

The Workers' Movement and Civil Society in Egypt

From Underground to Mass-Movement and Back Again

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Spring 2014

Abstract

This master thesis analyses the relationship between the workers' movement and civil society in Egypt within the time period from 1984 to 2013. Four different organisations are discussed from their early years of underground activities in one instance, participation in the mass-movement during the 2011 revolution and its aftermath that led to the disintegration of the mass-movement. The sources for this analysis are books, reports, Internet resources, but not least first hand accounts through interviews. The interviews were conducted as part of the research for this thesis in Cairo and Mahalla al Kubra, and show a clear link between the workers' movement, civil society and the revolution. The thesis is structured in two parts. The first part gives a general contextual background, and is about the history of the workers' movement in Egypt and the second part is about four different civil society groups. Comparisons are drawn through a discussion on the services each group engages in, key individuals and the history of each organisation. The organisations analysed are the Centre For Trade Unions and Workers Services, The Association For the Protection of the Environment, The Democratic Front Party and the Salafiya Costa Movement.

Key words: Workers' movement, civil society, revolution, underground, Cairo, Mahalla al Kubra, Egypt, Social history.

Acknowledgements

I want to express my sincere thanks to my supervisor Professor Knut S. Vikør at the Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion at the University of Bergen for dependable supervision. Thank you to the Middle Eastern Seminar including the supervisors Anne K. Bang and Anders J. Bjørkelo and my fellow students.

I would also like to thank Dr. Joel Beinin. His writings and interviews about the history of the workers' movement in Egypt have been invaluable for the research of this thesis.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to Professor of Political Economy Samer Soliman at the American University of Cairo, who sadly passed away in December 2012. His writings and thoughts was a major inspiration to write this thesis.

Thanks to all the people in Egypt who helped with the research for this thesis. To mention some: Thanks to Hamdi Hassan, Adbullah el Senawy, Said Habib, Fatma Ramadan, Alaa al Aswany, Bassem Victor, Soha Ali, Joseph Nessim, Nicole Assaad, Yousriya Loza Sawiris, and lastly the translators. However some of these people must remain anonymous because of the present security condition in Egypt, but you know who you are.

Thanks to family and friends who have supported me in this process. Thanks to Ingvild for love, help and support with this thesis.

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Table of Abbreviations

APE	– Association for the Protection of the Environment
CCBA	– Cairo Cleaning and Beautification Authority
CTUWS	– Centre for Trade Unions and Worker Services
CPE	– Communist Party of Egypt
DFP	– Democratic Front Party
EDLC	– Egyptian Democratic Labour Congress
ERSAP	- Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Program
EFITU	– Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions
ETUF	– Egyptian Trade Union Federation
FJP	– Freedom and Justice Party
GFLUKE	– General Federation of Labour Unions in the Kingdom of Egypt
ILO	– International Labour Organisation
IMF	– International Monetary Fund
MB	– The Muslim Brotherhood
MOMM	– Ministry of Manpower and Migration
NDP	– National Democratic Party
RCC	– Revolutionary Command Council
SCAF	– Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
SCM	– Salafiya Costa Movement
WCNL	– Workers Committee for National Liberation
WPCP	– Workers and Peasants Communist Party

Part I: Introductions, Sources and Historical

Background

Prologue

On the 28th of January 2011 I went to downtown Cairo to see with my own eyes what was going on. My friends and I had heard rumours that there was a demonstration and this was supposedly a big one. The traffic was blocked so we decided to walk from Zamalek where we lived, across the 6th of October Bridge and into downtown and Tahrir Square. On the way we were joined by hundreds of mostly young people coming from the Giza side of the river Nile. Many of these people were shouting slogans and some of them were repeating the words *intifada* and *thawra*. The first word I understood and made the association to the two rebellions by the Palestinian people against Israeli rule in the past, but the other word I would later learn meant revolution and I was in the middle of it.

When we came to the place where the Corniche turns towards the Egyptian Museum we saw that riot police blocked the street in both directions. As we walked on the pavement I could see the terrified faces of young police cadets with oversized helmets and shields. I could also see huge lieutenants in combat clothing shouting at the cadets and sometimes beating them. Across the street I could see the determined faces of the revolutionary crowd. We tried to enter Tahrir Square, but plain-clothed police stopped and questioned us and when they were done they escorted us to one of the riverboats and ordered the owner to ferry us back to Zamalek again.

My friends and I had to bribe the ferryman to take us back to the downtown side of the river and thus we defied the order of the police. This time we ended up right between the Ramses Hilton Hotel and the Maspero building where the news company *Aljazeera* had their headquarters at the time. *Aljazeera* were filming the whole riot from the roof of the building and broadcasted live to the entire world. Now a fierce street battle was raging between the police and the revolutionaries. Stones were flying and teargas grenades were launched directly towards where we were standing. We had to run into the Ramses Hilton to escape the

teargas that choked us. After a while the revolutionaries broke into the hotel lobby to take shelter from the battle going on outside. Many took care of wounds and injuries, others had to wash teargas out of their eyes, and one small group knelt down and started praying, but most of them just took a break before they ran back outside to continue fighting.

We decided to try to get out of the hotel because we felt we ought to get to a safer distance. Just as we came outside the police charged at a group of people standing close to us. We got out of their way and hoped they would ignore us. I could smell the sweat of the police as they ran past me. My friends and I then decided that the hotel was the safest available place for us at the time being after all, so we managed to get back in and stayed there until nightfall. By then the battle had subsided and later we learnt that the police had been defeated and the revolutionary crowd had managed to enter Tahrir Square. The Square was held for 18 days and resulted in the downfall of President Hosni Mubarak.

This was the event that would inspire me to do research on the Egyptian revolution and learn more about its place within modern Middle Eastern history. As I learned more about the history of Egypt the role of the workers' movement became clear to me, especially as a voice of contention against the state. The importance of the workers' movement increased in the years leading leading up to the revolution. But to understand the role of the workers in the revolution one needs to look back to the establishment of a modern working class in late 19th and the 20th century.

Introduction

Egypt before the 2011 Revolution

For 30 years President Hosni Mubarak had ruled the country with the support by the Egyptian army, most of the international community and most importantly the USA. He had like his predecessors Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar al Sadat, built up a highly entrenched police state to protect him. Most of it was financed by aid and direct military support from the Americans. Egypt has been under martial law since 1967 except for a short period before the assassination of President al Sadat in 1981.

The capital Cairo was one of the most policed places in the world under Mubarak. An estimated 50 000 to a 100 000 people served in the police force in Cairo alone, and this was just the normal uniformed police.¹ The secret services, under the direct management of the Ministry of the Interior, spied on dissidents and troublemakers and it is impossible to know exactly how many agents they employed. The ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) controlled the economy through the president's son Gamal Mubarak and his close circle of investors and bankers. The national media, on television and in newspapers, fought amongst themselves to praise the President and his family, lifting them up to a semi-divine status.

The political process was completely dominated by the closest friends of the president and he would appoint ministers and governors after his own taste without consulting any democratic instances or popular referendums. Workers were in a vulnerable position and there were no trade union federations that could speak for them.² Since the regime of Abdel Nasser the state tried to force the workers' movement under their control and this trend reached its height under Mubarak. By the late 1980s the Egyptian Federation of Trade Unions (EFTU) had become a "yellow union" that tried to suppress the workers rather than fight for their rights.³ In the vernacular they were commonly known simply as "*el hukuma*", or "the government" in English.⁴

¹ Rodenbeck Max. *Cairo – the City Victorious*. 1998 London. P. 216.

² *The Draft Law on Trade Unions*. Published by the CTUWS. 08.03.2009. P. 8.

³ A "yellow union" is an expression describing a union that is in league with the management or the government.

⁴ Interview, conducted by the author, with Gamal abo el Alaa, Ibrahim Hamdi, Yaser Sakkah and Said Habib in Mahalla al Kubra. January 2014.

The Egyptian regime under Mubarak seemed to be relatively strong and stable both in the eyes of the regime itself, by the international media, and even by the opposition. The opposition was in a very difficult situation under Mubarak and the only kind of contestation that was accepted by the regime was of the kind that was too small to pose a real threat. Few experts on Egypt believed it was possible to fundamentally challenge the strength of the regime and even Joel Beinin, which is the source I have used the most in chapter one of this thesis, said as late as in 2010 that he did not think the strike movement that had been in Egypt since 2008 would be able to shake the foundation of the regime.⁵

In this political climate it is hard to imagine that a thriving opposition could be established. However we know that on the grass root level the regime gradually lost control. There were many different groups of pioneers that paved the way for the emergence of a powerful revolutionary movement and some of these will be presented in this thesis. These groups were civil society actors in Egypt who despite the oppression were able to make some room for political activism underground or on the grass root level. Sometimes these groups would camouflage their activism as being aid or charity, but within this aid there would be an element of political protest.

In the history of modern Egypt the types and titles of local leaders and mediators has changed with the times. In the semi-feudal system before the 1952 revolution it was the Omda who had this key position.⁶ After the monarchy was discarded the Muallim inherited the position from the Omda.⁷ Today key individuals in organisations and parties could be seen to resemble the Omda and the Muallim in that their central position between power structures is necessary in order to get anything done. Many ordinary people do not have the necessary skills to navigate this complex system. The reason these key individuals, these mediators, are so important in Egypt is that there are huge gaps in the services provided by the state, and the official bureaucracy is inefficient. In addition, the mediators are important for the development of civil society because they are the people who tend to initiate and manage organisations like the four chosen for this thesis. These mediators who work in different

⁵ Interview with Joel Beinin at Democracy Now. Published on 10.02.2011.

<http://www.democracynow.org/shows/2011/2/10>

⁶ Omda: A local chieftan who was a middle man between the farmers in the countryside and the land owning nobility who lived in the city.

⁷ Muallim: The word means teacher in Egyptian arabic. An informal leader of a neighbourhood, a community, or a crafts guild. The term is used in the Zabbalin community and the Muallimeen often is the mediators between the NGOs and the Zabbalin workers.

organisations, but with similar practices, are crucial for creating and sustaining the emerging civil society in Egypt.

Since industrialisation started in Egypt in the late 19th early 20th centuries the workers' movement has been an important source of inspiration for the greater oppositional movement. The workers demands have usually been about 'bread-and-butter' issues irrespective of whether they were dealing with repression and exploitation from the Turks, British colonial rule or later the independent Egyptian governments.

Introducing civil society in Egypt

The organisations in this thesis have in common that they are results of a growing civil society in Egypt. Civil society is the public space between the state and the individual. This space can be organisations, networks, trade unions, and independent media for example. In other words civil society can be described as the glue that binds society together. According to Political Scientist Bruce R. Sievers from the University of Stanford civil society includes at least seven different factors or in his own words "strands". These are: Nonprofit and voluntary institutions, individual rights, the common good, the rule of law, philanthropy, free expression and tolerance. These factors are widely used in research on modern civil society. Sievers's point is that these aspects are interactive components that together create the necessary conditions for a functioning modern civil society.⁸

One aspect of civil society is social movements that work to change within society. These organisations are sometimes reacting to the status quo and the hegemonic power in place at the time of their foundation. They are expressions of opposition. Civil society is thus the space in which ideas are formed and debated and possibilities emerge.

The Egyptian revolution in 2011 was an energy injection to civil society, even if violence from the police and army has taken some of this energy away.⁹ Egyptians had started to believe that they could challenge the state and the army if they just organised and joined the public debate. Before the revolution there was a great sense of apathy when it came to joining

⁸ Sievers Bruce. Article: *What is Civil Society?* Published in GIA Reader Vol 20, No. 1. 2009.

<http://www.giarts.org/article/what-civil-society>

⁹ Sika Nadine. Article: *Civil Society and Democratization in Egypt: The Road Not Yet Traveled*. 2012.

<http://muftah.org/civil-society-and-democratization-in-egypt-the-road-not-yet-traveled/>

the public debate. People felt all the important decisions were made in advance by the President and that the political process was just a charade to give the masses the impression that their opinion mattered.

Many Egyptians became interested in politics for the first time during and after the revolution. They joined or created new organisations that aimed to ease the path toward democracy. The new organisations were of all denominations and ideologies from Islamist to Socialist. All of the organisations discussed in later chapters gained new members during and after the revolution. Lots of workers joined a union for the first time in their lives, others joined public pressure groups like the Salafiya Costa Movement or local political parties like the Democratic Front Party.

Another sign that civil society was on the offensive was an explosion of street art and culture. Young artists would paint and give their accounts of the street fighting between the security forces and the revolutionaries. The narratives of the revolution were accounted for in the street art as the revolutionary youth commemorated their own martyrs in this way.¹⁰ The independent music scene also flourished during and after the 18 days in Tahrir Square. The artists who sang in the sit-ins became some of the heroes for the young demonstrators.¹¹ These expressions of underground culture are some of the gains of the revolution and in the long run could have more influence than the immediate political gains.

Since 2012 there has been a contra-revolution that has sought to de-radicalise the political situation. This was instigated when the elected president Mohammed Morsi granted himself sweeping powers in November 2012 and it was further strengthened by the army takeover in July 2013.¹² Morsi wanted to declare the end of the revolution and make the youth that were still fighting the police in the streets give up and return to work. The government wanted to protect itself and feared the revolutionary potential of the crowds. After Morsi's government was toppled by both popular pressure and military intervention the army continued this rhetoric. Publically calling protesters, unions and the Islamist movement troublemakers and terrorists, they sought to alienate these groups from the rest of the population. The army

¹⁰ The Walls of Freedom: Reference to street art in Cairo. As viewed 10.05.2014. <http://wallsoffreedom.com>

¹¹ Ramy Essam: Singer who became famous during the revolution. As viewed 10.05.2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-rEKmTBKiBM>

¹² Kouddous Sharif Abdel. *What Led to Morsi's Fall—and What Comes Next?* Article published in The Nation 05.06.2013. <http://www.thenation.com/article/175128/what-led-morsis-fall-and-what-comes-next#>

started arresting people from oppositional groups and the escalation of violence led the army to kill around 1000 supporters of Morsi outside Rabaa al Adawiya Mosque on the 14th of August 2013.

This massacre was a culmination of the contra-revolution. Many groups in society feared the revolutionary crowds and more importantly that their property would be harmed so they welcomed a return to the familiar political processes with a strong leader and a strong army. Essentially nobody in the establishment wants democracy in Egypt, because real democracy would mean that the millions of poor in the country actually would have power over the rich. It would mean a radical redistribution of the wealth of the nation and this is a more terrible prospect for the rich than continued dictatorship and the lack of basic freedoms. In fact the problem with democracy in Egypt is essentially the same as the ancient Greeks faced. The majority of the population in both Egypt and ancient Greece was poor and real democracy would mean that the few rich would have to give up their privileges. Very few people want to give away privileges when they first have enjoyed them. Nevertheless this is a precondition for real democracy according to Aristotle and it is perhaps the reason why real democracy remains a utopian model that have yet to be achieved.

The conservative forces, like the army and the religious establishment, in Egypt have unsuccessfully tried to quell the emerging and revolutionary civil society. The strong energy created by the revolution is still remembered by everyone that experienced it. Even if some conditions have become worse than they ever were under Mubarak due to military repression and new restrictive protest laws, civil society continues to organise and engage people.

Research Question

Because of my field work and my research on the workers' movement in Egypt I have chosen the following research questions:

How could the workers' movement contribute to the rise of civil society that led to 25th of January revolution in 2011? How did other kinds of groups contribute in developing this civil society in Egypt? And finally, how did civil society respond when the mass-movement fragmented after the revolution?

The first question will be discussed in chapter one of this thesis. This is an overview of the history of the workers' movement in Egypt. Here the long lines of labour history are shown. The origin of the revolution in 2011 can be found in the history of the workers' movement. It is interesting to see that it was basically the same things the workers fought for in 1910 as they did in 2011. The economic realities and distribution of wealth have remained fairly stable in Egypt. The owners of the land, the factory or the state employers dominate the economy while the peasants, the workers or the civil servant live in relative poverty without much hope of changing their situation to the better.

In all time periods covered in this thesis there have been significant events of workers' activism. I have chosen one event from each time period to get closer to the workers themselves. Chapter one will go back to late Ottoman times when modern industrialisation was introduced to Egypt. The chapter will include parts about the colonial period under the British and the eras of Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar al Sadat leading up to a quite detailed description of the age of Hosni Mubarak.

Four different organisations or civil society actors are presented in chapters two to five and here the second and third research questions are discussed. Some of these groups had been active for a while when the revolution happened and some came about right before or during the revolution in 2011. Only one of these is a workers' organisation, the others are focusing on helping other groups in society. The differences between the organisations are important in order to show the width of civil society actors, and to point out the fact despite the differences they do engage in similar practices. The focus in these chapters will be on the practices of the organisations, the key individuals that founded and led the organisations and on what happened with each organisation when they left the mass-movement.

Introducing the History of the Workers' Movement

Pre-Industrial labour history

In the late Ottoman period the urban artisan guilds were institutions that could mediate between the ruling classes on one hand and the artisan workers on the other. The guilds were interested in maintaining good trade conditions. The guild masters usually sought to prevent conflicts between apprentices and artisan masters. They had a harmony perspective and were

interested in preventing uprisings by the working apprentices, but in some instances the economic conditions became so bad that revolts could not be prevented. In these cases the guild leaders often assumed the role of strike leaders or mediators.¹³ The apprentices had the same function in the artisan workshops that modern workers later would have in the emerging industry. They were the ones that actually made the merchandise that the workshop would sell. The artisan masters were the owners of the workshops and were managing business and overseeing the production. They had much the same function that employers would have in the industrial age. Apprenticeship was an education the apprentices gained while they were working for the master tradesman.¹⁴

Colonial rule and the emergence of a modern working class

In 1882 British forces occupied Egypt to protect their interest and Khedive Tawfiq (1879-1892) against a revolt led by the colonel Ahmed Urabi.¹⁵ Officially, Egypt remained a part of the Ottoman Empire until 1923 when it was replaced by the Turkish Republic. The Arab provinces were subsequently turned into protectorates or mandates under British or French administration in accordance to the Sykes/Picot Agreement.¹⁶ The British army supported and protected the royal family and the economic reforms designed to turn Egypt into a supplier of raw materials to the British Empire. In addition it was of great strategic importance for the British to keep control of the Suez Canal because it was the quickest route to India and the other Asian Colonies.

Gama Abdel Nasser and the working class

Gamal Abdel Nasser was the leader of the Free Officers who took power after a military coup d'état in 1952.¹⁷ They made Egypt a Republic, and ended the hold that the royal family and the nobility had on the economy. The military junta of the Free Officers would later rename themselves as the Arab Socialist Union. From 1962 until 1974 this was the only legal political party in the country.¹⁸ Abdel Nasser wanted to free the Middle East and the Arabs by socialist reforms. Nationalizing the Egyptian economy and redistributing agricultural land became important elements in this process. For Abdel Nasser the military was the foundation his

¹³ Beinlin Joel. *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*. Cambridge 2001. P. 37-38.

¹⁴ Dictionary.com: reference to Apprentice. As seen 09.05.2014.

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/apprenticeship>

¹⁵ Rogan Eugene. *The Arabs – A History*. London 2009 and 2011. P. 162.

¹⁶ History.com: reference to the Sykes/Picot Agreement. As seen 09.05.2014. <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/britain-and-france-conclude-sykes-picot-agreement>

¹⁷ Encyclopedia Britannica: reference to Free Officers and Abdel Nasser.

<http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/180382/Egypt/22400/The-revolution-and-the-Republic#ref307102>

¹⁸ Rogan Eugene. *The Arabs – A History*. London 2009 and 2011. P. 414.

socialist state. The military would protect the Arab peoples by challenging the west and opposing the new state of Israel.

Abdel Nasser portrayed himself as a protector of the working class and escalated the industrialisation program. Looking past this rhetoric, Abdel Nasser quelled any challenge that could pose a threat to his reign. He ordered the army to clamp down on the Muslim Brotherhood, worker activists and communists alike, despite calling himself a socialist. All attempts to organise independently were stopped before they could even start.

Anwar al Sadat and the Open Door policy

Anwar al Sadat was the vice president under Gamal Abdel Nasser and naturally he took power as the former president had died on his post. Al Sadat had been in prison during the last world war under the suspicion of collaborating with the Germans. Many members of the nationalist movement hoped that the Germans would win the war and help them get rid of the British. Before the battle of El Alamein it even seemed plausible that they would at least win North Africa. After the war al Sadat became a member of the Free Officers, and although he and Abdel Nasser had different views on ideology he remained loyal to the president.¹⁹ Al Sadat used the legacy of Abdel Nasser to portray himself as a great leader. It took a few years before he officially changed his policy and turned his back on Arab Socialism. At the same time abandoned the one party system and allowed other parties to join the political process, he lifted the censorship of the media and even tolerated the Muslim Brotherhood.

The independent workers' movement in opposition to Mubarak

Hosni Mubarak was the longest serving ruler of Egypt since Mehmet Ali Pasha (1805-1848). He came to power after al Sadat was assassinated in 1981 and continued and intensified the neo-liberal policies that affected ordinary workers in a negative way. In the 1980s the economy of Egypt showed systematic weaknesses because it had become too dependent on foreign aid and remittances from migrant workers the oil rich Gulf States.²⁰ When the global oil prices dropped migrant workers had to return home to Egypt and this caused a currency crisis for the government.

¹⁹ Hourani Albert. *A History of The Arab Peoples*. London 1991. P. 417.

²⁰ Soliman Samer. *The Autumn of Dictatorship – Fiscal Crisis and Political Change in Egypt under Mubarak*. Cairo 2006 and 2011. P. 114.

In the early 1980s the regime softened and some of the most repressive measures were dropped. Mubarak wanted to show that he was a man of democracy and modernity, and he therefore let oppositional groups emerge as long as they did not challenge him. In the 1990s the oppression from the state became more aggressive and this led to underground opposition within the workers' movement. In the 2000s the workers' movement became a more public voice in this opposition as they started to organise strikes that were not only about basic living conditions and wages but also of a greater political nature.²¹

Introduction to four Egyptian organisations

In part two of this thesis four different Egyptian organisations will be discussed. This is in order to answer the second and third research question about the development of civil society. Comparisons will be made of how the organisations approach education, aid and other services. I have met with and interviewed people from these organisations and decided that they make interesting subjects for comparison. I think the similarities in practice are more important than the differences in goals and structures of each organisation.

The organisations are all civil society actors in Egypt and that makes them relevant in order to answer the research questions. Another common factor is that three out of four organisations in this thesis are working with Coptic issues in some way and in varying degree. Therefore a quite detailed introduction to Coptic history has been included. However this thesis is not a study of Coptic history but a study of the workers' movement and civil society in Egypt.

Introduction to Centre for Trade Unions and Workers Services

The Centre for Trade Unions and Workers Services is a fundamental part of the workers' movement in Egypt. The organisation is the most central research subject in this thesis. It is an Egyptian non-governmental organisation that aims to improve the conditions of workers and fight for the right to organise independent unions. The organisation was established in March 1990. The founders of the CTUWS committed themselves to doing something about the urgent need for independent unions in Egypt and they decided to adopt some fundamental principles for the organisation.²² Firstly, it was to be organised in a democratic manner and all board members had to be elected by general assembly. Secondly they should cooperate with

²¹ Interview with Gamal abo el Alaa, Ibrahim Hamdi, Yaser Sakkah and Said Habib in Mahalla al Kubra. 20.01.2014.

²² *The Draft Law on Trade Unions*. Published by the CTUWS. Cairo 08.03.2009. P 77.

the workers on the grass root level and provide direct services to fill the void created by the official trade union structure.²³

The CTUWS was founded in Hilwan, which is one of the main industrial areas south of Cairo. In the course of the 1990s the CTUWS opened new branch offices in Mahalla al Kubra, Nag Hammadi and 10th of Ramadan City as well as new headquarters in Downtown Cairo. The CTUWS has functioned as a fully-fledged trade union, organising workers locally and offering services that normally are associated with a functioning trade union, offering legal support, information work and organising sales cooperatives.

The CTUWS had an adversarial position toward the official union structure since it was founded, which in practice functioned like an arm of the state.²⁴ As a result their members have been harassed by the authorities and arrested for their activism. In the strike wave that developed in between 2003 and 2009 the CTUWS was active in organising actions against lay offs and cuts in welfare for workers. The CTUWS Mahalla was especially active in organising large strikes in 2006 and 2008. These strikes were later seen as preludes to the revolution in 2011.

Association for the Protection of the Environment

The Associations for the Protection of the Environment is an important actor in Egyptian civil society. It is a non-governmental organisation that works to better the conditions of the Zabbalin community in Cairo. The APE was founded in 1984 in Manshiyat Naser primarily as an environmental organisation, but the founders realised that bettering the living conditions of the Zabbalin was the only way to improve the environment in the slum in Manshiyat Naser.²⁵ Soeur Emmanuelle, Mourner Namatella and Yousriya Loza Sawiris are considered to be the founders of the APE. They played a major role in modernising the handling of the trash that the Zabbalin collect. They opened the first modern compost plant in Egypt as well as industrialising much of the recycling work that the Zabbalin used to do by hand.

²³ Ctuws.com: Under the headline About US. As seen 08.03.2014. <http://www.ctuws.com/about/story/?item=7>

²⁴ *The Draft Law on Trade Unions*. Published by the CTUWS. Cairo 08.03.2009. P 10-11.

²⁵ Wendy Walker. *The Torah Zabbaleen – From Shacks to High Rises*. Cairo 2005. P. 7.

The APE opened a paper factory, a rug factory and a plastic recycling plant in Manshiyat Naser during the 1980s. In addition to the production facilities, they also opened a cultural centre, a health station and a school for the Zabbalin.²⁶

The Democratic Front Party

It is not just organisations and social movements that constitute civil society in Egypt. Oppositional political parties are also important because they stand as alternatives to the hegemonic state and the existing power structures. The next example of emerging civil society is a relatively young and small party. Seeing past the political activism of this party, in practise, they too share important similarities with the other three organisations. The Democratic Front Party was a liberal, secular political party in the middle of the political spectrum.²⁷ It supported the neo-liberal economic strategy of the state until the revolution came in 2011. Before the revolution they were anti-Muslim Brotherhood, but during the revolution they supported the electoral alliance that the Freedom and Justice Party was a member of.²⁸ After the revolution the DFP went back to being anti-Brotherhood. The DFP was pragmatic when it came to join political alliances. When the DFP had the same agenda as the Brotherhood during the revolution it had no problem supporting them in elections.

The DFP organised events they called Freedom Festival that was engaged in social work to help poor people in Cairo. Their practices were to offer free education, basic aid and democracy lessons to people living in the slums. In many ways its practices were similar to the services provided by APE. After the revolution the DFP merged with the Egypt Bloc of Muhammad el Baradei, and it ceased to exist as an independent political party although the social projects continued in the slums.

Salafiya Costa Movement

The final civil society organisation in this thesis differs from the APE and the CTUWS in many ways. It is organised differently and has different goals. However, it shares important similarities in practice and it has been an interesting voice in the emerging civil society. The Salafiya Costa Movement is an organisation that aims to improve the relations between the different religious groups in Egypt. They are an anti-sectarian and revolutionary group that came together during the revolution in 2011. The founders of this organisation are the Salafi

²⁶ Ape.org.eg: Under the headline Institutional. <http://www.ape.org.eg/ThePrograms.html>

²⁷ Interview by the author with Joseph Nessim in Cairo. 20.03.2013.

²⁸ The Freedom and Justice Party: The political party of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Mohammed Tolba and the Copt Bassem Victor. The SCM is the youngest organisation in this thesis, and the founders were inspired by the unity of the people during the 18 days in Tahrir Square to work to decrease religious tensions in the country. The SCM was organised in committees and the Street Committee and the Freedom Committee ran the social projects. In addition to their anti-sectarian ideological work the SCM also started social projects to help the poor people of Cairo. They gave basic aid and services, such as food, clothes and basic education, to people that had no access to these services normally.²⁹

The social project became the most important contribution of the SCM. They tried to enter into dialogue with the other civil society actors during the constitutional efforts that were being attempted between 2011 and 2013 and representatives of the SCM were invited to the constitutional hearing in the summer of 2012. After the military coup in July 2013 the SCM withdrew from politics because of the escalation of violence. Although they withdrew from the political process they continued their social projects.

Introduction to Coptic history and the Zabbalin

The Copts are a Christian minority in Egypt constituting between 10 and 15% of the population.³⁰ The word comes from the fact that the ancient Greeks used to call the people in Egypt for *Aegyptoi*. The Arabic derivative of *Aegyptoi* became *Qibt* and this has in turn been westernised into Copt.³¹ Before the Arab conquest of Egypt by Amr Ibn al As in the 7th century, Egypt was a part of the Eastern Roman Empire controlled from Constantinople. At the time of the Arab conquest there was a conflict between the Coptic Christians and the Greek Orthodox Christians. This can be described as a conflict between the faith of the local people and the faith of the state.³² When the Arab expansion reached Egypt the population more or less welcomed the defeat of the Roman Army and the removal of the Greek Bishop. This was some of the reason why the Arabs managed to conquer Egypt with relative ease.

After the Arabs took over Egypt it took about 200 years before the Muslim population became larger than the Christian. Since the 9th century the majority of the population has been

²⁹ Interview with Soha Ali and Bassem Victor in the SCM office. 22.03.2013 in Cairo.

³⁰ The numbers of Copts in Egypt is uncertain. The previous Pope Shanuda III confirmed in 2008 that there were 12 million Copts in Egypt.

³¹ Encyclopedia Britannica: Internet article about Coptic history. As viewed 19.03.14.

<http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/136928/Coptic-Orthodox-Church-of-Alexandria>

³² This conflict had its root in the Council of Chalcedon when the monophysite doctrine was rejected in the 2nd Century. There was a schism between the religion of the Roman state (Greek Orthodox) and other orthodox churches. The Coptic Church was one of them.

Sunni Muslims, but the Coptic Christians were important to the Arab rulers and they often had high positions as administrators or scribes to the Sultans. During the Shiite Fatimid Caliphate there was an alliance between the Caliph and the Roman Emperor against the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad.³³ There was a great need of diplomats who could read and write Greek in this period and the Copts were ideal for this purpose. After Salah el Din retook Egypt for Sunni Islam in 1171 the Copts continued to be important subjects of the Ayubid and the Mamluk Sultanates and later the Ottoman Empire.³⁴

In the modern age from the 19th century onwards, the Copts were important in the nationalist movements against both the Turks and the British. There were several Copts in the circle around the nationalist leader Saad Zaghloul Pasha in the years leading up to the 1918 revolution. In fact the second prime minister of Egypt was a Copt named Youssef Wahba Pasha who served between 1919 and 1920.³⁵ Between the two World Wars the role of the Copts was important for Egypt, after the 1954 revolution, and during the reforms of Gamal Abdel Nasser, both the Coptic Church and the Coptic population joined his nation-building project.³⁶

The Coptic Pope was an important ally of the secular state and the Socialist president Abdel Nasser. In return for this loyalty the state made the Pope the main spokesperson and the leader of the Coptic population in general. The Pope was the one who negotiated with the state and mediated when there were conflicts about religious issues both with the Muslims and among the Copts themselves. In other words the state made the Church the sole representative of all the Copts in religious matters. The state did much the same with the religious learned of al Azhar University.³⁷ Al Azhar University was founded around 970 AD and it is currently one of the foremost learning institutions in Sunni Islam and in the Arabic language.³⁸ Since 1961 they have accepted non-religious studies on their curriculum. Like the Coptic Pope the Grand Sheik of al Azhar became the most important representative of all the Sunni Muslims in

³³ Between the 9th and the 11th centuries.

³⁴ Ayubid Dynasty 1171-1250 AD, Mamluk Dynasty 1250-1517 AD, Ottoman Empire 1517-1922 AD.

³⁵ Kamal Katba 2007. *The Egyptian Chronicles*: Webpage about modern Egyptian History. As viewed on 18.03.14. <http://www.theegyptianchronicles.com/History/PRIMEMINISTERS19.html>

³⁶ Osman Tarek. *Egypt on the Brink – From the Rise of Nasser to the Fall of Mubarak*. London and New Haven 2011. P. 61.

³⁷ Osman Tarek. *Egypt on the Brink – From the Rise of Nasser to the Fall of Mubarak*. London and New Haven 2011. P. 61.

³⁸ *Encyclopedia Britannica*: Internet article about about al Azhar University. As viewed 19.03.14. <http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/46851/al-Azhar-University>

Egypt. This was a strategy implemented by the state to gain control over the religious communities in the country.

This trend continued under the rule of Anwar al Sadat and Hosni Mubarak. As a reaction to the State/Church alliance a schism emerged between the young and the old generations in the last decade under Mubarak in the 2000s. The young Copts viewed themselves as Egyptians first and foremost and did not agree that the Pope should be able to negotiate with the state in matters concerning them. The state tried to deal with the religious communities separately and by doing so it laid the foundation for the sectarian conflict that would emerge later. During the government of Mohammed Morsi many Copts feared more discrimination from the state with an Islamist president. Most of them supported the army in deposing the government of Morsi in July 2013.

Even if some Copts have had important positions in modern Egyptian society most of them have been poor and made up a large part of the informal labour force in the country. One important example of this is their function in trash processing in Cairo. The Zabbalin are the trash collectors in and around Cairo. The word is derived from *zabbal*, which is the Arabic term for trash. Before the term Zabbalin became in popular use, the trash collectors were called *Wahaya*, which means “people of the oasis”. The Wahaya came from the Dakhla Oasis in the early 1900s and made a living in an area of Cairo called Bab el Bahr. The Wahaya started by collecting waste from the households in Cairo and then dried and sold it for fuel to run the Turkish baths in the city.

In the 1930s fuel oil replaced organic waste in Egypt so the Wahaya needed some other way to get rid of the organic waste. They went into business with pig-breeders called the Zarraba. The Wahaya became middlemen between the Zarraba and the house owners where the trash was collected and they made the most money. A hierarchical relationship developed between the Wahaya and the Zarraba. This relationship led to exploitation and sometimes abuse of the Zarraba, but the public did not know the difference between the two groups so they just called all of them Zabbalin meaning garbage people.³⁹ The term has evolved into being a description of an occupation and a socio-economic group.

³⁹ Wendy Walker. *The Torah Zabbalin – From Shacks to High Rises*. P. 13. 2005. Cairo.

In the 1970s the Zabbalin were forced to move from Imbaba on the Giza side of the river Nile, to Torah, Moqqatem and Manshiyat Naser. Here they set up tin shacks and lived without basic amenities like clean water. Their settlements grew to become slums, with the associated diseases, fire hazards and generally appalling conditions. The government let the Zabbalin stay at these settlements, but they did not let them lease the land and so there was always insecurity as to whether the government would chase them away.

In 1976 the Governorate of Cairo and the World Bank planned a project to improve the conditions for the poorest inhabitants of the city, including the Zabbalin. The project was to be led by local forces supported by the Coptic Church, the Maadi Women's Guild and the French nun Soeur Emmanuelle among other organisations. The project would take about 10 years, but in 1984 electricity and sewage had been introduced. This was the first step towards betterment of the situation the Zabbalin lived in. In 1984 Yousriya Loza-Sawiris, Mounir Namentella and Soeur Emmanuelle founded the Association for the Protection of the Environment. Many Copts feel that there should be close ties within the community even if the different members belong to different social strata. In this way civil society has been able to develop both within a religious community of Copts and in the precise geographical area of Manshiyat Naser.

Sources

Primary Sources and Source Critique

My own background and fieldwork

My academic interest in Egypt began when I started the Middle Eastern history program at the University of Bergen. I decided to take one semester as an exchange student at the AUC in the spring of 2011. As described in the prologue I soon found myself in the middle of a revolution and my studies in Egyptology at AUC became less interesting than what was going on around me. After completing my studies at the AUC I went back to Norway, but have returned to Egypt whenever possible. I decided to research modern Egyptian history focusing on grass root history, social movements, and eventually, the workers' movement. In March 2013 I conducted my initial fieldwork for this thesis and managed to get several interviews. In January 2014 I returned to Cairo for follow up interviews. I understand and speak very basic

Egyptian Arabic although not so good that I could do interviews in Arabic without interpreters. Therefore all the interviews are either conducted in English or with an interpreter present.

Method and Ethics

Most of the research in this thesis was conducted during fieldwork in Cairo in March 2013 and January 2014 and the most important method used to collect data during this fieldwork was interviews. These interviews are the most interesting primary sources in this thesis and they include the most detailed information about the issues I explore. The question whether to name people or not arises when dealing with interviews as sources. To be able to name the interviewee gives strength to the empirical evidence and it makes the research more reproducible. On the other hand there is risks involved in publishing the names of interviewees. One has to consider if naming them could be dangerous, such as if the information could be used against them later. This is especially important in the actual context of this thesis. The state of Egypt still prosecutes actors in civil society and many have been sent to prison. Prison sentences and conditions are harsh. There are also rumours of secret police arresting, abducting and torturing activists.

On the other hand the wishes of the interviewees has to be considered. All the interviewees that are named gave their explicit permission. They were aware of the risk and they still felt that it was important to be named in this thesis. Some interviewees even described being named here as part of their activism. Another argument for using the names is that almost all the interviewees appear as representatives for their organisation not as private persons. They are describing the views of the organisations, not their personal opinions. In addition, some of my interviewees are public figures. Their contribution to this thesis is not likely to pose any additional risk to them than they are already exposed to through their own political activism. Summing up, I have decided to name some of the interviewees, but not all of them. I have therefore withheld the identities of some who wished to be anonymous.

Interviews with Fatma Ramadan

The author conducted two interviews with Fatma Ramadan, one on the 24th of March 2013 and one on the 14th of January 2014. Both of them were conducted in the offices of the Centre for Trade Unions and Workers Services (CTUWS) in Cairo. The interviews give an inside perspective of the history of the independent workers' movement. The CTUWS has been a registered NGO in Egypt since 1990 and it has worked as a mediator between the workers and

the government as well as a coordinator between the different unions and strike committees that were active in this period.

I use these interviews as a primary source to the activities of the Centre for Trade Unions and Workers Services because Fatma Ramadan works for there. She has around 20 years of experience with workers' issues and she has been a participant in most of the events she describes in the interviews. The most important events are strikes and demonstrations for workers' rights from around 2005 until 2013. The main issues of the CTUWS are health insurance for the workers they represent, recognition of the union, to improve wages and safety at work, but most importantly against the privatisation of their work place.

She mentioned the tax collectors' strike in 2006 and the Mahalla strikes on the 6th of April 2008 as important events in the development of an independent workers' movement. A weakness with this source is that the interviewee has a personal vested interest in portraying some events in particular ways. She has a positive bias toward the workers' movement and may want to attribute a greater role to it in historic events than it actually had. Another problem with these sources is that Fatma Ramadan worked for two organisations at different stages and she did not always make it clear which one she talked about. Many times in the interview she just said, "we did" this and that without explaining who exactly "we" were. The interview was conducted in Arabic and there was an interpreter present.

Interviews with Abdullah al Senawy

The author conducted two interviews with al Senawy, the first one was on the 26th of March 2013 and the second one was on the 12th of January 2014. These interviews provides a perspective on the activities of the National Coalition for Change, popularly called the Kefaya movement, and the Journalist Syndicate where the interviewee was a participant. Al Senawy is also an Arab Socialist intellectual and used to work as editor of the Nasserite newspaper *al Arabi al Nasseri*.

Al Senawy provides both a first hand account and a journalistic perspective on the events that precluded the revolution in 2011. He also raises the view to a broader regional perspective by talking about the inheritance of power between Hafez al Assad and his son Bashar al Assad in Syria in 2000 and the participation of Egypt in the war with Iraq on the side of the US led coalition in 2001-2003 as major factors leading up to the revolution.

The main strength of the interviews with al Senawy is that it acknowledges the importance of the workers' movement in the years leading up to the revolution and in bringing down the regime of Hosni Mubarak. These interviews cover events in the early 2000s and mention both media campaigns against the government and demonstrations organised by the Kefaya movement. Al Senawy was a participant in one of the first openly critical demonstrations against President Mubarak and he said that the 300 demonstrators were surrounded by around 10 000 riot police to prevent the numbers of demonstrators from growing. The interviews with al Senawy are also my only primary sources that provided some theoretical perspectives on why the revolution occurred by describing the huge difference between the poor and the rich as a classical class struggle.

These interviews were conducted in Arabic and an interpreter was present, but we also spoke in English. As a self-declared socialist, Abdullah al Senawy belongs to a specific political wing, and has a vested interest in portraying the revolution and the years leading up to the revolution in a certain way. These interviews provided useful background information about the general struggle for rights and democracy in Egypt in the decades leading up to the revolution in 2011.

Interviews with Joseph Nessim

The author conducted this interview on the 20th of March 2013 in the offices of the Democratic Front Party. It gives an inside view on the activism of a local political party in a revolutionary setting. Nessim is also a construction engineer and a member of the Engineering Syndicate. This is the perspective of a self-declared liberal democrat and a secularist.

This interview is a primary source of the formation of the Democratic Front Party and the Muslim Brotherhoods (MB) takeover of the Engineering Syndicate is a major strength. Nessim, like al Senawy, affirms the importance of the workers in the revolution both as an inspiration for and as a participant in the demonstrations that brought down the regime of Mubarak.

A challenge with this source is that the interviewee makes some highly controversial statements. He described the Muslim Brotherhood as the primary problem in Egypt today and that religious fundamentalist destroys democracy. He says, "Egypt is in a slow burning war

with the Muslim Brotherhood”. Nessim is not neutral, but finds himself in the midst of a war between the secular, modern Egypt and the tyrannical Brotherhood. Unfortunately this source has no details about the independent workers’ movement. The interview with Joseph Nessim was conducted in English with no interpreter present.

Interview with Soha Ali and Bassem Victor

This interview was conducted on the 26th of March 2013 in the office of the Salafiya Costa Movement. Ali and Victor are activists in the Salafiya Costa Movement, which they define as a pressure group against the government. They also work with combating religious oppression and building bridges between the different religions in Egypt. Their members are both Salafists and Copts. The Copt Bassem Victor is one of the founding members of the organisation together with Mohammed Tolba who is a Salafist.

This interview provides some detailed perspectives on the events that led up to the revolution. Ali and Victor speak about the poverty issues and what the movement is doing about it. Salafiya Costa Movement provides food and medicine to many poor neighbourhoods. The movement seems quite well organised and they have different elected committees that perform specific tasks. Some of the members of the movement were also involved in the Kefaya Movement and the 6th of April Movement before this revolution and that indicates that they were involved in workers’ protests.

The Salafiya Costa Movement has never been directly involved in the workers’ movement, but some of the members are workers and used to support the strikes in Mahalla al Kubra in 2008 and 2009. The interview is not specifically about labour issues and some of the answers were short and unclear with little detail and too much general information. However, this interview shows clearly that people have multiple roles, and is therefore a good source on linking this movement with workers’ organisations.

A weakness with this source is brief answers – they do not expand much on their replies and are more concerned with ideology and inter-religious relations. This source has a minority-perspective and cannot be said to represent the view of ordinary Egyptians. However, the source provides a good example of how to unite agendas and put differences aside. The interview was conducted in English, without interpreter. The group has gained international popularity and has been engaged in conferences and workshops abroad. The SCM might thus

be seen to have operated on several different levels simultaneously in that it was involved at grass root level as well as the national and international levels. The group's members are well educated and are keen to do something for the poor and to have a say politically. They are upper middle class people providing charity to the poor, and this might be problematic when it comes to issues of representation, as a contrast to the workers' movement that is organised for and by workers.

Interview with Nicole Assaad

This interview was conducted on the 20th of March 2013 in the Association for the Protection of the Environment (APE) house in Manshiyat Naser where the Zabbalin community live and recycle the trash they collect. This interview is a primary source to the history of the APE. Nicole Assaad gives a detailed account of the history of the Zabbalin and the formation of the APE in the early 1980s.

For my purpose the interview serves as an insight to the conditions of informal labour in Egypt and to the practices of the APE. The Zabbalin used to be uneducated and did not have proper working conditions. They normally worked without contracts, insurance, safety equipment and they did not have access to union membership. In many cases the activities of the APE matches the way the independent unions and other social movements work. Like the unions the APE has helped the Zabbalin to get health insurance, legal documentation and educate them about their rights. I would say, on the basis of this source, that the APE provide union-like services. This is one of the strengths of this source, that it gives information about people on the fringes of working life in Egypt. They do not have a strong voice like the workers in the formal labour sector. This source does not give information about the labour struggle or the workers' movement and therefore it is only relevant as an additional perspective on the informal labour and as a source to the APE.

Nicole Assaad is a native Frenchwoman and a naturalised Egyptian. She works as a volunteer with the APE and as an English teacher in a primary school in Cairo. She has a vested interest in portraying the APE as positively as possible and she does not have a critical perspective on the role of the organisation in the Egyptian community. In her view there was nothing but a slum in Manshiyat Naser before the APE came and gave the Zabbalin a chance to improve their lives. The leadership of APE was quite close to the personal circle around the Mubarak family and the present and the former chairpersons used to be Members of Parliament. Nicole

Assaad is a close personal friend of these former MPs. The interview was conducted in English and no interpreter was needed.

Interview with Said Habib, Gamal abo al Alaa, Ibrahim Hamdi and Yaser Sakkah

This interview was conducted on the 20th of January 2014 in the office of the syndicate for retired workers and in the CTUWS branch office in Mahalla al Kubra. I use this interview as a primary source to the practices of the CTUWS locally and to the role of Mahalla al Kubra in the Egyptian workers' movement.

This interview is one of the most important sources in the whole thesis. It gives very good insight in both the political struggle of the workers' movement and the day-to-day activities of the CTUWS locally. The workers of Mahalla al Kubra organised large strikes in 2006 and 2008 and these has been considered as preludes to the revolution in 2011.

The four workers interviewed are living legends in the workers' movement in Egypt. In particular, Said Habib and Gamal abo al Alaa have both paved the way for workers activism in Egypt today. Few people have better insight in the development of the workers' movement in Egypt than these two individuals.

That being said, they are not neutral when it comes to describing the workers' movement. They have a vested interest in portraying the CTUWS Mahalla in a certain way and this is far from objective. Their view on the management of the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company is a good example of this. They told me that they fought to get rid of the old director and as a response the government promoted him, in turn the workers answered by taking over the factory and now run it by themselves. "The director is only a chair now" they told me.⁴⁰ In other words he has become obsolete in the actual management of the factory.

This interview was conducted in two sessions. The first was in the office of the syndicate for workers over sixty and the second one in the office of the CTUWS Mahalla. I had to wait for the second part until the activists finished work in the factory at 4 pm. An interpreter was present during this interview as it was conducted in Arabic.

⁴⁰ Interview, conducted by the author, with Gamal abo el Alaa, Ibrahim Hamdi, Yaser Sakkah and Said Habib in Mahalla al Kubra. January 2014.

Secondary Sources

Historical and political science literature has been key for this thesis. I have read and used a wide variety of books and this is a presentation of the most important sources. Three of these books are either authored or co-authored by Joel Beinin. *Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East – Struggles, Histories and Historiographies* from 1994 is edited by Zachary Lockman, and Joel Beinin has contributed with an article about the 1977 Bread riots. *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East* from 2001 is written by Joel Beinin and gives a detailed account of the history of workers in Egypt and other countries in the region. *Social Mobilization and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa* from 2011 is edited by Beinin and Frederic Vairel. This book looks at several examples of social protest from the whole region from Morocco to Turkey.

The major strengths of these three books is that they give detailed perspectives on workers' protests and social struggles in Egypt. A weakness is that they are regional in focus and that only some parts of them are relative to this thesis. The books describe in detail several strikes and examples of class conflict in Egypt from the early 20th century until the era of Mubarak. Another strength is that the authors, including Joel Beinin are some of the foremost experts on labour history in the Middle East. Another weakness is that these sources are far from neutral because most of the authors are biased in favour of the workers' movement. Beinin is clearly sympathetic to the workers' cause. However, he also criticises the practices and the ideologies of the workers' movement as being too little concerned with linking social to political demands.

Most of the secondary sources were used in Chapter 2, which is an account of the history of the workers' movement in Egypt. *Class Conflict in Egypt 1945-1970* from 1973 by Mahmoud Hussein and *Egypt on the Brink – From the Rise of Nasser to the Fall of Mubarak* from 2011 by Tarek Osman are two of these sources. The first of these two were used as a source to the sub chapter on the 1967-68 riots and the second was used as a source to the subchapters of Abdel Nasser and Sadat. I have used several other books about the history of the Middle East such as *The History of the Arab Peoples* by Albert Hourani and *The Arabs A - History* by Eugene Rogan as reference works.

Reports

The reports I have used as sources for this thesis provide important information about workers' conditions and struggles in modern Egyptian history. The most important is the one called *Justice for all – The Struggle for Worker Rights in Egypt* by Joel Beinin. Another important report is called *Occupational Safety and Health in Egypt – A National Profile* which accounts for the many shortcomings on those topics in the country.

Occupational Safety and Health in Egypt – A National Profile

This report is accredited to the Egyptian Gehad A. Abo el Ata. It is published by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 2005 and it is concerned with, as the title shows, the condition of occupational safety and health in the Egyptian workplace. The report goes into details about the lack of basic provisions for workers in Egypt. Major themes in the report are labour laws, international law, low wages, and lack of collective bargaining, health insurance and protection. The report shows the shortcomings of the state in providing good conditions for workers in Egypt and it presents good statistics of how the situation actually is. Both Egyptian and international researchers collaborated to create this report and this adds to its academic credibility.

The report criticises the government's efforts to enforce the international agreements it has signed concerning workers' rights. Both the UN Declaration of Human Rights, gives people the right to organise freely, and the conventions of the ILO are being broken every day even if the government is obligated to follow it. The Egyptian government participated and aided the researchers in creating this report. One major strength of this report is that it takes into account the whole country, not just the Cairo area, as is usual in about Egypt.

One problem with this source is that it is produced by the ILO, which is not neutral when describing the conditions for workers in Egypt. It has a specific agenda in showing the poor conditions in the country. However the collaboration of the Egyptian government in this report can also be problematic in this report. To what extent can the data provided by the Mubarak government be trusted?

Justice for all – The struggle for Worker Rights in Egypt

The report was written by Joel Beinin and published by the Solidarity Centre in Washington DC in 2010. This is a non-profit organisation that works with documenting the conditions of

labour struggles all over the world. The Solidarity Centre has also published reports about China, Mexico and South Korea to mention some of them.

This report is one of my main sources both in the background chapter and in my analysis because it shows a detailed perspective on the struggles for the right to organize freely and the existence of the independent union movement. The first chapter of this report is the basis for my own background chapter. The main focus is the Mubarak years and the increasingly predatory state towards the workers movement. The historic background chapter is quite detailed and explains how the old unions were co-opted by the government since the reign of Abdel Nasser until today. The report documents the strike wave that occurred between 2004 and 2009. The last time Egypt witnessed a similar strike wave was the late 1940s, and the years leading up to the 1952 revolution.

This report deals precisely with my research topic and is full of relevant statistics and analysis by both Egyptian and foreign academics. New perspectives on relevant issues like discrimination in the workplace and manager's policies of making illegal employment permanent contracts with the workers. Both of these issues are illegal in theory, but in practise it is commonplace according to this report. Like the report by the ILO, this one also verifies the lack of the right to bargain collectively as a major problem for the workers movement in Egypt.

The most important weakness of this source is that it is far from neutral because the Solidarity Centre is clearly pro-labour movement. Another weakness might be that Joel Beinin, again, is one of the main authors because I have used several sources written by him in this thesis. However he still is one of the most prominent historians within labour history of the Middle East.

The Draft Law on Trade Unions

This source is a proposed amendment to the Labour Law of Egypt published by the Centre for Trade Unions and Workers Services in 2009. It is used as a source to the perspectives of the workers' movement in Egypt. It raises the need for independent unions and attacks the state and the official trade union structure for being oppressive to workers. This document starts with a prelude explaining the situation for workers and that the need for independent unions is essential to building democracy in Egypt. Then the groups and people that created the Draft

Law are listed and thanked. After that there is a declaration of principles by the CTUWS before the actual proposed paragraphs of the draft law follows. At the end of the document all official information about the CTUWS can be found. What it is, where its offices are located and what campaigns it supported is just some of the information found here. It is one of the most important sources for chapter one of this thesis because it contains detailed information about the Centre for Trade Unions and Workers Services.

Strengths of this source is that it gives good insight to the demands of the workers' movement and gives an interesting perspective on the conflict between state and workers. It is also written by Egyptian workers themselves whilst American or European authors wrote most of my other sources. A weakness with the source is that it is quite polemical and does not provide a neutral point of view on the issues it describes. It slanders the official trade union structure for oppressing workers without considering the opposing point of view.

The most important experts of the field

My main academic source for the topic of my thesis is writings and lectures by Joel Beinin. He is the foremost academic expert on labour history in the Middle East. As a professor in history at Stanford University in California he has worked in the department of Social Studies at the American University in Cairo. For 10 years he lived in Egypt and did fieldwork on the workers' movement. He has published several book and articles on this topic. In addition he has also been the mentor of many other expert of these issues like Dina Bishara and others that came out of the AUC. Beinin is a former leftist radical and used to be the editor of the academic magazine called the Middle East Report.

Another important author that have given a theoretical background for this thesis is the late Samer Soliman. He was a professor in political science and political economy at the AUC. In his book *The Autumn of Dictatorship* he provides theoretical language for writing about political issues. He explains how to use Marxist analysis and Rational Choice theory in an Egyptian context. I had the pleasure of meeting him before he died only 44 years old. Soliman was a socialist democrat and started a political party after revolution. He was also a human rights activist and co-founded the organisation Egyptians Against Discrimination.

Source critique and Perspectives

In the thesis I will show the different perspectives on the events in the history of the labour movement. The most important perspective, in my opinion, is the one coming from the

movement itself. Therefore I have chosen the CTUWS as the main focus of my paper. They have worked as labour activists for decades and know the issues of workers in Egypt. Besides this, their activities have been documented by activists, newspapers and in archives. How close has the relationship with the grass root at the workplaces really been? This is an important discussion that has no definite answers. Because some of the critique the organisation has received is that they are detached from the grass root and they only want to work politically and engage in dialog with the elite. According their critics they have stopped being protestors with the focus of activism and turned into politicians. On the other hand the CTUWS defend themselves by saying that they are both an organisation for the grass root, but also a political pressure group and legal advice organisation. There are several interesting discussions like this within the workers' movement about the role of the CTUWS and I will present more of them in chapter 2 of this thesis.

The method of source critique I want to use is to put quotes and perspective up against each other to show how complex this issue has been in Egypt. For example, some of my sources describe the workers' movements as hooligans and troublemakers. The unions, whether under the ETUF or in the independent movement, are accused of being corrupt and engaged in organized crime according the their adversaries. Other sources describe the workers' movement as the real heroes of the revolution and romanticize them. I do not want to prove either view right or wrong, but only present their perspectives in a critical light. My source critique will not be contained to one chapter, but I will use it throughout my thesis.

Chapter 1: History of the Workers' Movement in Modern Egypt

Before 1882

Workers in the late Ottoman Empire

Before the industrial revolution reached the Middle East, Egypt was one of the breadbaskets of the Ottoman Empire. Most of the people were farmers and made up the most productive parts of a semi-feudal economic system. The peasants were oppressed in Egypt until the mid twentieth century and thus the opposition towards the Mehmet Ali Pasha dynasty and its economic strategy was greater in rural areas than in urban centres. The fiercest resistance was located in Upper Egypt, where there were at least five peasant uprisings in the 1820s.⁴¹

In 1881 peasants became important supporters of the Urabi revolt and it was only after the British Army intervened that the regime managed to regain control.⁴² Great Britain would keep its power in Egypt until 1954. The Sultan or his Viceroy owned most of the land in Egypt and a network of noblemen and army commanders managed this. They practiced a sharecropping system of harvesting where the ruler would lease a piece of land to a tenant farmer.⁴³ The tenant farmer would live and farm the land. The formalities concerning rent and payment would differ from place to place and depending on what time in history one looks at, but normally a prearranged amount of money and a most of the crops would be paid as rent to the landowner. In turn the tenant would be allowed to keep some of the surplus.

In the late Ottoman Empire a professional class of decommissioned soldiers would take the role as landowners on behalf of the viceroy and they would subjugate the peasants and the sharecroppers who were dependent on credit from merchants. The merchants and the landowners would often collaborate to extort as much capital from the farmers as possible and it was a deliberate strategy to indebt them. It is no wonder that the most militant challenge to authority in Egypt in late Ottoman times was peasant riots. These riots were often well

⁴¹ Beinun Joel. *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*. Cambridge 2001 P. 26.

⁴² Hourani Albert. *A History of the Arab Peoples*. London 1991. P. 283.

⁴³ Beinun Joel. *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*. P. 24-25.

organised and it would take a lot of military resources to quell them. They may be seen as the predecessor of the workers rebellions that Egypt would experience in the industrial age.

In addition to the economic extortion the peasants were also used in *corvée* labour to build and maintain the canals of the Nile and large national enterprises like building the Suez Canal opened in 1869. *Corvée* labour is when the state forces a certain class of the population to work on public or private enterprises for no money. It differs from slavery in that it usually only lasts for as long as the project takes to be completed. It is estimated that 100 000 Egyptians died digging the canal.⁴⁴ The sharecropping system continued well into the 20th century. It was only after the land reforms in 1952 that most of the tenant farmers were offered to buy the piece of land they lived on.

1882-1952

The emergence of a workers' movement under colonial rule

The modern workers' movement in Egypt started at the turn of the last century. Greek cigarette rollers in Cairo organised the first strike and later formed the first modern union between December 1899 and February 1900. This was in order to prevent the factory owners from hiring cheap unskilled labour to cut production cost.⁴⁵

The best-organised group of workers at the beginning of the twentieth century was railway and tramway employees. Their struggle was closely linked to the nationalist movement, and also against exploitation and abuse by foreign foremen. The people operating the Heliopolis tramway line in Cairo from 1910 were among this group of organised workers⁴⁶.

The National Party and its leader Muhammad Farid, who was heavily influenced by British and Scottish socialist movements, became an important voice for the conditions of workers in Egypt.⁴⁷ In 1909 he was one of the first who publicly criticised the lack of labour laws and the bad conditions at many work places.⁴⁸ The National Party also supported the first organisation that tried to unionise all workers. This group was called the Manual Trades Workers Union.

⁴⁴ al Sayyid Marsot Afaf Lutfi. *Egypt in the reign of Muhammed Ali*. P. 261. Cambridge 1984.

⁴⁵ Beinun Joel. *Justice for all – The Struggle for Workers Rights in Egypt*. P 5. Washington DC 2010.

⁴⁶ This line ran between the city centre and the suburb of Heliopolis. In difference to the other city quarters, Heliopolis was organised along a European racial segregation philosophy, and Egyptians were excluded from living there. Raymond André. *Cairo City of History* p. 329.

⁴⁷ Beinun Joel. *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*. P. 80. Cambridge 2001

⁴⁸ Beinun Joel. *Justice for all – The Struggle for Workers Rights in Egypt*. P 5. Washington DC 2010.

The growing workers' movement was an important force in the years leading up to the 1919 revolution and formal independence. The government, supported by the British army, attacked and tried to stifle the national movement, and forced its leader Saad Zaghloul into exile at Malta. This caused massive strikes and demonstrations between August and December in 1919.⁴⁹ In the following year there were 84 major strikes and by 1921 around 90 new unions were established throughout Egypt. Their membership numbers may have reached somewhere around 20 000 workers.⁵⁰

After the revolution in 1918 Egypt gained independence, but was still under military occupation and the economy remained under British control. However the revolution had sparked a nationalist wave that demanded full economic independence. To combat foreign economic domination the nationalist and capitalist Talat Pasha Harb founded Banque Misr (Bank of Egypt) in 1920 and went on to create a number of Egyptian businesses. He founded the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company in 1923, and the factory at Ghazl al Mahalla was at that time the largest factory in the whole of Egypt. This was a major event for the industrialisation and the emerging of an industrial working class in Egypt. Other new enterprises such as a national railway line and an electricity company also created the need for skilled workers.

Tens of thousands of workers were employed at Ghazl al Mahalla and conditions were hard. This led to the development of a workers' movement that has served as an example to the entire Middle East. Throughout modern Egyptian history the strikes at this factory have been some of the most effective and successful acts of defiance against the different regimes until today. Ghazl al Mahalla would become one of the places where the CTUWS started their grass root work in their fight for workers rights. Most of the industry in Egypt was established in the 1920s and 30s under British occupation.

In the 1920s and 1930s the various governments, usually under the Wafd Party umbrella, tried to undermine or control the workers' movement. This practice was motivated by a belief that the ordinary workers and farmers of Egypt needed clever, educated and wealthy people to

⁴⁹ Hourani Albert. *The Arabs a History*. P. 205. London 1991.

²⁴ Beinun Joel. *Justice for all – The Struggle for Workers Rights in Egypt* P. 6. Washington DC 2010.

fight for their rights.⁵¹ As a result the unions created under the patronage of the Wafd Government would collapse when rival parties came into power. This happened in 1925 when King Fuad I forced the government elected in 1924 to resign. The General Federation of Labour Unions in the Nile Valley, which was associated with the Wafd Party, became illegal. This federation represented around 150 000 workers and farmers.

Between 1930 and 1933 there was an autocratic anti-union government in power. Prime Minister Ismail Sidqi who was nicknamed “the Butcher of the People”⁵² was in charge. Sidqi held the view that labour issues were a police matter and not a social matter.⁵³ Therefore the government and the police tried to control and oppress the emerging working class and prevent them from organising.

The League of Nations reacted to this situation by sending the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on a fact-finding mission to Egypt. The commission emphasised the need for the foundation of independent labour unions. In 1932 the ILO accepted a legislation draft by the Egyptian government for basic protection of women and children in employment. The ILO accepted that the government claimed the country was too underdeveloped to implement anything more than minimal workers’ rights for women and children. However, the government gave in to the ILO demand to implement accident compensation at the workplace.⁵⁴

Law no. 48 of 1933 offered minimal protection but was an important piece of legislation because it introduced fixed working hours and the prohibition of child labour under the age of 12. The working day was set to maximum nine hours for women and in 1935 the law was extended to also include men. Children between 12 and 16 years old could work for up to eight hours a day. In addition to the labour laws being weak and poorly enforced, there were many loopholes in the legislation that helped employers to exploit workers. The government body for the enforcement of this law counted only six people in the whole country and the agents were unable to have great impact.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Beinun Joel. *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*. P. 89.

⁵² Al Aswany Alaa. *On the State of Egypt*. P. 64. Cairo 2011.

⁵³ Beinun Joel. *Justice for all – The Struggle for Workers Rights in Egypt*. P. 7. Washington DC 2010.

⁵⁴ Beinun Joel. *Justice for all – The Struggle for Workers Rights in Egypt*. P. 7.

⁵⁵ Beinun Joel. *Justice for all – The Struggle for Workers Rights in Egypt*. P. 7.

In May 1937 the Wafd government signed the Anglo-Egyptian treaty that would give the country more independence.⁵⁶ Despite having promised more workers' rights while negotiating with the British, the government refused to pass legislation recognising the formation of trade unions. In the same year Egypt became a member of the International Labour Organisation. As a reaction to the anti-union policy of the government some veteran unionists started to reorganise and advocated independent unions.⁵⁷

In 1938 the Wafd government was ousted and in this political vacuum the General Federation of Labour Unions in the Kingdom of Egypt (GFLUKE) was established.⁵⁸ The GFLUKE had no ties to the Wafd party nor any other political party. This was a major event in the history of the workers' movement and of great significance in establishing the role of the working class in the growing industrial sector when dealing with political and social issues in Egypt.

In 1939 the Egyptian parliament drafted a law to allow the formation of professional unions like the Doctors Syndicate or the Engineer Syndicate. The proposed law excluded women on religious grounds and it also prohibited the formation of trade unions. The difference between professional unions, or syndicates, and trade unions is that trade unions are for ordinary workers, and therefore the lower segments of the social classes. The draft law supported the higher social classes in strengthening their occupational positions, but intended to keep ordinary workers in unorganised and vulnerable working conditions. When members of the GFLUKE became concerned that this proposed law would be approved they organised a hunger strike on June the 12th 1939. After three days of massive pressure from the public the parliament gave in and had to start considering legalising trade unions.⁵⁹

This was an important victory for the workers' movement, but the outbreak of World War 2 did put the struggle for workers' rights on hold. In 1940 martial law was declared in Egypt and this gave the authorities an opportunity to have the GFLUKE dissolved.⁶⁰ In 1942 a government led by the Wafd party passed a law that addressed workers' rights. Law no. 85

⁵⁶ Encyclopedia Britannica: Internet article about the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. <http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/25031/Anglo-Egyptian-Treaty>.

⁵⁷ Beinun Joel. *Justice for all – The Struggle for Workers Rights in Egypt*. P. 8.

⁵⁸ Lockman Zachery and Beinun Joel. *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism and Islam and the Working Class in Egypt*. P. 232.

⁵⁹ Lockman Zachery and Beinun Joel. *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism and Islam and the Working Class in Egypt*. P. 235.

⁶⁰ Lockman Zachery and Beinun Joel. *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism and Islam and the Working Class in Egypt*. P. 237.

allowed the formation of trade unions. After this law was passed the independent labour movements became an important political and social factor. The workers' movement grew rapidly and in 1944 there were 350 new unions with around 120 000 members.⁶¹

The industrial working class in the cities grew during the war. This was due to exports to the war effort on the front lines. In 1945 there was 623 000 workers in over 130 000 factories. The agenda for the workers' movement in the years following the war was fighting unemployment and demanding better wages. There were several waves of nationalist and popular protests in the late 1940s and the workers' movement played an important role in organising demonstrations and strikes to undermine the British military rule and the increasingly unpopular government of king Farouk I.⁶²

The different unions tried to consolidate and form a federation of unions in 1946, but this attempt was unsuccessful because of conflicting internal ideologies. However, the main reason was that Ismail Sidqi returned to the prime ministers office and closed the workers' Marxist newspapers and threw the labour union leaders in prison.⁶³ As a reaction to the crackdown by the government a strike was organized in 1947 at the Misr Spinning and Weaving factory in Mahalla al Kubra. The three reasons to go on strike were to prevent mass lay offs, anger towards the management for forming a pro-company union and harsh mistreatment from the foremen. The "yellow" pro-company union tried to discredit the strike by claiming that Jewish communists were behind the workers' action. The strike took place between September and October and only ended when the police carried out a raid on the factory and arrested around 300 strikers.⁶⁴ After that the "yellow" union held a general assembly in order to legitimate their activities as a proper workers' union. As most of the strike activists were imprisoned, the "yellow" union only accepted company-endorsed nomination and the remaining work force was intimidated by recent events, the "yellow" union was able to win all candidacies and thereby formalised their control.

To prevent future actions and strikes the government reformed the labour law in 1948 and introduced national production standards, minimum wages, eight-hour days and a six-day week. This seemed good, but in fact the minimum wage was set so low that it was impossible

⁶¹ Beinon Joel. *Justice for all – The Struggle for Workers Rights in Egypt*. P. 9.

⁶² Beinon Joel. *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*. P. 119.

⁶³ Beinon Joel. *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*. P. 127.

⁶⁴ Beinon Joel. *Justice for all – The Struggle for Workers Rights in Egypt*. P. 9.

to live on. The introduction of minimum wages thus allowed employers to pay workers less than they had before and in some instances the wages were reduced with as much as down 50%.⁶⁵

In 1951 the government cancelled the Anglo-Egyptian treaty ratified in 1936. This was the first step towards the ending of British occupation, and coincided with a surge in nationalist and workers' activities. This led to a coalition of several political forces like nationalists, communists and independent trade union leaders establishing a preparatory committee to form the General Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions.⁶⁶ The founding congress was to be held in January 1952. The congress was never held because on the 26th of January central Cairo was engulfed in a fire and the residential area called Garden City was burned to the ground. In the chaos that ensued martial law was declared, the trade union congress was banned and many activists were arrested as a means to ensuring the government and the army remaining in control. The fire in Cairo marked the symbolic end of the monarchy and the dynasty of Mehmet Ali Pasha that lasted from 1805 to 1952.

1952-1970

Gamal Abdel Nasser and the silencing of the Workers' movement

On the 23rd of July 1952 the Free Officers led by Muhammed Naguib and Gamal Abdel Nasser staged a coup d'état overthrowing the infant King Fuad II and the Wafd government. The Free Officers established the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) that acted as a provisional government. Most workers supported the RCC because they offered complete independence, social justice and the end of feudalism in rural areas.⁶⁷

After these incidents the RCC met some of the workers demands by reforming the labour laws. They made it more difficult for employers to lay off worker and improved work benefits such as bonuses. On the other hand the law reform prohibited strikes and made arbitration by

⁶⁵ Beinin Joel. *Justice for all – The Struggle for Workers Rights in Egypt*. P. 10.

⁶⁶ Lockman Zachery and Beinin Joel. *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism and Islam and the Working Class in Egypt*. P. 409.

⁶⁷ Beinin Joel. *Justice for all – The Struggle for Workers Rights in Egypt*. P. 10.

the government compulsory in wage conflicts. Most workers held the view that the reform brought more positive than negative change and tried to cooperate with the new regime.

In 1956 Gamal Abdel Nasser won the presidential election as the only candidate with 99.9% of the votes. Egypt became a republic by law and a state run by the military in practice. Abdel Nasser achieved great popularity in Egypt and the Arab world. On the 23rd of July 1956 Egypt nationalised the Suez Canal. Great Britain, France and Israel declared war on Egypt in an attempt to remove Abdel Nasser from power. In the midst of the war in 1956 the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions was established with its main office in Cairo. They called for a blockade of oil shipments passing through the Suez Canal going to France and Great Britain and for solidarity with the Egyptian workers' movement. The incident became an embarrassment to the regime of Abdel Nasser because it wanted to create the image of Egypt as a workers paradise. This was a stark contrast to the reality where workers had few rights and no independent unions.⁶⁸ As a result the government was forced to formally recognize the Egyptian Workers Federation (EWF) established on the 30th of January 1957. Egypt was defeated militarily in the war but managed to keep the Suez Canal with the support of the Soviet Union and the United States. Israel was forced to evacuate the territory they had occupied.⁶⁹

The government made sure it had full control of the EWF union from the beginning. The government appointed the executive board, there were no nominations from among the workers and no elections during the founding assembly. The EWF changed its name into the Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF) in 1961, but the organisation remained the same and the links to the government became stronger.⁷⁰ From 1962 to 1986 the chairman of the ETUF also held the position as Minister of Labour. The ETUF was the only legal trade union in Egypt until the revolution in 2011 and all new unions had to be recognized and formally connected to ETUF.

During the late 1950s and 1960s Abdel Nasser was able to consolidate his economic reform policy into a system called Arab Socialism. The system was based on the authority of the military, populist rhetoric by the president and import-substitution industrialisation. It was an

⁶⁸ Beinun Joel. *Justice for all – The Struggle for Workers Rights in Egypt*. P. 11.

⁶⁹ Rogan Eugene. *The Arabs a History*. P. 379-380.

⁷⁰ Trip Charles. *The Power and the People Paths of Resistance in the Middle East*. P. 153.

economic policy aimed at achieving self-sufficiency by replacing imported goods with domestic production.⁷¹ All enterprises owned by foreigners were nationalised and the workers in these enterprises became state-employees. The standard of living for workers improved under Arab Socialism. The wages improved, state-provided housing was better and social welfare programs like retirement pensions were introduced.

The main goal of the Free Officers was to establish control as effectively as possible. They did not tolerate an active and independent workers' movement. Just one month before the coup d'état the workers at Mahalla al Kubra had initiated a strike on the 12th of June 1952 where they demanded an independent union, reasonable working hours and wages. The next day the army intervened and 11 workers were put before a military tribunal. Mustafa Khamis and Muhammed al Badri were convicted and executed on the 7th September 1952.⁷² Another major strike was initiated in the industrial town of Kafr al Dawwar south of Alexandria on the 21st of August 1952. The army cracked down on the workers and thus were able to put an end to the strike.⁷³

Even if the conditions got better for workers during the age of Arab Socialism there was no opportunity to organise freely. The regime did not want workers to unionise independently. The state would be like a great father figure that could not be questioned. Unions were meant to be a mechanism to increase production, not as organisations that made demands on employers. The government certainly did not accept any kinds of strikes or demonstrations.⁷⁴ All political opposition was met with physical force like mass arrests and even executions. The government successfully gained control over the trade unions, but since the economic policy of the regime provided better living conditions for many workers they accepted the limitations on their rights and freedoms.

The benefits for state-employees included free health care, access to cooperatives that sold subsidised food, state sponsored housing and a good pension. In addition workers in state run enterprises had the right to elect representatives to the board of managers and received cash bonus of 3% of the profits each year. Incomes in the public sector increased by the double

⁷¹ Beinun Joel. *Justice for all – The Struggle for Workers Rights in Egypt*. P 11.

⁷² Beinun Joel. *Justice for all – The Struggle for Workers Rights in Egypt*. P. 10.

⁷³ Lockman Zachery. *Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East*. P 265.

⁷⁴ Lockman Zachery. *Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East*. P. 218.

between 1960 and 1964. All high school and university graduates were guaranteed a job in the public sector and firing a worker became almost impossible.⁷⁵

For a while the reforms of Abdel Nasser worked a bit like the New Deal had in the USA in the 1930s. For a time it seemed that Arab Socialism was a success and it did lift the nation in the fields of education, economy and working conditions. The first five-year plan of Abdel Nasser between 1957 and 1962 created 1 million new jobs and an annual GDP growth on 6%. It provided enough growth to stifle the growth of a more militant workers' movement and opposition in general. Most people benefited from the reforms and therefore they believed in Abdel Nasser. The next five-year plan, from 1962-1967, did not fare so well. The attempts to expand domestic consumption and production failed and the five-year plan was abandoned due to lack of capital investment. Wages began to fall and the number of work hours per person started to increase by 1965.⁷⁶

After the 1967 war with Israel opposition against the regime arose because of the humiliating defeat, the loss of the Sinai Peninsula and the failure to liberate Palestine. Egyptian losses are estimated to around 15 000 dead, 23 000 wounded and 10 000 missing.⁷⁷ Abdel Nasser resigned on the 7th June 1967 because of losing of the war, but was asked to come back popular consensus the next day. However he had lost the saintly image as the saviour of the Arab peoples.⁷⁸ In both 1967 and 1968 students, workers and other state employees protested and called a general strike. Several times during these two years the army opened fire on protesters and due to the brutality of the repression the revolt failed. This was the start of mass mobilisation in Egypt, and Ghazl al Mahalla was a focal point.

On the 28th of September 1970 Gamal Abdel Nasser died and the Arab world lost its greatest hero and symbol. Despite of his mistakes he was loved by most Egyptians to the last. Around six million people took to the street of Cairo for his funeral.⁷⁹ The next leader, Anwar al Sadat, would face a much more determined and capable opposition than his predecessor.

⁷⁵ Beinun Joel. *Justice for all – The Struggle for Workers Rights in Egypt*. P 12.

⁷⁶ Beinun Joel. *Justice for all – The Struggle for Workers Rights in Egypt*. P. 12.

⁷⁷ Tucker Spencer. *Battles that Changed History: An Encyclopedia of World Conflict*. P 582. 2011. Santa Barbara, California.

⁷⁸ Osman Tarek. *Egypt on the Brink From the Rise of Nasser to the fall of Mubarak*. P. 72-73.

⁷⁹ Hourani Albert. *A History of the Arab Peoples*. P. 417.

1967-1968 revolts

A major event in the history of the workers' movement in the era of Abdel Nasser was a series of demonstrations, started on the 10th of June 1967, against the government's decision to capitulate and surrender to the Israelis. The demonstrators wanted to escalate the conflict and wage a "people's war" against the enemy.⁸⁰ They envisaged swarming all the way to Tel Aviv and throwing the Zionists into the sea. The workers' movement joined these demonstrations early on. After a couple of days the Abdel Nasser was able to calm down the masses. The streets were relatively calm until February 1968 and then the anger of the masses became evident. Students, workers and civil servant marched against the humiliation of the government of the behalf of the Egyptian people and strikes were organised. The minister of the interior met the demonstrators and said he understood the frustration of the youth, but never the less he banned any further demonstrations. This only provoked the masses and the police had to protect the minister. The demonstrations ended in street battles between the police and the crowds.

The following day marches were organised along several routes through Cairo to the Peoples' Assembly where demonstrators chanted slogans like "The Police is the enemy of the people" and "Dismiss the congress of incompetence". After a while a small delegation of students where sent inside to convey the demands of the people: To punish the cowardly generals who made the Egypt loose the war, freedom of the press and information in general about the war effort and the aftermath, free elections independent of the Arab Socialist Union, the establishment of independent student unions and the withdrawal of the police and the security forces who had besieged the campus of the University of Cairo.⁸¹

The situation escalated in the following days and the police were unable to hinder the organising of new demonstrators. A large demonstration was held at Tahrir Square and all segments of the population joined in. After this the army was called in and dispersed the demonstrators with tear gas and live ammunition. At the University of Cairo the demonstrations continued aided by high school students aged between fifteen and seventeen years old, but the army later managed to stop these demonstrations.

⁸⁰ Hussein Mahmoud. *Class Conflict in Egypt: 1945-1970*. P. 294.

⁸¹ Hussein Mahmoud. *Class Conflict in Egypt: 1945-1970*. P. 294.

On the 20th of November the same year the growing opposition among the masses was mobilised once more and this time the different groups of protesters were coordinated better. The demonstrations evolved into a general revolt and the police and army were unable to stop it. The people's anger was now more directly aimed at the police, the oppressing state apparatus, and demands were formed on a more ideological basis. The slogans "Freedom" and "Down with dictatorship" were chanted by the masses. All classes were engaged in numerous demonstration not only in Cairo, but also in the Mansoura and Alexandria.

The army intervened again and this time they used helicopter and machine guns on the crowds, but even when thousands were killed the rebellion only escalated. After three days of street battles the revolt exhausted itself. It was the protestors' lack of political leadership and unity that prevented this riot from becoming a fully-fledged revolution. The repression by the state became even more severe when Egypt entered the War of Attrition with Israel.⁸²

1970-1981

Anwar al Sadat and the Open Door Policy

Anwar al Sadat was the president of Egypt between 1970 and 1981. The most important events in his reign were the shift from a plan economy inspired by socialism to a neoliberal free market economy and the 1973 October War with Israel. In this war Egypt retook parts of the Sinai Peninsula that had been occupied by Israelis since 1967. However, it was not until 1982 that the whole of Sinai was evacuated by Israeli troops. Egypt considered this war a great victory and an act of revenge after the humiliating defeat in 1967 and this strengthened and secured the presidency of al Sadat.⁸³

After the war al Sadat became a national hero and he felt strong enough to reform the constitution and implement his new Open Door policy.⁸⁴ This means *Al Infitah* in Arabic and the policy meant opening of Egypt to the world market. The Open Door policy in Egypt was a result of the Washington Consensus.⁸⁵ An agreement promoted by the United States, the

⁸² Hussein Mahmoud. *Class Conflict in Egypt: 1945-1970*. P. 315-316.

⁸³ Rogan Eugene. *The Arabs A History*. P. 463.

⁸⁴ Beinun Joel. *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*. P. 156.

⁸⁵ Beinun Joel. *Justice for all – The Struggle for Workers Rights in Egypt*. P. 12

World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to encourage neo-liberal economic policies in development countries. Despite the efforts of the regime to privatize it did not manage to downsize the public sector. Instead the public sector actually expanded during the years of al Sadat.⁸⁶

From 1974 to 1982 there was a global oil boom and this caused a flow of Egyptian workers to the Persian Gulf and Saudi Arabia.⁸⁷ Poor peasants and workers could earn many times their annual income in the oil producing Gulf States than they could at home. Money transfers from these migrant workers became a large largest input of hard currency in Egypt in this period as well as an important factor to social mobility.⁸⁸

The IMF conducted a survey mission to Egypt in 1976 and in agreement with them the state decided to withdraw its subsidies on basic food commodities. This meant starvation for millions of Egyptians who depended on these subsidies.⁸⁹ What has become known as the 1977 Bread Riots was a direct result of this subsidy withdrawal.

After this crisis al Sadat became even more repressive than Abdel Nasser had been. The regime closed the newly opened newspapers and quelled all dissent by brutal means. When he entered into peace talks with Israel and later signed an agreement, some Islamists within the army started to plot his assassination.

The reign of Anwar Sadat came to an abrupt end on the 6th of October 1981 when he was assassinated at the annual celebration of the October War in 1973. The assassination squad that shot the president was a group of army officers that opposed the peace agreement with Israel that had been signed at Camp David in 1978. The leader of this group Khalid Islambouli was tried by military tribunal and executed in 1982.⁹⁰ The martial law that had been implemented in the 1967 war was lifted for 18 months during 1980 and 1981. The martial law has been in effect.

⁸⁶ Soliman Samer. *The Autumn of Dictatorship – Fiscal Crisis and Political Change under Mubarak*. Stanford, CA 2011. P. 38-39.

⁸⁷ Lockman Zachery. *Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East*. P. 222.

⁸⁸ Amin Galal. *Whatever happened to the Egyptians*. P. 97-98.

⁸⁹ Lockman Zachery. *Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East*. P. 248.

⁹⁰ Rogan Eugene. *The Arabs A History*. P. 499. Picture no.8 P. 518-519.

1977 Bread riots

Between the 18th and 19th of January 1977 there were uprisings in most of the major cities in Egypt. The cause of the riots was that the government had cut the subsidies on basic food commodities. It started with organised demonstrations but before long escalated into riots with masses of people thrashing property, burnings shops and raising havoc. The streets of Cairo and other cities erupted in violent riots as workers, farmers, students and masses of poor people attacked anything they associated with the new economic policy. They burned the luxury hotels and casinos on Pyramid Road highway located between Cairo and the Pyramids.⁹¹ Even the revolutionary members of the Egyptian Communist Party were shocked by the violence by the enraged masses. These were not disciplined revolutionaries, but an unleashed mass of hungry and desperate people. Without the food subsidies the poor lost their main means of survival and had no choice but to fight back. They attacked the homes of celebrities and the nouveau riches that had profited on the Open Door policy.

During these riots the workers at some of the most important factories in Egypt went out on strike. Workers from Gahzl al Mahalla, Hilwan Steel Mill and several other factories laid down their work with the demands that the government reintroduced the subsidies they had removed.⁹² The violence continued to spread and on the second day the army intervened and crushed the strikes and demonstrations nationwide. The government had to back down and continue with the food subsidies and in this way the masses and the strikers won an important victory. The Bread Riots in 1977 has since been recognised as a prime example on what happens when the different oppositional forces join with the poor masses in revolt. According to Abdallah al Senawy, when the masses arise the ones in power have to listen.⁹³

1981-2011

The Mubarak era and the rise of the independent workers' movement

Hosni Mubarak was the Vice-President of Anwar al Sadat and took over on the 14th of October 1981. He served as President for 30 years before he was toppled during the revolution on the 11th of February 2011. He continued and intensified the economic policies

⁹¹ Lockman Zachary. *Workers and Working Class in the Middle East*. P. 252

⁹² Lockman Zachary. *Workers and Working Class in the Middle East*. P. 252.

⁹³ Interview with Abdallah el Senawy in Cairo on 26.03.13.

of his predecessor. After 1982 the oil prices started to fall and this led to an economic recession in Egypt and prompted the government to implement more neo-liberal reforms to reduce the deficit in the state budget.⁹⁴ Between 1984-1989 the government continued the neo-liberal economic reforms according to the Washington Consensus in spite of more expensive consumer goods, lower real wages, and a dramatic increase in collective workers' protests.

As an example the government doubled the mandatory wage deductions for their health and pension plans in the public sector. As a reaction to this the textile workers in the town of Kafr El Dawwar went on strike in October 1984.⁹⁵ The strike escalated to a street riot that lasted for three days. The strikers cut telephone lines, lighted fires, stopped traffic and wrecked trains before they were met with violent military repression.

In 1984 and in 1986 there were mass strikes against the impact of the neo-liberal policy of the government. The workers in public enterprises reacted to the privatisation policy of the government and they wanted to keep the gains introduced in the days of Abdel Nasser. A reasonable wage, a pension package, health insurance and a workers' representative in the governing boards of the enterprises.⁹⁶ The strikes were well organised and other means of civil unrest were added to increase the impact of the strikes. Sabotage of infrastructure like in Kafr el Dawwar was part of this civil unrest. The 1988 strike in Mahalla al Kubra will be described in detail in a part of its own since it is of major importance for the development of the CTUWS.

Similar events took place at the Iron and Steel Company in the Helwan south of Cairo. The local branch of the state run union ETUF refused to support the workers' demands for better pay. The elected workers' representatives that complained to the board of the company were sacked and this provoked strikes both in July and August 1989. One worker was killed and hundreds were injured when the security forces dispersed the August strike.⁹⁷ This is the strike in where Kamal Abbas was arrested, put in cross-reference.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Lockman Zachary. *Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East*. P. 222.

⁹⁵ Beinun Joel. *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*. P.158.

⁹⁶ Interview with Abdallah al Senawy in Cairo 26.03.13

⁹⁷ Beinun Joel. *Justice for all – The Struggle for Workers Rights in Egypt*. P. 13.

⁹⁸ See Chapter 2

The 1980s a strike movement started to challenge the control of the ETUF. Dissident workers' newspapers started to publish critical articles about the government's economic policy and the close ties between the state apparatus and the only legal trade union. Some NGOs that brought workers' issues to the attention of the public were formed in this period. Most of these publications and NGOs were shut down in the 1990s when the new regime of Mubarak tightened his control of the media and the workers' movement.⁹⁹

At the end of 1980s Egypt was on the brink of bankruptcy and it was only their involvement in the first Iraqi war in 1991 on the side of the USA that saved the economy. The Americans, who were Egypt's main creditor, cancelled most of the foreign debt and thus both the economy and the regime of Mubarak were saved for the time being.¹⁰⁰

In 1991 Mubarak endorsed the Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Program (ERSAP) through Law 203 of 1991.¹⁰¹ This reform program was an agreement between the World Bank, the IMF and Egypt. Law 203 of 1991 listed 314 public sector enterprises that should be turned into private enterprises. The ETUF had tried to resist the privatisation measures of the government since the Open Door policy in the 1970s, but Law 203 was the final blow to this effort, when its chairman Sayyid Rashid approved this legislation in 1991.¹⁰²

Law 203 did not permit the mass layoffs of workers, but often public sector managers were allowed to cut down on staff before the enterprises were sold to private actors.¹⁰³ This was meant to increase efficiency, but in reality it was a loophole that helped to sack thousands of workers. In addition to this many newly privatized companies simply broke the law and laid people off anyway as the authorities turned a blind eye.

In July 2004 Hosni Mubarak appointed Ahmed Nazif to Prime Minister. His job was to accelerate the privatisation policy according to the Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Program. During his first year in office he ordered the privatisation of 17 public

⁹⁹ Beinlin Joel. *Justice for all – The Struggle for Workers Rights in Egypt*. P. 13.

¹⁰⁰ Soliman Samer. *The Autumn of Dictatorship - Fiscal Crisis and Political Change in Egypt under Mubarak*. Stanford, CA 2011. Find page.

¹⁰¹ Vairel Frederic and Beinlin Joel. *Social Movements, Mobilization and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa*. P. 186.

¹⁰² Beinlin Joel. *Justice for all – The Struggle for Workers Rights in Egypt*. P. 13.

¹⁰³ Vairel Frederic and Beinlin Joel. *Social Movements, Mobilization and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa*. P. 186.

enterprises. The government's policy was seen as closely associated with the businessmen in the circle around the president's son Gamal Mubarak.

The minimum wage in Egypt was 35 Egyptian pounds (E£) a month in 1984 and this was adjusted in 2008 to 110 E£. The basic wage in the public textile industry was 250 E£ and this was only changed after the protest wave in 2004 and then only to 450 E£. These low wages did not cover the increased cost of living and the rate of inflation that has taken place since the 1980s.¹⁰⁴

In the 1990s the conditions for the workers worsened and unemployment rose. Therefore the workers' movement initiated strikes and protests. The dissent toward the ETUF grew and it was seen more and more as a loyal servant of the regime. Unemployment rose from 8 % in 1998 to 12 % in 2002-03 and the anxiety of the workers started to become a serious challenge to the government.¹⁰⁵ In the 2000s the workers' movement became a major contributor to the largest social mobilisation for half a decade.

As a reaction to escalated strike activities and more critical media coverage the government started to tighten the control and started to crack down on dissent. During his first decade in power Mubarak tried to gain support by lifting some of the most authoritative measures that Sadat had imposed after the Bread Riots in 1977. One example of this is that the small but radical leftist party called the Tagammu was tolerated as long as it did not criticise the government directly. But whenever the party talked about the shortcomings of the president it would be met with brutal police repression. This example shows that minor opposition was tolerated for short periods, but was always kept at a manageable level by the regime. In addition, oppositional candidates from the Muslim Brotherhood were tolerated for a period and they gained some prominence before met state repression again.¹⁰⁶ In the early 1990s the invasion of Iraq and the government's economic policy led to increased criticism by the population. According to the BBC Hosni Mubarak survived six different assassination attempts.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Beinon Joel. *Justice for all – The Struggle for Workers Rights in Egypt*. P 14.

¹⁰⁵ Beinon Joel. *Justice for all – The Struggle for Workers Rights in Egypt*. P. 14.

¹⁰⁶ Mohammed Zahid. *The Muslim Brotherhood and Egypt's Succession Crisis – The Politics of Liberalisation and Reform in the Middle East*. London 2010. P. 149

¹⁰⁷ Bbc.com: Profile on Hosni Mubarak. As viewed 22.08.13 <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12301713>

These attempts caused the return to the hard-handed policy of Abdel Nasser and al Sadat. The repression was so hard that in the 1990s that even the worker' movement was afraid to organise protests against the regime. There was a very real risk to getting killed if joining an anti-government protest. The conditions for workers got worse when Egypt accepted a directive from the IMF to intensify their privatisation program in 1993. In the 1990s the crackdowns became more severe and the workers' movement experienced a low period of fewer strikes and less opportunities to organise.¹⁰⁸

1988 Anti-Mubarak demonstration

Workers at Ghazi al Mahalla have always had a deep sense of loyalty to the factory and solidarity towards their fellow workers.¹⁰⁹ One indication of this solidarity was that the workers created an educational fund to send their children to school. The management agreed to contribute to this fund together with the workers. In 1988 the government of Hosni Mubarak ordered the factory management to make cutbacks so the company could increase profit. One of the budget posts that were cut was the children's educational fund. The whole fund was taken away, not only the portion of money contributed by the management, but also the money that the workers had put in was taken away.¹¹⁰ This was not only theft and an insult in the eyes of the workers, but also as a consequence of the neo-liberal austerity measures initiated by the government.

Only hours after the cancellation of the education fund was made public, more than 20 000 workers at Ghazi al Mahalla went on strike. They made a coffin with the picture of Mubarak's face and for the first time the slogan "Iskut, Iskut Hosni Mubarak"¹¹¹ were heard. One worker that participated in this strike said that they made a word play over the Muslim creed, the Shahada.¹¹² They changed "There is only one God, and Muhammad is his Prophet" to "There is only one God and, and Mubarak is his Enemy."¹¹³ Later the Muslim Brotherhood would adopt this slogan as their own, but Ibrahim Hamdi, a worker at Ghazi al Mahalla, insists that they were the first who used it.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Gamal abo el Alaa, Ibrahim Hamdi, Yaser Sakkah and Said Habib in Mahalla al Kubra. 20.01.2014.

¹⁰⁹ *Revolution through Arab eyes – The Factory*. Al Jazeera World Documentary. Released 22.02.12.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Gamal abo el Alaa, Ibrahim Hamdi, Yaser Sakkah and Said Habib in Mahalla al Kubra. 20.01.2014.

¹¹¹ This means "Shut up, Shut up Hosni Mubarak. Al-Jazeera translated this slogan with "Down with Hosni Mubarak".

¹¹² In Arabic: la illah il ilallah, Mohammadun rasul il ilallah. In English: There is no God but Allah and Mohammad is his prophet. The Mahalla version sounded: la illah il ilallah, Mubarak adouh il ilallah.

¹¹³ Interview by the author with Ibrahim Hamdi at CTUWS Mahalla. January 2014. Cairo.

The answer to this strike was brutal repression by the security forces. The repression was so severe that it almost crushed the workers movement ability to organise and be active. There was virtually no militant labour movement in Mahalla during the 1990s. The workers fell silent, because they were afraid to get killed, incarcerated or fired.¹¹⁴ The next wave of strikes and civil strife in Egypt would erupt in the early 2000s and lead to the toppling of the regime.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Gamal abo el Alaa, Ibrahim Hamdi, Yaser Sakkah and Said Habib in Mahalla al Kubra. January 2014.

Part II: Comparison of four Egyptian Organizations

Structure of part two

This part of the thesis provides a more detailed presentation of the four organisations. They are the main subjects of my research. The most important organisation among the four is the Centre for Trade Unions and Workers Services because they are a central actor in the Egyptian workers' movement. Therefore the part about them is quite substantially longer than the parts about the three other organisations. The chapter contains an account of the history of the CTUWS and the people that were important in the foundation of the organisation. There is less emphasis on the other three organisations because they are not a part of the workers' movement. However, they are relevant as points of comparison because the services they provide are similar and they are all actors in civil society.

The organisations were chosen during fieldwork in the preparation of this thesis. Initially they were chosen because they were the ones I gained access to, but later it became clear that there were significant similarities between them both politically and practically. When it came to political similarities all the organisations joined the opposition movement against the elected President Mohammed Morsi who held office between 30th of June 2012 and 3rd of July 2013. In practical terms the organisations engaged in much of the same types of services towards the people they were helping.

The CTUWS is compared with the Association for the Protection of the Environment, the Democratic Front Party and the Salafiya Costa Movement in order to focus on the similarities, when it comes to their daily practices on the grass root level. The most important similarities in what the four organisations do are education, aid and services and their role as mediators.

Part two of this thesis is structured with one chapter on each organisation. Here all the empirical data I have gathered is presented and discussed. Each organisation's journey from underground movement to mass movement and back again is presented and discussed, as well as its role in Egyptian civil society.

Chapter 2: The Centre for Trade Unions and Workers Services (CTUWS)

The Centre for Trade Unions and Workers Services (CTUWS) was founded in 1990 and since then it has been in the midst of labour activism. The CTUWS has laid some of the foundation for the growth of an independent workers' movement and civil society in Egypt. I define the independent workers' movements as a group of workers that fight for the right to organize freely, outside the supervision of the ETUF. During the time of Mubarak the ETUF gradually lost all credibility as a trade union federation. The CTUWS has tried to change the system for the better by secretly training disciplined strike leaders in the factories they had access to and by supporting local workers' campaigns for better wages and working conditions.¹¹⁵ The CTUWS has been active for 24 years and it has been able to survive as an organisation for so long by being dynamic and flexible.

As the regime's attitude towards labour rights worsened the CTUWS would change its tactics and methods to suit the situation. This meant that the organisation remained adaptable and eventually became a central point of opposition. At times the secret police would harass the activists and they would break into different CTUWS offices to smash them up. Both secret and uniformed police would regularly arrest and torture CTUWS members. When this failed to stop the organisation's activities, members would be charged with for instance disturbing the peace and blasphemy.

The history of the CTUWS is here divided into the three following stages: Early Years, The Mass-movement and Post-Revolution. In the early years the role of the founding key individuals was essential. During these years the practices of the CTUWS were formed and developed. The link between radical leftists and workers' activists played a major role in creating the CTUWS and made them a part of the opposition against the neo-liberal economic strategies of the state. In the second stage the CTUWS became a more important voice in the workers' movement and in the emergence of the mass-movement, culminating in the 2011 revolution. The CTUWS was an important organisation in the mass-movement opposition that turned against the government and finally against Hosni Mubarak. In the third stage the CTUWS went through major changes in the post revolutionary situation that emerged after

¹¹⁵ The Draft Law on Trade Union. Published by CTUWS. 08.03.2009. P. 79 and 82.

the government of Mubarak were toppled. The revolution was a product of decades of struggle against oppression and deprivation. However, why the revolution happened when it did is a complex question, like this famous quote by Lenin suggests: “It is impossible to predict the time and progress of revolution. It is governed by its own more or less mysterious laws. But when it comes it moves irresistibly”.¹¹⁶

The CTUWS founders

The labour activists Youssef Darwish and Kamal Abbas founded the Centre for Trade Unions and Workers Services in 1990. Darwish was born in 1910 in a Karaite Jewish¹¹⁷ community in Cairo. He went abroad to study and when he returned to Egypt from France in 1934 he marked himself as a lawyer specialising in labour law. In 1946 he co-founded the Workers Committee for National Liberation (WCNL), which became the first official Marxist organisation in Egypt. Later the WCNL would become instrumental in creating the Workers and Peasants Communist Party (WPCP) and the Communist Party of Egypt (CPE). Veteran communist activists, like Darwish, who were active from the 1940s onwards, became important inspirations to new generation of activists in the workers’ movement in later decades. The foundation of the CTUWS was a result of accumulated activist experience over several decades.

After the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 Darwish converted to Islam in protest. In 1958 he was arrested during Abdel Nasser’s repression on communists and spent six years in prison. During the following regimes of Anwar al Sadat and Hosni Mubarak Darwish was arrested several times and subjected to torture. As recalled in his own words: “I was arrested so many times that when anybody tapped me on the shoulder I expected a state security agent had come to arrest me”.¹¹⁸

After being imprisoned once again in 1973, he escaped from first to Algeria and later to Czechoslovakia. In 1986 he came back to Egypt and continued to give legal advice to the workers’ movement. At this time he was 80 years old, but he would still represent workers for

¹¹⁶ V. I. Lenin. Speech at the Polytechnic Museum, Moscow, 1918. Robert Debs Heinl. *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations*. 1966. United States Naval Institute. Annapolis, Maryland, USA.

¹¹⁷ Karaite Judaism: A direction of Judaism that differs from the mainstream Rabbinic tradition in that it does not recognize the oral interpretations recorded in the Talmud and the Mishnah. Instead they only recognize the written interpretation of religious law as described in the Tanakh. Ref: <http://www.karaites.org/history.html>

¹¹⁸ Profile interview by Faiza Rady with Youssef Darwish in the Internet version of Al Ahrām Weekly. Published: 2-8 December. <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2004/719/profile.htm>

free in court.¹¹⁹ The CTUWS was officially founded in 1990, but by then workers had already started organising and had acquired experience from the steel factories in Hilwan. Hilwan is one of the most important industrial areas in Egypt. Youssef Darwish died at the age of in Cairo in 2006.

All the biographical material about Darwish comes from a profile interview in *al Ahram Weekly*. This is an Egyptian weekly newspaper in English published both in print and online. *Al Ahram* was a state owned newspaper until the revolution in 2011 and it was subjected to censorship from the state and the military. However, the English language *al Ahram Weekly* had more autonomy than the Arabic paper. The journalist Fayza Rady has covered worker related issues in *al Ahram Weekly* since the 1990s.

Kamal Abbas was the second founding member of the CTUWS. He was born in 1955 and at the age of 20 he became a welder at the Hilwan Iron and Steel Mill. In 1989 he became involved in labour activism by participating in a strike for a wage increase and a free meal during the workday.¹²⁰ Over 19 000 workers joined the strike and the security forces resorted to violence in order to end the strike. Kamal Abbas was one of the strike leaders that was arrested and tortured by the police.

Torture in police custody is widespread in Egypt and it was one of the main grievances for the revolutionaries in 2011. Before the revolution video clips recorded on mobile phones were leaked from several prisons. These clips showed police offices torturing ordinary prisoners with beatings, electroshocks and verbal abuse.¹²¹ Several of the activists in this thesis have been arrested and report being tortured in similar ways.

When Abbas was released from prison he was fired by the management for his participation in the illegal strike. After that he decided to join Youssef Darwish in starting up the CTUWS to fight for workers' legal rights. In the early years he saw himself as a progressive communist, inspired by Youssef Darwish and particularly the Solidarity Workers Movement in Poland during the 1980s. Solidarity started out as a strike movement and later became the

¹¹⁹ Profile interview by Faiza Rady with Youssef Darwish in the Internet version of *Al Ahram Weekly*. Published: 2-8 December 2004, Issue no. 719. <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2004/719/profile.htm>

¹²⁰ See Chapter 1

¹²¹ Bbc: Report on police brutality by journalist Orla Guerin.. 04.12.13. Shows video of prisoners being tortured by police. Similar footage exists from the before the revolution. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25121936>

main oppositional force to the pro-Soviet Polish government. Abbas later became more of a practical reformist and a spokesperson for the need of independent unions.¹²² He became involved in disputes with the official trade union structure or the ETUF over the issue of independent representation for workers in Hilwan. In the late 1990s and the early 2000s Abbas was involved in organising several strikes in Hilwan.

In 2005 Abbas was attacked by plain-clothed security forces and severely beaten because of his outspoken critique of the ETUF and the government. The regime intensified its attempts to shut down the CTUWS and in April 2007 Abbas was sentenced to one year in prison for disturbing the peace and distorting the public image of Egypt. The police shut down the CTUWS branch offices the same year because of the escalating strike wave that was to a large extent coordinated from these.¹²³

The information about Kamal Abbas is from an interview on the webpage of the Israeli labour organisation the Workers Advice Centre. They express solidarity with the Egyptian workers despite deep-rooted distrust between the Egyptian and the Israeli populations. The interview shows something of Kamal Abbas's personality and lets his voice be heard through frequent quotes.

Underground actions in the early years

The local branches of the CTUWS and the activists have an almost iconic status within the workers' movement in Egypt. This is because of their experience when it comes to organising opposition towards the state and their participation in strikes and demonstration. Their militancy in fighting for workers rights over several decades have made them heroes of the workers' movement.

The first decade after the founding of the CTUWS, there were few major clashes between the regime and the workers' movement. It was only when they openly criticised the policy of the government they faced direct repression such as the 1986 and 1988 strikes. Both these actions started in the state owned textile factory Ghazl al Mahalla. Even if the official policy of the government was less repressive in the 1990s than it had been in previous decades a more

¹²² Interview with Kamal Abbas by the Workers Advice Centre. Published on their website 14. March 2009. The Workers Advice Centre is an Israeli workers' organisation. They are against discrimination of Arabs. http://www.wac-maan.org.il/en/article_53/egypts_workers_on_the_move

¹²³ Interview, conducted by the author, with Gamal abo el Alaa, Ibrahim Hamdi, Yaser Sakkah and Said Habib in Mahalla al Kubra. January 2014.

covert practice started to emerge. According to activists at CTUWS Mahalla the factories were being infiltrated by government spies after the 1988 strike.¹²⁴ This was effective to the extent that many workers feared for their lives and refused to join any kind of strike movement or even contribute with their signature on petitions. The worker and activist Ibrahim Hamdi at Ghazl al Mahalla explains that: “In this time (1990s) ‘the security hand started to appear all over Egypt’”.¹²⁵ Despite the attempts to infiltrate the factories by the secret services, the CTUWS managed to continue its activism as well as the legal actions defending workers who had been fired illegally. Youssef Darwish was one of the pioneers in these legal processes.

In addition to the legal proceedings, CTUWS activists at different local branches organised political underground activities. They had secret meetings with workers and arranged courses in political activism and passive resistance in Mahalla al Kubra, Hilwan and Suez. They managed to avoid being detected by government spies and this suggest that the workers usually had a good idea who was a spy and who was a regular worker. The secret meetings offered a welcome safe space for meeting other people, talking and sharing ideas in general. The fact that these secret meetings took place indicates that civil society did have some arenas where it could develop beyond the control of state surveillance.¹²⁶

The local branches CUTS usually functioned independently from the central office in Cairo. The workers in Mahalla al Kubra were known for their militancy before the CTUWS were founded in 1990. The anti-Mubarak strike in 1988 is an example of this.¹²⁷ The workers at Gahzl al Mahalla call themselves the locomotive that pulls the workers’ movement train.¹²⁸

In 1991 the government of Egypt pledged itself to intensify the privatisation reforms recommended by the IMF and the World Bank through Law no. 203.¹²⁹ As a response the CTUWS suggested that the state would take responsibility for ensuring safety of the

¹²⁴ Interview, conducted by the author, with Gama abo el Alaa, Ibrahim Hamdi, Yaser Sakkah and Said Habib in Mahalla al Kubra. January 2014.

¹²⁵ Interview, conducted by the author, with Gama abo el Alaa, Ibrahim Hamdi, Yaser Sakkah and Said Habib in Mahalla al Kubra. January 2014.

¹²⁶ Interview, conducted by the author, with Gama abo el Alaa, Ibrahim Hamdi, Yaser Sakkah and Said Habib in Mahalla al Kubra. January 2014.

¹²⁷ See Chapter 1

¹²⁸ Interview, conducted by the author, with Gama abo el Alaa, Ibrahim Hamdi, Yaser Sakkah and Said Habib in Mahalla al Kubra. January 2014.

¹²⁹ See Chapter 1

workplaces and providing financial support and retraining to those who were laid off, instead of returning to state run enterprises.¹³⁰ The new law included lists of public enterprises that had to be privatised, but it did not allow for large-scale cutbacks or mass lay offs. However the investors that took over the newly privatised companies often sacked workers when it suited them. The Labour Law in effect at this time was from 1975 and offered some protection for the workers in the public sector, but in the privatised enterprises these rights were disregarded in general and the government had no interest in enforcing this old law, because of its new official policy of speeding up the neo-liberal reforms.

It was a normal strategy for managers to displace workers that were considered troublemakers. Problematic workers at a factory in Mahalla al Kubra would be sent to different branches of the company. This was the case with Hamdi Hossin. In 1988 he was one of ten strike-leaders who were first sent to prison and then, after his release the company sent him to a factory in Aswan to get rid of him.¹³¹ The strike was initiated because the government decided to cancel a schooling fund for the children of the workers at Ghazl al Mahalla. The strike ended when the government promised to reinstate the fund.¹³²

The Labour Law of 1975 defined the only legal trade unions in Egypt as the ones organised under the control of the state. The laws concerning formations of independent trade unions were restrictive and there was no way to organise legally without going through the structure of the ETUF.¹³³ This policy started to become severely criticised by international and domestic and human and labour rights organisations. Therefore the CTUWS could not function publically as a trade union representing workers collectively, it could only help its members in individual civil law suits against the companies that laid them off. Any other actions, like organising strikes, distributing the workers' newspaper called *Workers Speech* or providing courses in passive resistance to the factory workers were considered illegal. All these efforts by the CTUWS were conducted underground in secret, after work hours either in the CTUWS offices or in private homes.¹³⁴ This is a further indication that Civil Society was growing, but underground.

¹³⁰ Hill Enid. *Discourses in Contemporary Egypt – Politics and Social Issues*. Cairo 1999. P. 43.

¹³¹ *Revolution through Arab eyes – The Factory*. Al Jazeera World Documentary. Released 22.02.12.

¹³² See Chapter 1

¹³³ *The Draft Law on Trade Unions*. Published by the CTUWS. 08.03.2009. P. 5.

¹³⁴ Interview with Gamal abo el Alaa, Ibrahim Hamdi, Yaser Sakkah and Said Habib in Mahalla al Kubra. January 2014.

Mass-Movement leading up to the 2011 Revolution

The role of the CTUWS and the rest of the workers' movement changed dramatically in the 2000s. In the 1990s there was only a small number of large strikes and most of the labour activism was underground, under the threat of violence from the secret services or clampdowns from the Security Forces. Labour activists lived with a great deal of insecurity and fear of being arrested. International and domestic events coincided to make room for a mass-movement, emerging from civil society, in opposition to the regime of Hosni Mubarak.

After the terrorist attacks in the USA on 11th September 2001 Egypt became one of the fronts in the War on Terror. The government of Hosni Mubarak linked all sorts of opposition to religious extremism and international terrorism. This was an excuse to repress any group considered a threat. The Muslim Brotherhood was targeted and many of their members were imprisoned. The direct involvement of Egypt in the second Iraqi war in 2003 caused outrage in the streets. The Muslim Brotherhood used the war to recruit members at the universities that were against invasion. Many young people, who would never have thought of becoming a member of the Brotherhood, now joined the movement.¹³⁵

Another important event that led to a mass-movement against the government in Egypt was the transition of power from Hafiz al Assad to his son Bashar in 2000 in Syria. From 2005 and onwards it seemed like the same would happen in Egypt. The President's son Gamal Mubarak was given more and more power within the ruling National Democratic Party. Critical voices organised campaigns against the transition of power from father to son.¹³⁶ The Syndicate of Journalists became one of the most outspoken groups against the regime.

From this group of critics the group National Coalition for Change emerged, usually known as the Kefaya. They were most active between 2003 and 2005, and after the parliamentary elections in 2005 the Kefaya became less important. The Kefaya movement was criticised by both the radical left, the liberals and the Muslim groups for being too intellectual and not having a broad connection to the masses. Nevertheless, they contributed by breaking the taboo of criticising or even insulting Mubarak personally.¹³⁷ This became extremely important

¹³⁵ Interview with Abdallah el Senawy in Cairo. 26.03.2013

¹³⁶ Interview with Abdallah el Senawy in Cairo. 26.03.2013.

¹³⁷ El Sawaf Hassan. *The Real Story of the Egyptian Revolution*. Cairo 2012. P. 46-47.

when the opposition later developed into a mass-movement. These political factors made a deep impact on the workers' movement and the CTUWS.

Like the Kefaya, workers organised by the CTUWS in Mahalla al Kubra and elsewhere had an important role in breaking this taboo as well. By the early 2000s the local CTUWS branch had a significant presence in Mahalla. The demonstration in 1988 was not the only example.¹³⁸ The two big strikes in 2006 and 2008 became recognised as a prelude to the revolution in 2011. One of the most important youth movements in the 2011 revolution were the 6th of April Movement. The name 6th of April is a reference to the 2008 strike at Ghazi al Mahalla, which started at this date. The last of these two strikes escalated into street battles that lasted for several days and only ended after the police got reinforcements from other parts of Egypt as well as the army.¹³⁹

One important expression of the CTUWS' activism in the late 2000s was the drafting of a new law on labour rights. This draft law was released on the 8th of March 2009 by the CTUWS in collaboration with other labour activists. This document became a sort of manifest for the workers' movement in Egypt. It was an attempt to reform the labour law from 1975. The law was amended several times, but always in the direction of more restrictions according to the workers of Mahalla al Kubra.¹⁴⁰ The perspective of the organisation is made very clear in the draft law. Activists from Mahalla al Kubra, Hilwan and 10th of Ramadan City were involved in this work. The draft law became very important when it came to form actual demands towards employers and the state.¹⁴¹

When the revolution started on the 25th of January 2011 there was a lot of uncertainty and rumors about what was happening. The only certain thing was that there were large demonstrations in Downtown, but it seemed like the authorities were in control up until the 28th of January. This was the day when protestors overran the barricades set up by the riot police, crossed the bridges over the Nile and joined the peaceful protestors at Tahrir

¹³⁸ See Chapter 1.

¹³⁹ Interview, conducted by the author, with Gamal abo el Alaa, Ibrahim Hamdi, Yaser Sakkah and Said Habib in Mahalla al Kubra. January 2014.

¹⁴⁰ Interview, conducted by the author, with Gamal abo el Alaa, Ibrahim Hamdi, Yaser Sakkah and Said Habib in Mahalla al Kubra. January 2014.

¹⁴¹ *The Draft Law on Trade Union Rights*. CTUWS 8.03.2009. <http://www.ctuws.com/uploads/Books/THE-DRAFT-LAW-ON-TRADE-UNIONS-RIGHTS/The-Draft-Law-on-Trade-Unions-Rights.pdf>

Square.¹⁴² The scale of the uprising was unprecedented since the late 1940s and the year leading up to the 1954 revolution.

One of the most violent clashes between protestors and police during the revolution took place in front of the Maspero building on the 28th of January.¹⁴³ The Maspero building is the old radio and television central built in 1960 and where *Al Jazeera* had their main office in Cairo there before the revolution. It was important to the protestors to take this area in order to be able to enter Downtown and Tahrir Square. It was between Tahrir Square and the Maspero building that the police had made their barricade. The police set up another barricade between Tahrir Square and Qasr al Nil Bridge to stop protestors coming from this direction. The police charged at the protestors coming from the Maspero building and managed to push the crowd back. These protestors were mostly young students and activists who were unaccustomed to street fighting. The police broke through their lines and the protestors started to flee. What happened next was a decisive moment in the revolution. If the police had managed to stop the demonstrations here it is likely that they would have stopped the revolution.

Just at this point protestors from the Giza side of the river Nile started arriving and joined the protester under attack by the police. The bridges linking the West bank of the Nile to the East bank where Tahrir Square is located were full of people. The people living on the Western bank of the river are mostly working class. These protestors were more experienced in violent resistance to the police and all the years of oppression and brutality suddenly had an outlet. The violent elements and working class protestors complemented the majority of the demonstrators, who were largely peaceful. The revolution needed people who were prepared to use violence against the police. It is not likely that the peaceful demonstrators would have been able to hold Tahrir Square until Mubarak resigned if the violent elements hadn't joined them.

During the revolution in Egypt in 2011 several groups that were experienced in fighting the security forces aligned with the ordinary peaceful demonstrators and protect them. For a short time period society was turned up side down. Groups that usually operated outside the public

¹⁴² Live rapport of the 28th of January uprising on Al Jazeera English. As viewed 25.02.2014.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3T86e9Vih5E>

¹⁴³ Daily News Egypt: reference to the Maspero building. As viewed 10.05.2014.

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/10/06/calls-for-retribution-on-second-anniversary-of-maspero-massacre/>

discourse like the ultras became central for the development of the revolution.¹⁴⁴ They joined the protestors in fighting the riot police and actually successfully helped occupying Tahrir Square.

Ultras in this context were violent football supporters who had become politicised because of their hatred towards the police. Sub-cultures connected to football clubs are a complex phenomena that can be found in many countries, but in Egypt football matches were one of the few arenas where more than just a small group could get together. This means that football matches were another important forum for the development of civil society. In the revolutionary situation in January and February of 2011 the expertise of the Ultras in clashes with the police became relevant and important for the development and sustaining of the mass-movement. Violence specialists became important, both on the side of the regime and on the side of the revolutionaries.

The term is derived from the concept of monopoly on legitimate use of violence by the state developed by the 19th century sociologist Max Weber.¹⁴⁵ Weber's theory is grounded in the assumption that as societies develop the need for a clearer division of labour, and thereby for specialists, becomes greater. Gradually a demand for all kinds of specialists grows. A class of professional warriors gets or takes the monopoly on the use of physical violence. In modern nation states this is usually military and police forces. In Weber's view this was a way for a society to limit the general use of physical violence and to contain it.

However there are circumstances where other violence specialists challenge the state's monopoly on violence. This is supported by the political scientist Paul Brass who says:

“Although most people everywhere are capable of committing acts of violence under a variety of circumstances, the kinds of violence that are committed in ”communal riots” are, I believe, undertaken mostly by ”specialists” who are ready to be called out on such occasions, who profit from it, and whose activities profit others who may or may not be actually paying for the violence carried out.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Ultra: From latin *ulter* meaning distant or beyond. Has become a noun meaning an extremist, in politics, religion and sports etc. This is the meaning of the word in the Egyptian context as well

¹⁴⁵ Weber Max. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. P. 77-128 Politics as Vocation. 1946 New York.

¹⁴⁶ Brass Paul R. *Theft of an Idol: Text and context in the representation of collective violence*. P.9. 1997 New Jersey.

In the scenario of the Egyptian revolution in 2011 this was exactly what happened in the streets of Cairo. There were three types of violence specialists present. First there were the two traditional types as described by Weber, namely the military and the police. In the initial phase of the revolution the military kept their distance and appeared hesitant to choose between the people and the regime, before they finally appeared to decide to support the demonstrating crowds at Tahrir Square and throughout Egypt. The police, especially the riot police were the active violence specialists that protected the regime and the status quo. The riot police are usually young cadets deployed to unfamiliar parts of Egypt and given shields and helmets without much training. In addition there are riot police units that specialise in dispersing groups of demonstrators and these units take orders directly from the Ministry of the Interior. On the 28th of January the police were engaged in fighting with demonstrators.

On the side of the protestors there were violence specialists even if the international media focused on the peaceful demonstrators on Tahrir Square. Protestors who were more familiar with street fighting and clashes saved the peaceful demonstrators from being beaten by the riot police.¹⁴⁷ In the strike wave between 2003 and 2009 there were several brutal clashes between workers and the police. Some of the fiercest of these clashes were in Mahalla al Kubra like the one on the 6th of April 2008. These clashes had taught the workers how to build barricades, make Molotov cocktails and how not to be crushed by charging riot police. Together the violent and the peaceful demonstrators were strong enough to force the police to withdraw from the streets of Cairo.

According to David Mansley's book on collective violence and riot policing, the American sociologist Charles Tilly has explored the concept of Weber by conducting extensive research on the different ways the nation states has used the monopoly on legitimate use of violence. He says that however terrible violent crowds get, it is the professional violence experts who always do the most harm to human lives. Violent mobs and civilian protest movements usually do the most harm to private and public property, but lives are rarely lost until the police and the army shows up. Mansley argues that Tilly shows that throughout history the

¹⁴⁷ Nawara Wael. *Egypt's Ultras: Revolutionaries to Villains?* 18.11.2013. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/11/egypt-ultras-football-nawara.html#>

professional violence specialists, who have monopoly on legal use of force, perpetrate almost all the killings of people during civil disturbances.¹⁴⁸

The workers' movement were veterans in agitating for better rights and conditions. In the pre-industrial era these workers were largely farmers and peasants, but as an industrial proletariat were developed during the course of the 20th century they inherited the oppositional role that the peasants had held before. Both before and after the industrial era different Egyptian regimes have turned to violence to suppress demands of better living conditions. This forced the workers' movement to become more militant than other groups in society. Workers cannot be classified as violence specialists alongside professionals like the military or the police, but the conclusion is that the experience they gained in fighting the security forces through decades of oppression gave them an advantage when the revolution came.

The Centre for Trade Unions and Workers Services is a workers' organisation, but it is not unique in its practices. Several other organisations carry out similar practices on the grass root level. Fighting for better living conditions and providing services and help to the groups they are working for are central for all the organisations in this thesis.

Key individuals in the Centre for Trade Unions and Workers Services

The CTUWS is run by mediators that have more power than the rest of the members. Mediators appear to dominate the organisation, particularly in the central office in Cairo that deals with the national issues of the workers' movement. Leaders like Kamal Abbas and Fatma Ramadan can be described as mediators because their main function is to establish useful networks both in Egypt and abroad. They have an overview that the local leaders of the branch offices lack.

Workers who live in Cairo come to the office in Garden City to ask for advice and help. This gives Abbas and Ramadan a position of power in relation to the workers they are supporting. They do not go around out and look for workers that need help, instead the workers have to take time off from their jobs to come and ask mediators like Fatma Ramadan for the services the CTUWS provide. Local leaders like Gamal abo al Alaa and Ibrahim Hamdi in Mahalla al Kubra also serve as mediators for the workers and assist with grass root issues.

¹⁴⁸ Mansley David R. *Collective Violence, Democracy and Protest Policing*. P. 31-32. New York 2014.

The CTUWS does not appear to take advantage of this position of power to disavour of the workers, but the organisation have received some critique for being too far removed from the workers on the grass root level. This is because the CTUWS works on two different levels. The national organisational level and the local grass root level. The CTUWS Mahalla certainly participate in strikes and demonstrations, but the central office in Cairo mostly deals with legal matters like improving the labour laws and introducing minimum wages on the national level. The role of Fatma Ramadan is especially important in the CTUWS. Ramadan is an educated and resourceful person who campaigns for workers' rights in Egypt. She is also in a powerful position because she has skills the workers lack. The workers have to come and visit her in Cairo when they need help from the CTUWS to organise campaigns and strikes. She is the mediator that can support the workers and communicate their message to society in general.

On the other hand she is not a wealthy person and, as with the other people that worked in organisation, she often did not received a salary from the CTUWS. The organisation often had money problems and had to prioritise supporting the workers. Fatma Ramadan is an idealistic person and strongly believes in workers' rights. To her, this is more important than earning a lot of money, which she could surely get if she worked somewhere else.

The CTUWS fulfilled two important roles in the labour movement. On the one hand they provided the day to day services locally in helping the workers getting their rights and on the other hand they ran campaigns to challenge the authority of the ETUF the state controlled union and to change the labour laws of Egypt. Formally, the CTUWS is not a trade union. They are an NGO campaigning for workers' rights, but because of the poor performance of the ETUF they had to step in and fill the gap. In other words they did the job of a trade union without officially being one.

The CTUWS co-drafted a new union law that would legalise the foundation of independent unions as a direct opposition against the ETUF in 2009.¹⁴⁹ This was not just a draft to reform the laws concerning unions in Egypt. It also became a manifest that made the political agenda of the CTUWS clear. During the conference that led to the publication of the union law draft,

¹⁴⁹ *The Draft Law on Union Rights*. Published by the CTUWS. Cairo. March 2009.

the leaders of the CTUWS met with government officials. This conference shows that the CTUWS sees itself as a leader of the labour movement and that it has the right to represent the workers in dealings with the government. This report is an example of the fact that the organisation has had ambitions to change the Egyptian society on the national political level as well as they did the grass root activism for and together with the workers.

Education provided by the Centre for Trade Unions and Workers Services

Educational activities were particularly important for the CTUWS. In the early years, between 1990 and 2006 when the organisation became more involved with the mass movement. During these years the CTUWS focused their official activities on legal representation of workers, while organizing different types of underground actions in workplaces and factories.

The CTUWS arranged some courses publically and some secretly.¹⁵⁰ They organised courses about civil liberties, labour laws, political activism and passive resistance according to veteran labour activist Said Habib.¹⁵¹ It was the passive resistance courses that were secret because this was a revolutionary practice aimed directly at the police and the regime. The CTUWS taught passive resistance to the workers at Mahalla al Kubra to give them a means of self-defence against the police. The principles of the independence movement in India led by Mahatma Gandhi in the late 1940s, the Civil Rights movement from the USA of the 1960s and the Solidarity Workers Movement in the 1980s were among the inspirations that the CTUWS drew on to create these courses.¹⁵² In this environment civil society was able to grow.

The education provided by the CTUWS was a product of their political activism. In order to activate the revolutionary potential in the working class they wanted to increase the workers' knowledge about workers rights and political activism. According to veteran activists in Mahalla al Kubra the courses taught by the CTUWS were necessary to get the workers involved in strikes and demonstrations in the early 2000s.¹⁵³ After the violent army response to the striking workers in Mahalla al Kubra 1988 the strikes died out. Workers from Mahalla

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Gamal abo al Alaa, Ibrahim Hamdi, Yaser Sakkah and Said Habib in Mahalla al Kubra. January 2014.

¹⁵¹ Said Habib in interview with Al Ahram Weekly in the 29 May - 4 June 2008 issue, No. 899.

¹⁵² The Solidarity Movement in Poland was a strike movement that turned into a political mass-movement against Soviet dominance in the 1980s. Later its leader Lech Walesa became the first president of independent Poland.

¹⁵³ Interview with Gamal abo al Alaa, Ibrahim Hamdi, Yaser Sakkah and Said Habib in Mahalla al Kubra. January 2014.

al Kubra and other important industrial areas feared going to the streets and organising strikes.

To address this fear the CTUWS had to offer courses on human rights, workers rights and how to organise strikes without getting killed. The workers soon realised that as long as they did not mention the name of the President Mubarak they were safe. They could criticise and attack the economic policies of the government as long as they did not attack the president. This realisation also spread in the emerging civil society and was relevant for building up the mass-movement momentum.

During most of the 1990s the CTUWS had had great difficulty in getting large numbers of workers to join them, but in later the activists in Mahalla al Kubra were able to convince the workers that they would not get killed if they participated in strikes. In other words they had to win the workers over in order to be able to organise the large demonstrations in the 2006 and 2008 that were preludes to the revolution in 2011. The peaceful aspect of the revolution in 2011 drew inspiration from the workers' movement and their experiences with passive resistance strategy.

Aid and Services Centre for Trade Unions and Workers Services

The CTUWS provided many kinds of services that can be described as aid or support. The most important support in the early years was legal aid. Lawyers like Youssef Darwish represented workers that were being harassed, displaced and fired illegally. Another important service the CTUWS provided was to support strikes and campaigns publicly. In the 1990s it was almost impossible to do so, because of repression from the police.¹⁵⁴ But as the militancy of the workers grew in the early 2000s campaigns for better wages and working conditions became more visible in the public domain. The CTUWS was a major supporter to most of the workers' campaigns during these years. Not only with symbolic support in the media but, also with practical support like providing housing for strike meetings in their offices and equipment like access to computers and printers to make pamphlets.

The CTUWS managed to get health insurance for most of their members. This is a major issue for Egyptian workers. There is no guarantee that the employer will get them health insurance. The Ministry of Manpower and Migration (MOMM) is in charge of monitoring

¹⁵⁴ Interview, conducted by the author, with Gamal abo el Alaa, Ibrahim Hamdi, Yaser Sakkah and Said Habib in Mahalla al Kubra. January 2014.

that the labour law is being upheld. They have around 2000 inspectors all over Egypt who are supposed to make sure that health and safety regulations are being upheld, and also to report on illegal child labour. However they are not very efficient in carrying out inspections and they lack the authority to make sanctions on the employer after the implementation of the new labour law in 2003.¹⁵⁵ Therefore the CTUWS led campaigns for getting health insurance in companies both in the public and private sector.

In addition to getting health insurance to most of the workers it represents, the CTUWS also provides cheap food and commodities to workers in the local branches. This type of cooperative help is provided in the following way: All the members of the CTUWS Mahalla pay a small membership fee, and some of this money is put aside in a food account and a gas account. At regular intervals the CTUWS buys in large supplies of flour and gas that are redistributed to the members at a considerable discount. In other words the CTUWS organises sales cooperatives for the members so they can afford the most basic commodities.¹⁵⁶

Funding the CTUWS

According to Fatma Ramadan the members themselves fund the CTUWS.¹⁵⁷ However, according to Kamal Abbas the CTUWS received some money from a Dutch labour rights foundation in 1995.¹⁵⁸ It was this money that paid for the opening of branch offices in addition to the original one in Hilwan. The CTUWS expanded to other industrial areas like Shubra, Nag Hamada, Ramadan City and Mahalla al Kubra.

According to the webpage of the CTUWS it received the French Republic's Human Rights Prize in 1999 which gave it international recognition and support.¹⁵⁹ The publicity the CTUWS got as a result of the French prize was important because it started to receive funds from foreign labour foundations and unions. These funds were used to start the production of a monthly newsletter named Workers Speech¹⁶⁰, which was distributed by the CTUWS in factories, and in working class neighbourhoods.

¹⁵⁵ Beinun Joel. *Justice for all – The Struggle for Workers Rights in Egypt*. P. 94-95. Washington DC 2010.

¹⁵⁶ Interview, conducted by the author, with Gamal abo el Alaa, Ibrahim Hamdi, Yaser Sakkah and Said Habib in Mahalla al Kubra. January 2014.

¹⁵⁷ Interviews by the author with Fatma Ramadan. March 2013 and January 2014. Cairo.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Kamal Abbas by the Workers Advice Centre. Published on their website 14. March 2009.

http://www.wac-maan.org.il/en/article_53/egypts_workers_on_the_move

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Kamal Abbas by the Workers Advice Centre. Published on their website 14. March 2009.

http://www.wac-maan.org.il/en/article_53/egypts_workers_on_the_move

¹⁶⁰ In Arabic: Kalam Sinai'ia

The funds the CTUWS have received from other countries have been sporadic and only used to expand the practices of the organisation in specific ways. The day to day work of the CTUWS was funded by the members of the local branches like the one in Mahalla al Kubra. Therefore, the workers are hesitant to speak about funding from the other countries or foundations, or played down its importance.¹⁶¹

All the local branches work more or less independently from the central national office in Cairo. These local branches are well connected to the workers on the grass root level and most of the members are workers. Ibrahim Hamdi and Yaser Sakkah are both proud to be able to introduce themselves as workers at Ghazl al Mahalla.¹⁶² They emphasized that it was the workers that organized the CTUWS Mahalla and denied that professional activists ran the organisation for the workers.

The activists work every day at the factories and when the day is done they join union meetings in the evening. The working day at the factory ends at 4 pm. It is unfortunate that the workers and activists at the CTUWS were so reluctant to talk about funding from other organisations, but the need to emphasize their own struggle and that were funded locally must be understood.

In the 2003 the government engaged in a new privatisation strategy and it sold public enterprises to private investors. This meant that in the early 2000s there was quite a lot of money in the public treasury and the government could use this money to pay off the workers in order to end strikes and protests. In many of the strikes in the 2000s the workers got substantial financial gains both in the form of lump sums for ending protests and promises of increased wages. Even if economic demands usually were met, the government did not accept political demands.

According to Joel Benin the largest strike wave since the late 1940s took place between 2003 and 2009. More than 2 million workers, from both public and private sectors, participated in

¹⁶¹ Interview, conducted by the author, with Gamal abo el Alaa, Ibrahim Hamdi, Yaser Sakkah and Said Habib in Mahalla al Kubra. January 2014.

¹⁶² Interview, conducted by the author, with Gamal abo el Alaa, Ibrahim Hamdi, Yaser Sakkah and Said Habib in Mahalla al Kubra. January 2014.

strikes in this period.¹⁶³ The CTUWS participated in and supported strikes on both the national level and on the local level. When the revolution started on the 25 of January 2011 several workers' strikes were already in motion before the large demonstrations started. On the 10th of February there was a general strike in Egypt and on the 11th of February Hosni Mubarak stepped down from office.

The CTUWS after the revolution

The revolution was a great victory for the workers' movement. On the 30th of January 2011, in the middle of Their Square, the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU) was founded. One of the founding organisations was the CTUWS. This was the first legal independent trade union in Egypt for decades. In the time that followed it became clear that the different organisations were not as unified as the revolution has led them to believe. In the summer of 2011 the CTUWS withdrew from the EFITU to return to organise workers locally.

During 2012 and under the government of Muhammed Morsi, the EFITU became an important voice in the opposition against the government. This changed after the SCAF took over after toppling Morsi on the 3rd of July 2013. The chairman of the EFITU, Kamal Abu el Eita, was appointed Minister of Manpower in the army-backed government headed by the Prime Minister Hazem el Beblawi. The EFITU lost much of its popularity during the summer of 2013 because their members began to doubt its independence. According to Joel Beinin the CTUWS formed an alternative to the EFITU called the Egyptian Democratic Labour Congress (EDLC) on the 24th of April 2013.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Interview with Joel Beinin at Democracy Now. Published on 10.02.2011.
<http://www.democracynow.org/shows/2011/2/10>

¹⁶⁴ Beinin Joel. The Middle East Research and Information Project. 23.08.2013.
<http://www.merip.org/mero/mero082313>

Chapter 3: The Association for the Protection of the Environment (APE)

The Association for the Protection of the Environment is an Egyptian NGO that works with and for the Zabbalin community of Manshiyat Nasser in Cairo. The APE was founded by and is run by wealthy Copts, and the mostly Coptic Zabbalin are the people that benefit from the services the organisation provides. The founders were the French nun Soeur Emmanuelle, the environmentalist Mounir Namatella and the politician Yousriya Loza Sawiris. Soeur Emmanuelle was known as “the Mother Theresa of Egypt” according to Nicole Assaad.¹⁶⁵ The APE was founded in 1984.

Manshiyat Naser was a slum in the early 1970s when the Soeur Emmanuelle started working there. It was only after the APE appeared that the conditions improved. Soeur Emmanuelle worked at Manshiyat Naser until 1993 when she returned to France. She died in Paris in 2008, 99 years old. Nicole Assaad is a retired Frenchwoman who has lived in Egypt for most of her adult life. She now works as a volunteer at the APE and is the main source to the APE in this thesis. The APE provided funds and built the recycling plant in Moqattam so that the Zabbalin could improve their recycling enterprises. The processing of recycling trash became safer and more environment friendly. To a large extent the APE also became a provider of social aid to the poor Zabbalin. In addition to helping with the actual work, they built houses, opened schools and health clinics, and campaigned for women’s rights in the community. The APE can be seen to have been important for the development of civil society among the Zabbalin. In many ways the APE became a safety net for the Zabbalin and provided many services one would expect from a well functioning trade union.

The Zabbalin have usually worked without contracts, insurance or safety equipment and they do not have access to any kind of union membership. It was not until the Cairo Cleaning and Beautification Authority (CCBA) were opened in 1984 that the Zabbalin officially got the right to collect garbage in Cairo, but after an assessment of the value of the waste, the privilege was taken away from the Zabbalin and given to a private company called Misr

¹⁶⁵ Interview by the author with Nicole Assaad. March 2013. Manshiyat Naser, Cairo.

Service. They regained the privilege to collect garbage only after the APE had launched a successful campaign against the CCBA.¹⁶⁶

In many cases the activities of the APE matches those of the CTUWS. Like the CTUWS, the APE arranged health insurance, legal documentation and education for the Zabbalin. According to Nicole Assaad, the APE had to act as a trade union because there was no union that represented the Zabbalin.¹⁶⁷

The APE adopted several union-like practices when they started their organisation in 1984, just like the CTUWS. They addressed very different people, but they were forced by need and circumstances to engage in similar types of practices. The only legal trade union in Egypt before the revolution in 2011 was the state controlled Egyptian Trade Union Federation. However, the ETUF was no functioning like a union for the workers, instead it tried to prevent that the workers got better working conditions.¹⁶⁸ Therefore the CTUWS was set up to give the workers basic services so they could organise themselves. The APE had much the same role in Manshiyat Naser for the Zabbalin. Nobody offered the Zabbalin basic services before the APE were established.¹⁶⁹

After the revolution in 2011 the APE continued their activities in the Manshiyat Naser. According to Yousriya Loza Sawiris the APE noticed a decline in the demand of the products they produce.¹⁷⁰ This was because of the general decline in the economy and that the domestic costumers of the APE had less money than they had before the revolution. In addition people are usually more afraid of investing money in times of political crisis. After the election in 2012 when Mohammed Morsi became president the APE and the Zabbalin community became anxious that a Muslim Brotherhood dominated government might make things difficult for Coptic communities and organisations. Therefore they supported the demonstrations and the military intervention against the government in the summer of 2013. APE's activities in Manshiyat Naser were mostly unaffected by the political troubles since the

¹⁶⁶ Wendy Walker. *The Torah Zabbalin – From Shacks to High Rises*. P. 14-15. 2005 Cairo.

¹⁶⁷ Interview by the author with Nicole Assaad. March 2013. Manshiyat Naser, Cairo.

¹⁶⁸ Interview, conducted by the author, with Gamal abo el Alaa, Ibrahim Hamdi, Yaser Sakkah and Said Habib in Mahalla al Kubra. January 2014.

¹⁶⁹ Interview by the author with Nicole Assaad. March 2013. Manshiyat Naser, Cairo.

¹⁷⁰ Conversation with Yousriya Loza Sawiris in Cairo. March 2013.

revolution. The reason for this was that the health clinics and schools were largely ran by volunteers and second generation Zabbalin who did not have to travel far for work.¹⁷¹

Key individuals in the Association for the Protection of the Environment

The differences between the providers and the recipients of services in the APE are greater than in the CTUWS. The organisation was supported and protected by the Sawiris family since its foundation. Yousriya Loza Sawiris was a member of the Egyptian parliament between 1995 and 2000 and she was a board member of many important international and Egyptian committees.¹⁷² Loza Sawiris is a person who can negotiate with the state and international organisations, getting money from the Ford foundation, while she is involved in the activities in the garbage city at Manshiyat Naser. She functions as a mediator like Fatma Ramadan in the CTUWS but she is also the most traditional patron in this thesis. Her motivation for doing this work is to be recognised as a charitable person who gives back to her own people. The Zabbalin are Copts like the Sawiris family and there exists a symbolic tie between them. The tie that exists between the rich Copts in the Sawiris family and the poor Copts of Manshiyat Naser is both one of ethnicity and of social solidarity.

Other mediators in the APE are the members of the organisation that are involved in development programs in Manshiyat Naser. They are nurses and teachers that work giving basic services to the Zabbalin. In many cases the Zabbalin are dependent on these APE workers to access basic medical care. The organisation is in a position of power, because it has access to funds and skills that the Zabbalin do not have on their own.

The APE was the first organisation that opened projects in Manshiyat Naser. Since the foundation 30 years ago the APE has become a family run organisation. Many of the day-to-day leaders are second-generation volunteers and children of Zabbalin themselves. In many ways it can be described as a grass root organisation, because Zabbalin or their families have a strong say in the organisation. It is fair to say that civil society has had good condition for growth in Manshiyat Naser. The potential of power abuse in the APE is diminished because of the close ties between providers, mediators and the recipients of services.

¹⁷¹ Interview by the author with Nicole Assaad. March 2013. Manshiyat Naser, Cairo.

¹⁷² The Women and Memory Fund website: reference to Loza Sawiris. As seen on the 19.02.14.
<http://whoisshe.wmf.org.eg/expert-profile/yousriya-loza-sawiris>

The recipients of services provided by the APE are the Zabbalin and the other poor people that live in Manshiyat Naser. They often receive life saving services from the APE and thus they feel that they owe the organisation a certain debt. The APE is an organisation the Zabbalin need in order to sell their products to international and domestic markets. It is the organisation that has access to the networks of costumers that are interested in buying the artwork, the compost and the machinery the Zabbalin make. It is also the APE that owns much of the equipment and the localities where the products are made. The paper factory in Manshiyat Naser is placed right next to the headquarter office of the APE. All this gives the APE a powerful position in relation to the people they are helping. Even if the help is real and contributes to the betterment of conditions in Manshiyat Naser there is an element of patronage between the organisation and the people they are working for.

Education provided by the Association for the Protection of the Environment

The Association for the Protection of the Environment had two types of educations that they provided for the Zabbalin. Firstly they had schools for children and adults living in Manshiyat Naser, and secondly they gave education in modern recycling techniques to the adults. They encouraged the women at Manshiyat Naser to go to school and to get paid work both within the community and outside.¹⁷³ Womens' rights have been one of the most important causes for the APE since its foundation in 1984. This is perhaps one of the main areas of civil society involvement and development in Manshiyat Naser.

In the early years the APE had to convince the local leaders of the Zabbalin community to send their women to school and work. In Egyptian society it is considered a virtue for women to be able to stay at home and not have to go out to work. This is not just because of patriarchal domination, but many women prefer to be home if they can afford it, even if her husband allows her to work.¹⁷⁴ According to Nicolle Assaad, the APE workers had to fight with tradition for several years before they managed to convince the local leaders that it would be for the benefit in the community if the women were able to get an education go out to work.

The education provided by the APE is the best organised and most professional type of education among the four organisations. The APE has been running permanent schools in

¹⁷³ Interview by the author with Nicole Assaad. March 2013. Manshiyat Naser, Cairo.

¹⁷⁴ For more information about this issue see the book of Atiya Narya. Khul-Khaal *Five Egyptian Women tell their stories*. 1982.

Manshiyat Naser since 1989. The focus has been on literacy classes for both children and also adults who never went to school. These courses are based on the education model *Learn and Be Liberated* from Caritas, the development organisation of the Catholic Church.¹⁷⁵ According to the APE's webpage the education provided has resulted in high levels of literacy among in Manshiyat Naser, especially among the young in the community.

The education offered by the APE is quite different from the education the CTUWS provided. The CTUWS provided education that the workers needed to be able to organise opposition activities against the government and the state controlled Egyptian Trade Union Federation. The APE did not teach political activism, but they offered more basic education like reading and writing. However the APE did, like the CTUWS, teach human and legal rights. This was a much more political act, because it enabled the Zabbalin to raise their own demands and fight for their rights. According to Nicole Assaad the Zabbalin did not know what rights they had before the APE started to teach about these matters.¹⁷⁶ This education was a significant for the way civil society was able grow in Manshiyat Naser. In Egypt the public and the private education sectors do not have the capacity to reach all the groups that want and need education. This is why all the different organisations in this thesis provide some kind of education and see themselves as educators to the people they are helping.

Aid and Services provided by the Association for the Protection of the Environment

The APE also provides basic aid and support to the Zabbalin. The most important type is health services that they offer in Manshiyat Naser. The APE opened a health clinic for women and children in 1995.¹⁷⁷ They also started a vaccination campaign against Hepatitis in 2006. Hepatitis B is a problem directly connected to the work of the Zabbalin. They collect hospital waste like used syringes and bandages. They bring the waste to the recycling site and the women get the job of sorting the plastic and the metal material. The metal is cleaned, melted and resold and the plastic is recycled. This practice is dangerous for the women who do the sorting and the risk of getting infected with Hepatitis B is severe.¹⁷⁸ In addition the APE also put emphasis on natal health and contraception to improve women's health in the Zabbalin community.

¹⁷⁵ Webpage of the APE. Under the sub-section Programs. <http://www.ape.org.eg/ChildProtection.html>

¹⁷⁶ Interview by the author with Nicole Assaad. March 2013. Manshiyat Naser, Cairo.

¹⁷⁷ Webpage of the APE. Under the headline: History of the APE. <http://www.ape.org.eg/History.html>

¹⁷⁸ Webpage of the APE. Under the headline: The Programmes. <http://www.ape.org.eg/HealthSupport.html>

The APE helped the Zabbalin to get health insurance, just like the CTUWS did for the workers. One difference is that the Zabbalin usually are informal labourers, while the workers at factories or in offices are formal wage labourers. The Zabbalin have less rights than workers that are employed in the public sector like the workers in Mahalla al Kubra.

Another important service the APE could offer was to help the Zabbalin to get official identity cards. Before this the Zabbalin were paperless people.¹⁷⁹ Without an ID card it is almost impossible to get any kind of services from the state bureaucracy. That means, no pension, no social benefits or not even a birth certificate for a child. The right to identity papers has been included in the UN charter of human rights, but remains an unresolved problem in many countries. However, the APE helped many Zabbalin in obtaining ID papers. Without this help it would have been impossible for the mostly illiterate Zabbalin to fill in all the necessary forms. Not to mention they would not have known where to address themselves.

The Zabbalin lacked the education and practical knowledge about formal matters needed to get help in many instances. The Zabbalin share this problem with many groups from the poor classes in Egypt. Illiteracy and the lack of proper education have been and still is a major problem. However, when it comes to recycling and waste management the Zabbalin are among the best in the world. They have even sent recycling experts from Manshiyat Naser to Western cities like London and New York as waste management consultants.¹⁸⁰

Funding the APE

The APE was able to fund much of their practises by their own income generating programs. The APE produces and markets several products that generate income, which benefit the Zabbalin. They sell compost, recycling machinery, recycled paper, rugs, artwork and fashion items to name some examples. The famous American fashion designer Marc Jacobs started selling bags designed and produced at Manshiyat Naser in his shops internationally after a visit to the APE.¹⁸¹

In addition to the money the APE earn by selling its own products, it also receives funding from a wide variety of organisations. The World Bank, US Aid, Apache Oil, Embassy of

¹⁷⁹ Interview by the author with Nicole Assaad. March 2013. Manshiyat Naser, Cairo.

¹⁸⁰ Ape.org: as viewed 18.02.2014. Under the headline Income Generating Projects.
<http://www.ape.org.eg/BriefIntro.html>

¹⁸¹ Ape.or. as viewed 18.02.2014. Under the headline Income Generating Projects.
<http://www.ape.org.eg/BriefIntro.html>

Japan, Embassy of Denmark, Embassy of Finland, Ford Foundation, Sawiris Foundation, Walid Ibn Talal Foundation and the Catholic Committee against Hunger and for Development are just some of the foundations and companies that has supported the APE with donations and grants.¹⁸² To put it into perspective: The Walid ibn Talal Foundation is run by the Saudi prince with the same name and they support development projects around the world. The Catholic Committee against Hunger and for Development is one of the largest charity organisations in the world. The Coptic Sawiris family is one of the richest in Egypt and they have been instrumental in the foundation and the funding of the APE. The APE is by far the wealthiest of four organisations in this thesis.

The APE during the revolution and after

The APE supported the Zabbalin when they demonstrated against the regime of Hosni Mubarak. In the middle of the 2003 the government gave the monopoly on collecting waste in Cairo and other cities in Egypt to a company called Misr Services. The only problem was that this company came in direct competition with the Zabbalin. This caused tension and the Zabbalin protested. In an attempt to control the Zabbalin the government ordered in 2008 the slaughtering of all the pigs in Manshiyat Naser.¹⁸³ The pigs were both important in the processing of waste and an important source of food for the Coptic Zabbalin so they demonstrated against giving up their pigs. The loss of the pigs was a disaster for the Zabbalin and they have had a grudge against the government ever since this incident. The culling of the pigs was supposedly in order to hinder the spreading of the swine flu epidemic that hit many parts of the world this year. Much more likely was this an attempt to make it more difficult for the Zabbalin to do their work. So when the revolution started in January 2011 both the Zabbalin and several key members of the APE joined in and demanded the downfall of the regime together with the rest of the protest movement. However, the military intervened in Manshiyat Naser unlike in Tahrir Square and the other places where protests were held at this time.¹⁸⁴ Civil society had prospered in Manshiyat Naser at least partly due to the continued work of the APE, and the military decided it necessary to stop this protest whereas they let others carry on elsewhere. It may also have been an element of discrimination against the Coptic population here, as suggested by Nicole Assaad.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Webpage of the APE as viewed 18.0214. Under the headline Institutional.

<http://www.ape.org.eg/GrantsAndDonations.html>

¹⁸³ Interview by the author with Nicole Assaad. March 2013. Manshiyat Naser, Cairo.

¹⁸⁴ Interview by the author with Nicole Assaad. March 2013. Manshiyat Naser, Cairo

¹⁸⁵ Interview by the author with Nicole Assaad. March 2013. Manshiyat Naser, Cairo.

In 2012 when Mohammed Morsi was president the Zabbalin that worked with the APE and the Coptic population in general were anxious and demonstrated against the Brotherhood and the government. After Morsi was toppled and the army took over on the 3rd of July 2013, the Zabbalin and the Coptic community became ardent supporters of the transitional government and minister of defence General al Sisi.

Chapter 4: The Democratic Front Party (DFP)

The DFP was a liberal, democratic and progressive political party. The party was founded by Osama al Ghazali Harb in 2007. During his time at the University of Cairo he became a socialist and in 1972 he was charged with being a member of an illegal organisation called The Arab Pioneers that was in opposition to the regime. He was involved in the Bread Riots in 1977 and again he was arrested. After this incident al Ghazali Harb left politics to continue his studies and later his academic career. He made a comeback to politics in 1995 and was appointed as a member of the Shura Council by President Mubarak.¹⁸⁶ In 2002 he became a member of the Politburo of the ruling NDP.¹⁸⁷ He resigned from the policies committee in 2006 and later he founded the DFP. In 2010 the DFP became one of the major supporters of Mohammed el Baradei's campaign for democratic reform.¹⁸⁸ After the revolution the party merged into the Egypt Block with two other parties and since then it more or less ceased to exist as an independent political party.

Joseph Nessim was the leader of the Cairo branch of the DFP and most of the information about the party in this thesis comes from him. Even if the political party to some extent has disappeared it still continues to do social work. The DFP, like the CTUWS and the other organisations in this thesis provided practical services to poor people in Cairo. The party taught illiterate people to read and write as well as raising awareness about human rights and democracy, and it was a part of the emerging civil society. As the party became revolutionary in 2011 it also gave courses in political activism and passive resistance.¹⁸⁹

In 2010 the DFP joined the campaign supporting the presidential bid of Mohammed el Baradei. After the revolution the party leader al Ghazali Harb stated that he wanted the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) to rule the country for two years in order to oversee the transformation of the state towards democracy and the reestablishment of the police force that had disintegrated after the revolution.¹⁹⁰ In the parliamentary election he supported the Freedom and Justice Party of the Muslim Brotherhood and joined the

¹⁸⁶ Shura Council: Upper House in the Parliament of Egypt.

¹⁸⁷ Politburo: The committee in charge of the day to day policies of the party.

¹⁸⁸ Al Ahram Online: *Osama El Ghazali Harb Who's who – Elections 2011*. As viewed 10.05.2014.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/33/102/26709/Elections-/Whos-who/Osama-ElGhazali-Harb.aspx>

¹⁸⁹ Interview by the author with Joseph Nessim. March 2013. Cairo.

¹⁹⁰ Al Ahram Online: *Osama El Ghazali Harb Who's who – Elections 2011*. As viewed 10.05.2014.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/33/102/26709/Elections-/Whos-who/Osama-ElGhazali-Harb.aspx>

Democratic Alliance for Egypt. In August 2012 the DFP joined the Egypt Bloc with the Dostour Party among others.¹⁹¹ The Egypt Bloc was a very short-lived alliance and in September of the same year it was dissolved. The DFP had difficulty combining being a democratic, liberal party and supporting the SCAF and military intervention at the same time. It had to navigate the political terrain of post-revolutionary Egypt by joining and leaving several different political alliances in the years between 2011 and 2013. When the government of Mohammad Morsi was in office the party was in active opposition against his government and joined both violent and peaceful protests in front of the Muslim Brotherhood headquarters in Moqqatem, Cairo.¹⁹²

Key individuals in the Democratic Front Party

The Democratic Front Party had mediators like the other organisations. Leaders like Joseph Nessim had a stronger voice in the party than the regular members. Most of the members of the DFP were young men and women in their mid-twenties, and several were students. They had been politicised during the revolution and were keen to remain engaged in politics. According to Nessim there was no point in participating in politics before the revolution because the president and his close associates made all decisions of importance.¹⁹³ Additional motivations for joining the party was that the members had a forum for communicating political ideas, the opportunity of networking and a sense of social belonging. This is a good example of the political apathy that was dominant in Egypt before the revolution, and how civil society had more breathing space immediately after the revolution.

In addition to being a leader in the DFP, Joseph Nessim was also a member of the Egyptian Engineer Syndicate and the owner of his own engineering company. He had a good education from Australia and this gave him an advantageous position in comparison with most of the members who were students at Egyptian universities. His position in the party office in Downtown Cairo was central and people would come and seek his council if they needed anything. At a party meeting his chair was in the middle of the room where he enjoyed the attention of the other members. He was not in a central position in the party, but he was the local leader who could take care of important day-to-day issues. At the party meeting the other members present were sitting around the room, but the focus of everyone's attention was on Joseph Nessim. There seems to have been a relatively weak egalitarian tradition at

¹⁹¹ Hizb el Dostour: means the Constitution Party in Arabic.

¹⁹² Interview by the author with Joseph Nessim. March 2013. Cairo.

¹⁹³ Interview by the author with Joseph Nessim. March 2013. Cairo.

their party meetings even if the party was run in a democratic manner. The way an organisation conducts meetings can say a lot about its internal social hierarchy.

The chairman of the party, Osama al Ghazali Harb, was also a kind of mediator. His power and prestige came from his experience as a politician.¹⁹⁴ Even if he has been associated with the Mubarak era, he maintained and reinforced his role as an opposition figure by splitting from the National Democratic Party and by supporting Mohammed al Baradei before the revolution in 2011. He knew how to communicate both upwards in the political system and downwards to his own party members and clients.

According to Joseph Nessim the DFP believed in building democracy by lifting the standard of living of the poor people. This could be seen as a noble policy, but it could also be seen as a way to obtain loyal supporters of the party. The DFP viewed itself as a leading force in the development of democracy in Egypt and for this reason they taught the poor about human rights and democracy. What they actually thought the poor is unclear, but they had an interest in portraying the DFP as a good party and the Muslim Brotherhood as the main adversary of democracy in Egypt.

Education provided by Democratic Front Party

The Democratic Front Party put a lot of emphasis on education. In my interview with Joseph Nessim he told me that the DFP used to arrange something they would call a Freedom Festival, which was the umbrella term for their social work. Even the name “Freedom Festival” shows something of the mood in civil society around the time of the revolution. Every Friday members of the party went to slums and other poor areas in Cairo to teach the poor about human rights and democracy.¹⁹⁵ Like the CTUWS, the party also taught people about civil disobedience and passive resistance.

The Democratic Front Party provided a different kind of education than the CTUWS and the APE. The DFP went to the slums with big cars and caravans and provided basic education on the spot to whoever happened to come by. These schools were provisional and run by volunteers. They had a political function because they were also giving basic courses about

¹⁹⁴ Al Ahram Online: Internet article called *Osama El Ghazali Harb Who's who – Elections 2011*. As viewed 10.05.2014. <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/33/102/26709/Elections-/Whos-who/Osama-ElGhazali-Harb.aspx>

¹⁹⁵ Interview by the author with Joseph Nessim. 20.03.2013. Cairo.

democracy in practice. According to Nessim some of the topics taught were on how to vote, how to voice a political opinion and about international conventions signed by Egypt.¹⁹⁶ Even if the education offered by the CTUWS and the APE is quite different from the DFP it is important to note that all the organisations in this thesis work with education in some fashion.

Aid and Services provided by the Democratic Front Party

Another aspect to the Freedom Festivals was the giving of aid and support to the less fortunate. They provided food, clothes and blankets during the winter months.¹⁹⁷ The temperature drops to under 10 degrees Celsius in Cairo in winter and without sufficient shelter and clothing people actually freeze to death. Like the APE they also offered basic reading and writing education and helped the poor getting access to health services. According to Joseph Nessim helping the poor was just as important as being part of a political process when talking about building democracy in Egypt in the long run.¹⁹⁸

The recipients of the DFP services were poor people living in slums and deprived areas. The DFP took their Freedom Festivals to the general public in those areas.¹⁹⁹ In return this demographic category was expected to support the party and its candidate in future elections. In this sense the DFP and its recipients had a more traditional Patron/Client relationship in that there was a kind of exchange of services and loyalty.

Funding the DFP

According to Joseph Nessim, rich Egyptian businessmen who were opposed to the Muslim Brotherhood funded the Democratic Front Party in the first couple of years.²⁰⁰ Some of them were Coptic and others were liberal secularists. This is an example of both Copts and secularists were concerned about a move towards a more Islamic political direction in Egypt. The media tycoon, Naguib Sawiris, was the most famous financial supporter of the DFP. The APE and the DFP were both partly funded by the Sawiris family. Yousria Loza Sawiris, the mother of Naguib Sawiris, was on the governing board of the APE and the Sawiris Foundation was one of most important supporters of this organisation.

¹⁹⁶ Interview by the author with Joseph Nessim. March 2013. Cairo.

¹⁹⁷ Interview by the author with Joseph Nessim. March 2013. Cairo.

¹⁹⁸ Interview by the author with Joseph Nessim. March 2013. Cairo.

¹⁹⁹ See Chapter 4.

²⁰⁰ Interview by the author with Joseph Nessim. March 2013. Cairo.

Regarding the key individuals, the focus here is not on the exchange of goods or services in return for political support on the one hand and loyalty on the other. The exchanges in these organisations are more subtle and of a more symbolic nature than the direct link between goods and services and political support. This classical type of patronage is an important factor in political practice in Egypt, but it is not the focus of this thesis. Several politicians are famous for this kind of practice as a way of buying votes in general elections.²⁰¹ Usually this is seen as some kind of corruption, but it is not necessarily seen like this in Egypt. The exchanges from the sponsors' point of view are about being seen as a generous person who gives back to the less fortunate.

The DFP during and after the revolution

The DFP was involved in protesting since its foundation in 2007. Even the name is revolutionary, “the Democratic Front Party” suggests that there is a war waging and it has a front that needs to be defended. The DFP was firmly placed in the anti-Muslim Brotherhood camp. Some of the reason for this may be that several key individuals were Copts. The DFP did not define itself as a Coptic party, but it had many Coptic members and this influenced the party's political orientation. Joseph Nessim told me quite openly that: “Our main enemy in Egypt is religious extremists like the Muslim Brotherhood. We must get rid of their dominance over religion and politics. They are like a plague that destroys democracy. Egypt is in a slow burning war with the Brotherhood”.²⁰²

Nessim says that in the last general assembly of the Engineering Syndicate, in where he participated, the election of a new executive board was aborted when fistfights erupted between the MB dominated leadership of the syndicate and some of the members who viewed themselves as secular and liberal. Nessim admitted that the syndicate was lost to the MB and he started to focus his political energy on the Democratic Front Party. It provides a secular, Coptic perspective. Even if the Muslim Brotherhood is considered to be a moderate religious group in the West, among most secularists in Egypt the Brotherhood is seen as extreme fundamentalists.²⁰³ Politicians like Nessim did not care about political correctness in this case.

²⁰¹ Blaydes Lisa. *Who Votes in Authoritarian Elections and why?* 2006. P. 7.

²⁰² Interview by the author with Joseph Nessim. 20.03.2013. Cairo.

²⁰³ Bbc.com: reference to strong anti-Brotherhood sentiment in the newslines as viewed the 06.05.2014.
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27285846>

He clearly labelled the Brotherhood as a plague that poses a very serious threat to the vision of a democratic Egypt.²⁰⁴

The DFP was involved in most of the big demonstrations in the late 2000s and during the 2011 revolution. It was involved in the Coptic movement and several party members were injured in the Maspero massacre on the night between the 9th and the 10th of October 2011. The DFP was not a Coptic party, but in many cases it did support groups that fought for Coptic rights. Several of the members were Copts like Nessim even if they Muslims and secularists were members as well.

²⁰⁴ Interview with Joseph Nessim. March 2013. Cairo.

Chapter 5: The Salafiya Costa Movement (SCM)

The SCM describes itself as a social movement that tries to build bridges between the different religious communities in Egypt. Salafism is a direction of Islam that wants to return to the practices of the early Muslims during the lifetime of the Prophet Mohammed. Salafists are not a singular entity, but they have several views and opinions. It is a political view that in order to organise society in a better way one needs to go back to the roots. Most of the Copts are orthodox, but there are also Catholic and Protestant Copts.

The Salafi Mohammed Tolba and the Copt Bassem Victor founded the SCM after the revolution in 2011. Together they witnessed a unity of the religions during the 18 days on Tahrir Square. They were inspired to work to solve some of the problems between Muslims and Christians. Both Salafists and Copts faced harassment in society and this brought the two groups closer when they created the SCM. The Salafiya Costa Movement also provides many services to the poor in addition to the ideological work. The members go to the slums of Cairo to provide different types of services for the poor.²⁰⁵ The SCM is organised in several committees like the Street Committee and the Freedom Committee. Like all the other organisations discussed in the thesis the SCM provides education, aid and services to the people it is helping. The SCM is interesting because it combines this union-like practice with its ideological work, which is to build bridges and diminish tensions that exist between different religious communities in Egypt.

The Salafiya Costa Movement was started during the revolution in 2011. It both supported and joined the protests at Tahrir Square during the 18 days of the revolution. Soha Ali explained that the SCM has nothing against the Muslim Brotherhood, but that it was against the government of Mohammed Morsi.²⁰⁶ This was because the government did not meet the demands of the people at Tahrir Square during the revolution and because they tried to heighten the religious tensions in the country. Civil society can sometimes work across the religious divides and therefore may contribute to reducing sectarianism, and this is precisely the mission of the SCM. Despite criticising the government the SCM was one of the organisations that were invited and participated in the constitutional committee during 2012 while other groups boycotted it. The SCM withdrew from politics on the 12th of August 2013

²⁰⁵ Interview by the author with Soha Ali and Bassem Victor in the SCM. March 2013. Cairo.

²⁰⁶ Interview by the author with Soha Ali and Bassem Victor in the SCM. March 2013. Cairo.

after the government of Morsi was toppled, but it continued with the social work and aid to the poor.

On the 27th of November 2013 the Salafiya Costa Movement posted a statement on Facebook saying that the state repression against human rights was so harsh that the country was being pushed towards a second revolution.²⁰⁷ This was a clear and explicit political statement, but after that the Facebook page went silent and there have been no more statements. This happened at the same time as several other organisations closed down their social media platforms due to increased violence between security forces and demonstrators. These platforms mostly addressed themselves to the younger generation who had been the main participants in the revolution, and for them the revolution was not over. This withdrawal from public debate can be seen as a part of the fragmentation of the mass-movement that happened especially after the military took over in July 2013.

Key individuals in the Salafiya Costa Movement

In the SCM the mediators were all paying members and volunteers and in theory there should be no difference in power relations. However, the mediators, in the capacity of their personal prestige, enjoyed special respect and power in the organisation. The founders Mohammed Tolba and Bassem Victor were the official leaders of the SCM and because of this they could speak on behalf of the organisation.²⁰⁸ Soha Ali was also a mediator in the SCM because she was better educated than the other members. She also had a good job as a student consultant at the American University of Cairo while many of the members in the SCM were students or unemployed.

The point in differentiating between the key individuals and the other members in the Salafiya Costa Movement is to exemplify the internal power structures within the organisation. Historical literature is full of mediators and local patrons and shows how powerful their positions have been in Egyptian society and still are in many cases. These key individuals or mediators can be found in all the organisations in this dissertation. This is the case in the egalitarian workers' movement as well. With the way Egypt is organised one is completely dependent on key individuals to get anything done. A key individual like Bassem Victor holds a kind of authority that makes the SCM able to participate in civil society and communicate

²⁰⁷ Facebook page of the SCM. Posted on the 27.11.13. Translated from arabic.

²⁰⁸ Interview by the author with Soha Ali and Bassem Victor in the SCM. March 2013. Cairo.

with different organisations, parties and government agencies. This is due to his personal character, his education and his network of contacts.

Education provided by Salafiya Costa Movement

The Salafiya Costa Movement is organised in different committees. The Street Committee and the Freedom Committee are in charge of the direct services provided by the SCM in poor neighbourhoods. The committees provide schoolbooks and teach both children and illiterate adults. Many of the members in the SCM are university students who give lessons in reading, writing and basic maths. The educational work seems to be just as important as the food aid also provided by the SCM.

Education was and is still an important practice for the Salafiya Costa Movement. Even after the SCM withdrew from engaging explicitly with civil society it still continued with civil society development through organising the education work in the slums. This service is very important because many poor people need an alternative education program outside the regular school system. Many children have to work to support their families during school hours and therefore they need to be able to access lessons in the evenings. The flexibility is also key with the adult education projects that the SCM runs.²⁰⁹

The type of education offered by the SCM differs from the CTUWS and the APE in some particular ways. The CTUWS went to factories and workplaces and gave courses in political activism, the APE opened traditional evening schools for children in Manshiyat Naser, while the SCM sat up provisional schools in the slums. The schools run by the APE have professional teachers and proper facilities. The SCM schools are more basic than the APE schools because they are run by volunteers and they teach people from the back of vans and in coffee shops. This could be an indication that civil society has gone underground again since the disintegration of the mass-movement.

Aid and Services provided by the Salafiya Costa Movement

The SCM is organising aid and support for poor people in the slums of Cairo. It collects food and clothes that shops cannot sell and distributes to the poor. According to Soha Ali and Bassem Victor the SCM has established ties with upmarket shops in Zamalek and Maadi. Goods are picked up from these shops and handed out to the poor through the activities of the

²⁰⁹ Interview by the author with Joseph Nessim. 20.03.2013. Cairo.

Street Committee and the Freedom Committee.²¹⁰ In addition to this basic form of aid the SCM also helps the poor with legal and bureaucratic matters like getting ID papers and getting social benefits and pensions.

There are several medicine and teacher students that contribute with their skills. They perform health checks and give reading and writing lessons to the poor for free. Many of the members of the SCM have a lot of socio-cultural capital including higher education and belong to the middle classes. The members are not especially rich, but they contribute by offering their socio-cultural capital and spare time to the disposal of the Salafiya Costa Movement.²¹¹

After the military ousted the government of Mohammed Morsi, and especially after the massacre of government friendly protesters on the 14th of August 2013, the SCM grew increasingly disillusioned with the political process. The organisations changed its focus from engaging in public political debates to developing the Street Committee further. Since then offering aid and support for the poor has become the main function of the SCM. Providing aid to the poor is crucial in both Coptic Christianity and in Salafism. The practises of the SCM thus became something all the members could work on under the overall aim of bringing the two religious communities closer together.

The recipients of the aid and services in this thesis are often too poor to worry about the relationship between the organisation that helps them and their financiers. They have to accept all the help they can get and they are dependent on help to cover their basic needs. The difference between the Egyptian context and the traditional Patron/Client model is that the sponsors are not dependant on the political support from the recipients to maintain their position. This is the case with the recipients who depend on food aid and health services from the SCM and the DFP in this thesis. The workers of the CTUWS and the Zabbalin of the APE are usually better off than the people living in absolute poverty.

²¹⁰ Interview by the author with Soha Ali and Bassem Victor in the SCM. 22.03.2013. Cairo.

²¹¹ Interview by the author with Soha Ali and Bassem Victor in the SCM. 22.03.2013. Cairo.

Funding the SCM

According to Soha Ali and Bassem Victor, the members funded the Salafiya Costa Movement and they did not depend on money from any other groups or foreign organisations.²¹² The practices of the SCM were expensive to manage. However, most of the members of the movement were from the middle classes. They were doctors, engineers and teachers, or university students hoping to become doctors, engineers and teachers, and it makes sense that they could afford to fund the SCM.

Both Soha Ali and Bassem Victor agreed that the SCM did not receive donations or charity from any other organisations. They however acknowledged that the SCM received charitable donations from private individuals. Both the Salafists and the Copts have a religious duty to give charity to the poor and this can be some of the answer to this question. Members or other private individuals could fund the educational and the aid programs if they were marketed as charity.

The SCM after the revolution

The SCM was founded and gained fame during the revolution in 2011. They were inspired by and participated in the demonstrations on Tahrir Square during the 18 days between the 25th of January and the 11th of February. The members of the SCM witnessed the unity between the religious communities in Tahrir Square and it became the most important inspiration of the SCM. The goal for members of the SCM like Soha Ali and Bassem Victor was to make the religious unity during the revolution into a permanent situation in Egyptian society as a whole.²¹³ Even if the vision of the SCM was a harmonious one, they had a revolutionary perspective. The organisation gained its popularity because of the revolutionary situation in 2011. This is reflected in a disparity between rhetoric and practice within the SCM. Even if Soha Ali and Bassem Victor put a lot of emphasis on building bridges between religious groups, other members of the SCM had a conflict perspective. These members joined anti-Brotherhood protests and fought alongside other revolutionary groups like the revolutionary socialists and the liberal youth movement. This is a clear revolutionary perspective and it is interesting to note both these radically different perspectives were thriving side by side in the same organisation.

²¹² Interview by the author with Soha Ali and Bassem Victor in the SCM. 22.03.2013. Cairo.

²¹³ Interview by the author with Soha Ali and Bassem Victor in the SCM. 22.03.2013. Cairo.

The SCM was good at differentiating between its function as an organisation and the actions of the members as individuals. As an organisation it seemed to agree on principles of non-violence and dialogue, but as individuals the members could be both revolutionary and have very different beliefs. The founders, Mohammed Tolba and the Victor Bassem, were previous members of the Kefaya Movement and some of the younger members I spoke to were supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood. Usually Salafists and members of the Brotherhood disagree fundamentally on a number of issues, for example whether true believers shall participate in politics or not. Salafists usually advocate a withdrawal from politics, while the Brotherhood has developed into a movement with a very political profile. However, there is great variety within the movements and there are directions within each of the groups that disagree with the mainstream.

Conclusion

Strikes and demonstrations after 2011

People from all the organisations in this thesis participated in demonstrations against former president Hosni Mubarak. This engagement was seen as a form of help and support from the perspective of the organisations and the recipients. The thesis shows that before the revolution there was a slow build up to a mass-movement against the rule of Hosni Mubarak. In the beginning there were only some small groups that started protesting and it was not until the revolution had begun in January 2011 that large numbers of people joined the movement.

After the revolution, the mass-movement disintegrated whereas civil society did not. The different civil society groups and organisations went back to fighting for their own special interests instead of working together trying to change society as part of a mass-movement. The specific organisations discussed in this thesis went back to their familiar ways of organising activities. They all had more space to organise and participate in practical and political activities in their respective communities. On the one hand they were fighting for the rights of a particular interest group, like workers for example, and on the other hand providing services like food aid and basic education for the same group. The mass-movement that caused the revolution and toppled a regime fell apart before its demands were met, but there may have been pragmatic reasons for this. It makes a lot of sense to work on the local, micro level in a society where the problems seem so great and deeply rooted. Fixing the big issues is an enormous task so socially engaged people choose to do what they can for a small group instead.

During the time of mass-mobilisation in the revolution all these different groups came together by the fact that they had a common enemy in the government of Hosni Mubarak. After Mubarak stepped down some of the revolutionaries continued to fight the SCAF and the interim government while others felt that the revolution was over and went back to work to their own individual remits. The same phenomenon repeated itself when Mohammed Morsi became president. Some revolutionary groups continued to fight the police and the government while others decided to support the new regime. The people that chose to comply with the government labelled the groups that kept on fighting as troublemakers.

The fragmentation was even more dramatic after the 30th of June revolution and the military coup against Morsi on the 3rd of July 2013. The fragmentation developed further this time because now religion had become a more serious factor of division. In addition most people supported the coup and only the most loyal supporters of the government of Morsi remained militant and protested until they were shot upon by the military on the 14th of August 2013. In this brutal operation up to 638 people were killed and up to 4000 were wounded according to the Ministry of Health.²¹⁴ The supporters of the deposed government of Morsi claimed that many more were killed than the official numbers indicated.

Aid and services

Neither of these organisations are formally recognised as trade unions. Nevertheless they provide services one would expect from a functioning trade union. Therefore it is reasonable to call the services union-like practices. Although the APE, the DFP and the SCM have little or nothing to do with the workers' movement they end up engaging in similar forms of aid and services as the CTUWS.

In order to gain support among the people they serve, all the organisations in this thesis have to offer some practical services to their respective communities. It is expected of a community or charitable organisation that they provide certain types of help and support. This is partly because the Egyptian state falls short when it comes to take care of the basic needs of the population. In many ways the aid and services provided by the organisations are similar. The CTUWS are providing basic aid as well as legal support and education to workers both locally and on the national level. The APE are providing access to essential medicines, as well as assisting the Zabbalin with formal issues like getting ID papers. Both the DFP the SCM provide fundamental aid to the poor people living in the slums of Cairo. These two organisations provide more basic aid and could be said to focus less on enabling the recipients to take care of themselves in the long run. On the other hand both organisations are engaged in empowerment issues and this is directly linked to the continued development of civil society. These poor recipients live under worse conditions than the both the workers and the Zabbalin.

²¹⁴ Al Ahram Online: Internet article about the massacre as reference to death toll. Published on 15.03.2014. <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/79160.aspx>

Education

Education was something that the four different organisations highlighted as particularly important. They all provided types of education that was specialised to match the needs of the people they were helping. The CTUWS organised courses aimed at achieving better understanding of labour law and international labour rights among the workers. The APE provided education that the Zabbalin needed, specialising in education for women. The DFP and the SCM provide more similar education than the CTUWS and the APE. Both these two organisations arrange evening schools for poor children and adults in the slums. It is only in the evenings that the poor have time to attend school, as they have to work during the day. These two organisations operate from a conviction that only by lifting the living conditions of the poor can Egypt achieve freedom and democracy.

Key individuals

There are two kinds of key individuals in this thesis. The first kind is sponsors that support the organisations with funding. In return they are seen as virtuous individuals with a good sense of social conscience in the communities. These key individuals have been described as sponsors in each of the chapters about the four organisations. Naguib Sawiris is a good example of this kind of sponsor. The second kind of the key individuals is people who had important positions within the different organisations and thus had access to networks and resources that ordinary members lacked. These key individuals are described as mediators in each of the chapters. Fatma Ramadan is a good example of this kind of key individual. She is a person who can talk with workers seeking aid and support as well as sitting down with a state committee and put forward the workers' point of view.

Civil Society

The reason the CTUWS, the APE, the DFP and the SCM are discussed together is because they are all examples on the development and growth of a sustainable civil society in Egypt. Civil society in Egypt has been seen as marginal in comparison with the state apparatus or the economic institutions like investors and banks. Civil society in this thesis is the public spheres between the state, the market and the individual. That means organisational life, charitable ventures, religious establishments and trade unionism to mention some. In the decades leading up to the revolution there was increasing activity in the organisational life, predominantly on the grass root level and in the workers' movement, but also on the national level. The development of a civil society was necessary to organise substantial opposition against the regime. It was this foundation that made the revolution in 2011 possible.

After the revolution when the crowds left Tahrir Square, civil society found other spaces for continued growth. In a way that had been impossible before, coffee shops, underground art fora, workers' meeting places and street projects like the Freedom Festival became spaces where civil society could develop. Spaces like these had been there since before the revolution, but possibly due to less state surveillance, people had more room to be critical and talk freely in public. Another reason could be that before the revolution it was illegal to gather in groups of more than five and now this law was no longer upheld as strictly as it had been previously.

The mediators in the organisations in this thesis have in common that they have the knowledge and ability to negotiate with several power structures in society. This can be the state, financial sponsors, or other organisations or networks in civil society. Their position bridges several roles in different power structures. The organisations need these mediators in order to function as civil society actors.

The regular members and activists of the organisations also need to be taken into consideration. They are the ones that actually perform most of the services provided by the organisation. Their positions are not as powerful as the sponsors or the mediators because they do not have access to the funds nor the networks needed, but they are just as important for the performance and reputation of the organisation.

The classic forms of patronage is less relevant in this thesis because the recipients of services do not see themselves as clients and there are no expressed allegiances of loyalty between them and the mediators. In addition the goods and services are given because the people involved think that improving the lives of the poor is a prerequisite for democracy. In other words, ideology is at the core of the aid work not the need for political support. However, it is useful to have the classical patronage model as a background while describing the formal and informal power structures within the organisations in this thesis.

Main findings from each chapter

This thesis consists of two main parts. Part one contains an introduction and research question as well as a detailed historical background about the development of the workers' movement in Egypt. Part two contains comparisons between four different Egyptian organisations. The

CTUWS is the most central organisation in this part because of its significant role in the workers' movement. The APE, the DFP and the SCM are relevant in this part because they share similar practises with the CTUWS. The thesis starts with a prologue where the position of the author during the revolution is made clear. The author was present in Cairo during the 25th of January Revolution in 2011. The events of the 28th of January Day of Rage are presented by the author's eyewitness account.

All main elements and actors in the thesis are presented in the introduction. The situation prior to the revolution is described and then the research question is presented. A short introduction to the history of the workers' movement is included here and this is developed further in chapter one. The focus on practices instead of rhetoric or ideology gives this thesis a new perspective that rarely is accounted for in research about modern Egyptian history. Traditional historical research on the workers' movement and civil society in Egypt tends to talk about strikes and the conflict with the regime. To look away from the explicit politics and focus on the actions and practices makes it possible to show that there are major similarities between the different organisations. In practice all the organisations act as unions for the people they are trying to help. These are also crucial spaces for the emerging civil society.

Chapter one is a detailed historical account of the development of the workers' movement in Egypt from late Ottoman times until today. The chapter is divided into specific time periods from 1882 until 2013. The main point of this chapter is to show how each of the Egyptian regimes since early industrialisation in the 19th century sought to bring the working classes under control. Another important point in the chapter is to show how the workers have met this challenge from the state and how they have fought for the right to organise and better living conditions. To come closer to the reality for the actual workers in each time period one major incident from each era is discussed. The 1967-68 Riots, the 1977 Bread Riot and the 1988 Anti-Mubarak strike at Mahalla al Kubra all marked the workers' movement in different ways and paved the way for the revolution in 2011.

Chapter two contains detailed discussions about the Centre for Trade Unions and Workers Service. The CTUWS is the most important organisation in this thesis and therefore it is given more space than the other three. The main findings in this chapter is the story of how and by whom the CTUWS was founded, how the organisation grew and developed and most importantly how the Mahalla al Kubra branch is organised locally and what the activists here

did in the underground leading up to the revolution. The CTUWS runs sales cooperatives to make sure that the workers can afford basic commodities, they provided specific kinds of education that became relevant for the workers participation in political activism in the revolutionary setting. Lastly key individuals like Fatma Ramadan and the local leaders in Mahalla al Kubra play a fundamental role in the performance of the organisation. The organisation has mediators that have important networks both internally and externally. Without these key individuals the organisation would be unable to engage and participate in civil society.

Chapter three contains a presentation of the Association for the Protection of the Environment. The foundation of the APE as a support organisation for the Zabbalin in 1984 and the role of financial sponsors such as the Sawiris family are some of the important points in this chapter. The main point with the chapter is to illustrate how the APE performs some of the same functions for the Zabbalin as the CTUWS for workers. The two different organisations share common practices in their daily activities and these are education, aid and services. The reason why they provide these specific services is that there is a great need for them among the people. Poverty, lack of education and basic commodities are among the most severe problems in Egypt generally, but also especially for the workers in the CTUWS and the Zabbalin of the APE.

Chapter four contains a similar presentation of the Democratic Front Party and a comparison with the other organisations in this thesis. The main point presented in this chapter is that even if the DFP is a political party and a very different kind of organisation than the CTUWS and APE they practise the same functions for poor people in Cairo. These functions are education, aid and services. It is interesting to see how political action and basic aid is mixed in this way in the DFP. This is a common trend with many Egyptian organisations.

In chapter five the Salafiya Costa Movement is presented and compared with the three previous organisations. The conclusion of this chapter is that the SCM, like the APE and the DFP in the previous chapters, provides similar services to the people they are helping. Again, the SCM is a very different organisation from the others in this thesis, but they provide education, aid and services. The main difference in the practices between the DFP and the SCM and the APE and CTUWS is the level of participation among the recipients of services in the organisations. The SCM is the only organisation that was founded during the revolution

in 2011, the other three were founded before the revolution. Therefore this chapter contains a part about what happened with the SCM after the revolution. One important finding with the DFP and the SCM is that both of them ceased to exist in their original form after the military coup in 2013. Nevertheless, they continued providing education and aid to the poor as distinctive groups.

The first objective of this thesis has been to highlight the role of the workers' movement in the modern history of Egypt and to show how important it was in the opposition that led to the 25th of January revolution in 2011. The second objective has been to show how the workers' movement exemplified by the CTUWS engaged in practices that were similar in many ways to other civil society actors even if these actors officially were completely different. This has led me to the conclusion that offering aid and services to people are necessary for any civil society organisation if it wants to be taken seriously in Egypt. The types of services provided by civil society actors are determined by the needs of the people. It seems like some of the fear that had dominated Egyptian society had been lifted and replaced by a new degree of freedom and defiance on the streets at grass root level. Civil society and the workers' movement can be said to be linked together in their continued work for a better Egypt.

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