Unintentional Democrats

Independent Unions
in Post-Mubarak Egypt

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II

Summary

The Egyptian labor movement is one of the most active forces of Egyptian civil society today. Since the revolution in 2011, over 1,000 new unions have been founded and 3,000 strikes have taken place. This thesis asks whether these strikes and unions are a constructive force for democratization in Egypt. To answer that, two in-depth case studies are conducted. The chosen cases are the Independent Union of Public Transportation Workers and the Independent Movement in the Doctors' Syndicate. Their role in the current transition is analyzed based on ethnographic observation, in-depth qualitative interviews, newspaper articles and archive material. I challenge established perspectives on trade unions and democratization and develop a new framework, where I do not only investigate the unions' relation to political parties and political institutions, but also explore how individuals participating in the unions are affected and how the unions influence the industrial relation system. This is because democratization is not just about establishing a democratic political framework, but also requires active citizens that can voice their grievances and participate in democratic institutions. My analysis shows that the Independent Transportation Workers and Independent Doctors maintain a "narrow" focus, fighting for better wages and working conditions, rather than political change. This narrow focus has some negative implications. I found no evidence of any increased commitment to democracy among the participating members. The unions refuse to work with national federations to implement structural changes and it is unlikely that any political party will emerge from these unions. The negative aspects are arguably outweighed by important positive implications of their work. My informants gained an increased sense of agency as a result of union participation, both groups have fought for democratization of industrial relations on a local level and they are able to include members from different ideological camps, which has an important de-polarizing potential; especially for today's Egypt. My findings challenge the assumption that unions must have a political or structural outlook in order to play a positive role in democratization processes. Moreover, there is no evidence in this thesis that the unions would have played a more fruitful role for democratization had they adopted democratic change as an explicit goal. I argue that their positive role in the current transition process comes as an unintended result of their actions to maintain a narrow and non-political focus. In other words, they are unintentional democrats.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Note on Translation and Transliteration

All interviews and many newspaper sources used for this thesis are originally in Arabic. All quotes from newspaper sources and interviews conducted in Arabic are presented in English in this thesis, using my own translation. When I transliterate Arabic names, I use the letters available in normal English language. However, when mentioning specific names of organizations I use a more exact transliteration. A few times, when the informant uses key words in Arabic that are hard to translate in a good way or that carry much specific contextual meaning I have transliterated that word in parenthesis. I use the style of transliteration referred to below.

ا	ā	ط	ṭ
ب	b	ظ	ẓ
ت	t	ع	'
ث	th	غ	gh
ج	j/g[1]	ف	f
ح	ḥ	ق	q
خ	kh	ك	k
د	d	ل	l
ذ	dh	م	m
ر	r	ن	n
ز	z	ه	h
ش	sh	و	w/ū[2]
ص	ṣ	ء	'
ض	ḍ		

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[1] If it refers to a word in Egyptian dialect, I use "g". If it is in the standard variety, *fusha*, I use "j".
[2] If the و denotes a long vowel, I use "ū". If it denotes a diphtong I use "w"

Abbreviations

CTA – Cairo Transit Authority

ETUF – The Egyptian Trade Union Federation

EFITU – The Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions

EDLC – Egyptian Democratic Labor Congress

ILO – International Labor Organization

MB – Muslim Brotherhood

SCAF – Supreme Council of the Armed Forces

SMT – Social Movement Theory

SMU – Social Movement Unionism

1 Introduction

"The country will not rise without the rise of the workers; the workers will not rise without the rise of the country".
Ali, leading member in the Independent Union of Public Transportation Workers, Egypt 2012

The Egyptian labor movement is one of the most active forces of Egyptian civil society today. While youth activists on Tahrir square have been the focus of media lenses and public debate, Egyptian workers have been on the rise for almost a decade. Between 2006 and 2011 over 2,000 strikes were organized and it is estimated that over 1,5 million workers participated (Beinin 2011, 3). These strikes have been deemed essential in bringing about a "culture of protest" that delegitimized Mubarak and made the 25th of January revolution in 2011 possible (Beinin 2012; Bishara 2012b).

While a fair amount of academic work has been conducted on the pre-revolutionary strike wave in Egypt (see Lachapelle 2012; Beinin and El-Hamalawy 2007a; El-Mahdi 2011; Beinin and Vairel 2011; Oweidat et al. 2008; Chalcraft 2011), much less is known about the workers role in Egypt after the fall of Mubarak. The lack of research is puzzling considering that it is only *after* the revolution that the Egyptian strike wave really has taken force. In 2011 and 2012 alone, over 1,000 new independent unions have been created and 3,346 strikes and protests were initiated by workers (Amin al-Din 2013). That is more than four strikes per day.

The work that exists on Egyptian workers after 2011 relies only on strike statistics and the developments of the trade union federations (Beinin 2013; Bishara 2012c, 2012a; Amin al-Din 2013), not the development of the local unions that initiates these strikes.[3] Little is known about how powerful these unions are, what they want or how they influence the political transition. I aim to address this gap in my thesis.

The post-revolutionary strike wave in Egypt comes at a time of extreme political instability. The first elected president, Muhammed Mursi was ousted by the military with popular backing in July 2013. Egypt is now experiencing a challenging transition that may end in a stable democracy, but might as well result in the re-emergence of authoritarianism. The general theme of this thesis is to explore what role unions and strikes play in such a fragile transition. Is the "rise of the workers" and the "rise of the country" connected, as the opening quote of this thesis argues? Do strikes, unions and syndicate play a constructive role for democratization in the current transition, and if so, how?

I do not attempt to review the labor movement as a whole, giving a final answer to the totality of impact of trade unions in the current transition. Rather, I explore the theme of Egyptian trade unions and democratization through two in-depth case studies. The cases chosen are the Independent Union of Public Transportation Workers[4] (from now on: Independent Transportation Workers) and the independent movement in the doctors' syndicate[5] (from now on: Independent Doctors). They are both typical cases illustrating the development of the strike wave before and after the revolution. The Independent Transportation Workers organized two strikes before the revolution and five strikes in two years following the overthrow of Mubarak (Amin al-Din 2013). They also founded one of the thousand new unions mentioned. The Independent Doctors is not a separate organization, but an activist group within the doctors' syndicate. They were active before the revolution, mainly in the NGO Doctors without Rights. After the revolution they are known for mobilizing and organizing one of the longest strikes in Egyptian history, namely the doctors' strike, which lasted for over three months between September and December 2012 (Kennedy 2012).

I have gathered data from different sources to explore these cases. I conducted in-depth qualitative interviews, ethnographic fieldwork and gathered newspaper articles and archive material on the development of the Independent Doctors and the Independent

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[3] (Duboc 2011, is a notable exception)
[4] *al-niqāba al-mustaqilla lil-ʿāmilīn fīl -naql al-ʿām*
[5] *al-mustaqillūn fī niqāba aṭibā' maṣr*

2

Transportation Workers. The interviews and observation was conducted mostly between October and December 2012, with some additional interviews in March and June 2013. The newspaper articles and archive material are from 2005 until June 2013.

1.1   Research Questions

The general research question that I attempt to answer with data from these two cases is: *What role does the Independent Doctors and the Independent Transportation Workers play in the current political transition?* By investigating the *role* of the Independent Transportation Workers and Independent Doctors, I focus mainly on the *consequences* of their activities on the political transition, but also how these consequences are linked to the groups' *strategies* and concrete *actions*. This implies investigating both whether their actions are in fact democratizing, and to what degree this was a result of intentions to democratize. The general research question can therefore be re-phrased into three sub-questions:

1. *Are the actions of the Independent Transportation Workers and Independent Doctors the result of a strategy to democratize Egypt?*
2. *How do the Independent Transportation Workers' and Independent Doctors' actions play into the current political transition?*
3. *How are the consequences of the Independent Doctors' and Independent Transportation Workers' action actions linked to their strategies?*

Together, the answers to these questions constitute what role the doctors and Independent Transportation Workers play in democratization. One might argue that investigating both strategies and consequences are two different projects. I argue the opposite. Understanding the link between strategic choices and the outcome of these choices broadens the relevance of the thesis and makes the findings more interesting. This way, I will not only address if the unions influence democratization in Egypt positively, but also explore the mechanisms through which this influence comes about. The full answer can only be found by investigating the link between strategies and consequences.

1.2 Relevance of the Thesis

The findings of this thesis have relevance on three levels. First, the findings have implications for our understanding of the current Egyptian labor movement. Even though the two cases do not give a representative image of the Egyptian trade union movement, this thesis is one of the first in-depth studies of local trade unions after 2011. It provides in-depth knowledge of how Egyptian industrial relations work and how labor and politics are linked. It may shed new light on the macro data we have on the other unions, and generate new hypotheses on how we should understand the role of unionism in Egypt in general.

Second, the thesis is relevant for our understanding of the Egyptian transition. Even though history is often written from above, focusing on decisions taken by political elites, it is impossible to understand the development of society without taking into account its working population. Labor movements are deemed to be important players in any transition (Collier 1999; Bellin 2000; Fick 2009). The extraordinary number of strikes and protests only increases its relevance. Sociologist Rick Fantasia (2008, 555) argues that "labor movements are fundamental social formations whose effects on society run deep and reverberate broadly [...] When labor rises, it can shake a social order to its very core". In Egypt, labor has risen. This thesis helps us toward understanding *if* and *how* Egyptian society and politics is shook by it.

Third, the thesis brings new insights to how we should understand the role of labor in democratization processes generally. Existing theories on the role of trade unions in political transitions are mostly based on transitions from the so-called "third wave" of democracy (Huntington 1993) or earlier (i.e. O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead 1986; Adler and Webster 1995; Collier 1999). The Arab Spring in general and the case of Egypt in particular provides fertile ground for reviewing and modifying our understanding of trade unions' role in political transitions. My findings challenge existing theories in the field in two ways. First, I argue that previous studies are to narrow methodologically. They rely mostly on second-hand sources or very general data like strike statistics and a list of demands (i.e. Collier 1999; Bellin 2000). Their aim is often to say something general about the role of trade unions by only focusing on the political level, while ignoring trade unions impact on individuals participating and the industrial relations framework, both essential to democratization. While these studies are certainly valuable, they run the risk of overlooking important dynamics due to their overly structural perspective. In order to fully grasp the role of workers and trade unionists, we need to talk to them and observe how they behave. By getting close to the

4

subjects we can get closer to the mechanisms through which they influence change, instead of just inferring them from macro data. Based on these insights, I develop a new theoretical framework for the understanding of trade unions in transition drawing on the literature on social capital (i.e. Paxton 2002; Terriquez 2011), industrial relations (i.e. Hyman 2004) as well as general democratization theory (Ringen 2009; Higley and Burton 2006). This framework is used to analyze the case studies. Second, the findings from this thesis constitute a theoretical challenge of existing perspectives on trade unions in transition. My findings question the existing notion that strikes must aim for political change in order to have positive implications on democratization. In fact, I argue that the Egyptian case reveals the opposite, namely that trade unions can influence democratization positively through localized and non-political strikes.

1.3   Structure of the Thesis

In chapter 2, the context for my case studies is provided through a brief historical outline of how trade unions have related to politics in the modern era. The post-revolutionary context for the trade unions is also briefly outlined. Chapter 3 is divided in three parts. First, I discuss previous attempts to analyze the role of trade unions in transitions to democracy and present the two main perspectives in this literature, which I name the *consensus tradition* and the *conflict tradition*. Second, I analyze the material presented in chapter 2 in light of these two perspectives and argue that this analysis is insufficient both theoretically and empirically to answer my research questions. For that reason, the third part of the chapter presents a new integrated theoretical framework for the study of trade unions in transition. The chapter ends with a concrete model that guides my further analysis. Chapter 4 presents some notes on the measures taken. I argue for why I have chosen the cases I have and present the methodological, ethical and practical challenges of this study. Chapter 5-7 are the analysis chapter of the thesis, where I analyze the trade unions in light of the framework arrived at in chapter 3. Chapter 8 is a concluding chapter where I summarize my findings and discuss what implications they have for the broader agenda of understanding both the current transition in Egypt and the role of trade unions in democratization.

2   The Context of Post-Revolutionary Unionism in Egypt

The post-revolutionary trade union movement in Egypt grew out of a long and turbulent history within which all new activists are embedded. To gain a full undertaking of the role of independent unionism after the fall of Mubarak, a discussion of where this strike wave came from, and how it was related to politics and democratization previously, is essential. In this chapter, I present a brief history of the relation between Egyptian unionists and political institutions. I show that throughout the 20th century, the Egyptian labor movement adopted a doubled edged strategy, with nationalism as their guiding ideology and higher wages and better working conditions as their main goal. Democratization was not on their agenda. The strike wave that started in the mid-2000s and escalated after 2011 seemingly constitutes a breach with nationalism; but was it also the start of a new era with political strikes?

After describing the history of the labor movement until the mid-2000s, I outline the development and context of the independent unionism that emerged after 2011, which is the topic of this thesis. Who do they represent, what is their legal status and what are their demands? Are we seeing a reconfiguration of the labor movement's relation to politics and democracy? This discussion will serve as a brief history of the Egyptian labor movement and explore the institutional framework the post-revolutionary independent unions operate within.

The chapter functions as a necessary backdrop to the more in-depth discussion of the post-revolutionary developments which will be discussed in the coming chapters.

2.1   Fighting British Influence (1899-1952)

During the first half of the 20th century, the Egyptian labor movement emerged as an important political player in the fight against British influence. After the first strike in modern Egyptian history, initiated by cigarette rollers in 1899, unions started popping up in many areas of Egypt (see Beinin & Lockman (1998), and Goldberg (1992)). During the 1919 riots which demanded Egyptian independence from the British occupation, workers played an essential role in mobilizing (Beinin and Lockman 1998). Following these protests, workers and trade unions started developing ties with the nationalist political opposition. The nationalist leaders were largely upper middle-class people who wanted workers' support in order to broaden their base. The workers saw the nationalists as good allies to increase their own influence. The majority of capitalists and factory owners at that time were foreigners from Greece and Italy, and the workers thought that if the foreign capitalists were kicked out, working conditions would improve. The ties between nationalist politicians and labor leaders strengthened during the 30s and 40s, and contributed to the spread of nationalist ideology across Egypt (Beinin and Lockman 1998). A pluralistic union structure with rapidly increasing rate of organization emerged. By 1952, when the nationalists took power through a coup d'état, Egypt had 500 unions with a registered membership base of 150,000 (Kassem 2004, 89). The workers initially welcomed the nationalist coup, seeing the nationalists as their allies. What met them however, was harsh repression, rather than increasing political influence (Beinin and Lockman 1998).

2.2   Facilitating Corporatism (1952-1990)

The organizational freedom of Egyptian trade unions ended when the nationalist government took power in 1952. From 1953, President Gamal Abd Al-Nasir took control of the country, and quickly revealed that he would curb dissent from any opposition. The regime sought to strengthen state control over unions, rather than granting them more independence, and in the course of the first five years after the coup, the pluralistic union structure established in the first half of the 20th century was replaced by corporatism. A new trade union federation was

created in 1957,[6] not as a body to represent the workers, but as a powerful institution that the state could and would use to regulate labor relations while keeping an effective lid on dissent (Beinin 1989; Bianchi 1986). The lack of tolerance for dissent was demonstrated clearly only four months after the coup, when two union leaders were executed for allegations of hurting a police officer during a strike (Kassem 2004, 90). All strikes were banned, "inciting class antagonism" was made punishable by law and membership in the union council was only open to members of the regime controlled party, the Arab Socialist Union (Kassem 2004). The 500 enterprise level unions that existed in 1952 were by 1960 reduced to 27 sectorial unions, while 1,200 new local unions were created, all under strict control of the new federation. Membership was mandatory, and all attempts at organizing outside this framework were effectively stopped (Bianchi 1986). In other words: Class struggle was cancelled.

The professional syndicates (i.e. doctors, engineers, lawyers) were subjected to similar treatment as the trade unions, but preserved a larger degree of freedom. They were not incorporated under the regime-controlled Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF) and organized relatively free elections. Still, the regime did take steps against the syndicates, especially when elections brought results that the regime did not like. Consequently, syndicate boards were often controlled by loyal party members. The strike ban was also in place for the syndicates, and the regime struck down any attempt at political activity initiated from them (Kassem 2004, 96-98).

Members of the unions and syndicates did not protest the loss of organizational independence to a large degree. Instead, one could argue that they welcomed it. They "assisted in facilitating their own co-optation" as May Kassem (2004, 90) argues, viewing the new regime as their friends. This might seem irrational, since the nationalists took away the workers' organizational independence, but at least two plausible reasons may be found. First, the workers were committed nationalists, and did not see the President as a despotic leader who wanted to control them. Rather, they saw him as most Egyptians did; a charismatic leader who would re-build Egypt as a strong and prosperous nation (Beinin 2010, 24). Second, higher wages was more important to the workers than democratic industrial relations, and the workers benefited materially from the coup of 1952. The average real wage for industrial workers increased with 45 percent from 1952 to 1958 and another 24 percent from 1958 to 1970 (Goldberg 1992, 155). Job security and retirement benefits also increased substantially (Bianchi 1986). A new social contract emerged, where workers were projected

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[6] Named the Egyptian Trade Union Federation, (ETUF) after 1961

as key players in the re-building of the new independent Egypt, an image they to a large degree accepted (Posusney 1993; Goldberg 1992; Beinin 1989; Bianchi 1986).

Democratization was sacrificed in exchange for nation building and higher wages. The result was a corporatist labor regime that would prove to be both strong and resilient. During the era of Anwar Al-Sadat and Hosni Mubarak, the control mechanisms put in place by Nasir were to a large degree strengthened. As May Kassem (2004, 105) wrote in 2004: "The autonomy of trade unions has been marginalized to such a degree that it is difficult to distinguish them from the state". Despite some minor waves of labor unrest in the 70s and 80s, it is safe to say that the industrial relations system put in place in the 50s remained largely unchanged and unchallenged for over 40 years.

2.3   A Democratizing Strike Wave (1990-2011)?

Despite the repression trade union activists faced and their commitment to the nationalist project, cracks in the peaceful industrial relations system emerged in the 1990s. The number of strikes and striking workers increased and by the late 2000s these cracks evolved into something equal to a social earthquake, threatening to shake the very core of Egyptian politics and society. In table 2.1, we see the number of workers' collective actions from the 1990s until 2011. This includes strikes, sit-ins and demonstrations initiated by workers. The numbers are fairly high but steady from 1998 until mid-2000s. Then, there is a sudden increase from 86 protests in 2003 to 266 in 2004. A few years later, the numbers explode with 614 strikes and protests in 2007 and as many as 864 incidents of collective action from workers in 2009.

Table 2.1: Collective action from workers in Egypt 1998-2010

Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Number	114	164	135	115	96	86	266	202	222	614	609	864	485

Source: Annual Reports from the Land Center for Human Rights, that can be found at http://www.lchr-eg.org/

It is important to bear in mind that none of the collective actions we see in table 2.1 were sanctioned by the official trade unions. Strikes became officially legal in 2002, but you still needed permission from the state-controlled ETUF to strike (Beinin 2010). Since permissions were not given, all these strikes were technically punishable by law. Without relying on the trade union structures, the workers had to organize for themselves, bottom-up. The strikes were in no way coordinated at a national or even local level in the beginning. This

unorganized and uncoordinated wave of protests grew to be the largest wave of unrest Egypt had seen in many decades. As Joel Beinin (2010, 14) wrote in 2010 "[t]he current wave of [workers'] protests is erupting from the largest social movement Egypt has witnessed in more than half a century". Beinin estimated that over 1.7 million workers participated in strikes in the period 2004-2008 alone.

In addition to an increasing number of strikes, the period of 2004-2010 is important because a wide variety of Egyptian employees initiated protests. The textile workers have always been the "center of gravity" for the workers movement, and the strike in Mahalla Al-Kubra[7] in 2006 ignited the strike wave, and is considered a "major turning point" in the history of the Egyptian workers' movement" (El-Mahdi 2009, 7). In the years to follow, workers from all segments of society went on strike, including teachers, doctors, taxi drivers, public officials, street vendors and others. By the end of the 2000s, the strike wave spilled over from being very dominated by the public sector, to also include private sector companies (Beinin and El-Hamalawy 2007b; El-Mahdi 2011).

It is debated in the literature to what degree the strike wave that started in 2004 was politically oriented or had democratization as its goal. There are three main explanations as to why workers started striking. The most intuitive reason is that workers protested the repercussions of the structural adjustment program Egypt signed with International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1991 (Beinin and El-Hamalawy 2007a; Beinin 2009; Lachapelle 2012). As a result of this structural adjustment program, many public enterprises were privatized. The wave of privatization began in the 1990s but escalated strongly once the government headed by Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif came to power in July 2004 (Beinin 2010). As we saw in table 2.1, this coincides with the sudden rise of strikes that year. The privatization initiatives resulted in many layoffs and rising unemployment. This development was paralleled by the growth of a new rich Egyptian elite who benefited from the opening of the economy. In other words, inequalities were rising. According to Beinin and Vairel (2011) these increasing material grievances and inequalities were the main factors contributing to the high number of strikes in the 2000s. A second explanation also points to the neo-liberal policies, but to its cultural rather than material effects. Chalcraft (2011) and El-Mahdi (2011) argue that the privatization initiatives represented a "rupture in the post-1952 ruling pact" established by Nasir. The main reason workers did not strike during the 60s, 70s and 80s was that they saw themselves as a part of a national development project. Now, when many public enterprises

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[7] The largest textile factory in Egypt.

were privatized, workers in the public sector felt betrayed. Neo-liberal policies led to a breakdown of hegemony in the Gramscian sense. The loyalty of Egyptian workers toward the state was gone. The workers saw no reason to remain quiet and accept their poor wages and bad working conditions and therefore protested. A third explanation forwarded by Oweidat et. al (2008) points to the opening of political opportunities as the main driver for the strike wave. Strikes had been harshly repressed previously, but in the 90s and 2000s the police did not arrest as many protestors as before (El-Mahdi 2011, 396). Also, the rise of labor protest coincided with the rise of protests in other sectors of Egyptian society, like the solidarity group with the Palestinian intifada, the demonstrations against the Iraq invasion and the pro-democracy Kefaya movement. This growth in general protests and the relatively moderate crackdown from the government inspired the workers, and gave them the opportunity to go on strike according to this third explanation. In short, increasing grievances resulting from the wave of privatization, a breaching of the social contract established in the 50s and a moderate decline in state repression of strikes were all factors contributing to this unprecedented rise of strikes.

Rabab El-Mahdi has focused on the political nature of this movement, seeing the strikes after the mid-2000s as an example of "heightened class consciousness". She argues that "the meaning of these protests lies well beyond limited economic demands" (El-Mahdi 2011, 396). To get closer to understanding the relation between this strike wave and workers' desire for political change, it is interesting to investigate what their demands were. If we look at the concrete reasons for why workers went on strike, it becomes clear that the vast majority of strikes before the revolution focused on what is often referred to as narrow bread and butter issues. Most strikes started because the workers wanted higher wages, or increased bonuses. In addition to wages and bonuses, better work conditions and fewer working hours were common demands. In many cases, strikes also erupted as a direct response to for example the threat of layoffs, or proposed privatization of a company.[8] The fact that the demands were not structural, does not take away the importance of the strikes, or mean that they did not have any political impact. Quite the opposite. Despite the lacking agenda for democracy "Egyptian workers were by far the largest numerical component of the culture of protest of the 2000s that undermined the legitimacy of the regime of President Hosni Mubarak" as Joel Beinin

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[8] See bi-annual reports from the Land Center of Human Rights (*markaz al-'arḍ lil-huqūq al-insān*) that can be accessed on http://www.lchr-eg.org/.

12

(2012) argues. However, there are few indications that the striking workers first and foremost had democratization on their agenda.

2.4 Workers and the 25th of January Revolution

Academics and commentators who follow the Egyptian labor movement often emphasize the role workers played in the 18 days uprising that ended with the overthrow of Mubarak (Beinin 2012; Joya 2011; Beinin 2011; Charbel 2012), but how active they actually were during the 18 days is difficult to judge. A common saying among Egyptian unionists is that "[t]he workers did not come to the revolution, the revolution came to the workers" (Bishara 2012b). Bishara (2012b) argues, based on interviews with workers and trade union activists, that workers did indeed play an important role, by going on what resembled a general strike only two days before Mubarak left office, thereby crippling the productive sectors of the economy. This was 16 days into the demonstrations. Many workers had joined the first 15 days, but mostly as individuals, not as representatives of their workplace. In addition, many workers used the opportunity of the 18 days to stage strikes, not demanding President Mubarak to resign, but rather to increase their own wages. Also, the resignation of Mubarak spurred a huge wave of strikes. So it is definitely an exaggeration so say that "the revolution came to the workers". On the other hand, Egyptian workers did help bringing about the fall of Mubarak through their presence in the streets, and absence at their respective workplaces. Intended or not, the overthrow of Mubarak sparked the largest changes for the labor movement since the time of Nasir in the 50s.

2.5 New Independent Unionism (2011-2013)

The degree of activism and the organizational structure of the trade union movement changed drastically after the revolution. 1,377 strikes and workers protests were registered in 2011, 1,969 in 2012 (Alexander 2012; Amin al-Din 2013). This is approximately a doubling in the numbers of protests compared to the two years before the revolution. Just as important as the increasing number of protests and strikes is the shift in organizational structures of the workers movement. From striking without any organizational backing, against the monopoly of the ETUF, unions independent of the ETUF started popping from 2011 and onward. Legally, ETUF had a monopoly on organizing workers so any organization trying to challenge its authority would face resistance from the state. Some groups did defy the

monopoly and tried to establish independent unions before the revolution, but only a handful existed in January 2011 (Lachapelle 2012). After February 2011, around one thousand new unions have been created in two years, almost two unions per day (Beinin 2013).

The high numbers of new independent unions has led to a need for federations representing the totality of the independent union movement. Two such initiatives have emerged, The Egyptian Federation for Independent Unions (EFITU) led by Kamal Abu Eita, was established on Tahrir Square during the protests of 2011. The second federation is the Egyptian Democratic Labor Congress (EDLC) headed by Kamal Abbas. This initiative comes out of the most active pro-labor NGO (Center for Trade Union and Workers Services CTUWS) that Abbas led. EFITU alone claims to represent more than three million workers, a number fairly close to the 3.5 million workers that the official ETUF claimed to represent before the revolution (Beinin 2012, 3). They do not negotiate on behalf of the workers, and according to the leadership they do not wish to have that role either. EFITU describes their goal as "ensuring basic rights for Egyptian workers", like freedom of association, and being a strong force "providing inputs to policy makers". No mention is made of a goal of establishing collective bargaining; rather the independence of the local unions is stressed.[9] They want to fight the hierarchical structure of the old ETUF, and think it is time for unions to organize for themselves on a local level. The result of having two new federations, in addition to the old ETUF which still exists, is confusion as to who actually speaks on behalf of the Egyptian workers. All three federations claim to represent them, while the local unions, as we will see in later chapters, may not cooperate with any of them. A plethora of new organizations have been created in the aftermath of the revolution, but so far they are not necessarily organized, and most certainly not well coordinated (Bishara 2012c).

The fight for legalizing independent unions has dominated EFITU`s and EDLC`s agenda since 2011. Several decades ago, Egypt ratified ILO convention 87 and 98, which guarantees the right to organize freely and the right to collective bargaining. However, Egyptian law has not been in accordance with these conventions (El-Fiqi 2013). ETUF have a monopoly on organizing in the Unified Labor Law from 2003, meaning that any independent union outside the ETUF-framework would be deemed illegal according to Egyptian law. Strikes also still needed permission from ETUF to be considered legal (Beinin 2010).

In early 2011, there were clear signs of changing labor policies from the Egyptian administration. The new minister of Manpower and Migration, Ahmed Al-Borei was very

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[9] See their declarations of goals at http://www.efitu.com/#!:TBasicFund

early confronted with Egypt`s lacking compliance with ILO conventions. Trade union activists demanded that he changed the labor law, allowing unions to organize freely. Only one month after taking office, in March 2011, Egypt's largest newspaper *al-Ahrām* reported the following from a panel discussion with Al-Borei and all prominent union leaders present:

> "With tears in his eyes, El-Borai [al-Buraʻi] stated with resolve that workers would soon have the right to establish, form and join any trade union of their choice—trade unions which would remain completely independent of the ministry. These unions would be able to independently conduct their domestic affairs, develop regulations, allocate their funds and choose their own leaders" (Gaber 2011).

The same meeting, attended by many leading trade unionists, was concluded with the following words of Kamal Abbas, the coming leader of EDLC: "The regime has fallen...the Egyptian Trade Union Federation has fallen! What more do you want? Go create your own unions!" Directly following, during an ILO inspection to Egypt, Al-Borei signed a "Freedom of Association Declaration" which "reiterates the observance of all ratified international conventions, including Convention No. 87, as well as the establishment of trade unions" (Beinin 2012). The legal status of this document was unclear, as the labor law still remained the same, but the trade unionists saw it as a go ahead for organizing, and new independent unions started popping up, while strikes continued to be organized. Al-Borei also followed up on his promise and drafted the new "Trade union freedom law" (*qānūn al-hurreyya al-niqābiyya*), which he promised to see through. He also dissolved the board of the ETUF, a clear indication that he wanted to weaken the trade union monopoly and remove Mubarak loyalists from the board. That year, the ILO removed Egypt from their blacklist, indicating that they believed in a new era for workers legal framework in Egypt (Beinin 2012).

The backlash against the opening for new independent trade unions came quickly. After Mubarak left office, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) took power temporarily, until the new president Muhammed Mursi was elected in June 2012. SCAFs overall goal was to secure a stable transition. Social unrest and strikes were seen as threats to stability. Consequently, SCAF issued a decree March 24th 2011, creating a fine of over $8,000 for anyone participating or encouraging others to join a sit in or any other activity that "prevents, delays or disrupts the work of public institutions or public authorities" (Beinin 2012). In effect, strikes were made illegal once more. The Trade Unions Freedom law that al-Borei had drafted was also put in the drawer, as SCAF refused to ratify it. After severe pressure, al-Borei also reinstated the old board of ETUF, except its former president. This was

his last act before he resigned in November 2011, in protest of SCAF`s intervention in politics. Muhammed Mursi did not ratify the trade unions freedom law while he was in power either. Instead, the Muslim Brotherhood affiliated Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) drafted an alternative law, which in effect would ban all independent unions and revive the old ETUF organization. As a result, Egypt was put back on the ILO "black list" (Beinin 2012).

After Mursi was ousted July 3rd 2013, the legal status of independent unions remains in limbo. Kamal Abu Eita, the previous head of EFITU was appointed labor minister in the interim government of Hazem Biblawy, but it is not certain that he will be able to issue the trade unions freedom law in the precarious situation Egypt is currently in. His first statement as minister was that the Egyptian workers have been heroes of strikes, but "now they must become heroes of production" (Beinin and Acconia 2013); not necessarily an indication that trade union freedom is among his first priorities. So as of today, and for the whole period that this thesis covers, the independent unions are officially illegal in Egypt.

Regarding the new independent unions' demands, are there signs that the local bread and butter-demands of the pre-revolution strikes have evolved into more demands for structural change after the revolution? On a national level, EFITU and EDLC have raised two general demands that they claim to be valid for all workers. The first is the setting of a national minimum and maximum wage for government sector employees. EFITU ran a campaign with the Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights, a Cairo based NGO, to get this through. It got substantial media attention, and in late 2011 the government actually set a new minimum wage of 700EGP per month (100$) which was around three times higher than a normal wage at the time. However, all companies that could prove "sufficient reason" not to abide by the minimum wage were exempt from the law, leaving it little effect in practice. The majority of public sector companies have not implemented the 700EGP minimum wage as of mid-2013, meaning the demand is still valid and it is also continuously raised by EFITU and EDLC (Beinin 2012). The second general demand is a law guaranteeing the freedom of association to all independent unions.

The demands of the national federations are structural demands, aiming to enhance the legal and institutional backing of Egyptian workers. If we look at the demands at the local level, the picture is somewhat different. Before the revolution, most of the strikes were started due to local workplace oriented-issues and not national issues like a trade union law. When looking at the reasons for going on strike in 2012, the picture seems relatively unchanged. In table 2.2 we see the most common demands raised by protesting workers in 2012.

Table 2.2: Demands Raised by Striking Workers (2012)

Demands raised by striking workers (2012)	Number	Percent
Wage or bonus increase	708	36
Increasing work security	380	19,3
Protest against employees being fired	108	5,5
Poor treatment from the administration	71	3,6
Corruption in the administration	111	5,6
Protest against closing factories	29	1,5
Delayed payment or promotion	114	5,7
Other	448	22,3
Total	1969	100

Source: Amin Al-Din (2013, 9-10)

The majority of protests are either over wage issues, work security, or fear job loss. The general demands made by the EFITU and EDLC are not visible in the demands of the local independent unions. This is an indication that workers on a local level strike to better their wage and work conditions, not to create political change.

To sum up this section, activism from Egyptian workers has remained high the first two years following the revolution. In addition, over 1,000 new independent unions have emerged, and no less than two new federations for independent unions have been established. Legally however, these new unions are still under threat, as the old law giving ETUF monopoly on trade union organization has not yet been changed.

The question I address in the following chapter is to what degree these strikes and union activities play a conducive role to democratization in the current Egyptian transition. As shown in this chapter, democratization has not been high on the agenda before 2011. And we see here that the unions do not explicitly demand political or structural change even after the revolution. But can they still be important contributors to democracy? Leading researchers on Egyptian trade unions argue that the trade unions indeed play a democratizing role. El-Mahdi (2011, 389) argues that "labour is now poised to become the most important social actor behind corporatism's demise and hence might be opening new paths for democratization". Similarly, Joel Beinin (2012) holds that "independent trade unions remain the strongest nationally organized force confronting the autocratic tendencies of the old order. If they can solidify and expand their gains, they could be an important force leading Egypt toward a more democratic future". Lachapelle (2012) and Bishara (2012b) also claim that the current trade

union movement is helpful in the current transition. Thus, many researchers claim that the unions are important, but none of them provide an argument for why, or in what way Egyptian trade unions are constructive democratizers. These researchers have not conducted systematic data collection and analysis to back up their claim, and the empirical basis for their conclusions are not always made clear. In order to address the question of the role of trade unions in transition properly, we need systematic data analysis and a coherent theoretical framework.

3   Trade Unions and Democratization – Towards a New Analytical Framework

How can trade unions contribute to democratization? In order to analyze the importance of the workers movement in Egypt for democratization, we need a clear definition of democratization and a clear understanding of what roles trade unions can play in such a process. Despite an increasing awareness that trade unions indeed are important players in democratization (Fick 2009; Webster and Adler 1999; Adler and Webster 1995; Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992; Moody 1997; Harcourt and Wood 2006; Kraus 2007; Terriquez 2011; Fung 2003) the attempts at analyzing the Arab spring in light of democratization theory (Stepan and Linz 2013; Mansfield and Snyder 2012; Blaydes and Lo 2012; Sarquís 2012) do not mention the role of trade unionism or workers with one word. [10] The research that is concerned with trade unions in the Arab world in general tries to assess the reasons behind the strikes (i.e. Beinin 2012; El-Mahdi 2011; Chalcraft 2011) rather than their consequences. In other words: The role of trade unions in the transition after the Arab spring has yet to be analyzed.

In this chapter I review the existing perspectives on the role of trade unions in democratization. I discuss their applicability on the Egyptian case, based on the empirical

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[10] One-exception is Bellin (2012). But rather than claiming that labor movements were an important factor in the Arab Spring, she argued that the success of the Arab Spring was due to the fact that they heightened the mobilization beyond the strikes that had previously been organized.

information presented in chapter 2. I argue that existing perspectives are poorly equipped to capture the role of trade unions in the Egyptian transition, and therefore present a new integrated theoretical framework for analysis towards the end of the chapter.

3.1 Democracy and Democratization

What do we mean with democracy and democratization? These are "inherently contested concepts" and an astonishing number of different definitions can be found. Most or all of the definitions however, are possible to place on a scale between *minimalist* and *maximalist* (Grugel 2002, 4-6). The minimalist definitions focus on whether free and fair elections exist between at least two opposing parties. Schumpeter (1976) is the classic defender of minimalist conceptions of democracy, and defines democracy merely as a method to select leaders through elections. These theories have been criticized for maintaining a narrow focus on formal instead of substantive democracy. Many countries have elections, but are not democratic. Laws of equality may exist, but political leaders may still break democratic rules. Therefore a more maximalist tradition has emerged, stressing the importance of citizens active participation in politics (Pateman 1970), availability of spaces of deliberation (Habermas 1992) and also notions of social justice and equality (Grugel 2002) as inherent parts of democracy. Grugel (2002, 5) for example argues that "full democratization cannot take place without socio-economic reform, cultural and social change and a transformation of gender relations". The reason is that "poverty and social exclusion operates as real barriers to citizenship" and thus hinders participation in the society.

While I agree that with the criticism of minimalist definitions of democracy, I would argue against including participation, deliberation and social equality as independent factors in the definition of democracy. Just as countries may have free elections on paper, but still not be democracies, it is possible for a country to have low social inequality but still be autocratic. The same goes for participation. Participation only becomes meaningful, if there are democratic institutions in place where citizens can actually participate. And spaces for deliberation is useless if you don`t have active citizens to fill the spaces and political institutions to implement the wishes of the people forwarded in those spaces. So instead of trying to reach a list of independent criteria for what democracy is, and instead of operating with multiple definitions of democracy that focus on different dimensions (Della Porta 2013), I favor an inclusive definition that falls between the minimalist and maximalist ends of the spectrum. Stein Ringen (2009) has provided such a definition, which is the one I adhere to in

this thesis. He argues that democracy is a political system where "citizens hold the ultimate control over collective decisions in a securely institutionalized manner". This "includes electoral democracy but is not limited to that" (Ringen 2009, 25). To fulfill this definition a rule of law and an economic system that does not completely marginalize some groups of society is needed. It also stresses the importance of participation, but unlike Pateman (1970), Ringen`s definition stress that participation and deliberation must be coupled up with actual linkages between the individuals participating and decision making bodies. Without this, you end up with fragmented participation that does not increase citizens' control over collective decision-making. Countries that have elections on paper but not substantive elections fall outside of this definition. Countries that do not secure basic rights for its citizen also fall outside of this definition. However, a country cannot be said to go through a democratization process only if the social inequality goes down, if this is not somehow combined with a mechanism for empowering its citizens (Ringen 2009). This view of democracy makes it easier to understand and define democratization. Democratization can be defined as a process that increases or sustains peoples' institutionalized control over decision making processes. This requires a country that works towards fostering active citizens that are able to participate in strong and transparent institutions through which they can voice their concern, coupled with building accountable political institutions.

3.2 Trade unions in Transition – Existing Perspectives

What role do strikes and trade unions play in the process of securing institutionalized control over decision making processes? As argued in the introduction, there seems to be a general consensus that trade unions and an organized working class is indeed positive in bringing about democracy (Stepan-Norris 1997, 475; Lipset 1960). As Fick (2009, 249) recently argued: "Trade union influence extends beyond the confines of the workplace and impacts upon society as a whole, making a key contribution to creating, maintaining, and rebuilding democratic societies". The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and European Convention on Human Rights also acknowledge the importance of freedom of association, including trade unions in order for a well-functioning democratic society to emerge (Fick 2009).

Even though there may be consensus that trade unions have an important role to play in democratization, there is fierce disagreement as to *how* trade unions should behave in order to act as democratizers. Bellin (2000) argued that labor movements are "contingent democrats", namely that they can be constructive, but likewise may also obstruct democratic

reform, depending on the context they operate within. In the existing academic debate on the subject, I have identified two opposing views on how trade unions should behave in order to be constructive democratizers. The first that I call the *consensus tradition*, argues that trade unions must seek consensus and institutionalization to be constructive democratizers. The second view that I call the *conflict tradition* argues that real democratization is not possible to achieve without militant trade unions seeking conflict. I will review both arguments and see how these views fit with what we already know from chapter 2 about the Egyptian trade union movement.

3.2.1 Consensus Tradition

The core argument in the consensus tradition is that a country progresses towards prosperous democracy, only if a consensus is first established among the national elites on the rules of the political game. In this perspective, the role of trade unions is to contribute to this consensus, by disciplining the workers and make them fight for the better of the nation, rather than their own narrow and sectorial interests. The underlying philosophy is that the interests of the working class and capitalist class are overlapping rather than antagonistic.

One of the most elaborated and influential theoretical frameworks in this tradition is that of Burton and Higley (Higley and Burton 1989, 2006). They argue that an elite settlement is the most important factor leading a country on the road to democracy. In all cases where democratization has succeeded, there has been an elite compromise that has brought it forth. National elites must evolve from being *disunified* to becoming *consensually unified*. A consensually unified elite "share a largely tacit consensus about the rules and codes of political conduct amounting to a restrained partisanship" (Higley and Burton 1989, 19). To have a consensually unified elite is a prerequisite for democracy. As they argue: "[When] a consensually unified national elite is created [...] a stable democratic regime rapidly emerges" (Higley and Burton 1989). This theory is but one example of perspectives emphasizing the role of the elites and the importance of consensus in bringing forth democracy. Other examples include Huntington (1968) O`Donnel and Schmitter (1986), Linz and Stepan (1978, 2011) and Przeworski (1991).

An important premise for theories within the consensus tradition is that national elites have the agency needed to bring forth substantial political change. Democracy does not come about as a result of some structural factors, like economic growth. Democracy has to be decided and implemented. O`Donnell et. al. (O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead 1986)

22

compared the transition from authoritarianism to democracy to a multi-layered chess game with the ruling elite controlling the pieces. Linz and Stepan (2011) claimed similarly that structural factors might be important, but it is the elites who in the end have the power to capitalize on the structural factors present. It is elite decisions, not class struggle that drives history. In the words of Burton and Higley: "Classes push, but elites effect" (Higley, Burton, and Field 1990, 424).

In the view of democratization as brought forward by elite compromise, the role of trade unions is to make sure that workers do not demand revolutionary changes, but rather seek an agreement on the rules of industrial relations. The union elite is a part of the national elite, and must work towards consensus, not facilitate conflict. A strike is not necessarily damaging, but unions fighting for a completely different system with militant means are deemed destructive. Worker militancy contributes to instability, which again hinders prosperous democracy. Przeworski argues similarly that "unions must trust in the good faith of the government" and that the union leadership should avoid strikes and "persuade the rank and file to wait for reforms to bear fruit" (Przeworski 1991, 181). If the unions only fight for their own interests and their own wages, they are a threat to political stability and a threat to the democratic transition.

To sum up, the consensus tradition argues that a pact must be made within the national elite for democratization to succeed. Workers must be convinced that it is in their own interest to contribute to building a consensus democracy, rather than reinforcing conflict, because this will lead to progressive reform and democracy in the long run.

3.2.2 Conflict Tradition

Not all agree with the analysis of the consensus tradition. Another strand of research is far more skeptical to the premise that elite compromise is an essential ingredient of democratization, and focus more on the role of an active civil society. Webster and Adler argue that "traditional democratization theory emphasis on elites leads it to [...] neglect the role of labor movements as important actors in transition. Popular and radical movements are given scant attention and are understood as maximalists, who, if allowed free reign, risk [...] scuttling the entire transition process" (Adler and Webster 1995, 76).

A key question is whether elite compromise is always conducive to democratization. This is taken more or less for granted in the consensus tradition, but more critically examined in the conflict tradition. Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992, 60) argue in their

analysis of democratization that "any class that is dominant both economically and politically will not be eager to dilute its political power by democratization". This argument has roots to Marxist thinking, where the interests of the working classes and the capitalists are seen as antagonistic rather than overlapping. In other words: Even if compromise is reached within the national elite, there is no reason to expect a viable democracy to emerge. Rather, the elite will focus on keeping their power and influence, which normally does not mean extending democratic privileges, and certainly not to give the working classes "control over collective decisions in a securely institutionalized manner" as stated in Ringen's (2009, 25) definition of democracy.

Given the perspective of the conflict tradition, the role of trade unions in democratization becomes different. Instead of remaining quiet and disciplining the workers to accept compromise at any cost, trade unions should mobilize and strike to voice their interest. If they don`t, they risk being ignored and marginalized. As Richard Hyman (1975, 330) argued in his classic article on strikes: "A union which never strikes may lose the ability to organize a formidable strike, so that its threats become less effective". If unions never strike, there is no reason that the national elite will listen to them. And for a true democratic settlement to be reached, the representatives of the working class must make sure that their interests are taken into account. And here, strike is a necessary tool. But instead of focusing on local workplace issues, unions should broaden their horizon and cooperate with the civil society. If strikes are only focused on workplace issues, they are not conducive to democratization. This argument is based on empirical evidence of militant democratizing labor movements in countries like South Africa, The Philippines, Brazil, South Korea and developed into a theory known as Social Movement Unionism (SMU) (Waterman 1993; Moody 1997; Adler and Webster 1995; von Holdt 2002; Beckman 2009). The core argument in SMU is that unions can indeed be militant and influence democratization in a positive way at the same time, if they lift their demands above workplace issues (Moody 1997, 6-7).

The most known example of SMU is the South African experience. In the 1980s the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) made an alliance with the African National Congress (ANC) and joined their struggle against the apartheid regime. The result was a new mix between unionism and social movements, where the working class mobilized and organized strikes, not just for their own interests, but joining larger national struggles. For South Africa, many claim that the trade union movement "played a central role in creating the

conditions for the transition" away from apartheid (von Holdt 2002; Adler and Webster 1995, 95).

Based on the theory of SMU, Webster and Adler (1995) developed a generic strategy for unions as democratizers that combined "a radical vision" with "a strategy of reform". They fittingly labeled the strategy *radical reform* and argued that "through *radical reform* disciplined and sophisticated social movements may be able to inject more progressive content into the democratization process" (Adler and Webster 1995, 76). Concretely, they argued that strikes and repeated protests made the South African labor movement able to get through important democratic reforms like freedom of association and a labor-friendly constitution.

To sum up, the conflict tradition argues that strikes and militancy are important or even necessary tools the trade unions must use, if a substantial democracy is to emerge. However, the strikes should not be confined to local workplace demands. Alliances should be sought with other civil society actors or political parties, and the demands should extend beyond shop-floor issues. Social movement unionism is essentially cooperation between unions and other civil society groups, with the goal of reaching a more progressive democracy (von Holdt 2002, 285). "Cross-class alliances" are essential for the working class to play a constructive role in democratization. As Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992, 282) argue: "In all regions [...] pressure from the organized working class alone was insufficient to bring about the introduction of democracy, the working-class needed allies".

3.2.3 Consensus and Conflict Compared

The consensus and conflict perspectives on trade unions' role in democratization originate from very different traditions. The consensus tradition is rooted in a strategic interaction and rational choice-tradition where democracy can succeed if all actors agree on it. The conflict tradition has Marxist roots, in the sense that they view different classes as having different interests and therefore the elites cannot be left alone with the job of making democracy; they might as well end up consolidating authoritarianism. The two perspectives also propose two different roles that trade unions should play in order to be constructive democratizers.

Both traditions agree that there are two dimensions of trade union activity that should be analyzed when judging trade unions role in democratization: (1) The scope of the demands and (2) the degree of militancy. The scope of the demands can be defined as *narrow* or *broad*. Narrow demands are bread and butter issues, like wages and work conditions. Unions with

narrow demands do not seek alliances with any other group, but fight for themselves and their own issues. Broad demands are demands that stretch beyond workplace-related issues. This could be a strategy of seeking cooperation with employers' associations, seeking consensus on a system of industrial relations like the consensus tradition favors, or it could be an alliance with a political party or broad social movement to fight for more structural change, like the conflict tradition favors. In table 3.1, I have summarized what roles trade unions may play in a transition according the conflict and consensus tradition. A high degree of militancy with broad demands is in line with the radical reform approach of SMU, and deemed a positive role in the conflict tradition. A low degree of militancy and broad demands is deemed positive by the consensus tradition because it means that unions are avoiding conflict, while at the same time disciplining their workers to embrace a broader scope. A low degree of militancy and narrow demands is not constructive, but not outright dangerous either. The most damaging alternative is trade unions with a high degree of militancy and narrow demands. They could be a threat to the political and economic stability, and they would not have broad enough goals to actually contribute positively to the democratization process, according to these perspectives.

Table 3.1: Union Strategies According to the Conflict and Consensus Perspectives

High militancy and narrow scope: Non-constructive and dangerous for both tradition	High militancy and broad scope: Constructive in conflict tradition
Low militancy and narrow scope: Non-constructive for both traditions.	Low militancy and broad scope: Constructive in consensus tradition

3.2.4 Consensus and Conflict in Egypt

Do these existing theories on trade unions in transition give us the needed tools to analyze the Egyptian case? If we review what we already know about the Egyptian trade union movement from chapter 2 in light of the conflict and consensus tradition, it becomes clear that the new independent unions are *not* playing a constructive role in the current transition. The degree of militancy is very high. The number of strikes and collective actions from workers have been high since early 2000s and extraordinarily so since 2011. And there are no signs that the numbers of strikes will decrease. Regarding the scope of their demands, we saw in table 2.1 that the vast majority of protests and strikes in Egypt were started because of shop-floor

issues. Although some initiatives were taken to cooperate with civil society, like the minimum wage campaign, the concrete strike actions focused on wages, bonuses and job security.

For the consensus tradition, the Egyptian trade unions are not constructive democratizers because they maintain a high level of strike actions that in their view is a direct threat to political stability. From the data presented in chapter 2, it is clear that the union leaders are not telling their workers to show restraint, but rather encourage them to go on strike for what the consensus tradition see as limited demands. For the conflict tradition, the high level of militancy in itself is not the problem. The decisive issue is that they do not seek broad cooperation with civil society actors, and are not part of a larger national or even community struggle, but fight for their own sectorial interests. The core of the radical reform approach is that the unions broaden their horizon beyond the workplace issues, and the Egyptian unions do not seem to follow such a strategy. If we look at table 3.1 it becomes clear that the Egyptian trade union movement belongs in the upper left corner, with a high degree of militancy and narrow scope in their demands. Therefore, Egyptian trade unions are playing a destructive, rather than constructive role in the current transition in Egypt.

But is it a fair and valid conclusion that Egyptian trade unions are destructive to democratization? This assessment certainly goes against the existing literature on Egyptian trade unions. Even though none of them have elaborated an argument as for why unions are democratizing, leading scholars on the Egyptian labor movement like Beinin (2012, 2013) El-Mahdi (2011), Bishara (2012b) and Lachapelle (2012) all claim that this movement is important for democratic development. When we see such a huge discrepancy between what the theory tells us, and what observers conclude, it is not given that the theory is right. One should also keep in mind that the existing perspectives are developed in very different contexts (Europe, Latin-America) from the one under analysis (Egypt). The Iranian Sociologist Asef Bayat argues that while researchers should avoid the trap of Middle Eastern exceptionalism – concluding that the Middle East is so special that no "western" theory can be applicable in the region – the strategy of blindly applying theories based on western experience on regional cases might be just as problematic. As he writes:

> "Scholars in the Middle East [tend to] uncritically deploy conventional models and concepts to the social realities of their societies, without acknowledging sufficiently that these models hold different historical genealogies, and may thus offer little help to explain the intricate texture and dynamics of change and resistance in this part of the world" (Bayat 2010, 4).

A similar critique is raised by Beinin and Vairel (2011) in their book on Social Movement Theory in the Middle East. They argue:

> "Studies of the Middle East and North Africa that have employed SMT [Social Movement Theory] have usually limited themselves to using these regions as a source of case studies to validate classical concepts [...]. While the forefathers of SMT have been self-critically discussing the limitations of their formulations for a decade [...] this has had little impact [...] in the Middle East" (Beinin and Vairel 2011, 2).

This criticism calls for reviewing the existing perspectives on trade unions in democratization, instead of just applying them blindly to the Egyptian case. Bayat (2010, 4) criticized a scholar who concluded that there is no women`s movement in Iran because "certain features of Iranian women's activities did not resemble the principle model". Along the same line, I would not conclude that the Egyptian trade union movement is destructive to democratization just because it does not fit with the previous blueprints for unions in democratization. According to Bayat (2010, 5) "a fruitful approach would demand an analytical innovation that not only rejects both Middle Eastern "exceptionalism" and uncritical application of conventional social science concepts but also thinks and introduces fresh perspectives to observe [...] and new analytical tools to make sense of specific regional realities". This is what I propose to do.

In the final part of this chapter, I critique the conflict and consensus tradition and outline a new framework for analysis. This framework is not intended as a new roadmap for how trade unions should behave. The aim is rather to broaden the scope by emphasizing some central dimensions that must be taken into consideration, while leaving it open enough to account for different regional contexts and historical trajectories.

3.3   Trade Unions in Democratization – a New Framework

The problems with both the consensus tradition and conflict tradition are threefold. They have a too narrow conception of trade union impact, a too narrow assessment of democratization and a too narrow methodology. The existing perspectives evaluate the impact of trade unions on the political level only and neglect any influence on an institutional and individual level. They do not seek to answer what type of organization the unions are building, nor how these fit into the existing institutional framework. Furthermore they neglect the views and actions of individuals. This narrow view of impact stems from the consensus and conflict traditions'

28

narrow conception of democratization. Both these perspectives only see democratization as a political process. The possibility that institutional or individual changes can be democratizing in themselves, is not taken into account. According to Ringen`s definition of democracy, one should always review whether trade unions contribute to institutionalize representation, making sure that workers have their say. That includes empowering individuals and building strong and democratic institutions. To do so however, falls outside of the framework of both the consensus and conflict tradition. Therefore, a theoretical and methodological framework that encompasses a broader understanding of democratization is needed.

My goal is to establish a framework that can be used to assess the role of trade unions in a democratization process. There are good theoretical reasons for including both the individual, institutional and political level in the framework. In SMT it has long been established that social movements always impact the individual, institutional and political level, and therefore all must be taken into account (Amenta and Caren 2008; Giugni 2008; Earl 2008). Similarly, scholars of democratization, especially in the global south, have acknowledged that we need to broaden our focus of analysis beyond the purely political. Stein Ringen (2009) argues that the benchmark for democratization should be what it means for people in society, not just how the ruling regime is configured. This draws on Pateman`s (1970) insight that citizen participation is a key factor in building democratic societies. Similarly Törnqvist, Webster and Stokke (2009, 1) argue that the "root cause" for failing democratization processes in the global south today is "flawed representation emanating from both elitist institution building *and* fragmented citizen participation". Democracy is not just about "getting the institutions right" but making sure people have influence on decision making processes, an argument very similar to Ringen`s above mentioned definition of democracy (Törnquist, Webster, and Stokke 2009, 10). Democracy needs institutions that people can use to forward their demands and that the people are made able to participate actively in these institutions. Drawing on all these insights, I will divide my framework into three levels, the individual participatory level, the institutional level and the political level. At all three levels, unions influence democratization. And at all three levels, unions can play either a constructive or a destructive role for democratization.

3.3.1 Individual Level

At the individual level participation in trade unions can contribute positively to democratization in two ways. (1) By making workers feel an increasing sense of agency and

(2) by increasing their trust and participation in democracy on a national level. On the other hand, if unions contribute to increasing sectarian cleavages and strengthening clientelistic mechanisms making people opt for personal instead of collective solutions they play a destructive role on the individual level.

The insight that participation is important for democratization on an individual level is not new. There is a large literature arguing that civil society participation is positive for individual democratic participation, and thus for the functioning of democracy in itself (see Fung 2003; Portes 1998). Robert Putnam (1994) is perhaps the most famous protagonist of this view arguing that by participating in civil society organizations, social capital is created, which again creates a sense of civic culture, mutual trust and tolerance, all important democratic ideals. This is related to an argument raised already by Aristotle, developed by John Stuart Mill, Toqueville and Rosseau; you learn democracy through practicing it at a local level. Mill argued that "we do not learn to read or write, to ride or swim, by being merely told how to do it, but by doing it, so it is only by practicing popular government on a limited scale, that the people will ever learn how to exercise it on a larger" (Mill quoted in (Pateman 1970, 31). To participate in public life forces you to see beyond your own interest, to take the common good into account and weigh this in the decisions you make. Or as Pateman put it: "[i]t is by participating at the local level that the individual learns democracy" (Pateman 1970, 31). Some empirical evidence also shows that trade union participation is correlated with support and participation in national democratic institutions (Fick 2009; Radcliff 2001; Terriquez 2011; Kerrissey and Schofer 2013).

The participation tradition generally, and Putnam`s analysis of social capital specifically, have been criticized for creating an almost deterministic relationship between any kind of participation and the quality of democracy. It seems almost impossible for civil society organizations to have a negative or even neutral effect on democratization in this framework since all participation in any association automatically contributes to democracy. Portes (1998) argues negative impact of participation is indeed possible. If every citizen suddenly joins a terrorist group, with the aim of overthrowing the government and establishing a military dictatorship, that is not necessarily constructive for democracy in itself. Similarly, Paxton (2002, 255) argues that participation in civic groups with sectarian interest or groups that enhance social cleavages instead of social cohesion is indeed destructive, and does not influence democratization positively. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between different types of participation and be clear on exactly how it affects democracy.

30

Based on the discussion above, it is possible to identify two broad dimensions that should be studies when assessing the role of trade unions on the individual level. First, does participation in unions strengthen the members' commitment to and participation in national democracy? Do they function as so-called schools of democracy? If participation in the trade union strengthens a person`s belief in democratic means of fighting, and increases his or her participation in national democracy, this is a positive influence on democratization. A negative role at this level would be unions that strengthen sectarian cleavages and enhance clientelistic ties, very much similar to what Friberg (2002) describes in his study of the trade union movement in Bangladesh. There, union networks are used by trade union leaders for exploitation and personal profit. They use clientelistic ties, and "undermine the possibilities for a functioning democratic rule and weaken the institutional capacity of the state because public resources becomes a tool of political mobilization and a constant source of political instability due to rivalries and fights over privileges" (Friberg 2002, 3). If individuals through their participation get involved in rivalries over privileges and are thrown into a clientelistic social structure within the organization, this would count as negative consequences for democratization.

The second dimension is to what degree the workers feel able to affect their work life. Do workers feel an increased sense of *agency* resulting from trade union participation? If trade unions are able to increase the agency of workers, making them feel that they can affect their work life, they would be playing a very constructive role in the transition. The opposite here would be unions that make the workers feel weak, unable to affect their situation and/or excluded from society.

To sum up, trade unions play a constructive role for individuals if they contribute to spreading a sense of agency among the workers and make them believe and fight for the better of society as a whole, and not just reinforce sectarian cleavages. I have kept these categories broad to accommodate contextual differences.

3.3.2 Institutional Level

At the institutional level, trade unions can play a positive role for democratization through fighting for increased democratization of the industrial relations system and building organizations that have the capacity to implement workers' demands. A negative influence on this level would be unions consolidating an undemocratic industrial relations system and unions that are weak and thus unable to forward workers interests.

In general terms, a democratic industrial relations system means a system that "gives ordinary workers a voice in determining the conditions that shape their work lives" (Stepan-Norris 1997, 475). For this to be realized, workers views must be represented and their interests fought for at all levels. Pitkin has elaborated on the concept of democratic representation and argues that three criteria must be met for representatives to be truly democratic representatives. 1) The representatives must be authorized to act, 2) they must promote the interests of the represented, in this case the workers, and 3) people must have the means to hold their representatives accountable (Pitkin 1967; Urbinati and Warren 2008, 393). For this to be possible some basic civil rights (i.e. freedom of association, freedom of speech) that form the basis of democracy must be in place. There has been a long debate in union studies regarding whether internal union democracy is actually a good or a bad thing for a union. Lipset, Trow and Coleman (1956) argue that internal democracy in a union actually weakens the union and makes it more difficult for the union to get the demands of the workers through. Some degree of oligarchy within the union is not only natural, but desirable. Many have questioned this thesis, like Stephan-Norris (1997), who argues that competition within a union could also strengthen it. In this context, I will not go into this debate of which makes the union stronger, but rather assert with Pitkin that union representatives need to be accountable to their members, and internal democracy is an important part in that.

To secure a democratic and representative industrial relations system is conducive to overall democratization in three ways. First, securing basic rights such as freedom of association and assembly is not only positive for the running of industrial relations, but also needed in order to guarantee free and fair national elections (Fung 2003; Dahl 1971). Second, making workers able to voice their demands and actually affect their situation is democratizing in itself (Stepan-Norris 1997; Törnquist, Webster, and Stokke 2009). As Fung (2003, 523) argues "associations can improve the quality of representation, and so the quality of democracy more broadly, […] when they transmit the needs and preferences of their members to the government". Remembering Ringen`s (2009) definition of democracy as institutionalized control over public decision making, being able to affect your situation at work would be an important part of that. If individuals only affect the political system by voting, they risk becoming "atomized", and completely run over. Civil society organization, like trade unions are needed to ensure that different voices are heard. Third, as Bellin (2000, 183-185) argues, a corporatist labor movement that is deeply dependent on the state is usually concerned with preserving corporatism, while independent and democratic trade unions that

construct their demands in close relations with workers on the ground, are more likely to attack undemocratic practices of the state.

The discussion above leaves us with two ways unions can influence democratization in a positive way on the institutional level. First, does union action contribute to building a democratic industrial relations system that ensures representation of workers? Here, Pitkin`s (1967) three criteria serve well. A union that does not fulfill Pitkin`s requirements for representation – a leadership that is not authorized to act, that is not accountable to its members, that does not forward the interests of its members, that ignores the fight for basic civil rights, or tries to fight against, would be deemed destructive to democratization. The overly corporatist, non-participatory industrial relations system in Egypt in the 1950s (see chapter 2) is a good example of such an un-democratic industrial relations system. The second indicator on the institutional level is the strength of the union. It does not help much that unions are democratically organized and fight for civil rights, if they have no ability to forward these demands, or are able to implement them. Here, the unions' achievements in terms of concessions are a good measure. In addition, their potential power should be measured, understood as the potential to get future demands implemented. Diani (1997) argues that a movement`s structural position, their position in a network of influence, is just as important to use as a measurement of impact, as actual success in implementing demands. So both the degree of implementation and the unions' structural position should be investigated. A negative role on this level would be if the union has no impact and thus is unable to represent the interest of the workers, for example because it is too disorganized.

3.3.3 Political Level

Trade unions contribute positively to democracy on a political level if they manage to influence political parties and legislation in ways that gives legitimacy to the democratic institutions and ensures representation of workers. A negative role on the political level would be trade unions that either completely ignore or actively work to destroy democratic institutions.

The study of the political role of trade unions is of course connected to the other levels, but it deserves to be an analytically distinct factor. The political level is often seen as the most central dimension of union activity. It is also the dimension that concerned the consensus and conflict tradition elaborated on earlier in the chapter. But where the consensus and conflict tradition operationalized political impact as the degree of militancy and the stated

demands of unions, I favor a somewhat broader approach. In order to fully assess the role unions play on the political level, we need to study how the unions relate to politics and how this affects the political institutions in the local context. Richard Hyman (2004) has made a useful distinction between three different ways unions can relate to the political level. The first is business unionism, meaning a strategy where unions seek to be only labor market actors, without any political goals. The second is class oriented unionism, where the trade unions see themselves as involved in anti-capitalist struggle, and workers must unite to change the system completely. The third strategy is social unionism, where the unions seek to work as actors for social integration, aiming for compromise, not unlike the strategy described in the consensus tradition. While these are seen as the most common ways of affecting party politics, it might not be the only ones imaginable. In Habermas' ideal civil society, organizations function as intermediary for individuals and present a reasoned argument proposing changes in policy. These arguments are then taken up by democratically elected politicians who inscribe the policies suggested into law (Habermas 1992; Urbinati and Warren 2008). In this scenario, the workers need not establish their own parties, but rather make sure that their message is heard by the political parties that exist. Other political strategies might also be imagined. It is difficult to deem one political strategy conducive or destructive to democratization in itself. Again, the focus must be on the consequences in the given context.

A union`s wish and ability to influence the political institutions is important for democratization for mainly two reasons. First, it functions as an institutional mechanism ensuring the representation of workers, in line with Ringen`s definition of democracy. Second, it would give legitimacy to and strengthen democratic institutions. To be able to bring the voice of the workers to the political level is an important part of improving their control over decision making and thus improving the quality of democracy. An alternative role for trade unions to play here would be to ignore the political institutions altogether or actively seek to destroy them or replace them with non-democratic institutions. Truly revolutionary trade union movements for example, seeking the destruction of the political system cannot be seen as constructive democratizers. That does not mean that what they do is always harmful to society on all levels, but if the aim is to assess the consequences for *democratization,* trade unions advocating and following a strategy that involves abolishment of those very democratic institutions, have to be deemed destructive.

I have summarized the different dimensions of the new framework in table 3.2. In the analysis chapters (chapter 5-7), I provide an example of how this can be used to assess trade

unions' role in democratization in a more in-depth way than existing perspectives. If we compare table 3.2 to table 3.1, we see that instead of just focusing on stated demands and degree of militancy, we have directed our focus at the broader role trade unions play in transition processes, including the political level, but also the individual and institutional level. This is not a narrow blueprint, claiming that trade unions have to follow a specific ideology, engage in a certain number of strikes, or seek specific alliances in order to be constructive to democracy. It opens up our way of thinking about trade unions in transition, rather than narrowing it. A wide variety of different strategies and union activities might be conducive or destructive to democracy according to this framework. It all depends on how their activity influences the given context.

Table 3.2: Framework for Analyzing Trade Unions' Role in Democratization

	Individual level	Institutional level	Political level
Meaning	Influence on individuals' attitudes and actions	Influence on the industrial relations system	Influence on political institutions
Indicator(s)	• Sense of agency • Commitment to democracy	• Democratization of industrial relations • Ability to implement demands	• Influence on political parties and institutions
Constructive role	• Increasing workers agency • Contributing to establishing democratic consciousness	• Actions leading to democratization of industrial relations • Ability to implement demands and potential to implement future demands	• Ability to forward demands to political parties
Destructive role	• Inability to make workers feel included/represented, increase a sense of exclusion from society • Increasing sectarian cleavages, seeking sectarian or clientelistic solutions rather than collective action	• Actions that inhibits democratization of industrial relations • Inability to implement any workers demands/unwillingness (lack of internal democracy)	• Ignoring or seeking to destroy/delegitimize political institutions. • Unable to forward workers demand to political parties

4 Data and Method

In all research, the research question and theoretical framework are intrinsically linked with the choice of method (Kalleberg 2005). In my case, the research question prompted me to study the activities of trade unions in Egypt, after the fall of Mubarak in 2011. The theoretical framework pushes me to analyze data on the individual, institutional and political level of trade union activities. Also, by choosing to assess actions and consequences of trade union activities, I needed to collect data that enabled me to say something about why unions acted as they did and the consequences of these actions. Even though my research question and theoretical framework guides my choice of methods, the way I have chosen to go about this study is only one of many ways to answer my research questions. The goal of this chapter is to describe what I did, how I did it, and why I did in that way.

4.1 The Cases

The choice that guided this thesis the most was my choice to approach the research question as a case-study. I opted for an in-depth case study of two cases, instead of trying to grasp the trade union movement as a whole, with its 1,000 new unions. The case study method is one of many qualitative methods, and is especially useful when trying to make sense of complex processes, as trade unions role in transition is (Stake 1995). A case study uses data from one or more cases to draw insights about a broader cluster of cases and about more general

processes (Yin 2003, 13-16).The two cases I chose are The Independent Union of Public Transportation Workers (Independent Transportation Workers) and the Independent Movement in the Doctors' Syndicate (Independent Doctors).

The approach of studying two cases instead of the labor movement as a whole was chosen for a number of reasons. First, interviewing representatives and workers in all 1,000 unions seemed unfeasible. If I had wanted to grasp the union movement in its entirety, my sources of data would have been limited to analyzing existing material, like strike statistics and newspaper articles. By collecting in-depth data on two cases instead, I could analyze the role of these specific cases on all three levels: individual, institutional and political. Second, I wanted to study unions on a local, not a national level. To study the national level federations is appealing because one gets the impression that the they constitute a representative sample of what`s going on in Egyptian trade unions through the study of only one or two cases. However, all strikes are organized by the local unions not the federations as discussed in chapter 2. The local unions are the drivers of the trade union movement. Despite this, there are almost no studies concerned with these local trade unions. Therefore I opted for selecting among local or occupation specific unions instead of the federations. The question that remains is why I chose the Independent Transportation Workers and Independent Doctors among all the new union and syndicate initiatives? In the following I give a brief introduction to these two cases, and an argument for why those two cases were fitted for my study.

4.1.1 Independent Transportation Workers

Egyptian public transportation workers represent the formal part of public transportation in greater Cairo. With their around 40.000 workers, organized in 33 different garages, they are responsible for the city buses in greater Cairo, as well as the Nile river boats. Their employer is the Cairo Public Transit Authority (CTA) which is owned by the Cairo governorate. I chose this case because they are a paradigmatic case of new independent unions in Egypt. Their history reflects the history of the Egyptian labor movement. Such paradigmatic cases are good when there is very little research on a subject, which is the case here. In-depth knowledge of one typical example might prove to have broader relevance than deviant cases.

As many other workers at the time, the Independent Transportation Workers organized strikes before the revolution, namely in 2007 and 2009. These strikes were small but significant as they were the first strikes among the transportation workers since the 1970s. As most strikes during that time, they did not have an organizational backing and were deemed

illegal by the administration. After the revolution, in March 2011, they founded an independent union, like several other groups of workers as we have seen. The leaders of this union were the same people who had organized the strikes in 2007 and 2009. After the revolution and with the founding of the independent union, the number of strikes also increased (Al-Sayyid 2011). Whereas two strikes were organized between 2007 and 2011, no less than five strikes took place the next two years: February 2011, September 2011, March 2012, July 2012 and October 2012 (Amin al-Din 2013, 13; Masrawy 2011; al-Alfi 2011). Their demands tie in well with the general picture described in table 2.1. They wanted increased wages and bonuses, new buses and more spare parts for the existing buses. In addition they demanded that the CTA should be moved from the Cairo Governorate to the Ministry of Transportation (Al-Sayyid 2011). The reason for that was that the Ministry of Transportation had more money, and was therefore better able to actually implement their wage and work condition demands. Summing up, the Independent Transportation Workers represent a paradigmatic case of the independent trade unions in Egypt after the revolution, following the general developmental trajectory of similar organizations.

4.1.2 Independent Doctors

In addition to a case representing the workers, I chose a case which is normally deemed outside the scope of labor studies, namely the Independent Doctors. In Egypt, the professional syndicates constitute an active part of Egyptian civil society and they organize a substantial amount of the protests and strikes in the country. Syndicates are however organized somewhat differently than trade unions. It is not an organization only for employees but also employers. A doctor who runs a private clinic can be a member. The syndicates have historically enjoyed larger freedom, because they have not been subject to the ETUF umbrella. The doctors' syndicate has local boards and a national board that is voted in on general assemblies. Large decisions, like the decision to go on strike, can only be taken at a general assembly where all doctors who have paid their fee have the right to attend. The syndicates, and in particular the doctors' syndicate has also been an arena for politics to a larger degree than the trade unions. Since the 1980s the doctors' syndicate has served as a stronghold for the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). In 1992, the MB won the majority of seats in many large cities (including Cairo). Mubarak feared MB`s influence and effectively banned elections in the syndicate, a law that stayed in effect until 2011 (Fahmy 1998).

The Independent Doctors and the Independent Transportation Workers constitute a good pair of cases both because of their differences and because of their similarities. Becker (1998) argues that the golden rule of sampling is to select cases that you believe to be different. Dissimilar cases challenge your thinking and prevent you from jumping to easily to conclusions. The Independent Transportation Workers and Independent Doctors are different on many levels. In addition to having different institutional structures as described, their members represent different social groups, different educational backgrounds and they belong to different parts of the status hierarchy. At the same time, they share several similarities with the Independent Transportation Workers regarding the subject of this thesis, namely their recent strike history and activism. In the mid-2000s the Independent Doctors emerged, critical of the MB and critical of the Mubarak regime. Given that the syndicate was in a political deadlock, those doctors interested in fighting for change had to take their struggle elsewhere, before the revolution. The Independent Doctors won a general assembly majority for starting a strike in 2008, but it was never implemented (Law 2008). After the revolution the supporters of the Independent Doctors grew substantially. In a general assembly in March 2011, only one month after the ousting of Mubarak the Independent Doctors managed to vote through early elections in October 2011, where they won several seats on the board, running as "The Independent List" (Osman 2011). In May 2011, they decided to organize a strike demanding the implementation of their demands. The strike lasted only for one day, but it was the first strike in the doctors' syndicate since 1957 and was in that sense an important step for the independence movement (Fathi 2011). The following year they managed to get a majority for another strike in a general assembly. By this time, many doctors were fed up with the new government not implementing their demands. The strike started October 1st and lasted until December 21st 2012, making it one of the longest strikes in Egyptian history (al-Ahram 2013).

The fact that the Independent Doctors developed in a similar way as the Independent Transpiration Workers, make them a good pair for comparison, despite the rather large differences between the groups. My argument is that if I find similar developments or similar patterns in these two cases despite the differences it is unlikely that they are attributed to the social background of their members or the institutional structure of that specific group. It is more likely to be the result of union activity, which is what I'm trying to assess.

4.2 Types of Data Collected

I rely on three data sources in this thesis: qualitative in-depth interviews, ethnographic observation and newspaper articles. Silverman (2010) argues against using multiple sources of data, claiming that it is a false comfort. It is better to be clear about the limited data you have and analyze this properly, instead of tricking yourself to believing that you have captured all of reality because you have many data sources. Others disagree, saying that the mark of good case-study research is precisely that data is drawn from many different sources to give a more holistic view of the chosen case (Cresswell 2006). I argue that it is not possible to conclude *a priori* what types and how much data is actually needed. This must be dependent on the question you seek to answer and the chosen framework for analysis. In my case, I needed data that allowed me to address the role of trade union on an individual, institutional and political level. In this section, I describe what data I used to analyze the different levels in my framework. All three these levels cannot be addressed with the same data, so I had to draw on different sources to be able to do proper and grounded analysis.

At this point it is important to emphasize that the complete framework with the individual institutional and political level was not developed by the time I started the data collection. The data collection was not done with this framework in mind. However, I knew before the framework was developed that I needed to talk to individual workers in addition to collecting general information about them in order to grasp their role in a satisfying manner. The specific framework was then developed in a process close to what Michael Burawoy (1998) describes as the "extended case method", in the sense that I entered the field with some preconceived theoretical notions of what I would find (the existing perspectives described in chapter 3). However, I realized that the existing models were insufficient to capture my findings and therefore approached other theories related to how organizations impact individuals and institutions in addition to politics. So the framework described in chapter 3 was developed in a dialogue between the data and existing theory. The implication is that even though the study might seem theory-driven in the sense that I have a framework which is applied on empirical cases, it is important to underline that this framework was adapted and developed because existing frameworks did not do justice to the data I had gathered. In other words, the design was developed using an abductive approach.

4.2.1 Individual Level

The goal on the individual level is to assess the role trade union activity plays for the individual worker. The best way to explore this is by talking to the workers themselves. I therefore conducted 20 in-depth interviews with individual workers, lasting from 20 minutes to over two hours, with an average duration of about one hour. Ten of the interviews were with people in the union leadership (five from each case) and ten were with ordinary union members (five from each case). It was important to interview ordinary union members because the impact of trade union participation on individual workers cannot be assessed without also talking to those outside the union leadership. The main indicator at this level is the views and perceptions of workers. The interviews were semi-structured and the informants were asked about how they reacted toward the first strike, how their views developed over time, what made them change their perception of the union and why. I also addressed how they felt about their workplace, what they wanted to see changed and how they felt they could address this change. An argument against this method is that the informants don't remember the events correctly, or that they remember some parts of it more strongly than others. To this, I argue that the point is not to get an "accurate" description of what actually happened. I am after the informants view, and the way he or she has constructed the memory of the trade union activity. In this, what he or she has left out is part of this experience (Smith 2005). In other words, there is no truer account of how the trade union activity influenced them, than how they themselves describe it. Some parts of the qualitative interviews were close to what Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) call "factual interviews", meaning interviews aiming to get factual information about events that actually happened. In this case, the issue of faulty memory is highly relevant, and one should be cautious when using qualitative interviews as sources for factual information. Therefore, I also rely on newspaper sources and documents when describing concrete events like strikes. For example, when one worker speaks about a concrete strike that happened in September 2012, I cite a newspaper article that confirms that there actually was a strike in September 2012. However, I use the informants' statements as data on how this influenced him as a worker.

4.2.2 Institutional and Political Level

At both the institutional and political level the goal is to capture unions' influence on the industrial relations system and political institutions. The interviews conducted with the

leadership are the main sources of data at these levels. I use some of their descriptions of the strikes for example, as factual material (corroborated with newspapers), but mostly I use the interviews on this level of analysis to get their views on strategy and consequences of their actions. I asked them about their relation to politics and political parties, their relation to other unions and union federations, and the organizational procedures inside the union. In addition to interviews with the union leadership I conducted one interview with one of the leaders in the Egyptian Independent Trade Union Federation (EITUF), to get their view on the relationship with the transportation union.

I also draw on material from ethnographic observation on this level. In interviews, people often construct narratives around previous choices, making them seem more thought through, rational and linear than they perhaps were (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). The observation material gave additional perspectives on how the unions' actions came about. When conducting interviews with the union leadership about their strategy and actions, I used my fieldwork experience to understand better he processes they described, and it enabled me to ask better follow-up questions. The observation I did in the workplaces – bus garages and hospitals – gave me a better understanding of how the workers' workday functioned and thus contextualized what they were telling me in the interviews. Therefore, even though the observational material is only cited a couple of times in the analysis, it was important in the overall guiding of the research, and was important to my understanding of the two cases.

Newspapers and archive material from the union was the third source of data used at the institutional and political level. Even though many criticize the lack of free press in Egypt, even after the revolution, there are several newspapers, notably *Al-Maṣrī Al-Yawm*, Egypt Independent and *Al-Ahrām*, which follow strikes and workers issues closely. I do not use their analysis of the strike events, but rely on the factual information about when and where strikes happen for example. Newspapers are also generally used as a reliable source of data on concrete events, especially in the studies of social movements (Earl et al. 2004).

4.3   Practical Implementation of Data Collection

The data collection was conducted between October 2012 and June 2013. The majority of the interviews were conducted between October and December 2012, while some follow up interviews were done in March and June 2013. The collection of archive material and newspapers was a continuous process starting early 2012 and ending around July 2013.

Getting accepted in the unions and recruiting informants was challenging. I first attempted a bottom-up recruitment approach where I talked to random bus drivers in Cairo and doctors in hospitals explaining my project to them. Most of them considered me a foreign spy and wanted nothing to do with me. I therefore changed to a more top-down approach. Through some Egyptian journalists I know, I managed to get a hold of one leading person among the Independent Doctors, and one leader of the Independent Transportation Workers. They became my key informants and helped me gain trust in the hospitals and garages. Without the trust of leading persons in these organizations, the fieldwork would have most probably failed. Most of the interviews were conducted in the workplace (hospitals and bus garages). Five interviews were done in a café. All interviews were done in closed rooms with no one other than me and the informant present. I conducted the interviews in Arabic without an interpreter. All the interviews were later translated and transcribed into English by me. This means that the quotes cited in this thesis are not what my informants actually said, but a translation. The ethnographic observation consisted of participating in one strategy meeting in each union as well as several visits to one hospital and one bus garage in Cairo. I wrote field notes directly after each session in the field, which are used to inform the analysis at the political and institutional level.

4.3.1 Position of the Researcher

David Silverman (2010) advises new researchers to write about subjects that are close to their own reality. I have opted for the exact opposite. Studying Egyptian trade unions means studying a topic that is everything but close to my own reality. The informants are from another culture, speak a different language, have a different class background and work in professions I have never been close to. This social distance between me and them is significant. There are however some factors that reduce this distance and I did take some precautions in order to minimize the possible negative effects of this social distance. First, I knew Arabic well enough to communicate and conduct interviews without an interpreter. Second, I have lived in Egypt in 2009 and 2011 and know the country quite well. This is an advantage, in the sense that I am able to distinguish between phenomena that are visible all over Egypt, and phenomena that are more particular to the group I was studying. At least to a larger degree than if I had travelled there for the first time to do fieldwork.

Nevertheless, there is no denying that my presence impacted my informants. First, the fact that I am male was important. Given the general conservative gender roles in Egypt and

among my informants, I suspect it would have been difficult to gain similar access for a woman, especially if she was foreign like me. Second, the fact that I was a foreigner made the recruitment more complicated as described above. It is also likely that the answers that were given in interviews were affected by the fact that I am a foreigner. This is unavoidable, but not necessarily damaging to the quality of the interview. My sense is that my foreignness allowed me to be ignorant and unknowledgeable about the realities in Egypt. The interviewee thus came in a position of power, in the position of the expert, whereas I, the "stupid" foreigner, was the student. During some interviews however, I noticed from the answers and attitude of the interviewee that he or she did not trust me and did not give me honest answers. Some informants for example insisted that Egypt is a "perfect country" and that no one from abroad must think anything else. "Go back to your country and tell them that we are all fine" is an example from one of these interviews. In these cases, I thanked the informant for his time, aborted the interview and discarded the information. Not because those types of answers were uninteresting, but because it did not help me answer the research question I was interested in. Had I had different traits, a different gender, a different nationality or just been more experienced in conducting research it would naturally have impacted the thesis, but I do believe that the general findings would have been the same, and that my presence did not distort my findings.

4.3.2 Ethical Challenges

The guiding principle when considering ethics is the *do no harm* principle. I attempted to root all my decisions throughout in this principle, and avoid making decisions that I felt broke it. I will discuss the main ethical challenges I encountered in this study.

The first general issue is informed consent, making sure all informants are aware of what the researcher's intentions are, and what the data provided will be used for. Before conducting interviews, I explained briefly what my research was about, why I wanted to talk to them, and in what ways I would use the data. I did not obtain written consent, because they were afraid to give away their signatures on documents. When I attended strategy meetings, the leader of the meeting asked the participants if they accepted my presence after I had briefly explained what the information would be used for.

Regarding confidentiality, another important pillar of ethical research, my informants accepted being interviewed on the terms of being anonymous. I abided by this through removing their names from the quoted statements in this thesis, or adding a false name. I

could not make the names of the cases anonymous however, because I relied on newspaper sources that state their names. The informants inside the leadership might be possible to identify from these newspaper sources, seeing as they are not that many and that some names mentioned in some of the newspaper articles are also my informants. They were made aware of this problem and still accepted to participate.

Often, the most serious ethical challenges are the dilemmas that you have not taken into consideration. As Kai Erikson, argues: "Persons can be injured in ways researchers can neither anticipate in advance nor compensate for afterwards" (quoted in Ryen 2002, 219). In my case, one such incident did occur that I know of. My main informant among the Independent Transportation Workers, who helped me the most during my fieldwork, faced disciplinary hearings after I had left. The administration of the Cairo Transit Authority had never been particularly welcoming to me, but accepted my presence. But then they decided to threaten my main informant with suspension from work on the grounds of letting a foreigner into the workplace. All charges were eventually dropped. I was shocked upon hearing the news, and had not even imagined this possibility. And I had no way of compensating for it. It ended without too much harm being done to him, and he has offered to continue aiding me in my research. Still it confirms Erikson`s argument, it is important to devise your research project in line with ethical principles, but you can never prepare for all potential challenges.

4.4 Strategy for Data Analysis

I treat the answers from my informants as facts about their perceptions of reality. I do not doubt their answer or inscribe false consciousness. I also treat newspaper articles as factual accounts of events. This perspective differs from for example a postmodernist approach, where all knowledge is seen as contextually constructed and where the data from interviews cannot be understood outside the knowledge production context, meaning the interview itself. My approach is often referred to as "naturalism" and is, according to Ryen, the "dominant" position in qualitative research (Ryen 2002, 62).

I adhered to a technique of analysis close to what Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, 212-214) call "meaning oriented analysis". First I read through the material (transcribed interviews, field notes, newspapers) and categorized it in line with the three levels of analysis, namely individual level, institutional level and political level. This process could be called decontextualizing the material. Some parts of the material were categorized into only one category, for example the individual level, whereas other parts of the material, like some

newspaper articles, were deemed relevant for all three levels. After having categorized all materials, I went thought the data on each stage, and summarized the findings and main trends. In the coding stage, I treated the interviews, newspapers and field notes from observations similarly. When conducting the analysis however, I treated the sources of data differently according to what I described in the section on data. While the process of coding the material can be described as decontextualizing the data, the analysis could be seen as recontextualizing the data again within my theoretical framework. In this stage, I tried to answer the research questions posed, and contextualize the data according to how they answered the different sub questions in the thesis. I then reviewed how the conclusions coincided or differed from existing theory and if any broader implications could be drawn. This type of data categorization has its root in grounded theory, but is more deductive in the sense that the categories chosen were not solely developed inductively from the data material itself. In other words, the analysis was "concept driven" rather than purely "data driven" (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 209). Having said that, the categories defined were broad and opened up rather than narrowing in the possible interpretations of the material.

4.4.1 Internal Validity

If I through the data collection and analysis managed to provide a valid image for the groups or organizations I claim to provide knowledge about, the study is internally valid. This is equal to making sure that the research process is up to good quality standards (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). I believe several features with this study secured the internal validity. First, the different sources of material make my findings more robust than if I had only relied on say, newspapers or interviews. Second, all interviews were recorded and transcribed, instead of just relying on notes. When relying on notes, the researcher must conduct rapid interpretation of the material while interviewing which might lead to biased results. Analysis based on transcribed interviews decreases the chance that faulty memory and biased interpretations from the researcher will affect the analysis. Third, all interviews were conducted in Arabic without an interpreter. While many researchers rely on interpreters with great success, I would argue that knowing Arabic in this context increased the quality, and thus the validity of the study. It also gave me firsthand accounts of their experiences and views, instead of an interpreted version. Fourth, when reporting the results as you will see in the coming chapter, I always refer which data source I am drawing upon when presenting

information. I am aware of the differences between the types of data collected, and only use them according to the technique described in the section on data.

4.4.2 Measuring Consequences of Unions Qualitatively

In this thesis, I aim to explore the role of the Independent Doctors and Independent Transportation Workers in the current transition. This involves both an investigation of their actions, and the consequences of their action, as elaborated in chapter 3. To study action and strategy is more straightforward methodologically than the assessment of consequences. To investigate the consequences of social movements and trade unions is deemed the most important but also the most difficult task of social movement research (Amenta and Caren 2008, 475).

There are two main challenges to assessing the consequences of social movements, including trade unions that are not present when just studying their strategy. First, the success or failure of unions to meet their goals might be the result of other actors, not linked to the unions. The success of implementing a union demand for example, often involves decisions made by other actors that the researcher has not studied. For example, if a union fights for changes in legislation, that decision is not taken by the union, but by the state. In the literature on policy change, social movements are generally not deemed to be an important factor (Amenta and Caren 2008), so the burden of proof lies on social movement researchers to prove that movement action actually led to this change. Second, the consequences of movements may reach beyond their stated goals. We have to open up for unintended consequences of their actions. How can the researcher make sure that he detects all these unforeseen and unintended consequences of movement action (Amenta and Caren 2008, 461)?

I address the first challenge by adhering to the counter-factual rule of causality as a benchmark. According to this rule, a union (or any movement for that matter) can be said to have caused something if what we deem as impact could not have appeared in the way that it did in the absence of union action (Amenta and Caren 2008). What I will do, is investigate whether it is plausible that the unions fulfilled this rule. If the consequence observed could have happened without the unions we cannot say that this was a result of union action and therefore not treat it as a consequence of their action. But if we have data that strongly suggests that it could not have happened in the way it did without union action, we can argue that this is a case of trade union impact (Amenta and Caren 2008, 475). There are no rules for

how to measure this using the qualitative data that I have, and proving causality is close to impossible with this data. But by adhering to this rule as a benchmark, I am sure not to make claims of consequences that are not solidly grounded in data. Even so, the statements of I make about impact are not meant to imply proof of causality, but rather a plausible interpretation of the existing data.

The second challenge is solved by clearly defining exactly what I mean by consequences or impact of trade unions. Trade unionism might impact the environment, the family lives of the workers or the traffic in Cairo, but what I am concerned with in this thesis is their consequences on democratization. Through the framework presented in chapter 3 I have specified which indicators that are important when judging the role of trade unions in democratization. I fully acknowledge that I am not able to grasp the full extent of the consequences of their actions, but by having only two case studies and collecting sufficient data material, I believe I am in a position to study their role in the democratization process as I have defined it.

4.5   External Validity and Generalization

There are two ways to look at my case studies in this thesis. On the one hand they are "intrinsic", meaning that I am interested in what role the Independent Transportation Workers and Independent Doctors play in the current transition. Very little is known about the post-revolutionary strike activism, so the data from these cases is valuable in itself. However, the case studies are also "instrumental", meaning that they are chosen because they have relevance beyond their own context (Stake 1995). I cannot say that the conclusions in this thesis are externally valid for all trade unions in Egypt, but the data from these cases can be used for generalization in two ways. First, my findings will generate new hypothesis of how Egyptian independent unions and syndicates impact democratization, and may have implications for how we read the data we already have on trade unions in Egypt. Second, they can enhance our general understanding of what roles unions can play in a political transition. As Gobo argues "There are two kinds of generalizations: a generalization about a specific group or population (which aims at estimating the distribution in a population) and a generalization about the nature of a process" (Gobo 2007, 3). Another way of putting the same distinction is that you may aim at statistical significance, or sociological relevance of the population you are studying (Gobo 2007, 19). In my study, I focus on the latter. And if the goal is to illustrate a sociologically relevant process, then the number of cases is not really

significant. You only need one good case to illustrate a process, or generate new hypothesis. Consider Karl Poppers principle of falsification. Only one case is needed to falsify a theory. Even though we can never formally prove that a theory was correct, we can prove some theories wrong, and generate new insights that may be tested and developed in other contexts. The mechanisms I describe and the theoretical arguments I make, may therefore be used to generate new knowledge about trade unions in other contexts.

5   Individual Level Analyzed

This thesis aims to answer the following research question: *What role do the Independent Doctors and the Independent Transportation Workers play in the current political transition?* I have developed a framework for understanding the role of trade unions in transition processes where the role trade unions play is analyzed on the individual, institutional and political level. In the following three chapters I will analyze the case studies at all three levels, starting with the individual level in this chapter. At all three levels, unions may play a destructive or constructive role for democratization. The reason for this is that democracy is not just about political institutions. For a democracy to thrive you also need active citizens (individual level) that are able to voice their views in democratic institutions (institutional level). To what degree are the Independent Doctors and Independent Transportation Workers able to play a positive role at these two levels? Are they a positive force pushing Egypt towards democracy, or are they contributing to increased political instability?

At the individual level, unions can contribute positively to democratization in two ways. First of all by making the workers feel an increased sense of agency through their participation in the unions and secondly through increasing the workers commitment to democracy. Both these dimensions are in line with Ringen's (2009, 25) definition of democracy. Being able to control your work situation (increased agency) helps increase individuals' control over decision making processes while an increased democratic

commitment is an essential factor in facilitating trust in democratic institutions, as argued in chapter 3.

One indication that the individual workers feel that participating with the Independent Doctors and Independent Transportation Workers is worthwhile, is that the level of activism has increased the last years for both cases. The doctors organized a strike in 2012 from October until December - one of the longest strikes in Egypt's history -, and the Independent Transportation Workers organized five strikes in less than two years after the revolution (al-Ahram 2013). This indicates that the workers see the union as a good channel to voice their protests through. However, in order to fully assess their role on the individual level it is important to understand the motivations behind their participation and also how they view these strikes and what they mean to them. It is not given that this participation leads to increased democratic consciousness, even if this is assumed in participatory theories on democracy. Nor is it given that they feel an increased sense of agency through participation. They might be frustrated by the lack of influence on union policy or dismayed by the lack of concessions they are getting from their employer. I will first address the question of democratic consciousness, before I move on to agency.

5.1 Democratic Consciousness

In this section I review the impact of trade union activism on the *democratic consciousness* of the individual workers. This means two things, (1) the degree to which they view their participation as part of a struggle for democracy or political change and (2) their interest and willingness to participate in democracy on a national level as a result of trade union participation. I begin with how the workers themselves see their struggle.

"You will never get a worker to strike for anything except higher wages". This is a quote from Ali, a central figure in the leadership of the Independent Transportation Workers. In his view, unions should not try to fill the heads of workers with political ideology. The union is most efficient at mobilizing when they focused on things which directly affected workers, namely wages and working conditions. The rest of my informants confirmed this picture. When asked why they participate in strikes, all − including most of the leadership figures − cite wages and working conditions as the main reasons. As Hussein, a member in the Independent Doctors explains: "What is the point of going to work, if you can`t provide for your family? If you can`t feed your children or pay the rent? We need higher wages". Regarding working conditions, both doctors and transportation workers agreed that the state

of their workplaces was not good enough: "Our hospitals are not hospitals, they are garbage. It is impossible for me to do my work here" argued Amina, a central member in the doctors' strike committee. For the transportation workers, the poor working conditions were manifested in the lack of buses, and the lack of spare parts for repairs. The demands of the various strikes confirm this picture. Higher wages and better working conditions have been the two central demands for both the Independent Transportation Workers and the Independent Doctors (se chapter 4).

Some of my informants cited other reasons than wages for joining strikes. Most prominent was the sense that they had a revolutionary right to protest. As one doctor was quoted saying in a demonstration organized by Doctors Without Rights during the 18 days of protest against Mubarak: "This is not only about our wages, this is about holding those in power accountable and about getting our freedoms" (Mardell 2011). My informants had similar positions, arguing that the revolution was about social justice and getting their rights as workers, rights which they now realized they had to fight for. A related aspect brought up by almost all my informants was the fight against corruption, or more precisely the fight against corrupt leadership. Both the Independent transportation workers and the doctors spoke about "cleansing" (*taṭhīr*) the leadership, a term used all over Egypt after the revolution, referring to the removal of corrupt officials from the Mubarak era (*fulūl*). Among the Independent Transportation Workers this manifested itself in their desire to remove their employer Mona Mostafa, the leader of the Cairo Transit Authority (al-Sharqawy, Hamza, and al-Umda 2011). Similarly, the Independent Doctors' first demand after the revolution was the removal of Hamdy Sayyid, the leader of the doctors' syndicate since 1979 and a strong supporter of Mubarak (Fathi 2011). They felt that al-Sayyid and the other leading figures in the syndicates were not real representatives and cited the desire for better representatives as an important reason to join the protests. As Islam, a middle-aged doctor who actively supported the Independent Doctors explained:

 "You know, our leaders do not represent us. Who do they have as leader for the syndicate? Some guy who has been "successful in this and that hospital". Successful how? He has made a lot of money, and owns hospitals. They are all like that. None of them are from us. We really need to get rid of all of this, to get rid of these people from the private sector. They are not like us and do not represent us".

The doctors also blamed the Ministry of Health for corruption and demanded the removal of the minister himself. During a demonstration in front of the Ministry of Health in November

2012, the activists spray painted a sign so it no longer read "Ministry of Health", but "Ministry of Corruption " (*wizārat al-fasād*) instead.

Last, some of my informants in the doctors' syndicate said they joined the strikes because they were fed up with the system as a whole. As Amr, a young aspiring doctor who had just started working after finishing his education, told me in frustration:

> "The whole system is broken. For example, I had a patient almost dying, but there was no bed in the intensive care unit. So I had to search the hospital for a bed, but didn`t find it. And one time, a patient died because of this. So you feel that the citizens have no value. And the problems were evident in everything. Everything was done with favoritism and nepotism".

Summing up, wages and work conditions were the main reasons for both the Independent Doctors and the Independent Transportation Workers to go on strike. However, not all but some of the informants, especially among the doctors, mentioned other reasons such as fighting against corrupt officials, demanding democratic representation, and an overall fight to change the system. Can we see this as an increased democratic awareness due to union activity?

Most of my informants would not have gone on strike if the aim was not increased wages or better work conditions. The fight against corrupt officials is the closest we get to people joining the struggle because they want to fight for democracy. There was a genuine desire to rid the syndicate of old and corrupt officials, and to fight them with democratic means through the syndicate elections. On the other hand, they did not see the strikes as a fight for democracy nor did they mention democracy as a justification or goal for their struggle. Democratic politics was not what was on their mind, and the establishment of democratic institutions was not the reason they strike. This lacking interest in democracy is confirmed when we investigate the workers commitment to democracy on a national level.

We often think of union activists as politically engaged persons, deeply involved and interested in politics. Among my informants however, both in the Independent Transportation Workers and among the Independent Doctors, only a very small minority could be described as engaged in national politics. For example, less than fifty percent of my informants voted in the elections that followed the 2011 revolution. Of those who voted, some voted for Muhammed Mursi, some for the socialist candidate Hamedeen Sabbahy and others voted for the liberal candidate Amr Moussa. But most of them stayed home. When asked direct questions about democracy, none of my informants had given it much thought. Many

54

expressed skepticism about the importance, or feasibility of participating in elections, and had little trust in politicians. As one of the transportation workers explained: "You know, these elections are useless anyway. Do you think this guy who is elected will represent me, or help me with my problems?" President Mursi`s constitutional declaration on November 22nd 2012, seen by most observers and analysts as a blatant attack on democratic institutions, was not of great concern to my informants. As Ali, one of the leaders in the transportation union told me:

> "You know, they have tried to take away all his tools and still expect him to govern. All he is doing is making himself able to work. It`s like a carpenter you know. If you take away the hammer and the nail from the carpenter, how do you expect him to work? The president can`t have all these institutions blocking his decisions".

Some did not defend Mursi, but would rather see the return of Husni Mubarak. As one bus driver told me "I loved Husni Mubarak, he made the country go in the right direction (*timshī ṣaḥḥ*)". Others stated that they did not care about politics whatsoever. Stability and security were more important factors: "I have no interest in politics. I don`t read newspapers.  But I see that they still don`t have a constitution. We need [a constitution] in order to have stability. All we really want is security and food to eat", explained one of the transportation workers.

There are a few exceptions to the general picture portrayed above. One of my informants, Khaled, was active in the strike committee for the doctors and in the Strong Egypt Party (*miṣr al-qawiyya)*, one of the more influential opposition parties. He said that "democracy was the only way to get Egypt on the right path" and constantly spoke to other doctors about the importance of participating in elections. Three other informants, two transportation worker and one doctor shared similar views. Others like Muhammed who said he was a "salafist", had political affiliations, even though they cared little about politics. However, among those who had a political affiliation, all of them claimed that this started long before their work in the unions. Thus, there was no link between their union activity and political engagement. My data is not a representative sample, and consequently we cannot draw any firm conclusions of political engagement on the general level in these unions. What the data does show is that there is no absolute link between being a union activist and participating and supporting democracy on a national level.

5.2 Increased Agency: Independent Transportation Workers

Among the transportation workers all my informants claimed that participation in the independent union allowed them to voice their grievances to someone that cared about their views. Before the Independent Transportation Workers was established, the state controlled pro-Mubarak union was the only alternative for the workers. Membership in this union was compulsory, but none of my informants felt that it actually represented them. The unionists there were not themselves workers and were seen by my informants as representatives of the administration and the government rather than someone interested in workers' rights. As Abdallah, a ticket collector in the *Imbābae* garage explains:

> "We used to not gain anything from these unionists. A unionist here for us as transportation workers meant a guy who came a couple of days before the election, and then disappeared and never returned before his term ended. Just appearing right before an election and running away again. And they would always be supportive of the old regime and the administration, at the expense of the workers".

Before the establishment of an independent union, my informants were very afraid to speak out and protest, despite being unhappy with their working conditions. "Before the revolution we were oppressed *(maẓlūm)*. The wages were low, and prices high (…) but we couldn't speak. We would have been beaten up, arrested", a repairman in the *Maẓallāt* garage explained. A worker in *Imbābe* garage expressed similar views: "I could not participate in a strike during the Mubarak era. I have a family. You know, the security forces would have beaten us". The fear for repression both physically and financially was very much present and served as a huge challenge.

The 2011 revolution marked a turning point for my informants. There was a marked shift in attitude, from the fear of participating, to a sense that everyone should fight for their rights. Islam, a member of the Independent Transportation Workers explained that he felt he had a sense of revolutionary right to express their grievances and change their situation. As he put it: "It was a feeling that you had to state your view, claim your rights, it was a democracy".

The new independent union was important in channeling the workers' desire for change. The leadership started to talk to the workers about their rights and the problems with the administration, and met "much better response than before the revolution" according to one union leader. Explaining workers their rights during breaks at work was an effective tool

for building support according to the union leadership. A union leader also explained how they "organized large meetings where workers explained problems they had, and we suggested how they could fix it". This was very much appreciated by my informants outside the leadership. All expressed a sense that "before we didn't know about our rights, but now we do". Through the active work of independent unionists making the argument that fighting for their rights was a fight worth taking, they convinced an increasing number or workers to join the Independent Transportation Workers and participate in strikes. For example, the strike in September 2011 had much higher participation than the 2007 and 2009 strikes, according to the leadership.

Hamdy, a bus driver from the *Imbāba* garage, is a good example of how the Independent Transportation Workers helped convince workers that fighting for change was worthwhile. The poor working conditions and low wages had annoyed him since before the revolution, but he neither dared, nor knew how, to do anything about it. For him, the entry of Tareq, the local independent union leader, convinced him that voicing your opinion is a good and important thing.

> "We felt that Sheikh Tareq actually spoke in the name of the workers, in truth. He discovered the problems and addressed them. (…) Many workers felt problems, but in general they have very little education. They feel that there is a problem, but don`t know how to express it or address it. So I felt that Sheikh Tareq managed to convey the problems that we all felt, but were unable to convey ourselves. (..) Instead of a unionist that was not present for 6 years like the old union, Tareq was a unionist that was with us 24 hours a day".

My observations seemed to confirm that the new independent unionists dealt actively with workers' rights. All the union leaders I interviewed received at least five phone calls during our on average one hour conversations. The phone calls were often related to a problem experienced by a worker, whereby the union leader suggested a solution. It could be related to how to deal with the administration, how to complain if someone felt mistreated, or how to check that they had actually received what they were supposed to on that month's pay check.

All my informants stated that the independent union had made it easier to voice their protests, and all expressed that their work situation had gotten better over the last years. They appreciated the concessions the administration gave, the increase in bonuses and new spare parts. However, not all agreed on the decisions of the union leadership, and not all of them supported every strike. For example, a few of my informants, generally positive to the

Independent Transportation Workers, felt that the strikes in 2012 were unnecessary. Like Ali, a repairman in *Maẓallāṭ* garage said:

> "The union was established right after the revolution and I joined it. Then we struck in 2011. I supported this, and it helped us. We got higher wages. But the strikes this year [2012] have been useless! They had no real demands. It was not the right time to strike. We know that the country is in a difficult situation right now, and we have to help out, not go on strike".

Disagreement over whether or not a union should go on strike is not necessarily a sign that the workers felt no agency. Quite the opposite, it shows how individual workers felt that they could decide for themselves whether they should join or not. Before the independent union was there, they had no option and no one dared to strike. Now, they had the possibility of supporting an independent union, but also a possibility to oppose their decision. Disagreements such as this indicate a non-authoritarian climate where opposition was allowed. To have workers questioning the judgment of the leadership also puts pressure on the union leaders to be accountable. They cannot do as they please and still count on the support of their workers; they have to earn it.

Summing up, the fact that union participation increased after the founding of the independent union, is a good indicator that workers felt the union was improving their situation. All my informants stated that they saw the demands raised by the union as relevant, and that they felt they could voice grievances to them, be heard, and thereby affect their situation. These are strong indications that transportation workers did indeed feel an increased sense of agency after the founding of the independent union, because they "finally" got someone who represented them.

5.3   Increased Agency: Independent Doctors

The indications of increased agency I observed among the Independent Transportation Workers also proved true for the Independent Doctors. After the revolution, levels of participation increased dramatically. The increasing activism culminated in one of Egypt`s longest strikes from October until December 2012 (al-Ahram 2013). While the doctors among my respondents were more ambivalent about the independent strike leaders than the transportation workers, they felt the increasing activism from the Independent Doctors helped them in voicing their grievances and changing their work situation.

Prior to the revolution, the only group pressing for change in the public sector health system was Doctors Without Rights, an NGO started up by doctors, and committed to comprehensive reform of the health system (Doctors-Without-Rights 2007). They tried to mobilize for strike action once prior to the revolution, but it was never implemented (Abd al-Sattar 2012). According to the independent leadership this was due to a combination of fear of repression, lack of experience in the strike committee, and that neither the Muslim Brotherhood nor the Mubarak-loyalists in the syndicate were supportive of strike action. One leader of the Independent Doctors in Alexandria describes the situation in the following way:

"No one believed that anything was possible to change before the revolution. People were thinking of themselves and said there was no use. They either adapted to the system, (…) just stopped working entirely in the government sector but took the wage. This was not written, but you felt it. The people who didn`t acclimate or accept the system stayed in Egypt to get their specialization and certificate, but then just travel abroad. So people either acclimated to the system, or fled from it. No one fought it. We wanted to do something, really. But you know, the syndicate was weak and supportive of the regime. It was a part of the regime, really".

The revolution increased the will to mobilize drastically. The experience of successfully overthrowing Husni Mubarak influenced all my informants, within and outside the leadership of the Independent Doctors. They described how they wanted to make changes, quickly. The story of Atef, a doctor who was 26 at the time of the revolution is symptomatic of the stories told by my informants:

"For example, I was 26 in 2011. Until I was 26 I didn`t vote in any election. I thought it was ridiculous. I didn`t think it would change anything. It was no use. We were all living in this situation. But then came 25th of January. I felt something new was happening. My whole life I had not felt anything like this. I felt that our country did not exist before this. After that, I mean, the president resigned and there was a euphoric revolutionary feeling. We really felt that we wanted to change something. We felt that when we were able to get rid of an oppressive regime like Mubarak`s it would be possible to do greater things as well".

The newfound willingness to mobilize and change society was evident already in the doctors' general assembly of March 2011. Before the revolution, few attended the general assemblies in the doctors' syndicate and contested issues were seldom discussed. In March 2011, the scene was completely changed. According to my informants, over a thousand doctors attended, whereas before the revolution you were lucky to have 200 doctors there. According

to media reports, no general assembly in the doctors' syndicate had been this well attended in over 20 years. A private Egyptian TV channel concluded that "the spirit of the revolution has clearly reached the professional syndicates" (ON-TV 2011b) and videos taken during the assembly confirms this picture.[11] Activists refused to acknowledge the authority of the old syndicate leadership, stormed the stage where the leadership was sitting, took their microphones and started a shouting match with Essam El-Erian, who was the cashier in the union and headed the general assembly. This activist spirit and high degree of participation was upheld in the general assembly the 1st of May 2011, where the first decision to strike was made (Fathi 2011). In addition to high participation in general assemblies, many small activist groups were founded. The most notable among these was the Egyptian Doctors Coalition (*'itilāf 'aṭibā' maṣr*). One of the founders explained that after the revolution, many doctors "had this feeling that they wanted to do something, but the problem was that nobody really knew how to direct it. How to use it".

The early post-revolutionary activist spirit experienced a setback in May 2011. After successfully organizing a six hour strike on the 10th of May (Fathi 2011), the planned full strike on the 17th of May was cancelled before it had even lasted a full day. The official reason was that negotiations to better the condition for doctors was underway (Elyan 2011), but the real reason, according to the strike leadership, was that the doctors were not used to strike as a tool. "People were not ready for it" one of the leaders in the strike committee told me. "They thought that if you strike one day then the government will abide by your claims the second day. But of course they didn`t. So people got angry, and the strike was dissolved". In addition, doctors are not used to collective action. "They refused to strike, because they wanted to use middlemen (*wasṭā*), and solve problems by themselves. Doctors are used to think of the sick, and feel that strike is a thing which is against their job and what they are supposed to do". The organization was weak and there were few activists present outside Cairo to coordinate the strike in the governorates, according to my informants. A more accurate description than saying it failed is that it never really started. Among my informants outside the strike leadership, I found no one who had participated in the May 2011 strike. They all told me that they had not believed in the strike, or were afraid that it might hurt patients.

After the failed strike in May 2011 the participation in the subsequent general assemblies in June and October 2011 were not well attended according to my informants and

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[11] Private footage taken from the general assembly http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F67GHuwswZQ

they did not win a majority for any new strikes. Despite early enthusiasm after the revolution, the leadership of the Independent Doctors described that they had to fight a constant struggle mobilizing the doctors and convincing them that it was possible to change the system. They mentioned three main obstacles to mobilization that are not present for most other workers. First, most doctors think of their job as an essential public service, and that it would harm the sick if they went on strike. Second, doctors often seek individual instead of collective solutions. They fix their problem through connections instead of taking the systemic fight. Third, and perhaps most important, the work in the public sector hospitals is not the only source of income for the vast majority of doctors. All the informants I interviewed worked in the private sector in addition to public hospitals. This meant that they had much less incentive to actually go out and fight to change the system than other workers, like the transportation workers. If the working conditions were poor in the public sector hospitals, they could just rely on their private sector job. So to mobilize people to fight for change in the public sector was really challenging. In order to fight the pessimistic spirit, the Independent Doctors continuously worked to convince the doctors of the feasibility of strikes and protest, and that it was in all doctors' interest to press for changes in the public health sector. An upside for the Independent Doctors was the syndicate elections in October 2011. Here they won control in 13 out of 27 governorates running as the "Independent List" (Osman 2011). This election victory proved that there was a real desire for change among some doctors and that the doctors thought it would be a good thing to vote for change, despite the challenges to mobilization that have been mentioned.

The real test of the willingness to mobilize among the doctors came in October 2012, when what was to become a three month long strike was initiated. In September 2012, the Independent Doctors managed to once again mobilize a substantial crowd for the general assembly and vote for a strike (Barsoum 2012). This time the strike was better organized and people were prepared. Strike committees were in place in almost every governorate, and many doctors had gotten more used to the idea of striking. The central strike committee had statistics over how many percent of the doctors that participated in the strike from day to day.[12] These numbers showed a very high participation rate the first weeks, where the numbers nationwide were around 85%. By mid-November participation had slowly gone down but around 75% of all doctors participated. But after a while these high participation

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[12] The numbers were published don the strike committee`s Facebook page every during the strike. They can still be found at https://www.facebook.com/docstrike2012

rates were difficult to maintain. On the 22nd of November, President Muhammed Mursi shocked all Egyptians by declaring a constitutional declaration that effectively put him over the legislature (Kirkpatrick and al-Sheikh 2012). This stole the attention of most Egyptians, including the doctors and made the strike seem unimportant. As one of the strike leaders explained: "The constitutional declaration made it really difficult for us. It drew our attention away from what was actually important. It took our energy, and it made it more difficult for the government to give in to our demands. They had more important things to care about". When the strike entered its third month, December, pressure was mounting. The participation rate dropped to around 60%, and many wanted to call off the strike. Like Mustafa, an old doctor in Shubra hospital expressed: "I am against the strike now. Don`t you see that the whole country is in disarray? The economy is suffering. I agree with the demands, but why do we need them right now? Can`t we just give them some time to fix things? Mursi and his government want reform, and I believe they can deliver if we just let them. We should talk, not strike". Many were especially angry with the fact that other workers got their demands implemented after only a short strike, whereas the doctors never got the governments attention. As one frustrated informant told me during a rally for doctors' rights during the strike: "The metro workers got their demands implemented after three hours of strike. We have been striking for three months but nobody is listening to us". The Cairo Metro Workers did strike on 14th of November, and the strike was called off after only three hours when the Ministry of Transportation gave into their somewhat smaller demand of firing the head of the Metro company (Gharib 2012).

Whereas the lacking effect of the strike created a sense of hopelessness among many doctors, the "Doctors' Youth Coalition" wanted more radical action instead. They were fed up with the partial strike the strike committee was running. "In order to have an effect you need a full strike, close the hospitals. Then, and only then, will the government listen to our demands" one of their leaders explained. The strike committee refused this proposal saying it was against human rights and that closing the hospitals would amount to "deliberately killing citizens" (Ali Hassan and Al-tayyib 2012). So the calls for full strike were rejected and the partial strike continued, meaning that the emergency ward would still be open. An emergency general assembly was convened 21st of December, and the strike was suspended, without any of the demands being met (al-Ahram 2013).

The impact of October-December 2012 strike on doctors is not one-sided. By the end of the strike in December 2012 many doctors were fed up with the strike committee and

therefore voted to end the whole thing. Many of my informants expressed annoyance that the demands had not been met and doubted whether it was worthwhile continuing to fight within the syndicate. From this perspective, one could conclude that doctors did not feel an increased sense of agency as a result of the Independent Doctors' mobilization for strikes. However, if we compare the situation to before the revolution, there are arguments supporting that doctors indeed feel an increasing ability to affect their work situation. To be able to run one of Egypt's longest strikes in history is an impressive show of mobilization in itself, and indicates that many doctors felt fighting was worthwhile. During some visits to hospitals in October and November, the mood was also one of optimism, and most doctors then felt the strike was going well. It was not before the end of the strike that my informants' view turned negative. Many of my informants that were interviewed in October and November 2012 were happy that the syndicate finally cared about their rights, and most of them thought it worthwhile striking for better rights, something they previously had deemed useless. Also, we see a learning curve for the individuals concerning strikes. In May 2011 workers did not know what a strike was. This experience helped them organize a better strike and made them able to use this tool to affect their situation, something they had not been able to previously. As one of the strike leaders put it "We learned a lot since the last strike in May [2011]. Now we know how they are trying to trick us, and we can fight back. Also the doctors are more used to the thought that strike is a possible and good way to get your demands through". The situation is comparable to what Rick Fantasia (1989) describes in his analysis of a hospital in the USA. He argues that workers get a heightened sense of agency and develop a "culture of solidarity" during strike actions that might disappear again shortly after. But even though this sense of agency and solidarity is not visible at all times, these instances of collective mobilization increases the overall sense of solidarity, and makes it easier for the workers to mobilize next time. So even though many doctors felt regret at the end of the strike, it is reasonable to argue that an overall sense of increased agency is identifiable among the doctors now, comparing to before the revolution and before the strikes.

5.4   Summing Up: Individual Level

The informants interviewed in the two cases in question have an increased sense of agency as a result of their participation, but there is no indication that their democratic consciousness, interest in democratic politics or willingness to partake is in democracy on a national level increased. Regarding agency, the overall result is that workers do indeed express an increased

ability to affect their own work situation, after joining the independent unionists. They see the union as a good place to voice their grievances and feel that expressing their views to them and participating in the strikes has a positive effect. This partly confirms what theories of participatory democracy and social capital claim, that local participation fosters active citizens more aware of their own situation, with an increased ability to affect the situation they are in. Even though I found differing levels of commitment and support of the Independent Doctors' and the Independent Transportation Workers' decisions, I observed an emerging "culture of solidarity" (Fantasia 1989) where the workers felt that a collective fight was indeed worthwhile pursuing to better their own situation. A feeling they described as not present before these activist groups entered the scene

There is no clear evidence supporting that unions contribute strongly to a democratic consciousness, understood as a commitment to democratic means of struggle. In general, the level of political engagement among my informants was low. More importantly, democracy or the fight for a democratic political system was not a reason for the workers to join the unions. This conclusion differs from for example El-Mahdì (2011) who claims that the strikes in Egypt have a very political nature, and that workers gain an ever increasing class consciousness that will lead them to fight for democracy. She infers this from the number of strikes and some of the stated demands. I believe the conclusion I arrived at is different because I actually talked to workers on the ground, not only the leaders who tend to be more politically oriented. My conclusion is strengthened by the fact that I only interviewed people sympathetic to the independent unionists, and who were supportive of strikes. It is reasonable to assume that those did not even participate in the unions do not have a higher degree of democratic awareness or consciousness. The lack of evidence for an increased democratic awareness also contradicts theories stating that participation in civil society automatically transfers to a commitment to democracy on a national level (Putnam 1994).

There is no evidence to support that unions have an explicit negative impact on democratization on the individual level. There was no evidence of increased sectarian cleavages or a desire to seek individual instead of collective solutions. This means that the general clientelistic structure of Egyptian society (Lust 2009) seems to be transcended, or at least threatened, by these unions. Such structures of societies are often imported in organizations like trade unions, as Friberg (2002) found in his study of Bangladesh. If the trade unions in Egypt are able to overcome this and get people to work together without depending on clientelistic mechanisms the unions play a positive role in decreasing the

patrimonial character of the Egyptian society. One should be wary drawing a firm conclusion based on this data, but it remains an interesting finding worthy of further exploration.

A final question that needs to be addressed is whether the increased agency we see is actually the result of union activity, or if it is just a result of the revolution? My informants cite the demonstrations against Mubarak as decisive in changing their views just as often as the unionists or activists. The transportation workers for example, in many ways established their union as a result of the revolution. And the increased activism at the general assemblies of the doctors in 2011 could be read as a result of the revolution. To this, I would counter that the Independent Transportation Workers and Independent Doctors still played an important role in providing a channel where this new sense of activism was directed, and could be fostered. If the unions had not been there, it is likely that the activism would have died out. As we saw, activism was low among the doctors from May 2011 until October 2012. When they managed to mobilize a three month strike in October 2012, this was not just due to revolutionary euphoria, but to the hard work of mobilizing from the unionists. One of my informants confirmed this view by saying "The first decision to make a strike [in 2011] was because of the air of revolution, but now [in 2012] it is the air of necessity". The Independent Doctors and the Independent Transportation Workers were born out of the "air of revolution", but it was their sustained work in mobilizing for strikes and demonstrations that yielded workers who felt able to affect their work situation even two years after the overthrow of Mubarak. The conclusion is that the cases under study did contribute positively to an increased sense of agency among the workers, but there is no indication that they helped foster a democratic consciousness for their members.

6 Institutional Level Analyzed

How do the Independent Doctors and the Independent Transportation Workers influence democratization on the institutional level? As outlined in chapter 3, the two main indicators on this level are (1) democratization of industrial relations and (2) the ability of unions to implement demands. Democratization of industrial relations helps the workers forward demands to the employer and secure agreements. This increases their influence over collective decision making processes, as Ringen`s definition of democracy states. How much of the workers' demands they are actually able to implement is equally important. It is not much help if the workers can voice their demands at all levels, but the union is powerless to push for implementation.

6.1 Democratizing Industrial Relations

As described in chapter 2, the industrial relations system established under Nasir in the 50s, which remained in place until 2011, was highly undemocratic. Only one trade union federation was allowed, ETUF, where membership was compulsory. Strikes were banned until 2002, and after 2002 you still needed permission from the state-controlled union to strike. Trade union elections were subject to widespread fraud, and the elections of 2006 were especially fraudulent. Reformist candidates were banned from running and only candidates

loyal to Mubarak`s National Democratic Party (NDP) were on the ticket (Bishara 2012a; Beinin 1989).

The two cases studied here both attempt to change the industrial relations system, but through two different paths. Where the Independent Transportation Workers effectively broke the trade union monopoly by establishing a union independent of the old structure, the Independent Doctors took their fight to the old syndicate, trying to reform it from within. I describe the two groups' efforts separately in the following.

6.1.1 Independent Transportation Workers: Enforcing Democracy From Below

I will address three issues when reviewing the role of Independent Transportation Workers in the democratization of industrial relations. I begin with the strategy of the Independent Transportation Workers towards the industrial relations system. Then, I explain how their strategies played out and had consequences for the industrial relations system. Last, I discuss to what degree workers on the ground actually had a say in affecting the agenda of the new independent union. I show that the Independent Transportation Workers did not have a strategy to democratize industrial relations. Furthermore, they did not, nor do they now, fight for changes in broad legislation. Despite this, they made an important contribution to democratization of industrial relations by establishing a union independent of the ETUF-monopoly. The union that the Independent Transportation Workers established was more democratically organized than the state-controlled one.

Industrial Relations Strategies

The stated demands of the Independent Transportation Workers were limited to workplace issues. The most structurally or politically oriented demand they raised was to transfer the governance of public transportation from Cairo Governorate to the Ministry of Transportation. But as they claimed themselves, the reason for demanding this was only that the Ministry of Transportation was in a better position to implement increased wages and better working conditions. Some of the workplace demands are still possible to interpret as political, in the sense that they are an implicit attempt at fighting privatization. The independent unionists see the deterioration of the wages and working conditions as a part of a government scheme to completely privatize public transportation. As Khaled explained:

"If you want to sell the CTA, what do you do? You make sure that the busses are in horrible shape, that there are no spare parts. This way, they make us useless, because they don`t give us anything to work with. And when you have managed to make us useless, privatization is an easy argument to sell".

No one in the leadership explicitly mentioned a struggle aimed at a democratic industrial relations system. This is also reflected in the fact that they did not mobilize a protest or strike in support for any broad changes in the industrial relations system. They stayed away from the struggle for a law guaranteeing union pluralism for example. As Ali, one of the top leaders in the union explained:

"We are in solidarity with the demand of freedom of association, and we express our solidarity as individuals (…) But you see, that is a political demonstration. We, as a union, fight for our rights. But any political demands, like changes in legislation are up to the parliament. We can be in solidarity with it, but not strike for it. We can only strike for our own demands".

The establishment of a trade union freedom law was the most important demand for the two federations for independent unions. The Independent Transportation Workers never cooperated fully with these federations; they worked on their own instead. The leaders of the Independent Transportation Workers mentioned several reasons for not cooperating with the federations. First of all, they were perceived as too weak:

"They benefit from having us as a member, but we don`t gain anything from cooperating with them. When they try to mobilize a demonstration, a couple of hundred people turn up. When we transportation workers mobilize, over 10,000 people show up. So why should we join them?"

Second, they were not keen on being represented by anyone but themselves, as the quote by Tareq, a leading personality in the Independent Transportation Workers' leadership shows:

"We don`t want anybody speaking in our name. We as transportation workers know our situation best, and speak for ourselves. And by the way, that was what those people in the federation told us as well, speak for yourself'"

Fatima Ramadan, one of the leaders of the Egyptian Federation for Independent Trade Unions (EFITU) confirmed that this was indeed their strategy:

"We don`t want to speak in the name of the workers. We want them to represent themselves. During Mubarak we had a pyramid-like centralized structure. Now we want to fight against that, and give the power back to the workers on the ground".

Overall, the Independent Transportation Workers did not have an explicit strategy for democratizing the industrial relations system, and did not work with those who did.

In spite of their lacking democratization agenda, the Independent Transportation Workers did play a positive role in democratizing industrial relations through the very creation of the independent union, and the struggle to become the legitimate representatives of the workers. The strikes before the revolution threatened the existing industrial relations system, but did not directly attempt to change its structure. The strike in 2007 did not break the monopoly of the state-controlled union, but it was the first time they had striked since 1970 and thereby it constituted an important change of strategy. The 2007 strike also took the administration, which had gotten used to obedient workers, by surprise. As one official working for the employer of the transportation workers, described it: "We had no idea. We honestly had never expected a strike to erupt among the workers. We thought they were doing fine". The strike in 2009 marked a more explicit threat to the established system. It was during this strike that the idea to establish an independent union was born. After the strike ended the activists even called a press conference claiming that they would create a new independent union, challenging the old Mubarak-loyal one (Alexander 2012).

The plans to establish an independent union for transportation workers materialized in March 2011 (Al-Sayyid 2011). This act of founding a union was not only a threat, but actually broke the union monopoly on organizing among transportation workers. Even though their legal status was unclear (see chapter 2), they behaved as if it was a legal union. Their reasons for founding it were pragmatic. The old state-controlled union did not fight to raise their wages or better their working conditions, nor did they represent the demands of the workers. Therefore, they needed an organization themselves to forward these demands.

Fighting for Representation

The main problem for the Independent Transportation Workers was that there were no mechanisms in place to include the independent activists in negotiations. The Independent Transportation Workers had no real means of contacting or dealing with the administration. To have such channels between the union and the administration is essential for building

democratic industrial relations. And in order to have any real impact, they needed to be recognized by the administration as a legitimate representative of the workers. The Independent Transportation Workers had no legal backing to support their claim to be recognized, but they fought their way to the negotiation table. How they managed to win the right to be recognized is revealed in the history of the September 2011 strike. The strike started on September 15th and was nearly ended September 16th. News reports said that an agreement had been made between Mona Mostafa, president of the CTA and the workers. However, Mostafa went on TV the same night and said that the demands of the workers would be studied but she could not promise that they would be implemented. And then she added: "It is important to acknowledge that there is only a small minority of the people in the independent union who are actually striking. There are many honorable, respectable good Egyptians who still continue their work. And honestly, what are the rest of them thinking? I said I was going to study this. Are they just interested in chaos?" (ON-TV 2011a). This comment annoyed the leadership in the Independent Transportation Workers so they decided to continue the strike, making it the longest strike so far in the history of the transportation workers. Had better communication channels been in place between the administration and the Independent Transportation Workers, it is likely that the strike could have been avoided, or resolved much sooner. The core of the problem was that the employer did not recognize the independent union as the real representatives of the workers. This became clear in the way they tried to resolve the strike. On September 26th, ten days into the strike, the president of the CTA, the governor of Cairo and the transportation minister called the parties to a meeting in order to negotiate a solution. They seemingly came to an agreement and newspapers reported that the strike had come to an end (Masrawy 2011). The problem was that the workers were only represented through the old, state controlled union. The Independent Transportation Workers were not present, even though they started the strike. They did not agree with the negotiated deal and were angry that they were kept on the outside (Dream-TV 2011). The minister of Manpower, al-Borei, interfered, and he was furious. Public transportation was an essential service and could not be halted for this long. He went on TV and shouted at the striking workers: "We can't stop the wheels of production in this transition period. We are losing money as long as they are striking, so how can we at the same time raise their wages?!" (Dream-TV 2011). He refused to negotiate with the independent unionists, so the strike continued. Representatives from the Independent Transportation Workers were eventually brought to the negotiation table and after several days of negotiations, they came to a

compromise solution the 5th of October. The workers got slightly increased bonuses, and some increase in their pensions, but not as much as they demanded (Magdi, Faris, and Atef 2011).

The story of the 2011 strike reveals how change in the industrial relations system is implemented through struggle, not legislation. There was no legal reason for why the independent union should be brought to the negotiation table, but they were the ones who started the strike, so the administration was pushed to talk to them. In the following strikes the Independent Transportation Workers were consulted as representatives of the workers. By founding a union and being recognized as representatives of the workers, they enforced trade union pluralism and pushed for democratic industrial relations on a local level even though that was not their main intent.

Internal Democracy

The establishment and recognition or the new independent union was an important step towards democratic industrial relations, but incomplete if it did not actually give workers on the ground a say in how the union was run. Without establishing mechanisms ensuring internal democracy you have just replaced one authoritarian structure with another. One of the main reasons for protesting the old union was that they "did not represent" the workers. But were the new independent unionists truly representatives of the average worker?

Holding fair elections is one indicator of internal democracy. In the independent union, elections were organized one year after the union was founded, in April 2012 (Hoqouq 2012). At the time, head of the union 'Adel Al-Shadhly said that they wanted to hold the elections despite not being recognized as a legal union by the law:

> "We hold the elections in accordance with ILO convention 87 that Egypt has signed, giving us freedom of association, and which gives us the right to organize our own union with our own administration and manage our own affairs, without the interference of the ruling regime" (Abd al-Gawwad 2012).

The elections were held, and they were competitive in all regions, meaning that several candidates fought for the same seats. According to news reports and my informants, there were no signs of election rigging, and the elections were held with the supervision of the security forces and the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions. They were all in all

successful, despite some accounts of low turnout (Hoqouq 2012). New elections are also planned for 2014.

Holding elections was an important step in asserting the Independent Transportation Workers' commitment to being true representatives of the workers. There are however, some important problems with how the internal democracy in the union is run. First, the elections led to internal cleavages in the union. Instead of making collective decisions, strikes were sometimes decided by individuals rather than by and not democratic vote. This was the case in September 2011, March 2012 and September 2012. Such individual decision-making led to arguments afterwards and complaints that the union was weakened. In all the strategy meetings I attended during my fieldwork during the fall of 2012, arguments broke out between different parts of the leadership. Often, the elected leader was overrun by one or two charismatic figures in the union. Several of my informants in the union leadership confirmed that the titles they had received after the election were symbolic, and that who was really in charge was a different matter. In the strategy meetings I attended there was also agreement that the union had become weaker after the elections. "We have lost touch with the workers. There is a danger that we are becoming too removed from them", one local leader argued. Some even argued that the election had a negative effect. Like Tareq, another leader of a local union branch claimed: "Before the elections, we were the strongest union in Egypt. Now, after the election, we are among the weakest". The internal cleavage reached a high point in early 2013, when one of the union's top members accused a fellow member of being a traitor on the union's Facebook page. The reason was disagreement over whether one should accept negotiations with the administration or go on strike.

The problems of internal democratic organization can be interpreted in different ways. On the one hand it reveals that even though the representatives are elected, democratic rules are not followed completely. The leader is not necessarily treated as the real leader, and people make individual decisions without checking with the central leadership. However, these problems are hardly unique in building democratic organizations. The independent union is still very new, and it is perhaps unfair to expect an organization to function perfectly after just one year. The sense that they are losing touch with the workers, and that internal cleavages are damaging the effectiveness of the organization are well known problems in union democracy (Stepan-Norris 1997; Lipset, Trow, and Coleman 1956), originally formulated in Michel`s "Iron Law of Oligarchy" (Michels 2011 [1911]). Despite these problems, the Independent Transportation Workers plan to go ahead with new elections in

2014. It remains to be seen whether the union manages to consolidate itself as a democratic organization, but it is fair to say that they are trying. As we saw in the previous chapter, workers do feel that the independent union is close to them, and represents their interests. They still function on democratic grounds, and plan to continue doing so. This struggle to establish a democratically run organization is therefore positive to the overall democratization of industrial relations, despite its critical organizational problems.

Summing up, the Independent Transportation Workers have done a very important job in democratizing industrial relations, not only through establishing an independent union, but also through gaining recognition as a legitimate representative of the workers. However, they fight in essence for their own rights, not systemic changes. They do not fight for systems of collective bargaining. They want every workplace to negotiate their own salary. They do not fight for changes in legislation such as freedom for unions, although they are in solidarity with the demand. These are important fights for democratic industrial relations that they choose not to join. But still, remaining as an independent union with the support of the workers is a crucial step in democratizing industrial relations.

6.1.2 Independent Doctors: Enforcing Democracy From Within

In the following, I review the influence of the Independent Doctors on the industrial relations system. As with the Independent Transportation Workers, I explore strategies as well as the consequences of these strategies for industrial relations.

Industrial Relations Strategies

The Independent Doctors did not have a strategy to democratize industrial relations. While they attempted to frame their strikes as being for the public good, the demands they raised were not connected to democratization in any explicit way. Specifically, they have raised three main demands after the revolution: 1) the increase of the health budget from 3 to 15 per cent of the GDP, 2) increased security in the hospitals and 3) higher wages for doctors (Kennedy 2012). My informants confirmed that they did not engage in struggles for broader issues such as freedom of association. "We are doctors, and fight for doctors' rights", said one central strategist in the strike committee. The strike committee or the activists in the syndicate have not pushed for any legislative or political changes that are not directly connected to the health sector or doctors' rights. As was the case with the transportation workers, the doctors

did not see the point of engaging in any broader struggle. "The most important goal for any union is to fight for the interests of their own occupation" as Doctors Without Rights states on their website (Doctors-Without-Rights 2012b). Despite not taking actions for broad changes in the industrial relations system, the Independent Doctors have fought to democratize their own syndicate. Where the Independent Transportation Workers opted for starting an independent organization, the Independent Doctors chose to fight within the existing syndicate, believing change from within was possible.

Struggle to Democratize the Syndicate

Before the revolution, the Independent Doctors, led mainly by the NGO Doctors Without Rights, did not attempt to change the established syndicate. They managed to get majority vote for a strike in a general assembly in 2008 (Law 2008), but apart from that, they focused their work on activism outside the industrial relations system. The revolution sparked changes in the Independent Doctors' relationship to the syndicate. What my informants described as "revolutionary euphoria" drove the activists to attempt at radically changing the health care system. They decided to push for elections within the syndicate, and get power through democratic means. As one leading activist explained:

> "This was the most effective way. There were some initiatives to establish unions or syndicates independent of the existing syndicate, but this was a much more complicated process. The best thing would be to win within the organization that was already there"

To get influence in the syndicate, two things needed to happen. Elections would have to be organized for the first time in 20 years, and they had to win support for their demands in the general assemblies. In both cases the Muslim Brotherhood, rather than loyalists to the old Mubarak regime, proved to be the most challenging.

Already in March 2011, the Independent Doctors managed to get a majority of votes to amend the laws which until then had made syndicate elections impossible, and early elections were scheduled for October 2011. The old law demanding 50 percent participation in the general assemblies in order for the result to be valid, was no longer in effect (Kennedy 2012). Elections were held as planned, and the Independent Doctors, running under the "Independent List" won enough seats to secure control over the syndicate in important cities like Cairo. Even though the list loyal to the Muslim Brotherhood won the vast majority of

seats in the general board and the new president of the union was a brotherhood supporter (Osman 2011), the activists were content with the results. They saw the holding of the first elections in the syndicate for 20 years as an important victory in itself.

The activists saw strike as the only way to get the Ministry of Health to listen to their demands. A strike could only be voted for in a general assembly, and also there did they meet fierce opposition from the Muslim Brotherhood. The doctors affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood were vehemently opposed to strikes. Publicly they argued that it would "hurt the patients" and that it was immoral to strike, while the activists I interviewed were all convinced that the reasons were more political. As one of my informants described it in November 2012:

> "The Muslim Brotherhood doctors represent the government, they have the president. They are more interested in keeping their party in power, than actually fighting for better conditions for doctors. Members of the Muslim Brotherhood are only loyal to their party (*gamāʾ*) not to their profession (*mihna*)".

To get a majority for strike in the general assemblies was challenging, and the Independent Doctors actually had to force the Muslim Brotherhood affiliated doctors to abide by democratic rules. The contested general assemblies are interesting, because they are examples of activism fighting for acknowledgement of democratic rules. The following story, told by Atef, a young active doctor, is but one of many examples of this:

> "The general assembly in May 2012 is a good example of how the brotherhood tried to cheat us. Essam El-Erian, who headed the general assemblies, had booked a meeting room that only had room for around 400, whereas over 5,000 doctors actually came. He first said to us that those outside the meeting room were not eligible to vote. We [the Independent Doctors], who were in the majority on the outside but not on the inside, refused to accept this of course. We protested and El-Erian was forced to acknowledge the votes also from the people outside. After the votes were counted, the result was a clear majority in favor of strike. Dr. El-Erian refused to accept this however, and demanded a new vote, using paper instead of a show of hands. He only tried to stall time, it was ridiculous. The second round of voting brought the same result as the first, a majority to start a strike. Essam El-Erian refused to accept it. He put the decision in the drawer, turned off the light and left the building. We who voted for the strike got furious of course, and decided to stage a sit-in inside the syndicate until El-Erian returned. After three hours he finally did, the decision was signed and the strike was officially legal".

During the general assembly in September 2012, when the issue of strike was on the agenda again, and the Independent Doctors had mobilized in huge numbers, the Muslim Brotherhood tried to ignore the democratically elected result again. When the general assembly had voted for a strike, the leaders of the syndicate simply exited the building without signing the decisions. This time, the Independent Doctors continued the assembly, and voted on members of a strike committee. The syndicate leadership refused to accept this, as they had left the general assembly before these decisions were taken, but were forced to accept them in the end (Ibrahim 2012; Kortam 2012; Adam 2012).

The struggle between the Muslim Brotherhood doctors and the Independent Doctors in the May 2011 and September 2012 general assemblies, reveals an independent movement that chooses to fight with democratic means to get their goals through. When the MB-affiliated doctors attempted to shut down democracy by ignoring a democratic vote, the Independent Doctors protested and won. In that sense, the Independent Doctors' movement fought an important fight for democracy in the syndicate. A further indication of this wish to abide by democratic rules is that they accepted losses. When the decisions in the general assemblies did not go their way, like in June 2011 when the majority voted to suspend all plans for strike, the activists accepted it. Also, when the three month long strike was ended in a general assembly on December 21st 2012, the activists accepted it. And even though they did not win a majority in the last syndicate elections in 2011, they plan to run again in 2013. As a part of that campaign they are also calling for further democratic reform of the syndicate law, demanding increased supervision of the elections, and more voting places in order to avoid long lines. They strongly encourage doctors to vote.

In this case, factionalism and disagreements between the MB wing and the activist wing in the syndicate actually helped promote democratic procedures forward. It also showed that without the activists pushing, the MB faction was content with breaking democratic rules. Activism was thus needed in order to uphold democracy within the syndicate. The question of democratic legitimacy and internal democracy is different for the Independent Doctors than the Independent Transportation Workers. The syndicate rests upon rules and regulations that are widely accepted among the doctors, whereas the Independent Transportation Workers are building up a legal structure from scratch. However, we saw that even though democratic laws were in place, their implementation did not come without a fight.

6.2   Ability to Implement Demands

In addition to democratizing industrial relations, an important indicator on the institutional level is that the unions are able to implement the demands of the workers. A strong organization which is able to implement the demands of the workers increases their control over decisions that affect them, which is an important part of democratization.

In the case of the Independent Transportation Workers, many of their minor demands have been implemented. In 2007 the ticket bonus was at 4 percent, today it has reached 12 percent. The meal allowance has been increased the last three years with around 150EGP (25USD), the number of spare parts has increased, and a new fleet of buses arrived in 2011. All these concessions have come as direct results of a strike.[13] These successes prompted leaders in the Independent Transportation Workers to tell me that "every strike we have organized has been successful" and that "they always give in to our demands". At the same time, the most central demand for the Independent Transportation Workers, the transfer of oversight from the Cairo Governorate to the Ministry of Transportation, has not been fulfilled. This frustrates the leadership. "If they only changed oversight, all the other problems would disappear. They would afford to raise our wages and give us the buses we need", one of the central leadership leaders told me.

On paper, the Independent Doctors have been much longer on strike than the Independent Transportation Workers, but fewer of their demands have been implemented. The only demand that was clearly fulfilled as a result of the strike in late 2012 was increased security in the hospitals. Neither the pay raise, nor the gradual increase of health spending in the national budget was fulfilled, and the syndicate confirmed in June 2013 that these were still the most important demands (al-Ahram 2013). The Independent Doctors are still in negotiations with the government, but nothing has materialized yet. The Ministry of Health promised to look into it when the three month long strike ended in 2012, but the doctors have not received a pay raise so far, according to my informants.

If we judge the strength of these unions by how many demands they have successfully implemented, the Independent Doctors comes out rather weak, whereas the Independent Transportation Workers seem more effective. The Independent Doctors organized one of the longest strikes in Egypt's history, but were still unable to get their demands through, while the Independent Transportation Workers got all their demands granted, except one. However, this

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[13] This information is based on documents the leadership showed me, but that I was not allowed to copy.

interpretation might be unfair. First, there are good reasons, beyond the control of the doctors, for why their central demands have not yet been fulfilled. The Egyptian economy is weak. To increase the health budget to 15 percent of the GDP, and increase the doctors' salary with 300 percent is arguably impossible in an Egypt with today`s economy. Second, all the unfulfilled demands are demands that require changes in legislation in order to be approved. The legislative context in Egypt since 2011 has been very challenging to operate in for these unions. They first appealed to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) that had legislative powers from February 2011, until the new parliament was in place in 2012 (Al-Arabiyya 2012). Then they addressed the parliament in 2012, but this parliament was dissolved in June 2012 (Al-Jazeera 2012). Then they addressed the Shura council which was given legislative authority, but this was dissolved again in July 2013 (Perry 2013). To get laws concerning specific organizational issues regarding the doctors and the transportation workers in this environment is indeed difficult if not impossible.

And even though the Independent Transportation Workers got many of their demands through, the demands they raised were also easier to implement. For example, the Independent Transportation Workers agree that "a complete overhaul" of the wage structure in Egypt is needed for real social justice to happen, but they do not want to fight for its implementation. Today, the basic wage comprises only 10 percent of the total salary, whereas 90 percent are bonuses. This makes the income very unstable and subject to unpredictable changes. When income is dominated by bonuses, it is also impossible to enforce a fair minimum wage, and makes it easier for employers to make rapid cuts in wages (al-Biblawy 2012). The reason the Independent Transportation Workers do not demand an overhaul of the wage system is that "this is nothing our employer can enforce". So they realize that in order to implement this, the decision must be taken on a higher level. But as long as the Independent Transportation Workers' union is unwilling to participate or support negotiations for structural changes at a higher level, these kinds of reforms, remain impossible to achieve.

So as we see, there is more than one possible interpretation of these findings. The unions have managed to implement some demands, but not the most important ones. Their strategies are hindering them, especially the transportation workers, from supporting structural demands like a minimum wage which would benefit them directly. By this measure, the unions under study appear weaker than their proven mobilization capacity suggests. However, if we are to measure strength as the unions' ability to influence the state and their employers, the picture that emerges is somewhat different. Both the Independent

Transportation Workers and the Independent Doctors conduct regular meetings with their employers, relevant ministries, the Prime Minister and the President's office. They have both formed delegations that have addressed the Parliament and Shura council, and especially the Independent Doctors have succeeded in attracting media attention. The fact that the transportation workers have become legitimate representatives, and are listened to and that the Independent Doctors managed to mobilize one of the longest strikes in Egyptian history, are signs of strength in themselves. The Independent Transportation Workers and the Independent Doctors have not proven their full strength, but have the potential to become strong unions in the future.

6.3 Summing Up Institutional Level

Regarding the democratization of industrial relations, neither the Independent Transportation Workers, nor the Independent Doctors had an explicit strategy aimed at democratizing the industrial relations system. They did not participate in any broader struggle for freedom of association or other general demands. Their agenda was to get their localized demands implemented. In order to do so, they had to fight for democratization locally. The unions under study chose two different ways to go about this. The Independent Transportation Workers built up a structure independent of the old union monopoly of the Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF). This was a direct and actual challenge to the old corporatist industrial relations system put in place in the 1950s. They are still not legally recognized, but in practice they have managed to push their way to the negotiation table through strikes, and have de facto become authorized to speak on behalf of the transportation workers. Breaching the monopoly is in effect democratization of the industrial relations system, and contributes to promoting the wish of the workers. They organized elections and proved their continued support through their ability to mobilize workers for strikes. The Independent Doctors' have managed to partly democratize the doctors' syndicate from the inside, holding the first elections in 20 years, and forcing rival factions to abide by democratic rules during the general assemblies. Without the Independent Doctors, there are good reasons to believe that democratic rules would have been breached.

Both the cases under study emerged as true democratic representatives of the workers, fulfilling Pitkin's (Pitkin 1967) three demands: 1) They were authorized to act by fighting their way to the negotiation table and winning elections. 2) They promoted the interests of the

workers through mobilizing strikes that presented their demands. 3) They were accountable to the workers through elections where leaders could be replaced.

Regarding the strength of the unions in terms of the ability to implement the demands they made, the verdict is mixed or it is perhaps not yet settled. Both the Independent Doctors and the Independent Transportation Workers have been unable to implement their most ambitious demands. In addition, none of the unions are interested in working with any federations or actors on a national level to address structural reform in for example the wage structure or a general law of working conditions. This limits their potential impact. However, they are still young movements, and have managed to fight themselves to a position with considerable potential power locally. They are in a position where they have the attention of their employer. They have a proven ability to mobilize strikes, and regularly meet with legislative authorities negotiating to get their demands through. Whether internal cleavages and local orientation will hinder them in the long run, remains to be seen.

7 Political Level Analyzed

At the political level, unions can contribute positively to democratization by strengthening political institutions. This can be achieved by various strategies, like creating political parties or lobbying for changes in existing parties. In what way their strategies influence democratization, or indeed whether they do so at all, depends on the context. A negative role on this level would be a union that seeks and actively tries to destroy or delegitimize democratic institutions. I will first review the political strategy of the two cases, before I see how this strategy manifests itself in practice, and last review its consequences. Both cases will be treated together in this part of the chapter.

7.1 Non-Political Strategy and Action

Both the Independent Transportation Workers and the Independent Doctors described themselves as "non-political" and "non-politicized". What it meant to be "non-political" varied somewhat between different people in the leadership. Ali, a leading transportation worker said that "the workers struggle has nothing to do with politics, the two are completely disconnected". Omar, another leading figure in the transportation workers union elaborated:

> "The workers struggle has nothing to do with religion or politics. Worker's issues are not sectarian issues, like politics and religion. When I fight for workers' rights, do I fight for only Muslim workers' rights, or for the right of Muslim *and* Christian workers? Do I fight for the Islamist workers' rights, or

the socialist workers' rights? We are all in the same boat. When the worker is in line to get his wage, is it written Muslim or Christian on the pay check? The salary does not know religion and has no political affiliation".

In his view, workers' rights are not divisive issues like political issues are. To grant workers what they need is not an ideological standpoint, but just something everybody agrees on. Rafiq, a local transportation union leader shared Omar's views and emphasized how political affiliation actually could be dangerous to the union:

"We cannot accept that politicians control the unions. The unions fight a fight for workers' rights. But the country's national issues, its foreign policy and domestic politics, from prices and commodities to international agreements; the workers have no relation to these issues. For me as a worker working for the state, it is up to the state to grant me my rights without demanding anything in return. So if the politicians come in and try to meddle with workers' rights, we as a union will say "no, you have no right to interfere with this issue", unless it is on the initiative from the workers themselves".

Others, both among the Independent Transportation Workers but especially the Independent Doctors had a more nuanced view of the relation between politics and unionism. They agreed that unions should not engage in political activity, but nevertheless argued that the two spheres were connected. Hassan in the doctors' strike committee for example claimed that their demands were indeed political, but not politicized, which he saw as a crucial difference:

"You`ll find that our demands are connected to politics. Increasing the health budget is a demand present in all the programs of the different political parties. Even the Muslim Brotherhood party, the ruling party is talking about this in their party program. So it's a political demand. But it`s not politicized, because it is not connected to a specific current".

Ali, a member of the central leadership in the Independent Transportation Workers also argued that there needed to be cooperation between the political sphere and the union sphere.

"Politics is a game that is played by the different political parties. That is the high politics (*siāsa 'āliyya*). But then you have the workers politics (*siāsa 'umāliyya*.) And it is important to recognize that they are connected. So, there has to be a connection between the political parties and the unions. They cannot work separately. Because the country will not rise, without the rise of the workers and the workers will not rise without the rise of the country".

When asked to specify how unions and political parties should cooperate, it became clear that Ali did not envision any deep alliance. Instead he felt that political parties should support unions, not necessarily the other way around: "We accept that parties issue declarations of support, but if they try to enter in the way we work or are organized, we completely reject

this". The leaders of the Independent Doctors had a similar view, claiming that they accepted support from political parties, but as an organization they could not meddle with politics. The Independent Doctors were frustrated with the doctors affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, and saw their explicit political support for them as a traitorous act to the doctors' profession. They were afraid, as were the Independent Transportation Workers, of political control of the union. Cooperation could easily lead to political parties interfering with the union agenda. As Ali, from the Independent Transportation Workers said: "There is a difference between solidarity and control". Despite slight differences, there was agreement in the leadership of both unions that politics and workers issues are separate spheres. Whereas politics is the realm of sectarian and divisive issues, workers' rights are more universal and not subject to political differences. Union work and politics are separate spheres and should remain that way. Political parties may offer endorsements of unions, but unions should not give endorsements to political parties.

The perception of the Independent Transportation Workers and the Independent Doctors of themselves as non-political might seem at odds with conventional understanding of trade union activity as essentially a political enterprise, even if they only fight for wage and working conditions. It is therefore important to emphasize that "non-political" in this context refers to what the workers themselves define as political and non-political. It is clear from the statements above that politics for them is something confined to the parliamentary sphere, to the politicians, while grass roots work is defined as something else. Whether one agrees with such a conception of the political is not really relevant in this context. The important point here is that this non-political outlook in both cases had several consequences for how they related to political parties and political institutions, which is highly relevant to understand their role on the political level. Four manifestations of their non-political outlook stand out. First, none of the unions made any declarations supporting a specific political party or even candidate in the different elections. They did not officially advise the workers how they should vote in the national assembly elections, the presidential elections or the referendum on the constitution. Second, both unions claimed to practice an unwritten rule that no one was allowed to talk about politics in the union meetings. These unions did not see political discussion as relevant to the union issues. Third, the Independent Transportation Workers cited political disagreement as one of the main reasons for refusing to cooperate with the Egyptian Federation for Independent Trade Unions (EFITU). According to the Independent Transportation Workers the federation was too politicized: "They are all socialists, and they

want to oust President Mursi. We are a trade union, and have no business engaging in these issues". This reached a high point during the *Tamarrud*-campaign in 2013 that ended with the ousting of President Mursi on the 3rd of July 2013. The federations announced public support of *Tamarrud* (Egyptian Federation for Independent Trade Unions 2013), whereas the Independent Transportation Workers refused to support a campaign they deemed as "politicized". Fourth, the Independent Doctors distanced themselves from politics through proposing several changes to the syndicate regulations, aimed at reducing the influence of politics. They wanted to remove a clause stating that Egypt was to be a "socialist state" and wanted all references to political ideology taken out. In addition they wanted to change the election system. "All syndicate members should be elected on a regional basis". Today some of the members are elected on a national level. The problem with this system according to Doctors Without Rights is that "it leads to voting based mostly on political preferences, whereas locally elected unionists are elected based on their personal history and work. Thus it becomes more likely that unionists are elected on a union basis – and this is what we want – instead of being elected based on political affiliation" (Doctors-Without-Rights 2012a).

One might think that the explicit aim to remain outside of politics would lead to a separation of politics and workers issues. Before we can assess whether this is true, we must consider what the consequences of this non-political unionism actually are.

7.2 Political Consequences of Non-Political Actions

The non-political attitude expressed by the Independent Transportation Workers and Independent Doctors has both negative and positive implications for their role on the political level. On the negative side it is not likely that a workers' party will emerge from these two cases. To establish a strong workers party has historically been an effective way for workers to affect the political level (Hyman 2004). No initiative has been taken for forming such a party. As I showed in the chapter on the institutional level, none of the unions under study are interested in fighting for issues not directly related to their work situation. This, combined with their wish of not being politicized, makes it unlikely that they will pursue such a strategy in the future. Most of my informants expressed no interest in establishing a workers' party, while other said it "would be a good thing to have a party" but claimed that it was not likely to happen in the near future.

The non-political strategy of these two cases also has positive implications for their role on the political level. Both the doctors and transportation workers are able to influence

the existing political parties through their individual political engagement. There are people with very different political affiliations in the two unions under study. And they use different means to connect to their parties. Some try to promote workers' rights to parties that are skeptical of their cause. For example Saad, a member of the Independent Doctors explained how he is negotiating with the salafi party *Ḥizb al-Nūr* for them to change their position on strikes. The Salafis, often called ultraconservative Islaimsts, have historically been opposed to strikes. As he explained:

> "I try to convince the people of my party, *Ḥizb Al-Nūr* that strikes are a good thing. I mean, they are *shaykhs*, and all they know is really religion. They are not that experienced in politics, and do not know that much about the problems in society. They are against the strikes from a general standpoint. Because strikes which affect normal people badly, and that is forbidden in Islam. But they do care about social justice, the right of sick people etc. So when I explain it that way, they listen".

Others are writing policy for different political parties. One of the doctors who were in the strike committee is now writing the health policy for two large opposition parties, *al-Dustūr* and *Maṣr al-Qawiyya*. A leading figure among the Independent Transportation Workers is writing the labor policy for a smaller socialist party while another was a co-founder of *Ḥizb al-Hadaf*, a Salafi party where he has the responsibility for labor policy. In addition, some of the transportation workers enlisted as candidates for parliamentary elections in 2013.[14] Two central activists among the Independent Transportation Workers enlisted as independent candidates in two different areas of Cairo. One is a declared socialist, the second a declared Salafi. They hoped to draw support from different groups (Al-Shafiei 2012). The reason for enlisting was a realization that "we need to be present at all levels where decisions about workers' rights are taken". They would support their own affiliations, but vote together on issues relating to workers' rights, and try to convince parties from their own political current to vote with them on workers issues. This could be interpreted as a change in tactics from the unions, that they are actually engaging explicitly in politics. However, the candidates themselves insist that it is not the union that is running, but them as private persons with different political backings.

The non-political strategy also enables the unions to include members of different political factions in the same union. There were socialists, Salafis, moderate Islamists, liberals and people who did not care about politics in both the Independent Doctors and the

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[14] The elections have not taken place yet, and it is unclear whether they still are enlisting as candidates.

Independent Transportation Workers. By not talking about politics, they managed to put ideological rivalries aside and focus on real life issues instead. If the trade unions manage, as the two case studies here do, to forge a political space that is actually inclusive, this is a positive contribution to democratization and depolarization. It could serve as an example for the rest of Egyptian society because it enables them to affect the policies of many different political parties.

7.3 Summing Up: Political Level

Egyptian unions under study present a fascinating paradox. They want to avoid politics, and take concrete action to distance themselves from the political scene. However, this very act of removing themselves from politics has positive consequences for democratization on a political level, in several ways.

The cases under study do not have any explicit goals to influence political institutions. In fact, one could argue that they ignore them to a large degree, claiming that they are not relevant. When looking at their actions however, it is clear that they have many positive, often unintended, consequences for democratization. Through creating a political space where members of different political currents can join and be active, the unions prove as an example of how cooperation is possible, despite the polarized reality of Egyptian politics. The importance of this cannot be overstated. To my knowledge, this is the only political space in Egypt where people with clearly different ideological background manage to work together towards the same goals. After the ousting of President Mursi, polarization is threatening to destroy the possibility of inclusive democracy in Egypt. The trade unions have a potential to limit this polarizing divide.

In addition, the unions' relation to politics is a bottom-up approach that could be described anti-Leninist unionism. Lenin (1988 [1902]) argued that the workers would never reach political consciousness by themselves. A strong political party was needed to lead the workers in the right direction. In my cases however, the unions are afraid of political alliances, afraid that it would compromise their agenda. They do not opt for the Leninist strategy of allying with a supposedly supportive political party, like much of the Egyptian union movement did in the 1920s (see chapter 2). In Egypt today, we see how the unionists advise the parties, and formulate their policies, rather than the other way around. Whereas Lenin thought the workers were too stupid to be political and therefore needed help from political parties, the Egyptian unions under study think the political parties are too stupid and

unable to make sound policies without their help. In other words, Egyptian unionism is Lenin turned on his head. This act of contributing to policy is constructive to democratization in itself. It helps the parties formulate policy grounded in people's experiences rather than written directly of an ideological platform. It increases the legitimacy of the political parties among the workers, and contributes to workers interests being promoted on a political level. The role they are playing is in many ways similar to what Habermas (1992) has described as the ideal civil society organization. They function as whistleblowers to the political parties, voicing legitimate concerns, that the political parties then adopt in their programs and (eventually) might put it into law. How effective their influence on the political parties is, remains to be seen.

8 Discussion and Concluding Remarks

Do the trade unions under study play a constructive role in the current Egyptian transition? Are they constructive or destructive for democratization? In chapter 3, I discussed how the trade union movement in Egypt, including the cases under study, would not qualify as democratizers using old paradigms for studying the relations between trade unions and democratization. How does this look when two cases have been reviewed in-depth in line with the new framework? I have analyzed the roles of the Independent Transportation Workers and the Independent Doctors at the individual, institutional and political levels separately in the previous three chapters. In this chapter, I draw the levels together and discuss the implications of my findings. I will first review the arguments for deeming the unions destructive to democratization. Then I argue why I think this statement needs to be reevaluated.

8.1 Narrow Focus, Broad Implications

The Independent Transportation Workers and the Independent Doctors have one very important trait in common which transcends and influences their role at the individual, institutional and political level. They have what we can call a *narrow focus*, meaning that they are only concerned with demands that relate directly to their own cause and do not explicitly engage in broader struggle to democratize industrial relations, or any other political struggle.

What implications does this narrow focus have? One argument is that it confirms the thesis that Egyptian unions are destructive to democratization. It hinders them from being a democratic player in the current transition. There are findings at all three levels which support this hypothesis.

At the individual level, my informants have not gained any broader democratic consciousness as a result of participating in a union. This finding contradicts parts of participatory theories of democracy (Pateman 1970) and the large literature on the effect on individual participation (i.e. Putnam 1994; Fung 2003). My findings question the link between union participation and democratic commitment. However, they strengthen the findings of a small number of newer studies which conclude that participation has an effect on political engagement only if the members engage in explicitly political activities in their organization (Sobieraj and White 2004; Brown and Brown 2003; Terriquez 2011). The unionists were not exposed to politics, because the unions wanted to avoid political activity and avoid becoming politicized. Had the unions been more explicitly engaged in political activities, it might have had a larger impact on the individual workers participation in, and commitment to, democracy on a national level. On the institutional level, we saw how this narrow focus was a problem for the unions' possible impact. By refusing any initiatives to work for collective bargaining above industry-level, they made it difficult to get through real structural reforms in the industrial relations system, like securing freedom of association and securing a fair minimum wage. On the political level, their narrow focus hindered them from cooperating with other workers in creating a strong coalition. It is unlikely that a strong workers party will emerge when they are not even cooperating with the national federation for independent unions, seeing it as too political. Had they had a more political outlook, they might have developed from just protesting for their own interest, to work for the greater good of the country and contribute positively in the transition.

There are however strong arguments against this claim. In the previous chapters, many findings support the opposite conclusion, namely that the narrow focus of these unions had positive implications for democratization on the individual, institutional and political level. On the individual level, my informants report an increased sense of agency. They feel they are able to affect their own work situation, and feel that participating in the union gives them the opportunity to affect political decisions. Whereas my findings contradict the part of social capital theory that claims a direct link between participation and democracy, it supports the claim that participation leads to more active citizens who feel a will and ability to better their

own situations (Pateman 1970; Putnam 1994; Paxton 2002). On the institutional level, both unions fought important battles to democratize industrial relations. The Independent Transportation Workers founded an independent union and thereby challenged the non-democratic trade union monopoly. The old union federation functioned as a mechanism to control workers rather than representing them as described in chapter 2. That they were able to break this monopoly and establish themselves as real representatives for the workers was a positive contribution to the current transition. By fighting to become the real representatives of the workers and establishing an internal democracy, they secured that workers in reality were represented. The Independent Doctors' movement similarly fought to increase transparency and forced the syndicate to abide by democratic rules, pushing it out of the undemocratic practices that existed during the Mubarak era. And even though the unions can be deemed as weak because their most important demands remain unfulfilled, their record of mobilization and their ability to fight their way into positions of influence, is a clear sign of strength. On the political level the unions have created a political space where people from widely different political affiliations are members, which is quite unique in Egypt today.

The indicators of positive implications of the trade unions have not occurred in spite of their narrow focus, but *as a result* of their narrow focus. It is not unique for trade unions to focus on their own interests. In reality it follows quite closely what Richard Hyman (2004) describes as the tradition of "business unionism". In this tradition, unions see themselves first and foremost as labor market actors with the objective of securing basic rights for their workers through "standard rates of pay, normal working hours and basic health and safety requirements" (Hyman 2004, 7). Similarly, the unions under study try to fight for better wages and working conditions. Hyman describes how unions that wish to follow this strategy often end up in a situation where they are forced to fight for democratic rights. The reason is that in order to negotiate better working conditions for themselves, the unions need a predictable and transparent industrial relations regime, and they need to secure representation. There are therefore almost no unions that are able to follow a strict business union strategy. Rather, they evolve into what Hyman labels "political economism", meaning a strategies that "extend beyond the searching of material gains to the establishment of *rights* in industry.(…) At a very minimum, unions have to influence the ways in which the state shapes the rules of the game in the labour market, including their own right to exist, to bargain collectively and to mobilize collective action" (Hyman 2004, 14). This image fits well with how the unions in this study behave. They do not work for democratization of industrial relations because that is

their end goal, but as a *means to an end.* The goal of the doctors and transportation workers is to be labor market actors, and fight for the best of their workers. In order to be able to do so however, they need to have the right to exist and to bargain with the employer. Politically, this narrow focus, which would be deemed by Lenin as their biggest disadvantage, is actually their foremost strength. Through explicitly stating that they are pure labor market actors and not interested in politics, they draw support and members from a wide variety of political affiliations and generate policy for different political parties. This is Lenin turned on his head. Instead of weakening the unions, it strengthens their appeal and also contributes to stemming the tide of polarization which is currently haunting Egyptian society and politics. The German sociologist Robert Michels, known for coining "The Iron Law of Oligarchy", described in his book *Political Parties* how the German labor movement had democratization as a goal but still ended up creating oligarchy. He described this as an "unintended consequence" of their activities (Michels quoted in Lipset, Trow, and Coleman 1956, 5). I turn this argument around and say that the democratizing role of the Egyptian trade unions is an "unintended consequence" of a strategy void of democratizational promise.

The positive consequences of the Independent Doctors' and Transportation Workers' activities arguably outweigh the negative. Still, one could ask whether they would have played an even more constructive role if they had embraced a broader outlook, and explicitly supported democratization in their demands? To a certain extent, that might be the case. The doctors and transportation workers are weakened by their lack of will to cooperate with any type of national union federation. They are disorganized and could throw more strength behind their support of a minimum wage and the trade unions freedom law if they cooperated with some of the federations. Despite this, it is clear from my findings that the cases under study would not have played a more positive role for democratization if they had embraced an explicit political agenda; quite the opposite. A large part of their positive contributions to democratization can be described as what Jon Elster has called "states that are essentially by-products" which means states that "can only *come about* as the by-product of actions undertaken for other ends. They can never be *brought about* (…) intentionally, because the attempt to do so precludes the very state one is trying to bring about (Elster 1981, 431 italics in original). On the individual level, the increased agency of the workers would not have come about if the unions had an explicit strategy to "increase a sense of agency". even though they might appreciate it in hindsight. Workers joined, as we have seen, mainly because they wanted to increase their wages. Workers did not express any interest in national democracy.

94

To mobilize workers around a general demand of democracy would have been difficult if not impossible. First, because many of them were not politically active and it is therefore unlikely that they would take to the streets for a demand that did not directly affect them. This is in line with research findings from a variety of contexts suggesting that political motives are not on the mind of workers when they join unions (Kerrissey and Schofer 2013). Second – and perhaps most important – any demand that could be interpreted as politicized, supporting a specific party or political current, would most probably have created deeper cleavages within the union. The pluralistic membership structure including people with different ideological convictions would most likely have disappeared, and the unions would have become yet another example of a polarized political sphere. The positive effects of depolarization would not have been upheld with unions advocating an explicit political strategy.

How the Egyptian trade unions develop further is an open question. If labor is to become an important force in Egyptian politics, some kind of unification on a national level might be desirable. It is important for workers to have representatives on all relevant levels, not just locally. This is – at least in theory – possible to achieve without becoming politicized. However, I disagree with those advocating for a political party of workers as the best mean to democratization. The two examples of political unionism in the global south that has been deemed successful are South-Africa and Brazil. In both cases there was optimism and talk of the strong labor movement that brought about democracy through political party-alliances. However, in both cases there are indications of disillusionment, that the labor movements have become fragmented, and that they have lost many of their political gains (i.e.von Holdt 2002; El-Mahdi 2009). This further indicates that there is not one simple way for trade unions to work for democracy, and that the non-political actions taken by the unions studied in this thesis might prove to have a larger impact than classic political unionism, which has long been deemed the most successful path to workers influence.

8.2   Contributions of the Thesis

This thesis contains relevant contributions on an empirical, methodological and theoretical level. Empirically, the thesis is relevant to the study of Egyptian unions because it provides data on what local trade unions in Egypt are actually doing after the revolution. This thesis is, to my knowledge, the first detailed study on the question of trade unions' contribution to democracy after the overthrow of Mubarak. Some scholars have mentioned, as an afterthought, that trade unions in Egypt are or could be conducive to democratization, but

have not explained why, how, or in what way. The hypotheses generated here, that Egyptian unions contribute to democracy despite not having a democratizing agenda, should be empirically explored further. Especially the finding that labor can be an actor of depolarization is interesting for the political climate in Egypt today. We saw that the local unions were non-political while the existing federations took an explicit stance for the *Tamarrud*-campaign and against Mursi. Under what conditions trade unions in Egypt can be depolarizing and how these federations and trade unions are actually linked should be object of further investigation.

Methodologically, I have outlined a new way that the role of trade unions in democratization processes could be studied. The framework laid out here makes it possible to do more nuanced and fine-grained analysis, giving a more complex and also more accurate picture of the role of trade unions. Whereas many previous studies have focused exclusively on the political level (Collier 1999; Przeworski 1991; Higley and Burton 2006), the individual level (Terriquez 2011; Putnam 1994) or the institutional level (Stepan-Norris 1997; Lipset, Trow, and Coleman 1956), I argue that it is favorable to analyze these levels together. You cannot make any real claims about the role played by trade unions in political transitions without taking all these levels into account. And where most previous studies of trade unions have been preoccupied with identifying the positive *or* negative consequences for society, my framework advocates a position where you look for positive *and* negative consequences together. Usually, organizations play highly complex and ambivalent roles in society, and a study of these organizations should not limit themselves to the positive or negative impact, but rather take both into account. This way of analyzing trade unions also has some implications for how we should interpret the macro data that exists on strikes in Egypt. It means that we should not interpret an increasing number of strikes as something which is necessarily positive for democratization or political stability. On the other hand we should not conclude that non-political demands do not have political impact. More in-depth studies are needed to analyze the role of trade unions.

Theoretically, this thesis questions the notion that unions raising structural or political demands are better for democracy than unions focused on shop-floor issues. This is a repeated claim in the literature, be it from a Marxist perspective (Lenin 1988 [1902]), Social Movement Unionism (Adler and Webster 1995), or traditional transition literature (Przeworski 1991). I have shown how a union exclusively focused on shop-floor issues can contribute positively to democracy. Further, I have argued that the positive implications are

the *result* of the unions wish to stay non-political. Removing the ideological foundation of a union opens up for a more pluralistic membership structure and puts the union in a position where it can influence political parties from a wide variety of political spectrum. I have also shown that in a context of deep polarization, non-political unions can play a part in playing down polarization and prove as an example of coalition building, in a way that would not be possible had the unions adopted explicitly political demands.

As a concluding remark, it is important to acknowledge what this study is not. It is not an overall evaluation of the whole complex process of democratization in Egypt. I have not even made an argument of how the relative strength of trade union impact is, in comparison with other actors affecting the transition. With the ousting of President Mursi on July 3rd 2013, we see that other forces than the trade unions are guiding the transition. To draw far reaching implications for the overall process of democratization in Egypt based on this material is likely to be misleading. What I have done however, is to focus on the role of trade unions, and asked if they should be seen as positive or negative players in the process. I have found that the two unions under study influence democratization in both positive and negative ways. I argue that the positive implications, namely increased agency, union democracy, contributions to party policy and a depolarizing agenda, outweigh the negative implications. But the conclusion contains a paradox. The positive role that these unions play is not the result of their intentions. The unions are not explicitly interested in democratization. They do not try to play a role in the current democratization. Their positive role for democratization comes as an *unintended* result of their actions to maintain a narrow and non-political focus. In other words: They are unintentional democrats.

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