 80 percent of the budget was spent on salaries and 20 percent was left for the

⁹⁹⁴ *La voix de l'Oranie* 3.12.2000. « Il faut rapidement réformer le système de la santé » M. Mecheri Larbi Salim, syndicaliste et membre du C.A. du CHUO. Him.

⁹⁹⁵ *La voix de l'Oranie* 3.12.2000. « Il faut rapidement réformer le système de la santé » M. Mecheri Larbi Salim, syndicaliste et membre du C.A. du CHUO. Him.

rest, such as medicines and other consumables, which did not enable a lot⁹⁹⁶. Related to his affiliation in SNAPAP, Mecheri said:

We have always denounced the current system and we believe that it needs profound and urgent reform. Objectives will never be achieved if there is no real support for hospital staff and at all levels. There is a tendency in the current system to discourage the motivation of everyone. The health system is for war, not for social care ... there is simply anarchy that reigns. The reform we are still talking about has to start with the protection of the staff. The director or manager must be integrated into the work of the group, this is how to avoid conflicts of the Administration-Union type. We must give responsibility to everyone⁹⁹⁷.

Mecheri said that recruitment of the personnel (the amount of the staff was 7000) in CHU Oran was massive and anarchic, while timetables were not respected, and often nobody knew their job description. If the workers could have more power in organizing the working environment in the hospital, it would increase its efficiency. Now these, what he calls, “pseudo-unionists” of UGTA are confusing the identification of the workers possibilities to recognize their interests and prevent democratic reforms:

Social work at the CHU was managed by pseudo unionists who are self-appointed defenders of workers' interests. But UGTA membership cards were paid for by social service money, and loans were given without paying any money back. Like the CHU, the management of social work was in anarchy. SNAPAP was the first to call for autonomy of all structures including the committee of social works. In 1998, there was a committee election where everyone could stand as a candidate without any union status. Once the committee was elected, an action plan was developed that the UGTA refuted. It managed to sidestep all the actions of democratization⁹⁹⁸.

In 2014, more than ten years later, I visited CHU Oran with Mecheri. I asked him for an opportunity to visit the workplace to have an idea of conditions where trade unionists functioned in workplaces as such. I was able to visit in various departments of the hospital and met its personnel. Mecheri, who had been working in the hospital since the 80s, was known for his activities in SNAPAP. I realized then that it necessitates courage and determination to raise questions related to working conditions in the workplace. Personnel can be divided to those who struggle among

⁹⁹⁶ *Quotidien Oran* 26.8.2000. Entretien avec Oukil Abderrahmane, DF du CHUO: « 80% du budget de l'hôpital vont aux salaires ». M. Mazari.

⁹⁹⁷ *La voix de l'Oranie* 3.12.2000. « Il faut rapidement réformer le système de la santé » M. Mecheri Larbi Salim, syndicaliste et membre du C.A. du CHUO. Him.

⁹⁹⁸ *La voix de l'Oranie* 3.12.2000. « Il faut rapidement réformer le système de la santé » M. Mecheri Larbi Salim, syndicaliste et membre du C.A. du CHUO. Him.

the autonomous trade unions and to those, who do not participate secure their job while benefitting from the sacrifices of their colleagues. I was a little surprised about the relatively high amount of workers in the department. Mecheri told me that he was worried about the possible reductions in the working force in the near future as part of the continuous neoliberal economic adjustments. He told me: “Look at all this people working around here. As you see, many of them are not constantly working”. It was true. I saw many, especially younger nurses hanging around. He continued: “What happens to them, if they are fired when more strict efficiency measures are actualized?”. At least now, they had possibilities to watch and learn and participate, and therefore to socialize, within the working conditions in the hospital. Who would benefit, if they were moved to the unemployment registers?

In 2001, the contestation and competition between SNAPAP and UGTA continued. In March, the members of National Secretary Board elected Rachid Malaoui as the Secretary General of SNAPAP. This change is often depicted in the collective memory related to the autonomous trade unions as a radical turn by SNAPAP. One of the most visible and important actions conducted by the SNAPAP during the year was the hunger strike, which received a significant amount of media attention in Algeria, especially in the oppositional newspapers, and forced even some of the political parties and authorities to react. The hunger strike became an international matter when the European Parliament and International Labor Organization got involved. The hunger strike can be considered as the ultimate transformation of bodies into objects of struggles where needs are converted into demands in the context of political action. It transforms the body into resistance at the risk of death. Hunger strikes as embodied protests have been used as political weapon in many historical and contemporary struggles within social movements and, according to Amanda Machin, they “deftly interiorize the violence of the opponent within body of the protester”⁹⁹⁹.

The hunger strike followed broad uprisings, known as the “Black Spring”, which took place in Kabylia in May 2001. Regardless of mediation attempts by political parties, such as FFS or RCD, a huge demonstration took place in Tizi-Ouzou on 21 May organized by the council of village assemblies (aarch)¹⁰⁰⁰. The event was triggered by the killing of a schoolboy, Guermah Massinissa, in police custody on 26

⁹⁹⁹ Machin, Amanda (2016) Hunger Power: The embodied protest of the political hunger strike. *Interface: a journal for and about social movements*. Volume 8 (1): 157-180 (May 2016).

¹⁰⁰⁰ Volpi, Frédéric (2003, 107) *Islam and Democracy – The Failure of Dialogue in Algeria*. London: Pluto Press.

April in Tizi-Ouzou¹⁰⁰¹. A couple of days later, three other youth suffered from police brutality, which was followed by spontaneous and angry protests and massive riots¹⁰⁰². On 25 May, new demonstrations emerged that lasted for several days, and finally the council of village assemblies were successful in moving the demonstration to Algiers on 14 June¹⁰⁰³. The large-scale protest march led to violent clashes between protesters and security forces and there were ethnic dimensions¹⁰⁰⁴ linked to social grievances¹⁰⁰⁵. According to Yassin Tamlali, the demonstrators were mostly unemployed and high school students, unlike in 1988 October uprisings, where workers were also behind the manifestations¹⁰⁰⁶. The use of force by the government further antagonized relations between the regime and Amazigh activists affirming discrepancies that had been pushed aside during the conflict between the government and the Islamists in the 1990s¹⁰⁰⁷. President Bouteflika took a political decision and prohibited all demonstrations in the country¹⁰⁰⁸.

It was against this background that SNAPAP launched the hunger strike campaign. The hunger strike also coincided with the eve of the International Youth Festival organized in Algiers, which brought together youth and various NGOs from all over the world¹⁰⁰⁹. The hunger strike started on 7 August and lasted for 15 days. During the strike, SNAPAP was able to bring up various demands on public through media and the beginning of the hunger strike was announced already in the late July¹⁰¹⁰. SNAPAP was able to gain a lot of attention and transmit its message to wider audiences. Several direct quotations of the Secretary General Maaloui were published in the journal *L'Authentique*¹⁰¹¹:

¹⁰⁰¹ Volpi (2003, 106); Le Sueur (2010, 83).

¹⁰⁰² Le Sueur (2010, 83).

¹⁰⁰³ Volpi (2003, 107).

¹⁰⁰⁴ Protesters demanded official recognition for Tamazight language not being satisfied by the 1995 formal recognition of Amazigh culture as element of Algeria's national identity (Le Sueur 2010, 83).

¹⁰⁰⁵ Volpi (2003, 107); Le Sueur (2010, 83).

¹⁰⁰⁶ Tamlali, Yassin (2003) La révolte des Kabylie ou l'histoire d'un gachis. *Confluences Méditerranée* – No 45 Printemps 2003.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Bensmaïa and Melehy (1997, 90); Volpi (2003, 107).

¹⁰⁰⁸ Volpi (2003, 107).

¹⁰⁰⁹ *L'Authentique* 1.8.2001. Grève de la faim illimitée au SNAPAP: Elle interviendra a la veille du festival international de la jeunesse. Faïza B.

¹⁰¹⁰ *L'Expression* 26.7.2001. Grève de la faim au SNAPAP: Une action majeure pour soutenir ses revendications. A. Saïd.

¹⁰¹¹ *L'Authentique* 1.8.2001. Grève de la faim illimitée au SNAPAP: Elle interviendra a la veille du festival international de la jeunesse. Faïza B.

- “The policy of repression and hogra [humiliation] can no longer be tolerated. Everyone has to react”.
- “The power [pouvoir] has handled it so well to pass all its reforms. It is these corrupt men it needs. We do not want to be manipulated”.
- “This fund [Fonds national de péréquation des œuvres sociales or National Social Equalization Fund, FNPOS], which is owned by all workers, is violently diverted by the government for the exclusive benefit of the trade unionists of the UGTA for the construction of housing, of which, at least 100 were awarded per wilaya”.
- “The UGTA is too involved in questionable business to be able to continue representing the workers, who have actually now preferred to withdraw from the parent organization joining to other independent unions functioning within the limited space they are allowed”.

Malaoui even went as far as linking the hunger strike to those young Amazighs that were killed during the “Black Spring” stating in the journal *La Liberté*¹⁰¹² and *La Tribune*¹⁰¹³:

- “If we must die like the youth in Kabylie, we will do it. Anyway, we will continue our action until death”.
- “[T]he peaceful demonstrations bring nothing with such kind of Power [pouvoir]. We shall die if our death gives something positive for our country”.

These statements surely fulfill the definitions regarding populist philosophy of conducting politics, trend that can be easily applied to state authorities and their communication in the media as well, while social grievances behind the statements should not be underestimated. Meanwhile, they stressed the pacific nature of their protest regardless of the criticism of their efficiency in front of the “such” authorities. The hunger strike was tactical choice to gain pressure through media to reach into genuine dialogue with state officials, because public marches of the citizens did not yield anything but repression, as Malaoui hinted in an interview¹⁰¹⁴. The quotes reveal also the antagonistic construction of discourses referring the

¹⁰¹² *Liberté* 1.8.2001. “...jusqu’à la mort!” Grève de la faim du SNAPAP. Hassan Moali.

¹⁰¹³ *La Tribune* 1.8.2001. Des membres du SNAPAP en grève de la faim à partir du 7 août. Karima Mokrani.

¹⁰¹⁴ *L’Expression* 23.8.2001. Conférence de presse du SNAPAP: La grève de la faim est un choix tactique. B.T.

authorities and UGTA as “corrupted manipulators”, whose arguments and games are of course not bought by SNAPAP. These discourses show how the meanings are fixed in particular domains. When hunger strikers denounce the hogra (humiliation) of the Algerian people to whom they insisted they represented, they constructed an understanding of an unfair Algerian society, unfair conduct of politics, and bad governance by the state authorities.

When the actual hunger strike began involving 23 members of SNAPAP, the media coverage grew intensively¹⁰¹⁵. The media showed pictures of decisive activists that only drank water and who stated: “Our action poses a problem on freedom of association that does not exist in Algeria. We are determined to resist until death or until our claims are taken care seriously”¹⁰¹⁶. For the patriotic sake, these autonomous trade union activists were ready to sacrifice themselves for the freedoms, necessary to defend Algerian workers. Amnesty International, which had attempted to have an access to explore the committed violence and crimes in Algeria already during the atrocities in the 1990s, announced their hope for international intervention to pressure the Algerian government to improve the conditions of the autonomous trade unions¹⁰¹⁷.

These international efforts were considered as meddling into Algerian internal affairs by authorities and their supporters. These attempts of international human rights groups were used against autonomous trade unions accusing them from unpatriotic acts letting foreign powers to interfere in Algerian domestic affairs. Meanwhile, autonomous trade unions benefitted from these statements as part of their attempt to internationalize their domestic struggle, hoping to at least gain moral support and generate foreign pressure on the state authorities. The authorities were accused of being mute, while Malaoui stressed the support from the European Parliament and the continuation of their hunger strike until the demands gained results¹⁰¹⁸. Other autonomous trade unions, such as CNES joined to show their

¹⁰¹⁵ *Liberté* 8.8.2001. Les cadres du SNAPAP en grève de la faim: Devant le mutisme des pouvoirs publics. Rafik H.; *L'Expression* 9.8.2001. Une grève de la faim illimitée. Karima Ouallouche.

¹⁰¹⁶ *Liberté* 8.8.2001. Les cadres du SNAPAP en grève de la faim: Devant le mutisme des pouvoirs publics. Rafik H.

¹⁰¹⁷ *Le Matin* 11.8.2001. Aucune réaction des autorités. SNAPAP, les syndicalistes entament leur 5^e jour de grève de la faim. Samira I.

¹⁰¹⁸ *Le Maghreb* 12.8.2001. “Le combat continue”. Les cadres du SNAPAP en grève de la faim. A.F.; *Le jeune indépendant* 12.8.2001. Jamais le département de Zerhouni n’a été aussi fermé: 6^e jour de la grève de la faim des syndicalistes du SNAPAP. Samira M.

support for SNAPAP¹⁰¹⁹. The next day 8 August Association RAJ¹⁰²⁰ expressed its support¹⁰²¹ as well as Algerian human rights organization LADH. Meanwhile various oppositional newspapers, created within democratic reforms after the 1988 October uprisings, published communications of the SNAPAP in their entirety:

SNAPAP press release

The executives of National Autonomous Union of Public Administration Staff, SNAPAP, observing the 7th day of hunger strike because our grievances, which are summarized as follows, were not resolved:

1 – Algerian trade union law is designed in such a way that it is impossible to create a trade union confederation either directly or through the grouping of approved unions who then give the monopoly to the leading union.

2 – The same law gives the employer the power to grant representativeness, which is inconsistent in the event of a conflict, and the right to authorize or not to allow workers' meetings outside working hours, with or without the availability of premises.

3 – The promulgation of a decree and the specification of the leading union which is only representative in the commissions of allocation of housing at the level of the communes.

4 – The social assistance regulated by a decree of the single party continues to be in force with misappropriation, with giving 1/6 of the fund to the leading union UGTA for the construction of housing for the benefit of their trade unionists and the exclusion of others organizations even if the funds belong to all workers.

5 – The exclusion of our organization from the boards of directors of social funds and arbitration bodies and the allocation of seats entirely to the leading trade union despite our agreement with the government in 07.04.1992 ¹⁰²².

6 – We have been waiting the general statute of the Public Service since 1991, and its slow in coming.

7 – The intimidation of the representatives of our union and the decision of the party in power to promote administrative instruction of the trade union system.

NB: On the 6th day, a SMU team and the labor inspectorate moved to our headquarters and a medical consultation was carried out for all strikers, and 2 strikers are on drip during the day and 2 more at night with the support of the National Council of Public Health Practitioners. On the morning of the 7th day, SNAPAP

¹⁰¹⁹ *Le Matin* 12.8.2001. Le CNES apporte son soutien. Au sixième jour de la grève des cadres du SNAPAP. Yasmina F.

¹⁰²⁰ Rassemblement Actions Jeunesse.

¹⁰²¹ *Le Matin* 13.8.2001. Association RAJ, message de soutien au SNAPAP.

¹⁰²² According to autonomous trade union activists, the agreement was signed in 7.4.1992 between the government led by Sidahmed Ghazali and SNAPAP to distribution of seats in the CNES, CNAS, CNR and National Arbitration Commission.

received the visit and support of Mr. Abdellah Djaballah along with the deputies of his party El-Islah.

Algeria 14.8.2001, The general secretary of SNAPAP, Rachid Malaoui¹⁰²³.

These demands depict well the premises of the SNAPAP to function as an autonomous trade union. Political parties also started to show up and exploit the significant media coverage that SNAPAP was able to achieve. The first political leader to show up was Abdellah Djaballah from the El-Islah party¹⁰²⁴. The next day another Islamist party MSP, led by Mahfoud Nahnah, expressed its solidarity with SNAPAP¹⁰²⁵. FFS had sent a delegation already in the first days of hunger strike to support SNAPAP¹⁰²⁶. At this point, the hunger strike had gained so much attention that political parties wanted to show their support and thereby possibly increase their own popularity.

However, this raises an interesting problem. It can be considered contradictory that at this point SNAPAP did not resigned from oppositional sectorial political support, while accusing UGTA for its political support for state authorities. In order to stress its aspectual political conduct of trade unionism, it had now mixed sectorial politics in its political action, an aspectual side of political action outside of the traditional sectorial conduct of politics. How far was this still a question of work and workers' conditions? We can also ask whether SNAPAP itself was guilty of politically supporting domestic oppositional parties, human rights groups and international human rights groups such as Amnesty International or European Parliament. Should SNAPAP rebuff their help and risk being isolated within its struggle? Regarding politicization, this question is also related to hegemony and context: who has the power to decide what is political and in what context it is articulated as such?

Newspapers showed pictures of prostrate SNAPAP activists who were ready to die for their struggle against the injustices committed by those in power. Other representatives of the SNAPAP also showed their solidarity around the country and joined the hunger strike in nine different wilayas: Aïn Defla, Oran, Annaba, Tiaret,

¹⁰²³ *L'Authentique* 15.8.2001. Communiqué du SNAPAP.

¹⁰²⁴ *Le Jeune indépendant* 14.8.2001. Djaballah solidaire. 7^e jour de grève de la faim des syndicalistes du SNAPAP. S.M. (S.M. indicates the first letters of the forename and surname of journalist who wrote the article).

¹⁰²⁵ *L'Authentique* 16.8.2001. Le MSP soutient le SNAPAP et condamne le « carnaval ».

¹⁰²⁶ *La voix de l'oranie* 18.8.2001. Plusieurs syndicalistes évacués vers l'hôpital: Onzième jour de grève de la faim du SNAPAP. Him.

Chlef, Batna, Oum El Bouaki, Naâma and Djelfa¹⁰²⁷. Soon the amount of the activists were stated in the press reaching 150¹⁰²⁸. The hunger strike was animated by more dramatic features when state of condition of some of the strikers started to deteriorate and some of them were carried to hospital.

In the newspaper, *La Tribune*, journalist Ahmed Kaci¹⁰²⁹ wrote that SNAPAP has shown determination through their action that cause fear among those in power. The International Labor Office of the International Labor Organization (ILO) started to be interested in the hunger strike, and offered its help via two options: either ILO would directly approach the Algerian government or SNAPAP would file official complaint¹⁰³⁰. In addition, the French Democratic Confederation of Labor (Confédération française démocratique du travail, CFDT) expressed concern regarding the condition of the hunger strikers¹⁰³¹. On 19 August, after 13 days of hunger strike, the autonomous trade unions gathered at the headquarters of the SNAPAP, decorated with banderols of the hunger strike that hung from the windows¹⁰³², and issued a common declaration supporting the efforts of the SNAPAP¹⁰³³. In the declaration, signed by SNAPAP, SNPSP, SMMCC¹⁰³⁴, SNAM¹⁰³⁵, SATEF and UNPEF, autonomous trade unions called on civil society at large to demonstrate for the just cause of SNAPAP and condemned the irresponsible attitude of the country's authorities, the Prime Minister and the President, regarding their indifference in front of danger of death regarding the hunger strike. They also demanded adherence to Convention 87 of the ILO.

UGTA responded immediately with their own communication and answered the accusations delivered by SNAPAP during the hunger strike. Stressing their engagement as the real defender of the workers, they questioned the unpolitical

¹⁰²⁷ *L'Echo d'Oran* 14.8.2001. Dix syndicalistes du SNAPAP entament une grève de faim: Par solidarite avec le bureau national. H. Nora; *Le Matin* 16.8.2001. Les syndicalistes sollicitent Benflis: Dixième jour de grève des cadres du SNAPAP. Samira L.

¹⁰²⁸ *El-Moudjahid* 13.8.2001. SNAPAP: 150 cadres observent une grève de la faim; *L'Expression* 13.8.2001. Des revendications rejetées: 150 membres du SNAPAP en grève de la faim. A.B. (A.B. indicates the first letters of the forename and surname of journalist who wrote the article).

¹⁰²⁹ *La Tribune* 16.8.2001. Éditorial: Ces syndicats qui font peur. Ahmed Kaci.

¹⁰³⁰ *Le Matin* 16.8.2001. Les syndicalistes sollicitent Benflis: Dixième jour de grève des cadres du SNAPAP. Samira L.

¹⁰³¹ *El Watan* 20.8.2001. Syndicats: Solidarité avec le SNAPAP. Ziad Salah.

¹⁰³² *L'Expression* 19.8.2001. Que veut le SNAPAP? Salim Benalia.

¹⁰³³ *L'Authentique* 20.8.2001. Déclaration des syndicats autonomes réunis au siège du SNAPAP en date du 19 août 2001.

¹⁰³⁴ *Union of Magistrates of the Court of Accounts* (Syndicat des magistrats de la cour des comptes)

¹⁰³⁵ *National Trade union of the Sailors* (Syndicat national autonome des marins).

motives and patriotism of SNAPAP, accusing it for its recourse to international bodies, such as the ILO:

It is a grotesque scenario cynically mounted and inspired for political purposes by the vengeful and state's supporters, themselves directed by their masters and the outside pressure¹⁰³⁶.

In other words, UGTA accused SNAPAP of conducting national politics for the benefit of external power rather than defending the cause of the Algerian workers. According to Laclau and Mouffe, political processes can be significant, because contingent articulation of fluid meanings determine in many ways how the society is experienced¹⁰³⁷. When communication mentions that SNAPAP has foreign “masters”, this means to construct reality through the argument that SNAPAP had internationalized a domestic conflict for outside interests at national expense and is not really protecting Algerian workers but rather instigating instability. In the seventh chapter I deal in more detail with how international actors influence nationalistic perceptions of patriotism. Here again the concept of political is explicitly used to decrease the objectives into simply political power struggle instead of operating strictly in the sphere of the traditional trade unionism. Regarding the SNAPAP's accusations and prosecution related to state subventions¹⁰³⁸, UGTA stated:

In response to the accusations and threats made by SNAPAP towards the General Union of Workers, the latter decided to bring justice to all the individuals who publicly defended the honor and the dignity of the management of the organization and its executives at the base. We do not have to account to this pseudo-union as to how we continue our work¹⁰³⁹.

UGTA rejected the discourse constructed by the SNAPAP activists, where SNAPAP is the real authentic trade union that defend the material and moral rights of the workers through acts of citizenship, and instead in turn renounce its credibility describing SNAPAP as a “pseudo-union” that lack all the authenticity in the base.

¹⁰³⁶ *L'Expression* 20.8.2001. « L'UGTA bluffe » Après les déclarations de la centrale syndicale. Le SNAPAP réagit. Salim Benalia.

¹⁰³⁷ Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, 34 and 37).

¹⁰³⁸ *L'Authentique* 22.8.2001. Après les milliards... les comptes. Le SNAPAP dépose plainte contre l'UGTA et le ministère du travail. Faïza B.

¹⁰³⁹ *L'Expression* 20.8.2001. « L'UGTA bluffe » Après les déclarations de la centrale syndicale. Le SNAPAP réagit. Salim Benalia.

Nevertheless, SNAPAP managed to put pressure so that even the governmental newspaper *El Moudjahid*¹⁰⁴⁰ published next day (21 August) an article, where they described the serious conditions of the remaining 25 hunger strikers and discovered that the movement had received support from the political formations, civil society and other trade unions. On the same day, the leaders of the SNAPAP, Malaoui and Hacène Achour, received a delegation led by Kinane Rachid and Bendjebba Yazid from the Ministry of Work and Social Security¹⁰⁴¹. After the meeting and the assurances of the dialogue and platform to discuss the demands, SNAPAP interrupted the hunger strike after the 14th day¹⁰⁴². The agreement to start the dialogue with the minister was considered by Malaoui and SNAPAP as victory and the beginning of an end for the monopoly of the UGTA¹⁰⁴³, albeit many doubts were left related to previous rounds of negotiations between autonomous trade unions and the state authorities. In the media, newspaper articles speculated that nothing had been won yet¹⁰⁴⁴.

On 22 August, the oppositional newspaper *El Watan*¹⁰⁴⁵ published an article in which the leader of SATEF Arab Azzi was interviewed where he hinted that the conditions change through laws. This recalls what Don Mitchell had to say about the connection between action conducted by the autonomous trade union activists and sustainable democracy building. Mitchell combined civic rights, in this case the demands of the SNAPAP during the hunger strike, directly to public space. He argues that one must struggle to gain space to achieve just laws that guarantee aspired rights and freedoms:

Social action is structured through law, and social action creates abstract or differentiated spaces in proportion to the power possessed by each side in a struggle. So social action – including oppositional work by social movements – always operates simultaneously to influence the production of law and the production of space. [...] Rights themselves, therefore, are part of the process of producing space¹⁰⁴⁶.

¹⁰⁴⁰ *El Moudjahid* 21.8.2001. 15e jour de la grève de la faim des syndicalistes du SNAPAP.

¹⁰⁴¹ *Le Maghreb* 22.8.2001. Le SNAPAP suspend sa grève de la faim. Suite à l'accord avec le Ministre du travail. Arab C.

¹⁰⁴² *Le Quotidien d'Oran* 22.8.2001. Le SNAPAP met fin à sa grève de la faim. Le ministère du travail pour un dialogue. Hamid G.

¹⁰⁴³ *L'Authentique* 22.8.2001. Après les milliards... les comptes. Le SNAPAP dépose plainte contre l'UGTA et le ministère du travail. Faïza B.

¹⁰⁴⁴ *Le Matin* 23.8.2001. Rien n'est encore gagné. Les syndicalistes de SNAPAP ont suspendu mardi leur grève de la faim. Yasmine F.

¹⁰⁴⁵ *El Watan* 22.8.2001. Syndicats: La réforme passe par le changement des lois. Djamel Amrouche.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Mitchell, Don (2003, 29) *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*. New York – London: The Guilford Press.

SNAPAP, like other autonomous trade unions often refer to legal texts that protect the trade union freedoms¹⁰⁴⁷. However, many autonomous trade union activists argue today that it is not a question of laws as such. There is nothing wrong in the ILO conventions 87 and 98 ratified by Algeria in 1962¹⁰⁴⁸ or article 90-14 of the Algerian constitution, but rather in their implementation in practice¹⁰⁴⁹. The action conducted by the autonomous trade unions aimed at the implementation of rights guaranteed amid the constitutional change since 1989. The action conducted at the beginning of the 2000s was more about to force the governmental authorities to activate the legislation. Autonomous trade unions were for example still struggling to create confederation, after the failed attempt of SNATA came attempt at a confederation CASA¹⁰⁵⁰, challenging the monopoly of the UGTA, so that autonomous unions would be taken as social partners to construct policies in healthcare, education or the public sector.

SNAPAP of course did not have the strength to challenge the Algerian authorities by force. Therefore, through peaceful acts of citizenship repertoires, such as mobilization, collective action and negotiation, SNAPAP sought to operationalize its normative endeavor attaining “the broadest unity of democracy regarding the personal struggles of the civil servants as well as equal rights against all forms of discrimination, inequalities and exclusion”¹⁰⁵¹. As explained on their website¹⁰⁵², SNAPAP sought to offer a space for dialogue, exchange and solidarity and cooperated with other social movements, such as national autonomous unions (CNES, SATEF, SNPSP, UNPEF), political parties (FFS, MSP, RCD), human rights groups (LADH) and international associations (ILO, EU, CFDT, Amnesty International).

Dialogue within mixed commission (SNAPAP and delegation from the Ministry¹⁰⁵³) was challenging and different interpretations on the law 90-14 sprout.

¹⁰⁴⁷ *Rapport Préliminaire du C.N.L.S. Sur les libertés Syndicales en Algérie*. CNLS No. 01. Avril 2005.

¹⁰⁴⁸

http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11200:0::NO:11200:P11200_COUNTRY_ID:102908

¹⁰⁴⁹ Interview with 26 years old Hamid Derradji in Oran December 2014.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Algerian Confederation of the Autonomous Trade Unions (Confédération Algérienne des Syndicats Autonomes).

¹⁰⁵¹ http://www.maisondessyndicats-dz.com/Pour_Quoi%20se%20Syndiquer.php (Retrieved in 7.2.2012, website does not function anymore).

¹⁰⁵² http://www.maisondessyndicats-dz.com/Pour_Quoi%20se%20Syndiquer.php (Retrieved in 7.2.2012, website does not function anymore).

¹⁰⁵³ *La Tribune* 2.9.2001. Les pourparlers SNAPAP-ministère du Travail clôtures aujourd’hui. Hasna Yacoub.

Malaoui accused in an interview published in *Le Matin*: “This law makes believe to the international opinion that we are a democratic country where the trade union pluralism is devoted like the political one”¹⁰⁵⁴. According to Malaoui, Algerian government was politicizing democracy by creating an image of the country for internationalizing domestic conflict for their own gain: Algeria is democratic country and articles of the constitution, such as 90-14, guarantee the democratic conduct of state affairs. Malaoui also alleged that, according to interpretation of 90-14 by the authorities, autonomous trade unions only exist reductively in sectors or sectorial confederations, not as one single coherent body, such as CASA, that could challenge UGTA:

“Before that, we held a congress to create SNATA [...] in 1999. The minister of labor then reminded us that in view of this same law we have no right to do so, since this structure does not include the economic sector, which led us to create the CASA. Here again, we are shown bizarre legislation to tell us that it will be necessary to create several confederations sector by sector”¹⁰⁵⁵.

While Malaoui accused the government of politicking through trade unionism, another newspaper closer to the official line, *L'Expression*, attacked SNAPAP, asking: “SNAPAP, does it make politics?”¹⁰⁵⁶. The article predicted that the real intention of SNAPAP was to construct large social movement that generated its power from the civil society, while Malaoui refused accusations saying: “The only clan that is behind the SNAPAP is that of hunger”, and continued:

“We are the defendants of the workers, unlike the UGTA, which is complacent with power (*pouvoir*). The latter wants, at whatever the cost, to pass the train reforms. We must defend the workers, because the disaster is imminent”¹⁰⁵⁷.

“We wanted to have concrete evidence, signed by the anachronism that characterizes trade union legislation. It's done”¹⁰⁵⁸.

According to reporter Salim Benalia this meant that Malaoui had, accidentally, admitted the merit of the authorities in recognizing trade union pluralism as well as authority of the government in its definition, even though in a widely publicised

¹⁰⁵⁴ *Le Matin* 23.8.2001. Entretien avec le secrétaire général du syndicat: Rachid Malaoui : « Non à l'autonomie sectorielle ! ». Yasmine F.

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Le Matin* 23.8.2001. Entretien avec le secrétaire général du syndicat Rachid Malaoui : « Non à l'autonomie sectorielle ! ». Yasmine F.

¹⁰⁵⁶ *L'Expression* 4.9.2001. Le Snapap passe à la vitesse supérieure. Salim Benalia.

¹⁰⁵⁷ *L'Expression* 4.9.2001. Le Snapap passe à la vitesse supérieure. Salim Benalia.

¹⁰⁵⁸ *L'Expression* 4.9.2001. Le Snapap passe à la vitesse supérieure. Salim Benalia.

press conference¹⁰⁵⁹ organized by the SNAPAP Malaoui refused the recognition of the government regarding the trade union pluralism¹⁰⁶⁰. On the contrary, SNAPAP announced that international tribunal of the ILO would determine the question¹⁰⁶¹. Because negotiations did not bring the solution, SNAPAP decided to return to the streets and started to organize sit-in in front of the Ministry of Labor¹⁰⁶². The only way to put pressure on the government was through civil society and international arena. By using populist tactics, SNAPAP declared “war” on the state authorities and invited Algerians to:

” [...] demonstrate together and to carry out a joint action capable of overthrowing the established order, because we declare war on the State”¹⁰⁶³.

Regardless of the non-authorization from the state officials for the confederation CASA, autonomous trade unions (SNAM, SNPSP, CNES, SATEF, SNAPAP) continued to organize joint meetings using it as platform for more orchestrated action¹⁰⁶⁴. These repetitive gatherings manifest also about indifference regarding official attempts to prevent functioning of unauthorized confederation. In addition, political parties such as RCD, FFS and PST were present¹⁰⁶⁵. It was obvious, that these movements were in the process of forming common political opposition that challenged the state authorities and institutions through vast social front. After two hours of the sit-in in front of the Ministry of Labor, the delegation formed by six members of various autonomous trade unions was invited to meet with Minister of the Labor and Social Protection Mohamed Larbi Abdelmoumene. Minister Abdelmoumene gave an official answer in a long communication, where he replied that the accusations of the autonomous trade unions were merely “allegations”¹⁰⁶⁶. While the Minister stressed that there are still lot to do regarding the socio-economic development in the country, he denied that the measures conducted by the authorities regarding the trade union pluralism did not contradict with Algerian

¹⁰⁵⁹ *El Moudjadid* 4.9.2001. Le SNAPAP hausse le ton; *La Tribune* 4.9.2001. L SNAPAP déclare « la guerre ». Hasna Yacoub; *El Watan* 4.9.2001. Echec des négociations. Amnay Idir.

¹⁰⁶⁰ *La voix de l'Oranie* 4.9.2001. « Le gouvernement ne reconnaît toujours pas le pluralisme syndical ». Him.

¹⁰⁶¹ *Le Matin* 4.9.2001. ”C’est le tribunal international de Genève qui tranchera”. Yasmine F.

¹⁰⁶² *Liberté* 4.9.2001. Le SNAPAP veut porter sa colère dans la rue. Farid Belgacem.

¹⁰⁶³ *L’Authentique* 4.9.2001. « Nous repartons en guerre » Le SNAPAP exprime sa déception des résultats de la commission mixte. Amel H.

¹⁰⁶⁴ *Le jeune indépendant* 15.9.2001. La CASA rate son rendez-vous. Nabila K.

¹⁰⁶⁵ *Le Quotidien d’Oran* 15.9.2001. Sept syndicats autonomes interpellent le gouvernement. Khalil M.

¹⁰⁶⁶ *Le Quotidien d’Oran* 22.9.2001. « Vos critiques sont des allégations ». H. Ziad.

responsibilities in the context of ILO conventions¹⁰⁶⁷. The communication of the Minister was responded by SNAPAP with their own communication¹⁰⁶⁸.

The year 2001 was important regarding the development of the autonomous trade union movement. The following year (2002) started with the preparation of the general strike for April, meanwhile autonomous trade union movement waited the decision from ILO regarding the controversy related to the interpretation of the conventions and constitution. Contestation continued simultaneously in the CHU Oran¹⁰⁶⁹ related to social issues in the hospital where nine SNAPAP activists started hunger strike that lasted only few days, when solution was found via negotiations between unionists and authorities¹⁰⁷⁰. Negotiations were also held in the health sector between autonomous unions (SNAPAP and SNPSP¹⁰⁷¹) and the Minister of Health and the Population Abdelhamid Aberkane, who assured the freedom of trade unionism and the integration of the contractors¹⁰⁷². How fruitful were these asymmetric negotiations? How their failure impacted on the future openings, believes in dialogue and trust between the antagonistic actors?

The conflict between autonomous trade unions and the state officials enlarged into international level when the permanent secretariat of the ILO published its 300 hundred-page report composed following the SNAPAP complaint of September 2001. In the report, both sides had sent communications to explain their position. The Committee's conclusion were in many ways assent regarding accusations of SNAPAP:

154. As regards the SNAPAP's application to establish confederations (entitled SNATA and CASA), the Committee notes the Government's reply to the effect that these applications were turned down in view of their non-conformity with sections 2 and 4 of Act No. 90-14 of 2 June 1990 respecting procedures for the exercise of the right to organize. In this respect, the Committee considers it appropriate to recall the content of these provisions. Section 2 provides that "workers and employers in the same occupations, trades or sectors of economic activity shall have the right to set up trade unions for the purpose of defending their material and moral interests".

¹⁰⁶⁷ *Le Quotidien d'Oran* 22.9.2001. « Vos critiques sont des allégations ». H. Ziad.

¹⁰⁶⁸ *Le Quotidien d'Oran* 25.9.2001. Le SNAPAP répond au ministère. Djamel B.

¹⁰⁶⁹ *Le Carrefour d'Oran* 12.2.2002. Rien ne va plus au CHU d'Oran. Hadj Allal.

¹⁰⁷⁰ *La voix de l'Oranie* 17.2.2002. Neuf syndicalistes entament une grève de la faim. B. Nacéra; *El Watan* 21.2.2002. La grève de la faim suspendue. T. Ameur.

¹⁰⁷¹ *L'Authentique* 3.1.2002. L'espoir renaît: Rencontre aujourd'hui des SNPSP, SNAPAP et SNPDP. Amel H.

¹⁰⁷² *Le Quotidien d'Oran* 10.3.2002. Pas de compression de travailleurs dans le secteur de la santé. Abdelkader Mostefai.

Section 4 provides that “associations, federations and confederations of trade unions shall be subject to the same provisions as those applying to trade unions”. In the view of the Committee, these provisions do not pose a problem from the standpoint of the principles of freedom of association since they may be applied to first-level organizations and the latter are free to establish interoccupational organizations and affiliate to federations and confederations in the manner deemed most appropriate by the workers or employers concerned, without prior authorization being required.

155. However, it seems to be the Government’s interpretation of these provisions which poses a problem in this case. In the light of the information available, the Committee observes that the Government, citing various requirements laid down in legislation, in practice prevents workers in the public sector from establishing a confederation. The Committee recalls that the right of workers and employers to establish organizations of their own choosing is one of the fundamental aspects of freedom of association. In particular it implies the right to take the following decisions freely: the choice of structure and composition of organizations; the establishment of one or more organizations for an enterprise, occupation or branch of economic activity; and the establishment of federations and confederations. Thus, the principle laid down in Article 2 of Convention No. 87 that workers shall have the right to establish and join organizations of their own choosing implies for the organizations themselves the right to establish and join federations and confederations of their own choosing. Moreover, the Committee has always considered that the preferential rights granted to the most representative organizations should not give them the exclusive right to set up federations and affiliate with them [see Digest of decisions and principles of the Freedom of Association Committee, 4th edition, 1996, paras. 606 and 619]. Accordingly, the Committee requests the Government to take the necessary measures to ensure that the workers who are members of the SNAPAP may establish and join federations and confederations of their own choosing. It requests the Government to keep it informed in this respect.

156. As regards the allegations of favouritism displayed by the Government towards the UGTA trade union, the Committee notes that the Government has not provided specific observations on this subject. The Committee reminds the Government that, by according favourable or unfavourable treatment to a given organization as compared with others, a government may be able to influence the choice of workers as to the organization which they intend to join. In addition, a government which deliberately acts in this manner violates the principle laid down in Convention No. 87 that the public authorities shall refrain from any interference which would restrict the rights provided for in the Convention or impede their lawful exercise. The

Committee trusts that the Government will take these principles fully into account in future.

157. As regards the allegations that the SNAPAP was denied the right to participate in the management boards of social security funds on the pretext that only the most representative trade union is authorized to sit on them, the Committee notes the Government's statements to the effect that, under section 39 of Act No. 90-14 of 1990, only organizations that are representative at the national level may sit on these boards and that the SNAPAP cannot claim to be representative at the national level. In this respect, the Committee recalls that it has always considered that certain advantages, especially with regard to representation, might be accorded to trade unions by reason of the extent of their representativeness. However, the determination of the most representative trade union should always be based on objective and pre-established criteria so as to avoid any opportunity for partiality or abuse. The Committee notes in this respect that, in this case, the complainant does not seem to challenge the status of the UGTA as the most representative organization.

158. As regards the allegations concerning obstacles to the holding of general assemblies, the Committee notes that, according to the Government, the latter explained to the SNAPAP that general assemblies may be organized freely and without prior authorization of the employer, unless they are held at the workplace during working hours. However, according to the SNAPAP, the employers constantly refuse to allow general assemblies even outside working hours for security reasons. In this respect, the Committee reminds the parties concerned that the right of occupational organizations to hold meetings in their premises to discuss occupational questions, without prior authorization and interference by the authorities, is an essential element of freedom of association and the public authorities should refrain from any interference which would restrict this right or impede its exercise, unless public order is disturbed thereby or its maintenance seriously and imminently endangered [see Digest, *op. cit.*, para. 130].

159. Moreover, the Committee notes that the Government rejects outright all the allegations referring to presumed threats of prohibition on establishing trade union sections, closures of premises, dismissals, transfers and suspensions of pay of trade union members. However, the Committee observes that, in a recent communication dated 15 October 2001, the SNAPAP once again reports numerous obstacles to freedom of association in different branches of economic activity: prohibition on establishing a trade union section in hospitals; sanctions, suspensions, physical assault, transfers and intimidation of trade union members and officers; and closure of trade union premises. The SNAPAP provides a detailed list of persons subjected to

such measures and the branches of economic activity and places where these violations are alleged to have occurred. The Committee accordingly requests the Government to send without delay its observations concerning the specific allegations put forward by the SNAPAP on this subject. Moreover, since the SNAPAP has not provided any detailed information concerning the allegations of dismissals, internment and other arbitrary measures against its members forcing them to take exile, the Committee requests the SNAPAP to provide any additional information it considers useful in this regard.

160. Lastly, the Committee notes that in its communication of 16 October 2001 the Government deplores the fact that the SNAPAP did not exhaust all of the remedies available in Algeria before appealing to the ILO. In this respect, the Committee reminds the Government that although the use of internal legal procedures, whatever the outcome, is undoubtedly a factor to be taken into consideration, the Committee has always considered that, in view of its responsibilities, its competence to examine allegations is not subject to the exhaustion of national procedures [see Digest, op. cit., Annex 1, para. 33]. Moreover, the Committee expresses its profound concern at the SNAPAP's allegation that, since it presented its complaint to the ILO, the Algerian authorities have refused all contact with it and reneged entirely on the promises previously made to the SNAPAP. The Committee requests the Government to send its observations in this respect without delay¹⁰⁷³.

Report also express its concern regarding the situation in Algeria, stating that: “[T]he Committee expresses its profound concern at the SNAPAP's allegation that, since it presented its complaint to the ILO, the Algerian authorities have refused all contact with it and reneged entirely on the promises previously made to the SNAPAP”. However, although five autonomous trade unions (SATEF, SNTE, SNAPAP, CNES and SNPSP) were supposed to organize the general strike in April, only SNAPAP and CNES did so, which ended in modest participation¹⁰⁷⁴. After these victories, one could ask why Algerians did not want to join for struggle of autonomous trade unions? Were people already enjoying the fruits of the economic growth or were they worried about risking the fragile stability in the country or their own situation? Were autonomous trade unions and oppositional political parties in general lacking the confidence of the citizens for being credible alternative vis-à-vis state authorities?

¹⁰⁷³

http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:50002:0::NO:50002:P50002_COMPLAINT_TEX_T_ID:2906533

¹⁰⁷⁴ *Liberté* 15.4.2002. Seuls le CNES et le SNAPAP: Grève de la coordination syndicale. R.M/M.B. (R.M/M.B. indicates the first letters of the forename and surname of journalist who wrote the article).

During the year 2002, various strikes and sit-ins were organized during the year. In the health sector, SNPSSP accused that the negotiations during February with Minister of Health and Population Aberkane did not bring any change or concrete results, because the promises were not kept regarding the specialization and salaries¹⁰⁷⁵. An average salary of 14 000 dinars did not motivate specialists to work in the public sector and it was time to go back to the streets to put pressure on the authorities. In the summer, the Minister of Work and Security Social Tayeb Louh met with the leader of UGTA Abdelmadjid Sidi-Saïd regarding the reform in the public sector and promised to consult autonomous trade unions as well¹⁰⁷⁶. The reform became important especially for many of those who were worried about the effects of the globalization in the public sector through privatizations. Sidi-Saïd alarmed all the trade unions for common battle against it denouncing the “war between unions”¹⁰⁷⁷. Was UGTA using its “enemy”, autonomous trade unions, to pressure the government?

In the autumn, SNAPAP denounced the reform plan of the Head of the Government Ali Benflis. SNAPAP’s unanimity fractured after one of its members and the member of parliament Belkacem Felfoul¹⁰⁷⁸ voted for the plan in the People’s National Assembly¹⁰⁷⁹. Simultaneously, various oppositional newspapers started to connect SNAPAP in their headlines and articles to the protest organization that aimed at constructing a large social protest movement. This movement followed the example and rhetoric of the leftist international global protest movement that organized anti-globalist manifestations against multilateral institutions such as IMF, World Bank, WTO and G8 meetings¹⁰⁸⁰. SNAPAP denounced the reform, continued to criticize UGTA as an “aspirin union”, giving energy to the power, and

¹⁰⁷⁵ *La Tribune* 24.4.2002. La grogne des praticiens spécialistes de la santé publique reprend de plus belle: Selon le SNPSSP, les promesses et engagement du ministère de tutelle n’ont pas été tenus. Amel Bouakba.

¹⁰⁷⁶ *Le Matin* 15.7.2002. Tayeb Louh élargit les consultations. Samira I.

¹⁰⁷⁷ *Le Quotidien d’Oran* 22.7.2002. Sidi Saïd annonce une bipartite sur la fonction publique en octobre. M. Abdelkader; *L’expression* 23.7.2002. Des syndicats unis autour de causes peu « communes ». Mohamed Abdoun.

¹⁰⁷⁸ In 2004 SNAPAP was divided between SNAPAP Malaoui and SNAPAP Felfoul due to dissensions.

¹⁰⁷⁹ *L’expression* 14.8.2002. Le Snapap approuve. S.B. (S.B. indicates the first letters of the forename and surname of journalist who wrote the article).

¹⁰⁸⁰ *Le Soir d’Algérie* 14.8.2002. Vers un large mouvement de protestation. Zineb A. Maïche; *La Presse* 14.8.2002. « Sauver la Fonction publique ». B.M and M.O. (B.M/M.O. indicates the first letters of the forename and surname of journalist who wrote the article).

shooting down the argument that reform would include increases in salaries¹⁰⁸¹ by showing, or politicizing from governmental perspective, how fragile the purchasing power of the public sector worker was¹⁰⁸². Meetings between the Government and UGTA, were severely criticized by autonomous trade unions that accused them as fraud and organized sit-ins in front of the Parliament. Representative of the UGTA Boualem Bouzidi defended the negotiations by demoting autonomous trade unions:

“We are against this law! The UGTA has 1,279,408 members, while the autonomous unions do not represent more than 20% of the civil servants. We are the ones who really represent the workers”¹⁰⁸³.

Bouzidi distanced the UGTA of being the underling of the state authorities while touching the patriotic sentiments by arguing that UGTA was the one that represented and looked after the interests of Algerian workers. The importance of the 2003 Law of the Finance, integrating questions such as status of the public sector and salaries, pushed Malaoui to issue severe statements:

Everything has been prepared since August and we shouldn't expect much. That they do not take us for idiots, all cannot be achieved in one fell swoop with twenty-five ministers¹⁰⁸⁴.

[T]he government is meeting with itself since the members of the organization of Sidi-Saïd are part of the power structure ... if not, how to explain that the so-called trade unionist like Mohamed Lakhdar Badredine is an FLN deputy and will definitely vote for the hydrocarbons bill¹⁰⁸⁵.

Negotiations were referred to as theatre meanwhile the 1600 dinars increase in salaries were considered insufficient¹⁰⁸⁶. The government was meeting with itself because Malaoui did not see any difference between UGTA and the state. Meanwhile, newspapers more close to the power elite saw the negotiations as pacification meaning the increase of the salaries for more than half million workers,

¹⁰⁸¹ *L'Expression* 15.8.2002. Le FMI, cet absent présent: Augmentation de salaire et « dépermanisation ». Mohamed Derar; *L'Actualité* 15.8.2002. Les salaires seront augmentés. Ali Oussi.

¹⁰⁸² With average salary of 10 000 dinars. Regarding all the expenditures (2000 dinars for taxes and social security, 1600 dinars for rent, 1900 dinars for electricity, gas and water) only 4500 dinars were left for living including food. (*El Watan* 20.8.2002. Le SNAPAP déplore l'érosion des salaires; *Le Quotidien d'Oran* 20.8.2002. Le SNAPAP tire la sonnette d'alarme. Omar S; *Le Matin* 20.8.2002. « Il faut nous associer au dialogue social ». Nadir Benseba.)

¹⁰⁸³ *El Watan* 8.8.2002. L'optimisme de l'UGTA. Des dossiers chauds au menu de la bibartite. Adlène Meddi.

¹⁰⁸⁴ *Le Matin* 10.9.2002. « La bibartite est un échec ». Yasmine Ferroukhi.

¹⁰⁸⁵ *Le Matin* 10.9.2002. « La bibartite est un échec ». Yasmine Ferroukhi.

¹⁰⁸⁶ *Le Quotidien d'Oran* 10.9.2002. « On n'achètera pas notre silence pour 1.600 dinars ». Omar S.

which meant about 30 billion dinars cost for the state¹⁰⁸⁷. The president of the SNPSP Salah Bensebaïni criticized that all the victories achieved by the autonomous trade unions were delivered as merit for UGTA, even though they had already reached to the similar agreement with the Minister Berkane earlier:

We welcome this achievement, but we strongly deny and denounce the will of the UGTA to do everything possible to recover the hints of a substantive work we had to do with the Minister of Health well before¹⁰⁸⁸.

Bensebaïni was disappointed that the fruits of their combat was delivered to UGTA and accused the bipartite-negotiations of being nothing else than double war against SNAPAP. SNPSP hold in September its third Congress, which gathered other autonomous unions CNES, SNPSSP and SNAPAP. However, it marked the absence of UGTA¹⁰⁸⁹. Malaoui and Bensebaïni had not been in good terms all the time, the previous having accused the latter being bought by the Minister¹⁰⁹⁰. Now it was time for reconciliation and attempt for coordinated action. In the next chapter, I deal with various strategies that state authorities used to manage the concerted challenge of autonomous unions.

6.2 Divide and rule: doubling the movements

In 2003, after a year of many victories, SNAPAP continued its scramble with UGTA and state authorities campaigning for trade union pluralism through organizing repeated strikes, sit-ins and demonstrations in the public space. There was news about the members of the UGTA leaving the union towards autonomous parallels¹⁰⁹¹. One of them was Mourad Tchiko, who I met several times during my field research in the ranks of SNAPAP. Tchiko was member of the general direction of the civil protection SNAPC, affiliated to UGTA¹⁰⁹².

The accusation related to political and to non-political antagonistic perceptions continued, when Malaoui displayed the announcement of the UGTA to hold a

¹⁰⁸⁷ *L'Expression* 17.9.2002. Les pouvoir publics jouent la carte de l'apaisement. S. Benalia.

¹⁰⁸⁸ *El Watan* 19.9.2002. Bensebaïni: "Halte aux manœuvres!". K. Ouahab.

¹⁰⁸⁹ *El Watan* 29.9.2002. Les praticiens en congrès. Djamila Kourta.

¹⁰⁹⁰ *El Watan* 29.9.2002. Les praticiens en congrès. Djamila Kourta.

¹⁰⁹¹ *El Watan* 17.2.2003. Des syndicalistes quittent l'UGTA. Arab Chih.

¹⁰⁹² *Le Soir d'Algérie* 17.2.2003. Vers la création d'un syndicat autonome. K.B. (K.B. indicates the first letters of the forename and surname of journalist who wrote the article).

general strike 25-27 February 2003 as political. Malaoui accused UGTA of negotiation with the government to appease the angered atmosphere among the workers for the benefit of the power (pouvoir): “It is a strike that has been negotiated between the UGTA and the government, to absorb the discontent of the workers in the different sectors”¹⁰⁹³. Therefore, UGTA and negotiations were politicized as political play and its action constantly linked to power (pouvoir). However, few days later Malaoui announced that SNAPAP will join to the strike organized by UGTA, but with goal of unlimited strike starting from 25 February 2003¹⁰⁹⁴: “[T]he fact that SNAPAP, which has no political ambitions, joins this strike will take its political weight into action”¹⁰⁹⁵. Suddenly Algeria was confronted with a general strike organized simultaneously by two contestants: UGTA and SNAPAP. According to international media, the general strike shut down Algeria and was followed by 95 percent of the workers¹⁰⁹⁶. Meanwhile, the pro-government media forgot to tell in their news that while the strike was called by UGTA, it was also advanced through autonomous trade unions. Marginalizing autonomous trade unions UGTA’s strength to mobilize workers were thus amplified.

2003 also witnessed two considerable developments: the establishment of the National Committee of Trade Union Liberties (Comité National des Libertés Syndicales, CNLS) and broad struggles in the sector of education. CNLS was established in October as observatory organization by seven autonomous trade unions (SNPSP, SNAPAP, CNES, SNPDSM¹⁰⁹⁷, SNMASM¹⁰⁹⁸, CNAPEST and CLA). Its main motivation came after arrests of unionists related to strikes in the education sector as well as when two important autonomous trade unions that were established in the secondary education sector did not receive official authorization¹⁰⁹⁹. They were the Autonomous National Council of Secondary and Technical Education Teachers (Conseil National Autonomes des Professeurs de l’enseignement Secondaire et Technique, CNAPEST) and Council of Secondary

¹⁰⁹³ *El Watan* 19.2.2003. « C’est une grève politique » selon les syndicats autonomes. Nabila Amir.

¹⁰⁹⁴ *El Mondjabid* 22.2.2003. Le SNAPAP appelle à une grève le 25 février.

¹⁰⁹⁵ *Le Matin* 22.2.2003. « Nous ferons grève avec l’UGTA » Conférence de presse de M. Rachid Malaoui, secrétaire général du SNAPAP. Yasmine Ferroukhi.

¹⁰⁹⁶ *BBC News* 25.2.2003. Strike shuts down Algeria. Mohamed Arezki Himeur.

¹⁰⁹⁷ *National Union of Professors and Docents in Medical Sciences* (Syndicat National des Professeurs et Docents en Sciences Médicales).

¹⁰⁹⁸ *National Union of Assistant Professors in Medical Sciences* (Syndicat national des maîtres assistants en sciences médicales).

¹⁰⁹⁹ *Le Matin* 18.10.2003. Le Comité national des libertés syndicales élabore un programme d’action. R. M (R.M indicates the first letters of the forename and surname of journalist who wrote the article); Graïne (2010, 172).

Schools of Algiers (Conseil des lycées d'Alger, CLA). Important figure in the context of Algerian autonomous trade unionism, Redouane Osmane¹¹⁰⁰, aimed at the construction of one single body representing the workers in the field of education from the teachers to the cleaners and cooks, which did not fit to the vision of part of those forming the CNAPEST¹¹⁰¹. CNAPEST organized its first strike that lasted 45 days in January 2003 in the wilaya of Sétif, the city where the union was created¹¹⁰², and soon spread to the wilaya of Bordj Bou Arreridj and elsewhere in the area¹¹⁰³. Later in the year, CNAPEST and CLA organized one of the longest strikes in the education sector that continued for about three months, demanding higher salaries for teachers¹¹⁰⁴.

Politicization within autonomous trade union-UGTA antagonism took place also in the sector of education. Autonomous trade unions accused UGTA for using their affiliated union the National Federation of Education Workers (Fédération Nationale des Travailleurs de l'Éducation, FNTE) for interfering to the protest while the leader of UGTA Sidi-Saïd accused autonomous trade unions for “political ambitions”¹¹⁰⁵. The leadership of CNAPEST responded that their union was non-political¹¹⁰⁶. CNAPEST and CLA were supported by the Kabyle citizens Aârouch-movement, leftist and Islamists from El-Islah party¹¹⁰⁷. Therefore, it was true, that oppositional forces were behind CNAPEST and CLA. Remarkable amount of women, especially among CLA, also participated to the strike¹¹⁰⁸.

Regarding the contestation in the educational sector, there is one interesting element to add, which describes well the versatility and richness of the field of trade

¹¹⁰⁰ Redouane Osmane (1951-2007) founded in 1987 *National Union of Algerian Students - Autonomous and Democratic* (Syndicat National des Etudiants Algériens-Autonome et Démocratique, SNEA-AD) and was activist in the PST, trade unionist in the UGTA and founder of the autonomous trade union CLA.

¹¹⁰¹ Graïne (2010, 18-19 and 82-84).

¹¹⁰² According to Larbi Nouar CNAPEST emerged already in December 2002 within meeting in Sétif (Graïne 2010, 85).

¹¹⁰³ Graïne (2010, 82).

¹¹⁰⁴ Graïne (2003, 166); Werenfels, Isabelle (2007, 75) *Managing Instability in Algeria: Elites and political change since 1995*. London and New York: Routledge.

¹¹⁰⁵ *Liberté* 9.11.2003. Démocratie syndicale et démocratie. M. Hammouche; *Le Quotidien d'Oran* 11.11.2003. Le CNAPEST réplique à Sidi Saïd. Amel B.

¹¹⁰⁶ *Le Quotidien d'Oran* 11.11.2003. Le CNAPEST réplique à Sidi Saïd. Amel B.

¹¹⁰⁷ Werenfels (2007, 75).

¹¹⁰⁸ Graïne (2010, 166).

unionism in Algeria. David Porter¹¹⁰⁹, who wrote an interesting work about the anarchist movement in the Algerian contemporary and past context, interviewed Redouane Osmane in 2003, who pointed out the significant difference between “the center and periphery”. Osmane argued in the interview that the significant female participation in the strikes was mainly related to culture that prevailed in the capital of Algiers and was therefore part of the “democratic practices” of the CLA. Osmane argued, that women's participation was not accepted and understood within CNAPEST, established in Eastern Algeria, and functioning in “authoritarian way” accusing the previous for non-transparent running of their trade union, especially regarding the decision making processes when CNAPEST was negotiating with state authorities (ministry) for an end to the strike. Osmane said: “the agreement signed by CNAPEST with the ministry was first revealed to strikers on television”, meaning that only small elite group in the leadership of CNAPEST made decisions without consulting the activists on the base level¹¹¹⁰. This cultural inference is revealing and may inform us about the differences between large urban areas and smaller cities in the periphery, or they may reveal certain urban-centric attitudes on the part of the teller.

However, many activists were arrested during the strike invoked by the fact that CNAPEST and CLA were functioning without official authorization¹¹¹¹. I interviewed the president of the CNAPEST, Nouar Larbi, in January 2015 in Algiers, where he depicted the establishment of the union and the strikes that were organized in the autumn:

When we created our union, it was based on protest action. UGTA is union that is representative. Union is not present only to be representative. We wanted to add to the sauce of the government something else that represents workers. When it is time for decisions, it cannot always begin with the refusal or acceptance of those decisions. There were three or four autonomous trade unions before us. However, they functioned almost in the same way as UGTA. They wanted to negotiate year after year without gaining anything. We did a revolution. We conducted a strike that continued almost two months in the end of 2003¹¹¹².

Before shifting towards autonomous unions, Larbi was already experienced trade unionist in the ranks of UGTA. However, he felt that something more should be

¹¹⁰⁹ Porter, David (2011, 413-414) *Eyes to the South. French Anarchists & Algeria*. Oakland – Edinburgh – Baltimore: AK Press.

¹¹¹⁰ Porter (2011, 414).

¹¹¹¹ Interview with President of CNAPEST Nouar Larbi in Algiers in January 2015.

¹¹¹² Interview with President of CNAPEST Nouar Larbi in Algiers in January 2015.

done. His personal reminiscence, interviewed by Larbi Graïne, is interesting in the context of acts of citizenship:

I had previous experience at UGTA before the advent of CNAPEST. I was facing a dilemma. It was necessary either to give up teaching or to struggle to change it. Finally, I opted for the second solution. Colleagues supported me. If they had not done it, I would have given up¹¹¹³.

As if answering to the criticisms presented by Redouane Osmane, Larbi stresses the importance of the support from his colleagues that was crucial for the continuation of his acts of citizenship. It is also important to highlight the importance of, supportive or discouraging, impact of social surrounding in the cumulative political activity of the individuals.

In addition to active employment policies, the authorities have a variety of other strategies to undermine the autonomous trade union movement. According to Amar Benamrouche, since the independence in 1962 until the 1980s, the government integrated their own representatives inside the protest movements and aimed through this infiltration to integrate and rule various independent social movements¹¹¹⁴. Redouane Osmane stated that especially after the civil war it was hard to organize meetings without governmental presence¹¹¹⁵. Autonomous trade union activists have also accused authorities for direct physical interference such as arrests and harassment. New autonomous trade unions, such as CNAPEST and CLA, faced the refusal of official recognition when their licenses were canceled. During my discussions with many union activists they blamed the authorities for bribing and corrupting individual union members to disperse unions and other oppositional movements and associations, which created suspicion among activists themselves.

Trade union pluralism can be considered as inherent right according to ILO Conventions 87 and 98 in the context of freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining¹¹¹⁶. However, it does not make it obligatory, regardless of its inherent legitimacy¹¹¹⁷. Neither can the obligation be found from Algerian constitution, which makes it challenging for autonomous trade

¹¹¹³ Nouar Larbi interviewed by Larbi Graïne (2010, 79).

¹¹¹⁴ Benamrouche, Amar (1999, 152) *Grèves et conflits politiques en Algérie*. Paris: Karthala – Institut Maghreb Europe.

¹¹¹⁵ Porter (2011, 414).

¹¹¹⁶ International Labour Office (2010) *Trade union pluralism and proliferation in French-speaking Africa*. Geneva: International Labour Office.

¹¹¹⁷ International Labour Office (2010).

unions to legally condemn the reluctance of the Algerian government to complicate their actions¹¹¹⁸. Regarding the recent history of the autonomous trade unions in Algeria, the prevention of the functioning of the Islamist SIT symbolized the first attempt to restrict the pluralism of the trade unionism in the country. In the interview conducted by Andrea Liverani in 2002¹¹¹⁹, Rachid Malaoui described government activity aiming to undo trade union pluralism as an early example how the state officials implement divide-and-rule tactics to break the SIT:

RM: We had the law [on unions] through marches and demonstration because even if initially [the authorities] included “la liberté syndicale” in the constitution, they later did not want to implement it. And then they did not give us recognition, because you know, the Algerian power (*pouvoir*) does not grant recognition if inside they haven’t got somebody they can manipulate as they like. With the SIT the “*pouvoir*” required the sectoriality criteria to be respected: but the Islamists set up different unions, and then without the agreement they declared themselves united in the SIT, and de facto the SIT became the Islamists’ union. Now what people do not know is that they drained all the workers from the public economic sector off the UGTA: and this why the UGTA backed the army in 1992, because with the Islamists there, nor necessarily in power, but simply there, its destiny was doomed. Today, since the law forbids the dissolution of a union, the Islamist Leagues are disbanded by decree every six months ... and now the workers of the public and private sector are left only with the UGTA¹¹²⁰.

Before I started my fieldwork regarding the autonomous trade unions in Algeria, I read the history of the development of trade unionism in the country and tried to follow as much as possible the events through various media sources. However, there were multiple details and practices that I could have not figured out by myself and if I did not have had possibility to speak with activists of the autonomous trade unions themselves as part of the participant observation in the fieldwork. In 2013, I met Rachid Malaoui, Kaddour Chouicha and other trade unionists in a cafe in Oran. During our discussions, I unexpectedly faced a problem that had caused me troubles when I was still gathering information and trying to construct larger picture about the field of autonomous trade unions, their orientations and functioning: There were two different unions that were both called SNAPAP:

KM: You have just organized a strike in the public sector.

¹¹¹⁸ Chouicha, Kaddour (2008, 277-278) *Évolution du pluralism syndical*, in Mohammed Chentouf (Eds.) *l’algérie face à la mondialisation*. Éditions Codesria: Dakar.

¹¹¹⁹ Liverani, Andrea (2008, 112) *The Civil Society in Algeria: The political functions of associational life*. Oxon: Routledge.

¹¹²⁰ Liverani (2008, 112).

RM: Did you see any strike?

KM: No. It was approximately two weeks ago.

RM: Did you see it, were you here already?

KM: No, I was not in Algeria yet. I only read about it in the press. El Watan [I probably remembered inaccurately the newspaper] said it was success and L'Expression said it was exaggerated.

RM: El Watan did not say that it happened. All the newspapers said it was success. Did you see it on the ground? Did you feel the strike? Do you know what is strike organized in the public sector? A strike in the public sector means health, communes, education ... everything. Did you hear that it was a legal strike? Did you hear that from the press? You were not in Algeria? That was a strike that existed only in the press.

KM: Who organized it?

RM: A clone. You have to understand this before we can move on. A clone of the power (*pouvoir*) had asked permission from the power to organize a strike, which does not have any base. A clone makes a strike, newspapers and television tell lies. The strike was never illegal. Majority of the press are part of the power or there are journalists in the press that are part of the power. Therefore, they may speak about the strike but on the ground, there is nothing. [...] All the strikes that are not directed against to the power are announced legal. However, they knew that there was a movement that was gaining ground so they have ... this false trade union, which organizes a false strike to diminish [the real movement?] ... but it did not work. That is why it is difficult and you have to read and understand the CISA report¹¹²¹ well in details. You cannot do the research by leaning to the articles in the press, because the press is manipulated¹¹²².

I felt stupid and started to consider by myself whether I was really sure that there was an article, which said that SNAPAP was organizing the strike. Actually, I felt many times quite foolish, asking silly questions. Especially the older generation of male activists were sometimes frustrated to explain me in plain, in concrete and simple terms, how things worked within civic contestation within autonomous trade unions. Sometimes they must have been disappointed about my lack of understanding about the situation, in some cases it was just their way of discussing a bit arrogantly. They also must have felt frustrated because after years of struggle their arguments seemed to be obscure. Nevertheless, I must also bring out that I met and interviewed many older male activists that were always eager to share their

¹¹²¹ *CISA - Comité international de soutien au syndicalisme autonome algérien*. (Octobre 2013). Algérie 2013: La poursuite des violations des libertés syndicales par le pouvoir.

¹¹²² Interviewed in Oran in March 2013.

knowledge, explain and teach me about the history and contemporary situation related to unionism in Algeria.

There were multiple autonomous trade unions that were created from the internal struggles and contested, which had right to use the name of the union. The members of the autonomous trade unions call this process as the cloning or doubling the movements. From the research point of view, the cloning was extremely interesting. While the Algerian state authorities seem to aversely tolerate the autonomous unions, various obstacles according to autonomous trade union activists are created to undermine their activity. One tactic was the “creation of doubles”, or “cloning”, as the autonomous union activists called them. Cloning seems to be, according to SNAPAP activists, one of the responses from the Algerian authorities to create ambiguity among Algerians and external observers. I have to admit that before I understood the logic of cloning, argued by the activists, I was confused when trying only to depend on newspaper articles and in relation to SNAPAP and other autonomous unions. On some occasions, I saw articles where SNAPAP was said to be organizing events or even cooperating occasionally with the UGTA or with some elements of it. When I asked from Rachid Malaoui: “Does SNAPAP work in some occasions with the UGTA”, he answered: “No, never”. I was told that it was the SNAPAP-Felfoul, considered as clone by those supporting SNAPAP-Malaoui that actually cooperates with UGTA. The division into two SNAPAPs dates back to internal struggle inside SNAPAP in 2004.

The discourses that were constructed around the concept of political were once again strongly present in the occurrences of 2004, which divided SNAPAP, and were closely linked to the presidential elections of April 2004. SNAPAP refused to support the candidacy of the incumbent President Bouteflika, who won the elections with 85 percent of the votes. His main opponent, former Prime Minister, Ali Benflis received only 6.4 percent while Abdallah Djaballah from the Movement for National Reform (El-Islah) got five percent with 58.1 percent turnout. In the end of May 2004, one of the founding members of the SNAPAP and deputy in the People’s Assembly, Belkacem Felfoul led a congress in the hotel Riyad (Sidi Fredj), National Council meeting, which voted for new Secretary General to take out current Secretary General Malaoui from his position¹¹²³. The congress that gathered around 60 participants, accused Malaoui for:

¹¹²³ *Le Quotidien d'Oran* 26.5.2004. Malaoui contesté de l'intérieur: Mouvement de « redressement » au SNAPAP. S.E.K. (S.E.K. indicates the first letters of the forename and surname of journalist who wrote the article).

... using the organization for political purposes and for zaâma [...] It advertises internationally and, in particular the International Labor Office (ILO), without recourse, was ignoring the legal ways of settling labor disputes [...] uses the representations of the organization in the wilayas in favor of Ali Yahia Abdennour's League of the Human Rights (LADDH), and present its claims¹¹²⁴.

Malaoui organized a press conference where he denounced the legality of the congress and accused Felfoul of misusing his position as deputy in the Parliament and as a member of SNAPAP to confuse the public¹¹²⁵. According to Malaoui this was an orchestrated attack by the state officials, because SNAPAP did not support President Bouteflika's candidacy:

We opposed the government's actions and publicly opposed several projects. We also refused to support the presidential candidate, considering that we are an apolitical union¹¹²⁶.

Felfoul and Hassan Achour also affirmed that the straw that broke the camel's back regarding their action to substitute Malaoui was the non-support for President Bouteflika's candidacy¹¹²⁷. However, Malaoui stressed the unity of SNAPAP, which could not be broken by the attempts of destabilization through this kind of "pseudo-congresses":

We are united. It's the outcasts of the union that came out today. They contacted their friends to organize the congress without any meetings in the wilaya level. None of the members of the National Council were present at this meeting. It is clear that there is a will to break SNAPAP¹¹²⁸.

SNAPAP received support from the CNLS, when its leader Tahar Besbes condemned the violation of trade union freedoms¹¹²⁹. The SNAPAP sections in Annaba, Chlef and Béjaïa announced one week after the congress in Riyad that they

¹¹²⁴ *Le Quotidien d'Oran* 26.5.2004. Malaoui contesté de l'intérieur: Mouvement de « redressement » au SNAPAP. S.E.K.

¹¹²⁵ *El Watan* 26.5.2004. « Le pouvoir ne veut pas d'un syndicat autonome ». Nabila Amir.

¹¹²⁶ *El Watan* 26.5.2004. « Le pouvoir ne veut pas d'un syndicat autonome ». Nabila Amir.

¹¹²⁷ *Le Quotidien d'Oran* 26.5.2004. Malaoui contesté de l'intérieur: Mouvement de « redressement » au SNAPAP. S.E.K.

¹¹²⁸ *El Watan* 26.5.2004. « Le pouvoir ne veut pas d'un syndicat autonome ». Nabila Amir.

¹¹²⁹ *Liberté* 1.6.2004. "Les libertés syndicales sont confisquées" Tahar Besbes, coordinateur du CNLS à Liberté. Nadia Mellal; *La Tribune* 2.6.2004. Les syndicats autonomes dénoncent « les atteintes aux libertés syndicales ». Karima Mokrani.

did not recognize the new leadership of Felfoul¹¹³⁰. Few weeks later in June, SNAPAP behind the Maaloui organized national conference in Rouiba, which gathered more than 300 participants from 41 wilayas as well as representatives from CLA, SNPSP and SNPSSP¹¹³¹. In addition, there were representatives from political parties such as FFS and RCD and from the German Friedrich Eber Foundation¹¹³². The meeting was a show of force from Malaoui to assure his position as secretary general of SNAPAP¹¹³³. Six years later in an interview with Larbi Graïne Malaoui explains the incidents:

[...] there has been attempts to stick labels on us and to get us involved in debates that do not fall within our competence. When that did not succeed, as a punishment, they created doubles to our unions. In 2004, we were asked to support publicly the candidacy of Bouteflika for the second mandate. We had already lived this scenario during the presidential elections of 1999. I remember that at the time we had to make a passage on state television to say that we will observe the neutrality in these elections. However, the people in power did not digest our position. The breaking took place when in 2004 we refused to march for the second time. We were told that if we did not support their candidate, they would create us a clone. “Expect the destabilization. If it necessitates your imprisonment, we will do it”, our interlocutors told us¹¹³⁴.

Malaoui explained how they were threatened being imprisoned by the authorities or destabilized in the organizational level if they would not to support the second mandate of President Abdel Aziz Bouteflika:

We told them that we need to change the laws. Because they prohibit unions, it is written in black on white, to be affiliated with a political party or any other organ. So the law is very clear. [...] Why the authorities did not sanction unions or associations that supported nominations? Yet the law 90-14 expressly forbids them to do it. In other words, what is being asked of us is neither more nor less than violations of the law¹¹³⁵.

¹¹³⁰ *Le Jeune Indépendant* 1.6.2004. Les sections d’Annaba, Chlef et Bédjaïa ne reconnaissent pas la nouvelle direction. N.O. (N.O. indicates the first letters of the forename and surname of journalist who wrote the article).

¹¹³¹ *La Tribune* 20.6.2004. Les partisans de Malaoui dénoncent la mainmise du pouvoir sur le SNAPAP. Amel Bouakba.

¹¹³² *La Tribune* 20.6.2004. Les partisans de Malaoui dénoncent la mainmise du pouvoir sur le SNAPAP. Amel Bouakba

¹¹³³ *Le Soir d’Algérie* 21.6.2004. Conference nationale consultative des cadres du SNAPAP: Malaoui lève le doute. Zineb A. Maïche.

¹¹³⁴ Rachid Malaoui interviewed by Larbi Graïne (2010, 34-35).

¹¹³⁵ Rachid Malaoui interviewed by Larbi Graïne (2010, 35).

Malaoui defended the non-political orientation of SNAPAP by taking neither Bouteflika's nor Benflis's side. He explained that during the period when rival candidate Ali Benflis worked as Prime Minister, SNAPAP was organizing sit-ins in front of Interior, Vocational training and Health Ministries to oppose antisocial politics of the Benflis-government. These protests, however, failed to attract any media attention. Therefore, if SNAPAP wanted to do politics why did they not use the supportive media attention given to Benflis campaign in supporting his candidacy for their own political purposes?

[...] the press was politically allied with Benflis. But if we were to attack Bouteflika, we should be sure to occupy one of the newspapers. We did not want to play this game. We said that we did not support anyone. And we had to assume the consequences of our stance: retaliation from the ministry of the interior and the president. We are a trade union and we have duties to our members. Nothing obliges us in the statute to adhere to this or that party. People come to us because they want to defend their moral and material interests, no more. I cannot avoid this. At SNAPAP, there are benflisists, Bouteflikists, ffsistes, everyone is represented. We cannot instruct them how to vote, the law forbids it, and trade union ethics does not allow it. Imagine that you support a candidate who will later without telling everyone privatize the public service, what are you going to do?¹¹³⁶

When Larbi Graïne, who did the interview, asked who contacted Malaoui to support Bouteflika, he does not want to answer:

I cannot tell you more. They were the decision-makers, we will tell more when the time is right¹¹³⁷.

In 2014, ten years later, I spoke with Salim Mecheri about the incident. He recalled in detail the sequence of events:

KM: What happened with Felfoul?

SM: It is true that Felfoul was before the representative of the autonomous trade union SNAPAP. We worked together during the arrival of the Bouteflika. Felfoul presented to deputation in 2001. If I remember well, he presented himself as the free candidate. We knew very well the Algerians and that a free candidate could never pass. If it is not designed by the power (*pouvoir*) one can never ... We understood that Felfoul had a clan who was directing him¹¹³⁸.

¹¹³⁶ Rachid Malaoui interviewed by Larbi Graïne (2010, 36).

¹¹³⁷ Rachid Malaoui interviewed by Larbi Graïne (2010, 36).

¹¹³⁸ Salim Mecheri. Interviewed in Oran in December 2014.

Mecheri explained that they started to be convinced that Felfoul had the power elite behind him, because otherwise he could never be elected as a free candidate. Simultaneously Mecheri explained that SNAPAP leaders used this occasion to get rid of him by appealing to the organizational codes of the union:

Luckily, leaders of SNAPAP made a reflection that it can be a good occasion to make him disappear. We can impose on him the status of our organization that whoever direct or deceive the trade union organization and who presents within the electoral organs such as APC [l'assemblée populaire communale] or APW [l'assemblée populaire de wilaya] must depose his resignation within the trade union organization. We believe that trade unionist has the ambitions and it is not forbidden, but you are subjected to the status of the organization. If you chose to be the deputy, you cannot represent the organization. [...] He was elected. We spoke with him telling that now was up to him to depose his resignation because his status has changed. [...] One is detached from his position and paid by the APN. Supposedly, he was agreeing, more or less¹¹³⁹.

Mecheri also accused that while Felfoul was deputy, he did nothing to help SNAPAP meanwhile the latter organized protests and strikes.

I remember the second mandate of the Bouteflika. We were called by Felfoul. I remember that I was in Algiers. No, before that we made one hunger strike that had really an effect [hunger strike in 2002]. We entered into negotiations. We were told that there will be less problems. We were told that they [state authorities] will recognize the autonomous trade unions and so forth. After the second mandate [of the Bouteflika], we were called by Felfoul. I was personally called by Felfoul. I was in training in Annaba. We had a program supported by the Commission of the European Union. The one who was the interlocutor of the program was the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. I remember I was in Algiers. He asked: "Selim, why do you work with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation". I told: "Because it is foundation that supports the trade union organizations. We have elaborated on program of formation properly Algerian, where those who communicators and consultants are Algerians. At the same time, I was not able to combine what was the problem. UGTA was also supported by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. There were SNAPAP, UGTA and one cultural organization from Tizi Ouzou and another in Algiers. European Commission had reserved a sum to support and promote this formation. However, we did not touch any money. It was the Friedrich Ebert Foundation that organized everything, such as the accommodation of the participants, the reimbursement and who paid for those who communicated [speakers] so we were nothing but organizers doing the work from the voluntary basis. We deposed the technical sheet [...] After he [Felfoul] asked what would I think if we would support the candidacy of the Bouteflika's second mandate. I told it is not me to answer whether we support or whether not. It is National Council [SNAPAP] that must decide whether it wants to adopt this position. He was like you are against the elections, I said it is not about that. I asked, do you

¹¹³⁹ Salim Mecheri. Interviewed in Oran in December 2014.

ask me the question as a citizen or trade unionist? He said it is as you wish and I said no, it is not the same. I told him that: “If you want my personal position I can tell you I have never voted and I will never vote”¹¹⁴⁰.

Mecheri openly admitted that he does not vote. This shows how the autonomous trade union activists differentiate formal political participation and activism (extra-parliamentary participation) within manifest political act according to framework of Joakim Ekman and Erik Amnå (introduced in the previous chapter)¹¹⁴¹. Also, Mecheri’s disengagement from elections can be considered as active disengagement, because he boycotted formal elections since 1992, when he believes democratic development was halted:

I was clear with my position. It is true, I have never voted since 1992. Boycott is also a right? He started to contact people one after another. Then we invoked the National Council [SNAPAP] [...] The day before the National Council meeting, there was a congress of the CNES in the center of Tipaza. The day before our National Council meeting, we were accommodated in the center where we met Kaddour and others. He had just resigned to prevent reappoint of their General Secretary. [...] When they terminated we started ours. I remember, there was a messenger, the one who is today Head of the Government [Abdelmalek] Sellal. He was then the leader of the electorate cabinet of the Bouteflika’s second term. He was sent to follow our National Council saying that the President ask you to support his candidacy. I remember that we were clear that as members of National Council we do not have possibility to decide but that it will be decided within the National Council. We finished the National Council and with a huge majority we ... Felfoul did not participate to this [meeting of] National Council ... because he understood that we are not going to support this [candidacy of Bouteflika] but the debate was held transparently and it was open. It was even decided that if majority votes for the support of the candidacy of the presidential elections it is up to them to assume this responsibility. Every member gave his opinion. Personally, I gave my opinion that was against. With overwhelming majority ... it was the final declaration ... I remember that it is inscribed in some of the journals that the SNAPAP is supposed to cherish its neutrality of autonomous trade unionism. The door is open to all the workers to vote whom ever is in their aspiration to avoid the polemic. Because one should not forget that SNAPAP is big autonomous trade union of the public function that is supposed to cherish its neutrality¹¹⁴².

SNAPAP does not prevent its members from choosing their political orientation but refrains as an organization from taking a stance in politics, while critics could also

¹¹⁴⁰ Salim Mecheri. Interviewed in Oran in December 2014.

¹¹⁴¹ Ekman, Joakim & Amnå, Erik (2012) Political Participation and Civic Engagement: Towards a New Typology. *Human Affairs* 22, pp. 283-300.

¹¹⁴² Salim Mecheri. Interviewed in Oran in December 2014.

argue that SNAPAP's non-political stance can be considered as active disengagement? However, from the democratic aspect Mecheri brings out important element why organizations such as SNAPAP should not take political stance:

There are the circulars and decrees that call the workers in the public establishments to be vigilante and cherish their neutrality, because it is them, who organize the election in the levels of prefectures in the wilaya level. We are the trade union of the public function we have the section that are represented by the committees of the state. These committees of the state are the ones that control and organize ... If you push them to affiliate or display with one candidate automatically you have a fear of fraud. [...] Sellal came back and told to Rachid [Malaoui] that Bouteflika is not happy and that you will pay expensive bill for your position. One week later we received a mission order designing that Felfoul Belkacem, President of the trade union SNAPAP, organizes the electoral campaign of Bouteflika. [...] After Bouteflika had the second mandate they rented a hotel called Tipaza Riyad. It is known state hotel. All the persons that organizes congress, assembly or whatever meeting in that hotel is automatically the power (pouvoir). I remember very well, the wali of Oran called to people, no matter who, musicians ... that they have to assist to the congress. We were informed that there will be a congress. We precipitated asking: hey, what are you doing? We were called by the gendarmerie of Tipaza. They proceeded arrests of the 45 voluntary members in the surroundings [of Tipaza]. Our other affiliates of SNAPAP were dispersed. Me, one of my friend called Toco and Madame Ghozlaine [currently Secretary General of SNAPAP] were in one office, where came one colonel. He told us: "you are legitimate organization. You are not wrong. I won't hide from you the fact that I received the orders that the participants of the congress of Felfoul Belkacem must be securitized". I assure you, he said it with these words. He said: "You have right to go out but you must not do anything. You should not create us problems". I told him that I will close to the door and just watch. He said: "no problem". I said: we will not touch them¹¹⁴³.

Then Mecheri described the atmosphere within the congress organized by Felfoul:

There were gendarmerie with German Shepherd Dogs. The participants of the congress were accompanied from the congress to the hotel¹¹⁴⁴.

Mecheri spoke with the journalists from Algerian television, who according to him understood well what was going on, meaning that the congress organized by Felfoul was an act of theater organized by the power (pouvoir):

Ten minutes past midnight, they had designed Felfoul Belkacem as Secretary General of the trade union [SNAPAP]. Luckily, we filmed everything. We photographed everything and we have proof that the power (pouvoir) that wanted to destabilize SNAPAP created one [clone] ... The first thing we did was to draw complaint, a file

¹¹⁴³ Salim Mecheri. Interviewed in Oran in December 2014.

¹¹⁴⁴ Salim Mecheri. Interviewed in Oran in December 2014.

of consistence, to ILO [International Labour Organization]. They sent commission and called Minister of the Employment Tayeb Louh. I remember one friend of my, an expert, who worked in Geneva, told me: "I was in Algiers meeting the Minister of the Labour with Felfoul in his office. I was surprised"¹¹⁴⁵.

This personal reminiscence of Mecheri related to occurrences of 2004 bring out various aspects related to the concept of political, manifest political action and cloning as an asset of power (*pouvoir*) to control oppositional movements. From the research point of view, my aim is not to say whether Mecheri's account is correct or not, but to bring elements significant related to theoretical framework of this study at large and to depict an individual narrative of an autonomous trade union activist. To be able to verify whether things proceed as explained by Mecheri are beyond my reach, without having possibility to hear the narrative of the state authorities about the event. However, I am more interested here in the understanding of autonomous trade unions activists regarding the cloning, of which they accuse state authorities. Ten years later I asked SNAPAP activist Idris Mekideche in 2013, what is according to his view the so-called clone. It is simultaneously interesting to reflect how little appreciation trade union activists give to oppositional political parties. He answered:

That is a problem, they [the authorities] do. Actually, the political parties do not disturb too much the power (*pouvoir*), they are weak and the real opposition does not exist. However, for the autonomous trade unions they create the clones. How? First, they infiltrate someone from their side to the union and create problems and finally create a new instance from the same union to make obstacles. These people are not representative. They do not have a base. They are only implanted by the state like what they did with SNAPAP when they implanted Felfoul. Felfoul was implanted to SNAPAP. Today, every time when SNAPAP declare a strike he [Felfoul] announces after one day that he stops the strike and that he has found a solution with the government only to wreck the strike (laughs) and many other things also. It is not honest. However, we are aware of all of that and we know all the difficulties we face¹¹⁴⁶.

A similar process took place according to various autonomous trade union activists in educational sector as well, when the Autonomous National Union of Teachers of Secondary and Technical Education (*Syndicat National Autonome des Professeurs d'Enseignement Secondaire et Technique, SNAPEST*) was established in 2006 and received official authorization along with CNAPEST next year. The President of CNAPEST Larbi Nouar depicts the events:

¹¹⁴⁵ Salim Mecheri. Interviewed in Oran in December 2014.

¹¹⁴⁶ Interviewed in the bus heading to World Social Forum in March 2013

Therefore, what they do is that every union that they find really strong with leaders that are not corrupted, they search someone among them to create another union. SNAPEST is a double of the CNAPEST. Why, because CNAPEST was created in the East-Algeria, in Sétif. We chose one Kabyliaian [Meziane Meriane], because he spoke well French. At the time, there were a problem of the movement called Aârouch. It was maybe in 2002 and they were negotiating [Aârouch movement and the government]. Therefore, when we chose a Kabyliaian it meant that the authorities could not go too far with him. It was kind of a strategy that we had. Unfortunately, the one we chose, Mr. Meriane, is corrupted. He was not really trade unionist. Later, they obliged him to create another union, which is SNAPEST. That was in 2006. We were both unions authorized at the same period. As if, they wanted to create an amalgam among the educational sector: CNAPEST, SNAPEST and so forth. However, they [members] are academic and they can make the difference between CNAPEST and SNAPEST. There are also SATEF of the [Mohamed Salem] Sadali and SATEF of [Boualem] Amoura. There are now ongoing process in the court that prevents Sadali to speak in the name of SATEF, because they created dissidents inside the SATEF and there are today two SATEFs¹¹⁴⁷.

Kaddour Chouicha explains about similar development in CNES:

There were people already inside the CNES who waited that we would make one mistake. I was really tired, because we had in the National Council one party, one of them was the friend of Saïd Bouteflika [younger brother of President Bouteflika]. So for sure there were pressure. One party was related with the PST, who wanted that we would become a branch of the PST. It meant that we had to take care of all this at the same time. It was difficult moment and tiring as well. Of course, you had all the challenges related to power (pouvoir), but that is normal. That is its work. Therefore, there were people inside who waited. After I withdrew and some others as well, the new group who took control were a bit arriviste, not all of them¹¹⁴⁸.

In the CISA report, *Algérie 2013: La poursuite des violations des libertés syndicales par le pouvoir*¹¹⁴⁹ exists a chapter, where the so-called “real” autonomous trade unions are separated from their clones. The report makes separation between SNAPAP (Malaoui) and SNAPAP-bis (Felfoul). CNAPEST (Nouar) and SNAPEST (Meriane), SATEF (Sadali) and Satef- bis (Abdelmadjid Basti, later Boualem Amoura), CNES-Chouicha and CNES-bis (Abdelmalek Rahmani) and SNTE (Mohamed Bennoui) and SNTE-bis (Abdelkim Boudjnah). In addition, the division was also made between the Inter-Union of the Public Service (Intersyndicale de la

¹¹⁴⁷ Larbi Nouar, interviewed in Algiers, January 2015.

¹¹⁴⁸ Kaddour Chouicha. Interviewed in Oran in January 2015.

¹¹⁴⁹ *CISA - Comité international de soutien au syndicalisme autonome algérien*. (Octobre 2013). *Algérie 2013: La poursuite des violations des libertés syndicales par le pouvoir*.

function publique, IAFP¹¹⁵⁰) and the Coordination of the unions of the Public Service or Confederation of the Autonomous Trade Unions (Coordination des syndicats de la fonction publique or Confédération des syndicats autonomes, CSA¹¹⁵¹). The CISA report can be considered as supportive of the perspectives of the autonomous trade unions, but it gives clear concerns regarding clones and doubling of the movements.

At the same time, the Algerian autonomous trade union leaders are not different from those of other social movements around the globe in the sense that personal disputes are common as related to power struggles and other personal discordances. While my intention is not, as a researcher, to discount the experiences of cloning, I have also observed that whenever these personal conflicts set the autonomous trade unions apart from common action, the other counterpart has often been relatively readily called a clone, double agent, or governmental agent, and so forth. Actually, personal power struggles are also present in the Algerian autonomous trade union movement, which does not exclude the possibility that the governmental authorities would not use them or even create them for their own interests. There are various international examples of how the security forces infiltrate social movements so as to control them. For example, a well-known example from the United States, COINTELPRO (Counter Intelligent Program) was a cover operation used by the FBI to create disputes and doubts among the activists in the nexus of activists' social network and social movements during 1950s to early 1970s¹¹⁵².

It is very difficult to figure out who are considered by whom as a clone, who is working with the state authorities, who are cooperating, and when, and how much inter-personal relations and disputes impact on labeling. In 2008, the United States was interested in trade union activism and planned nationwide strikes organized by autonomous trade unions in Algeria. From the Wikileaks cables, it is possible to read the reports, were Deputy Chief of Mission Thomas F. Daughton reports on these strikes and discusses meetings with union leaders. In the report Daughton writes about his meeting with the president of UNPEF Mohamed Ider:

¹¹⁵⁰ Established in March 2006 by CLA, CNAPEST, SATEF, SNTE, SNAPAP, CNES and *the National Union of Teachers of Paramedical Education* (Syndicat National des Professeurs de l'Enseignement Paramédical, SNPEM).

¹¹⁵¹ The Coordination of the unions of the Public Service, or since 2012 the Confederation of the Autonomous Trade Unions regroup UNPEF, SNPSSP, SNPSP, CNES-Rahmani, SNAPEST, SNPEPM and the Algerian National Union of the Psychologists (Syndicat National Algérien des Psychologues, SNAPSY).

¹¹⁵² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COINTELPRO>

(C) SUMMARY: Algeria's autonomous unions are gearing up for two nationwide strikes in February as they continue to make demands on the state. While the unions largely agree among themselves on the issues underlying the strike calls, there is less agreement on who speaks for whom, with splinter movements forming inside some unions. [...] 3. (C) Throughout the meeting, Ider underscored the apolitical nature of Algeria's autonomous unions. UNPEF, he said, had been officially recognized by the Algerian government since 1990 and had steadfastly relied on the country's legal system to advance its agenda. "We are not an opposition movement", he stressed, but an organization that "cares about Algeria and will fight for Algeria". [...] 5. (C) COMMENT: The clear divisions within the autonomous union community make it difficult to know who speaks for whom. The protests planned for February by different autonomous unions may end up being noteworthy although, as Ider points out, the unions have the ability to speak to the government but not the power to negotiate with it¹¹⁵³.

These cables show that the officials of the United States are also struggling to identify and map the autonomous trade union movement. In the context of this chapter, it is depicting how President Ider also stressed their apolitical nature. However, there are also other more direct preventions by state authorities according to autonomous trade unions. Idriss Mekideche explains the governmental efforts to obstruct the operation of the autonomous unions in the context of democratic development:

IM: Indeed, it (power) does not declare straight that it refuses it [action of the autonomous unions]. It says that there are democracy and that there are any problems and so on. However, in reality there are lot of restrictions and impediments. By the way, there are many trade unions, who have deposited their registration to the ministry of labor where you register to create trade union but they are not given registration. [...] Therefore, one prevents the others to organize and to unionize. That is how I see it. Because they know, that they violate the laws and human rights. Once there is an autonomous trade union, democracy, freedom of expression and freedom to unionize, it constitutes a danger for them. Secondly, there is a phenomenon, which is universal but propagates terrible ways in Algeria. I mean corruption and all that. When there is freedom to unionize it means a shame for them. Therefore, it is normal. The newspapers speak about the scandals related to the corruption every day. They have a problem with independent organizations so they want to be the godfathers of these unions and they want order what they can do or not do. That is not normal but they cannot claim anymore that there cannot be autonomous unions because the world has changed, but at the same time, they make obstacles for them.

KM: Like what kind of obstacles?

IM: For example, every time when SNAPAP organizes activity or action there is a problem. [...] They prevent us to organize demonstrations. We are prevented from

¹¹⁵³ Wikileaks. Unions plan nationwide protest surge: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08ALGIERS140_a.html (Retrieved 26.2.2018).

organizing gatherings and sit-ins. Every time when there is a strike, they say it is not legal. How a strike can be illegal? I have heard that in democratic countries one person can be in strike. He do not work, there is something that does not please and he starts a strike. How it can be said about the entire national union, that has representatives in public sector in entirety. Education, justice, local collectives and the others have a strike, which is considered illegal. For us the legality ... we do not look for to be legal anymore because we know that they say we are not. What we seek now is legitimacy, because we have a base and we are representative. That is the most important. The question is not whether you are legal or not. The laws can be changed. There are many autonomous trade unions due to non-access of SNAPAP to enter into economic sector, because they know that it constitutes a danger for them¹¹⁵⁴.

Mekideche argued that they are no longer searching for legality in their acts of citizenship, but rather legitimacy, which elucidates what Mitchell had to say about how social action is structured through law¹¹⁵⁵. Through legitimation of their existence and representation autonomous trade unions aim to impact legislation. Mekideche used the rhetoric of describing the state authorities as mafia by describing them as “the godfathers” who are afraid of letting autonomous unions to settle whether in the public sector and especially in the economic sector, where they would obtain more economic power and lever in pressuring the government through their action. Simultaneously Mekideche believed that the legitimation related to democratic pursuits have reached to culmination point, where there is no more return. He also suggests that the Algerian authorities need to show to the outside world that Algeria is democratic and respects its international commitments. I often felt during the interviews that autonomous trade union activists were quite hopeful for international pressure that could generate a more favorable situation for their activities. They also had had quite a normative expectation regarding European democracy, while being highly critical of their foreign policies. Another young activist Mohamed characterized the autonomous trade unions as part of the “real opposition movement”, unlike the other political parties:

They [autonomous unions] disturb them. If you search for the establishment of autonomous union, I mean a real opposition party ... because there are parties that play the game as if they are real opposition party, but it is more a theater play that is designed in advance. A conqueror that will fail ... it is like that. The same thing in the field of economy, if you try to create something strong you will face obstacles. I think it disturbs them. Because, if you ask after the real workers' rights it disturbs them ...

¹¹⁵⁴ Idriss Mekideche interviewed on the bus heading to World Social Forum in March 2013.

¹¹⁵⁵ Mitchell (2003, 29).

because this is not democratic country. Therefore, they refuse to give permission of registration¹¹⁵⁶.

These interviews show some of the means that are, according to them, used by the state officials to restrict the functioning and development of the autonomous trade union movement. They also consider the autonomous trade union movement and the network of other civil society actors as the real oppositional forces instead of some political parties, weakly rooted in the society, that “play the game” of the state authorities and remind merely “fake opposition” in the “theater play” rather than challenging the power in reality.

Governmental politics regarding employment are much more than just the suspected breaking of the autonomous trade union movements. Using various programs, the government aims to improve working conditions and sustain labor policies. I believe that the autonomous trade union activities should be understood as a reaction to governmental employment policies and strategies in general in the context of the active labor market, and therefore their functioning should be reflected against the larger labor policy background as well. To approach this environment, it is possible to understand social, economic and political conditions in which autonomous trade union movement functions and to reflect the main features of Algeria’s labor markets: the employment services and active labor market programs, job placement services for unemployed people (men, women, youth) and state support services in broad societal context. Government regulates and balances labor markets through various programs that have been developed by the state during the past decades.

In 2006, Mohamed Saïb Musette, who has published numerous analyses on Algerian employment policies, argued that sustainable and decent job creation in Algeria, and Maghreb in general, has been weak and deficient¹¹⁵⁷. Job creation was disturbed by informal employment, considerable unemployment and low activity of female labor¹¹⁵⁸. In 2010, the government announced a five-year plan (2010-2014) to encourage employment production with initial budget of DZD 350 billion (USD 4,7 billion)¹¹⁵⁹. Musette published in 2014, through the European Training

¹¹⁵⁶ Idriss Mekideche interviewed in the bus heading to World Social Forum in March 2013.

¹¹⁵⁷ Musette, Mohamed Saïb (2006, 21) *Le Marche du travail au Maghreb central*, in Mohamed Saïb Musette and Nacer Eddine Hammouda (Eds.) (2006) *La question de l'emploi au Maghreb central*. CREAD: Alger.

¹¹⁵⁸ Musette (2006, 21).

¹¹⁵⁹ Musette, Saïb Mohamed (2014, 3) *Employment Policies and Active Labor Market Programmes in Algeria*. ETF.

Foundation (ETF), a comprehensive summary: Employment Policies and Active Labor Market Programmes in Algeria, where he introduces the main features of the Algerian labor market as well as employment policies and strategies. According to Musette, employment policies have been developed around the National Employment Agency (ANEM) since 1980s and by creation of four new agencies: the National Unemployment Insurance Fund (CNAC), the Social Development Agency (ADS), National youth Employment Support Agency (ANSEJ) and the National Agency for the Management of Microcredit (ANGEM). Furthermore, Algeria has worked to decrease unemployment with foreign international programs within United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), ILO, World Bank, EU and various NGOs.

Since the 1990s, due to IMF Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), the private sector has dominated the labor markets, while still in 1989 public sector was major employer providing 54 percent of jobs¹¹⁶⁰. In 2011 public sector's volume decreased to 40 percent, which is of course weakening trend considering the role of the autonomous trade unions functioning in the public sector¹¹⁶¹. This does not mean that an Algerian would still not want to work in the public sector, where salaries and other work benefits are still more extensive¹¹⁶² and what is more, in the private sector the employment contracts are often more temporal¹¹⁶³. One of the major struggles that autonomous trade unions have conducted links to the minimum wage, which was adjusted in 2012 to 18 000 dinars¹¹⁶⁴. In 2014-2015, deep struggles took place related to revoke the article 87 bis dating from IMF SAP's in 1990s, where the minimum wage was defined in the constitution. In 2015, regardless of lower energy prices the article was abrogated¹¹⁶⁵.

Employment services in Algeria are divided under two ministries: ANEM, ANSEJ and CNAC under the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security and ADS and ANGEM under the Ministry of National Solidarity. These ministries and their functioning have also been under observation by autonomous trade unions. The main function of the reorganized ANEM in 2006 is job intermediation, which organized through seven central departments in 11 regional centers, 48 wilaya offices

¹¹⁶⁰ Musette (2014, 7).

¹¹⁶¹ Musette (2014, 7).

¹¹⁶² *Liberté* 27.11.2013. En Algérie, le public paye mieux que le privé. Amina Hadjiat.

¹¹⁶³ Musette (2014, 7).

¹¹⁶⁴ Musette (2014, 11).

¹¹⁶⁵ *Le Quotidien d'Oran* 6.7.2015. Abrogation du 87 bis : Une si chère paix sociale. Yazid Alilat.

plus 167 local offices¹¹⁶⁶. ANEM also include five youth employment programs for duration between 1 or 1.5 years: DAIP¹¹⁶⁷, CID¹¹⁶⁸, CIP¹¹⁶⁹, CFI¹¹⁷⁰ and CTA¹¹⁷¹, that have significant role in decreasing the job-related tensions. ANSEJ was generated in 1996 and launched two years later to promote micro enterprises initiated by the youth through support, advice and training and its services are found from the internet¹¹⁷², while the amount of its funded projects has raised from 7279 (1998) to 62 812 (2012)¹¹⁷³. CNAC was created in 1994 to reduce the social costs related to IMF Structural Adjustment Programs by granting unemployment benefits to older workers, aged between 35-60 years old, that lost their job due to economic factors¹¹⁷⁴. ADS was organized in 1996 to decrease poverty and social exclusion plus to support the unemployed within eleven regional offices, 48 wilaya offices and 254 field social units targeting social integration of jobseekers in general and young graduates in particular¹¹⁷⁵. According to Musette¹¹⁷⁶, it has been an important asset for the government with ANEM to ease social tensions through several programs: PID¹¹⁷⁷, AIG¹¹⁷⁸ and social inclusion programs¹¹⁷⁹ DAIS, ESIL and IAIG¹¹⁸⁰. Finally, ANGEM, created in 2004, provide microcredit for the use of the poor through 10 regional offices, 49 local coordination offices at wilaya level and 549

¹¹⁶⁶ Musette (2014, 14).

¹¹⁶⁷ Vocational integration assistance mechanism for the youth that regroup three sub-programs: CID, CIP and CFI (Musette 2014, 15).

¹¹⁶⁸ Graduate integration contract targeting first-time job seekers within public and private economic sector: 15 000 DZD for university graduates and 14 000 DZD for senior technicians (Musette 2014, 15).

¹¹⁶⁹ Professional integration contract pointed to first-time youth jobseekers leaving secondary or vocational education and training centers (Musette 2014, 15).

¹¹⁷⁰ Training insertion contract for youth without training or qualifications through work projects organized by local authorities or other sectors (Musette, 2014, 15).

¹¹⁷¹ Subsidised work contract aimed at those whose 3 years CID, CIP or CFI contract comes to an end (Musette 2014, 15).

¹¹⁷² <https://www.ansej.org.dz/index.php/fr/>

¹¹⁷³ Musette (2014, 17-18).

¹¹⁷⁴ Musette 2014, 18).

¹¹⁷⁵ Musette (2014, 16).

¹¹⁷⁶ Musette (2014, 16).

¹¹⁷⁷ Insertion programme for graduates between 8000-10 000 DZD (Musette (2014, 16).

¹¹⁷⁸ Allowance for activity or community service targeting social inclusion for disadvantaged people of employable age with 3000 DZD (Musette 2014, 16).

¹¹⁷⁹ Can last twice times two years with compensation of 6000 DZD (Musette 2014, 16).

¹¹⁸⁰ Musette (2014, 16).

support units that offer finance for self-employment, working at home, small businesses, goods and services¹¹⁸¹.

These governmental instruments are highly criticized by the activists of the autonomous trade unions. For example, ANEM is called Agence Nationale d'Esclavage Moderne (National Agency of Modern Slavery). However, they give a more diverse picture regarding the employment policies of the state authorities targeting to calm social tensions related to socio-economic challenges such as youth bulge, rapid population growth, housing and poverty. Regarding the efficiency of these programs, according to Musette, there are limited amount of information related to their operations and results, at least in public¹¹⁸².

The autonomous trade unions seem to have few possibilities to influence governmental employment policies, even though they have been able to stress issues such as the minimum wage, working conditions and the status of the public sector. Mostly, their activities seem to concentrate on social and political issues related to trade union freedoms, corruption and authoritarian rule and the sensitization of these question in public. Towards the end of the 2010s, SNAPAP and other autonomous unions struggled in challenging environment: boosting economy due to high oil prices and tightening grip of state authorities. Manifestations, declaring “Barakat” (enough), “y en a marre” (fed up), “à bas la répression” (down with repression), were prevented¹¹⁸³ meanwhile long strikes were conducted in sector of education, as Larbi Nouar, President of CNAPEST, describes:

In 2009, we made a coalition with UNPEF to defend the rights of the sector. It was a big strike that effected on all the establishments such as elementary, intermediary, high school and so forth. We were able to arrange many things. We believe that we are a trade union, not a political party. I even assisted in the congress of SNAPAP-Malaoui. When he was elected as the President he said that we must work to change the Algerian political system. I spoke and said that everyone want to change the political system of Algeria, even those that are inside. We are not tranquil. Those who are inside are afraid that one day people will overflow and those who are outside want change as well. All the Algerians want to change political system. Only when we have rule of law we can solve the problems without having support of someone in the administration and so forth. I told him, there are families, people who work there have rights that are violated there are and there are... one must work inside the system within union. To gain increase in salary and to improve the conditions of the workers rather than wait that we can change the political system is not our vision. We make

¹¹⁸¹ Musette (2014, 18).

¹¹⁸² Musette (2014, 26).

¹¹⁸³ *El Watan* 16.4.2008. Des manifestants bastonnés par la police: Le rassemblement des syndicats autonomes empêché.

our strikes and demands through negotiations, even though the real negotiations does not exist¹¹⁸⁴.

Larbi Nouar brings out common dialogue regarding the change, should one work from the inside or outside to be successful?

¹¹⁸⁴ Interviewed in January 2015 in Algiers.

7 SOCIAL CHANGE THAT NEVER TOOK PLACE

In this last chapter, I will study how acts of citizenship shape the individual agents' view of surrounding societal structures within the context of post-2011 uprisings and the discourses that justify these acts. I ask: how the citizenship demanded by independent trade union activists is negotiated through nonviolent acts in the public space? While I am interested in how the autonomous trade union activists view the citizenship related to patriotism, I am simultaneously interested in the construction of antagonistic discourses between oppositional autonomous trade unions and state authorities. I will show that the concept of patriotism and the Independence war (1954-1962) as a collective memory are contested by the both actors, oppositional and state authorities, to further legitimize the chosen political action. Therefore, both justify their action and viewpoints through concepts of patriotism, citizenship and nationalism.

Allegations of external interference by the major powers, mainly the United States, with the use of new technological and mental instruments such as social media came up in various discussions, debates and research related to 2011 uprisings and their aftermath. Both counterparts, state authorities and autonomous trade unionists, accuse each other of unpatriotic action that leads to the destabilization of Algeria benefitting external powers, especially United States and France. The United States is criticized for its aggressive interventionist policies in the Middle East and North Africa while France's colonial legacy, Independence War and complex relations continue to instigate debate within the heritage of the collective memory. Therefore, I use patriotism, including political and stability, as the nodal points that gather several floating signifiers (such as democracy, nationalism, transparency, freedom) that represent divergent meanings and experiences within the antagonistic subject positions.

This chapter analyzes the development of the autonomous trade union movement's latest performances starting from the regional upheavals (2011 uprisings) and their impacts on Algeria until the 2019 uprisings. These processes reflect in many ways the 1988 October uprisings in Algeria and were often compared in the discourses of autonomous trade union activists and in the media as well, as I will later show. In all cases with the October uprisings in 1988 and the 2011 uprisings

the demonstrations were organized and mobilized extensively by the youth. After the respective state authorities were forced to make concessions, the democratic political processes were “captured” by the religious movements: FIS in Algeria, Ennahda in Tunisia, Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and so forth. Religious groups and movements were able to mobilize their supporters efficiently, winning the elections that forced the former state authorities with the help of the army to halt democratic reforms paving a way for political marginalization of the oppositional groups, activists and Islamists altogether. For the Algerian trade union activists, the cancellation of the political process in 1992 indicated the end of the democratization process, and unlike in Tunisia and Egypt, led to bloody civil war.

Almost 20 years later, when uprisings erupted in Tunisia and spread around the region, various Algerian oppositional social movements entrusted that the process, glossed over as “the Arab Spring”, would offer political and social opportunity for their aspiration. Also in Algeria, the youth rioted in various cities linking the social upheavals, though modest, to wider regional uprisings. The events instigated expectations for the new momentum for democratic change that had been interrupted since 1992. Some oppositional political parties, unions, youth organizations and human rights groups established the Coordination for Democratic Change (Coordination nationale pour le changement démocratique, CNDC), which expressed openly its pursuit for regime change. However, the Algerian people did not follow the oppositional movements. State authorities have been successful in dispersing oppositional movements, whether due to their targeted action or due to the inability of these movements themselves to construct a credible image and serious alternative among the population.

I start this chapter by introducing 2011 uprisings and their implications in Algeria. Next, I will reflect my personal experiences related to travel, which took place during the spring 2013, where dozens of oppositional activists were denied exit from Algeria to participate the World Social Forum in Tunisia. Finally, I will reflect the internationalizing of the internal struggle between autonomous trade unions and state authorities in the context of patriotism, stability-instability nexus and the concept of political relating to fear and impact of external powers. I discuss the Post-2011 environment in Algeria arguing that Algeria lacks credible oppositional force that could instigate protests in the country and challenge the state authorities. In the end of 2014, energy prices started to fell, which severed the economic situation in Algeria. The announcement of the sick President Abdelaziz Bouteflika aspires the fifth mandate led to vast protestations around Algeria in February 2019 and released the discontent towards the state authorities. However, these uprisings were not

organized by the oppositional movement, but were spontaneous protest by the people. This study will stop the analysis to these massive manifestations that forced President Bouteflika to resign.

7.1 The 2011 uprisings

The wave of revolts that are connected to 2011 uprisings started in Tunisia 17th of December 2010. Algerian protests throughout the country (Algiers, Oran, Djelfa, Boumerdes, Annaba, Tipaza, Ouargla, Bechar) begun about ten days later in 28th of December. They were mostly unorganized violent riots that presumably did not have any connections to political parties or organizations. Demonstrators, mainly the youth, blocked roads and put tires on fire. However, these protests were the widest in the country since the 1990s upheavals. Autonomous trade unions, such as CNES, SNAPAP, CLA, SATEF and human rights organization LADDH, published common communication, where they expressed their support and solidarity for Algerian youth while condemning the repression of the authorities:

We regret that violence has become the only way to be heard, but faced with a dictatorial and authoritarian management, making violence an instrument of management of society, and facing the asphyxiation of civil liberties and obstruction of all the peaceful ways of claiming, including the prohibition of strikes, rallies, peaceful marches, one can only expect a social explosion¹¹⁸⁵.

This statement contains multiple aspects related to violence, political and instability. While it takes critical approach on violence in general, it understands its conduction by the youth as the only resort left. The violence is fault of the state authorities and their management of political processes or rather due to continuous blocking of political processes that finally lead to violent atrocities. This position clearly accuses the state authorities of destabilizing the county. However, this statement differs from previous communications published by the oppositional autonomous trade unions because it did not condemn the violence de facto. Meanwhile, the autonomous trade unions such as SNAPEST and UNPEF, labeled by some autonomous trade union activists as “clones”, denounced the protests as vandalism¹¹⁸⁶.

On 21 January 2011, political parties, unions, youth organizations and human rights groups organized a meeting in Algiers that decided to set up National

¹¹⁸⁵ *El Watan* 11.1.2011. « La révolte est le résultat d'une asphyxie des libertés ». Nabila Amir.

¹¹⁸⁶ *El Watan* 11.1.2011. « La révolte est le résultat d'une asphyxie des libertés ». Nabila Amir.

Coordination body. The meeting was widely mediatized in the oppositional media such as *El Watan* and *Le Soir d'Algérie*. It gathered almost all the known oppositional movements and parties¹¹⁸⁷. With the presence of well-known oppositional personalities such as honorary president of LADDH and former Minister Ali Yahia Abdennour, National Coordination aimed at the change of the regime, not only changes in the regime¹¹⁸⁸. The typical “Arab Spring” –rhetoric were used: the wall of fear must be broken and the public spaces, confiscated by the power (*pouvoir*), must be reappropriated by the citizens. The first march, whose pacific nature was highlighted¹¹⁸⁹, would take place on Saturday 12 February. New body of the movement, the Coordination for Democratic Change (Coordination nationale pour le changement démocratique, CNDC), published its first communication, where it stressed its support for the uprising and to those arrested. In addition, the communication expressed its solidarity with the Tunisian people in its struggle against the totalitarianism and for the democracy¹¹⁹⁰.

Therefore, the most of the radical opposition were present, except autonomous trade unions CNAPEST and SNPSP and political party FFS, that possibly took some distance for strategical or personal reasons. However, only few days before the awaited Saturday 12 February SNAPAP and SATEF as well as LADDH announced that they would withdraw from the CNCD¹¹⁹¹. These acts can be seen as attempts to confuse the general public understanding of the forming oppositional movement, because behind the headlines one could find that actually it was all about SNAPAP-Felfoul, SATEF-Amoura and LADDH-Zahouane: those unions that are considered by SNAPAP-Malaoui and others as clones. However, one can also assume that their

¹¹⁸⁷ The signatories were Ali Yahia Abdennour, Fodil Boumala, LADDH, SNAPAP, CNES, CLA, SATEF, SOS Disparus, *Rally for Youth Action* (Rassemblement action jeunesse, RAJ), Syndicat des étudiants de l'université de Tizi Ouzou (UMMTO), Comité de chômeurs du Sud, Collectif Algérie pacifique, Comité de quartier de Bab el Oued, Association Tharwa Fatma n'Soumer, Comité de l'institut des sciences économiques (UMMTO), Association Afak, Association estudiantine Nedjma, Université de Bouzaréah and political parties such as *Democratic and Social Movement* (Mouvement Démocratique et Social, MDS), *Rally for Culture and Democracy* (Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie, RCD) and *Party for the Justice and Freedom* (Parti pour la Justice et la Liberté, PLJ).

¹¹⁸⁸ *El Watan* 22.1.2011. Une coordination se met en en place. Zine Cherfaoui; *El Watan* 6.2.2011. « C'est le système qui doit changer ». M.B. (M.B. indicates the first letters of the forename and surname of journalist who wrote the article).

¹¹⁸⁹ *El Watan* 1.2.2011. Le 12 février, nous marcherons. Madjid Makedhi.

¹¹⁹⁰ *El Watan* 23.1.2011. Communiqué de la Coordination nationale pour le changement et la démocratie.

¹¹⁹¹ *Le Quotidien d'Oran* 7.2.2011. La LADDH se démarque de la marche du 12 février. Salah-Eddine K.; *La Tribune* 9.2.2011. Algérie: Les SG du Satef et du Snapap se démarquent de la CNCD – Les annonces de participation n'engagent que leurs auteurs. Samir Azzoug.

intention was not at all to confuse the public opinion but rather to make clear that their respected movements were not part of the CNCD. From the research perspective in the context of media-analysis, the timing of the declarations gives an impression that their main purpose was to offer a negative image about the coherence of the CNCD, because none of the previously mentioned movements ever participated to any of the meetings organized by the coalition. If they did not want to trick, maybe they just wanted to resign and cut any suspected involvement with them and CNCD?

Despite the attempt by CNCD to occupy public space in Algiers and Oran, they did not succeed to follow similar patterns that took place in the neighboring countries, where demonstrators were able to capture symbolic public squares. Day after President of Egypt Hosni Mubarak stepped down, assemblages in May 1 Square in Algiers and 1 November Place in Oran were both prevented by massive deployment of the police. First the demonstrators were few hundred in Algiers, but later on their amount rose to few thousands according to newspapers, meanwhile according to witnesses the assemblage gathered more police (around 30 000¹¹⁹²) than civil participation¹¹⁹³.

Regardless of spectacular attempt to hold manifestation in the capital and utterances how “taboo fell”¹¹⁹⁴, “the wall of the fear is destroyed¹¹⁹⁵” and “this was a good beginning”¹¹⁹⁶, the authorities managed to prevent CNCD to kick off nationwide mobilization via arrests and blocs. CNCD published communication, where they announced new march for the next Saturday 19 January 2011 and condemned the repression of the state, stressing the pacific tendency of the citizens to use their constitutional rights, therefore citizenship rights:

[T]he tendentious maneuvers and the demonization of the peaceful actions of the citizens, the Algerians were able to thwart all the obstacles by adhering to the last demonstration¹¹⁹⁷.

CNCD accused the state authorities of demonization and restricting citizenship rights as the reasons that prevented their peaceful actions. Foreign Minister Mourad

¹¹⁹² *L'Expression* 13.2.2011. El Bahdja, une journée de non-marche. Karim Aimeur.

¹¹⁹³ *Le Soir d'Algérie* 13.2.2011. De la place Tahrir à la place du 1^{er} Mai. Brahim Taouchichet.

¹¹⁹⁴ *Le Soir d'Algérie* 13.2.2011. Un tabou est tombé. S.A.I. (S.A.I. indicates the first letters of the forename and surname of journalist who wrote the article).

¹¹⁹⁵ *El Watan* 18.2.2011. « Le 12 février a brisé le mur de la peur ». Salim Mesbah.

¹¹⁹⁶ *L'Expression* 13.2.2011. « Je suis venu juste pour voir ». Hadjer Guenanfa.

¹¹⁹⁷ *Liberté* 16.2.2011. La CNCD répond à Medelci. N.A. (N.A. indicates the first letters of the forename and surname of journalist who wrote the article).

Medelci assured that the state of emergency would be lifted in the coming days¹¹⁹⁸. Government had also decreased the cost of cooking oil and sugar already in January¹¹⁹⁹. Finally, on 19 February 2011 protest turned out to be nothing more than the repetition of what happened a week earlier. Citizen march transformed into police march. According to the narrative of the activists, their citizenship rights were restricted.

The sensitization of the dimensions related to citizenship had been under scrutiny already many years. In August 2010, for example, LADDH organized a campaign “The duty of citizenship is our right”¹²⁰⁰. President Mustapha Bouchachi stated:

The regimes of these countries in question know how to coordinate their efforts, but for security reasons, and show solidarity, but against their respective civil societies. Therefore, why not to consider a coalition of these [respective civil societies] to make their voices heard on a minimum on the issue of promoting human rights and citizenship? [...] When we break the law, we are sanctioned by society, but the representatives of the order must respect our dignity by refraining from abusing or using violence on us¹²⁰¹.

Therefore, the concept of citizenship has been one of the central concerns of the mobilization of the autonomous trade unions and other social movements. As Bouchachi mentions, sometimes activism is in conflict with the law but this is integrated within the theory of acts of citizenship, which, as Engin F. Isin¹²⁰² writes, “do not need to be founded in law or enacted in the name of law”. Through acts of citizenship autonomous trade union activists hope to improve citizenship rights, formed by the complex web of rights and responsibilities that materialize contingently in varying degrees of influence and autonomy through economic, political and social integration¹²⁰³. The citizenship deals with various human categories in the society. It is according to Malika Rebai Maamri one of the fundamentals of the modern democratic state¹²⁰⁴. However, in this study I stress more the meaning of how one is transformed into a citizen through acts of

¹¹⁹⁸ *Liberté* 16.2.2011. La CNCD répond à Medelci. N.A.

¹¹⁹⁹ Al Shaykh, Issam bin (2011) The Algerian reform proposals: an initiative for change, or continued monopolization of power by the authorities? *Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies* 14.8.2011.

¹²⁰⁰ *El Watan* 8.8.2010. La campagne pour la citoyenneté relancée à Oran. Djamel Benachour.

¹²⁰¹ *El Watan* 8.8.2010. La campagne pour la citoyenneté relancée à Oran. Djamel Benachour.

¹²⁰² Isin, Engin F. (2008, 38-39) *Theorizing Acts of Citizenship*, in Engin F. Isin and Greg M. Nielsen (Eds.) (2008) *Acts of Citizenship*, London & New York: Zed Books, pp. 15-43.

¹²⁰³ Isin (2008, 15).

¹²⁰⁴ Maamri, Malika Rebai (2014, 1) *The Dimensions of Democratic Citizenship in Algeria*. Norderstedt Germany: GRIN.

citizenship, not so much the impact or consequences that political action can generate to increase those rights, though they are obviously interconnected.

The concept of citizenship is largely perceived as a link between an individual and a state (previously city-state) as well as between the ideas of democracy and the rule of law. From the ideological perspective, citizenship is at the center of republicanism related to state's organization that guarantees popular sovereignty for the people. Citizenship denotes rights and responsibilities of a citizen. According to Catriona McKinnon and Iain Hampsher-Monk, citizenship means qualities and conditions that individuals share as membership of a political community to act as political equals¹²⁰⁵. However, while this possession of citizenship is linked to the nationality with the right to work and live in a country and to participate in public debates and political life in general to discover the common good of the society, it differs from the act of citizenship that transforms an individual into citizen. When Algerians search for consensus, stability and common ground, sharing membership in a particular political community, such as social movements or other communities, it is effected by the politicization of their acts that are defined through articulation. Therefore, citizenship can be linked to patriotism as well appearing within the forms of special affection and love, identification and sacrifices for ones attachment to a homeland.

In contemporary Algeria, Mohamed Mebtoul has questioned the fulfillment of citizenship from a critical perspective, as “unfound citizenship” of Algeria¹²⁰⁶. This is revealing for this study because it describes well how the oppositional activists experience the realization of the citizenship in the country:

Citizenship is forbidden in a social system that strongly rejects the autonomous and plural debate, to present and give space to forms of doubtful ideological indoctrination. They have succeeded in producing a simplistic populism that is not endowed with any political and intellectual depth, reduced to operating in isolation, breaking with the social and cultural dynamics deployed daily by social agents. The socio-political refusal of proximity and the plurality of confrontations results in multiplying institutions not well prepared to integrate and to take into consideration the constraints and the expectations of the people forbidden from access to the status of user, only to allow them a right to see how system works.

We are referring to the political production of a deformed bureaucracy that operates less on the rule than on personal relationships. Its effects are multiple: confusion, uncertainty, mistrust, stress, indifference, social distancing of people from state institutions. The lack of citizenship is also the lack of a decentralized social regulation

¹²⁰⁵ McKinnon, Catriona & Hampsher-Monk, Iain (2000, 1) *The Demands of Citizenship*. Great Britain: Continuum.

¹²⁰⁶ Mebtoul, Mohamed (2013, 9) *La citoyenneté en question (Algérie)*. Oran: Editions Dar El Adib.

that builds on people's social experiences in the interests of equity and solidarity, not on ruptures and split between those who are protected through to their relation network, and the other anonymous, little people, who are constraint by social wandering. It is a question of going beyond a too simplistic labeling of the behavior of the people, deeply anchored in certain social representations, which focus recurrently on the collective guilt in the face of situations of incivism and indifference. "We are not educated", "we see dirt everywhere. People throw their garbage anywhere". "We Algerians are violent, aggressive", and so on. In the absence of a rigorous and critical analysis, the affective and moral dimension seems to predominate, centered on a form of social impotence that doesn't really question its social mechanisms¹²⁰⁷.

Despite this quite structuralist point of view, Mebtoul manages to connect the interplay between individual and larger social structures in the context of social indifference due to lack of citizenship. Passive participation in politics, even within civil society organizations, form a huge obstacle that autonomous trade union activists confronted before and during the 2011 uprisings, when trying to profit from the political opportunity, social grievances and resources, created by the structural change related to wider regional uprisings¹²⁰⁸. In addition, Mebtoul in a sense questions, whether citizens exist in a state for their rights, or their gratitude and charity of the state? When Algerian citizens reflect their own acts, how do they incorporate them to wider social environment and what instigate the acts?

Against Mebtoul's structuralist perspective, Engin F. Isin and Greg M. Nielsen investigate citizenship from the perspective, as mentioned before, where it activates through acts and is not seen as solid status¹²⁰⁹. The importance of active citizenship and political participation has been repeatedly called by many scholars and politicians as well¹²¹⁰. The acts of citizenship conducted by the autonomous trade union activists, perceived as manifest political participation¹²¹¹, is seen as distinct from those Algerians who have an Algerian passport and may only vote or take part within the general social community building, such as working life and unorganized contingent interaction with their fellow countrymen. The acts create the actor not

¹²⁰⁷ Mebtoul (2013, 10-11).

¹²⁰⁸ Derradji, Islam Amine (2012, 7) *La Coordination nationale pour le changement et la démocratie algérienne et le réveil arabe: Grièfs, ressources et opportunité*. Mémoire de maîtrise déposé au mois de juillet 2012 (McGill University Thesis).

¹²⁰⁹ Isin, Engin F. & Nielsen, Greg M. (Ed.) (2008) *Acts of Citizenship*. London & New York: Zed Books.

¹²¹⁰ For example : Benbitour, Ahmed (2011, 14-15) *Radioscopie de la gouvernance Algérienne*. Alger: Edif 2000; Maamri (2014,19).

¹²¹¹ Ekman, Joakim & Amnå, Erik (2012) Political Participation and Civic Engagement: Towards a New Typology. *Human Affairs* 22, pp. 283-300.

vice versa, shifting the focus from the institutional way of understanding citizenship as status to collective or individual deed breaking the socio-historical design¹²¹². As Jonathan Darling¹²¹³ argues, acts are not dependent on any particular conception of deeds of an actor, but enable identifying of the production of new subjects. Therefore, citizenship transforms into a negotiated and contested field of possibilities and impossibilities, as Sidney G. Tarrow displays the engagement “when patterns of political opportunities and constrains change” offering strategic “repertoire of collective action, creating new opportunities, which are used by others in widening cycles of contention”¹²¹⁴.

CNCD aimed at using the political opportunity from neighboring regional countries to mobilize Algerians to challenge the authorities with its stated goal of regime change¹²¹⁵. The massive police deployment and lack of large participation nevertheless prevented mass gatherings and outset of the similar processes that took place in Tunisia and Egypt. Sidney Tarrow¹²¹⁶ links the power of protest and collective action into the boundaries of the accepted limits of social behavior. CNCD assured that taboos fell and the wall of fear was destroyed — typical rhetoric used during the uprisings, whether in Tunisia, Egypt or Syria connecting Algerian occurrences to the larger regional movement. According to Tarrow, “the power of protests” does not lie “in its numbers nor in its level of violence, but in its threat to burst through the boundaries of the accepted limits of social behavior”¹²¹⁷, one reason why protests are often blocked in the capital Algiers. Therefore the “power of collective action can be used by ordinary people faced by unjust authority, by organized social movements, by insurgents within institutions – even by constituted interest groups and parties” as an “almost the only resource they have available to gain attention, rally a following, and insert themselves in the political community”¹²¹⁸.

¹²¹² Isin & Nielsen (2008, 1-3)

¹²¹³ Darling, Jonathan (2017, 730) Acts, ambiguities, and the labour of contesting citizenship. *Citizenship Studies*, 21:6, pp. 727-736.

¹²¹⁴ Tarrow, Sidney (2011, 28-29) *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹²¹⁵ Derradji (2012)

¹²¹⁶ Tarrow, Sidney (1991, 7) Struggle, Politics, and Reform: Collective Action, Social Movements, and Cycles of Protest. *Western Societies Program*, Occasional Paper No. 21. Ithaca, N.Y.: Center for International Studies, Cornell University.

¹²¹⁷ Tarrow (1991, 7).

¹²¹⁸ Tarrow (1991, 7).

Mancur Olson¹²¹⁹ argues that even though groups of rational self-interested individuals with common interests are often expected to act to achieve their common goals, it will not be actualized unless the group consists of only a few individuals or unless “there is coercion or some other special device to make individuals to act in their common interest”. In other words, groups do not automatically always act according to the assumed common or self-interest, so why does collective action actualize in some contexts, for example in Tunisia and Egypt, but not in others, and how can collective action be defined? Todd Sandler¹²²⁰ refers to collective action as “activities that require the coordination of efforts by two or more individuals”. Acts of citizenship, however, approaches acts of individual, whether within collective or singular form. Collective action comprises group actions that target to promote “the interests or well-being of the members”. According to Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow collective action designates: “coordinating efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs”¹²²¹. While autonomous trade unions, civil society organizations and some political parties were able to agree on common objectives and compose common communication when establishing CNCD, they were unable to deliberate and convince the wider audiences, especially after the show of strength by the governmental authorities.

Therefore, reflecting how Tarrow sees the collective action as a synonym for social protest referring to Tilly’s definition on collective actions as “joint action in pursuit of common ends” or “people’s banding together to act on their shared grievances, hopes and interests”¹²²², the majority of Algerians seemed to have divergent sentiments about how the country should be developed. In turn, political actors that were behind CNCD, such as the leader of RCD Said Sadi were highly unpopular among Algerians, which was also stated by the youth organization RAJ, when they withdraw from the movement one week after its establishment and before the first march of 12th of February¹²²³. After the second march, 19th of February 2011, the rows of the CNCD began to crash due to the role of the political parties. Especially the youth collective Pacific Algeria required the withdrawal of the political parties from the CNCD, which finally divided into two different structures. Initiator

¹²¹⁹ Olson, Mancur (2002, 1-2) [1965] *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and Theory of Groups*. New York: Harvard University Press.

¹²²⁰ Sandler, Todd (1992, xvii-3) *Collective Action – Theory and Applications*. The United States: The University of Michigan.

¹²²¹ Tilly, Charles & Tarrow, Sidney (2015, 8) *Contentious Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹²²² Tarrow (1991, 9).

¹²²³ *El Watan* 30.1.2011. Le Raj se retire de la coordination. R.P (R.P. indicates the first letters of the forename and surname of journalist who wrote the article).

of the Pacific Algeria Facebook –group, 29-years old Amine Menadi, opposed political ideologies brought in by political parties and claimed instead: “The only ideology that we allow ourselves is that of the citizen's truth”¹²²⁴. Menadi politicized the incomplete realization of the citizenship in Algeria stressing its importance to create common ground for joint political action, which is endangered due to fragmented party politics. The importance regarding this individual connotation over collectiveness may reflect generational difference between younger and older generation or not.

Political parties RCD, MDS, PLD plus Collective of the students, Wassila-network, National Association of Disappeared Families (ANFD), National Collective for the Freedom of the Press (CNLP) and Ali Yahia Abdennour stayed in CNCD supporting the continuation of the Saturday marches each week. LADDH, SNAPAP, CLA, SATEF, CNES, Collective of the unemployed youth, Pacific Algeria and SOS Disparus created new body called Coordination of the Civil Society (Coordination de la société civile), which transformed later into form CNCD-Barakat (enough)¹²²⁵. The Chairwoman of the SOS Disparus, group CNCD-Barakat, Nacera Dutour explained: “If we want citizens to walk with us, we need to explain to them our vision related to the problems of unemployment, human rights, freedoms ... Some did not want to do this work”, hinting at CNCD-political¹²²⁶. The united opposition was no more and step by step during following Saturdays, the movement gradually melted away. In March, some youth even attacked protesters and tried to lynch leader of the RCD, Saïd Sadi¹²²⁷.

Isin and Nielsen stress that being a citizen means more than exercising rights or fulfilling obligations, such as paying taxes, voting, learning languages or teach: acts of citizenship means breaking the same old repetitive proceedings to concrete acts¹²²⁸. Isin¹²²⁹ differentiates “activist citizens” and “active citizens”. For him “activist citizens engage in writing scripts and creating the scene” while “active citizen follow scripts and participate in scenes that are already created”. Therefore, it is also necessary to make clear distinction between the movements and the

¹²²⁴ *El Watan* 26.2.2011. CNCD version Bouchachi : « Nous, nous marcherons en mars prochain ». Saïd Rabia.

¹²²⁵ *El Watan* 23.2.2011. La CNCD divisée en deux structures. Madjid Makedhi; *El Watan* 15.3.2011. L'organisation opte pour les meetings: La CNCD-Barakat reprend du terrain. Madjid Makedhi.

¹²²⁶ *El Watan* 15.3.2011. L'organisation opte pour les meetings: La CNCD-Barakat reprend du terrain. Madjid Makedhi.

¹²²⁷ *Al Jazeera English* 5.3.2011. Youths “attack Algerian protesters”.

¹²²⁸ Isin and Nielsen (2008, 1-3).

¹²²⁹ Isin (2008, 38).

individuals that make the actual decisions to act. As Karl Mannheim has argued, it is the individual that has capacity to think as far as we lack metaphysical entity of group mind reproducing our ideas or thinking instead of us¹²³⁰. In the research concentrating on activism, it is focal to stress the factors implicating on individual entries and engagement in structured collective action¹²³¹. Mannheim however points out that while the individual thinks, it rather means thinking with the others or participating in collective thinking¹²³². Similarly, Tarrow has highlighted the importance of the networks and face-to-face groups and other connective structures where collective action is the most activating and sustaining¹²³³.

At the end of March 2011, about 500 contract teachers required meeting with the President Abdel-Aziz Bouteflika to realize the promise to regularize their posts and barricaded themselves in front of Presidential palace Mouradia for 10-15 days¹²³⁴. Their representative Meriem Maârouf stated in the *Le Soir d'Algérie* –article in the beginning of the protest: “We will spend this night and every night here until the President decides to receive us”¹²³⁵. Two days later two contract teachers tried to set themselves in fire¹²³⁶ while after fourth night Meriem Maârouf said they will throw their identity cards to garbage and suicide all together¹²³⁷. What impels teachers to act with such devotion and desire threatening to commit such self-sacrifice? Actualization of acts provokes both responsibility and answerability, because acts always concern others and the Other. What creates the determination to devote oneself to challenge the authorities? Is it the anger towards the state authorities or joint action when people act together? How much social networks and identity construction impacts on this devotion from the individual-collective –dichotomy perspective?

When activists and members of autonomous trade unions make a decision, whether righteously or not, to become a claimant of their citizenship rights and in a

¹²³⁰ Mannheim, Karl [1929] (1955, 2) *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge.

¹²³¹ Lefort, Bruno (2013, 35) *A Recited Community: Figures of an Identity Foretold – Narrating Heritage and Positioning Boundaries among Student Partisan Groups in Plural Lebanon*. Tampere, TAPRI.

¹²³² Mannheim [1929] (1955, 3).

¹²³³ Tarrow, Sidney (2011, 30) *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹²³⁴ Sources vary from 10 to 15 days.

¹²³⁵ *Le Soir d'Algérie* 21.3.2011. Jour de colère devant la présidence. Salima Akkouche.

¹²³⁶ *El Watan* 23.3.2011. Deux enseignants contractuels tentent de s'immoler: Lors du troisième jour du sit-in devant la présidence. Samir Ghezlaoui.

¹²³⁷ *El Watan* 24.3.2011. Enseignants contractuels: Menace de suicide collective. Samir Ghezlaoui.

way break temporarily out with habitus in a specific momentum, they show creativeness in imagining the possible social transformation compared to those who believe that the change is not possible. Therefore, Isin argues, the “difference between habitus and acts is not merely one of temporality but is also a qualitative difference that breaks habitus creatively”¹²³⁸. He is also interested in which conditions subjects act as citizens, how do they transform into actors, how do they become claimants of rights, entitlements and responsibilities, how should we name those acts and how to investigate them and their transformation into citizens¹²³⁹? These questions should be asked from the members and activists themselves instead of just concentrating on the acts as such to perceive experiences and motives behind the acts.

Two years later, I interviewed Maârrouf, who is clearly respected among the other SNAPAP activists due to her previous struggles and sacrifices, and asked how she started her activism and why. Often the activists, especially younger ones, narrated the start of their activism through experiences of social injustice. The older generation usually constructed their memories in the context of larger life courses instead of pointing to an actual “moment”, where everything began:

I started in 2008 by creating a teachers’ contractual office, affiliated to SNAPAP that aims for permanent working contracts for teachers. First, we started in two wilayas, Algiers and Blida, and then it spread into 33 wilayas. The first act we did was the hunger strike for 40 days. After that, the minister of education started negotiations which however did not responded to demands and into real solution. Unfortunately, after hunger strikes many teachers had health problems. The Ministry of Education had not given any reply and those involved in the sit-ins organized opposite to presidential palace, because it is near to the Ministry of Education where the sit-ins were conducted, have been prevented from organizing protests. However, protests were organized every week. After the protests, there was intimidation by the police. We did 18 PV [Proces-verbal] [...] They took the protesters for the whole day and asked “why do you protest, you must stop, you must stay at home”. Therefore, there was finally so many problems that it was not possible to continue the protests and continue claiming the rights. However, even after these intimidations I was not afraid. The Minister himself called me and said that leave the movement and I will give you an apartment and work, but I refused. I have since been without work for two years now and I have been prevented from working only because of refusing to leave the movement. In 2011 we organized a sit-in in front of the Presidential palace, where we stayed day and night 15 days demanding the transformation of 30 000 contractual jobs to permanent contracts¹²⁴⁰.

¹²³⁸ Isin (2008, 18).

¹²³⁹ Isin (2008, 18).

¹²⁴⁰ Meriem Maârrouf. Interviewed in the bus heading to World Social Forum in March 2013.

Creating the teachers' contractual office was an act that was followed by hunger strike and protests in front of the presidential palace Mouradia to struggle for regularization of the teachers' posts. The motives constructed within longer period of time compared to the actual act. While there have been much attention on the status and habitus of citizenship, which Isin¹²⁴¹ sees as ways of thought and conduct internalized over long period of time, acts of citizenship should be understood as related but distinct from them. Distinction could be seen related with the everyday creative momentous acts, or breaks regarding structural and even determinist concepts of habitus and practice connecting individual acts to common engagement within the group¹²⁴². Within the theoretical framework of acts of citizenship, it is more fruitful to reflect how the acts are reproduced focusing on the exact moments, regardless of status and substance, when subjects constitute themselves as citizens instead of concentrating too much on actual start of activism, or wake-up¹²⁴³. Acts are easier to recognize and analyze than processes of formation of habitus. There are no fixed identities nor solid habitus or practice but more fluid temporal subject positions.

Malika Rebai Maamri also highlights the citizenship not only as a "legal status, but also as a way of life"¹²⁴⁴. In general, it is possible to resume that the autonomous trade union activists argue that citizenship rights are not implemented concretely or entirely. They believe that Algeria is lacking freedom of speech, democracy, just economic wealth distribution and justice. Many of them construct discourses where Algeria is ruled by unfair and oppressive non-patriotic government that benefits from the natural resources through nepotism and corruption enriching foreign countries instead of citizens of Algeria. They insist that natural resources belong to the people and profits should be equally shared. They see the authorities as brutal and corrupted working for their personal interests instead of common good. They suppose that their dignity is on the line and they do not have anything to lose. They are motivated to act within unions such as SNAPAP to defend workers' rights as fulfillment of the citizenship. Isin claims that "[a]cts cannot happen without motives, purposes, or reasons, but those cannot be the only grounds of interpreting acts of citizenship"¹²⁴⁵. Acts of citizenship are constructed from the individual's own life

¹²⁴¹ Isin, Engine F. (2008, 15) *Theorizing Acts of Citizenship*. Isin, Engin F. & Nielsen, Greg M. (Ed.) (2008) *Acts of Citizenship*. The Pages 15-43. London & New York: Zed Books.

¹²⁴² Isin (2008, 18).

¹²⁴³ Isin & Nielsen (2008, 3).

¹²⁴⁴ Maamri (2014, 17).

¹²⁴⁵ Isin (2008, 38).

experiences and perceptions that are certainly connected to larger social encounters and formation of discourses, but spring from individual, consciousness or unconsciousness, desire. Actualization of an act cannot be foretold or decided in advance.

The demands of the oppositional trade union and human rights movement are personified within the rhetoric of former Minister and founder of the Algerian human rights organization LADDH, Ali Yahia Abdennour. He was also one of the founding members of the UGTA before the independence and became the Secretary General of the UGTA. When I had possibility to interview¹²⁴⁶ him on autonomous trade union movement, he started reminiscing about his beginnings far from the 1940s when he was a member in the party PPA-MTDL and activities during the early years of the creation of UGTA. He was organizing famous, internationally recognized, general strike between 28.1-4.2 1957 with Abane Ramadan¹²⁴⁷, Saad Dahlab¹²⁴⁸ and Youcef Benkhedda¹²⁴⁹ disagreeing with his friends about the length of the strike that it could last only two days for tactical reasons. Then he explained how they run UGTA from the prison where they were captured by the French in 1957. After four years of prison he was released, leading UGTA in practice from Tunisia. He also told about how Ferhat Abbas¹²⁵⁰ called him to join the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (GPRA) to help with the drafting of Independence Program of Algeria together with Benyoucef Benkhedda, Franz Fanon¹²⁵¹, Lamine Khene¹²⁵², Omar Oussedik¹²⁵³ and Messaoud Aït-Chalal¹²⁵⁴. Ali Yahia Abdennour assured that when Ferhat Abbas was elected as the first acting President, he appropriated the program under his own name though it was actually

¹²⁴⁶ Ali Yahia Abdennour. Interviewed in Algiers in January 2015.

¹²⁴⁷ Abane Ramadan (1920-1957) played key role during the War of Independence, but was assassinated by the FLN.

¹²⁴⁸ Saad Dahlab (1918-2000) was important political activist in various nationalist movements and was involved with the creation of FLN newspaper El Moudjahid.

¹²⁴⁹ Benyoucef Benkhedda (1920-2003) played also the key role during the War of Independence and was head of third GPRA exile Government in 1961 and was hailed by many as the first Algerian President after the independence before he was sidelined.

¹²⁵⁰ Ferhat Abbas (1899-1985) was the President of GPRA during 1958-1961 and the first acting President of independent Algeria. He was also important political activist in various nationalist movements and political parties.

¹²⁵¹ Franz Fanon (1925-1961) was psychiatrist, philosopher and revolutionary representing the editorial collective of El Moudjahid and Ambassador of the GPRA in Ghana.

¹²⁵² Lamine Khene (born in 1930) is an important political activist and Algerian nationalist politician.

¹²⁵³ Omar Oussedik (1920-1992) was an important political activist and Algerian nationalist politician.

¹²⁵⁴ Messaoud Aït-Chalal was a longtime leader of UGEMA (Union générale des étudiants algériens) since 1957.

joint work. At first, I thought that he just wanted to contextualize the autonomous trade union movement to the larger context of Algerian historical development, which is surely necessary. However, he also wanted to emphasize his role during the Algerian War of Independence to strengthen his criticism towards contemporary state authorities challenging the monopolies of nationalism and patriotism.

At over 90 years old, Ali Yahia Abdennour is considered by many as the symbol of human rights movement in Algeria. He works closely with the autonomous trade union movement participating regularly to the general political discussion in Algeria through various oppositional media outlets. Ali Yahia challenges official narrative of the state authorities as maintainers of the legacy of the independence and does not save the words when criticizing state authorities and contemporary situation in Algeria:

What was it that we achieved in 1962? We achieved territorial independence, but we did not achieve human independence. Neither the autonomy of the people, people's sovereignty. We liberated the territory, that's all. Normally, we must liberate two things: popular sovereignty meaning that the people are sovereign. What does it mean that people are sovereign? It means that people are sovereign to choose freely its representatives in all the state's institutions elected by the state from the mayor to wilaya assembly, from the PNA [People's National Assembly] and Senate [Council of the Nation] to President of the Republic. Therefore, Algeria has never elected the President with sovereignty. The elections have always been tricked. Secondly, did we liberate the citizen? We are still subjects. [...] In 1962 the leaders who returned from the exterior, the army from the borders that occupied the country considered the Algerian people as the enemy and it stroke [on people]. There was a war. There were people who died ... Wilaya d'Alger, wilaya 4 ... wilaya 3 ... there was a war in 1962. Because they considered the people who fought against the emperor, they took the place of the colonizers¹²⁵⁵.

Arguing that Algerians never fully gained liberty, Ali Yahia Abdennour discredited the heritage of Algerian independence and especially those who are in power. He insisted that Algerians still lack real freedom meaning that "truly patriotic" Algerians should change the political system to finalize the independence struggle.

So what brought the autonomous trade unions? When the Algerian leaders took the place of the colonizers with the use of force, there are the rich that are more rich, and the poor whose number increases. There are those who suffer from the hunger. There are seven million Algerians who do not have enough to eat, even ten million. [...] The social is totally eliminated by those who govern. What we wanted to do? The situation is actually extremely difficult due to the illness of Bouteflika¹²⁵⁶.

¹²⁵⁵ Ali Yahia Abdennour. Interviewed in Algiers in January 2015.

¹²⁵⁶ Ali Yahia Abdennour. Interviewed in Algiers in January 2015.

Ali Yahia Abdenmour equated current state authorities and colonizers. He argued that Algerians are again poor as they were during the French colonial period. The discourses constructed about the social reality and shared in the activists' networks strengthen the discourse of righteous struggle of the "real" patriotic Algerians against corrupted authorities who work as agents of foreign countries such as United States and France. The collective memories they construct about the history supports their discourse, as this communication of the CNCD "Barakat" shows:

We do not seek the throne, but only the change. [...] After 132 years of colonization and at the price of enormous sacrifices including more than seven years of armed struggle, Algeria finally regained its sovereignty in 1962. But, to date, the Algerian people have not yet enjoyed of his sovereignty and entire freedom. While a wind of freedom and hope is blowing over the region, our country, after having been at the forefront of the democratic aspiration in October 1988, finds itself today stuck by a regime that refuses to look for a different direction¹²⁵⁷.

The references to the 1988 October uprisings were common when 2011 events were reflected on. Abdel Nasser Djabi offered interesting perspectives how to contextualize 2011 and 1988¹²⁵⁸. He stressed that weak organizational structure and the absence of political parties or labor organizations in the management of the protests combine 1988 and 2011 uprisings and highlight the weakness of the civil society in the country¹²⁵⁹. He also found a similarity regarding the democratic socio-economic demands in both events and their nature, meaning that they emerged in the popular neighborhoods initiated by the youth residents¹²⁶⁰. The creation of the CNCD came only at a later stage and was not able to take control or benefit from the popular demonstrations that preceded its establishment neither did it enjoy wide support among the youth protestors. Some of the autonomous trade unions also remained outside and continued in April their own activities, such as the strike organized by CNAPEST and UNPEF¹²⁶¹.

Finally, I will show how young autonomous trade union activists describe the citizenship themselves. During my interviews in March and April 2013, the concept of citizenship emerged in the subordinate clause. Often when interviewees spoke about their individual motivation behind their activism, the question of citizenship emerged. The question of citizenship was most often tied to the values of basic civil rights that should be provided to all Algerian citizens as stated in the constitution

¹²⁵⁷ *Le Soir d'Algérie* 26.3.2011. CNCD "Barakate" – Meeting à la salle Atlas.

¹²⁵⁸ Djabi, Abdel Nasser (2011) *Protest Movements in Algeria. Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies* May 2011.

¹²⁵⁹ Djabi (2011, 8).

¹²⁶⁰ Djabi (2011, 8-9).

¹²⁶¹ *Le Quotidien d'Oran* 25.4.2011. Education: Les syndicats gèlent la grève. Salah C.

and the socio-economic condition they were living and experiencing. Sometimes citizenship was mentioned as a synonym with *karama* (dignity), as young activist of SNAPAP Sofiane Sellami explained:

Until today, they (the authorities) have not accepted our autonomy. They always want to prevent us to conduct our action. They prevent us to work in peace ... they harass our members. There is always repression by the police and security guards. I think that because this authoritarian system ... this is dictatorship that does not want people to demand their rights whether related to the work or citizenship. They want to control everything. That is why they do not accept independent trade unions. [...] I became activist because I asked after my rights. The article 55¹²⁶² states that every Algerian citizen has a right to work and live in dignity¹²⁶³.

This interview clearly explains the close connection between the concerns of realization of the citizenship and the beginning of activism. When Sellami states: "I became an activist because I asked after my rights", it shows clearly how an understanding of acts of citizenship transforms an individual into an actor. Similarly, the experienced injustices, environment that spring into acts, are supported with group mates through interaction and connection with other individuals strengthening the experience, as another young SNAPAP activist Samir Baroud explains:

An association, political party or trade union that really asks after Algerian citizenship rights, they [the government] create a double organization to crush the movement [...] I am active in the trade union movement to claim my rights. Many rights are confiscated by those in power. There are no freedom of expression. The real Algerian citizens are suffering. Today there are two Algeria: those who share the oil revenues and those who are simple citizens. Therefore, we claim our rights and unionize¹²⁶⁴.

It is easy to see the construction of an antagonistic picture of those who are rich, in power and who profit from common natural resources, and those, an average people or citizens, who do not. The situation is unjust and citizenship rights are not realized. Mustapha Larbi, again another young SNAPAP activist, went even further in explaining the lack of realization of the basic rights contextualized in work, state assistance, and healthcare:

¹²⁶² Algerian Constitution, First Chapter, Article 55 (Work): 1) All citizens have right for work. 2) The right for protection security and hygiene at work is guaranteed by the law. 3) The right to rest is guaranteed; the law defines the relevant clauses.

¹²⁶³ Sofiane Sellami (name changed). Interviewed in the bus heading to World Social Forum in March 2013.

¹²⁶⁴ Samir Baroud (name changed). Interviewed in the bus heading to World Social Forum in March 2013.

If the power (*pouvoir*) can manage to give us stable work, we will be ok. If they cannot, ok, we ask unemployment compensation. If someone is given unemployment compensation, at least one is being noticed. Normally someone pays compensation for the other, he will prefer to find a real work instead of just paying compensation, you understand? If I have right for compensation, then I should have right to health care, transportation... I am unemployed. I need to move, I need health care, I am a human being, I have my dignity. Through unemployment compensation or stable jobs the power (*pouvoir*) should give us what we call easy neighborhood (*quartier facile*), free healthcare, free medicines. We are human beings. Now it is catastrophe. Young Algerians are dying. Most of the youth has become schizophrenic. It is disaster in the streets. We are afraid that this Algerian youth doesn't have anything to lose. If this people will make a revolution they will burn the whole country as simply as that. We instead, we are afraid for Algeria. We ask from this power (*pouvoir*) to give to the youth its rights, or their citizenship rights. Dignity¹²⁶⁵.

Mustapha Larbi stressed that they are worried or “afraid” what will happen in Algeria. They care about the country and as the activists they are ready to make sacrifices for the better tomorrow within patriotic frame. Young activist of SNAPAP Hamid Derradji stressed the duties related to citizenship and its importance in the democracy building:

Citizenship is the base of the construction of democratic state. As citizens, we have our duties and our rights. However, one must really stress the duties to construct our country, because in Algeria there is not good faith to construct this country. They are here to destroy our homeland¹²⁶⁶.

It is clear that citizenship can mean different things for different activists, but according to SNAPAP's project in November 2013, Appel a la concretization du droit de citoyenneté (Call for the concretization of the right of citizenship), regarding the demands of their citizenship rights, they claimed citizenship rights as:

- to recognize the popular will expressed through free and transparent elections as the only source of political legitimacy.
- to respect the freedom of choice and expression of the citizens.
- for achieving compliance with all policies, trade unions and associations freedoms and effective legal equality between women and men.

¹²⁶⁵ Mustapha Larbi (name changed). Interviewed in the bus heading to World Social Forum in March 2013.

¹²⁶⁶ Hamid Derradji. (name changed). Interviewed in Oran in January 2015.

- to support the unemployed by the state through the provision of unemployment allowance to all citizens without their uses and allow free access to the public service.
- for social housing and guarantee health coverage to all workers with a lower monthly income 30,000 DA.
- for the reinstatement of all trade unionists and suspended and revoked for the cause of human rights¹²⁶⁷.

Sellami, Baroud, Larbi and Derradji all stressed that they saw SNAPAP as the only existing platform to change precarious working structures in Algeria. However, it is also interesting how consistent their experiences are, which can mean at least that their shared discourses are shared in practice, or constructed in common networks in groups in participatory thinking, as Mannheim would describe¹²⁶⁸. Many activists also take part in a similar formation, where concepts such as citizenship are instructed. Algerian civil society is pluralist and rich compared to the role of the political parties, considered as weak and ineffective¹²⁶⁹. While discontent and pessimism may be vast among Algerians, social movements and other actors are nevertheless also relatively marginal phenomena. In 2014, I asked more targeted questions regarding citizenship and the acts of citizenship. Next I present a dialogue with a middle-aged SNAPAP activist, responsible for union's communications, Idriss Mekideche:

KM: And could you describe what the citizenship means to you?

IM: The citizenship, in short, means to have rights and responsibilities and to exercise them in reality. To live with a dignity. To respect the others. To respect the liberties of the others. It is all that. When we are citizens, we have responsibilities and rights. We exercise them in reality. We have and we use those liberties in reality.

KM: The actions that are conducted by SNAPAP are they related to the citizenship?

IM: Of course. Last year we assembled in Oran to call and to regain our citizenship. We made this call to the press as a result of this meeting in the context of trade unionism and SNAPAP and all the Algerians in general. It is related to freedom and democracy. The trade unions are here to protect the moral and material interests of the workers. However, without these rights such as freedom and democracy and

¹²⁶⁷ *Journalistes Citoyens Algérie* 13.10.2013: Appel a la concretisation du droit de citoyenneté. Idriss Mekideche. <http://www.jcalgerie.be/?p=9096>

¹²⁶⁸ Mannheim [1929] (1955, 3).

¹²⁶⁹ Liverani, Andrea (2008, 99) *The Civil Society in Algeria: The political functions of associational life*. Oxon: Routledge.

without right to organize in the context of civil society, we cannot defend the workers. Therefore, we decided to fight on two fronts: freedom and democracy as well as the rights of the workers. They are interconnected. We want to defend the workers but then we are told that we have not right to protest or that we do not have right to organize meetings or to assist in international manifestations. We are prevented to travel. Without these freedoms, we cannot protect the interests of the workers. We cannot be a trade union if we cannot protect the workers. We cannot exist¹²⁷⁰.

How Mekideche described how the fulfillment of citizenship rights also explains the transformation of the autonomous trade unions into protest movements and close cooperation with human rights organization such as LADDH and Amnesty International Algeria. Autonomous trade union activists argue that unions are not able to practice basic trade unionism and are therefore forced to conduct struggles transforming public spaces into spatial politics hoping to transform them into spaces of rights to gain conditions that are necessary for functioning within more traditional framework. However, there are differences in regard of experiencing the citizenship among unionists and unions. The President of CNAPEST, Larbi Nouar was in many ways less critical in his depiction of socio-political situation in Algeria:

First of all, one must understand that we are not like the citizens in Morocco or other countries. The social classes do not exist regarding the laws and so forth. However, in practice there exist some abnormalities. We do not have the social ranks as in Gulf countries that cover everything. On the contrary in Algeria, you can find a son of farmer (fellah), who represent Algeria in the United Nations. We do not have social classes. We are all Algerians. There are people who are in power and there are people who are not in power but there are not criteria who we accept among those in power. An average citizen can reach whatever position. This is grace of the November revolution. There are no different classes between Algerians. However, during the years of Bouteflika, there are now people who have became ultra rich, and those who have become really poor. These are the abnormalities, that we can register in Algeria¹²⁷¹.

This statement shows the versatility of experiences within the trade union movement, while similarities as well. Nouar stresses the lack of hierarchies in Algeria compared to Morocco and other countries due to independence war that made Algerians equal with one another. However, he also brings out the income inequalities that were according to him on the rise.

Finally, the 2011 uprisings did not lead into largescale political upheaval as in the neighboring countries, though many similar socio-economic features were clearly

¹²⁷⁰ Idriss Mekideche. Interviewed in Algiers in December 2014.

¹²⁷¹ Larbi Nouar. Interviewed in Algiers in January 2015.

present and experienced within the autonomous trade union movement. A few years later, the glimmer of change that followed the regime changes in Tunisia and Egypt started to vanish. Expectations for democratic transitions experienced setbacks within Mohamed Morsi's Egypt as well as in Syria and Libya due to ever escalating civil wars. This was the context where I started my fieldwork in Algeria, in spring 2013.

7.2 Restrictions at the Tunisian border

In March 2013, I travelled to Oran, the second largest city in Algeria, where I had possibility to visit the anthropological research center CRASC (Centre de recherche en anthropologie sociale et culturelle) and to meet with the trade union members of SNAPAP. In the evening two SNAPAP activists picked me up from my hotel and drove me a cafeteria, where I met Rachid Malaoui, Kaddour Chouicha and other trade unionists. The café was typical public cafeteria in Algeria with little luxury but a nice atmosphere.

We discussed about autonomous trade unions and I told them about my research. They were friendly and insisted that as an Algerian citizen I had the right to make research and I would not need any official authorization to interact with them: it was my duty to participate in a discussion, criticize, and develop the country. They said: "are you going to ask permission from the government to speak with us?" and laughed. They corrected many factual errors and misunderstandings that came up and gave me various new viewpoints for my study. I felt quite foolish after that meeting because I started to understand how complex and extensive topic I had chosen and how little I knew about it. Simultaneously, I was not sure whether I was able to try to manage such a challenging question.

During the discussions, they started to speak about the World Social Forum in Tunisia, where I was also supposed to travel from Algeria, because I had some friends from Finland participating there from various Finnish NGOs. Malaoui and Chouicha told me that there were dozens of SNAPAP activists, young and old, women and men, from all around Algeria, who were leaving by bus to Tunisia for the forum. They offered me possibility to join them. I promised to think about this appealing possibility even though I first thought that I would travel to Tunis as I was planned, by airplane from Algiers. They asked me: "Are you afraid? We are ready to sacrifice ourselves and you are afraid of a bus trip".

After the visit in Oran, I traveled back to Algiers and started to think about the travel. I had been told by many researcher colleagues that it could be risky to go with the anti-governmental activists to the places where I might face the authorities and be reported in the same context with them. The border would be definitely one place to avoid. Meanwhile, I was reflecting on the unique possibility to meet, to interview and construct relations with so many activists around Algeria, to follow them to international conference and observe how they interact with other international actors.

After a few rather sleepless nights I decided to take the risk and participate. I called to the organizer of the trip, the number I was given, and asked for further information. On the Sunday morning 24 March, I went to the office of SNAPAP in El Harrach, a suburb in Algiers, where I found dozens of activists who were gathering from different cities around Algeria. The office was in a building, which did not appear very luxurious, but which seem to be of practical for an autonomous trade union. There were few rooms, a kitchen and obviously it was used to hold meetings and education with flip chart and chairs to different floors.

I introduced myself to the various people I met in the corridors. I was asked to wait until we would move to Maison des syndicats in Bab-Ezzouar, Algiers. There would be buses that would take us to Tunis. However, while discussing with some SNAPAP youth activists, I found out that when crossing a border, one must pay taxes first. I was not aware about that before and I caused a bit of problem because time was limited. Finally, two youth activists, one from SNAPAP and another from FFS, promised to accompany me to an official establishment where I could pay the taxes, about a few hundred dinars, if I recall correctly. It was a rainy day and I remember being a bit ashamed for causing this extra bother due to my ignorance. Due to lack of time, these two activists were able to negotiate so that I was let to pass the queue. Finally, we were able to join the others in Maison des syndicats.

Maison des syndicats was a famous place where some of the most important meetings and gatherings among the autonomous trade unions were held. I remember seeing news, just some weeks before, where police had besieged the building. There were many posters in the walls and dozens of activists waiting for the buses to pick us. It was a cold rainy day and we moved to wait under the bridge on a highway not far from the house. The buses arrived and one bus was full of activists of the SNAPAP and another with activists from various movements, such as Amnesty of Algeria, SOS Disparus and FFS to mention just a few. I went to the bus of SNAPAP.

We started our long trip towards Tunis. I was told that we will cross the border at Tebessa. We were almost a hundred and the atmosphere in the bus was promising.

Young activists were dancing and occasionally shouting anti-governmental slogans or singing y'en a marre. I was able to communicate with many activists and decided to ask if I was able to conduct some recorded interviews. Our bus contained activists from different cities, as I was told beforehand, and during the way to Tebessa I was able to conduct about ten interviews and observe interaction between the activists. They were women and men, young and old.

From the beginning, I was very well received and I found them polite and friendly. I had thought that it would be difficult to have permission to interview the activists or to have an access to their experiences in the first place. However, everyone were eager to share their thoughts and they were pleased that someone was interested in their struggle in the first place. I asked permission to conduct interviews from the organizers of the trip already in the beginning when I arrived and I was told that I was free to speak and interview whoever I wanted. Actually, I noticed that many activists were so eager to share their perspectives that I had to take everyone into consideration and not exclude someone who wanted to speak, otherwise those excluded could be offended. Therefore, the only limit was time.

We stopped few times during the trip and these stops offered a possibility to get to know new members. Unfortunately, many prominent conversations were left unrecorded. During the so-called “unofficial” discussions, I tried to make as many notes as possible but it was challenging due to the full schedule and continuous discussions and happenings. We had left Algiers at about midday and it was getting dark. We made few other stops during the long trip and finally, in the night or early morning around 3.00 a clock, we arrived to border control in Tebessa.

Every bus had the main person responsible who always counted us before we continued after the stops. Now those in charge collected our passports to be checked by the border officials. Everyone was tired. We waited in the hall, but nothing happened. Gradually, after some hours when sunrise begun, people started to go back on buses to have few hours of sleep. Soon rumors started to circulate that there might be some problems. In the morning, between six and eight o'clock, the information was verified. We were denied exit from Algeria to the World Social Forum in Tunisia by the state authorities of the border.

When the final information came, dozens of activists from the buses jumped out, took their returned passports from those in charge and started to protest at the border. They waved their passports in the air, symbolically stressing the violation of their citizenship rights. Why their access to pass the border was denied? A cold desert wind was blowing while these activists shouted anti-government slogans. Everyone were tired and angry. The buses left and I heard that there could be other border

controls that could be easier to pass. First, the buses stopped at the village or small town of Meskiana, birthplace of well-known Algerian novelist and psychiatrist Yamina Méchakra (1949-2013), where we ate breakfast. I remember the old men in the town center with their brown burnouses, traditional Algerian cloth.

Then the buses continued to the beautiful city called Souk Ahras, birthplace of important Church Father Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430). From there a few activists took taxis to the border hoping that they could pass individually. The group, around 100 activists, was too large and attracted too much attention. The rest continued to the fourth largest city called Annaba in the North located by the Mediterranean, which was about 80 kilometers close to the EL Kala, next to a border crossing to Tunisia. We arrived to Annaba late in the evening. Everybody was starting to feel tired and a bit nervous. I was told that the bus drivers would drop us at the main bus station and leave. They had been driving for two days and for some possible disagreements they decided to leave. We were waiting for a few hours in the middle of main railway station in Annaba, known for its youth delinquencies, and some of the activists urged and recommended me to be exceptionally careful because of some potential criminals that could easily recognize our confusion in the station with our travel luggage and so forth.

However, soon we moved to youth hostel where we could have a shower and dinner. It was touching to see how united and helpful all these activists were despite their fatigue and the setbacks they faced over the last two days. It was easy to recognize some youth figures who continuously kept up a good spirit, organized things such as accommodation, lunch and so forth. They enjoyed respect among the others as well and somehow expressed their willingness to receive responsibility. I was told that next morning we would all continue to the border crossing near El Kala and try once more to pass to participate to the World Social Forum.

Next morning, 26 March, we took our breakfast quietly and again I had many fascinating possibilities to conduct discussions with the activists. I also had the opportunity to leave the youth hostel and buy some newspapers. I was positively surprised at how our travel was mediatized in various oppositional journals: *El Watan*, *Liberté*, *Al Khabar* and *Le Soir*. In the article of *El Watan* one activist was quoted saying:

[W]e arrived at the border around 3am. We gave our passports and all our papers were in order. We waited until 9am for the police to tell us that it is impossible to leave the territory, without any explanations¹²⁷².

¹²⁷² *El Watan* 26.3.2013. Des militants algériens empêchés de quitter le territoire nationale. Mehdi Bsikri.

Other quotes published told:

The decision comes from above, the police told us. Preventing Algerians from participating in the WSF is a serious act that affects the dignity and freedom of our fellow citizens. [T]he Algerian Power is frightened by any act that could lead to a “democratic contagion” as a result of the latest developments in the region¹²⁷³.

Then a few smaller buses were organized to take us to the border crossing near El Kala. Again the delegation was prevented from crossing. This time there were many outsiders crossing the border and they were a bit astonished when activists started to shout anti-governmental slogans, to sing the Algerian national anthem and wave the Algerian flag they had with them. Their demonstration was a kind of performance, and these young activists seemed to be professional demonstrators when conducting their protest. Some army soldiers arrived to inspect the situation, but they were rather smiling and calm. After sometime, we jumped back onto buses and moved to a new hostel, with better conditions than at the youth hostel, where we spent the first night. In the evening some of the activists gathered, around 20, to a room to discuss about tactics to cross the border or to organize protests at the border. I thought that it was time for me to get back to the capital Algiers next day, because many had left already. Some of these activists nevertheless remained and I heard later on that they had stayed for several days.

On the last morning we had breakfast and I started to know some of the activists better. We had many interesting discussions about the constructs of life in Algeria, marriage and regional differences in the marriage ceremonies. We discussed about the position between men and women, politics and experiences of life in general. Both women and men participated in these discussions. I was told by the young activists that SNAPAP was like a family. They even referred to Nassira Ghozlane, the secretary-general of the SNAPAP, as their mother figure who always took care of them. We took some pictures together and finally I left with three other unionists from Annaba to Algiers by long-distance taxi. We arrived so late that we all stayed the night at the office of SNAPAP in El Harrach. The next morning, I left and continued my stay in the capital with my family and friends.

Later on, I contacted one member from UGTA, who I was supposed to meet and interview in Tunis. I told him that I was not able to contact him before because I was conducting my field research among the activists that were stopped at the border. He asked me whether I participated with the SNAPAP people? I answered

¹²⁷³ *El Watan* 26.3.2013. Des militants algériens empêchés de quitter le territoire nationale. Mehdi Bsikri.

yes, when he told me that if he had known that I was going to travel with those people he would have explained me that it is not worth it. He told me that this trip had been organized by Morocco and we were carried like sheep. The relations with Algeria and Morocco have been cold for few decades and since 1994, the border between the countries has been closed. Especially the dispute related to Moroccan occupation in Western Sahara have led to an impasse regarding the development of their relations.

According to Frédéric Vairel, it is revealing to study the setbacks suffered by the activists' associations because it increases one's knowledge about the methods that are used by the authorities. The first impression after the unsuccessful trip to World Social Forum was that it had been a disappointment and setback for these oppositional activists. Vairel, when dealing with contentious spaces, stresses that "they function under coercion"¹²⁷⁴. He continues:

The contentious arenas constitute a "new discipline" adopted by regimes against activist' organizations and mobilizations; they are part of the way authoritarianism is reinventing itself¹²⁷⁵.

The contentious practices of SNAPAP can be linked to the way the activists define the political situation in Algeria and reformulate their political identities. Therefore, repertoires of contention of SNAPAP transforms into the subject of their struggle when they "define and implement tactics and gauge their potential efficacy" in Algerian social environment while simultaneously defining surrounding social and political reality. In December 2014, I spoke with Idriss Mekideche in the CGATA meeting, whom I have met first time in the trip to World Social Forum. I showed him a picture, where activists were waving their passports in the morning in Tebessa:

Oh yes, that is when we were in the border. I did not see the passports. This is part of the violations of human rights and restrictions regarding the freedom of movement. Meanwhile Algeria has ratified all the international conventions. You experienced that with us. We were prevented to pass the border to Tunisia to assist the World Social Forum without any explanation or reason. In the end, they did not say anything, unfortunately. It was an experience for the people who did not know how things happen. However, I believe that there are always possibility to find interests from such incidents. For example, we stayed on the border about one week and conducted protestations. There were of course those who left but we continued to protest day after day and those people who passed the border saw us and were

¹²⁷⁴ Vairel, Frédéric (2011, 27) "Protesting in Authoritarian Situations", in Beinini, Joel and Vairel, Frédéric (Eds.) *Social Movements, Mobilization, and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

¹²⁷⁵ Vairel (2011, 27-28).

really surprised. Otherwise, they had ever heard from us. Now, all the World Social Forum spoke about us and in other circumstances it would probably ever happened. In the end, their action had other consequences that they probably expected¹²⁷⁶.

I will now show how the patriotism in the antagonistic discourses are constructed and what role does play the foreign human rights organization and other foundations in the context of Algerian autonomous trade unions. While the Algerian authorities are highly sensitive about any external interference on Algerian internal issues, the autonomous trade unions and other oppositional movements use their help as a strategic choice to internationalize the internal conflict in their struggle for the realization of citizenship rights and freedom of action in the sense of a pluralist trade union environment.

7.3 External relations: citizenship rights or patriotism?

In this final chapter, I will develop in more depth the link between the antagonistic discourses related to patriotism in the context of international framework. I will stress patriotism and stability as the nodal points as well as the political in relation to internationalization of the conflict between the state authorities and autonomous trade unions. The United States and France often come out as foreign powers that instigate significant elements in the construction of discourses. The United States is an important military hegemonic and economic power in the world. Its military interventions in the Middle East, North Africa (Libya) and Sahel during recent years are followed closely in Algeria. However, due to complex relations, close and distant, between Algeria and France, antagonism anchors even deeper to historical events. The 132 years of colonialism, the war of independence, immigration and development of relations between Algeria and France, among others, play significant role in the construction of antagonistic discourses that appear in various interviews related to autonomous trade unionism in Algeria.

Why Algeria skipped the so-called “Arab Spring”? The country was suffering from many similar characteristics that raised unrest in Mediterranean area and elsewhere. There is little research conducted about the issue. However, Arab Barometer¹²⁷⁷ published thin opinion poll that revealed increasing satisfaction among Algerians related to living condition since the 2011 uprisings. The study

¹²⁷⁶ Idriss Mekkideche. Interviewed in December 2014 in Algiers.

¹²⁷⁷ Robbins, Michael (2014) *Skipping the Arab Spring? The Arab Barometer surveys a Changing Algeria*. April 2014.

depicts well why Algerians were content to observe the events from the sidelines. A recent analysis of three public opinion surveys revealed that while only minority of citizens evaluated positively the government or the state of democracy in the country, the overall trend was increasing satisfaction with living conditions since the so-called Arab Spring.

For example, in 2013 four times as many Algerians rated the government's performance as good compared with just two years earlier (40% vs. 10%). Likewise, the percentage who believe that the state of democracy and human rights is good or very good has gone up from just 8 percent in 2011 to nearly a third (32%) in 2013. Satisfaction with the state of the economy has similarly heavily increased during the same time-period. About twice as many Algerians said the economy is doing well or very well in 2013 (66%) compared with 2011 (32%). The report states:

This change may be due to the government's dramatic increase in social spending following the Arab Spring. Nevertheless, the vast majority of Algerians (77%) state that economic issues remain the biggest challenge facing their country. Similarly, in 2013, Algerians were more likely than in 2011 to say that their basic rights were guaranteed, including freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and freedom to vote in elections. In 2013, fully three quarters of citizens said each of these liberties was ensured¹²⁷⁸.

However, it is also important to reflect critically aforementioned surveys, though they can indicate about the wider public opinion in the country. The increased economic situation meant of course a huge challenge for the fragmented oppositional movement to mobilize citizens to protest. While small demonstrations and sit-ins were common in different sectors, such as education, health and public sector around the country, they lacked largescale popular participation. In many ways, for oppositional groups Algerians appeared ignorant and passive regarding manifest political engagement.

Secondly, the 2011 uprisings led to political instability in Tunisia and Egypt, and even civil wars in Syria, Libya and Yemen, which did not attract Algerians after a decade of bloodshed during the 1990s. The 2011 uprisings have also initiated wide discussions related to timing and geopolitical power politics. While revolts were depicted as authentic and incidental regarding their timing, concerns of foreign meddling and manipulation related to new social media technologies and transformation of media landscape have been manifested. These warnings of destabilization via social movements have been common in the narrations of

¹²⁷⁸ Robbins (2014, 1).

authoritarian governments, but discussion and doubts have been generated by scholars as well.

Immediately after the 2011 uprisings, Tariq Ramadan¹²⁷⁹ presented two opposing analyses on the 2011 uprisings, where one saw direct manipulation of the United States and some European countries that aimed for a new type of control through the destabilization of the eastern and western Mediterranean countries. The other repealed this view by explaining that no one can control social movements. However, then Ramadan offered an interpretation that went between the two aforementioned analyses. He argued that uprisings were not produced through manipulation, but were not totally autonomous either¹²⁸⁰. In addition, Ramadan wrote how the US and some European countries cooperated with Google, Yahoo, Twitter and Facebook and gave training for young Tunisian and Egyptian activists and bloggers since 2003-2004 and during 2006-2007 even more systematically¹²⁸¹. Similarly, Ramadan described how the Otpor (Resistance) movement was formed within internet dissidents in Serbia and managed to topple the government of Slobodan Milosevic in 2000 and how similar movements were behind Rose Revolution in Georgia, Orange Revolution in Ukraine and Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan.

In Algeria, the autonomous trade unions are also accused for receiving funding from the outside of Algeria to destabilize the country for the interests of foreign powers. The institutions, such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)¹²⁸², National Endowment for Democracy (NED)¹²⁸³, International Republican Institute (IRI)¹²⁸⁴, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI)¹²⁸⁵, Freedom House¹²⁸⁶, Albert Einstein Institution¹²⁸⁷ and Open Society Institute (OSI)¹²⁸⁸ are known for their promotion of democracy

¹²⁷⁹ Ramadan, Tariq (2011, 41-43) *L'Islam et le réveil arabe*. Paris: Presses du Châtelet.

¹²⁸⁰ Ramadan (2011, 21).

¹²⁸¹ Ramadan (2011, 42-43).

¹²⁸² Created in 1961 by the President John F. Kennedy for administering civilian foreign aid.

¹²⁸³ Founded in 1983 by the President Ronald Reagan to strengthen democratic institutions around the world.

¹²⁸⁴ Founded in 1983 to expand the freedom throughout the world and is chaired by Senator John McCain since 1993.

¹²⁸⁵ Founded in 1983 to increase effectiveness of democratic institutions and is connected to Democratic Party.

¹²⁸⁶ Founded in 1941 to promote democracy, political freedom and human rights.

¹²⁸⁷ Founded in 1983 by Gene Sharp that specializes in the study of methods of non-violent resistance.

¹²⁸⁸ Founded in 1993 by George Soros, wealthy businessman and political activist who is also object of various populist foes and conspiracy theories.

and are funded by US budget or American private capital¹²⁸⁹. Ahmed Bensaada argued that these institutions combined with the formation of activists and bloggers in various non-governmental organization provided with new technological instruments targeted more on destabilization than sustainable democratization¹²⁹⁰. Training includes non-violent ideology theorized by Gene Sharp, called as “Machiavelli of the non-violence” or “Clausewitz of the non-violence war”, who also founded Albert Einstein Institution as is well-known for his academic research on non-violence. According to Bensaada, various color revolutions and 2011 uprisings contain similar practices and symbols, as for example, raised fist that have been attached to these non-violent movements from Serbia to Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria¹²⁹¹.

These suspicions relate to the Algerian autonomous trade unions, because Bensaada accuses the Algerian human rights organization LADDH for receiving money from the NED in 2002, 2004 and 2005, while SNAPAP from Solidarity Center, one of the satellites of NED¹²⁹². Solidarity center even devotes one page for SNAPAP in its website¹²⁹³. I asked Selim Mecheri, the longtime activist of SNAPAP from the health sector, about the accusations related receiving financial aid from international institutions such as the Solidarity Center or about the accusations of being controlled by abroad:

SM: Ah, foreign countries. For us it was necessary to get help from the Solidarity Center because otherwise we wouldn't have had chance to go out [from Algeria]. For example, I do not have resources to go out without invitation from these international organizations. I do not want hide the fact that my salary is not enough neither is the financial resources of my organization. Sometimes when I go for a mission in Algiers, I use about 30 percent of the costs from my assets. It is not my organization that will ... but I am sure that I am defending a real cause and we have arrived to our objective, which is that we have become trade unionist. That's a choice. People respect us, because in the morning I arrive before my workers. I put on my doctor's coat. They know well whether I have a trade union meeting in Algiers. I go during the weekend. If I am for example invited [somewhere], the law authorize me to be absent from the work. There is a law that defines the modalities regarding rights to exercise trade unionism in Algeria. I have right to be absent from the work. I must present my convocation or my invitation for administration. Then I am authorized in the frame

¹²⁸⁹ Bensaada, Ahmed (2011, 20) *Arabesque Américaine: Le rôle des États-Unis dans les révoltes de la rue arabe*. Québec: Michel Brûlé.

¹²⁹⁰ Bensaada (2011).

¹²⁹¹ Bensaada (2011, 21, 24 and 85).

¹²⁹² Bensaada (2011, 83-84).

¹²⁹³ <https://www.solidaritycenter.org/algeria-reinstate-rachid-malaoui-end-union-rights-violations-now/>

of training. It is administered in the new status of the public function that training is a right and that the administration must authorize possibility for trade unionist or a worker in the public function to assist into congress or seminar of training. It is an achievement that was claimed especially by the autonomous trade unions, because the UGTA is not interested¹²⁹⁴.

Mecheri explained that the cooperation of autonomous trade unions with foreign institutions was part of the strategy to challenge UGTA within the international level. He questioned why UGTA had the right to international cooperation but the autonomous trade unions did not?

SM: The first track of the UGTA was in Germany. UGTA was the first partner that worked with Friedrich Ebert Foundation. It was created by the first German President that was elected democratically in 1922 [in reality it was created in 1919]. Friedrich Ebert is similar to FLN. It is a foundation that regroup multiple departments that form trade unionists, politicians and candidates. It is a school. Now they are saying that you are internationalizing the problem. I would like to ask from the power (pouvoir) or the UGTA why Algeria is ratifying international conventions? If they are ratified they are more reliable and weight more than constitution? [...] Algeria has ratified all the conventions related to work or working life. Eight conventions have been ratified. There exists eight conventions related to work. All of them are ratified by Algeria. It is subjected to engage to respect these conventions. The law 90-14 [relative aux modalités d'exercice du droit syndical] authorize to knit the relations between Algerian trade union organizations and international trade union organization. If we are, what is-called, harkis¹²⁹⁵ or mercenaries or whatever, they can just depose the complaint.

KM: They accuse you for creating the Algerian Arab Spring?

SM: I consider that the people of the UGTA ... I am human being, defender of the human rights. I am against the humiliation of the human beings. They are the people that hide themselves behind the flag of the UGTA. They are thugs with fine clothes who treat the workers as idiots. If the worker denounce these representatives of the UGTA, they are automatically punished. They can speak whatever, because you feel that they are telling you the talk of the power (pouvoir). They are against Algeria ... they want to internationalize the problems of the Algeria ... they are inscribed to foreign agenda to destabilize the country ...

KM: What do you think about this external menace?

SM: I don't believe that there is external menace.

KM: What about uprising?

¹²⁹⁴ Selim Mecheri. Interviewed in Oran in December 2014.

¹²⁹⁵ On page 287 I deal with the concept of harki and how is it used as qualifier in Algerian political language.

SM: There will be an uprising. I am totally agreeing about that. I will be objective with you. I am against an uprising because we have passed a phase ... really... really ... difficult. I am really afraid of this generation. It is not ... it is representative. One million and then one million high school students. Three million university students. Don't forget that there are unemployment estimated as 30 percent. It is a sign that makes afraid. This new generation that is born here in the university is not like those before. It does not think like ... I class them as the protest generation. [...] We are confronted by the protest generation and it makes me afraid and it will mark the [...]. At the moment, it does not understand and it is not interested in [...]. Karim, there is something that really touched me as being the ancient generation. I discuss occasionally with the youth and they say: "if the Americans come to colonize us, I would be happy". It is really serious¹²⁹⁶.

This dialogue shows well how the discourses related to patriotism and stability are constructed. At this stage, it is enough to state that it is intrinsically part of the discourse construction related to patriotism. Mecheri was worried that one day the youth will be so frustrated that they will manifest and transform the country into turmoil. Mecheri also states about the generational difference and gap of understanding between older and younger generation. Because of the experiences of the 1990s, he would not want to go the civil war again. Significant part of the youth have dissenting generational collective memory compared to older generations and for example, they were born after the civil war and therefore comprise its memory differently. Meantime he was worried that the youth lacked the appreciation regarding the independence of Algeria and the sacrifices that former generations committed by bringing out the desire of the youth for new American colonization.

It is difficult and challenging to find information on whether United States is directly in contact with the autonomous trade unions. However, I did some research through Wikileaks¹²⁹⁷, which offers 68 653 results related to entry word Algeria. One cable from 2009 was extremely interesting regarding this study, because it shows the support requested by SNAPAP from the Solidarity Center:

In addition, we have requested MEPI [The U.S. –Middle East Partnership Initiative] funding for a Solidarity Center project working with Algeria's labor unions, as well as a small grant for SNAPAP, Algeria's largest autonomous (i.e., non-government-affiliated) labor union. The Solidarity Center is currently the best vehicle for sustained engagement with autonomous unions, but the SNAPAP small grant exercise is an effort to build the organizational and fund-raising capacity of a union with little or no previous experience in either area. If successful, the SNAPAP grant might lead to

¹²⁹⁶ Selim Mecheri. Interviewed in Oran in December 2014.

¹²⁹⁷ It is important to notice that Wikileaks was accused by various civil rights organizations of endangering of human rights activists and their identities and was criticized for not censoring documents that could put human rights activists at risk.

larger direct engagement, albeit in the distant future, without a MEPI implementer as intermediary. (FY09 MSP Goal 3)¹²⁹⁸

The US embassy in Algiers, as most likely embassies from other countries as well, keeps ties with autonomous trade unions and other civil society activists. Wikileaks cables also reveal other information regarding autonomous trade unions. For example, the leader of SNAPAP, Rachid Malaoui have met three times¹²⁹⁹ in 2008 with US officials and explained about the social situation in Algeria. Cables also show meetings with the President of UNPEF Mohamed Ider¹³⁰⁰ and Secretary General Ali Lemdani¹³⁰¹ of CNAPEST. Coordinator of CNAPEST, Nouar Larbi explained in the interview with Larbi Graïne the request of American embassy to meet with autonomous trade union representative regarding their support for Bouteflika's extension for the third presidential mandate:

The American Embassy invited us, it is true, but for our part we declined the invitation. We were in favor of a meeting at the National Headquarters of SNAPAP. The Americans wanted to learn about trade union issues, such as the number of members, and the nature of our demands. We must not demonize trade unionists who have relations with foreign countries. The Algerian state itself has diplomatic, military and economic relations with the outside world. It's okay for unions to have relationships at this level. We are members of Solidarité Sud, Public Services International, International Education and CGT Maghreb-Europe. We are supported morally if only by press releases. On the material side, on the other hand, we are not assisted either by our State or by the foreigner. [...] We are an institution of the Republic¹³⁰².

SNAPAP also maintains relations with Spanish General Confederation of Labour (Confederación General del Trabajo, CGT) and National Confederation of Labour (The Confederación Nacional del Trabajo, CNT), French SUD Unions (Solidaires

¹²⁹⁸ Wikileaks. Algeria and MEPI - Moving forward
https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09ALGIERS415_a.html (Retrieved 26.2.2018)

¹²⁹⁹ Wikileaks. Would the real autonomous trade unions please stand up?
https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08ALGIERS332_a.html (Retrieved 26.2.2018);

Wikileaks. "Year of the strike" continues:
https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08ALGIERS458_a.html (Retrieved 26.2.2018); Wikileaks.
Mounting social discontent drives late May street violence in Algiers and Oran
https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08ALGIERS661_a.html (Retrieved 26.2.2018)

¹³⁰⁰ Wikileaks. Unions plan nationwide protest surge:
https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08ALGIERS140_a.html (Retrieved 26.2.2018)

¹³⁰¹ Wikileaks. Would the real autonomous trade unions please stand up?
https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08ALGIERS332_a.html (Retrieved 26.2.2018)

¹³⁰² Nouar Larbi interviewed by Larbi Graïne (2010, 99-100).

Unitaires Démocratiques, SUD) as well as with other North African, African and Middle Eastern unions. Malaoui explained their international cooperation with foreign organizations in 2010 in the interview with Larbi Graïne:

Yes we are adherents to the ISP (Public Services International). We are part of a Euro-Mediterranean network of trade unions. We have established working relationships with the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). Complaints have been lodged with the ILO [International Labor Office] and the ILO [International Labor Organization]. We have taken the step because we realized that globalization is not only economic but also social. In front of the powerful bosses who shaped this new world, stand up the alter-globalists who intend to make global social fight. Since the multinationals control the world economy, our fight is also an international struggle. The international solidarity of workers has become more necessary as unions are being repressed at home, as is the case for us. It is in this context that we adhere to the international social movement¹³⁰³.

Maaloui also stated that they do not have any difficulties in approaching foreign organizations:

No, it's a question of credibility. Foreigners are not fooled. They had the opportunity to come here. We invited trade unionists from Spain, France, PSI, International. They could meet everyone. They have their investigation. They know how to recognize the real unions of fakes. When you are credible, you adhere easily¹³⁰⁴.

The Algerian authorities accuse the unions of receiving foreign money and working as assets for the destabilization of the country. Questions of foreign economic support is often considered as working for external interests, which is denounced by autonomous trade unions. According to Idris Mekkidèche, responsible for communications, SNAPAP does not receive any funding from the state.

Not money nor any subventions. We have the contributions of the workers and we have the contributions or aids related to the traineeships, seminars and forums by the international organizations¹³⁰⁵.

Malaoui argued that SNAPAP is self-financed:

We are self-financed, our members contribute each with 80 DA year¹³⁰⁶.

¹³⁰³ Rachid Malaoui interviewed by Larbi Graïne (2010, 43).

¹³⁰⁴ Graïne (2010, 43).

¹³⁰⁵ Interviewed in the bus heading to World Social Forum in March 2013.

¹³⁰⁶ Graïne, Larbi (2010, 44).

Malaoui nevertheless admitted, as does Mekideche, that international solidarity groups contribute to the finance of the formations of SNAPAP members, while other support from international unions is merely moral:

Moral support is important. International solidarity has also contributed to the formation of our unions. In addition, it assists us with every action we take. Therefore, we learn a lot in congress when we are invited¹³⁰⁷.

In September 2013 Hocine Zahouane, President of one branch of scattered LADDH accused the Worldwide Movement for Human Rights (FIDH)¹³⁰⁸ of instigating the “Arab Spring” in Algeria and attached Rachid Malaoui of SNAPAP for those who were working for this agenda and receiving “important sums” of foreign funding to “execute the plot”¹³⁰⁹. Malaoui rejected the accusations in an interview with Larbi Graïne already few years earlier:

An internal conflict between Zahouane and the members of the Bouchachi team split the league in 2009 and we took a stand in favor of Bouchachi and Yahia Abdenour, the former president of the league with whom we worked. Therefore, we became the target of Zahouane who then accused us of receiving foreign funding to divide the country in the midst of turbulent period. This position was also held by the government, politicians and journalists, and through this the government tried to destabilize us with the complicity of a DRS clan. There is always, within the DRS, a very active clan that causes us serious trouble. The League of Human Rights of Zahouane has repeatedly received funding of foreign NGOs which I will not name. SNAPAP receives no subsidies from abroad. We work with foreign trade unions because we belong to an international trade union organization, the International Trade Union Confederation, and other foreign trade union organizations to which we pay contributions each year. This practice is authorized by Algerian law, which allows Algerian trade unions to join regional and international trade unions¹³¹⁰.

I visited the SNAPAP main office near El Harrach in the capital Algiers in March 2013 before leaving with 96 other activists towards Tunis Social Forum. I also spent a night in the office after returning late in the night to Algiers from Annaba, where SNAPAP activists continued demonstrating in the border of El Kala after being refused to cross the Algerian-Tunisian border to participate to the World Social Forum. For me, it seemed that SNAPAP was dealing with very limited resources

¹³⁰⁷ Graïne, Larbi (2010, 44).

¹³⁰⁸ <https://www.fidh.org/en/> (Retrieved 24.2.2019)

¹³⁰⁹ *Algerie News* 23.9.2013. Les vérités de Zehouane: Complot du FFS, tentative d'un printemps arabe en Algérie et crise de la LADDH. Aïssa Moussi.

¹³¹⁰ *El Watan* 17.2.2014. « Le pouvoir a sa propre société civile et ne dialogue qu'avec lui-même ». Feriel Kolti.

regarding their office and conditions, and its performances seem to rely on mostly dedicated activists ready to sacrifice their free time and resources to continue their struggle against the authorities, which recalls many ways a way of life. The outfit of their office and other mediums can be described as modest but practical.

The accusations of destabilization from abroad are widespread. They operate via the construction of discourses integrating us versus them juxtapositions creating images, where one's own patriotism is accented. Simultaneously, these discourses function as transformation of the others as the damagers of the state interests. Sometimes it is enough just to bring out foreign threats without accusing any counterparts, as the leader of the oppositional Algerian Workers' Party (PT) Louisa Hanoune's statement shows, when she accused in March 2013 that the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was training 200 Algerian in Tunisia, recruited by the Freedom House to use them for their political aims¹³¹¹. National protests were linked to foreign interests to destabilize Algeria. In 2013, young unemployed of the National Committee for the Defence of the Rights of the Unemployed (la Coordination Nationale de Défense des Droits des Chômeurs, CNDDC) started to organize protests in various cities in the economically crucial oil-producing areas of south of Algeria (Ouargla, Ghardaïa, El-Oued and Laghouat). Protests initiated speculation about foreign meddling organized by US, some European countries and Gulf countries to destabilize Algeria. When I discussed with Rachid Malaoui in 2013 in Oran, he did not hide that SNAPAP was supporting and helped the establishment of the movement in the south:

Who created Committee for the Defence of the Rights of the Unemployed CNDDC? Did they not tell you? It is SNAPAP. The committee that we created was the member of CNDC (the Coordination for Democratic Change). We created it and then it joined to the CNDC. And the people who are now protesting in the south, also the committee of the unemployed, it is also created by SNAPAP. Who created the National Workers' Committee on Pre-employment (Le Comité nationale des Travailleurs de Pré-emploi), who were beaten before yesterday [manifestation was organized in front of the Grande poste d'Alger]? It is the SNAPAP youth¹³¹².

The activities of SNAPAP can also be linked into network of other affiliates such as The Committee for the Defense of the Rights of the Unemployed (Comité national pour la défense des droits des chômeurs - CNDDC), which was created separately

¹³¹¹ *Le Grand Soir* 12.3.2013: Déstabilisation de l'Algérie : des blogueurs entraînés par la CIA en Tunisie: <https://www.legrandsoir.info/destabilisation-de-l-algerie-des-blogueurs-entraines-par-la-cia-en-tunisie.html>

¹³¹² Rachid Malaoui. Interviewed in March 2013 in Oran.

because SNAPAP did not have right to unionize in the field of unemployed according to the legislation. The National Workers' Committee on Pre-employment (Le comité national des travailleurs de pré-emploi) is also established as distinct organ gathering mostly the youth. Similarly, SNAPAP also has separate section for the women, National Union of Women Officials (L'Union nationale des femmes fonctionnaires), which was created in April 2005, when about 120 women from various structures and wilayas gathered in Zeralda in a meeting led by Koumas Hafidha¹³¹³. In addition, SNAPAP works closely with other autonomous trade unions and civil society organizations such as the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights (La Ligue algérienne pour la défense des droits de l'homme, LADDH)¹³¹⁴, Collective of Families of Disappeared in Algeria (Collectif des Familles de Disparus en Algérie, CFDA) and SOS Disappeared (SOS Disparus). In addition, cooperation can be found with various student, youth and district movements. These cooperative formations reflect the social and political environment in which these unions operate.

On April 2014, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, recuperating following a stroke in April 2013, was re-elected for the fourth time as Algerian President after a second constitutional amendment. The constitution was already amended for the first time in 2008, enabling the continuation of his presidency¹³¹⁵. The fourth mandate was widely criticized and the loose movement Barakat was created to protest against it. Autonomous trade unions protested against the fourth term of the President Bouteflika, but the Algerian public observed the situation on the sidelines and did not participate to the protests.

In 2014, SNAPAP joined to Arab Trade Union Confederation (ATUC)¹³¹⁶, connected to International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), which was established by 17 trade unions from 11 North African and Arab countries¹³¹⁷. It is possible to generalize that recent years have witnessed larger pursuit of autonomous

¹³¹³ *Le Soir d'Algérie* 27.4.2005. SNAPAP: Création d'une fédération des femmes fonctionnaires. A.G. (A.G. indicates the first letters of the forename and surname of journalist who wrote the article).

¹³¹⁴ The Algerian human rights movement is currently split into three factions. The first is LADDH of Kaddour Choucha from Oran, who is the leader of one important faction that is supported by honorary President of Ali Yahia Abdennour and contain sections e.g. in Laghouat, Chlef and Tlemcen. The second is LADDH of Béjaïa presided by Hocine Zehouane. The third is the Algerian League for the Human Rights (Ligue algérienne des droits de l'Homme, LADH) presided by Mokhtar Bensaïd in Algiers.

¹³¹⁵ Djabi, Nacer (2014, 3) Algeria: The Man and the Regime. *Arab Reform Initiative July 2014*.

¹³¹⁶ http://www.arabtradeunion.org/en_ (Retrieved 24.2.2019)

¹³¹⁷ <https://www.ituc-csi.org/new-trade-union-body-takes-up-the> (Retrieved 24.2.2019)

trade unions to obtain international help. One youth activist of SNAPAP stressed the importance of international human rights groups:

SNAPAP must be helped because it is almost the only force among the unions in Algeria that resists all this. It must be helped by the international community, international civil society and international organizations that democracy, union pluralism, activism, workers' rights and people in general can resist. Otherwise, if we suffer from obstacles, prevention, repression or ignorant international atmosphere we risk our ability to resist long time¹³¹⁸.

Persecutions, harassments and arrests of the autonomous trade unions or other civil society actors are systematically published by various international organizations, such as ITUC – Annual Survey of violations of trade union rights 2012¹³¹⁹, 2013¹³²⁰ and ITUC continue to keep up the information in its website¹³²¹. In addition, Euromed Rights have published numerous reports on human rights violations related to autonomous trade unions in 2013¹³²², 2014¹³²³, 2015¹³²⁴, 2016¹³²⁵ and 2017¹³²⁶ as well as Amnesty International 2017/2018¹³²⁷. These human rights organizations operate within legal and observatory context stressing that Algeria has ratified ILO core conventions 29, 87, 98, 100, 105, 111, 138 and 182 related to work, working conditions and freedom to organize within trade unions. Simultaneously,

¹³¹⁸ Interviewed in the bus heading to World Social Forum in March 2013.

¹³¹⁹ 2012 Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights
<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4fd88969c.html> (Retrieved 24.2.2019)

¹³²⁰ 2013 Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights – Algeria: <http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=printdoc&docid=51b851813e> (Retrieved 24.2.2019)

¹³²¹ Survey of violations of trade union rights: Freedom of association – Collective bargaining – Strike. Algeria: <https://survey.ituc-csi.org/Algeria.html> (Retrieved 24.2.2019)

¹³²² Solidarity with Independent Unionists in Algeria: Call for the reinstatement of Rachid Malaoui: <https://euromedrights.org/publication/solidarity-with-independent-unionists-in-algeria-call-for-the-reinstatement-of-rachid-malaoui-president-of-snapap/> (Retrieved 24.2.2019)

¹³²³ Workers' rights trampled: <https://euromedrights.org/publication/algeria-workers-rights-trampled/> (Retrieved 24.2.2019)

¹³²⁴ Algeria: The authorities must stop harassing labour rights activists: <https://euromedrights.org/publication/algeria-the-authorities-must-stop-harassing-labour-rights-activists/> (Retrieved 24.2.2019)

¹³²⁵ ALERT: Further Repression Against Independent Unions in Algeria: <https://euromedrights.org/publication/alert-repression-independent-unions-algeria/> (Retrieved 24.2.2019)

¹³²⁶ Algeria, objective #UPR207: <https://euromedrights.org/publication/algeria-objective-upr27/> (Retrieved 24.2.2019); Algeria: Joint Declaration: <https://euromedrights.org/publication/algeriajoint-declaration-march2017/> (Retrieved 24.2.2019).

¹³²⁷ Algeria 2017/2018: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/algeria/report-algeria/> (Retrieved 24.2.2019)

these organizations cooperate in close relation with human rights and trade union activists. According to 2013 Annual Survey of violations of trade union rights in Algeria, published by ITUC, trade union rights are not guaranteed. The report blamed the Algerian authorities for restricting the functioning of the independent unions in the public sector:

Travel bans against trade unionists: The Algerian authorities prevented a delegation of 96 trade unionists and civil society activists from crossing the border into Tunisia to attend the World Social Forum in March 2013. The only reason given by border police in Annaba was that the trade unionists were on a list of people banned from leaving Algeria because of "unrest".

Interference in trade union activities and harassment by police: North African trade unionists visiting Algeria to take part in the first North African Forum to Fight Unemployment and Precarious Work were harassed by police. Police raided the hotel where the trade unionists were staying and proceeded to arrest five Moroccans, three Tunisians and three Mauritians, including two women. They were then driven directly to the airport and deported from the country. The trade unionists detained were due to take part in a meeting at the Maison des syndicats. Police surrounded the trade union premises early in the morning and prohibited any attempt to access or vacate the building.

Anti-union discrimination: In March 2013, nine trade union members were dismissed from their positions according to SNAPAP when they started to call a series of strikes from January onwards. The latest strikes were scheduled for 25, 26 and 27 February but were declared illegal by the Court of Algiers.

Arrest and sanctions against trade unionists: In October 2012, Yacine Zaïd, International Union of Food Workers representative in Algeria, was sentenced by the court in Ouargla on Monday, 8 October, to a six-month suspended prison sentence and a fine of 10,000 dinars (about 100 euros). Accused of "insulting a police officer," he had been taken into custody for one week¹³²⁸.

The Algerian authorities seemed to dismiss the reports. Relations between UGTA and ITUC have especially been frosty. In December 2014, I visited the UGTA-FNTE local office hoping make interviews with members of UGTA and have also more perspective and information from their views about autonomous trade unions. I met four persons, who told me that they could not give me recorded interviews without official permission. I was told that unlike the autonomous trade unions, they had rules and codes that must be followed. They had explicitly antagonistic notions

¹³²⁸ 2013 Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights – Algeria: <http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=printdoc&docid=51b851813e> (Retrieved 24.2.2019)

on autonomous trade unions and they knew many of them who were living in Oran. Therefore, I was not able to record our discussions but I wrote to my notebook subsequent notations¹³²⁹:

How autonomous trade unions are able to defend Algerian workers while they are not even able to defend themselves?

UGTA defends the state whoever is the President. This is what UGTA has done since the founder Aïssat Idir.

Autonomous trade unions only speak in the cafés trying to turn people against the state. They lack plan and responsibility. Some of them are even manipulated by the foreigners. UGTA defends Algeria. UGTA has rules and responsibility.

UGTA is revolutionary and the only credible trade union in Algeria. UGTA trains the workers for syndicalism. Autonomous trade unions are “parasite” unions. They do not represent neither Algeria, nor workers. They are in marginal. They are politicized and do not defend Algerian workers. Malaoui speaks in cafés and do not even live in Algeria.

In addition, I was told that UGTA’s wilaya of Oran contained about 80 000 members that were divided into six sections. They also arranged me a meeting in the wilaya headquarters of Oran with Secretary General Abdelkader Djattou on 23 December 2014. The meeting lasted only about 15 minutes. Secretary General Djattou explained to me mainly about the laws related on trade unionism. Later on when I was interviewing Selim Mecheri in CHU Oran, I told him that I met with the representatives of the UGTA in Oran and that the I was told that everything I need to know about the trade unionism in Algeria exists in the Labor Code (Code de Travail). Mecheri asked me what was the color of the book and I answered that it was red. Then he continued:

SM: [...] They showed you the red book of the Labor Code [Code de travail], which is the ancient one. This shows that they are disconnected from the new project. The new project is composed of 174 pages. Personally, if they would ask from me, should I choose the former Code or the new one, I would answer that I prefer the ancient one. [...]

KM: In their rhetoric, UGTA says that they are the one that defends the sovereignty of Algeria related to external pressure. They are the ones that give formation for the trade unionists they protect the workers ...

SM: I totally agree. UGTA participate with us to the framework of affiliation PSI Public Service International. UGTA also affiliates to the ITUC International Trade Union Confederation. SNAPAP is the only autonomous trade union that is also

¹³²⁹ Notebook notations from 10.12.2014.

affiliated and is the competitor for the UGTA. We are not the representative to all the workers in Algeria. However, we are an alternative force. We have managed to impose the idea of the trade union pluralism throughout Algeria. For example, we have been able to create the CGATA. We are also the member of the ITUC. When we were only the SNAPAP, we could not join to ITUC, because being able to become a member in ITUC you have to represent all the workers. It is long work that dates back until 1990 [...]¹³³⁰

Mecheri explained that creating the General Autonomous Confederation for Algerian Workers (Confédération Générale Autonome des Travailleurs Algériens, CGATA¹³³¹) in 2013 was the latest attempt to form confederation to challenge the UGTA. Likewise, the other attempts to form a confederation, CGATA, was still waiting for official authorization. However, next year (in 2014) it was accepted as the second representative to the ITUC, which was a major victory for the autonomous trade unions¹³³². The situation is paradoxical in many ways because CGATA, which is considered as legal representative from Algeria in the significant international institution ITUC, is simultaneously labeled without official authorization as illegal in Algeria itself. It is no secret that the Algerian state authorities and especially representatives of the UGTA have vocally criticized ITUC's decision accusing it for meddling into Algerian internal affairs.

The Secretary General of UGTA, Abdelmadid Sidi-Saïd, has issued numerous hostile statements on ITUC's decision and criticized heavily especially the Secretary general Sharan Burrow. In a video uploaded in You Tube, Sidi-Saïd calls Burrow as a “dog”¹³³³, strong word in Algerian Arabic rhetoric. In addition, Sidi-Saïd called her harka: “The ITUC's SG is a harka because she tried to break the union on the international scene and disrupt our UGTA, but found resistance. They (ITUC: Editor's note) no longer do union action but destruction”¹³³⁴. He added that she:

¹³³⁰ Selim Mecheri. Interviewed in Oran in December 2014.

¹³³¹ CGATA was established in 2013 and is affiliated by five autonomous trade unions: SNAPAP, SESS (Syndicat des enseignants du supérieur solidaire), SNATEG (Syndicat national des travailleurs de l'électricité et du gaz), SNAP (Syndicat national des postiers) and SAATT (Syndicat autonome algérien des travailleurs de transport).

¹³³² *Algérie Focus* 25.12.2014. Syndicat autonomes algériens : reconnus à l'étranger mais hors-la-loi en Algérie. <http://www.algerie-focus.com/2014/12/syndicats-autonomes-la-cgata-conforte-sa-legitimite-a-linternationale-au-detriment-de-lugta/>

¹³³³ *You Tube – Video* 5.11.2016: Abdelmadjid Sidi Said: la secrétaire générale SCI Sharan Burrow « est une chienne » <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TPkSJSODgs> (Retrieved 26.2.2019)

¹³³⁴ *Liberté* 2.3.2015. Sidi Saïd tire sur la Confédération syndicale internationale. D.L. (D.L. indicates the first letters of the forename and surname of journalist who wrote the article). <https://www.liberte-algerie.com/ouest/sidi-said-tire-sur-la-confederation-syndicale-internationale-221106> (Retrieved 26.2.2019).

“[...] wants to colonize the other trade unions and I say we are against it, we are the only ones who oppose, we refute this interference and that is why I treat them as harka”. Sidi-Saïd continued: “It is the role and the moral duty of the UGTA to defend the country and fight against the political and union harkas who want to attack Algeria. The other unions abroad are each defending their own country and they would like to break Algeria and I will not accept anyone who comes to run our house”. In 2017, the Secretary General Abdelmadjid Sidi-Saïd accused directly the autonomous trade unions of trying in “complicity with the International Labor Office (ILO) to destabilize Algeria¹³³⁵”.

Discourses related to destabilization and patriotism are especially common within official sectorial political level. Sometimes dissensions are labeled as fitna, division among the Muslims, which should be avoided refrain chaos and civil war and maintain peace and order. To evaluate further the discourses related to destabilization, I show few examples how the governmental officials and ruling politicians construct their view on stability-instability dichotomy. Such examples are relatively easy to find from the media. Next examples are chosen from the timeframe 2014-2017 in various contexts. For example, in 2014 President Bouteflika downplayed rumors related to internal disputes inside the army: “The fictitious conflicts fomented between the structures of the National People's Army are part of a process of destabilization well elaborated by all those whom the weight of Algeria and its role in the region disturb”¹³³⁶. This quote does not identify those actors, but it is clear that those forces are external threat to Algerian stability. In 2015, President Bouteflika stressed the internal security inside Algeria to overpower any element of destabilization in the country: “We must, first and foremost, watch over and strengthen the home front for the exclusive benefit of the nation, to face any attempt to destabilize the country”¹³³⁷. This could mean terrorism as well as oppositional social movements, such as autonomous trade unions, that function in Algeria. The Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal stated in 2017: “There have been anonymous calls from some parties to destabilize Algeria” and continued: “There has been an attempt to destabilize the country. They think that Algeria can be remote controlled by

¹³³⁵ *Presse-dz* 4.2.2017. Après ses graves accusations: Les syndicats autonomes répliquent à Sidi-Saïd. Aïssa Moussi.

¹³³⁶ *L'expression* 18.2.2014. Bouteflika: Les conflits fictifs fomentés relèvent d'un processus de déstabilisation bien élaboré.

¹³³⁷ *Midi Libre* 9.3.2015: Bouteflika insiste sur la protection des droits de la femme : halte à l'obscurantisme. Ines Amroude.

anyone. They think of the Arab Spring with whom we have no relationship”¹³³⁸. Prime Minister Sellal connected the “Arab Spring” and its negative implications within the region as external destabilization that menaces Algeria.

What is interesting is how the identities are constructed through discourse building. In 2017, the President of the UGTA Abdelmadjid Sidi-Saïd accused autonomous trade unionists of being “traitors”, “bought by foreigners” and working for the destabilization of the country¹³³⁹. These accusations target the question of the nationalism and patriotism of the autonomous union activists and is connected to larger discussion on identities and values. When autonomous trade unions take their struggle to the international arenas, they are considered as actors offering themselves for the foreign enemies of Algeria. They are accused of surrendering to US-EU human rights and democracy discourses constructed to enable the use of the practices of soft power in meddling to internal affairs of Algeria. As Idriss Mekideche explained:

When we live all this, we are treated as collaborators, as traitors and as assets of foreigners who manipulate us. This means everybody: trade union activists, human rights defenders and all who denounce the corruption. I think it is unfortunate. All these people love Algeria profoundly. Otherwise why we denounce? We could easily go and rob with them and be in peace. There are those who have their salaries and those who have not. Despite that they continue to suffer and fight. I think it is enough to show their sincerity. They have nothing. They have been suspended while they are 50 years old. What do they really profit? I think that the people who are treated as traitors and collaborators and who does not have a goodwill are those who are the real nationalists and it reminds me of one old Algerian film, where someone spoke on the balcony behind the Algerian flag. Then in the audience there were someone who said: “show yourself, you are hiding behind the flag”. The people in power hide behind the Algerian flag and behind the nationalism and treat the others as traitors and all that but in reality they are those who are corrupted and make everyone else feel bad in this country¹³⁴⁰.

Both state authorities and oppositional activists construct competing discourses about who is in reality authentically defending the interests on the nation: who is the real patriot. Who really loves the country and is ready to make sacrifices so that the country could be stable, just and prosperous. These examples clearly show the

¹³³⁸ *Sud Horizons* 6.1.2017. Abdelmalek Sellal: "il y a eu tentative de déstabilisation de l'Algérie". Nouria Bourihane.

¹³³⁹ *Algérie Focus* 2.2.2018. UGTA/ Violente attaque de Sidi-Saïd contre les syndicats autonomes. <http://www.algerie-focus.com/2017/02/ugta-violente-attaque-de-sidi-said-contre-syndicats-autonomes/>

¹³⁴⁰ Idriss Mekideche. Interviewed in Algiers in December 2014.

antagonistic construction of discourses as an effort to command the field of discursivity by dominating the central nodal point to rule other fixation of meanings, as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe configurate, that can be elicited within the context of stability and patriotism¹³⁴¹. These discourses base on collective memories related to colonization and the independence of the Algeria. Colonization and the War of Independence contain the connotations of self-sacrifice of those who died for the independence and betrayal of those who collaborated with colonial power. During a photo elicitation interview, Samir Baroud said of the Algerian flag:

Algeria is our country. Our independence cost 1,5 million martyrs. Directly when I see our flag I have an image of these martyrs who gave their life for that we can be an independent people¹³⁴².

Whenever activists are speaking of UGTA or the state authorities, they denounce their authentic will to work for the common interest of Algeria and Algerians through competing floating signifiers that underscore the hegemonic nationalist discourses used by those in power as their legitimate right being the representatives of the continuity of nationalist values of War of Independence. Middle-aged SNAPAP activist Amir Djilali recounts typically about the history of UGTA, where the founders of the trade unions are considered the real activists unlike those who today represent the central union:

First, during the colonization of Algeria by the French, in the period “Algérie française”, the founders of the UGTA were real activists, because they conducted activism for independent Algeria during 1954-1962. However, after the independence, people who were in the government exploited the UGTA and changed its leadership. Therefore, they all work now for the system. Because of that, there is tension, which is arising. There are former activists of the UGTA and there are people who have never been part of UGTA, because UGTA does not work anymore for the needs of the people or for the workers’ rights. In other words, it works according to the will of the Power. That is why there are the real unionist, who work for the unions such as SNAPAP, in which I am also a member¹³⁴³.

UGTA is accused of representing the rich and those in power, unlike the first militants that struggled against colonial France. Oppositional political parties, activists in civil society and cultural personalities, such as the famous critic of the

¹³⁴¹ Laclau, Ernesto and Mouffe, Chantal (2001, 112) [1985] *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. Verso: London and New York.

¹³⁴² Samir Baroud (name changed). Interviewed in Algiers in December 2014.

¹³⁴³ Interviewed in the bus heading to World Social Forum in March 2013.

contemporary state authorities, the award-winning author Boualem Sansal,¹³⁴⁴ who wrote sardonically on the government's use of patriotism, which expresses well how the understanding of the issue is contested:

A tired reminder: the phrase “les constants national” is a registered trademark, among others (“the Revolutionary Family”, “the Worthy Heirs of November”, “sincere and genuine Algerians”, “the country of million and half martyrs”!!), invented by the FLN in the mid-80s as its totalitarian and absurd power cracked under the pressure of global recompositions following the collapse of the Eastern bloc¹³⁴⁵.

So when speaking of citizenship rights, autonomous trade union activists attempt to brake the official narrative, generated by those in power, of patriotism, nationalism and independence. According to Abdel Nasser Jabi, who contextualized his study premises on the supposition of existence of the role of generations on the basis of the work of Karl Mannheim¹³⁴⁶, the current generation in power derives its legitimacy from the discourses that base on dominant and hegemonic patriotism related to independence war (1954-1962)¹³⁴⁷. Those who fought during the War of Independence are getting older year by year, and it is increasingly challenging to continue the tradition in the coming years, whether in relation to those in power or those in opposition. In addition, I believe that “the generational moment” and partition on Algerian realities into three coarse generations is challenging and too generalizing. In this approach, the transition of power from first to second generation is seen as a smooth process due to connectedness between them while the transition of power from the older first generation to younger third, which is different in terms of upbringing and experienced social reality in post-independent Algeria, is seen as a more turbulent and acute rupture. Nevertheless, the tendencies to represent the independent Algeria will require new formation of identities and it will be interesting to see in the near future how those contestations are conducted.

Discourse construction related to patriotism and stability is attractive, however, and in that debate, France still plays an important role. While youth may be in many ways tired of certain nationalist constructions of identity and discourses stressed by the older generations based on representations of power positions, the patriotic

¹³⁴⁴ Boualem Sansal is well-known critic and award winning author, who was himself heavily criticized by many Algerians after his visit in Knesset in Israel in 2012.

¹³⁴⁵ Sansal, Boualem (2006, 30) *Poste restante: Alger – Lettre de colère et d'espoir à mes compatriotes*. Paris: Gallimard.

¹³⁴⁶ Mannheim, Karl [1923] (1952) The Problem of Generations, *In Keeskemeti, Paul. Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge: Collected Works, Volume 5*. New York: Routledge. p. 276-322.

¹³⁴⁷ Jabi, Abdel Nasser (2012) The Impasse of Political Transition in Algeria: Three Generations and Two Scenarios. *Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies*. April 2012.

sacrifices and independence related to nationalism still plays powerful role among Algerians, even among those functioning in oppositional groups. For example, when the French Prime Minister Manuel Valls tweeted a picture of Algerian recovering President Bouteflika in 2016 after the high-level meeting between Algeria and France, even autonomous trade union activists started to publish ridiculed pictures of French Prime Minister, even though Bouteflika does not enjoy too much appreciation among number of union activists.

Therefore, what seems to be more important for oppositional groups and autonomous trade unions, is to depict themselves as the real maintainers of Algerian tradition of nationalism, freedom and independence struggle, and to construct suspicious contributions and connections of those in power to that legacy. The young SNAPAP activist Hamid Derradji described his background, coming from a revolutionary family while contesting the representativeness of current authorities regarding patriotism and liberation of Algeria:

The Algerian flag is our symbol. It represent the sacrifices of our ancestors. I come from a revolutionary family, so this flag is really close to my heart. When we see these people like Bouteflika, the President, for me he is not a President. He is just a boss. Boss of the Oujda clan. We were able to get out from the French colony and now we are colonized by the Oudja clan. By the way, they have been there since 1962. They just change the persons but the system stays the same. Those people did not do the revolution. They did not really sacrificed for the country. They were mostly waiting outside until Algeria got its independence and then came to take the power¹³⁴⁸.

Hamid Derradji used patriotic rhetoric to describe how his ancestors sacrificed themselves during the War of Independence for the independence of Algeria. He is made a clear division between current President and leaders and those who fought for the independence. He frames President Bouteflika and current leadership as the Oudja Clan, ta group that was formed around the former President Houari Boumédiène in the Moroccan city of Oudja during the War of Independence. The Oudja Group, it is argued, were infiltrated into key power positions within the military and politics to maintain power from other competing power groups since 1962, when National Liberation Army under his command marched into Algiers and ousted the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (GPRA) and its President Benyoucef Benkhedda.

The antagonistic discourses are constructed to counter-argue the claims of the state authorities and their representations of being the sole hegemonic representatives of the Algerian patriotism and nationalism. As if they were the ones

¹³⁴⁸ Hamid Derradji (name changed). Interviewed in Oran in January 2015.

who sacrificed for the sake of independence and have power today to define what is good for the country and how to maintain the stability. The statement of an important figure among Algerian oppositional forces, Ali Yahia Abdennour, describes interestingly these attempts in challenging the monopoly of the state authorities to nationalism: “France left through the door in 1962, but came back through the window”¹³⁴⁹. In addition, Ali Yahia has stated: “Independent Algeria is copy from the colonized Algeria”¹³⁵⁰. It is common to use discourses constructed around the colonialism to challenge the ownerships related to patriotism, as Sidi-Saïd also did referring to ITUC’s undesired decision to accept CGATA as second official representative of Algeria.

From the oppositional side, it is common to depict Algerian current rulers as modern colonizers and as puppet rulers controlled, in reality, by the former colonizers. According to these discourses, the current state authorities are not those “real independence fighters” that fought against the French, but those installed by the French to rule Françalgérie¹³⁵¹. In some occasions, the book *De Gaulle mon père*¹³⁵², published by Philippe de Gaulle that contain interviews with Michel Tauriac mentions that: “In addition – what no one has ever said – a hundred thousand former harkis are engaged in the new Algerian army of the FNL”. Sometimes this quote is used to hint that the French infiltrated harkis to Algerian army and that current state authorities stem actually from this infiltrated “traitors”. It is common to find from various anti-government internet discussion boards discussions where various known Algerian army generals are called as “harkis”¹³⁵³.

During the 1990s, the Islamists also launched the concept of *hizb fransa* (the Party of France) to describe the rulers of the country as being led from Paris, and to challenge through symbols and language the position of War of Independence to

¹³⁴⁹ TSA 30.10.2015. Ali Yahia Abdennour: « La France est sortie par la porte en 1962 et elle revenue par la fenêtre ». Imene Brahimi.

¹³⁵⁰ Rezzik, Mohamed (2013, 67) *Le printemps arabe et l'exception algérienne*. Alger: BOUNAGA.

¹³⁵¹ *Françalgérie* is mimic for the term *Françafrique*, which in contemporary use depicts the assumed neocolonial relationship of France with its former colonies. However, the term was first used by President of the Côte d'Ivoire Félix Houphouët-Boigny with positive connotation referring that successful economic performance and political stability depended on good relation with France.

¹³⁵² De Gaulle, Philippe (2004) *Charles de Gaulle, mon père. Entretiens avec Michel Tauriac, tome 2*. Paris: Plon.

¹³⁵³ Harkis were auxiliary military movement that fought alongside with the French during the Algerian war of liberation (1954-1962). French left the big part of Harkis after the independence to their own fortune and thousands were slaughtered as “traitors”.

those in power¹³⁵⁴. Lahouari Addi¹³⁵⁵ argues that Islamists were successful in challenging the cultural and political nationalism represented by the authorities during the 1980s and 1990s through multiple religious symbolism. In addition, in Algeria the Amazigh movement has also challenged the monopoly of the state authorities since the Independence. Meanwhile, President Liamine Zéroual coined the term *famille révolutionnaire* (revolutionary family), which aimed to gather various non-Islamist movements under one umbrella¹³⁵⁶. It is typical that historical and political identities are constructed in states as tools to justify their own acts through the construction of socio-political imaginaries. This requires the construction of discourses that are powerful tools in controlling and structuring the experiences and collective memories under the social practices and conditions, where citizens live their everyday lives. In Algeria, post-colonial narrations are created through identity markers that stress the War of Independence and sacrifices of the Algerian people. Therefore, the competition related to discourses, whether challenging or maintaining them, contains the hegemonic struggle integrating values, customs, political principles and social relations as described within the theory of hegemony by Antonio Gramsci¹³⁵⁷. Nevertheless, the state is, according to Laurie Brand, never able to completely eliminate the competing alternative visions of the collective memories and construction of discourses¹³⁵⁸.

Therefore, oppositional forces also create and sustain counter discursive images regarding the collective memory, where the current state authorities are depicted in the exact opposite light, or at least their ownership on these representations are challenged. These accusations, the relation between France and state authorities for example, are also discussed and raised out in various literatures, such as Lounis Aggoun and Jean-Baptiste Rivoire: *Françalgérie, crimes et mensonges d'États*¹³⁵⁹, Naoufel Brahimi El Mili: *France-Algérie : 50 ans d'histoires secrètes*¹³⁶⁰, Lyes Laribi:

¹³⁵⁴ Brand, Laurie (2014, 174) *Official Stories: Politics and National Narratives in Egypt and Algeria*. Stanford, California: Stanford California Press.

¹³⁵⁵ Addi, Lahouari (1995, 15-17) *L'Algérie et la démocratie: pouvoir et crise du politique dans l'algérie contemporaine*. Paris: éditions la Découverte.

¹³⁵⁶ Werenfels, Isabelle (2007, 66) *Managing Instability in Algeria: Elites and political change since 1995*. London and New York: Routledge.

¹³⁵⁷ Brand (2014, 5).

¹³⁵⁸ Brand (2014, 13).

¹³⁵⁹ Aggoun, Lounis and Rivoire, Jean-Baptiste (2005) *Françalgérie, crimes et mensonges d'États*. Paris: La Découverte.

¹³⁶⁰ El Mili, Brahim (2017, 67-69) *France-Algérie: 50 ans d'histoires secrètes. Tome 1 (1962-1992)*. Italie: Fayard.

L'Algérie des Généraux¹³⁶¹, Habib Souaïdia: La sale guerre¹³⁶², and Hocine Malti: Histoire secrète du pétrole algérien¹³⁶³, only few to mention.

In the interviews, the autonomous trade union activists often argued that there is no democracy in Algeria and that it is the army that retains power behind the scenes. It is also illustrative, how the well-known trade unionist and human rights activist, Kaddour Chouicha, describes the picture of General Khaled Nezzar during the photo elicitation interview:

He was a general in the army, started in the French army. He was not from early on in the resistance. He went to the resistance very late when it became clear that the liberation movement was seriously going towards independence of Algeria. Secondly, he is one of the architects of the civil war in Algeria that was carried out against the people after the events in 1990. These are two sides of the same person, because when he was in the French army he was against the Algerian people. When he became important in the Algerian army, he was again against the Algerian people¹³⁶⁴.

Autonomous trade union activists depict the army generals as unpatriotic authorities who design the structures of Algerian governance without transparency, as Ali Yahia Abdennour described:

It is not said by many but as a human rights activist, I will say that Algeria is dictatorship. It is even deeper dictatorship compared to what is happening elsewhere, Stronger dictatorship than that of Ben Ali in Tunisia [in the past], because there is lot of money. They can buy people. [...] It is deeper than in Egypt. Listen, it is even deeper than in North-Korea. It is close to pharaohs. When Bouteflika decides, everybody are included without any discussion, whether it relates to politics or something else. [...] It is the party of the power (pouvoir) that designs the Ministers, choose the ambassadors, the President and take them away. Since 1962, it was the army that designed Ben Bella. It was the army that designed Chadli ... Boumedienne was himself the leader of the army. It is the army that has designed everything until Bouteflika. Who brought Bouteflika? He was abroad. It is the army that designs. The army removed Ben Bella and Chadli. It was the army that designed [...] Zeroual. He did not resigned himself as did not Chadli, it was them who removed him¹³⁶⁵.

Ali Yahia argued that France and United States benefit from current situation in Algeria, and therefore support current administration:

¹³⁶¹ Laribi, Lyes (2007) *L'Algérie des Généraux*. Paris: Max Milo Éditions.

¹³⁶² Souaïdia, Habib (2012) *La sale guerre*. Paris: Éditions La Découverte.

¹³⁶³ Malti, Hocine (2010) *Histoire secrète du pétrole algérien*. Paris: Éditions La Découverte.

¹³⁶⁴ Kaddour Chouicha. Interviewed in Oran in January 2015.

¹³⁶⁵ Ali Yahia Abdennour. Interviewed in January 2015 in Algiers.

We have now arrived until certain point that even Europeans and France, country of the human rights, assist the dictatorships because it is in their interests¹³⁶⁶.

This is of course exactly the opposite of what the state authorities argue, when they accuse oppositional social movements of being tools of the US and France to destabilize Algeria. Ali Yahia Abdenmour explained to me how the world was changing and new emergent powers such as the BRICS countries and especially China are getting ever more stronger. He believed that the EU and United States and the Liberal world order at large were becoming weaker in terms of the international power struggle. He argued that French and Algerian elites need each other:

They have lot of unemployment in France and they have need to send their enterprises to benefit from petro-money of the Algeria. They accept this. [...] Today, many Algerian patrons have property in France. They have their apartments. If something happens in Algeria ... a revolution ... they have everything for the next three generations. [...] However, even if the states or governments support the dictatorship in Algeria according to their interests, there is civil population that have principals such as democracy and freedom of speech. [...] ¹³⁶⁷

Again we return to the discourse on stability and patriotism. Ali Yahia argued that the rich Algerian elite does not care about the future in Algeria. If things go wrong and they can no-longer profit from their position and Algeria drifts into chaos, they just pack their things and move to France where luxury apartments await them. Social media is full of speculation about how much Algerian state authorities own assets in abroad and how many millions of euros they have in different bank accounts. Similar discussion preceded uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt. Simultaneously, Ali Yahia appealed to “real” patriotic Algerians who should raise up to struggle for democratic principalities and values:

We must struggle for the democracy. The future of the country depends on democracy, which can bring the change and from where does it come from? From the army, because they cannot stay aside anymore. Gaid Salah [Chief of Staff of the Algerian People's National Army] has taken all the power. This cannot continue. When does it happen, we don't know. Whatever simple moment can create the momentum. If a personality for example is killed or ... or if in three wilayas people go out to the streets due to housing or... it will instigate the fire. If the army don't move, if the oppositional parties such as CNLTD [La Coordination nationale pour les libertés et la transition démocratique] of the Benflis don't move, the street can. Because the street does not take part in parties. The youth ... for example, the south has never moved, and now they are thousands. [...] If we don't find a political

¹³⁶⁶ Ali Yahia Abdenmour. Interviewed in January 2015 in Algiers.

¹³⁶⁷ Ali Yahia Abdenmour. Interviewed in Algiers in January 2015.

solution, there will be an explosion. However, if the power (*pouvoir*) is intelligent and understands that Bouteflika cannot play anymore and they cannot delegate his powers anymore. How can they deliver the power to someone who is not elected by the people? How do they think that people would follow Sellaal, who is leader of a *daira*, who is now elected as the Prime Minister? [...] What do you think that the fourth presidential term can exist when it is not addressed by the people? It is not possible! It cannot endure. Either we find political solution or it will be a chaos¹³⁶⁸.

This describes the situation well, where Algerians gathered on the streets in February 2019 to protest peacefully against the fifth term of President Bouteflika. Contrary to the state authorities' configurations, Ali Yahia blames current state authorities and power elite for drifting Algeria into chaos with support of former colonial power France and United States. He was worried about the future of Algeria and predicts instability. At the same time, the next quote describes well the actual disperse of oppositional forces, whether political parties or trade unions. Solid and organized oppositional movement does not seem to exist in Algeria, and this may be partly due to the success of strategies by the state authorities, and partly to the lack of credibility of the oppositional movements among Algerian citizens. Ali Yahia, like many activists in autonomous trade union movement, feared that the lack of organized oppositional functioning will lead to unorganized rioting and chaos:

Algerian society is broken. Civil society is broken. Even the smallest spark can create an explosion. Next Monday, it is the *Yennaier* in Kabylia. There is MAK¹³⁶⁹ that will scroll in Tizi Ouzou and Béjaïa. Then the police will hit them or someone will die. It can explode. Imagine if someone hits somebody or kill? It can blow out. The army is actually divided¹³⁷⁰.

Ali Yahia was also concerned at the usage of the so-called *baltagias*, suspected goons used by authorities, to achieve desired momentum of chaos, which could enable those in power to use of force:

DRS can mobilize the youth to go out to the streets. Those who are against Gaid Salah and against Bouteflika can use the youth saying: go out to the streets, and they will follow. DRS owns and knows them, meaning those that have been in prisons and so forth. They will go out, they are hit and the army will interfere. The army will say that we will not interfere to make a coup, but because the people demand. They went out to the streets and we just return the power to the people. Everything will and can happen. Until next April, there will be new Algeria¹³⁷¹.

¹³⁶⁸ Ali Yahia Abdennour. Interviewed in Algiers in January 2015.

¹³⁶⁹ Le Mouvement pour l'Autonomie de la Kabylie (MAK).

¹³⁷⁰ Ali Yahia Abdennour. Interviewed in January 2015 in Algiers.

¹³⁷¹ Ali Yahia Abdennour. Interviewed in Algiers in January 2015.

Ali Yahia predicted that Algeria would face an uprising in April 2015, which of course did not take place. Important demonstrations took place in May 2018 in Oran, organized by resident doctors under Collectif Autonome des Médecins Résidents Algériens, CAMRA)¹³⁷². The protests drew thousands of participants and were strongly supported by different autonomous trade unions¹³⁷³. However, on 22 February 2019, tens of thousands participated to express their opposition to the fifth mandate of President Bouteflika. Oppositional autonomous trade union activists have been waiting impatiently for these vast popular uprisings. The candidacy for the fifth term has led to extensive protests all around the country. In the universities in dozens of cities thousands of students protested a week later. The demonstrations were peaceful and they were conducted in a good spirit. However, there is always the risk of escalation and some groups might have an interest in organizing protests that are more violent so as to increase polarization to their own advantage.

Researcher Nacer Djabi reflected in an interview¹³⁷⁴ the possible strategies that state authorities implement vis-à-vis demonstrations, especially the violent ones. Djabi argued that regime prefers violent non-organized manifestations instead of coordinated social movement action:

Historically, the Algerian political system, with its elites and institutions, prefers to deal with unorganized violent social movements. It prefers rioting to a conscious, organized and clear political movement, otherwise it will be forced to negotiate and recognize movements representatives and representativeness.

When it comes to rioting, the government is not obliged to do all that, because the riot does not give a clear direction and form structures. Therefore, it is refusing to negotiate with organized and politically supervised movements for fear of recognizing their legitimacy. In fact, the unorganized violent movement does not pose a threat to the political system.

These challenges do not disturb the political system, because they do not produce alternative elites, let alone new legitimacy and do not pose political problems that can really disturb present order. It is in this sense that one can understand that the riot becomes a strengthening force for the political regime. By design or not, the government anticipates them whenever it finds itself facing a general upheaval, as was the case in recent years. It makes them disperse into small movements to avoid the big confrontation.

We must go back in the political history of Algerian society - elites and institutions - to better understand the problematic history that is posed to us recurrently and at

¹³⁷² <http://camra-online.org/> (Retrieved 1.3.2019).

¹³⁷³ *L'Expression* 10.5.2018. Ils maintiennent la protestation: Les médecins résidents campent sur leur positions.

¹³⁷⁴ *El Watan* 9.1.2017. « L'émeute ne menace pas le système, elle lui sert de fortifiant ». Hacem Ouali.

each historical stage. For example, let's look at the most recent one, that of the 1990s, how the political regime favored negotiation with the “military block” of the FIS and not with its policies. It is in this context that one can understand the thesis of René Gallissot, which explains the weakness of the protesting social movements as generative of the alternative elites, which the Algerian society badly needs¹³⁷⁵.

It is also important to keep in mind that autonomous trade union movement is heterogeneous and it would be incorrect to bunch all the unions, and especially individual opinions, to same category generalizing that all of them share similar critical views and opinions regarding the state authorities. For example, Nouar Larbi, the President of CNAPEST spoke in a different tone about President Bouteflika:

I think he has done lot of things for Algeria. In addition, Algeria was very rich during his period. However, there is an absence of good governance. Even though he tried. Because there are projects that have cost two, three or even four times more then they should that have to be paid, such as highway east-west and so forth. However, he did a lot for Algeria. Especially regarding the construction and housing. There are many cities that have been implemented or built. Hundreds of thousands of houses have been provided during the reign of Bouteflika. However, we are not satisfied. Why? Because the amount of money that have been used could have brought much more then this. Therefore, what we miss is good governance¹³⁷⁶.

Concerning the picture of former general Khaled Nezzar, Larbi said that they saved the country, though they may have been guilty for some atrocities as well. Meanwhile, another secretary general, Mohamed Salem Sadali, from the educational autonomous trade union SATEF, did not hide his dislike of President Bouteflika:

When I see the picture of this president, I think he has been really miserable for this country, because never before Algeria has experienced the conditions of the life we have today due to the presidency of this man. Since 1999, even though there was the increase of the prices of oil more than 100 dollars of barrel, if during these last 15 years the money would have been used to develop our economy and the country, I believe we could be within one of those emergent countries. Never before this kind of opportunity was presented¹³⁷⁷.

Energy prices fell in 2014, sparking a critical debate about how Algeria is capable to maintain its economy and avoid consequences that followed when oil prices went down in the mid-1980s. State authorities have been able to contain the formation of larger and vaster oppositional front. Opposition, whether political, organizational or

¹³⁷⁵ *El Watan* 9.1.2017. « L'émeute ne menace pas le système, elle lui sert de fortifiant ». Hacem Ouali.

¹³⁷⁶ Nouar Larbi. Interviewed in January 2015 in Algiers.

¹³⁷⁷ Mohamed Salem Sadali. Interviewed in January 2015 in Algiers.

associative, is dispersed and lack credibility among the Algerians. There have been sit-ins and strikes in various sectors, but the larger oppositional movement does not exist. State authorities are able to use various tactics such as negotiations, when necessary to search solution for social challenges. In the context of autonomous trade unions, In 2014, Minister of Education Nouria Benghabrit initiated concerted negotiations with numerous autonomous trade unions. One of the participants in the dialogue, Nouar Larbi from CNAPEST, described the process:

KM: How would you describe the latest negotiation with the Minister [Benghabrit]?

NL: We have a system administrative and bureaucratic. It is like the colonial system of the France. To have this you need a document ... it is too much. One can say that our actual Minister is more interested in the pedagogy. She is not so much interested in the conditions of the good pedagogy, the salaries of the teachers or the expectations of the students. It is often said that we have only 42 students in a class. Meanwhile we have suburbs, where are more than 50 students in a class, especially in the new urban zones. They are really constructed randomly. Because when tens of thousands of houses are built, it is done without anticipation of public institutions, such as commerce centers, schools or high schools and so forth. In the end, we find ourselves in the unacceptable situation. While for them, it is already great when there are one teacher and class. We want that the conditions of the workers and teachers would be better. Especially when there are financial means. It is not like in Mauritania or Mali. Unfortunately, there are lack of good governance. That is the problem. It is not intentional to have bad schooling system, no. It is bad management.

KM: And the meetings [with the Minister]. How they are organized?

There are those meetings when everybody, every trade union, is invited. There they spread information about what they have done etc. However, when we conduct real negotiation, everyone is invited separately. Why we are eleven trade unions in the education sector?¹³⁷⁸

It is revealing that only the educational sector is divided to eleven different trade unions. When meetings are organized individually, it creates even more distrust among the unions when competing to represent the workers and show the effectiveness of attaining their objectives. Finally, eight unions signed the common Charter of ethics¹³⁷⁹. While the media praised the success, all the unions that signed were those characterized by autonomous trade union activists as clones: SNAPEST, SNAPAP-Felfoul, SNAPEP¹³⁸⁰, SATEF-bis, Le Syndicat des corps commun, Isa Fédération UGTA des travailleurs de l'éducation and UNPEF-bis. CLA and

¹³⁷⁸ Nouar Larbi. Interviewed in January 2015 in Algiers.

¹³⁷⁹ *Liberté* 30.11.2015. Éducation : 8 syndicats signent la Charte d'éthique et de stabilité. Djazia Safta.

¹³⁸⁰ Syndicat National Autonome des Professeurs de l'Enseignement Primaire.

CNAPEST who participated to the process refused to sign the charter in the end and Nouar Larbi resigned. In 2015, I interviewed Sadali of the SATEF related to negotiations between Minister and unions:

MSS: They call it never negotiation, they call it dialogue (haiwar). Not even dialogue.

KM: How do you meet, one after one or... and what do you think about of this whole process in general?

MSS: The framework of negotiation is not a framework. Because the Minister herself do not consider the trade unions as partners. In front of you there should be a partner that is autonomous and is not dependent of you. Because, if something happens, hop, we will take away your detachment. We will take away you headquarter. All the power is in the hand of Minister. Firstly, the role of the partner does not exist in the first place. Trade unions are suppressed. Secondly, the so-called negotiations or dialogue take place with non-representative unions. You won't find the real SNAPAP or SATEF in the negotiations. No, never. We have never been invited. They only invite the doubles to discuss with them.

KM: Ok, so it is not you SATEF that takes part of the negotiations?

MSS: No, not SNAPAP either¹³⁸¹.

Once again, I found myself being confused which SATEF had participated in the negotiations. I asked then about CNAPEST, which can be considered as a serious oppositional autonomous trade union movement. Personal, or strategic disagreements came out:

KM: But CNAPEST takes part and CNAPEST is not a clone?

MSS: Yes, but I know people in CNAPEST. There are the base of the CNAPEST and the direction of the CNAPEST. It is the base that is protesting, but those people in the high level who organize things accept to play certain game. For example, when we organized CNCN, they refused though they were with us in the public function. They come but next morning they leave meaning that they don't engage. They never touch the real problems. Regarding the technical issues such as salaries and so forth, they are not right. Therefore, the negotiations are not real negotiations and most of the actors are not real actors. The negotiations are contested. Even though sometimes we get around to the same table [...] there are negotiations with everybody [with different autonomous trade unions] and in the end we find the trade unions against each other. Through inside, through people they decrease the power [of the unions]. The other thing is that the decisions, regarding the reforms of the educational system, are never consulted. [...] However, when the reform goes further and there is a

¹³⁸¹ Mohamed Salem Sadali. Interviewed in January 2015 in Algiers.

problem and the students go out to the streets for example, then we invite the trade unions to find solutions as if everybody are part of the decision making¹³⁸².

Sadali criticized CNAPEST and especially its leadership while pointing out — in the context of their own experience of the negotiations — that due to asymmetric power relations, autonomous trade unions cannot conduct real negotiations. Unions are dispersed and it is easy for the government to play them off against each other so as to have a better position in negotiations. Kaddour Chouicha, who is today active in the autonomous trade union (Syndicat Enseignants du Supérieur, SESS), was terse, when I asked his opinion on negotiations with Minister of Education:

There is no dialogue. They know me. They would probably say that take Chouicha out and you get your authorization¹³⁸³.

Another way to weaken the autonomous trade union movement is to prevent its access to the economic sector. According to Farid Cherbal, autonomous unions have been unsuccessful in this regard¹³⁸⁴. Whenever the autonomous trade unions have managed to reach the economic sector, the state authorities are able to block their attempts. The latest example was in 2017, when the SNATEG, a union affiliated to CGATA consisting of workers of the Sonelgaz, was targeted by detaining its president Raouf Mellal and general secretary Abdelkader Koufi¹³⁸⁵. In early 2018, CNAPEST organized strikes and drifted in direct confrontation with the government. Minister Benghabrit threatened to fire all the teachers that joined to manifestation. In 2019, the signed autonomous trade unions within the educational sector argued that their promises with Minister Benghabrit have not been kept and they will continue strikes regardless of negotiation attempts by Minister of Education. In the health sector doctors and care staff organized large marches in Oran and even in Algiers.

In March 2018, the Ministry of Employment published an official list, which contained 66 officially recognized trade unions in Algeria. In the communication, it was stated clearly that the “pseudo-confederation CGATA” and SNATEG were not considered as official unions. In addition, the communication stressed that the recognized SNAPAP, which is the first officially authorized independent trade union in Algeria, meant the SNAPAP-Felfoul. This means that SNAPAP-Malaoui is not

¹³⁸² Mohamed Salem Sadali. Interviewed in January 2015 in Algiers.

¹³⁸³ Kaddour Chouicha. Interviewed in Oran in January 2015.

¹³⁸⁴ Farid Cherbal. Interviewed in Algiers in October 2019.

¹³⁸⁵ *Industriall-union* 20.12.2017. Support Algerian union under government attack. <http://www.industriall-union.org/support-algerian-union-under-government-attack>

an officially recognized autonomous trade union. In addition, a new attempt to establish another autonomous trade union confederation La Confédération des syndicats algérien (CSA)¹³⁸⁶, collided with a negative decision from the Ministry of Work, Employment and Social Security in February 2019¹³⁸⁷. This attempt was the latest push from the autonomous trade unions bringing together 13 different unions, the most important of them being CNAPEST, UNPEF, SNPSP and SNPSSP.

Before the large popular citizenship protests in February 2019, the situation seemed extremely difficult for the autonomous trade unions movement. They were dispersed and were not able to mobilize significant masses of workers to struggle with them against the state authorities. However, the movement continued to protest and operating, and by internationalizing the struggle they were able to gain some important victories. Nevertheless, the popular protests of February seemed to be a spontaneous reaction by Algerians, who were against the fifth mandate of President Bouteflika rather than as a result of efficient oppositional sensitization. The oppositional movement may had some influence on Algerian citizens, but so far it seems that none of the oppositional movements, whether political party, autonomous trade unions or other civic association, are able to lead the popular uprising opposing the political regime in its entirety.

¹³⁸⁶ CSA was consisted of 13 autonomous trade unions.

¹³⁸⁷ *La Liberté* 7.2.2019. Le ministère du Travail dit non : Création de la Confédération des syndicats autonomes. Amar Rafa.

8 CONCLUSIONS

What are the autonomous trade unions in Algeria? They are individual societal actors, or social movements that form a heterogeneous political body through a manifold organizational network consisting of other autonomous trade unions, human rights groups, civil society associations and political parties. While there are dozens of autonomous trade unions that work mainly in opposition vis-à-vis the state authorities, there are also dozens of autonomous unions that function alongside UGTA in accordance with the state policies. Therefore, autonomous trade unions cannot be generalized and grouped into a single actor. I have included in this thesis the most conspicuous oppositional autonomous trade union actors, while I cannot argue that this work represents the vast autonomous trade union movement in its entirety. Oppositional autonomous trade unions form an important ensemble within the scattered oppositional movement in Algeria and have played an important role in the state policies last 30 years.

The objective of this research is firstly to map and analyze the trade union movement, its networks and development in Algeria and to problematize its functioning and contribution to social change through normatively expressed democracy building. Secondly, to contemplate how the state authorities manage peaceful societal development and the challenge presented by these oppositional unions. Thirdly, to explore how the citizenship demanded by these autonomous union activists is negotiated through nonviolent acts of citizenship in the public space? I have analyzed the acts of citizenship of the trade union activists, mobilization in general, membership and media coverage as well as the attempts of state authorities to control the functioning of these unions. I have conducted the main body of the research material through ethnographic oriented fieldwork and used discourse analysis as a research tool to analyze the construction of discourses through participant observation, interviews and other existing research material such as media articles and other available literature.

The autonomous trade unions are significant political actors. Their organization and devoted membership may transform them into a stronger political force than scattered oppositional political parties. There are sectorial contestations among these unions, while a convergence of the movements has lacked latitude when aiming for

larger political change. None of the single oppositional groups, whether autonomous trade unions, oppositional political parties or various civil society actors, such as human rights groups, have succeeded in creating a credible, cohesive and unified alternative force for the state authorities to challenge the power elite in the country. Therefore, it is possible to argue that the oppositional forces remain dispersed.

It is difficult to identify a single reason for this failure. The causes are rather combinations of manifold factors: socio-economic development, retaliatory actions by state authorities, mutual dispersion due to inter-competition and personal relations and other regional or international occurrences that have led to absence of compact oppositional set. The international economy that impacts on energy prices, the international political situation in general, and regional processes has various intricate affects on internal developments in Algeria. Simultaneously, interior proceedings and maintained order in the country integrate multitudinous evolutions on social and political actors, whether within the societal or on an individual level.

Because political parties, unions and associations that play a crucial role within the formation of political life were not able to function properly or efficiently enough, discontent burst out through segments of people in February 2019. It is illuminating to observe how challenging it is for the masses in the streets to organize themselves and form rapidly a common way to organize and create political structures (organizations, associations, parties, unions) that could efficiently concretize the people's will into demands to proceed towards wished social change. It is difficult to know whether the lack of political oppositional organization is failure of the social movements or success of state officials' divide-and-rule policies. At this point, it is hard to estimate which political forces or social segments are able to transform 2019 uprisings to their political advantage.

8.1 Evolution of the fragmented autonomous trade union movement

During the 1988-1992 democratic phase, an anomaly within North Africa at the time, led to early Islamist gains, as occurred within the post-2011 regional uprisings in various countries, maybe most clearly in Egypt and Tunisia. However, it has been paradoxical how even the most democratically oriented parties and movements supported military intervention at the expense of strain on the democratic process itself to save democracy and reform. This was spectacular in Algeria at the beginning of the 1990s, when various personalities and movements supported halting the

elections to freeze the gains of the Islamist movement FIS. Autonomous trade unions have continued to demand the realization of the reforms from the 1988-1992 period. Therefore, the question I pose is:

1. What are the contributions of independent trade unionism to social change in Algeria and how do they reflect democracy building in the country?

To answer to my first research question, it is necessary to problematize what was the role of the autonomous trade unions regarding 1988-1992 aftermath, because before 1988 they were, officially, non-existent. Nevertheless, strikes and other trade union activities took place already before the October uprisings and political contestation in Rouiba reflected wider discontent in the country offering an important allusion, what was about to follow.

The violent events of 1988 that led to significant social change and democracy building were interrupted due to, first, political stalemate between the Islamist movement led by FIS and state authorities, and secondly, civil war. Regardless of atrocities committed during the “dark decade”, the most radical and oppositional autonomous trade unions, such as CNES and SATEF, were in the forefront demanding reforms and promoting democratic social change organizing multiple actions in the public space to gain popularity and support for their claims. Members of autonomous trade unions were active in various other social movements, such as students movements, already before the 1988 October uprisings. However, their membership increased, after the laws 90-14 and 90-02 were enacted in February 1989. The next year dozens of autonomous unions started to appear through various sectors challenging the predominance of the UGTA. However, some of the unions functioned already before the 1989 constitutional change. Autonomous trade unions continue to protest for democratic reforms, which they consider necessary in protecting the workers’ rights.

This study concentrates on the 30 years of time-period between the years 1988-2018. Autonomous trade unions have been important social and political actors since their gradual official creation in 1990. Currently, there exist officially 66 trade unions in Algeria. Their mobilization suffered during the civil war in the 1990s and especially since 2011 regional uprisings, when they failed to form coherent and unified oppositional movement with other civil society actors and political parties. Meanwhile, the period after the beginning of the 2000s can be arguably be stated as the fiercest phase of contestation and struggle between the oppositional autonomous trade union movement and the state authorities. Especially, the hunger strike of 2002

and internal attempt to divide SNAPAP in 2004 were visible events in the Algerian media and produced popularity for autonomous unions through media attention within various newspapers and other media broadcasts. The civil war had prevented the possibility to develop trade unionism due to weakened socio-political societal situation, but after the peace process came into force, autonomous unions demanded the rights guaranteed within 1989 constitutional reform.

Is it possible to estimate whether the autonomous unions were able to reach their objectives during the contestation that has lasted past 30 years? This is how the activists themselves feel about their success. Again, their answers show diverse positions. The President of CNAPEST, Nouar Larbi, was more optimistic with his estimation whether autonomous trade union movement has been able to promote democratic development:

Yes, because if it would not have been successful in promoting the democracy and disturb the public power, it would have not been treated by the political parties or public power as if it would want destabilize or that it is inscribed to the international agenda. I consider myself as a reference of wisdom that is learning the democracy. I do not believe that there exists the democracy in the world. I am doubtful but I am human being and I believe that human being has rights. I am supposed to defend the principles of the humanization. The animals have also right to live¹³⁸⁸.

Mohamed Salem Sadali, Secretary General of SATEF was subtly more pessimist regarding past achievements and reflected possibilities to strengthen the activities:

The only way to solve things is through presence within the field. If the problems are only resolved in the high level, they are not the real problems. The presence is the only way to solve things. However, even there are intrusions and it [autonomous trade union movement] is now dispersed and the autonomous trade unions suffer. There is fatigue. There are members that we are not able to defend and so forth. [...] So, now in SATEF we only try to use our energy in the places where it is worth to consume, meaning in the real combats related to real questions ... but playing with small details we will only confuse our members as if we give an impression that SATEF exists even though we cannot have any influence on decision making. The only way is that trade unions find again their cohesion to form a block so that we can struggle together and make things change¹³⁸⁹.

A member of SNAPAP, LADDH and CGATA, Selim Mecheri, told me in March 2019 that at the end of 2018 they had almost lost all hope for aspired social change. The 2019 uprisings surprised even the experienced political actors. However, a few

¹³⁸⁸ Nouar Larbi. Interviewed in Algiers in January 2015 in Algiers.

¹³⁸⁹ Mohamed Salem Sadali. Interviewed in January 2015 in Algiers.

years earlier, in 2014, he believed that there were some important gains achieved showing more optimistic visions than for example Sadali, while he did not share the optimism of Nouar Larbi either. He considered being important that autonomous trade unions had been able to permanently implant their existence within societal level as one actor among many within the oppositional forces:

I think that the autonomous trade unions have been able to restore within the spirit of the Algerian worker the fact that autonomous trade unions are reality. It [autonomous trade union movement] has been able to defy the Algerian system, to change the mentality of the system. Because one has to recognize that we have been able to gain many achievements, such as increase of the salaries. We have imposed the right to exercise trade unionism [...] The system play recognition of the trade union pluralism in Algeria, which is really important. Before it was a taboo that there were this pluralism and we were sure that the system refused the autonomous reflection. It always controlled and commanded these trade union organizations rejecting the autonomous reflection. It did not want to recognize that there were autonomous trade unions. It was able to monopolize or neutralize the political parties. I consider them as the pseudo [organizations] ... It was able to neutralize the autonomous trade unions organizations, all those that refused to align with the power [pouvoir]¹³⁹⁰.

Therefore, while it is not easy to estimate how successful the autonomous trade unions have been in promoting the social democracy and democratic reforms in the country or how the democracy has developed in Algeria in the first place, it is possible to state that autonomous trade union movement has successfully continued being an important societal actor in the political level. They have continued the democratic spirit of exerting the rights guaranteed in the 1989 constitutional reform. I argue that autonomous trade unions have formed an important element into oppositional movements especially since 1988 October uprisings and some of the most critical unions that function currently within non-authorized confederations CGATA and CSA can be considered as significant actors among other social movements in Algeria.

8.2 “Successful” management of the state authorities

As with the 1988 October uprisings, which were politicized later on by various actors, so too trade unionism has also become a political phenomena where social and political struggle takes place. While autonomous trade unions have been

¹³⁹⁰ Selim Mecheri. Interviewed in Oran in December 2014.

powerless to maintain a traditional role within trade unionism due to governmental restrictions, they have instead transformed into a protest movement that has included various demands on their programs outside from traditional working related challenges. Due to the restriction of their action, their contestation has transformed into political struggle on civic and associative liberties and for application of democratic configurations guaranteed in the 1989 constitutional reform. Therefore, many autonomous trade unions are considered to represent one of the oppositional actors among many, not as traditional trade unions, though these unions politicize various work-related issues: salaries, working conditions, appointments, housing distributions and management in general.

The state authorities maintain various methods of impacting on the oppositional trade union movement. Therefore, it is necessary to ask in relation to the state:

2. How do the Algerian ruling authorities manage the non-violent acts of citizenship conducted by the autonomous trade unions?

Especially since the beginning of 2000s after the atrocities involving the radical Islamist armed forces started to abate, state officials hardened, alongside the radicalization of the unions, their stance on civic liberties using the political violence, caused by terrorism, as an explanation for restrictions within the public space, where autonomous unions were organizing their activities. The state authorities have equally aimed at restricting the functioning of the autonomous unions. Preventing manifestations, arrests, allegedly created doubles and denying authorization of the new movements have been efficient tools to weaken and disperse the autonomous trade unions.

In addition, with the power displays, the state authorities have conducted negotiations with the autonomous trade unions since 1990s. However, at least from the unions' point of view, the results have been modest. While these negotiations may have not yielded concrete results, they have strengthened and confirmed the reckoned position of the autonomous unions vis-à-vis state authorities as credible social actors. At the same time, asymmetric negotiations between the state and scattered unions have enabled for the state authorities to gain time and disperse the oppositional unions even further.

It seems that the state authorities have been successful in breaking the unity of the unified autonomous trade union movement, though it seems that all the discrepancies among the key figure activists are not result of successful intervention by the state. Sometimes personal conflicts have equally created split among actors preventing unification of the oppositional movement. After the Civil War,

autonomous trade unions tried to hang on 1988-1992 democratic reforms. While their efforts gained little success, they continue to exist and demand the actualization of the past constitutional reform.

At the same time, neither autonomous trade unions nor oppositional political parties pose a serious menace for the regime, though through the successful internationalization of the conflict unions and human rights groups have managed to cause losses for the international image of the government. Autonomous trade unions have managed to mediatize and internationalize the internal conflict cooperating with multiple international human rights organizations and trade unions. For example, approval of CGATA within ITUC as the second Algerian representative, while being unauthorized in Algeria, can be considered as an important victory within international level for the autonomous trade union movement.

In general, trade unions are more significant when they have the power to organize strikes and actions that have an economic impact. The state authorities have been successful in Algeria in preventing any oppositional autonomous trade unions to reach economic sector and blocking their ability to exercise economic pressure. If the strikes are organized only in the public sector, they cannot cause serious economic damage and do not have significant international impact regarding energy exportations. The latest highly mediatized incident took place in 2017, when SNATEG, affiliated with CGATA, consisted workers of the Sonelgaz was targeted by the state authorities ending to arrest of the leaders of SNATEG. Sonelgaz, an important state-owned utility responsible of distributing and selling the natural gas in the country, was too significant to risk for the potential economic pressure.

Finally, due to economic growth in the 2000s and investments on social development, probably inadequate, have slowed down the mobilization of the autonomous unions, which have not succeeded to attract the masses of population to their ranks. Autonomous unions have constantly lacked members while the youth have been mostly passive to join manifest political activity, trade unions or other civil society associations. To investigate further the individual aspect related to trade union activism, I integrated the theory of acts of citizenship to approach single human perspectives instead of abiding solely within the societal level.

8.3 Activist citizens

Before the 2019 uprisings, Algerians were sometimes considered as passive bystanders. As I showed above, various quantitative inquiries demonstrated the wide and deep manifest political disengagement in the country, especially among the youth. In 2011, Algerian people did not follow the mass demonstrations organized by the CNCN. Many suggested that the aftermath of the October 1988 uprisings and the civil war during 1990s that followed were the most prominent factors leading youth to lose hope regarding their abilities to impact on political system. Therefore, I was interested in the construction of individual discourses related to activism, whether among younger or older members. My third research question sought to find out:

3. How the citizenship demanded by independent trade union activists is negotiated through nonviolent acts in the public space?

The imaginaries related to political passivity in Algeria changed in February 2019, when hundreds of thousands started to spontaneously gather to manifest against the fifth term of the President Abdelaziz Bouteflika and the whole political system. It is inaccessible for this study to estimate whether the masses of the streets were totally disconnect from oppositional movements, or if there were any connection at all. After the masses started to gather, political parties, autonomous trade unions and other associations wished to turn the events according to the best suitable narrative for themselves and participated to these peaceful demonstrations. However, it is also relatively easy to notice that 2019 manifestations integrate many similar dichotomies and statements presented by oppositional autonomous trade unions during the last decades, among other oppositional movements, whether related to demands, discourses or habits that these demonstrations integrate and resemble. Before these massive peaceful uprisings, political activism was relatively marginal phenomenon among majority of the Algerians. Demonstrations usually brought together a few dozens participants, regardless of the sporadic nature of the events. These protests were mainly organized by oppositional political groups but also by various inhabitants from local housing districts. But in this thesis I draw a distinction between a spontaneous act of demonstration and activism within the theoretical framework of acts of citizenship.

The motivation for the activism springs from the surrounding social conditions, important familial figures and friendship including the progressive courses of life. In many ways, activism was long process of ruptures from the habitus from personal

aspect, while simultaneously acts were not passively given. These individuals endeavored more than being merely just institutionalized citizens that exercise rights and fulfill obligations. Initially they perceived deficits within the socio-political system and then acted to change them. Because oppositional political parties were weak, these individuals found autonomous trade unions through internet, via personal contacts or by accident as their platform for engagement. The transformation continued during the activism within the trade union movement.

I have shown how trade union activists and state authorities view the societal environment from dissenting perspectives, in some contexts even from the opposite slant. Both, autonomous trade union activists and state authorities blamed each other for destabilization, political maneuvers and unpatriotic performances. Meanwhile they both represented themselves as the nationalist protector of Algerian independence and freedom. The acts of citizenship had meaning: struggling for a better society. Activists argue that their action aimed at increase of freedom and democracy. They consider themselves as the representatives of those authentic independence fighters that fought for the independence of the country. They are against foreign capital owners and corrupted elite who enable stealing of Algerian national wealth. They view the state authorities as puppets of foreign interests whose rapacious lust for power led to the impoverishment of Algeria and Algerians.

Activists performed manifestations within the public space through nonviolent protests, rallies, sit-ins, demonstrations, hunger strikes, petitions and media coverage aiming at transforming their social imaginaries related to state authorities into wider collective action. By showing their own example and sharing their views with other Algerians they aspired to instigate interest of their fellow citizens to join for the common struggle for the better Algeria. Meanwhile, state authorities tried to block their access for these spaces viewing these actions as destabilization of the country for the benefit of their viewed external enemies of Algeria.

These disagreements were negotiated through various aforementioned discourses that actually led the debate into issues of patriotism and stability instead of concentrating on poverty, development of the society and the rights and responsibilities of all the Algerian actors. Therefore, the negotiation took place elsewhere, though occasionally union activists confronted the police forces during the protests. The debates concerned history, values and various other more abstract concepts in general. In many ways, discussions for example on the level of salaries or regularization of labor seemed to play marginal role. As if there did not exist genuine platforms or spaces to conduct those debates.

Algeria is currently in the process of the transformation of its second republic. The so-called “hirak” movement, or popular protest movement, that gathers hundreds of thousands Algerians have shown determination among Algerians to achieve profound socio-political reform. This movement, regardless of its loose structures, is capable of integrating all the segments of Algerian society. In addition, it is explicitly supported by various oppositional parties, human rights groups, civil society associations and autonomous trade union movement. These spontaneous and vast manifestations around the country surprised academics, political activists and Algerian citizens themselves. As if overnight, the whole nation would have transformed from active citizens into activists citizens.

Since February 2019, on every Monday and Friday hundreds of thousands individuals have gathered on the streets around the country. The joy and determination resembled a therapeutic performance. As if the occupation of the public space enabled not only its reappropriation, but enabling personal freedom, confiscated by the various authorities and rulers in the past, for citizens themselves as well. These gatherings generated public discussion, led to the reappropriation of the dignity and formation of new political subjectivity. The foundation of the citizenship instigated need to reassure its existence every week, month after month.

The functioning of Algerian autonomous trade union movement reflects well the political and societal “realities” and operational modes of the contemporary actors. Large non-violent manifestations follow the pattern of avoiding confrontation with state’s security forces and surprisingly peaceful demonstrations have been able to generate the necessary power leading to resignation of the President Bouteflika, the government and various other key personalities from government administration. It is important to follow the contributions of autonomous trade unions for the social change in general and for the development of Algerian society in particular in the near future. The future will show whether Algerians manage to construct the Algerian republic 2.0 peacefully.

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