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Yesterday's Tomorrow is Not Today. Memory and Place in an Algiers Neighbourhood

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Abstracts	4
Chapter 1: Introduction	10
Chapter 2: Historiographies and Narratives of the Past in Algeria	52
Chapter 3: Narratives of Nation-Building: Politics and Living Standards	90
Chapter 4: Reimagining the City: 1970s Urban Planning, Space and Memory	131
Chapter 5: 'How we were': Representations of Sociability and Public Morality	177
Chapter 6: Fragments of Futures Past	215
Appendix 1: Fieldwork Sites and Techniques	236
Appendix 2: List of Interviewees	242
Appendix 3: Map of the Commune of Bab el-Oued	245
Bibliography	246

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Short Abstract

Since the euphoria of a hard-won independence and the hopes attached to socialist nation-building, Algeria has experienced liberalisation, increasing inequality and civil war. This thesis sets out to explore memories of post-independence nation-building in the 1970s, interrogating the past-present relationship, by asking how Algerians remember their own recent past, and what these memories reveal about contemporary subjectivities. Based on a year of ethnographic fieldwork in the low-income Algiers neighbourhood of Bab el-Oued, the research focuses specifically on memories of politics, urban space and sociability.

While the authoritarianism of the period was rejected for its repression of civil liberties, the overwhelming narrative on the period was nostalgic, with the past routinely couched as more positive than the present. Memories of intense social mobility and rising living standards within the context of state-led development, competent urban management and warm neighbourhood relations governed by traditional morality and solidarity were used to critique the present; particularly the retreat of the state from its responsibilities since the 1980s and the fragmented, consumerist society that has emerged from civil conflict since the 1990s.

However, social memory also translated a series of principles that demonstrated the continued relevance of the egalitarian claims made by postcolonial nationalism. Popular notions of social justice mapped future aspirations for the Algerian polity. Nostalgia was not only a matter of the past, but of the lost future of material plenty and equality promised by industrial modernisation that once seemed just over the horizon, but is now divorced from present experience. Such memories translated the passing of the dream of mass utopia, even though the modernist principles of equality, justice and progress continued to underpin both daily interactions and the political aspirations of the present.

Long Abstract

Since the euphoria of a hard-won independence and the hopes attached to socialist nation-building, Algeria has experienced liberalisation, increasing inequality and civil war. Social memories of post-independence nation-building during the 1970s under President Houari Boumediene (1965-1978) past chart this course and interrogate the past-present relationship. In contrast to the scholarly attention commonly devoted to periods of violence and upheaval in Algerian history, this thesis set out to explore how Algerians remember a much understudied decade of stability within living memory, and to ask what these memories reveal about current relationships to politics and society. Within the regional context of the Arab Uprisings of 2011-12, and ongoing social contestation in Algeria calling for greater wealth redistribution and accountability, the research focuses on the meanings now attached to the emancipatory promises and egalitarian claims made by a nation-building project that during its heyday was a model for much of the Global South.

Based on a year of ethnographic fieldwork in the low-income Algiers neighbourhood of Bab el-Oued, the project blends archival material, participant observation and semi-structured interviews to explore both the ways in which the past is re-imagined in the present, and how the past simultaneously provides a template for formulating present subjectivities. The necessarily schematic images of the past retained and transmitted within social memory were thus a double-edged sword. On one hand, representations of the nation-building period articulated the moral politics and social justice that continue to define expectations of the state, while memories of collective revolts against existing political orders in 1954 and 1988 as not having borne out popular aspirations of greater social justice and accountability have contributed to cynicism and the demobilisation of energies for collective change.

Chapter one discusses the difficulties in defining the nation-building period, locating it broadly within the 1970s, and also introduces the field site through its sounds, smells and sights, while reflecting on my own experience in the neighbourhood. The second part then places the research conceptually and theoretically within broader debates and literature on social history and memory, as well as urban anthropology. Chapter two then takes this forward into the Algerian case, by looking at Algerian historiographies through the construction of a problematically totalising official history since independence and the ways in which social memory has been used to counter this by various groups engaged in power

brokering, reimagining the past for their own purposes and simultaneously borrowing from the official narrative in the process. After examining the obstacles standing in the way of the doing post-independence history in Algeria due to the crushing weight of the narrative of national liberation that locates the end of history in 1962, the chapter goes on to provide a review of the comparatively scant literature on the post-independence period, charting the institutional growth of the Algerian state and its political system. Lastly, and in preparation for the following three chapters based on fieldwork, the inhabitants of Bab el-Oued take centre stage, recounting how they see their nation's history, through data gathered during timeline drawing activities during interviews and a history workshop held for young people in the neighbourhood during the fieldwork. The plot structures that emerge show a gradual decline from the high point of independence, with a noticeably positive period during the 1970s, before plunging into the abyss of violence that was the 1990s.

Chapter three examines the two major narratives in social memory on the 1970s. On one hand, the certainties generated by political stability and rising living standards and job opportunities, and on the other, the depiction of the period as an authoritarian dictatorship that ran roughshod over civil liberties and had political opponents eliminated or exiled. Although there was universal agreement in rejecting severe constraints on freedom of speech, though not always authoritarian politics itself, translating an unwillingness to turn back the clock to the 1970s, and a strong sense that the average citizen has always seen politics as a closed sphere best steered clear of, the overwhelming narrative on the everyday life, urban space and sociability of the period was overtly nostalgic, with the past routinely couched as more positive than the present. Memories of everyday life foregrounded intense social mobility and rising living standards within the context of state-led development and centralised economic planning, but also highlighted the austerities of nation-building, experienced through endemic shortages of consumer goods, the shared aesthetic references born of the slow pace of obsolescence of socialist era products, and the beginnings of a two tier system in which those with links to influential public sector positions used their influence to redistribute state resources. In this sense a situation in which social status depended on public sector connections was contrasted with the flagrant displays of material wealth now commonplace in today's consumer society. However, the sense of progress associated with the 1970s expressed what people today expected from the state, through memories of wealth redistribution by a strong state, coupled with characterisations of Boumediene as a figure that embodies a set of political principles, including honesty and integrity. This demonstrated both

the continued relevance of the egalitarian claims made by postcolonial nationalism and a clear willingness to use the past to criticise the retreat of the state from its responsibilities.

Chapter four sets Bab el-Oued in its urban context, looking at the spatial and population changes occurring in the wider city after 1962, which contextualises memories of Bab el-Oued's resettlement by inhabitants of the Casbah after independence and the reproduction of existing networks of kinship and solidarity in what had hitherto been a European working-class neighbourhood. This sense of community through length of residence and shared economic hardship has given Bab el-Oued a strong sense of neighbourhood identity, though traditional solidarities have been seriously eroded by the social production of mistrust during the conflict of the 1990s. The chapter also looks at post-independence urban planning, whose emblematic works – from monumental structures such as the Stade Olympique to large-scale social housing projects – are often interpreted, despite their dilapidated state today, as examples of a truncated sense of progress. The next part of the chapter focuses on Bab el-Oued, ethnographically examining constructions of private and public space and the social relations within it, particularly the concept of *ḥouma*, before examining memories of the neighbourhood's urban space in the 1970s as well-managed, clean and organised, as a way of criticising the present. These memories are then put into dialogue with concerns in the press of the day that echo those of present-day citizens over a range of urban problems from overcrowding to traffic to poor hygiene, emphasising the lyricized nature of urban space in social memory. In this sense, the lyrical city of the future as imagined by the urban planners of the mid-1970s to reflect a modern and egalitarian society is mirrored by the equally lyrical city of the past reimagined today from the perspective of Bab el-Oued's severe urban decay, with layers of (re)imagined urban space superimposed on each other.

Chapter five focuses on memories of sociability and public morality, which foregrounded the referencing of the 1970s to express the social changes wrought by the 1990s. Remembered warm relations between neighbours governed by traditional solidarity and morality stood in contrast to depictions of the fragmented and often mistrustful social relations that have emerged from the conflict, in which Bab el-Oued was hit particularly hard. Furthermore, traditional solidarities based on familiarity were eroded by changes in settlement patterns, with longstanding residents moving to safer suburbs and the arrival of new neighbours escaping the much more dangerous Mitidja. The chapter also examines changing perceptions of gender relations, in which memory articulated a number of different positions: from traditional women's dress being used to create an authentic Algerian past

prior to the influx of styles from the Middle East during the mid-1980s in which the *ḥāyek* becomes a symbol of nostalgia amongst young women who would not actually want to wear it; (post)colonial representations of modernity through the term *civilisée*, through uneasy appropriations of Middle Eastern style *ḥijāb* as 'ancestral culture; to strategic uses of the veil to please parents and project a certain image, or to as contextual protection during political instability when traditional codes of honour were threatened. Young people pointed to the increased importance of image in the present through the diversity of styles and subcultures present in the city today, from Islamists to Goths, and contrasted this to a time when image was seen as being less important. This was particularly true in perceptions of those with an outwardly religious appearance, which was frequently associated with insincere religious practice and hypocrisy. Religiosity in the 1970s was remembered as being the preserve of older people, forming a major element in generational boundaries, and was contrasted to a present in which religious practice was at once more socially visible, individualistic and normative, but not necessarily viewed as indicative of greater respect for gender and age defined social boundaries, which were universally seen as having been more prevalent in the past, even by Islamists. Religiosity was thus separated from morality. Nostalgia was also expressed by certain groups of young people through the use of styles and aesthetics that articulated a pastiche sense of pastness that can be defined as pre-1980s, and therefore situated before the period seen as having ushered in many of the problems associated with the present.

Memories of the past were thus frequently used to critique the present, as an anchor that allowed a process of self-identification in the new context of a post-conflict consumer society. Memory thus described what it means to live in a poor neighbourhood when the state has retreated from its responsibilities; what it means to be a society when social interaction is rendered toxic by the mistrust born of civil conflict; and how a moral order can be imagined in a present buffeted by rapid social change. However, representations of a lyricised past articulated more than a critique of the present. Social memory of the period also contained a series of principles, such as political integrity and state redistribution of national wealth. Notions of social justice and equality, enshrined in memories of the past, mapped popular aspirations about the principles on which the Algerian polity should be based in the future. Nostalgia was therefore expressed not only in terms of the past, but of a lost future of material plenty and equality promised by industrial modernisation that once seemed just over the horizon, but now bears little relation to present experience. Such memories translated the

passing of the dream of mass utopia, representing a difficult moment of awakening into a world where the future is consigned to the past, even if the modernist principles of equality, justice and progress continue to underpin both daily interactions and political aspirations in the present.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Something very special happens every evening in Algiers. As the light begins to fade, Alger la Blanche changes colour. Twilight turns the white facades of the city's buildings an intense, dusty blue and their ornate wrought iron balconies a deep indigo. As the pace of the frenetic city slows, the feeling is at once reflective and calm, nostalgic even. Walking through Place Audin one evening, as the hues began imperceptibly to transform, I saw two blue-clad policemen flag down a passing car, ostensibly to check the driver's papers, but possibly just to ogle at the rarity: a beautiful, sea green 1967 Peugeot 404, in immaculate condition, complete with white wall tires and shining chrome details. While they exchanged pleasantries with the middle-aged driver, complimenting him on his classic, I began to notice that heads were turning. A van pulled over in front of the car, and two bearded Islamists got out to shake the driver's hand, all smiles and declarations of *mā chā' Llāh*. A small group of old men sitting on a bench overlooking the square began to nod and reminisce, one declaring, 'Eh oui, c'était l'époque où on pensait qu'on allait s'en sortir' (That was back when we thought we were going to make it). Women passed by with the same knowing smile that accompanied the commonly used phrase 'kī kānet ddunya dunya' (when everything was as it should be), and a group of teenagers nudged each other and pointed, saying 'chēbba, chrīkī!' (cool, man). Something about relationships to the past, present and future was clearly being triggered by the appearance of this relic, producing different but related reactions among diverse groups of people. If only for a fleeting moment and within a diminutive space, a deeply divided, wounded and fragmented society seemed to be in agreement on something, perhaps even briefly at peace with itself in the soothing light of approaching dusk.[1]

This scene underscores some of the central issues emerging from this research: how memories of the optimism and certainties of the post-independence period in the late-1960s and 1970s translated several issues, among which were the lost feelings of community, solidarity and equality forged through the struggle for independence and the sacrifices and

[1] The transliteration system used here for Algerian Arabic dialect adopts Algerian vernacular spellings in Latin script, including 'ch' for the letter ش, and '3' for the letter ع, as most appropriate for rendering the vernacular language of Algiers in the same way its speakers do. However, to avoid confusion through the use of French dipthongs, diacritics are used to denote long vowels. IJMES transliteration is used for Standard Arabic, including bibliographical references.

austerities of socialist nation-building; a sense of mourning for the passing of a once imagined bright future and the breakdown of the powerful imaginary of time that underpinned Algeria's attempt at modernist industrialisation as a prelude to happiness for the masses; and the social fragmentation brought about by civil conflict during the 1990s and the emergence of a consumer society.

From the outset, the research aimed to examine memories of the nation-building period within a specific geographical space, the Algiers neighbourhood of Bab el-Oued. The central objective was to explore how such memories both define and help people make sense of present experience. Memories of past living standards, politics, urban space and sociability shed light on broader conceptions of temporality and socially held understandings of the past in relation to the present. Memories of the past articulated the temporal dissonance between past, present and future and expressed what it means to live in a poor neighbourhood when the state has retreated from its responsibilities; what it means to be a society when social interaction is rendered toxic by the mistrust born of civil conflict; and how a moral order can be imagined in a present buffeted by rapid social change.

The original idea for the project was influenced by the Arab Uprisings of 2010-11 that called overwhelmingly for greater social justice and political accountability. The aim was partly motivated by the desire to re-evaluate the meanings attached to the emancipatory promises and egalitarian claims made by postcolonial nationalism in Algeria during the heyday of the 1970s, by analysing the ways in which this project is (re)imagined in light of ongoing current demands for regional change, as well as Algeria's failed transition to multi-party democracy in the late-1980s, the civil war of the 1990s and the liberal economics and reinforced state power of the 2000s.

Despite this regional context, however, it was representations of the national past that were overwhelmingly used to express past-present disjuncture, at the centre of which stood the devastating effects of the civil war of the 1990s. For the majority of those interviewed, there were two, radically different, Algerias. On one hand stands the familiar, stable lifeworld of the 1970s, governed equally by traditional modes of sociability and solidarity; and on the other, the fragmented, globalised post-conflict society characterised by its ideological oppositions, consumerism, individualism and unhealed wounds. Apolitical nostalgia for the lifeworld of the past, with its warm relations between citizens and everyday certainties helped to maintain a link with a sense of Algerian-ness that pre-dated conflict and rapid social change, and formed a safe narrative for talking about the past, one of the few that existed

between different generations in a country where 'true' history was routinely perceived to be held under lock and key – a single form of consensus about the past in an otherwise thorny and divisive history.

Despite wholesale rejection of the authoritarianism of the nation-building period, the overwhelming narrative is one of nostalgia, though not without its remembered problems, from political repression to structural shortages of basic goods. Memory, of course, did not always fit the reality of life as once experienced. Though representations of the period as one of increasing social mobility and rising living standards within the context of state-led development and centralised economic planning are corroborated by statistical data, nostalgic representations of well-ordered and uncrowded urban space, warm relations between citizens, and traditional solidarities clash with primary source material. The newspapers of the day reported many of the same concerns and complaints about city life that residents express today: an acute housing crisis, congestion and overcrowding, declining moral values. The absence of these problems in memory may be explained by the dramatic increase in Algiers' population from 943,551 in 1966 to 2,364,230 in 2008,[2] in so far as the same social problems were arguably less acute in the past, given the inability of infrastructure to keep pace with demographic growth. However, the existence of the same problems in past and present cannot be denied, pointing to the selective remembering of elements of the past that were less a faithful account of the past as once experienced, but aimed instead at criticising the present.

Politically speaking, representations of the nation-building period helped to define a sense of moral politics, while memories of socialism's articulation of substantive democracy and its link between revolutionary time and material progress at once articulated and underpinned the social justice that Algerians continue to expect from their state today. Unanimity on the importance of wealth redistribution and expectations of progress is one of the period's most significant legacies. Conversely, while memories of greater social mobility articulate a critical attitude toward the state, memories of previous collective efforts at revolt against existing political orders, such as the war of independence and the riots of October 1988 as not having borne out popular aspirations contributed to cynicism and the demobilisation of energies for collective change. As a result, Algeria is caught between firmly believed in political principles, those of social justice and equality, and a reigning apathy about the possibility of turning these principles into political reality.

[2] Recensement Général de la Population 1967 and 2008, Office Nationale des Statistiques.

Perceptions of the past and present thus reinforced each other in a dialectic relationship: the past is reimagined in the present, but simultaneously provides a template on which to base assessments of the present, and the future. Thus, representations of an idealised past articulated more than a critique of the present. The notions of social justice and equality enshrined in memories of the past also mapped out popular aspirations about the principles on which the Algerian polity should be based in the future. Nostalgia was felt therefore not only in terms of a lost past, but of a lost future of material plenty and equality, promised by a modernist paradigm of progress, that once seemed just over the horizon, but bore little relation to present experience. Memories of a once hoped for future therefore translated the passing of the dream of mass utopia, representing a difficult moment of awakening in which the dream was recognised as just that, even if its principles of equality for all continued to underpin both daily interactions and political aspirations in the present.

If previous scholarly work on Algerian history has focused almost entirely on the colonial period and decolonisation, this research adds to the small but growing body of work currently underway by a handful of young scholars on the much under-researched post-independence period, as well as providing fresh interdisciplinary approaches to the study of Algeria that combine history and anthropology. As such, the major contribution of this work is to ask Algerians how they relate to their recent past, and to ethnographically investigate the past-present-future relationship from the perspective of a working class neighbourhood, based on prolonged on the ground fieldwork.[3]

[3] See also work by other scholars working in contemporary history and memory, although many of these have focused on decolonisation and violence: A. Moussaoui, *La violence en Algérie. Les lois du chaos* (Paris, 2006); M. Rahal, "Fused Together and Torn Apart: Stories and Violence in Contemporary Algeria", in *History and Memory*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2012), pp. 118-15; N. Vince, "Saintly grandmothers: youth reception and reinterpretation of the national past in contemporary Algeria", *Journal of North African Studies* 18 (1), 2013, pp. 32-52.

Locating the Nation-Building Period

In its broadest sense, the nation-building period may be considered as running from independence in 1962 to the nationwide riots of October 1988 that brought an end to single party rule. However, the periodization used by residents in Bab el-Oued loosely located Algeria's most prosperous and stable period between the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s. The preceding and subsequent periods are universally imbued with negative feelings. The initial three years after independence, coinciding with the presidency of Ahmed Ben Bella (1962-1965), were often seen as unstable and unproductive. The late-1980s are remembered as a time of transition between the stability of the previous period and the horror of the 1990s, as well as for the economic hardship after the crisis of 1986, social contestation against the regime and the withdrawal of the state from its redistributive duties. The bulk of Algeria's longest period of stability and social mobility falls under the leadership of Houari Boumediene (1965-1978), and thus 'the seventies' was often used as shorthand to refer to the period, expressed as *les années soixante-dix* in both French and Algerian Arabic. As well as its temporal centrality within the more broadly defined nation-building period, it was only in the 1970s that Algerians began to taste the material benefits of independence, after a difficult post-war period. This is because the centralised economic planning that allowed for growth did not get under way until 1967, and its effects began to be felt in the early-1970s, especially after the nationalisation of hydrocarbons in 1971. The early-1980s are sometimes seen as forming part of the 'good old days', but this inclusion is not universal and depends on generational perspective. The 1980s are seen as a prelude to the divisions of the 1990s, becoming the decade 'when things began to fall apart', and are somewhat tainted by the disappearance of Boumediene as father of the nation, as well as the economic liberalisation and associated rise in socioeconomic disparities under president Chadli Bendjedid (1979-1992).

This considered, the nation-building period is defined here as running from 1965 to 1985, since, despite liberalisation and reform under Chadli, this period was presided over by a political system defined by an avowedly socialist project of authoritarian state-led development based on the modernist paradigm of industrialisation, predicated on the third worldist programme of the recovery of natural resources from foreign ownership, in this case Algeria's large hydrocarbon reserves, and their utilisation for national development. However, I will follow the field in using the 1970s as convenient shorthand for the period.

The term *nation*-building as opposed to *state*-building is used here, since although the period was that in which the architecture of the current Algerian state was constructed, the creation of strong institutions was geared toward the larger goal of social transformation and the attempt at building a socialist nation. As such, the period was about bringing an imagined community into being: fusing a heterogeneous population into a unified national body.[4] From late 1971, the tripartite policies of the Socialist Revolution, as well as being vehicles for the state's egalitarian claims, attempted just such a process of homogenisation: the Industrial Revolution aimed at incorporating the urban working class and sub-proletariat into the national political community through employment in state-owned industries and worker self-management programmes; the Agrarian Revolution was intended to improve life in the countryside and in the process, to weaken traditional centres of authority based on tribal and kinship structures and bring the rural masses within the ambit of the state; and lastly, a Cultural Revolution that focused on the Arabisation and education reform aimed at creating a single cultural community.

Nation-building is also preferred over state-building since, for the early part of the Boumediene period, Algeria lacked formal participatory institutions of governance. The national assembly and constitution were suspended after Colonel Boumediene's coup d'état on 19 June 1965, after which President Ben Bella was placed under house arrest. The new regime was characterised by weak institutionalisation at the top, based on the collegiate leadership of a 26 member Revolutionary Council, composed of 13 high ranking officers of the Armée Nationale Populaire (ANP), 11 ex-colonels or commanders of the wartime ALN,[5] and only two civilians.[6] For the following decade, this unelected Council, headed by Boumediene, enjoyed unfettered legislative powers. Unencumbered by representative government, the Council subsequently rebuilt the architecture of the state from the ground up, according to populist official rhetoric. Local government was the first to appear, with elections to municipal assemblies (Assemblées Populaires Communales – APC) held in February 1967, and regional assemblies (Assemblées Populaires de Wilaya – APW) following in May 1969.

[4] H. Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria 1988-2002. Studies in a Broken Polity* (London, 2003).
[5] Armée de Libération Nationale.
[6] P. Balta, *La stratégie de Boumediène* (Paris, 1978).

Spurred on by a growing awareness within the power structure that regime legitimacy could not be based solely on the FLN,[7] the construction of a democratic formalism was intensified throughout the second half of the 1970s. The construction of a robust, centralised institutional framework was famously articulated through Boumediene's intention of "building a state able to outlive both events and men".[8] A foundational document designed to reinforce Algeria's socialist orientation, the National Charter, was submitted for public debates held nationwide in early summer 1976, and subsequently put to referendum on 27 June 1976, before being turned into a constitution that was also adopted by referendum on 19 November 1976. Presidential elections were then held on 10 December 1976, in which 95% of voters elected the incumbent leader – who was the only candidate – after which Boumediene acquired the official title of President of the Republic.[9] Finally, after the regime was deemed safe from the top, elections to a new Assemblée Populaire Nationale (APN) took place on 25 February 1977, in which the electorate was able to choose from closed lists of party members.

The speedy nature of this formal democratisation drive has been interpreted as a necessary legitimacy building exercise in the face of growing opposition to leftist regime policies from the early-1970s by a disenfranchised middle-class linked to the state bureaucracy that was regularly accused by the regime of protecting its class interests and standing in the way of the Socialist Revolution.[10] In any case, by the mid-1970s the absence of formal institutions was glaringly obvious,[11] particularly in view of the increased political and institutional isolation of Boumediene after his left turn of 1971, as reflected in a slew of resignations and deaths, sometimes in suspicious circumstances,[12] of Revolutionary Council members. By 1978, only ten members remained, eight having died and eight having retired or become regime opponents.[13] An alternative explanation sees the gradual construction of the institutional architecture of the Algerian state throughout the 1970s as a process of genuine democratisation that, over the following decades, would have led to the natural splitting of different interest groups within the party and state apparatus into different political

[7] The supposedly vanguard single party, the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), had not held a party congress since 1964.
[8] In French, "*l'édification d'un État capable de survivre aux événements et aux hommes*". Houari Boumediene, Déclaration du Conseil de la Révolution, 3/12/78, in *Discours du Président Boumediene*, Tome VIII (Algiers, undated), p. 78.
[9] He had previously been known officially as President of the Revolutionary Council.
[10] H. Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria*, p. 16-19.
[11] J. Leca and J. C. Vatin, *L'Algérie politique. Institutions et régime* (Paris, 1975).
[12] Such as Interior Minister, Ahmed Medeghri, found dead at his home in 1974.
[13] P. Balta, *La stratégie de Boumediène*, p. 333-334.

formations.[14] Journalist Paul Balta has maintained that Boumediene enigmatically mentioned "spectacular changes" planned along the lines of greater political liberalisation just before his death from a rare blood disease in December 1978.[15]

The Field Site: Bab el-Oued

Bab el-Oued is a low-income neighbourhood of Algiers, with an area of 1.2 km^2, situated in the valley of an underground river, the Oued M'kacel, beside the sea on the northern side of the western headland of the bay of Algiers. Administratively speaking, Bab el-Oued is a *commune* with its own local assembly (APC) and mayor, but is also the administrative centre of a *daira* – a larger administrative unit comprising the four other *communes* surrounding the neighbourhood: Bologhine (St Eugène), Oued Koriche, Raïs Hmidou (La Pointe), and the Casbah. As the commercial and administrative centre for these *communes*, Bab el-Oued functions as a mini city centre within the capital for a potential population of over 232,000.[16]

Evolution of the Population of the Commune of Bab el-Oued[17]

	1966	1977	1987	1998	2008
Bab el-Oued	83,671	121,489	105,374	86,600	64,732

Source: Office Nationale des Statistiques.

[14] See the interview with Cherif Belkacem, who left the Revolutionary Council in 1977, in the documentary, *'alā āthār Būmedīn*, ENTV, aired December 1997.

[15] See the interview with Balta, "Boumediene envisageait de libéraliser le régime", in the special supplement "Houari Boumediene, le règne de tous les pouvoirs 1965-1978", in *El Watan*, 27 December 2008, available at https://www.scribd.com/doc/14342492/Houari-Boumediene-le-regne-de-tous-les-pouvoirs-1965-1978.

[16] The 1998 census shows the population of the daira of Bab el-Oued as 232,537 (Recensement Générale de la Population 1998, Office Nationale des Statistiques).

[17] This data, perhaps surprisingly, shows a decline in population from a high point in the late 1970s. The decline between 1977 and 1987 is due to two factors. Firstly, statistics show a reversal of the *exode rurale* (much complained of in the press of the day), with 21,506 arrivals in Algiers and 142,240 departures over the same period. 57% of the latter went to non-neighbouring wilayas, often for employment opportunities in the bureaucracy. Furthermore, President Chadli's 1983 drive to forcibly relocate rural migrants to their wilayas of origin had an impact on population numbers. Secondly, in 1984, the administrative delimitations of the Commune of Bab el-Oued were changed as part of a major territorial reshuffle. The Commune lost the areas of Oued Koriche and Bologhine, thus dramatically reducing its size and population. However, despite this, there seems to be a tendency toward population decrease, which continues between 1987 and 2008, explained by the gradual movement of longstanding residents to newer suburbs. If central Bab el-Oued feels increasingly overcrowded to residents, this is because of its importance as a commercial centre with an extremely high volume of daytime passing traffic, rather than an increase in resident population.

The neighbourhood is routinely said by inhabitants to be separated from the city centre by two architectural markers facing each other across Place Mohamed Ouanouri: the enormous Lycée Emir Abdelkader, formerly the Lycée Bugeaud built in 1862-8, with its imposing stucco façade and columns; and the headquarters of the national police, the Direction Générale de la Sûreté Nationale (DGSN), a sprawling building made of prefabricated concrete built on the site of the colonial-era Caserne Pélissier. Just outside the administrative limit of the *commune*, this area is known as *ddekhla tā3 Bāb el-Oued* (the entrance to Bab el-Oued). Due to the presence of important state institutions, this is not a place one can linger, and becomes a space of passage, frequently jammed with traffic and thronging with teenagers in the afternoon as they leave school. Continuing on into the neighbourhood from here would take you down Ahmed Boubella street, lined with early 20th century apartment buildings built in the Haussman style and known as *le qwāṣ* (the arches) for its covered arcades of shops on one side of the street. To the left snakes Rampe Louni Arezki (Rampe Vallée),[18] up to the high ground behind the Jardin de Prague (Jardin Marengo), a park often regarded as a no-go area due to its reputation for drugs and muggings. Towards the sea sits the relatively quiet and middle-class Quartier Nelson, centred around a large square with a small market[19] and larger apartments, many of which double up as private medical and legal practices.

Following the arcades of the main artery into central Bab el-Oued brings you out onto the wide swathe of green that cuts through the turn of the century apartment buildings, opening up a vista to the sea: Boulevard Abderrahmane Taleb, also known as Faisan d'Or, after a colonial era brasserie that once occupied the premises now housing the Nike store. Looking away from the sea, up the swathe of park towards Lycée Okba gives a view of the towering blocks of Cité des Eucalyptus, built in 1959 at right angles to the steeply sloping ground. Looking south toward the sea reveals the esplanade of Kettani, almost always taken over by a football game, with its open air swimming pools by the edge of the sea, built as a military baths during the colonial period and subsequently opened to the public after independence.

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[18] I have used official place names, and placed colonial era place names in brackets, resisting the urge to use the prefix "ex-", since many colonial-era place names remain in common use. Instead, "ex-" is used here to denote a colonial-era name that is no longer in use.

[19] The main market was closed for renovation during much of the early-1970s after being damaged by an OAS bomb in the early-1960s. A spontaneous market grew up around La Consolation, before the authorities transferred the market to the main square of Quartier Nelson. Destroyed by fire in 1976, Nelson's market was subsequently rebuilt in modernist style (see *El Moudjahid*, 1 July 1976).



View of Central Bab el-Oued from Chemin Sidi Ben Nour, leading up to Djebel Coucou, which overlooks the neighbourhood.

At this end of the Boulevard sits a large two dimensional metal sculpture in the shape of a tree, donated as a gesture of friendship by the city of Marseille some years ago, and known in the neighbourhood as 'Timberland', due to its resemblance to the clothing brand's logo. As one of Bab el-Oued's major places for outdoor socialising, the Boulevard has various spatial divisions according to different gender and age uses: the lower area around the tree sculpture is more open, contains a fountain and is frequented by families and women. This is one of the few outside spaces in the neighbourhood where women can sit and chat. Further up, under the shade of neatly clipped trees is an area predominantly occupied by old men, sitting on the walls on pieces of cardboard so as not to dirty their trousers, watching the world go by or playing dominos. At the top of the boulevard is a paved area known as *jnīna ferṭāsa* (the bald park) because of the trees removed by the council, which is mostly used by boys for playing football.



Boulevard Abderrahmane Taleb, looking up from Kettani toward the Cité des Eucalyptus.

The route into central Bab el-Oued continues down the neighbourhood's main shopping street, Avenue Colonel Lotfi (ex-Avenue de la Bouzaréah). Being in a car at this point would mean being caught in perpetual gridlock, inching through the neighbourhood's overcrowded one way system down Avenue Gherafa Brahim (Avenue Durando) towards Bab el-Oued's thronging transport nexus, known as La Princesse after the patisserie of the same name. Here, shared taxis coming from the city centre eject their tightly packed passengers and imbibe new travellers who must first shout out their destinations and hope the driver feels like going in their direction. On foot however, one can continue down Colonel Lotfi, with its elegant faded white facades and blue wrought iron balconies covered in washing and satellite dishes, edging past interminable shoe shops, clothes stores, and fast food restaurants selling the ubiquitous mix of pizzas, chips and sandwiches. The parallel streets behind the neighbourhood's main drag become progressively less ornamented, poorer, and more industrial, once inhabited by Europeans of Spanish and Gypsy origin, with the old SNTA[20] factory. This area is also home to the famous Es-Sunna mosque, an important centre of

[20] Société Nationale des Tabacs et des Allumettes.

Islamist activism in the 1990s. Navigating the busy, narrowing pavements requires dodging innumerable other pedestrians that reveal the diversity of Bab el-Oued's population: young men wearing figure hugging tracksuit bottoms, football shirts, elaborately gelled hair and the latest trainers hanging around in front of building entrances; middle-aged women in knee-length skirts and short–sleeved tops or covered in the all-enveloping black *jilbāb*; little girls wearing pyjamas and slippers on errands to their local shop for their mothers; respectable avuncular looking men with moustaches, crisply ironed shirts and pressed trousers; gangs of teenage girls on the way home from school wearing tight jeans and stylish sunglasses, some with *hijāb*, some without; old men wearing the cobalt blue uniform once worn by dockers in the city's port; and Islamists with their characteristic spotless, shortened white *qāmīṣ* imported from the Gulf, beards and sandals.

Soon the street opens out slightly at what is often considered to mark the centre of the neighbourhood: a small, but busy junction known as Trois Horloges, due to the ornate lampost at its centre sporting three clock faces, each facing the converging streets. One street goes up to En-Nasr mosque and the park created to replace the buildings that collapsed during the intense flooding of 2001, and continues up to the poorer parts of the neighbourhood, Maxime Noiré and the large social housing estates above it.



Avenue Colonel Lotfi, heading into central Bab el-Oued.



View of central Bab el-Oued from Oued Koriche: the slab block of Groupe Taine (centre), the Marché Kbir of Climat de France (foreground right), part of the Cité des Carrières (far left) and Cité de l'Armaf (centre left).

The first of these, Cité Perez, was the first social housing complex built for Muslims during the colonial period in 1952, next to the late-1950s estate of Cité de l'Armaf with its seven peeling blocks, and Groupe Taine, another estate dominated by a 150 metre long, twelve storey slab block. Above these stand the even poorer estates around Triolet that lie within the administrative boundary of Oued Koriche: the legendary Climat de France, a modernist estate home to tens of thousands of people, designed by Fernand Pouillon and completed in 1959, comprising a gargantuan rectangular block with a large square in the centre, a long serpentine bar block and numerous others; and the infamous Diar el-Kef (Cité des Carrières), two large blocks on the steeply sloping land above Triolet, one recently refurbished and the other still showing its façade of unrendered breezeblocks, completed in 1960 as temporary social housing for Muslims, with diminutive flats and shared bathrooms. If Bab el-Oued has a reputation in wealthier parts of Algiers as a tough neighbourhood, Cité des Carrières forms Bab el-Oued's own no-go area, and its residents are regularly blamed for crime and insecurity in the neighbourhood.

Turning right from Trois Horloges brings you to a small square known as Formāja for its cheese-like wedge shape, the evening home of Dlāla, the neighbourhood's informal buy-anything-sell-anything market, bustling with traders selling fake designer sportswear, caged goldfinches captured on the surrounding hills, or individuals selling their own bric-a-brac to make ends meet. Behind this stands Bab el-Oued's central market, a large turn of the century iron structure with stalls spilling out into the surrounding streets: fish on one, fruit and vegetables on the other. Pressing through the crowds of Dlāla takes us past the area where baguettes are sold in the evenings, sarcastically known as Club des Pains, after the luxury resort of Club des Pins, reserved for high ranking military and regime figures and located down the coast. Above this is the quieter square of Lelièvre, with its palm tree-lined central garden and shady café, a favourite morning haunt of the neighbourhood's old men. Beyond Lelièvre stands the sprawling late-19th century Centre Hospitalo-Universitaire de Bab el-Oued (Hôpital Maillot), with numerous buildings scattered throughout tranquil gardens that provide a welcome break from the constant noise and crowds in the centre of the neighbourhood.

Turning in the opposite direction from the market at Formāja will take you past the transport nexus of La Princesse, with an ever-present crowd awaiting a prepetually late bus service connecting with the city centre, and the main police station, whose presence makes the adjacent square into a sort of neutral space for the neighbourhood's young men, where no fights or drug use can take place, earning it the name el-3aqla (the calm), and onwards to La Consolation, three city blocks of peeling, overcrowded modernist appartment buildings built to rehouse the mostly Italian population of the Marine quarter after its remodelling in the 1940s. These buildings then open out onto the seafront at Rmila, the main transport point for private buses and taxis running to the western districts of Bologhine, Raïs Hmidou and Aïn Benian. Rmila is also the end of the esplanade that extends back to Kettani, and along which is located Bab el-Oued's narrow beach – affectionately known as Zigout Plage (Sewer Beach) because of the fetid river that emerges from its underground journey through the neighbourhood at the side of the beach. To the left of Rmila stands the newly rebuilt Stade Ferhani (Stade Cerdan), with a running track and football pitches, and the breakwater known as Rochers Carrés, whose large concrete cubes provide a screen on the landward side that covers a multitude of illicit behaviours: from drinking to intimate encounters.

For an uninitiated foreigner, orientation in Bab el-Oued is a tricky exercise. Many places remain known by their colonial-era names, rather than the official names that appear

on the map (Rochambeau, Rue Mizon, Les Carrières). The new names were meant to inscribe new political orientations and the historiography of the postcolonial state on urban space, but the continued use of earlier names suggest that habits and popuar usage change much more slowly. As in other locations that have undergone official renaming to articulate a reformulation of history,[21] this reticence can also be understood as a form of resistance against a dominant official narrative erasing the lived experience of the neighbourhood, whose own history is made visible through a muti-layered, constantly evolving process of naming and renaming. In this sense, despite the maintenance of colonial names in some places, the relationship to urban space was far from being stuck fifty years in the past. On the contrary, many place names were continually evolving, using popular, often sarcastic, nicknames relating to their unsatisfactory physical state (Zigout Plage, Jnīna Ferṭāsa), their morphology (Zig Zag, Formāja), or names related to commercial premises (SNTA, Nedjma, La Princesse), or the activities that take place in them (Dlāla, el-3aqla, Barāj tā3 Maillot).[22]

Ethnographic methods of participant observation provided the backbone of the fieldwork techniques used. By definition, participation implies getting involved, joining in and being subjective, while observation implies keeping one's distance, being unbiased, critical and subjective. As a result, my focus was to build real relationships based on mutual trust created through daily contact. My self-presentation varied according to context as appropriate, ranging from historian to friend. Although I had expected that some people, particularly youth, would be anti-academic or anti-professional, this was not the case. Presenting myself humbly as a sympathetic observer wanting to know more about the neighbourhood, at once knowledgeable but inevitably naïve, as someone who has learnt about Algeria from books but that cannot 'see things' from an Algerian perspective without the help of residents, were the keys to acceptance. Being genuinely interested in others as people and not as research subjects was also important, and I often felt that people wanted to test me out on this score before deciding if I could be trusted. In this sense, making clear the indispensability of participants' knowledge was key in building trust, as was simply being myself as much as possible.

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[21] M. Pilz, "Tiblisi in City Maps: Symbolic Construction of an Urban Landscape", in T. Darieva, W. Kaschuba and M. Krebs (eds.) *Urban Spaces after Socialism. Ethnographies of Public Places in Eurasian Cities* (Frankfurt, 2011), p. 81-107.

[22] The last of these names, *barāj*, refers to a police checkpoint, of which there are many throughout the city, and which are used by residents as landmarks to refer to nearby locations.

My contact with the neighbourhood began during a series of walkabouts during a three week stay in Algiers in July 2012, intended to scope out the possibilities for research in the neighbourhood.[23] These intial forays into the neighbourhood quickly revealed the embodied nature of ethnographic research on the ground. Wandering around an unknown place, with no contacts to serve as introductions into the social life of the neighbourhood proved a profoundly daunting and uncomfortable experience in which I was often unsure what to do with my body – where to put it, how to sit, where to go, where not to go, what to say, and what not to say. Three sites were quickly identified as places in which I could take part in activities that would make inroads into the social life of the neighbourhood: a gym on Rue Boukhezer Ahmed (Rue Montaigne), the neighbourhood association SOS Bab el-Oued on Place Lelièvre, and the Café de l'Equipe on Rue Ibnou Marzouk el-Khatib.

The first of these sites, the gym, is owned and run by a middle-class man in his fifties from El Biar. With no name or sign, its entrance is marked only by steps leading to a basement from the street into a large windowless space filled with rusting weight–lifting equipment, lockers and showers. As a no-frills, men-only space, social relations at the gym, known as *ṣāla ta3 l-ḥdīd* (literally 'the metal room'), are governed by codes of both politeness – swearing was frowned upon – and masculinity. Being regarded positively as *khchīn* (tough) requires not only having a good physique and attending regularly, but also displaying several key aspects of idealised masculinity: giving off total self-assuredness, not shying away from difficult tasks (*mā yetfechech*), making a sincere effort (*ijīb rōḥo*), keeping one's word and being genuinely friendly and respectful of others (*irespictīhum/iqadderhum*). If the select group of tough guys seemed initially surprised and suspicious at the presence of a foreigner, barriers were gradually broken down, eventually leading to the ultimate in gym acceptance: training with them and being asked to join them for coffee afterwards. Taking these relationships outside the gym and being introduced to people's families and friends was of key importance, since talking in detail about my research or asking searching questions at the gym would have been seen as inappropriate; an excuse to divert oneself from the masculine activity of lifting weights.

The second site, SOS Bab el-Oued is a neighbourhood association founded by a man in his late-forties with a long history of youth work, originally from the neighbourhood, and his wife, a primary school teacher in Oued Koriche, who now live outside Bab el-Oued. Both of Kabyle origin and radically secular, their self-narration is clearly caught up in the ideological

[23] For technical details of the field research, see the appendix at the end of this thesis.

oppositions of the 1990s, instantly couching the association as having been founded in 1994 out of a need to provide a non-religioius space for young people to express themselves. This position creates a series of dynamics: the strong support for the state as republican institution by those running the association, a position that precluded neither harsh criticism of politics, nor close links with the police, with the regular presence of a plain-clothes police officer; as well as visible social and spatial divisions with many – but by no means all – Islamists in the neighbourhood. For some residents, the association is therefore perceived as too ideological, causing them to shy away from the activities offered due to a general air of 'politics'.

The association offers a range of activities for young people in the neighbourhood: extra classes in French, English and maths, a rehearsal space with instruments for aspiring bands, outings and trips, and more importantly, a rare space in which young people can simply hang out and socialise. Bab el-Oued is one of the few neighbourhoods in Algiers not to have a *maison de jeunes* (youth centre). Most of those attending the classes are of primary school age, usually picked up by parents straight after class, whereas the musicians were between the ages of 17 and 24 and formed the bulk of those that attended the association on a daily basis to socialise. The walls of the association were decorated with a variety of symbols that made clear its engagement with both official historiography and a revolutionary politics, all presented in the form of pastiche of images of the past: the face of Che Guevara on the front door, flanked by the words *échange* (exchange), *engagement* (commitment), *solidarité* (solidarity); a centrally-placed framed composite of portraits of heros and martyrs of the revolution with Emir Abdelkader at the centre; black and white images of Bab el-Oued during the colonial era; a framed Algerian flag with a wooden African mask below it; a model of the Dome of the Rock complete with invading tank and Palestinian flag on top of the bookshelf; a large mural of the rock band AC/DC; a Venezuelan flag on the filing cabinet at reception and poster of Hugo Chávez; a framed text of the Algerian national anthem surrounded by images of martyrs; several portraits of ex-president Houari Boumediene; and a little shrine on another bookshelf at the centre of the meeting room upstairs with framed photographs of the founder's brother and a female cinematographer, both assassinated by Islamist militants during the 1990s.

I first approached the association in July 2012, explaining the research project and expressing the desire to participate in the life of neighbourhood. As a result, I was given a weekly English class of six 17 year old girls, who as well as being an endless source of enthusiasm, encouragement and fun, introduced me to their older brothers and provided more

links with the wider neighbourhood. Furthermore, the association provided a space in which I could meet and talk to women of different age groups – students, other teachers or mothers – which otherwise would not have been possible, since the presence of lone males in the few spaces of female socialisation that existed in the neighbourhood was strongly frowned upon.

My position in the association as foreigner aged between the young people and the older founders meant that I took on the role of respected friend to many of the male young people, who would often share their problems ranging from girl trouble, family issues, doubts in religious beliefs, drug use, school expulsions and trouble with the police; as well as their genuine hopes for a better world and greater self-expression. Moreover, my role at the association allowed me to be attached to a well-known local institution, giving me a role as an English teacher and youth worker often seen as positive within the neighbourhood that made it easier for residents to place me in a familiar context. Engaging in fieldwork in a low-income neighbourhood made making a tangible contribution both methodologically and ethically important for my work, with the idea that fieldwork should do as much as possible not to reproduce the unequal power dynamics of a comparatively comfortably-off western researcher extracting information from residents and offering nothing in return. A key part of this project was therefore to make the fieldwork as much of an exchange as possible, in which my skills with young people could modestly have a positive effect on the fieldwork site.

However, my link to the association also meant being lumped in with its reputation in the broader neighbourhood, and may therefore have closed some doors to parts of the Islamist community, who frowned for example on the association for its encouragement of music and gender mixing. The owners of the Islamic emporium nextdoor to the association, reputedly ex-rebel leaders from the Médéa region during the 1990s, regarded me with extreme suspicion, and attempts to engage them were not welcome, unless I was willing to convert to Islam, and stopped frequenting the association. This was a social divide I was not in a position to bridge, and doing so may have further harmed my efforts to participate in the life of the neighbourhood. However, the shop and others like it, owned and staffed by Islamists that were not from Bab el-Oued, were boycotted by the majority of residents, due to the widespread view that Islamist fighters benefiting from the 2005 amnesty had blood on their hands. Residents were even reluctant to pray with these men at El-Feṯ mosque across the square, where they prayed completely separately. If contact with those in the neighbourhood that eschewed the political stance of the association, for whaterver reason, was doubtless

reduced by my participation in it, this was counterblanced through contact with people at the other, more neutral sites and acquaintances made through the commerces I regularly used. Indeed, the fact that I discovered that many in the neighbourhood viewed the association with suspicion for a variety of reasons was indicative of the fact that other residents trusted me enough to share their feelings with me.

Owned, like many of the neighbourhood's cafés, by migrants from Jijel, the café chosen initially as a fieldwork site soon closed down for refurbishment. However, it was quickly replaced by a small café frequented by the older brothers of some of my students and their friends, mostly students studying technical subjects at the Université des Sciences et de la Technologie Houari Boumediene (USTHB) in Bab Ezzouar. Most afternoons, we would sit at our regular table by the window and while away the time chatting, joking and smoking. Becoming a regular at this café allowed access to a different age group that gave different perspectives on relationships to the past, and much else. Time was also spent at the open air café in Place Lelièvre, which in the mornings was a favourite place for a large group of older men, all of whom had grown up in the neighbourhood.

History, Memory and Anthropology

Since the second half of the twentieth century, the possibility of a totalising modernist history in search of "the significance common to all the phenomena of a period, the law that accounts for their cohesion",[24] has come under attack from poststruturalist currents of thought that have seen the historical discipline as "one way in which a society recognises and develops a mass of documentation with which it is inextricably linked."[25] This critical approach has substituted genealogy for History, interrogating the construction of the past from the viewpoint of the present to recover the historical contingencies that have allowed seemingly timeless, naturalised things to come into being. Foucault's histories of madness, crime and punishment and sexuality made visible a series of discourses unfolding within sets of restraints and rules of exclusion that determine what can and cannot be said or done, who can speak, and what is true or false. Representations of the past thus have normative value, defining boundaries of exclusion and inclusion of present-day communities. For Foucault then, like other disciplines, history is not just a highly structured institution for the production

[24] M. Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* (Paris, 1969), p. 10
[25] *Ibid*, p. 7.

of specific knowledge, but has been complicit in the exercise of power and the impulse toward totalitarian control over the psyche and the body that is intrinsic to modernity.

However, it should be pointed out here, that in tracing the genealogy of present-day discourses to show their different construction in the past, Foucault is more concerned with the present that the past, and sometimes ends up reducing the complexity of past systems of power relations in order to expose those of the present, casting the past in rose-tinted tones in the process.[26] Foucault can be nostalgic. Surrounded in Bab el-Oued by extremely negative evaluations of the present and an overarching nostalgia for the past, and exposed to the glaring difference between today's degraded built environment and past images of neatly ordered urban space, I was myself keenly aware of the temptation to reproduce the narrative of many of those I met, using a lyricized past to expose present injustices. While memory was certainly used in this way, and understandably so, the re-imagination of the past suggested that more was at play.

The poststructuralist approach seeks to expose the power relations behind authoritative accounts of the past in which political or social elites use institutions, such as education systems, to coordinate the way in which the past is remembered. In this sense, official history is used to silence popular memories, with people being "shown not what they were, but what they must remember having been".[27] However, this top-down power dynamic runs the risk of reproducing the dualism of Hobsbawm's notion of a tradition invented by elites and idly taken up by the masses,[28] thereby missing the complexity of power relations operating in multiple directions. Ranger's reappraisal of the concepts he elaborated with Hobsbawm is especially relevant for its focus on the non-West, in that it maintains that the original work overestimated the permanent nature of traditions, without allowing room for the continual reformulation of identities and institutional transformation.[29] Ranger sides with Anderson's notion of 'imagined communities', arguing for more a complex framework of analysis for the history of postcoloniality, as different imaginings of ethnicity, religion and language entered into constant contestation to redefine and reimagine the meaning of political

[26] See D. Cohen and R. Saller, "Foucault on Sexuality in Greco-Roman Antiquity", in J. Goldstein (ed.), *Foucault and the Writing of History* (Oxford, 1994).
[27] M. Foucault, "Film in Popular Memory: An Interview with Michel Foucault", in *Cahiers du Cinema*, 1974, from excerpt in J. Olick, V. Vinitzky-Seroussi and D. Levy (eds.), *The Collective Memory Reader* (Oxford, 2011), p. 252-253.
[28] E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).
[29] T. Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition Revisited: The Case of Colonial Africa", in Terrence Ranger and Olufemi Vaughan (eds.), *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth Century Africa*, (London, 1993), p. 62-111.

community. Lipsitz[30] and Zerubavel[31] also point beyond an opposition between dominant memory and countermemory to an alternative scenario in which multiple versions of the past circulate. This approach is particularly useful for understanding the contested nature of the past in Algeria, where competing versions of the past are promoted in order to gain control of the political centre. As the following chapter shows, these competing narratives are far from being mutually exclusive, but rather offer an array of themes strategically borrowed and reappropriated by antagonistic versions of the present.

Poststructuralism's revelation that power, as an unequal relational force, does not just operate in a top-down direction, but is ubiquitous and permeates all social relationships also means that a true politics of resistance is illusory, since power can never be stripped away to reveal an underlying essence through which it might be elided. In this sense, there can be "no single locus of great refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary",[32] only a plurality of resistances playing multiple roles at best. If the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss and Parsons had little time for agency, the subject seemed to be being passed over once again by poststructuralist thought, irrevocably enmeshed in systems of power relations with "neither the originary grounds of autonomous existence, nor the epistemic means for self-knowledge".[33] The major casualty of the idea that any exercise in the scientific explanation of social life was effectively an exercise in collective myth-making was therefore the confidence in a sense of social totality, and especially the crisis of Marxism as an interpretative and political paradigm predicated on the material basis of inequality and the possibility of struggle against it. If Jameson railed against the 'death of the subject' as being in reality the construction of a new, depthless, fragmented subject incapable of political action and perfectly attuned to the logic of late-capitalism;[34] Calhoun reminds us that modernist nationalism had indeed been reductive of diversity and manipulating of the past, but the national expresses solidarity and belonging and provides both the rhetoric and perhaps the only real framework in which to demand equality and growth.[35] It is modernist nationalism that has underwritten many successful projects of redistribution of wealth, not least that of Algeria during the 1970s. Related to this question of agency, was a debate about who poststructuralism belonged to.

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[30] G. Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*, (Minneapolis, 1990).
[31] E. Zerubavel, "Social Memories: steps towards a sociology of the past", in *Qualitative Sociology* 19, 1996, p. 283-299.
[32] M. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1 (New York, 1978), p. 95.
[33] N. Dirks, G. Eley, S. Ortner (eds.), *Culture, Power, History* (Princeton, 1994), p. 12.
[34] F. Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London, 1991).
[35] C. Calhoun, *Nations Matter. Culture, History and the Cosmopolitan Dream* (London, 2007), p. 18.

Some have pointed to poststucturalism as a shared intellectual heritage due to the influence of decolonisation, particularly in Algeria, attempting to make it into a Franco-Maghrebian theory concerned with the undoing of France's imperial heritage and the breakdown of its universalist claims, ultimately leading to the events of 1968 in Paris and a new generation of thinkers,[36] from Sartre to Derrida. In this sense, Algeria stands at the origin of the postmodern turn. It can be imagined that, initially at least, from an Algerian perspective, the intellectual rug-ripping inaugurated by poststructuralism was seen as an internal issue of the west dealing with the eurocentrism of its own universalism: a self-doubt that was at once France's well-deserved lesson and something with which an Algeria on the right side of history with its head held high, need not concern itself. In contrast, others have seen the decentring of identity as a western luxury,[37] or a continued form of western imperialism,[38] while yet others have criticised the relevance of postmodernism to the experience of most inhabitants of the postcolonial world, whose struggle to attain the benefits of modernity is ongoing.[39]

For intellectuals in the Arab World, faced in the 1980s with a series of repressive post-colonial gerontocracies and a rising tide of religious resistance against the state in the form of radical Islamism, the ideas coming from the West seemed tantamount to ideological suicide. Those on the Arab left have defended modernism by critiquing both essentialist and romantic concepts of identity, detecting not only a contemporaneity, but an objective complicity between postmodernism's relativist exoticism and Islamism's rhetoric of identity and authenticity, advancing the possibility that both share a logic of the incommensurability of cultures and the marginalisation of discursive reason and agency. Syrian historian Aziz al-Azmeh draws parallels between postmodern ideas of difference and post-colonial ideologies of authenticity, as mirror images of the same culturalism, in which "orientals, most particularly those who describe themselves as post-colonial, re-orientalize themselves

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[36] See the chapter "Derrida in Algeria", in R. Young, *Postcolonialism. An Historical Introduction* (Oxford, 2001). Young cites Fanon, Memmi, Bourdieu, Althusser, Lyotard, Derrida and Cixous (all of whom were born, or had formative experiences in, Algeria) in his attempt to give Third World roots to poststructuralist thought. None were Algerians 'proper', but *improper* Algerians, not belonging to either side. Some, like Althusser, were *pieds-noirs* from poor European families. Althusser's family was deported to Algeria as result of Franco-Prussian War. Others, like Derrida and Cixous, came from indigenous Jewish communities expelled from Spain in 15th century, while Fanon, Bourdieu and Lyotard, went to Algeria to work or were called up, and got involved with the revolution. Lyotard says he owes "his awakening, *tout court*, to Constantine" (quoted in Young, p. 419).

[37] G. Spivak, "The Postmodern Condition: The End of Politics?" in S. Harasym (ed.) *The Postcolonial Critics: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (London, 1990), pp. 17-24.

[38] Z. Sardar, *Postmodernism and the Other: the New Imperialism of Western Culture* (London, 1997).

[39] A. Ahmad, *In Theory: Nations, Classes, Literatures* (London, 1992).

radically when they speak of regaining their authenticity and singularity. Thus arises a traffic in mirror images between re-orientalized Orientals speaking for authenticity and postmodernists speaking for difference".[40] Emphasising the dangers of the postmodern critique of humanism in the Arab World, Palestinian historian Hisham Sharabi has pointed out that "while the intellectual world of late capitalism perhaps can accommodate without much damage the aestheticism or scepticism of a Foucault or a Derrida, the intellectuals of the postcolonial periphery, including the Arab World, can ill afford the risk of philosophical and anti-theoretical scepticism".[41] Egyptian philosopher Fouad Zakariyya has maintained that faced with the retreat of Arab states from their social and economic functions, later exacerbated by the repression of the left and the imposition of structural adjustment policies, Islamism's ahistorical return to perceived origins has proposed not a vision of an empowered future, but a set of changes in formal appearances, a focus on formal rituals, and an obsession with sex, which does nothing to address issues of injustice or socioeconomic inequality.[42] In this sense, Algerian feminist Marnia Lazreg's lambasting of postmodern 'antihumanism' may also be read against the grain as a critique of the other ideology to emerge from the abandonment of the utopian dream of modernism in the Arab World, the essentialism of religious revival:

"Antihumanism has not provided any authority larger than itself that could monitor its excesses. Old-style humanism, in contrast, and despite its shortcomings, makes itself vulnerable to criticism by appealing to its unfulfilled promise of a more reasonable rationalism or a more egalitarian universalism. Indeed, the universalistic claim to a supracultural human entity embodied in reason provided colonized societies with the tools necessary to regain their freedom. Colonized women and men were willing to give up their lives in order to capture their share of humanity celebrated but denied by colonial powers. But what does antihumanism offer 'different' peoples? On what grounds (moral or otherwise) can powerless people struggle against their relegation to the prison house of race, colour or nationality into which antihumanism locks them?"[43]

However, the writings of the Arab left have often counterposed modernity to authenticity, in a debate that dominated intellectual life in the Middle East and North Africa for the latter part of the 20th century. Locking the region into an unhelpful binary, the polarised positions on either side have lost sight of the extent to which many people do not see the two as mutually exclusive. Indeed, one of the strongest ideas transmitted by

[40] A. al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities* (London, 1996), p. 22.
[41] H. Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy: Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society* (Oxford, 1988), x.
[42] F. Zakariyya, *al-Ḥaqīqa wa l-Wahm fī al-Ḥaraka al-Islāmiyya al-Mu'āṣira* (Cairo, 1986) and *al-Ṣaḥwa al-Islāmiyya fī Mīzān al-'Aql* (Cairo, 1987).
[43] M. Lazreg, "Feminism and Difference: The Perils of Writing as a Woman on Women in Algeria", in *Feminist Studies* 14:1 (1988), p. 99-100.

representations of the 1970s in Bab el-Oued was that of a modern state delivering on promises of progress towards a more just society and greater prosperity on one hand, and the social life of a working-class neighbourhood governed by traditional notions of solidarity and morality on the other.

Along with a turn away from systematic studies of the past toward the specific and small-scale, with an emphasis on cultural practices, discourse and the subaltern, came the difficulty of constructing an active politics within a subject-defying framework. Since poststructuralism, we have been left with the choice between accepting the end of political agency, or reifying and re-essentialising the subaltern as a basis for political action – a path undertaken by minority groups in the West with varying degrees of success, but who now find themselves locked in Lazreg's antihumanist prison house. The tyranny of modernist unity has been exchanged for the new tyranny of a segmented diversity, a process that – in practice – has done little to really challenge underlying notions of discrete and internally homogenous cultures inherited from the modern era. Against continuing injustice, postmodernism has little to offer. While Punk, Plath and Pollock screamed their desolation, and attempted to leap to freedom in the process, the postmodernists began to seem like a retirement community for failed revolutionaries, morbidly announcing the impossibility of truth and the death of the subject.[44]

By the 1990s, a way out was signalled by coalescing work in social history and anthropology, drawing on Gramscian hegemony and Bourdieu's idea of habitus, looking at the patterns of daily life that encode social divisions and inequalities and the processes through which subjects come to embody these norms and take them for granted. Forms of microhistory, such as the 'everyday history' of Medick and Lüdke,[45] looked at ordinary desire and the trials of getting though as the sites where power relations are contested or secured in perpetually incomplete processes of negotiation that are rarely unambiguously lost or won. Here, the emphasis was shifted to understanding how the subject is culturally and historically constituted in different times and places, but showing how such culturally and historically configured subjects are also autonomous agents whose actions and modes of being both sustain and transform the structures that made them. Building on the ideas of De

[44] B. Marshall, "Why Modernism Still Matters", in S. Lash and J. Friedman (eds.) *Modernity and Identity* (Oxford, 1998), p. 46.
[45] A. Lüdke, *The History of Everyday Life. Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Everyday Life* (Princeton, 1995).

Certeau,[46] such work maintains that no system of power is wholly determining and that everyday life is replete with little rebellions and things that do not fit dominant narratives. Social and cultural constructions are thus open to transformation, rather than being inevitabilities to which we must submit or accommodate ourselves. The study of culture and society should then attend to how people with real capacities make and remake their social reality. As well as being the only reasonable solution to the postmodern enigma, this approach frames the ways in which memories of the past were used in Bab el-Oued at once to contest present injustices and reaffirm the status quo, and also provides a basis for understanding how culture intersects with everyday life, forming a site of practice that makes visible the tension between agency and structure.

Ever since the early 1970s, and the appearance of Geertz's[47] ideas on the study of culture as an ensemble of texts and White's work on historical texts as poetic constructions of their authors,[48] history has been anthropologised, while anthropology has been historicised.[49] Anthropology has come up against the invention of tradition and the centrality of the constructed nature of culture, which have dislodged previous assumptions about how culture works. History has had to deal with itself as a variable cultural form, reassessing notions of time, change and duration and locating events within wider discursive fields. Historical anthropology bears much resemblance to any history seeking to understand the making of collective worlds, one in which social dynamics and their context take precedence over a procession of dates and important figures. For Gramsci, history is made in the struggle between different lifeworlds coexisting in times and places.[50] In fact, understood in this way, the crossover points between the two disciplines are so many that perhaps "there ought to be no 'relationship' between anthropology and history, since there should be no division to begin with. A theory of society which is not also a theory of history, or vice versa, is hardly a theory at all."[51] In this sense, there is much to be said about the similarities between the necessarily non-totalising approaches taken in both anthropology and social history, since both are embodied in the politics of present subjectivities. Both disciplines must be content to work with fragments: all the social historian can see are fragments of an era, just as the

[46] M. De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, 1984).
[47] C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973).
[48] H. White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Baltimore, 1973).
[49] N. Dirks, G. Eley, S. Ortner (eds.), *Culture, Power, History* (Princeton, 1994), p. 6.
[50] A. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London, 1982), p. 404-407.
[51] J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Boulder, 1992), p. 13.

ethnographer can only see fragments of culture.[52] Rather than aiming to create a totalizing history, anthropological history must aim to show how the essences and realities that are taken for granted are constructed, by locating them in their cultural contexts and placing them within the global historical processes of which they are part; in short, to show "how realities become real, how essences become essential and how materialities materialise".[53] With this in mind, that being undertaken in this research – a socially located ethnography of the historical imagination – must explore the processes and ideas that make and transform particular worlds and allow certain things to be said and done.

As a result of this approach, this research proposes no single explanatory paradigm for memory, rejecting both the positivist claim to explain everything and the postmodern position that seems to explain nothing at all, but rather that memories of the seventies are articulated in multiple ways and at once describe both relationships to the present and the future. These articulations varied from individual to individual, rather than showing consistent commonalities according to class, gender or age. Furthermore, I follow White in asserting that it is not possible to produce ways of looking at society that are not permeated by ideological representations, and that, in my view, "any science of society should be launched in the service of some concept of justice, equity and progress – that is to say, some idea of what a good society might be."[54]

Approaches to memory studies that highlight interaction between structure and agency rather than domination include that of Bodnar,[55] between what he terms official and vernacular cultures, with memory as the space in which these two cultures negotiate with each other. Bodnar's official culture is unitary and mobilises a generalized patriotic language to promote an idealised image of the nation that legitimises the concerns of dominant social groups that share a common interest in the status quo. Vernacular cultures, in contrast, are multiple, rooted in community experience and can be in permanent or temporary opposition to, or in acquiescence with, official culture. Rather than a binary opposition between history and memory, both vernacular an official cultures are used by leaders, and gain adepts from across the social spectrum in different combinations, since individuals can support aspects of both cultures at once. Public memory, as Bodnar terms it, is the mechanism that mediates

[52] *Ibid*, p. 20.
[53] *Ibid*.
[54] H. White, in V. Bonnell, L. Hunt, R. Biernacki (eds.) *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley, 1999), p. 316.
[55] J. Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the 20th Century*, (Princeton, 1993).

between competing restatements of reality expressed by the experiences of differentiated groups, privileging some over others. Rather than being passive recipients official culture, people react in different ways, by accepting official narratives, espousing alternative versions or appropriating official agendas for their own purposes by, for example, using public ritual time for recreation, or using patriotic symbols in opposition to political systems. To be successful then, a dominant narrative must tally with personal and local experiences to be accepted as true, since the most all-pervasive narratives of the past are those that do not appear to be narratives. Rather than results of the machinations of those in political power then, the socially remembered past is mostly fluid, and only a small number of representations of the past aim to offer totalizing visions; most are more vague, elusive and defined by broader senses and references, around which wider associations of meaning are flexibly organised.[56] Approaches to memory that privilege political factors risk underplaying the social and missing the way power can operate in other areas. If memory origination is explained solely by political differences, memory is liable to become a prisoner of political reductionism and functionalism.[57] Conversely, poststructuralist approaches to memory only deconstruct the official past, exempting the 'other' from deconstruction and assuming that what has been unearthed from under the suffocating blanket of modernist narratives of unity is natural and self-evident. Schwartz's work criticises this,[58] maintaining that the leaders of vernacular cultures also function as homogenizing elites, promoting loyalty to their leadership and community, a point which takes us back again to Lazreg's prison house.

With this in mind, memory is understood here, for the purposes of this research, as a symbolic filter through which experience is made sense of and that allows people to locate themselves meaningfully in the world, rather than simple act of power. In contrast to simple top-down dualisms, more nuanced terms such as tension, friction, contestation, ambiguity, negotiation and compromise are more useful in describing memory dynamics than irreducible antagonism or complacent harmony.[59] The past-present relationship is understood to be reflexive and constantly negotiated, with the past remade in the present on one hand, defining this present and constraining the possibilities of action within it on the other. In this sense, "the past is matched to the present as a model *of* society, since collective memory reflects

[56] J. Fentress and C. Wickham, *Social Memory. New Perspectives on the Past* (Oxford, 1992).
[57] A. Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method", in *American Historical Review* 102(5), 1997, p. 1386-1403.
[58] And by extension the homogenous intra-group memory posited by M. Halbwachs in *La mémoire collective* (Paris, 1950).
[59] G. Cubitt, *History and Memory*.

past events in terms of the interests, fears and aspirations of the present, and as a model *for* society, because memory embodies both a template that organises behaviour and a frame in which people locate and find meaning for present experience."[60] Boym takes this further, maintaining that the past, present and future are in fact superimposed on each other: every epoch dreams the next and, in doing so, revises the one preceding it,[61] in such a way that assemblages of old beliefs co-exist with the new. The value of this approach lies in steering a course between presentism and essentialism, avoiding the pitfalls of both constructionists, who make social memory seem more precarious than it is, and essentialists, who underestimate the extent to which memory adapts to social change. In this sense, the work of Confino[62] on representations that allow a nation to hold together as something resembling a community of memory, with sometimes serious conflicts over meaning, are important in conceptualising the broad consensus over nostalgic representations of the past in Algeria and their role as social glue.[63]

Despite broad consensus, individual approaches to collective memory are also of importance. Samuel[64] and Lowenthal[65] highlight how activities such as genealogy, country house visiting, reading historical novels, collecting antiques are ways in which people lay claim to, evoke or come into contact with the past. Relationships with the past may be more connected to personal motivations or by what a particular period or event means to a given individual. Similarly, Rosenzweig and Thelen's survey of attitudes to history in the United States suggests that popular perceptions of the past do not depend on the history taught at school, but are much more linked to interest in the intimate past of family or immediate community. Rather than automatically reproducing or rejecting ready-made representations of the past, people configure their own pasts and embed them in their own lives.[66] Remembering is a social act. We remember as members of families, localities, professions and nations – what Zerubavel terms *mnemonic communities* – the implication being that we often 'remember' events at which we were not present, or that happened before we were

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[60] B. Schwartz, "Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of American Memory" (2000), from excerpt in J. Olick, V. Vinitzky-Seroussi and D. Levy (eds.) *The Collective Memory Reader* (Oxford, 2011), p. 242-247.
[61] S. Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York, 2001).
[62] A. Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, imperial Germany, and national memory, 1871-1918* (Chapel Hill, 1997).
[63] In this sense, as the next chapter illustrates, conflicts of meaning too need a common space in which antagonists compete, pointing not to a simple duality between community and conflict, but to a dialectic. See M. Rahal's notion of *entre-soi* in "Fused Together and Torn Apart: Stories and Violence in Contemporary Algeria".
[64] R. Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, Vol.1. *Past and present in contemporary culture* (London, 1994).
[65] D. Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, 1985).
[66] R. Rosenzweig and D. Thelen, "The Presence of Past: Popular uses of history in American life", in J. Olick, V. Vinitzky-Seroussi and D. Levy (eds.), *The Collective Memory Reader* (Oxford, 2011), p. 269-70.

born, through the interpretations of others.[67] In this sense, the fusion of our own personal biographies with that of the groups and communities to which we belong becomes a key part of our social identities.[68] Following on from this, Hynes[69] sees memory as an aggregate of juxtaposed personal images and experiences that develop into a mythical structure; individual recollections blended together through particular patterns of narration into widely accepted figures of remembrance as reflections of collective experience. The implication here is that rather than foisting a constructed memory on the masses, political elites take advantage of a social memory continually reformulated from below by individual experience, and reflect this back at the public to improve legitimacy. This approach is particularly useful in understanding the relationship between memory and politics in Algeria, in which nostalgia for the nation-building period is used by the present political elite to boost regime legitimacy.

What is frequently termed collective memory[70] is often represented as transcending the individual, and thus risks slipping into a metaphysics of group mind, especially in orientalising approaches to Arab societies, in which notions of 'the Arab mind',[71] or depictions of a homogenous Arab 'outlook' have been commonplace.[72] While it is crucial to counter such totalising approaches by underlining that only the individual remembers, individuals nevertheless inhabit a social world that shapes that retained by individuals. Social groups *can* therefore have memories, just as they have identities, ideas, styles and discourses, all of which amount to more than the sum of individual subjectivities. Olick differentiates between collected memory, as the sum of individuals, requiring psychological or neurological approaches to analysis; and collective memory, as being greater than the sum of individuals, for which a political or social approach is required.[73] To eschew this collective aspect of memory would be to deny the social and the cultural. Inappropriate individualisation and psychologisation of social memory leads to talk of social groupings remembering, forgetting, repressing and experiencing amnesia, with little methodological adjustment between the

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[67] E. Zerubavel, "Social Memories: steps towards a sociology of the past", *Qualitative Sociology* 19, 1996, pp. 283-299.
[68] M. Schudson, "The Past in the Present versus the Present in the Past", *Communication* II, p. 105-13.
[69] S. Hynes, "Personal Narratives and Commemoration" in J. Winter and E. Sivan (eds.) *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge, 1999); see also K. Jarausch and M. Geyer, *Shattered Past. Reconstructing German Identities*, (Princeton, 2003).
[70] M. Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*.
[71] R. Patai, *The Arab Mind* (New York, 2002).
[72] M. Nydell, *Understanding Arabs* (Boston, 2006).
[73] J. Olick, "Collective Memory: The Two Cultures", *Sociological Theory* 17(3), 1998, p. 338-48.

individual and the group.[74] Given the transition from a recent civil war, Algeria is often placed in the traumatised category, a process of naming from the outside that becomes a catch-all for a plethora of social and political ills, leaving little room for agency by individuals immobilised within the label of collective trauma. Such approaches often portray Algeria as a kind of dead-zone; a society awaiting the passing of the after effects of conflict. My experience in Bab el-Oued showed that, despite contending with evident scars and deep social fragmentation, young people particularly were often beautifully unencumbered by memories of the 1990s, and were actively, dynamically and creatively engaged in opening up new spaces and forms of self-expression that translated their own aspirations and hopes for the future.

For the purposes of this research, the term social memory, conceived of as a working rather than a substantive concept and defined as "the process by which knowledge and awareness of the social past are generated and maintained in human societies",[75] is preferred over collective memory, since it locates the mechanisms that transmit memory firmly within the praxis of social relationships,[76] recognising that memory is filtered through processes of interpretation grounded in social contexts,[77] rather than being unchanging over time. Though social memories share a composite nature with individual memory, being made up of "a mixture of pictorial images and scenes, slogans, quips and snatches of verse, abstractions, plot types and stretches of discourse, and even false etymologies",[78] what makes memories social is their ability to be transmitted and shared. For this articulation to take place, images must be conceptualised, conventionalised and simplified, since to gain widespread appeal, an image has to be relevant to an entire group, a process in which complexity is reduced and images of the past become more schematic. Because the relationships between concepts need not reflect relations in the real world, it is important to underline that the images contained in social memory are "often decontextualized, and, in a radical sense, we have no real way of knowing whether they refer to something real or something imaginary".[79] To write off memory as being unreliable or unempirical is, however, to miss the point.

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[74] W. Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in History: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies", *History and Theory* 41, 2 (2002), p. 179-97.
[75] G. Cubitt, *History and Memory* (Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 26.
[76] J. McDougall, "Social Memories 'in the Flesh': War and Exile in Algerian Self-Writing", *Alif Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 30 (2010), 34-56.
[77] E. Zerubavel , "Social Memories: steps towards a sociology of the past", *Qualitative Sociology* 19, (1996), 283-299.
[78] J. Fentress and C. Wickham, *Social Memory*, p. 47.
[79] *Ibid*, p. 49.

The approach used here does not follow the ethnohistory methodology used by Vansina,[80] since sifting through oral traditions to reveal of residuum of historical truth, the end result of which is not demonstrable as truth anyway, is not the purpose of this research, whose aim is not to ascertain the veracity of social memory. Equally, oral history, which has often aimed at compiling archives of living testimony, and has seldom analysed memories for their social meanings, was not deemed an appropriate methodology. Biography is not neutral, but culturally located. To rely on it would risk defining the locomotive of the past as rational individualism, paying little attention to the silent cultural forms that constrain action. The danger of oral history lies in the past becoming a cast of individual protagonists with little attention given to context.[81] Bourdieu has termed this the "biographical illusion",[82] a modernist fantasy of society and selfhood in which everyone is in control of their own destinies in a world made by the rational actions of autonomous agents, a fantasy that "leads historians to seek social causes in individual actions and social action in individual causes – to find order in events by putting events in order."[83] Instead, the anthropological approach taken here seeks to analyse memories – whether real or imaginary – as narratives with their own specific grammars, as guides to social identity that help to explore the encoded meanings attached to social reality that allow people to make sense of the world they inhabit.

In this sense, Ricoeur talks about the interrelationship between memory narratives and historical narratives. While the former circulate in everyday conversation, can be critical and do not seek any kind of authority above that of living exchange, historical narratives do aim for objectivity in that they search for explanations for past events through causality. However, these narratives are not mutually opposed since the very idea of the past depends on memory, as well as the fact that, "we have nothing better than testimony, in the final analysis, to assure ourselves that something did happen in the past."[84] Because we always rely on someone else's memory, historians thus produce images that can only stand in for the past as once experienced; images that are neither exact replicas of the past, nor pure inventions. The built-in subjectivity provided by the importance of memory means that all narratives of the past are open to criticism, preventing the emergence of grand narratives and providing a safeguard against absolute knowledge that helps us out of the postmodern

[80] J. Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savannah* (Madison, 1966).
[81] J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Boulder, 1992).
[82] P. Bourdieu, "The Biographical Illusion", in *Working Papers and Proceedings of the Centre for Psychosocial Studies* Vol 14, (Chicago, 1987), p. 1-7.
[83] J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*, p. 26.
[84] P. Ricoeur, *Memory, History and Forgetting* (Chicago, 2004), p. 147.

dilemma. Although past events are ineradicable, their meaning is not fixed through time. With this in mind, the way to make sense of the past is to pair it with "the future quality of the future and the present quality of the present".[85] Consequently, retrospective reinterpretation cannot abstract out the past from the interrelated temporal dimensions of the past, present and future. Historical determinism is therefore broken up by attending to how people in the past expressed their present as the present of their past, and the present of their future. Thanks to this opening up of the full scale of temporality, Ricoeur's work provides a launch pad for thinking about this problematic in reverse: how people in the present not only reimagine their past, but express their present as the present of their past futures.

Ricoeur's work also speaks of the anthropology of time and place, especially about the "abundant interferences between 'recounted' time and 'constructed' space".[86] Space is thus understood here as both a measurable geometric quantity, and in the more abstract sense of a *lieu de vie* in which social relationships unfold. The passage of time and experience leave durational, material and affective inscriptions on physical space, in such a way that cities can be 'read' as texts – an idea that dovetails with contemporary anthropological approaches to the city. The study of the political economy of the city emerged as the dominant theoretical force over the social organisational paradigm in the early 1980s. Influenced by Bourdieu and Giddens, this approach was used in North Africa by Eickelman, for whom cultural forms or practices cannot be treated as independent of the hard political and economic contexts in which they are generated.[87] Several important ethnographies applied this approach to the changing face of New York neighbourhoods.[88] In line with the political economy of meaning, the present research attempts to include the effects of changing political and economic circumstances on the ways in which people engage with the built environment. Equally, postmodern approaches have also been a key part of understanding relationships to urban space in Algiers. Coming back to Ricoeur, the 1990s saw the emergence of approaches in which cities were read as a text with messages encoded into their environment. This representational way of looking at cities foregrounds everyday life, and treats the urban environment as a discursive realm. This approach has been important for theorising urban planning in 1970s Algiers, notably Holson's work on Brasilia, which critiques the

[85] *Ibid*, p. 346.
[86] *Ibid*, p. 186.
[87] D. Eickelman, "New Directions in Interpreting North African Society", in H. Barakat (ed.) *Contemporary North Africa. Issues of Development and Integration* (London, 1985); A. Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory* (London, 1979); P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge, 1977).
[88] I. Susser, *Norman Street* (Oxford, 1982); see also U. Hannerz, *Exploring the City* (New York, 1980).

assumptions underpinning the modernist urban project, reading the city as a giant text on which is written the social engineering project of an imagined socialist utopia, one that purposefully broke down traditional forms of sociability by creating new spaces that at once encouraged social levelling and reduced social interaction.[89] Here, as in Mitchell's study of Egypt[90] and Rabinow's work on France's use of planning as a showcase of cutural superiority,[91] modern technologies of architecture and planning are viewed as being used to build new societies in which power relations become framed in colonial spatial configurations: movement is controlled and bodies are surveilled. However, reconducting the very criticisms often levelled at modernism, such studies often exclude the lived experience of individuals and the group meanings attached to these forms of planning and control – an omission picked up on by De Certeau,[92] who attempts to show ways in which space is continually reappropriated by users, and thus infused with subversive potential. This work, along with that of Bayat,[93] is of particular use in framing practices of naming, moving and rembering urban space as ways in which people in Bab el-Oued challenged existing narratives and systems of control, political or otherwise.

Approaches to the postcolonial study of urban space have dovetailed with a tradition of British social anthropology focusing on social relations within the city in Africa.[94] In contrast, and equally following the contours of colonial areas of dominance, much French anthropological work on Algeria has been focused on rural areas.[95] Anthropology on Algeria was part of a long colonial tradition centred mostly on the Berber speaking region of Kabylia, through 19th century works by military men such as Daumas and Carette, and later Hanoteau and Letourneux, as well as trained anthropologists such as Masqueray.[96] This geographical

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[89] J. Holson, "The Modernist City and the Death of the Street", in S. Low (ed.) *Theorizing the City* (New Brunswick, 1999), p. 245-277.
[90] T. Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt* (Cambridge, 1988).
[91] P. Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of Missionary and Didactic Pathos* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989).
[92] M. De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.
[93] A. Bayat, *Life as Politics. How ordinary people change the Middle East* (Stanford, 2013).
[94] S. Barnes, *Patrons and Power: Creating a political community in metropolitan Lagos* (Bloomington, 1986); S. Moore, *Anthropology in Africa: Changing perspectives on a changing scene* (Charlottesville, 1994); M. Peil, *Lagos: The City is the People* (Boston, 1991).
[95] A reason for this rural focus may have been simply because, given the high percentage of European population in Algeria's largest cities (75% in Algiers in 1926; see J. Ruedy, *Modern Algeria. The Origins and Development of a Nation* (Bloomington, 2005), p. 121) and the anthropological focus on 'natives' and its complicity with colonial domination, rural areas were the site of colonial-era anthropology.
[96] E. Daumas, *Moeurs et coutumes de l'Algérie. Tell, Kabylie, Sahara* (Paris, 1864); H. Carette, *Etudes sur la Kabyie proprement dite* (Paris, 1848) ; A. Hanoteau and A. Letourneux, *La Kabylie et les coutumes kabyles* (Paris, 1872-3) ; E. Masqueray, *Formation des cités chez les populations sédentaires de l'Algérie : Kabyles du Djurdjura, Chaouia de l'Aouras, Beni Mzab* (Aix en Provence, 1983 [1886]).

focus on rural areas, and on Kabylia in particular, remained unchanged towards the end of the colonial period, depsite the emergence of highly critical approaches that exposed the horrors unleashed by the colonial system on the Algerian countryside,[97] and has continued until recently in Scheele's piercing study of memory and power in a Kabyle village.[98]

Urban anthropology on Algeria is therefore virtually non-existent, only partly because of the pervasiveness of the idea that anthropology should study 'traditional/native' communities. The dearth of recent anthropological studies has been compounded by the colonial focus on separating Arab from Berber, which led to the independent Algerian state taking an extremely dim view of anthropology as an imperialist discipline used in the service of neocolonialism, dividing the nation through the study of Berber culture.[99] To make matters worse, Algeria was effectiely off limits to foreign researchers during the 1990s. If not anthropology proper, the social history of Algiers is dealt with in detail by Çelik, Calncy-Smith and Terpak in their volume *Walls of Algiers*, which analyses the city through its urban fabric as represented through text and image production. Çelik's chapter on the spatial changes in Place des Martyrs allows the centre of the city to be read as a discursive text, on which meanings are overwritten by colonial and postcolonial power.[100] Work by Loeckx and Avermaete on colonial modernity's plans for the city in the 1950s subscribes to the same approach.[101] However, the usefuless of this volume for present purposes is reduced by its limitation – like so much else on Algeria – to the colonial period. Unfortunately, the authors have little to say about changes ensuing from fifty years of independence. As a result, there is no attention paid to how residents themselves might construe and encode their urban environment today: Algiers is read as a postcolonial text, but without its people. If foreign researchers often seem unduly obsessed by colonialism, a more current and sociological approach has been taken by Algerian scholars. Sociologist Nassima Dris' work provides invaluable analysis of the uses of space and urban memory in Algiers, ranging across subjects from the imagery of the 1980s shopping centre and martyrs' memorial of Riad el-Feth to informal trade and the Islamisation of public space.[102] Architect Nora Semmoud's work

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[97] P. Bourdieu and A. Sayad, *Le Déracinement* (Paris, 1964), see P. Bourdieu, *Sociologie de l'Algérie* (Paris, 1961).
[98] J. Scheele, *Village Matters. Knowledge, Politics and Community in Kabylia, Algeria*, (Woodbridge, 2009).
[99] M. Aït Kaki, *De la question berbère au dilemme kabyle à l'aube du XXIème siècle* (Paris, 2004).
[100] Z. Çelik, "Historic Intersections. The Center of Algiers", in Z. Çelik, J. Calncy-Smith and F. Terpak (eds.), *Walls of Algiers. Narratives of the City through Text and Image* (Seattle, 2009), p. 198-227.
[101] A. Loeckx and T. Avermaete, "Architecture ou Révolution. Critical Moderns and the Search for a New Urbanity in 1950s Algiers", in T. Avermaete, S. Karakayali and M. von Osten (eds.), *Colonial Modern. Aesthetics of the Past, Rebellions for the Future* (London, 2010), pp. 170-88.
[102] N. Dris, *La ville mouvementée. Espace public, centralité, mémoire urbaine à Alger* (Paris, 2001).

focuses similarly on strategies of reappropriation of space, with the accent placed on the social and morophological evolution of the city since independence, as well as they ways in which families have adapted and made use of existing interior spaces over time.[103] These two excellent works represent the only in-depth scholarly attempts to engage with the development of Algiers since independence.

The approach used here attempts to follow on from this by reading Bab el-Oued, contextualised within the broader framework of the city, as a text in whose urban space multiple forces collide and are inscribed. However, it attempts to look beyond a materialist production of space emphasising the historical, political and economic factors contributing to its morphological formation, and to engage with the *social* construction of space – "the transformation of space through people's social exchanges, memories, images and daily use […] into scenes and actions that convey symbolic meaning".[104] That said, the aim has also been not to lose sight of the 'political economy of meaning', including, for example, the effects on social constructions of urban space of spatial reconfigurations in the neighbourhood during the 1990s as a function of the liberalisation of the real estate market, armed conflict, rising property prices in Bab el-Oued, youth unemployment, and an influx of rural migrants.

Nostalgia and the Future Past

The term (from the Greek *nostos*, to return home, and *algia*, painful condition) was coined in the seventeenth century by Swiss physician Johannes Hofer to describe the homesickness experienced by Swiss soldiers fighting in France.[105] Over time, however, the term has undergone a significant semantic change from pathological homesickness to wistful time-sickness, in which nostalgia for place has become nostalgia for time. Now demilitarised and demedicalised, the term no longer refers to homesickness, much less disease. This change in meaning is partly due to a semantic shift in the meaning of home, as a result of greater mobility, interconnectedness and hybridity.[106]

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[103] N. Semmoud, *Les stratégies d'appropriation de l'espace à Alger* (Paris, 2001).
[104] S. Low, "Spatialising Culture. The Social Production and Social Construction of Public Space in Costa Rica", in S. Low (ed.) *Theorizing the City* (New Brunswick, 1999), p. 112.
[105] J. Hofer, *Dissertatio medica de nostalgia* (Basel, 1688); see English translation by Carolyn Kiser Anspach in the *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 2 (1934), p. 376-392.
[106] F. Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York, 1979).

Davis rightly highlights the role of the present in his definition of nostalgia as a sentiment relating to "a past imbued with social qualities, which, moreover, acquires its significance from the particular way we juxtapose it to certain features of our present lives",[107] with the past always triumphing over the present. For Davis, collective nostalgia is a reaction to anxiety-producing events. With its sources in perceived threats to identity arising at moments of discontinuity, nostalgia thus functions as a social mechanism for coping with fast-paced social change, acting to restore a sense of continuity across temporal ruptures and providing a safety valve capable of rechanneling jarring changes in the public sphere toward the private sphere of shared memories. In the process, it temporarily restores a sense of socio-historic continuity, buying enough time for change to be assimilated institutionally. Attempting to restore temporal continuity, or at least express a sense of rupture due to the experience of the violence of the 1990s, and especially its knock-on effects on social interactions, was evident in Bab el-Oued, where memories of the 1970s provided a contrast to the current post-conflict society, giving a sense that talking about the 1970s was in fact a way of externalising the experiences of the 1990s. For Davis then, nostalgia is more than a tool of social control. This has been the view of many on the political left, from where nostalgia has been seen as conservative reaction blocking the path toward undoing social injustices. Indeed, for Marxists, nostalgia has been a kind of false consciousness, obscuring awareness of class struggle and looking backwards instead of forwards. However, writing in 1979, as major economic liberalization was just getting under way, Davis was perhaps not to know that nostalgia would be felt by a much diminished political left that had for so long viewed it with contempt. However, while useful for defining nostalgia as a social phenomenon, as well as in understanding the emergence of nostalgia for the 1970s in Algeria as coinciding with the social, economic and political changes of the late-1980s, Davis' view of nostalgia as having a single function is ultimately reductive.

More recent work on nostalgia has been carried out by Boym, who maintains that "the twentieth century began with utopia and ended with nostalgia".[108] She distinguishes between the *algia* (the longing we share) and the *nostos* (the return home), opposing longing to belonging. Despite a common longing for things to be different, we part ways on the route to be taken – on how notions of community, identity and unity should be understood and rediscovered. Boym's best known contribution is her distinction between restorative and

[107] *Ibid*, p. 13.
[108] S. Boym, "Nostalgia and its Discontents", in *Hedgehog Review* 9 (2), 2007, p. 7.

reflective nostalgia. While restorative nostalgia attempts a conservative ahistorical reconstruction of a lost home, reflective nostalgia wistfully delays homecoming, pondering the longing itself. In short, restorative nostalgia projects tradition as truth, while reflective nostalgia calls the whole set up into question. Whereas restorative nostalgia is to be found at the core of national and religious revivals, often focusing on the return to an original "prelapsarian moment",[109] reflective nostalgia instead inhabits many places at once and implies flexibility rather than the reestablishment of the past. Though it risks slipping into a mutually exclusive binary of history versus memory, the utility of Boym's approach is that because "restorative nostalgia ends up reconstructing emblems and rituals of home and homeland in an attempt to spatialize time, reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, cherishes fragments of memory and temporalizes space",[110] nostalgia has the potential to be harnessed both as a hegemonic project *and* a subversive force. These concepts are a useful starting point for mapping social memories of nation-building in Algeria and their relationships with views of contemporary politics, illuminating ways in which memory was used to both criticise the present and wistfully articulate the blueprint for a better future.

However, Boym's distinction is of limited use, since both of the dominant discourses on the period under study in Algeria – as golden age of social justice and national pride, and authoritarian dictatorship – contain the potential to work both for and against the status quo, reducing nostalgia's dissident potential. While the golden age discourse may articulate opposition to present politics, expressed as nostalgia for the stability and relative prosperity of the recent past, the same nostalgia has also been used in support of the status quo by current president Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who has portrayed himself as continuing Boumediène's legacy.[111] Dissidence may also be articulated through the authoritarian narrative, which sees claims to social justice as a paternalistic cover for bureaucratic rule that excluded popular participation,[112] and lumps the whole postcolonial period together as inherently hegemonic, writing off nostalgia as little more than a wistful repackaging of authoritarianism. Rather than a neatly defined set of opposing discourses then, narratives on the period intersect with each other, with people producing a combination of conflicting images of past and present aspirations. Indeed, conflicting feelings of belonging and

[109] S. Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York, 2001), p. 49.
[110] *Ibid*.
[111] See the article "Le chef de l'état a presenté hier l'expérience algérienne à Genève", in *Liberté*, published 08/06/05, which asks, 'Is Abdelaziz Bouteflika nostalgic for the 1970s?'.
[112] R. Tlemcani, *State and Revolution in Algeria* (Boulder, 1986), p. 155-158; M. Maschino and F. M'rabet, *L'Algérie des illusions. La révolution confisquée* (Paris, 1972), p. 144-167; M. Harbi, *Le FLN, Mirage et réalité* (Paris, 1980), p. 378-385.

exclusion, national pride and desire for emigration, dissidence and apathy have defined Algerian youth since the mid-1980s, reflected first through Raï and now hip-hop, and aptly summarised in Boym's assertion that "the imperative of a contemporary nostalgic is to be homesick and sick of home – occasionally at the same time".[113] If Boym's binary is too neat, her concept of reflective nostalgia does open up the possibility of a radical remembering, in which the nostalgic is both collector of fragments and critical dreamer. Nostalgia's potential lies not in dwelling wistfully in the past, but in the potentialities of imagining a better future. The link between past, present and future was a major theoretical issue throughout the design and fieldwork of this project, and opened up the possibility that nostalgia may serve as a way in which people, rather than describing the past, articulate hopes and aspirations to the future, using images of the past as a shared vocabulary.

The issue of futurity is touched on by Nadkarni and Shevchenko, in their work on postsocialist nostalgia in Russia and Hungary. Their important contribution is the idea that nostalgia is never a longing for a specific past as much as longing for longing itself, made safer by the fact that the object of desire is irrevocably lost. The key here is not the object that triggers nostalgic feelings, but the self-reference to an awareness of once felt desire for the future in the form of an alternative present, and the awareness that this desire cannot be recaptured. The implication here is that nostalgia has less to do with the past itself, but with the fantasies that once structured past visions of the future.[114] Boym also approaches nostalgia for the socialist past as a "kind of nationwide mid-life crisis", a sort of longing for the uncomplicated days of national youth that is especially pertinent in the case of Algeria, where the longing for an ahistorical past went hand in hand with a collective forgetting that projected memories of the period onto a larger historical picture, aiming at re-establishing continuity with past selves.

The work of Buck-Morss has useful reflections on time and remembering under socialist political systems that are relevant for the analysis of Algeria, providing a welcome opportunity to take Algeria out of its usual Arab-Islamic framework of analysis. She contends that, whereas space has been the all-important concept for the liberal nation-state systems of the West, which have emphasised a frontier-based geopolitics in which victory is understood in terms of territorial sovereignty and spatially delimited enemies, political systems based on

[113] S. Boym, "Nostalgia and its Discontents", p. 457.
[114] M. Nadkarni and O. Shevchenko, "The Politics of Nostalgia. A Case for Comparative Analysis of Post-Socialist Practices", in *Ab Imperio* 2, 2004, p. 489-519.

class struggle have placed the emphasis on time, with victory imagined in terms of historical progress towards an ideal society. In socialist systems then, time becomes a teleological concept whose key role in legitimacy building means its effective nationalisation by the state and recalibration into a series of five year plans. If time in the West was spatialized as a vacant category waiting to be filled by political events, space in the East was temporalized by the construction of the Berlin Wall, understood not as a spatial barrier, but a temporal one that would allow young socialist states to retain their ideological purity while catching up with the West.[115] Like other socialist systems, the political legitimacy of the Algerian polity in the 1960s and 1970s rested not only on the liberation struggle, but on a powerful imaginary of time predicated on the paradigm of industrial modernisation, and the anti-nostalgic promise of overcoming the humiliations of colonialism through a logic of social transformation in which the state would deliver progress towards a better tomorrow.

Whereas from the late-1940s, high modernism on both sides of the emerging Iron Curtain was obsessed with a present future, the late twentieth century was enamoured with a present past, reflected in a search for history of the other and a turn towards "ends" (end of history, death of the subject, end of metanarratives). Like many in Algeria, the Soviet generation of the 1960s, of which Boym is a member, had considerable aspirations wrapped up in notions of progress toward an ideal society, being promised they would not only live to both see full communism, but to conquer the cosmos. However, by the 1990s "from a land of tomorrow, Russia has turned into a land of today dreaming of yesterday".[116] This is relevant to Algeria in the same period, when a surfeit of memory and counternarratives exploded onto the political scene after the demise of the one-party state, used as weapons in a headlong struggle to monopolize the symbolic capital of political community that was fought directly over the bodies of Algerian citizens.[117] In this context, mirroring the nostalgia of the Perestroika generation, popular nostalgia in Algeria fell on the pre-1988 period before the opening of multi-party democracy, simultaneously allowing the old nomenklatura to retain their positions by mobilising nostalgia to their advantage. Despite these temporal shifts and a devastating postmodern critique, the socialist teleology of time as progress towards a fairer society, as one incarnation of a larger paradigm of industrial modernisation shared with the

[115] S. Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe. The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002), p. 23-25.
[116] S. Boym, *Nostalgia for the Future*, p. 67.
[117] J. McDougall, "The Fetishism of Identity: Empire, Nation and the Politics of Subjectivity in Algeria", in J. Chalcraft and Y. Noorani, (eds.), *Counterhegemony in the Colony and Postcolony* (Basingstoke, 2007), p. 49-71.

West, remains a powerful and intoxicating narrative. Koselleck's work on past futures locates memory in the gap between what he terms the space of experience, or everyday life, and horizons of expectation.[118] This was exactly the site of remembering in Bab el-Oued, where memories of the 1970s articulated the breakdown of this imaginary of time, and exposed the gap between the retreat of the state from its redistributive goals – within a present climate of continued insecurity, consumerism and the accrual of spectacular illicit wealth – and the continued existence of once created expectations of social justice and progress in society at large.

As well as scholars themselves becoming potentially entrapped in wistful ahistorical pasts, the danger of approaching nostalgia lies in endowing it with inevitability, in which nostalgia is assumed to have political meaning, rather than seeing it as embedded within social meaning and producing different subjective positions. In his study of nostalgia for the former GDR, Boyer reminds us to ask who is calling whom nostalgic. In this anthropological work, the charge of *Ostalgie*, levelled at Easterners by the West as being evidence of a wish to return to authoritarian socialism, undergirds the structuring of unequal power relations in reunified Germany. By labelling Easterners as nostalgic for socialist authoritarianism, West Germans project concerns about their own authoritarian past onto easterners, thereby casting themselves as liberal and democratic.[119] Boyer's critique is of those who seek to read politics into nostalgia (assuming inherent political meaning as authoritarian or subversive), or to read nostalgia into politics (assuming every reference to the past is nostalgic). Rather than turning nostalgia into something different from that understood by those engaging in it, scholars must therefore look at the meanings of nostalgic practices within wider fields of possibility which, as in the case here, may turn out to articulate seemingly contradictory desires: such as modernity and tradition; nostalgia for a future-focused paradigm of social transformation; or as a way of talking about a more difficult recent past of conflict, rather than a simplistic wish to turn back the clock. In this sense, nostalgia is treated as a cultural practice, with special attention paid to "how the meaning of nostalgic practices, far from being pre-determined by their historical referents, is shaped situationally in the process of their creation and re-enactment."[120]

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[118] R. Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York, 2004).
[119] D. Boyer, "*Ostalgie* and the Politics of the Future in Eastern Germany", in Public Culture, 18 (2) 2006, p. 361-381.
[120] M. Nadkarni and O. Shevchenko, "The Politics of Nostalgia", p. 492.

Other scholars have thought in broader ways about current society's fascination with the past that has been of key importance in theorising how the localised nostalgia encountered in Algeria goes beyond local or regional dynamics and fits into a broader global framework of shifting conceptions of time. While acknowledging its role in exposing power relations, many of these thinkers have also been wary of the postmodern critique and the breakdown of the construction of time "as a neutral, homogenous medium, like the space of pictoral realism in painting; a time where mutually informative measurements can be made between the past, present and future, and where all relationships can be explained in terms of a common horizon".[121] This conception of time produced a rationalised consciousness that sought to transcend the present through linear, developmental historical thinking and the elaboration of a dialectical method for getting to the destination of a better world, with objectively defined indicators of progress lighting the way. However, by definition, this modernist search for completion could perhaps never be fully realised. For Ermath, the problem with this model was that the pursuit of unattainable perfection required the constant deferring of future satisfaction, making impossible the very achievement of that which was the *raison d'être* and legitimating strategy of the modernist political systems that enunciated this imaginary of time.[122] Modernist teleologies may well have contained within them the seeds of their own failure. Whatever the case, we are now faced with a derailment of linear time as once known: time is off track.

Nora has sought to explain the shattering of the conception of historical time as straightforward linearity through the rapid social change experienced since the end of World War II. The end of a neat past-present-future narrative, heightened by the spectre of environmental disaster and the abandonment of the paradigm of modernist industrialisation, has created significant anxiety about what lies ahead. Faced with an ever receding future and a past shrouded in debates over truth-claims, the present is all that remains. Our insecure obsession with the past is thus a desperate attempt to hang on to something, depositing, in Nora's terms, a surfeit of *lieux de mémoire*, precisely because there are no living *milieux de mémoire* left.[123]

Similarly, Huyssen's work on memory advances the idea that the very "assumption of the progression from a remembered familiar past to an optimistically envisioned future has

[121] E. Ermath, *Sequel to History, Postmodernism and the Crisis of Representational Time* (Princeton, 1992), p. 27.
[122] *Ibid*, p. 40.
[123] P. Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire*. *Vol. 1 : La République* (Paris, 1984), introduction.

been abandoned".[124] The temporal disjuncture born of technological change, mass media, and new patterns of consumption, work and global mobility have engendered a loss of valid traditions, against which memory is enlisted as bulwark against obsolescence and amnesia, due to deep seated anxiety about the speed of change and shrinking of temporal horizons. However, the use of the past as a marketable commodity is detached from any attempt to ground it in context or experience, creating a pastiche pastness that only serves to increase confusion. Huyssen's exit strategy from the postmodern maze is the idea of 'productive remembering', essentially a more aware version of modernism, conscious of its constructed nature, suggesting that instead of obsessing about the past, it is high time we remembered the future.[125] Maier agrees that the current preoccupation with the past is a symptom of political failure, due to postmodern societies' inability to create collective institutions based on a vision of the future.[126] While modernist projects encompassed larger aspirations toward law, justice and welfare, the shift to group based memory in the 1990s has accompanied the undermining of both liberal and socialist states, leaving a postmodern politics of fragmented group identities that is no substitute for hard politics, and simultaneously disenabling the conceptualisation of wider issues, such as social justice and wealth redistribution. In this sense, the surfeit of memory is "a sign not of historical confidence, but of a retreat from transformative politics".[127] This raises the question of whether certain aspects of modernism could – or should – be salvaged, about whether the fragments of our incomplete attempts at creating a utopian future help us learn to dream again, this time in the plural.

[124] A. Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Making Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (1995), p. 8.
[125] A. Huyssen, "Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia", in *Public Culture* 12(1), 2000, p. 21-38.
[126] C. Maier, "A Surfeit of Memory? Reflections on History, Melancholy and Denial", in *History and Memory* Vol. 5, No. 2, 1993, p. 136-15.
[127] J. Olick, V. Vinitzky-Seroussi and D. Levy, *The Collective Memory Reader* (Oxford, 2011), p. 444.

Chapter 2

Historiographies and Narratives of the Past in Algeria

In addition to providing a conventional literature review, this chapter explores the ways in which the past is contested and reformulated in contemporary Algeria. It deals firstly with official historiography and its institutionalisation by the postcolonial state, before looking at the socially-held counter narratives to state-sponsored history that have emerged since independence and continue to articulate political opposition. The next section will examine the silences on the post-independence period created by the official narrative, as well as highlighting the difficulties in doing history on the postcolonial period in a country where an all-pervasive narrative of decolonisation means that history ended in 1962. Subsequently, the focus will then shift to discussing the existing literature on the nation-building period of the 1970s, using both personal memoirs as primary sources and debates in secondary sources over the role of the single-party and the bureaucracy, the class system, the construction of state institutions, and the economic choices and policies of socialist Algeria and their contribution to the unravelling of regime legitimacy in the 1980s. The last section will focus on how Algerians in Bab el-Oued see their own history, asking which periods and events are important form their perspectives and looking at the plot structures used to understand the past, with the aim of putting voices of contemporary Algerians into dialogue with literature on Algerian historiography.

The Official Narrative

Since the creation of an independent state that has sought to overcome the humiliations of colonialism, postcolonial nationalism in Algeria has formulated an official historiography that explicitly set out to "decolonise history".[128] The creation of an official narrative on the past was crucial in bolstering the legitimacy of a populist revolutionary political system that was backed up "neither by longstanding tradition nor by universal suffrage".[129] Standing at the centre of this historiography is the idea of 130 years of continual anti-imperialist struggle

[128] *El Moudjahid Culturel*, May 1974 ; see also Lacheraf, *L'Algérie: nation et société* (Paris, 1965).
[129] J. McDougall, "Martyrdom and Destiny", p. 51.

based on a binary opposition between a united nation and its colonial enemy.[130] This opposition had its roots in two strands of Algerian nationalism that emerged in the late-1920s from the gradual exhaustion of the Young Algerians' belief in the French republican system as a court of appeal against the injustices of government by the *colons*:[131] the Islamic reformist *salafiyya* movement and the radical politics of the Parti du Peuple Algérien (PPA).

Inspired by reformist trends from the Middle East, the *salafi* movement was the first to clearly enunciate the idea of Algeria as a separate entity distinct from France with its own personality and culture. In 1929, Mubarak al-Mili published the first volume of his national history, *Tāriīkh al-Jazā'ir fī al-qadīm wal-ḥadīth*,[132] which set about reimagining the past as a way to create the present by using Algeria's history as proof of nationhood. In the same year, the preface of Ahmad Tawfiq al-Madani's *Kitāb al-Jazā'ir* argued that despite a colonial imaginary in which Algeria was an integral part of France, two countries with such different histories and cultures could never become one. Al-Madani ended his preface with a phrase that inaugurated the tripartite identity markers used by Algerian nationalism ever since: "Islam is my religion; Arabic is my language; Algeria is my fatherland."[133] Furthermore, the Algerian *salafiyya* movement had been of crucial importance in articulating a narrative of Arab-Berber unity,[134] and a moral and geographic opposition between Occidental imperialism stretching back to Roman times, and the Oriental civilizations that had always displayed unrelenting resistance against it. This view of ancestral resistance against Occidental invaders as the total meaning of history thus portrayed armed resistance to French colonial rule as inevitable.[135] The grinding poverty created by settler colonialism in the Algerian countryside, the destruction of local elites and increasing urbanisation contributed to a levelling in Algerian society that, along with the emergence of a militant nationalist culture among Algerian industrial workers in France during the interwar period, predisposed Algerian nationalism towards socialism as a solution to the challenges of that lay beyond the horizon of independence. Thus, if the *salafiyya* formulated the earliest idea of nationhood, the political culture of the militant leftist PPA was the first to invoke the main

[130] M. Lacheraf, *L'Algérie: nation et société*, pp. 203-281.
[131] J. Ruedy, *Modern Algeria. Origins and Development of a Nation*, (Bloomington, 2005), p. 114.
[132] M. al-Mili, *Tāriīkh al-Jazā'ir fī al-qadīm wal-ḥadīt*, (Constantine, 1929-32).
[133] A. al-Madani, *Kitāb al-Jazā'ir*, (Algiers, 1932).
[134] J. McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria*, (Cambridge, 2006).
[135] J. McDougall, "Martyrdom and Destiny".

themes of revolutionary nationalism in Algeria that would go on to mark the orientations of the future Algerian state: rural issues, anti-capitalism and independence.[136]

Eternalising an idea of nationhood that predated the French invasion converted the colonial period into a parenthesis, albeit a long and painful one, after which the pre-existing Algerian nation was once again able to recover control of its own destiny and reassume its ancestral Arab-Islamic identity. This narrative denies that while the institutional order existing in Algiers before 1830 was certainly a state, it only exercised administrative control over parts of the area occupied by present-day Algeria and, as part of the Ottoman Empire, was no more a *national* state than the empire's other eyalets, for example Tunis or Tripolitania.[137] Although the Ottoman state, and the resistance of Emir Abdelkader, provided a pillar of identity against French colonial encroachment and invasion, this identity marker was largely Muslim – rather than Algerian – in nature.[138] Furthermore, the official narrative masks alternative historical possibilities, as well as ignoring the extent to which many Algerians either learned to work the colonial system to their own advantage or collaborated actively with it. Even more crucially, official historiography denies that nationalist categories of thought and practice have their roots in the colonial period. It was due to the exclusion of Muslim Algerians from French *valeurs républicains* on religious grounds that the earliest enunciation of nationalism came from the religiously motivated *salafiyya* movement. Equally, the integration of Algerian workers into militant working class politics in the factories of Paris and Lille, and the influence of Jacobin notions of a centralised republic were to have long lasting effects on Algerian nationalism. In short, colonialism made it possible to imagine the nation.[139] This imagining has conceived the nation "as a *thing* with strong ontological status, to be satisfactorily proven and merely a matter of traceable historical development, through the chronology of 'awakening' or 'self-realisation' and the cultural-political process of institutionalising 'identity'."[140]

Couched as the recovery of national sovereignty after the colonial hiatus, decolonisation and the war of independence have thus become cornerstones of the historiography of the

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[136] See J. Ruedy, *Modern Algeria. Origins and Development of a Nation* (Indiana University Press, 2005), p. 137; and M. Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme algérien*, vol. 2, (Paris, 2003).
[137] G. Meynier, "Problématique historique de la nation algérienne", in *Naqd. Revue d'études et de critique sociale*, n° 14/15, 2001, pp. 256-257
[138] *Ibid.*
[139] J. McDougall, "The Fetishism of Identity: Empire, Nation and the Politics of Subjectivity in Algeria", in Chalcraft and Noorani (eds.), *Counterhegemony in the Colony and Postcolony* (Basingstoke, 2007).
[140] McDougall, "Introduction: history/culture/politics of the nation", *Journal of North African Studies*, 8:1 (2003), p. 2.

postcolonial state. As the veritable founding moment of the national state, much as the French Revolution or the American War of Independence, the institutionalisation of the insurrection of 1954 has created a pantheon of martyrs of the liberation struggle, whose sanctification as national heroes has reduced individual experiences and local memories of the war to a single unified narrative of recognisable events and trajectories. Algeria's diversity was replaced by a single, unified subject – *un seul héros, le peuple* – represented by a faceless populism.[141] During the war of independence, the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) set about reducing the political diversity of inter-war Algerian nationalism by monopolising the legitimacy of armed struggle,[142] and the historiography of the postcolonial state has subsequently edited out rival nationalist figures and movements from official history, such as Messali Hadj and the ENA-PPA-MNA,[143] while the important figures of the Association des Oulemas were retained to reinforce the legitimacy of the national state by foregrounding religious symbolism.[144] As a result, in Algeria, political history is at once "paradoxically present and absent, mobilised in immediate consciousness and severed from its genesis".[145]

This official historiography was institutionalised during the nation-building period through language, education and the creation of official bodies. While the War of Independence, officially referred to as *Révolution Algérienne / al-thawra al-jazā'iriyya* or *Guerre de Libération Nationale / ḥarb al-taḥrīr al-waṭanī*, was included in new history manuals immediately following independence, the early-1970s saw the beginning of several new projects centred on the preoccupation with "writing and re-writing history."[146] In 1970, Boumediene highlighted the all-pervasive importance of the War, but allowed a glimpse of the necessary silences present in the History – with a capital H – that was to be (re)written:

"The History of Algeria belongs to the Algerian Revolution and the War of Liberation, with its pages of glory and its serious problems, must be the priority of the Algerian People […]. This is a part of our History that can be written immediately, and we aim to begin this process shortly. However, there is another part of our History

[141] J. Scheele, *Village Matters: Knowledge, Politics and Community in Kabylia, Algeria* (Woodbridge, 2009).
[142] M. Harbi, *Le FLN, Mirage et réalité* (Paris, 1980), pp. 131-140; Stora, *La gangrène et l'oubli*, pp. 138-148.
[143] Since the 1990s, however, figures such as Messali Hadj and Ferhat Abbas have been reintegrated into official historiography through school textbooks and re-naming of important infrastructure projects, such as Bejaia's Abane Ramdane Airport, Tlemcen's Messali Hadj Airport and Jijel's Ferhat Abbas Airport.
[144] H. Remaoun, "L'État national et sa mémoire : le paradigme histoire", in *L'Algérie 50 ans après. État des savoirs en sciences sociales et humaines 1954-2004* (Oran, 2008).
[145] O. Carlier, "Mémoire, mythe et doxa de l'État en Algérie. L'Étoile Nord-Africaine et la religion du Watan", in *Vingtième Siècle. Revue de l'Histoire*", 1991, 30, p. 82.
[146] H. Remaoun, "L'État national et sa mémoire", p. 153.

that must be written later, as many of those who participated in it are still alive and have played both positive and negative roles."[147]


SAMEDI 6 JUILLET 1974

1954 VINGTIEME ANNIVERSAIRE 1974

Par Mohamed MANSOURI

130 ans de répression coloniale et de lutte héroïque

Seventies typeface meets official historiography, with the grandeur of Ottoman Algiers and images of colonial massacres. *El Moudjahid*, 6/7/74.

As well as educational reform, this political impetus led to the institutionalisation of the official past in several ways: the creation of the National Archives and a network of regional archives in 1971, with subsequent campaigns for donations of privately-held documents[148] and ongoing battles over the return of archival material held in France; the founding of a Centre Nationale des Études Historiques (CNEH) in 1971 attached directly to the Presidency of the Republic; the reconversion of the Serkadji prison into a Museum of the Revolution the following year; and important commemorations for the twentieth anniversary of the outbreak of the *insurrection nationale* in1974.

Such institutionalisation took on a new urgency in the late-1970s and early-1980s. From 1977, the press began to run a glut of features and articles relating to issues of cultural authenticity (history, art, popular traditions, the Casbah and Andalusi music), that translated both the concerns of segments of the population about loss of tradition in relation to the

[147] *Discours du Président Boumediene Tome III, 2 juillet 1970 - 1 mai 1972* (Algiers, undated), p. 128.
[148] *El Moudjahid*, 9 May 1974.

socialist policies of the 1970s, and the need to shore up the cultural legitimacy of the system in the face of Boumediene's increasing political isolation.[149] The early-1980s saw work beginning on a new national library in El Hamma, and especially the inauguration of the Martyrs Monument in 1982, as well as the Museum of the Moudjahid and the Museum of the Army in the concrete monumentality of the Riad el-Feth entertainment and shopping complex, a manifestation in public space of both the legitimacy conferring power of the past and the new consumer society envisaged by Chadlism.[150] As well as a number of magazines devoted to history intended for the general public, of which the most visible, the French language *Mémoria*, focuses exclusively on the colonial period and the war of independence, there has been a sharp increase in history departments at Algerian universities since the 1990s. The weight of the official narrative on academic production in Algeria is illustrated in Ramaoun's analysis of the subject matter of articles in Algerian historical journals and theses completed at Algerian universities from the 1960s to the 1990s, highlighting the dominance of topics related to the colonial period over the Ottoman or Medieval periods, as well as increasing focus on actions of resistance and armed uprisings against colonial rule. Few works dealt with colonial society or the emergence of the nationalist movement outside the *salafiyya* movement.[151]

Postnationalist scholarship posits that nationalism's normative claims set up deep structures of exclusion, hegemony and ideological intolerance, resulting in patterns of authoritarianism within the postcolonial state that ultimately constituted the main stumbling block to nationalism's own emancipatory promises. Such approaches to contemporary Algeria have aimed to reveal discourses marginalised by a homogenising nationalism, focusing on the fragmentary as a reminder of the postcolonial state's inability to reflect and federate the cultural realities of the nation.[152] De Georges has shown how official historiography has been resisted at local level since the early 1980s through the efforts of ageing moudjahidin to make the memory of the war relevant to a new generation by situating

[149] *El Watan Supplement Houari Boumediene: Le règne de tous les pouvoirs 1965-1978*, 27/12/08, p. 7 ; see also Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria*, pp. 16-17.
[150] N. Driss, *La ville mouvmentée. Espace public, centralité, mémoire urbaine à Alger* (Paris, 2001), p. 253-4.
[151] H. Remaoun, "L'Intervention institutionelle et son impact sur la pratique historiographique en Algérie : la politique « d'écritures de l'histoire » tendances et contre-tendances", in *Insaniyat*, no. 19-20, January-June 2003, vol. VII, pp. 1-2.
[152] F. Colonna, "The Nation's 'Unknowing Other': Three Intellectuals and the Culture(s) of Being Algerian, or the Impossibility of Subaltern Studies in Algeria", in J. McDougall (ed.), *Nation, Society and Culture in North Africa* (London, 2003), pp. 155-171.

it in local contexts, challenging centralising narratives of the war in the process.[153] This points to the fact that decentralising forces are likely more commonplace than they appear, and since western (and Algerian) academics have until recently been unable to do fieldwork outside larger cities due to security concerns, these tensions have been missed, placing the academic focus on the visible side of the equation, that of the normative claims of nationalism. While scholars like Calhoun that are unwilling to throw the baby out with the modernist bathwater are right to stress that for most of us, the national is real, despite its historically constructed nature,[154] it should be pointed out that while postnationalist historiography has certainly exposed the national as not 'natural', the aim has never been to deny its reality – people have clearly been willing to lay down their lives for nationalist causes – but rather to show how the nation becomes imagined in a certain format rather than others; to look at how nationalism becomes ideologically effective. Far from being lofty academic arguments, these issues were present in every-day life in Bab el-Oued. The national was experienced as a tangible category with which many people feel a deep personal investment, as reflected by donations of jewellery and other valuables by Algerian women to create the national bank after independence. Many in Bab el-Oued thus displayed a great deal of pride in their national identity and would not take kindly to attempts by Western academics to 'undermine' this, echoing centre-periphery interpretations of postmodernism as Western hegemony repackaged.[155] However, while showing great respect for the martyrs of the revolution, there was a strong desire for self-expression among many young people in Bab el-Oued, for whom the unanimism and voluntarism of Algerian nationalism was often experienced as stifling, backwards-looking, or just plain boring. The tensions between centripetal forces of nation and family, and centrifugal forces of individualism, globalisation and consumerism were constant themes arising during fieldwork and run throughout much of this study.

[153] T. DeGeorges, "The Shifting Sands of Revolutionary Legitimacy: the role of former Moudjahidin in the shaping of Algeria's collective memory", *Journal of North African Studies* 14, 2 (2009), p. 275.
[154] C. Calhoun, *Nations Matter. Culture, History and the Cosmopolitan Dream* (Abingdon, 2007), p. 18.
[155] N. Richard, "Postmodernism and Periphery", in Thomas Docherty (ed.) *Postmodernism. A Reader*, (Hemel Hempstead, 1993).

Counter-narratives

Officially-sanctioned historical narratives are far from having a monopoly on representations of the past and the formation of social memory. In Algeria, the use of the past as an instrument of power incites a generalized mistrust of history and a particular focus on the vested interests of those who lay claim to historical knowledge, contributing to a keenly felt public awareness of the power relations behind a given position or action. Scheele has pointed to a widespread conception that 'true' history has been hijacked, held under lock and key and manipulated by specific social groups or the political elite,[156] a feeling that was also palpable in Bab el-Oued, where such an absence of historical 'truth' was often used to explain the moral defects of the political system and the inequalities it produces. It follows then that, conceptions of stolen history are necessarily accompanied by popular notions of what constitutes the 'real story' and that, importantly, future political change is predicated upon recognition of a historical 'truth' that is often determined in advance.[157]

Official historiography in Algeria is criss-crossed by a series of alternative set narratives on the past. These narratives are articulated around the official historiography, borrowing some parts of it and rejecting others, in a relationship best understood as a series of narratives that converge, overlap, diverge and intersect both in content and over time, rather than as a series of mutually exclusive, frontally opposed versions of the past. The common denominator is that most counter-narratives lay claim to revolutionary legitimacy, reproducing the official narrative and reinforcing the centrality of the war of independence in constructions of political meaning. Indeed, this interdependent relationship goes some way to explaining the staying power of the official narrative. Despite the organic sounding nature of this relationship, it should not be forgotten that while these narratives are based on past events and used to explain the present, they are also used to legitimise versions of the present or visions of the future, and are therefore integral parts of urgent social contests over power relations in the present. The task will now be to examine the content of these narratives and explore their effects on the ways in which Algerians relate to contemporary politics. The first set of these narratives emerged directly after independence in summer 1962 from the power struggle that took place between different Algerian groups, but have their roots in wartime rivalries and suspicions. The second set of narratives, which relate to the nation-building

[156] For one example of this translated into contemporary Algerian hip hop, see the song *Il était une fois l'Algérie* (Once upon a time there was an Algeria) by the group Intik, from their 2001 album, *La Victoire*.
[157] J. Scheele, *Village Matters*.

period under President Houari Boumediene (1965-1978), are the subject of this thesis and will be explored at length throughout. The third set of narratives on the past emerges from the economic crisis and social turbulence of the 1980s and articulate religious and ethnic paradigms of mobilisation.

The summer 1962 narratives have their origins in the two neat distinctions made during the war by nationalist leader Abane Ramdane at the Soummam Congress in 1956.[158] The first of these distinctions was between internal and external military forces, or the maquis fighting inside Algeria and the *armée des frontières* stationed in Morocco and Tunisia for the duration of the war. The fighting between Algerian groups immediately after independence has given rise to a narrative according to which the external military forces took control of the state at the expense of the internal maquis, which the narrative casts as the true essence of the anti-colonial struggle and the rightful heirs to the levers of state power. It is therefore implied that while the external forces that have dominated the state since 1962 have styled themselves as fighters of liberation, they are really nothing of the sort. The second distinction made at the Soummam Congress was between the political and military branches of the nationalist movement, a split manifested in the internal struggle toward the end of the war between the Armée de Libération Nationale (ALN) and the Gouvernement Provisioire de la République Algérienne (GPRA). This split has engendered another narrative that sees the fighting of summer 1962 as having resulted in marginalisation by the army of the political authority that had negotiated independence with France, signalling the beginning of a hitherto uninterrupted military domination over the Algerian state.[159] As narratives of injustice, in popular discourse, these narratives articulate a clear division between 'winners/baddies' and 'losers/goodies'. Highlighting the importance of the shifting alliances and exclusions of the past as keys to fathoming the black box of Algerian politics in the present, these narratives use the war as a starting point to explain what is frequently seen as a hidden group of shadowy figures that has controlled the state since independence.

Both these narratives rest on the idea of 'confiscated independence',[160] in which the revolution is stolen from its 'rightful' heirs. As such, these narratives articulate a strong feeling of ownership over a decolonisation struggle clearly recorded in social memory as a

[158] See J. Ruedy, *Modern Algeria.*

[159] For a look at these narratives from the perspectives of their originators, those who lost out in the power struggles following independence, see H. Aït Ahmed, *La guerre et l'après guerre* (Paris, 1964); M. Harbi, *Le FLN. Mirage et réalité* (Paris, 1980); Abbas, *Autopsie d'une guerre* (Paris, 1980).

[160] The term is borrowed from T. Maschino and F. M'rabet, *L'Algérie des illusions, la révolution confisquée* (Paris, 1972).

collective struggle that has not resulted in a corresponding feeling of collective ownership over the postcolonial order. The theme of confiscation is also visible in two other narratives also related to the immediate post-war order. The first of these is a feminist narrative, in which independence was confiscated from women that had fought or participated in the war in large numbers but were subsequently marginalised from public life and sent back to the home.[161] The second narrative delays the moment of confiscation to the coup d'état led by Colonel Houari Boumediene against President Ahmed Ben Bella on 19 June 1965, which it portrays as putting an end to an era of left socialism reflected in syndicalism and self-management sometimes identified with Trotskyism, and replacing it with an authoritarian brand of state-centric, right socialism that was often identified with Stalinism. This narrative gained more traction among the French left that had supported the FLN during the war, and never gained broad adherence in Algeria itself.[162]

Other socially held views of the past include the two major narratives that emerged from the liberalisation and identity politics of the 1980s: the ethnic/secular and religious/authoritarian paradigms advanced respectively by Berberism and Islamism. Differentiated identities articulated social discontent over falling living standards during the 1980s, and by the 1990s were engaged in a struggle to control the symbolism of political community.[163] However, both paradigms are firmly rooted in the disenfranchisements that emerged from the socialist policies of the nation-building period during the 1970s. Although religious opposition to secular nation-building began almost as soon as independence was declared and the founding figures of Algerian Islamism formed their first organisation in 1964,[164] Islamism began to surface as a significant current during the mid-1970s, with demands for regime accountability couched in terms of *shūrā* and opposition to the Agrarian Revolution couched in Islamic defences of private property, most famously in Abdelatif Soltani's 1974 book, *al-mazdakiyya hiya aṣl al-ishtirākiyya*, whose title attempted to link socialism with pre-Islamic *jāhiliyya*, and his fetwa on the invalidity of prayers performed on nationalised land.[165] Soltani maintained that the war of independence had in fact been a jihad

[161] K. Taleb Ibrahimi, "Les Algériennes et la guerre de libération nationale. L'émergence des femmes dans l'espace public et politique au cours de la guerre", in M. Harbi and B. Stora (eds.) *La Guerre d'Algérie 1954-2004, la fin de l'amnésie* (Paris, 2004).
[162] T. Maschino and F. M'rabet, *L'Algérie des illusions.*
[163] J. McDougall, "The Fetishism of Identity: Empire, Nation and the Politics of Subjectivity in Algeria", in J Chalcraft and Y. Noorani (eds.), *Counterhegemony in the Colony and Postcolony.* Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 49-71.
[164] A. Bozzo, "Islam and the State: Theory and Praxis for the Algerian 'Ulama", *Journal of Algerian Studies*, Vol. 1 (1996), pp. 51-64.
[165] M. Evans and J. Phillips, *Anger of the Dispossessed* (London, 2007), p. 92.

against the French, a religious struggle that was subsequently hijacked by a secularising postcolonial order that smacked of atheism and western political ideology.[166]

Simultaneously, Berberism emerged in French universities during the late-1960s, within an environment newly sympathetic to differentiated identities.[167] Colonial policies of extending French education in Kabylia and massive Kabyle emigration to France meant that a significant proportion of Algerian university students were Kabyles. The first Berberist formations in France, during 1967-9, focused on culture, fostering an identity construction based on the idea of an original community that had remained intact through the ups and downs of history, of which the survival of Berber languages were the most tangible proof. In what has been described as the "mystification of language",[168] Berberism created a linguistic opposition between both French and Standard Arabic as colonial imports and a (heavily reconstructed) Tamazight and dialectal Arabic as Algeria's true languages. This division is based on a view of Arabs as just another wave of invaders that Berbers, as the 'true' Algerians, have fought against. As such, Berberism borrows from the official narrative's insistence on resistance to outside invaders. Because Berberism is essentially a product of Kabylia, which was an important stronghold of the maquis during the war of independence, Berberist discourse also frequently reproduces the narratives of summer 1962,[169] but presses them into service for its own ends: to explain an imagined Arab dominance over the postcolonial state.[170] Islamist and Berberist narratives therefore both lay claim to and reproduce nationalist historiography, using the same oppositional paradigm with the only difference being the identity marker employed.[171] In addition, nationalist discourse has included both Islamic and Berber elements, despite their subordinate positions within the nationalist framework.

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[166] S. Labat, *Les islamistes algériens* (Paris, 1995); Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria* (Reading, 1996); H. Roberts, *The Battlefield*; M. al-Ahnaf, B. Botiveau and F. Frégosi, *L'Algérie par ses islamistes* (Paris, 1991); P. Denaud, *FIS: sa direction parle* (Paris, 1997).

[167] M. Brett and E. Fentress, *The Berbers* (Oxford, 1996); M. Willis, "The Politics of Berber (Amazigh) Identity: Algeria and Morocco Compared", in Zoubir and Amira-Fernández (eds.), *North Africa. Politics, Region and the Limits of Transformation* (Abingdon, 2008); J. Goodman, "Reinterpreting the Berber Spring: From Rite of Reversal to Site of Convergence", in *Journal of North African Studies*, vol. 9, nº 3 (2004), pp. 60-82.

[168] K. Dirèche-Slimani, *Histoire de l'émigration kabyle en France au XXe siècle* (Paris, 1997).

[169] S. Chaker, *Berbères aujourd'hui* (Paris, 1998); M. Aït Kaki, *De la question berbère au dilemme kabyle à l'aube du XXIème siècle* (Paris, 2004); T. Yacine, "La revendication des Kabyles: culture ou identité", in *Les Kabyles. Élements pour la compréhension de l'identité berbère en Algérie* (Paris, 1992), pp. 23-34; R. Yefsah, "L'Arabo-islamisme face à la question Berbère", in *Les Kabyles*, pp. 105-125.

[170] See W. Quandt, "The Berbers in the Algerian Political Elite", in E. Gellner and C. Micaud, *Arabs and Berbers. From Tribe to Nation in North Africa* (London, 1973), pp. 285-303.

[171] A. Layachi, "The Berbers in Algeria: Politicized Ethnicity and Ethnicized Politics", in M. Shatzmiller (ed.) *Nationalism and Minority Identities in Islamic Societies* (Montreal, 2005), pp. 195-229.

Originating as minority movements with their origins in the exclusions generated by the unifying modernism of nation-building, the traction of ethnic and religious paradigms increased as regime legitimacy decreased, articulating the burgeoning social discontent of a new generation during the late-1980s. Over time however, these paradigms have replaced the socio-political concerns that generated them in the first place, leading to an excessive – and largely unhelpful – focus in the literature, and in Algerian politics, on the issue of cultural identity. As such, debates over national identity have therefore been misconstrued as "the site of the problem and of politics".[172] As sterile debates between voluntaristic conceptions of Algeria's personality have raged on, paradoxically, the identity paradigms produced during contests over political legitimacy have acquired lives of their own, constituting real issues in themselves that cannot be ignored. However, since the mid-2000s, identity paradigms have been showing clear signs of exhaustion as vehicles for channelling political and social discontent and are now almost totally absent from contemporary protests in Algeria, whose motivations and expressions are exclusively socio-economic and linked to concepts of *karāma* (dignity).[173]

Commemorating the End of History

An image published in late December 2012 by satirical cartoonist Ali Dilem in the newspaper *Liberté* entitled "Algerians get ready to celebrate New Year" depicts a disgruntled looking Algerian standing in front of a one-page-per-day calendar that reads "1962". This image of an Algerian *Groundhog Day* expresses the sense the significant barriers to getting beyond independence when talking about the past in Algeria and translates the difficulties involved in undertaking post-1962 history.[174]

The monumental nature of the independence struggle in nationalist historiography and the unanimist narrative on the past created by the state after 1962 conspire to utterly crush any discussion of events that have transpired in Algeria since independence. If the history of modern Algeria is that of the colonial period and the war of independence, 5 July 1962 becomes the end – rather than the beginning – of something. With little left to do, historians

[172] J. McDougall, "The Fetishism of Identity", p. 63.
[173] See R. Parks, "Algeria and the Arab Uprisings", in C. Henry and J. Ji-Hyang (eds.), *The Arab Spring. Will it lead to democratic transitions?* (London, 2013), p. 12-23.
[174] M. Rahal, "Comment faire l'histoire de l'Algérie indépendante?", *La Vie des Idées*, 13 March 2012, http://www.laviedesidees.fr/Comment-faire-l-histoire-de-l.html?lang=fr, consulted 1 April 2012.

can pack away their tools: the story has ended. This goes some way to explaining the surreal atmosphere in Algiers in July 2012, when the country was supposed to be celebrating 50 years of independence, but managed to do so without mentioning anything that had happened over the last 50 years.[175]



Commemorations are much more about the present than the past, because founding moments can only be celebrated by evoking and defining the communities they helped to forge.[176] Banners, billboards and buses in Algiers were thus emblazoned with the official emblem of the 50th anniversary celebrations, which depicted a male and female silhouette resolutely turned towards a modern, technologically advanced future, represented by the capital's new metro system, a laptop computer and a satellite. Likewise, the official commemoration show held in the city's main stadium included predictable large-scale choreography with thousands of young people coming together in the shape of the country, as the future of the nation was bizarrely embodied through rap and judo. The front page of *El Moudjahid* displayed a montage of a smiling President Bouteflika hugging a boy wearing the national football strip, watched over by an old photograph of a woman wearing a traditional white *ḥāyek*, the message being one of continuity between generations. Such imagery represents a desperate attempt by an ageing political class that emerged from the war of

[175] E. McAllister, "The Past in the Present: Algeria at Fifty", in *Mediterranean Politics*, 17:3 (2012), pp. 1-19.
[176] K. Winter, F. Tilmans, J. Van Vree (eds.) *Performing the Past: Memory, History and Identity in modern Europe* (Amsterdam, 2010).

independence and has dominated the state ever since, to repackage an official state sponsored historiography that has become increasingly challenged in the public sphere.[177]

However, the 50th anniversary also provided an unprecedented opportunity for claim staking by different constituencies, resting on constant unflattering comparisons between the past and the present. Friends in Algiers joked that Algeria was celebrating 50 years of *istighlāl* (exploitation), rather than *istiqlāl* (independence). A much speculated over official parade did not take place, but there was a large and rather homespun one held by the Algerian Muslim Scouts in central Algiers, with young boys and girls giggling and jumping about excitedly behind floats containing gory images of the 1945 Sétif massacres, while bemused shoppers looked on. Dilem published an image in *Liberté* entitled, 'There will be a parade to mark independence after all',[178] showing thousands of boats being rowed energetically across the Mediterranean to Europe. In contrast, the front page of the *Soir d'Algérie* was draped in mournful black for the occasion, with a headline reading "From wild hopes to the sordid reality";[179] while the headline of *El Watan* read "Glorious past, confiscated freedom".[180] However, it was the unintentionally ambiguous anniversary-themed adverts for a mobile phone company using the catchphrase *mā zāl wāqfīn* (we're still standing) that perhaps best expressed both pride in past glories and the stoicism of a nation waiting for political change.

The deafening silence on the post-independence period is largely a generational problem; both in politics and academia. Most significant here is that the generation that led Algeria to independence remains in power, though the deaths in 2012 of such imposing figures as Abdelhamid Mehri, Ahmed Ben Bella, Pierre Chaulet and Chadli Bendjedid points to its rapid passing. There is of course, the very real risk of censorship acting as a brake on open discussion of the recent past, but Algerian media and academia also a imposes a sort of self-censorship, through a reticence to discuss events not yet perceived to have fully passed into history and a reverence for the war generation that still exists among the post-independence generation, which has been used to executing the decisions taken by its elders, and has little meaningful experience of political initiative or leadership.[181]

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[177] T. Serres, "*Euphémiser la domination, ce qu'une première page nous apprend sur le régime algérien*", at http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/6521/euph%C3%A9miser-la-domination-ce-quune-premi%C3%A8re-page-no, consulted 24 June 2012.
[178] *Liberté*, 4 July 2012.
[179] *Le Soir d'Algérie*, 5 July 2012.
[180] *El Watan*, 5 July 2012.
[181] N. Jabi, "The Impasse of Political Generation in Algeria: Three Generations and Two Scenarios", Case Analysis Series (April 2012), Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Doha.

Mirroring this dominance of the war generation within Algerian politics, academic focus on Algeria remains largely the preserve of a generation of scholars for whom the war of independence was both a personally and politically defining moment. As a result, the experience of colonialism and the war of independence that followed have often been assumed by historians to be the only valid keys to understanding present-day Algeria. Reinforcing this trend is the fact that French academics continue to dominate the study of Algeria, which has meant a focus on events and periods that have marked France, most notably the colonial period and the war, with a postcolonial approach that paradoxically seems to continually recast Algeria as eternally tied to France. Furthermore, focus on these periods – as well as the 1990s – has contributed to Algeria's history being viewed as almost pathologically violent and has given rise to overly psychologised depictions of a 'traumatised society'.[182] With this in mind, and without wishing to undermine the importance of what were truly cataclysmic events, it is possible to see how a continued focus on the war and the colonial period in both Algerian official historiography and French academia – though often coming from opposing nationalist and postnationalist positions – unintentionally and uncomfortably work together to shut down any focus on other periods of Algerian history, particularly those following independence.

The current national history curriculum focuses overwhelmingly on the Ottoman Period, the rise of European imperialism and its encroachment on North Africa, the French invasion and colonial rule, and the rise of nationalism and independence. Constant repetition of the same themes, led to many students in Bab el-Oued seeing history lessons as profoundly boring. Although the compulsory history syllabus in 3rd year of secondary school focuses on the 1945-1989 period,[183] one history teacher in Bab el-Oued told me that in practice, due to the density of the syllabus and the large size of most classes, teachers only sometimes get beyond independence, and give very schematic views of the post-independence period when they do. The hesitance and doubt displayed by him, and other history teachers, in response to my questions on the legacy of the nation-building revealed that many in the profession are simply not used to thinking about the post-1962 period, given institutional pressures to

[182] This emphasis is criticised by N. Vince, "In Amenas – a history of silence, not a history of violence", on Textures du Temps, 20 January 2013 at http://texturesdutemps.hypotheses.org/576, consulted 20 January 2013; see also her forthcoming monograph, *Our fighting sisters: nation, memory and gender in Algeria 1954-2012*, Manchester University Press.

[183] The 3rd year syllabus has three topics: the World during the Cold War, Algeria between 1945 and 1989; and Third World development between 1945 and 1989. See the secondary school history textbook: A. Jofal, *al-tārīkh al-mu'āṣir 1945-1989 li al-sanawāt al-thālitha thānawī* (Algiers, 2010).

maintain focus on the periods foregrounded by the official narrative. Furthermore, the political sensitivity of post-independence history – especially the 1990s – makes teachers uncomfortable about broaching the subject in class. Instead, the explanations offered by teachers for Algeria's current problems were invariably linked directly to the identity crisis born of "a past robbed by colonialism", which was viewed as the total meaning of history.

In Algiers, the surreal juxtaposition of the omnipresence of the past and the silences on the post-colonial period has important practical implications for researchers. Doing fieldwork in Algiers meant contending with official propaganda, inaccessible state archives, reticence of people to talk about recent events that bear a strong emotional charge, suspicion of the authorities, and well-meaning advice that I should focus on the war of independence, since, after all, nothing 'interesting' happened in the 1970s. Such challenges contribute to maintaining academic focus squarely on the relatively safe ground of pre-1962 history. People in Algiers constantly asked me if I had chosen my own research topic, which suggested that Algerian postgraduate students are subject to a considerable degree of 'guidance' in their research choices. Furthermore, I was told by one well-known historian at the University of Algiers that he was unaware of any theses currently underway dealing with the post-independence period. Even Remaoun's exhaustive study of academic production on history since the 1960s does not comment on the elephant in the room: the total absence of work produced in Algeria on the post-independence period.

However, there is now a recent and growing body of work seeking to push scholarship into the forbidden territory of post-1962 Algeria as a subject of enquiry in its own right. In this sense, work by Rahal has done much to highlight the silences and absences of historiography on Algeria,[184] especially her ongoing work on communists after independence;[185] Vince has worked on women's narratives after 1962;[186] while Haleh Davis' ongoing work focuses on the continuities between the pre and post-independence periods

[184] M. Rahal, "Le temps arrêté. Un pays sans histoire. Algérie 1962-2013", in *Écrire l'histoire*, n°12, 2013, pp. 27-36 ; and "Fused Together and Torn Apart. Stories and Violence in Contemporary Algeria", in *History & Memory*, vol. 24, no. 1 (March 2012), p. 118-151.
[185] M. Rahal, "Impossible Opposition: The Magic of the One-Party Regime", at http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/14890/impossible-opposition_the-magic-of-the-one-party-r, consulted 3 January 2014.
[186] N. Vince, "1962 as Event and Metaphor in Women's Oral Histories in Algeria", at http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/14891/1962-as-event-and-metaphor-in-women%E2%80%99s-oral-histori, consulted 31 January 2014.

through her work on the Plan de Constantine;[187] and Serres has worked on similarities in popular narratives against colonialism and those against the post-colonial state.[188]

Historiography of Nation-Building

These silences are also audible in the dearth of primary and secondary sources available on Algeria after 1962. The 1970s and 1980s were broadly characterised by waning academic focus on Algeria, as Algerian academic and cultural production set about immortalising the liberation struggle and the euphoria of independence gave way to the less glamorous work of state building under Boumediene. However, there are a few notable exceptions: both primary and secondary source material was produced during the period.

Despite many initial detractors in France after the 1965 coup, by the late-1970s many on the French left, such as Paul Balta, were sympathetic both to Boumediene for his egalitarian politics and third worldist foreign policy. As Algiers correspondent for *Le Monde* from 1973, Balta had privileged access to Boumediene throughout the decade and published a compendium of his speeches covering a wide range of themes, *La Stratégie de Boumedième*, just before the president's death in late 1978. As well as the portrait of Boumediene at the beginning of the book intended to counter French media portrayals of him as a cold-blooded strategist, the work is useful as a compendium of Boumediene's speeches, whose thematic order translates the preoccupations of the time.

Other primary sources include accounts of a country brimming with optimism for the future and bravely taking on the challenges of the present, given by foreign visitors and *coopérants*, ideologically motivated Europeans that worked in Algeria during the 1960s and 1970s as teachers, doctors and technicians due to domestic shortages of skilled workers. Amongst this body of texts, two works stand out. The first are the memoirs of Michel Martini, who moved to Algeria in 1955 to work in a hospital in Orléansville, and was subsequently arrested and deported from Algeria two years later because of his support for the FLN. Martini returned to Algeria at independence, working as head of surgery in various hospitals in Algiers before retiring to France in 1987. The second volume of his memoir,

[187] M. Haleh Davis, "Restaging Mise en Valeur: 'Postwar Imperialism' and The Plan de Constantine", in *Review of Middle East Studies*, 44/2 (2010), p. 176-186.
[188] T. Serres, "Give Us Back Our Oil: Claims for Justice in Light of Algeria's Colonial Past", at http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/14894/%E2%80%9Cgive-us-back-our-oil-%E2%80%9D-claims-for-justice-in-ligh, consulted 3 January 2014.

published in 2001, *Chroniques des années Algériennes 1962-1972* charts the first decade of post-independence nation-building, especially the initial construction of a new healthcare system, and represents a critical but sympathetic view of a country with which Martini, like many of his generation, displayed significant ideological identification, despite his disparaging portraits of younger, more militant would-be *coopérants*.[189]

Hubert Nyssen, who later went on to found the publishing house Actes Sud, wrote *L'Algérie en 1970 telle que je l'ai vue* after an extended visit to Algeria in 1970, as part of a wave of stock-taking in France during the early 1970s translating curiosity over how Algeria was faring after ten years of independence. Describing the reigning sense of national unity as a "convergence of diversities"[190] for the practical ends of modernisation, Nyssen had reservations that the Algerian development model, by whose achievements he was clearly impressed, may be overtaken by sheer demography, forcing a re-evaluation of priorities by a new generation. If adults in the generation of the 1970s managed to bequeath to their children balanced institutional structures, diversified industry, modern agriculture, decent housing and a progressive education system, the latter would be less likely to call the political system into question, and there would be no reason why Algeria's new generations of the 1980s would not be able to find creative solutions for the problems of the future, Nyssen reports. Significantly, the strong state built by Boumediene was predicted to survive. In the early-1970s though, the focus was still on the tasks of *édification nationale*, a task that involved the population as a whole and generated a very real sense of energy and enthusiasm: "To be Algerian means to invest oneself in a process of construction whose results will, at best, be felt with the onset of old age. It is to gamble on a set of new values, without abandoning those that have permitted the journey thus far. It is to participate in a complete overhaul of national structures. To be Algerian is to begin the struggle anew; this time with tools instead of arms, on construction sites rather than in the maquis."[191]

Despite the presence of potential clouds on the horizon, Algeria's future was bright. As the lodestar for the European left of the 1960s and 1970s, post-independence Algeria was viewed as enjoying a privileged position, with greater freedom to create a more just social order, unencumbered by the weight and complexity of existing European political edifices:

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[189] M. Martini, *Chroniques des années Algériennes 1962-1972* (Paris, 2001), pp. 245-7.
[190] H. Nyssen, *L'Algérie en 1970 telle que je l'ai vue* (Paris, 1970), p. 121.
[59] *Ibid*, p. 138.

"We are less free because our structures have become so complex that we cannot, without risking collapse, risk seizing new options. We are condemned, on pain of devastation, to a meticulous progressiveness, while Algeria could – and can – at the dawn of the technological age, decide on a new series of arrangements."[192]

Enthusiasm for Algeria as *tabula rasa* in the view of progressively minded Europeans has its own history. The counter-positioning of a land of opportunity and promise to the inertias of the European *ancien régime* is reminiscent of the Saint Simonian narrative of Algeria in the 1840s-50s, as the new social sciences in Europe began to attempt to answer burning questions about what form should be taken by the new society that was emerging in the aftermath of the French Revolution.[193] For Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte, Algeria was the land where anything was possible, a sort of enormous open-air laboratory for the new social theories of the time. Prosper Enfantin wrote in 1843:

"If Algeria could be the place to test this new organisation, if we could carry out this precious innovation in this country where *everything needs to be done*, carry it out far from all the obstacles that the outmoded laws of our old society or the exaggerated pretentions of our youth dreaming of the future would oppose to it in France, what grace would we not have to render God for this happy result of our short-sighted conquest!"[194]

Of course, the key difference was that in post-independence Algeria, hopes for a brighter future lay not only on one side of the Mediterranean, and could now be engaged in by Algerians themselves.

The two major secondary sources produced during the period by Jean Leca and Jean-Claude Vatin and Bruno Etienne are more cautious in their analysis of Algerias's evolving political system. Leca and Vatin's *L'Algérie politique, institutions et régime*, published in 1975, provided a cold shower for ideologically-motivated Europeans extoling the virtues of Algerian socialism. A political scientist born and raised in Algiers, and a supporter of Algerian independence, Leca was director of the Institut d'Études Politiques in Algiers from 1962 to 1965. For Leca and Vatin, Algeria was above all an administrative state with several defning characteristics: the monopolisation of political resources by the single party and exclusion of other kinds of political organisations; the absence of a public market for the allocation of political or economic resources, which instead occured within the party and was

[192] *Ibid*, p. 143. My translation.
[193] O. Abi Mershed, *Apostles of Modernity. The Saint-Simonians and the Civilising Mission in Algeria* (Stanford, 2010).
[194] P. Enfantin, *Colonisation de l'Algérie* (Paris, 1843), p. 117, emphasis in the original.

hidden from public view; and the lack of autonomy of the party, which had no interests or values other than those of the groups it comprised. As such, the party has no system of arbitration that could be imposed on competing groups and therefore did not function as an institution, a fact which sealed its submission to the army.

However, Leca and Vatin stress that although the political system was not a totalitarian dictatorship, due to its permeability to conflicting interest groups, it was too tightly controlled at the apex to be polyarchic. Multi-party politics had been rejected in the 1964 Charte d'Alger on Marxist grounds, for fear of bourgeoisie dominance and the breakdown of the system into diverging class interests and loyalisms. However, the idea of a party based on a single class was also rejected in the 1962 Tripoli Programme, since the development of Algeria could never be achieved by a single class, which would end up protecting its own interests. The Soviet and Chinese models of the working class party were therefore eschewed in favour of a nationalist Nasserite model: that of a party transcending different interest groups. The FLN was to comprise the best elements of working people, but was called on to build socialism by including the widest possible social spectrum not only to "reflect the aspirations of the masses", but "to guide [the masses] towards the realisation of their aspirations".[195] The FLN therefore differed consideraby from both communist parties and the parties of liberal democracies, and is defined by Leca and Vatin as an "institution embodying and representing a composite social collective whose principle of unity resides in nationalism (symbolised by the party), in search of a socialist construction seen as the continuation of national construction."[196] Given the role of animating, orienting and supervising, but not substituting or controlling the state, the party became a parallel bureacracy, doubling the state. If in the USSR the party held real power and symbolic value, but the bureaucracy did not, the reverse was true in Algeria, where the party had symbolic value but no real power, and the bureaucracy held the real power but no symbolic value. This created a permanent tension during the Boumediene years, with an idealised party opposed to a bourgeois-dominated, Algiers-centric bureaucracy that could always betray the ideals of the revolution. This tension was reflected in the choice between technically competent but politically unreliable bureaucracy (because of collaboration with French, or a lack of socialist credentials), or militants with no administrative experience.[197]

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[195] Algerian Constitution, 1963, art. 25.
[196] J. Leca and J. C. Vatin, *L'Algérie politique, institutions et régime* (Paris, 1975), p. 30. My translation.
[197] *Ibid*, p. 44.

In addition to charting the building of political institutions from the late-1960s, with elections to the new local and regional assemblies, the APCs and APWs, Leca and Vatin highlight the active role of other consultative bodies, such as the Conseil National Économique et Social (CNES), created in 1968, which produced high quality reports and competent proposals on economic orientations and centralised planning, and the National Conference of Presidents of APCs, which held annual meetings and often voiced criticism of official policies. As the only elected national body until the creation of a national assembly in 1977, the latter functioned as sort of semi-autonomous parliament under control of Conseil de la Révolution. While clearly part of a top-down organisational model, Leca and Vatin insist that the APCs had real authority, holding candid discussions of pressing problems and providing solutions to local and national issues. As such, they functioned as better representatives than original national assembly ever did.[198]

A constellation of mass organisations was inagurated to provide political socialisation for the party and to mobilise popular support. According to the Charte d'Alger, the organisations were to ensure the success of party policy, reinforcing the top-down political model. The autonomy of the UGTA[199] was significantly reduced soon after independence, though it retained ample scope of action.[200] It was under Boumediene that the mass organisations lost much of their independence, with a more authoritarian tone emerging in 1969, when focus shifted towards worker discipline and meeting production targets, with workers' rights being relegated to a secondary position. Opposition to party control of the UGTA, and attempts to increase control over the UNEA,[201] led to student strikes and demonstrations in 1969 that were repressed by security forces.[202]

While immediately after independence, revolution was seen as being of greater urgency than state-buiding, under Boumediene, there was a major shift towards state-building as a way of ensuring revolutionary discipline and order. However, Leca and Vatin highlight that both the Ben Bella and Boumediene regimes displayed pro and anti-state positions as the situation demanded; whether to oppose 'reactionary elements', or to foreground unity. The key attitude toward the state was therefore one of power and strategy. While under Ben Bella, decision makers felt their power slipping and contested the bureacracy's power in order to increase theirs; under Boumediene, new decision makers incrseased their power by exalting

[198] J. Leca and J. C. Vatin, *L'Algérie politique*, pp. 81-3.
[199] Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens.
[200] J. Leca and J. C. Vatin, *L'Algérie politique*, p. 25.
[201] Union Nationale d'Étudiants Algériens.
[202] J. Leca and J. C. Vatin, *L'Algérie politique*, p. 26.

the state, later finding themselves unable to denounce it when politically expedient, thus increasing Boumediene's power.[203] For Leca and Vatin then, the neat opposition between an anti-statist Ben Bella period and a statist Boumediene period is a misnomer. However, if the Charte d'Alger advocated complete party-state identification at the top, the regime that emerged from Boumediene's 1965 takeover was more concerned with protecting state structures from partisan pressures, especially those of the bureaucracy, given fears of a technocratic elite reinforcing their power. Hence the emphasis on the construction of a state that would stand the test of time. As it turned out, this was far from idle rhetoric: Algeria's two most influential institutions, the ANP[204] and SONATRACH,[205] both of which bear the heavy stamp of Boumedienism, averted the collapse of the state when its very existence was threatened during the 1990s. A significant part of Boumediene's legacy is therefore the institutional architecture of the Algerian state which, despite changes in political style, remains intact today.

The other major work on the Algerian polity produced during the 1970s was *Algérie, cultures et révolution*, by Bruno Etienne, who worked as a *coopérant* in Algeria from 1966 to 1974, teaching at the ENA[206] and the law faculty of Algiers University. Etienne highlights the political weakness of the FLN, which lay in the difficult transition from a wartime front comprising disparate ideological currents united only by the common desire for independence, to a unified national party. As such, the party was riven by internal divisions reflecting those of the war, with interior moudjahidine occupying the lower echelons of party structures, resulting in an ideological void that allowed the emergence of traditional forms of clientelism based around loyalties to wartime wilaya leaders.[207] Etienne also underscores the presence of intense social mobility nationwide from the late-1960s, as new opportunities arose with state-building. The departure of the pied-noirs provided significant opportunities for the Algerian petit bourgeoisie and low-level civil servants, whose ascent had hitherto been limited by the presence of a European middle-class, but who were now thrust to the forefront of society, occupying not only vacant apartments in Algiers, but important administrative posts.[208]

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[203] *Ibid*, p. 37-8.
[204] Armée Nationale Populaire.
[205] Société Nationale pour la Recherche, la Production, le Transport, la Transformation et la Commercialisation des Hydrocarbures.
[206] École Nationale de l'Administration.
[207] B. Étiennne, *Algérie, cultures et révolution* (Paris, 1977), pp. 102-3.
[208] *Ibid*, p. 49.

For Etienne, Algeria's class structure during the 1970s did not fall into typical categories of analysis. While official rhetoric focused on the *couches défavorisées* (disadvantaged strata), understanding the class structure was complicated by the continued presence of traditional social groupings and hierarchies alongside more recent ones emerging from decolonisation.[209] From 1965, the francophone *algérois* bureaucracy broadened its links with other social groups gravitating around political power: the military and new land owners that had emerged from the speculation of 1962-3.[210] With the capital dominated by the bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie, the real divisions at national level were between those with salaried work and those without, over and above a neat division between urban bourgeoisie and urban proletariat. Given the burgeoning public sector, which provided 85% of total wages and salaries and 60% of employment by 1977,[211] access to the state and its resources was the dominant factor in the social stratification of the new Algeria. The new bourgeoisie owed its class status to the existence of the state, which could also not exist without it. Such a system of social stratification spawned networks of patronage that aimed to manipulate the system for personal advantage.

But for Etienne, clientelism was a double edged sword, simultaneously serving as a network to spread the modernist rationality emanating from Algiers, and functioning as integration mechanism for peripheral populations used by the state to impose its values and reinforce its power.[212] Clientelist structures also functioned in different ways in Algiers from the countryside. As representatives of the Jacobin state in the *bled*, bureaucrats had connections within the central administration, spoke the necessary French-*fuṣḥa* jargon incomprehensible in the countryside, and could dispense an array of benefits to the rural poor. In Algiers, clientelism was governed by struggles between groups opposed along personal or historical lines, rather than ideological ones. Against the state's declared ethics of modernisation and rationalisation, this meant a lack of institutional cooperation and political relations dominated by affectivity and subjectivity in which bureaucrats not only used state services to benefit the majority, but also as a bargaining tool within a field of clientelist relationships.[213] In this context, Etienne highlights the existence of a total rupture between traditional elites and structures, and new political personnel, creating a parallel system of statist bureaucracy and traditional institutions, such as the *djamaas*, which continued to

[209] *Ibid*, p. 60.
[210] *Ibid*, p. 104.
[211] M. Bennoune, *The Making of Contemporary Algeria, 1830-1988* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 252-3.
[212] B. Étiennne, *Algérie, cultures et révolution*, pp. 92-4.
[213] *Ibid*, p. 105.

regulate moral and legal affairs in villages and small towns. For Étienne, this was more than a simple juxtaposition between tradition and modernity, but expressed more general conflicts between ideals and realities.

Mahfoud Bennoune's work *The Making of Contemporary Algeria 1839-1988*, provides a vastly detailed appraisal of the policies that defined Algeria's socialist experiment during the 1970s, especially interesting since it was written on the eve of the fall of the one-party state. Departing from the institutional focus of the works mentioned above, Bennoune mobilises a staggering amount of statistical information to assess the period, with chapters devoted to industry, agriculture, employment and spending, education, housing and health. Broadly-speaking Bennoune positions himself in favour of the enfranchising policies of nation-building, highlighting the significant economic achievements and improvement in living standards achieved by centralised planning during the 1967-1977 period, while recognising the "failure to generate or shape a homogenous, experienced and cultivated or ideologically coherent elite independent of the army, the comprador elite and the influences of foreign powers".[214]

Interestingly, Bennoune's view of the policies of the Révolution Socialiste – enthusiastic support for industrialisation as a vehicle for development, and dissatisfaction at its premature abandonment under Chadli; sympathy for the aims of the Agrarian Revolution, but a negative appraisal of its results; and a dim view of the implementation of educational reform and Arabisation – mirrored that of many contemporary residents in Bab el-Oued. For Bennoune, if the policies of industrialisation and agrarian reform were coherent and well-planned, the problems lay in implementation and weak capacity for absorbing massive public investment. For example, the failure of agricultural development was a result of the limited reach of the much trumpeted Agrarian Revolution, whose aim was to redistribute lands from large Algerian landowners to rural peasants, in addition to the creation of 1000 model socialist villages providing housing and a range of welfare services to rural populations. Expropriation was intended to attenuate socio-economic inequalities in the countryside, rather than eliminate them altogether. Landlords were permitted to keep land allowing them to earn no more than three times the wage of a permanent worker in the self-managed agricultural sector. No specification was made on the area that could be kept by landlords, who could choose which parts of their land to keep. Furthermore, landlords were

[214] *Ibid*, pp. 303-4.

compensated to the equivalent value of their land within 15 years at 2.5% interest. Despite coherent conception, by the end of the 1970s, the Agrarian Revolution sector made up only 14% of the cultivable land surface and employed only 8% of the active agricultural workforce, while the private farming sector remained the largest (50% and 74% respectively).[215] The rate of construction of the socialist villages was equally lacklustre. In August 1972, work began on the first village in Aïn Nehala (Tlemcen); by 1978, only 94 had been completed, with 188 still under construction.[216] Bennoune attributes the disappointing performance of agricultural reform to a complex series of factors: resistance from landlords, huge public investment in the socialist agricultural sector to the detriment of the larger private sector; low agricultural wages in relation to other sectors resulting in an increasing shortage of skilled labour; rural-urban migration and an ageing rural population, illiteracy in the countryside that thwarted reform, inadequate technical training and use of agronomists in bureaucratic positions instead of on the ground.[217]

Despite these criticisms, the resolutely modernist Bennoune highlights the significant – and sincere – efforts exerted by the state to redistribute wealth as largely successful, pointing to dramatic improvements in living standards: with employment increasing by 76% and wages and salaries by 156% between 1967 and 1977.[218] However, the modernisation of productive forces was not accompanied by the expected cultural transformation toward a modern society that would have broader philosophical, religious and behavioural effects. This led to a retreat from the egalitarian policies of Boumedienism and the arrival of an 'Algerian Thermidor' under Chadli, as the new regime "removed the workers, peasants and young people and replaced them with compradors, middlemen, dealers, contractors, entrepreneurs, private industrialists and all sorts of opportunists in search of rapid enrichment".[219]

Bennoune's appraisal of Chadli's reforms is overwhelmingly negative. The break-up of the 66 state corporations in the name of efficiency, aimed at dismantling loyalties to the previous regime, without any preliminary research or consultation, into 474 mini-enterprises led to a dramatic increase in clientelist practices and corruption. This process was even more significant at local and regional level, as the number of public companies run by APWs quadrupled. In addition, declining state investment led to the stagnation of production, while

[215] *Ibid*, p. 176-7.
[216] *El Moudjahid*, 14 November 1978.
[217] M. Bennoune, *The Making of Contemporary Algeria*, pp. 194-7 and 208-11.
[218] *Ibid*, p. 254.
[219] *Ibid*, pp. 309-10.

the opening up of private investment in industry left the state encumbered with the least profitable companies. Employment in the private sector declined, but turnover was increasing rapidly, creating previously unseen social disparities. Chadli's anti-scarcity programme,[220] aimed at fulfilling the consumer desires hitherto thwarted by socialist austerity, imported previously unavailable goods from abroad for sale in state-run supermarkets and considerably increased state spending while encouraging the emergence of a parallel import-export economy that contributed to social inequalities.[221]

In contrast, rather than a vision of growing social equality under Boumediene and increasing inequalities under Chadli, Etienne and Tlemcani define the Boumedienist system as state capitalism, contending that social inequalities were first produced during the 1970s with the rise to prominence of petit-bourgeois bureaucrats determined to block the access of the working classes to the means of production.[222] If Bennoune conceives Chadlism as ushering in ill-fated policy choices that reversed the development process, Roberts sees a total ideological rupture and an abandonment of the national project. In fact, the Chadli regime – while instituting significant reforms aimed at economic liberalisation – highlighted the continuity with the preceding period, visible in the continued dominance of the socialist rhetoric of centralised economic planning and social welfare. The question then becomes to what extent Chadli believed himself to be reforming the system to guarantee its survival – with de-Boumedienisation being more a function of Chadli's need to build his own powerbase than indicative of an ideological reversal – or intending to tear it down, as Roberts and Bennoune argue. Whatever the intentions, Chadli's reforms are largely blamed for the increasing inequalities that ultimately challenged the existence of the system itself, especially after the economic crisis of 1986, resulting in the nationwide riots of October 1988. The social frustrations resulting from previously unknown levels of social disparities contributed to significant nostalgia for the certainties of the Boumediene era, which were already visible in the slogans chanted during the riots:

> "We don't want butter or pepper; we want a leader we can respect! Boumediene come back to us; Halima has come to dominate us! Chadli, that's enough vice, tell your son to return the money!"[223]

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[220] Programme Anti-Pénuries (PAP).
[221] M. Bennoune, *The Making of Contemporary Algeria*, pp. 264-84.
[222] R. Tlemcani, *State and Revolution in Algeria* (London, 1986).
[223] Quoted in M. Evans and J. Phillips, *Algeria. Anger of the Dispossessed* (London, 2007), p. 130. In the original Algerian Arabic, the slogans rhyme: "*Mā hebbīnach zebda wlā felfēl, hebbīna qā'id f hēl; Boumediene wellī 3līna, Halīma wellāt teḥkum fīnā; Chādlī, berka mel vīs, qūl l wlīdek irejje3 ed-devīs*". Halima refers to

After limited academic focus up to the 1980s, international interest in Algeria was suddenly revived with the onset of instability in the early-1990s, as scholars and pundits scrambled to blow the dust off the existing works on the history of colonial Algeria and the rise of nationalism, resulting in a glut of English language works on Algeria that included the post-independence period, such as those by John Ruedy (1992), Benjamin Stora (2001), Hugh Roberts (2003), Martin Evans and John Phillips (2007).

The aim of these works was ultimately to explain how Algeria had moved from the dynamism generated by independence to a brutal civil war within the space of thirty years, and more specifically why the hopes generated by the Arab World's first democratic experiment after 1988 lay in ruins. Roberts' *The Battlefield Algeria*, less a chronological history than a collection of articles on the politics of the 1990s and 2000s, devotes part of the first chapter to a sympathetic analysis of Boumedienist socialism as a process of nation-building that disenfranchised the middle classes, whose discontent was channelled through an emergent Islamism, and later through the liberalisation under Chadli. Algerian socialism's major shortcoming lay therefore in the antagonistic class dynamics it unleashed, rather than the content and implementation of the policies themselves and their economic effects, which Roberts does not analyse. Roberts agrees with Leca and Vatin that – initially at least – the political system was not totalitarian, foregrounding collegial leadership structure of the wartime FLN and strong political taboos against personalised leadership.[224] For Roberts, state-building was undertaken empirically, given the state's total freedom due to the lack of constitutional constraints. Such an arrangement was tolerable to Algerian society, because the intense social mobility of the 1970s meant that society was relatively amorphous, but also as a result of broad social consensus around the construction of a strong state and its control over economic activity through the creation of state enterprises that provided seemingly limitless employment opportunities, and the expropriation of foreign capital, which was achieved to massive popular acclaim. One of the most important ideas in relation to the period that emerge from Robert's work is that of nation-building as "producing Algerians" with the aim of creating "a socially and culturally uniform and orderly national community".[225] Such an approach thus underscores the importance of the period in understanding the later dynamics of opposing identity paradigms that threatened to tear the

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Chadli Bendjedid's wife, who was popularly claimed to dominate him. For the protesters of the day, Chadli clearly lacked Boumediene's *redjla* (masculine honour).

[224] H. Roberts, *Algeria the Battlefield*.

[225] *Ibid*, p. 17.

Algerian polity apart during the 1990s as expressions of the various exclusions created by the unifying modernism of the nation-building project.

In *Modern Algeria*, John Ruedy devotes a whole chapter to 1962-1978, following a common periodization on post-independence Algeria that uses presidential terms. Ruedy focuses on the state-led development policy: the use of nationalised hydrocarbon revenues to develop capital-intensive heavy industry (hydrocarbons, metals, chemicals, heavy machinery) that would stimulate the automatic creation of downstream light industries producing consumer goods and machinery to modernise agricultural production, the ultimate aim being to guarantee economic independence as a corollary of political independence. Until the industrialisation process created the expected economic take-off of the 1990s, the planners opted for austerity and the prioritisation of investment over consumption. Ruedy makes the often used argument that industry was prioritised over agriculture, leading to declining agricultural production and a dramatic increase in rural-urban migration. Bennoune's statistics however, show this to be wrong: while agriculture received 23% of total investment in 1967 and just 5% in 1979; the total value of investment in agriculture increased six-fold over the same period.[226] While for Bennoune, problems of conception and implementation within socialist economic planning could – and should – have been ironed out, for Ruedy, low productivity, high inefficiency and the neglect of consumption and housing signalled increasing debt, and an inevitable conversion to liberalising economics under Chadli.

Ruedy is right to point out that homogenisation, and bureaucratisation, the rise of technocrats and the control of mass organisations by the all-powerful state contributed to increasing depoliticisation in Algerian society during the 1970s,[227] as people became accustomed to decisions being taken on high without the need for involvement on their part. However, though this estrangement from politics may have accelerated with Boumedienist bureaucratisation, it was already visible soon after independence: despite Ben Bella's enormous popularity, there was little public outcry about his removal by Boumediene. For Ruedy, the re-admission of the people into the political process with the institutional reforms of the mid-1970s had the effect of reinforcing Boumediene's power, since Algerian presidents, though often sincere in their intentions of allowing popular participation, have not been willing to share power in ways that would diminish their own. Popular participation was instead used to weaken the power of potential rivals within the political apparatus, which

[226] M. Bennoune, *The Making of Contemporary Algeria*, p. 195.
[227] J. Ruedy, *Modern Algeria. The Origins and Development of a Nation* (Bloomington, 2005), p. 209.

helps to explain "why Algeria did not become a democracy despite the populist rhetoric that dominated its political discourse".[228]

Benjamin Stora, whose short but detailed work *Histoire de l'Algérie depuis l'indépendance 1962-1988* is alone in explicitly setting out to provide a post-independence history. Stora attempts to move beyond an analysis of socio-economics, focusing on changing cultural production and the arrival of a generation tired of the sacrifices of socialist austerity and hungry for greater freedom of expression. Stora's work highlights the continual use of imported models in the construction of the Algerian nation-state, especially those from France – from Jacobin centralism to the theory of *industries industrialisantes*.[229] In doing so, Stora reifies an Algeria eternally tied to France through borrowing of political and economic models and elides the extent to which Algeria attempted to chart its own course during the cold war, becoming a model for other countries experiencing decolonisation. Rather than France as centre and Algeria as periphery, Algeria formed its own centre. Like Ruedy, Stora's narrative is that of the failure of Boumedienism to deliver on its promises of modernity, due to sluggish economic growth despite massive public investment, the continued predominance of hydrocarbons, spiralling debt (from $2.7 bn in 1972 to $23.4 bn in 1979), the neglect of agriculture in favour of industry, and exponential demographic growth. He omits, however, any mention of increasing living standards and social welfare, preferring to foreground the problems that led to the instability of the late-1980s, since his aim is squarely on explaining later challenges to the state and the descent into violence. Stora thus gives a contradictory view of the period, on one hand highlighting the failures of modernisation, but on the other, maintaining that the turbulent identity politics of the 1980s were the fruit of "forced march modernisation".[230] In this sense, in much work on the post-independence period,[231] industrial modernisation and the social engineering of socialism is blamed for all of the country's later problems: both for failing to modernise and for modernising too much.

While the conversion to economic liberalisation was not necessarily a forgone conclusion, Stora and Ruedy rightly trace the ruptures that presaged the instability of the 1990s to the inconsistencies produced by Boumedienist socialism, which Chadli's reforms only exacerbated and made intolerably visible. Bennoune, Roberts and Evans and Phillips

[228] *Ibid*, p. 211.
[229] B. Stora, *Histoire de l'Algérie depuis l'indépendance 1962-1988* (Paris, 2001), p. 43-4; 77.
[230] *Ibid*, p. 66.
[231] See also L. Addi, *L'Algérie et la démocratie* (Paris, 1994).

differ in this respect, offering a much more sympathetic view of Algerian nationalism in the 1970s, foregrounding its redistributive claims of development, equality and social justice. Such significant ideological polarisation mirrors the binary social narratives on the nation-building period in Algeria – as either socialist dreamworld of national pride and egalitarianism, or socialist dystopia of economic carelessness and authoritarianism – that will be analysed in detail in the following chapter, and one cannot help but think that these authors have been swayed by one or other sides of this divide.

In all of the works written in the 2000s, the nation-building period is of interest only in so far as it sets the scene for, or is perceived to cause, the imbalances and disparities that lead to the main event: the "broken polity" of the 1990s. The period from 1962 to the onset of the economic and legitimacy crisis of the mid-1980s is somewhat glossed over as a prelude to something else, rather than constituting a viable object of study in its own right, despite the fact that it constitutes Algeria's longest period of stability, and as such is just as important in understanding contemporary Algeria as periods that have received more focus, such as colonialism and the war of independence. Although this literature furthers our understanding of Algerian society in the 1970s by utilising political-science or historical methodologies to approach contemporary Algeria that foreground macro-scale nationwide dynamics, none of these works transmit an idea of what everyday life was like during the period. As such, local responses to nation-building using social history or anthropological approaches have been totally absent. The salience of these alternative approaches lies in including the hopes and emotional investments Algerians themselves had – and continue to have – in the post-independence period within work on contemporary Algerian history. There is, therefore, not only a need for more academic focus on the period itself, but to ask how this period was experienced and is remembered by people at local level.

Remembering and Representing the Past in Bab el-Oued

The post-1962 period was a subject of intense interest to many in Bab el-Oued, since it was often thought to hold the keys to the discovery of the 'truth' about the reasons behind present injustices. The existence of several different narratives on the past was perceived as confusing and unsatisfactory; as one woman in her early twenties put it: "There are always several different versions, and you never know who to believe". The desire to uncover the real story – behind either the power plays during the war of independence, the successes and failures of nation-building, Chadli's reforms, or the violence of the 1990s – often translated a desire to understand when things had 'started to go wrong' in Algeria, backed up by a strong sense that things should not have turned out the way they have. However, due to official silences, people were faced with attempting to piece together their collective past through snippets and images from personal or family memories and conflicting socially held narratives that get them no closer to the ardently desired "truth" that will "set the record straight". As a result, the focus of this research on representations of the nation-building period was sometimes seen by people in Bab el-Oued as asking the wrong questions. Focusing on memory was quite simply barking up the wrong tree, since my job as a historian was to find out what "really happened".

Given the complex and contested state of Algerian historiography, one of the aims of this research was to explore how representations of the 1970s were contextualised within symbolic systems of meaning, by looking at broader conceptions of periodization and plot structures of the past. Zooming out to look at which events and periods were important to young people in Bab el-Oued allowed a glimpse of a 'from the ground up' view of Algerian history through the timeline drawing activity. Putting voices from Bab el-Oued into dialogue with the historiography confirmed the continued influence and reproduction of the official narrative centred on pre-1962 events of national importance, but also revealed that people in Bab el-Oued were simultaneously questioning this narrative by foregrounding events that either do not fit the official narrative, or occurred at local level.

The vast majority of events and periods mentioned were on a national scale – in so far as they were understood as purely national events, or international dynamics primarily affecting Algeria – followed by the local, global and personal. The national was thus the main framework within which participants located past events considered as important. National events and periods mentioned were chronologically as follows: the Ottoman Period as a repository of pre-colonial national identity; the resistance of Emir Abdelkader; Islamic

reformism and Abdelhamid Ben Badis; the 'Flywhisk Incident' (always mentioned in Standard Arabic as *ḥādithat al-mirwaḥa*); French colonial rule; the Sétif and Guelma massacres; the war of independence (couched either in official terms as *la Révolution Algérienne*/*al-thawra*, or in Algerian Arabic simply as *l-gīrra*); independence; Boumediene's coup d'état; the Boumediene period; the Berber Spring of 1980 (always mentioned in French as *Printemps Berbère*, or more rarely in Kabyle as *Tafsut*); the rise of the FIS; the riots of October 1988; the civil conflict of the 1990s (almost always referred to by its official title, *la Décennie Noire* – 'the Black Decade'); the presidency of Abdelaziz Bouteflika; and the national reconciliation projects and amnesties of 2000 and 2004.

Global events mentioned included: divine revelation to Muḥammad; the hijra; the period of colonial encroachment on North Africa prior to the French invasion; and World War II. Local events mentioned during the timeline activities related to Bab el-Oued or the greater Algiers region and its hinterland: *l-ḥamla*, the flooding that left 700 dead in the neighbourhood and considerable destruction in November 2001; *ez-zilzla*, the 7.5 magnitude earthquake that struck Algiers and the region to the east around Boumerdès in May 2003 causing 2,200 deaths; *ez-zīt w ssukkar* (oil and sugar), the nationwide riots that broke out in Bab el-Oued on 5 January 2011, triggered by sharp increases in the prices of olive oil and sugar, in which some of the young people interviewed participated. Personal events were much less mentioned, with the majority of respondents not including these at all; however those mentioned were extremely varied and included graduations, family deaths, university studies, jobs and residence in different places.

The timelines clearly showed the influence of an official state-sponsored historiography concentrating almost exclusively on colonialism and decolonisation. As a result, the majority of respondents began their timelines with colonial encroachment or the colonial invasion of 1830 – this was the point at which Algerian history began. However, in official historiography as well as in social memory, the Ottoman period plays the role of an idealised pre-colonial bulwark of authenticity. This relationship with the Ottoman past is visible in the restoration of Ottoman palaces such as Bastion 23, located on the edge of Bab el-Oued, and particularly the popularity of paintings and engravings of Ottoman-era Algiers, in which the Casbah holds prime position as a referential urban space that ties together an authentic network of symbolic meanings. Such images are sold throughout the city centre and adorned the walls of many houses in Bab el-Oued. That these images are also heavily orientalised – almost always featuring a woman wearing a *ḥayek* descending a steep, winding

street, or women lounging around having coffee in plush surroundings – shows the difficulties involved in imaging a pre-colonial past beyond the othering gaze of the 19th century European. Thus, if 1830 was the starting point for many of the timelines, an almost equal number chose Ottoman Algeria. In contrast, a minority began with the decolonisation struggle, or independence, and only two chose events marking early Islam. However, despite the crushing weight of 1962 as the end of history in Algerian historiography, and the silences on the post-independence period it produces, not a single participant ended their timeline at independence. In further contrast to the official narrative, the vast majority of timelines ended with local events: the 2010 riots or the 2003 earthquake. Significantly, almost all of the timelines placed more events after 1962 than before it.

The top five events mentioned pointed simultaneously to the reproduction of official historiography and its subversion through the inclusion of post-1962 events. On one hand, the colonial period, the war and independence are among the most mentioned events. The French invasion of 1830, the outbreak of the anti-colonial struggle in 1954, along with independence in 1962 are dates that every Algerian is familiar with and are constantly performed and commemorated by the state through education, commemorations, parades, public holidays and musealization. Despite much mistrust – and even anger – expressed by interviewees over the ways in which these events have been used as political capital by those in power, and the frequent deployment of the Summer 1962 narratives to explain the disjuncture between the hopes inspired by independence and alienation from current Algerian politics, for most of those interviewed, 1954 and 1962 remain focal points of national pride.

"Algeria was betrayed after independence. Everyone wanted to control the country, and there was lots of score settling. We don't really know much about what happened, but there were problems. The people who really loved this country and fought for our freedom were eliminated." (Hocine, 30).

"In 1954 the revolution broke out, and things started to get complicated. Afterwards, in 1962 we won our independence, but then they started to fight amongst themselves about who would rule Algeria. The people who fought in the mountains said they had done the work, so they should control the country, but Ben Bella won in the end." (Ali, 26).

On the other hand, in opposition to the official narrative, the conflict of the 1990s and the events of October 1988 were given equal weight to the anti-colonial struggle and independence, with the four constituting the most important periods that defined contemporary Algerian history for people in Bab el-Oued. The foregrounding of 1988 and the 1990s is significant in that it lays bare the silences of official historiography. Questioning the official silence on the conflict of the 1990s can be dangerous: since the 2004 amnesty took

effect, groups seeking justice for those who disappeared during the conflict have been shut down by the authorities, and questioning the state's role in the violence is punishable by prison sentences. The foregrounding of October 1988 and the 1990s underscores the significance of events that have dramatically affected the lives of people in the local community in recent memory and whose legacies are still very much felt in society. October 1988 and the 1990s were remembered through the local: where people where, what they were doing, who died, how they felt. These very personal memories stood in contrast to stories of the war of independence, which were much more standardised and de-personalised, due to the existence of an omnipresent official narrative, elements of which were often reproduced by individuals.[232] In addition to these memories, the importance of the local was further underlined by the fact that the vast majority mentioned the 2001 floods, the 2003 earthquake and the 2010 riots – all of which had a direct impact on interviewees and those they knew.

Events and periods of national scale with local effects were deemed most significant, alongside the most important events from official historiography. These were closely followed by recent local events affecting people's lives directly; and at significant distance by global events that serve either as a backdrop to other events (World War II) or as identity anchors (religious elements). The most noticeable absence from the timelines was reference to events or periods integral to the construction of the Berberist and Islamist identity movements of the 1980s and 1990s. The Berber Spring of 1980 and the formative events of early Islam only came up on two occasions in interviews. This would seem to support the point made earlier in relation to the continuing decline in the importance of these identity paradigms for young people in the community; a dynamic also demonstrated by the absence of the visible identity markers associated with these paradigms, such as the shortened *qāmīṣ* or Berber symbols, among the vast majority of young people in Bab el-Oued.

During a history workshop organised by the researcher, another activity was carried out in which those attending produced graphs depicting the ups and downs of Algerian history form their points of view.[233] Independence, October 1988, the war, the 1990s, the

[232] J. Scheele, *Village Matters*.

[233] This workshop was held on 28/3/13 at the youth association, and was organised and led by the researcher. It was attended by 20 young people (5 females, 15 males), ranging from age 17 to 25. After discussing the past in general and the ways their families talk about the post-independence period, participants were put into groups and asked to work together to produce timelines, with the insistence that they could include any event or period they important. After sharing the content generated with their peers in other groups, participants were asked to go back into their groups and turn their timelines into graphs, with time along the x-axis showing their chosen events and periods, and positive or negative evaluation on the y-axis. This part of the activity caused much heated debate within groups about whether specific events were to be evaluated as positive, negative or neutral,

Boumediene Period and November 1954 were the most mentioned, followed swiftly by local factors. Most of the graphs exhibited broad similarities in direction, but with significant divergences. All but one of the groups (which started their timeline with the onset of colonial rule) began with the Ottoman period. Because of its aura of cultural purity and authenticity, the Ottoman period was also the most positively evaluated period by two of the groups, one of which described the period as "Algeria's golden age". From the heights of the Ottoman period, all lines fell sharply with the beginning of the colonial period and reached an all-time low with the massacres of Sétif and Guelma in May 1945. From 1945 or slightly earlier, all lines rose sharply due to the coalescence of the nationalist movement, inaugurating a new period described by one group as "the union of the people" and culminating in the "renaissance" of the revolution. Here the insistence on unity echoed official historiography and masked the infighting and divisions between different nationalist currents during the war. The war of independence was interpreted in a positive light by most groups, but in a negative light by one group (with the line ducking back down below the level achieved with nationalist unity in 1954) because of the number of Algerians killed and, in reproduction of the Summer 1962 narratives, due to intra-Algerian fighting immediately after the war. From 1954, all lines continued to rise until independence in 1962, an event evaluated as being equally positive, or a little less so in some cases, as the Ottoman period.

Up to 1962, the graphs produced displayed a broad consensus. This unanimity – with variations in degree – points to the standardising effects of the secondary school history curriculum. In contrast, the patterns of the graphs post-1962 showed little consensus and much more divergence over which events or periods were regarded as positive or negative. This coincides with the end of the official historiography, and is very much where the several competing narratives of social memory take over. From independence then, half of the graphs continued to rise until the early 1980s (one of them to its highest point), before falling very steeply: "*w mā zālnā ḥabṭīn*" (and we're still falling),[234] commented one of the participants. In contrast, the other half began to trail off gradually after the high point of independence, initiating a general descent towards the 1990s. These two groups of graphs reproduced the two dominant socially held narratives on the post-independence period. Those producing the

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and to what extent. Groups were encouraged to discuss and build consensus, but this was not always possible. My input during the activity was limited to giving instructions and facilitating. A follow-up workshop gave the young people the chance to correct the my conclusions from the first workshop; after which we watched and Merzak Allouache's 1976 film *Omar Gatlato*, which is set in Bab el-Oued, after which participants discussed similarities and differences to their own lives and neighbourhood in the present.

[234] This comment was clearly meant as a sarcastic reference to the advertisement slogan for the 50th anniversary of independence, *mā zālnā wāqfīn* (we're still standing), mentioned above.

first set of graphs that rose from 1962 and fell in the early-1980s focused on socio-economics, arguing that Algeria began to develop for the first time, with rising levels of state investment in industry, education and social welfare accompanied with readily available public sector jobs allowing millions of Algerians to join the middle classes. In contrast, the graphs falling directly from 1962 focused on politics and highlighted the authoritarianism, repression of civil liberties and lack of accountability of the era. This shows considerable polarisation in social narratives on the nation-building period that will be examined in the next chapter. Despite controversy over its evaluation, it must be underlined that the immediate post-independence period remains one of the highest rated by the young people, with discrepancies centring on over when the fall began: in the late-1960s, throughout the 1970s or in the early-1980s.

Consensus returned on the 1980s, when all of graphs began to fall steeply to October 1988, which represented a low point comparable to the war of independence in half the cases as part of a steady decline from independence, or as a high point paralleled only by 1962 in the other half. Those groups representing October 1988 negatively emphasised memories of having to stay inside as young children while bullets flew in the streets, and some knew demonstrators that had been shot by the army. In contrast, other groups interpreted October 1988 as an awakening of the spirit of rebellion and unity against injustice, whose spirit was identified with the outbreak of the war against colonial rule in 1954 – implicitly equating the repression of the post-colonial state with the repression experienced under colonialism. October 1988 is of significant importance in constructions of identity around urban space, since much the riots began in Bab el-Oued, and the phrase *Bab el-Oued ech-chouhada* (Bab el-Oued of the martyrs), is frequently used as a marker of local identity and badge of honour. Representations of the October riots mirrored the ambivalence felt about 1962 – with a positive evaluation as a moment of opportunity and hope for the future fuelled by a sense of 'what might have been', but simultaneously as leading to disappointment and the confiscation of revolutionary hope by the illegitimate and unseen powers that took control of the levers of the Algerian state. There was, however, total unanimity in perceptions of the 1990s. Along with the colonial period, the 1990s was viewed by all the groups as the most negative period in Algerian history. Predictably, more detail was visible in the period following the 1990s, which constituted living memory for most of those present. Thus, the graphs began a slight rise with the amnesties of 2000 and 2005 that put an end to the worst of the violence, only to

fall again with the floods, earthquake and more recent riots to reach an overwhelmingly negative evaluation of the present.

In summary then, the overall story told by the graphs is one beginning positively with the Ottoman period, descending rapidly with colonial domination, rising again sharply with the anti-colonial struggle and independence and beginning another downward trend either soon after independence or during the early-1980s to reach rock bottom in the 1990s. The worst periods were perceived to be the colonial period and the 1990s, which stand in stark contrast to the most highly evaluated periods as Algeria's golden ages: the Ottoman period translating a reimagined authenticity, and the nation-building period articulating the hopes and energies released by independence. The importance of both these periods seemed to lie in the sense that both were seen as periods of stability in which Algerians were in control of their own destinies. The basic plot structure that articulates socially-held narratives of Algerian history is overwhelmingly one of confiscation – in relation to both 1962 and 1988 – disappointment, missed opportunities and gradual decline since the mid-1980s. The idea of confiscation translated a generalised feeling of *ḥogra*, a term that is omnipresent in popular discourse in Algeria and which has been translated as "contempt, disdain or violating a person's right to consideration".[235] However, *ḥogra* represented more than a general sense of injustice; it expressed a bitter disappointment and outrage that the state has not lived up to its promises and reflected a sense of having been cheated by history.

These narratives of young people in Bab el-Oued show that despite the existence of a frozen official historiography and a dearth of academic work on postcolonial Algeria, Algerians themselves have not stopped attempting to make sense of their recent past. Time has, of course, emphatically not stood still in Algeria since 1962. However, there is a stark contrast between the current standstill of political life, with the interminable wait for generational transition symbolised by an almost paralysed septuagenarian president, and the energy, hope and dynamism of the first twenty years of Algerian independence. As such, "Algeria's long crisis from the mid-1980s through to the early 2000s put a brake not only on the realization of development, prosperity and freedom, but on a *vision* of how Algerian society and the Algerian state might both build on and move beyond their colonial-and-revolutionary past."[236] Serres has pushed this argument further, claiming that post-1990s Algeria is "an extreme example of the epistemological crisis that marks the postcolonial

[235] Definition from Roberts, *The Battlefield*, xxii.
[236] J. McDougall, "Still Standing: Algeria's Future Past", at http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/14889/still-standing_algeria%E2%80%99s-future-past, consulted 31 January 2014. Emphasis is my own.

order".[237] While current the elite are unable to articulate an overarching project with which the majority of Algerians could identify, there is a sense of popular disappointment and frustration at the failure to create a still much hoped for "moral polity".[238] Popular notions of what the state's role should be remained largely defined by the past desire to overcome the humiliations of colonialism through the self-proclaimed objectives of the independent state: equality, redistribution of wealth, progress. That the socio-economic motivations of the almost daily strikes, sit-ins and riots that daily fill the headlines of Algerian newspapers resonate with these principles indicates that Algerians continue to identify strongly with the emancipatory promises made by postcolonial nationalism and their achievement through a strong redistributive state. Indeed, according to the World Values Survey, Algerians prize justice, equality and the protection of the most needy above all else.[239]

The uncertainties and injustices of the present were thus counterposed to memories of a time when the creation of a moral polity – despite awareness of the serious shortcomings of the socialist system – seemed to be just beyond the horizon, allowing Algerians to dream of a brighter tomorrow. It is unsurprising then, that the once imagined future continues to haunt the relationships to the present. The following chapters will be devoted to exploring how the nation-building period is remembered and reimagined in light of these relationships.

[237] T. Serres, "Give Us Back Our Oil".
[238] H. Roberts, *Moral economy or moral polity? The political anthropology of Algerian* riots, Crisis States Research Centre working papers series 1, 17 (2002), Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science.
[239] World Values Survey 2000, Official Data File v.20090914, World Values Survey Association *www.worldvaluessurvey.org* ASEP/JDS, Madrid.

Chapter 3

Narratives of Nation-Building: Politics and Living Standards

"It was a society that couldn't wait to start living! There was the generation that had grown up in the war, and another that arrived after independence that wanted to live like other young generations all over the world! It was the *belle époque* in so many ways: cultural life, living standards, everyone rolled up their sleeves and got stuck in. We wanted to build something good, we wanted an ideal society. It was a proud, strong and beautiful Algeria; that's the image that sticks with me … It's no longer the case." (Daho, 52).

"I mean, I love this country, but I'm not at ease here. It's like there's no flavour, no smell." (Mehdi, 25).

This chapter explores the two dominant narratives on the nation-building period in Bab el-Oued by looking specifically at the ways in which present subjectivities were expressed through depictions of 1970s authoritarianism and its policies, as well as characterisations of Boumediene as a figure that embodies a set of political principles, and memories of class, work and living standards. These memories at once defined what people expected from the state, through representations of social justice and rising living standards and were furthermore used to criticise the present.

The two predominant narratives on the 1970s in Bab el-Oued were based, firstly on memories of authoritarianism and lack of civil liberties, and secondly on depictions of rising living standards, prosperity and stability. The first narrative foregrounded the authoritarian politics of the day, often depicting Boumediene himself as *dictateur* and sole arbiter of national politics. Frequently mentioned topics included the one party state, lack of freedom of speech and civil liberties, as well as the assassination of major opposition figures. However, authoritarian politics were not always viewed in negative terms, and were only universally condemned for their suppression of free speech. The second – overtly nostalgic – narrative portrayed the 1970s as a golden age of social justice and national pride. Common references were centred on a new social mobility fuelled by rising living standards and job opportunities, as well as the relative lack of income disparities. The nostalgic narrative also harked back to a period of intensely felt pride in Algeria's hard-won independence, as well as

memories of a principled role on the world stage, coupled with genuine optimism for the future, all contributing to a strong sense that being Algerian counted for something.[240]

Explaining my topic of research to people in Bab el-Oued produced different narratives depending on the way in which I presented the topic. Saying my work was about the 'Boumediene period' often generated the authoritarianism narrative. In contrast, presenting my work as being about the 1970s seemed to elicit less political and more socio-economic associations closer to the golden age narrative. Rather than diametrically opposed binaries, these narratives were almost never mutually exclusive: elements of both were often used by the same individuals – often in the same conversations. Representations thus went beyond a neat split to express a series of concerns relating to the morality of politics understood in terms of lack of corruption, wealth redistribution and social justice. Even in situations of opposition – and argument – over the past, the common elements in expressions of both narratives were the recurring motifs of stability, social mobility and a sense of *sérieux*: integrity and assiduity in the management of public affairs by the state. Popping up time and again in conversations about all aspects of the past, these transversal elements provided a reminder that memories of the 1970s are filtered through perceptions of the present and intervening periods, particularly the 1990s.

Remembering Work and Living Standards

The most common representations of Bab el-Oued during the 1970s were those describing daily life. Across generations, the 1970s stood for dignity, expressed through memories of high standards of living and few socio-economic disparities. While this is clearly a matter of perception; economic data does bear out memories of the 1970s as a period of relative prosperity, especially in relation to the poverty experienced by Algerians during the colonial period and the privations of the years immediately following independence.

The Algerian economy grew exponentially as hydrocarbon exports and industrial output increased from the late-1960s: GDP rose from 15 billion DA in 1967 to 91 billion in 1978, a growth of 483%. Over this period, Algerian society experienced far-reaching changes

[240] A good example of nostalgia for the period can be seen in the article "Revisiter la mémoire de Houari Boumediène", in El Watan, published 13 December 2011.

associated with modernisation, as wages rose, urbanisation increased and population rocketed. Over the three successive plan periods (1967-1977),[241] employment in non-agricultural sectors (hydrocarbons, industry, construction) doubled from 22% in 1967 to 42% by 1977, while the proportion of the workforce employed in agriculture declined by 50%. The economic planners considered that the best way to redistribute state revenues to the population was through the creation of public sector jobs. Massive public investment over the plan periods thus meant 84% of jobs created were in the public sector. As a result, the proportion of salaried workers rose from 67% of the active population in 1967 to 76% in 1977. After a decade of planned economic development, the public sector generated 60% of GDP, and provided 85% of total wages and salaries and 60% of employment.[242]

Unemployment in Bab el-Oued during the 1970s was seemingly low; the 1977 census records 2,517 people in the area as unemployed, 4% of the total population of working age.[243] As a result, the 1970s was remembered as a period of full employment, in which finding a job was not only easy, but part of an expected life trajectory for young males which moved from school through military service to a public sector career.

"The majority of people worked in the state companies. People would leave school, go through military service and then find a job straight away. There was no problem and the population was much smaller." (Anis, 37).

"Back then there was no unemployment problem. There was a bit, but generally, if you looked, you'd find work easily. I started working in 72 in the administration of a French company. A year later, I went to do my military service, and when I finished, I didn't have any problems finding a job. Until the 80s it was pretty easy." (Samir, 55).

A common trope used to illustrate full employment was the image of three, four or even five people doing a job intended for one person. While expressed with bemused disbelief due to the contrast with today's competitive job market and high unemployment, there was little indication that this kind of full employment was necessarily considered negative – rather the successful policy of a state that saw itself as responsible for the nation's welfare. However, there are also suggestions that the aim went beyond providing income, and was also intended to 'keep people busy', so there was no time to 'get into trouble'. Again, this did not imply a necessarily negative assessment.

[241] Three Year Plan (or Pre-Plan) 1967-9; First Four-Year Plan 1970-3; Second Four-Year Plan 1974-7.
[242] M. Bennoune, *The Making of Contemporary Algeria*, p. 252-3.
[243] *Recensement Générale de la Population 1977*, Office Nationale des Statistiques.

"Boumediene's policy was working. You'd have one person doing the job, and three people sitting behind him, so that the people didn't go hungry. Politicians these days don't do that. They're closing down companies and making people redundant instead." (Malek, 53).

"It was a government policy. For example, if a company needed 200 workers, they'd recruit 500 so people wouldn't be idle. You'd find yourself with 4 or 5 others doing the same job! And it was easy… we hardly worked at all! We worked for a few hours a day – or less! They were keeping us busy. It was like being paid to go to nursery school." (Samir, 55).

"I heard that when they opened the SONACOME factory, I think they needed 500 employees. Boumediene said they had to take 1000. The other 500 would be trained, because one day they'd be needed. That way the country benefited from 500 extra qualified workers. But since the 80s, we've been in freefall." (Smail, 32).

State intervention in the labour market was also remembered through the trope of random employment inspections by the police on customers in Bab el-Oued's cafes during working hours on weekdays to weed out those that should have been working, amid fears that absenteeism was harming production levels.

"People would come into the cafes and question the customers. Those with a job were asked to return to their posts, and they found jobs for those that were unemployed. Now it makes no difference to the state whether you work or not. There were jobs, everything cost less and the government was more sensitive to poor people. Now, they're hard-hearted, they're harsh with the poor." (Mohamed, 64).

"My Dad told me there were even people who were employed to keep an eye on those who didn't work. They'd go into a cafe, it's say 3 pm, people should be at work and they'd be like, "Right, everyone back to work!". If someone could show them they were on their break or it was their day off, it was fine. It worked well." (Yacine, 20).

Rather than being seen as authoritarian, this trope was narrated with a sense of pride that the government took an almost personal interest in making sure people got into work, especially by young people who cannot imagine the idea of being offered a job. Young people today reproduced these stories with a mix of incredulity and anger. However, today's youth would probably not take kindly to this level of state involvement in private life and, as a young teacher suggests below, may not like the kind of jobs that were on 'offer' during the 1970s.

"The police would go into cafes and would find work for anyone who wasn't working, especially in agriculture. The country had just become independent, so everyone had to work so that the country got on its feet. A young person would never accept a job in agriculture now. Today, there's no future for young people. Even the little ones tell you there's no point in studying. Because they've seen their older brother put his diploma in a frame on the wall, and just sit at home. You can never work in the area you're trained for. You study international commerce, and work as a security guard! It's all *ma3rifa*… you have to be someone's son, or someone's

grandson, to get a job. Now you even need *ma3rifa* to be a rubbish collector. I swear! That's why our young people are so demoralised." (Narimene, 29).

During a workshop on the 1976 film *Omar Gatlato* with a group of young people at SOS Bab el-Oued, the first difference between the 1970s and the present alighted upon by those present was that everyone in the film had a job. The office scene in the film gives a tongue-in-cheek portrayal of the idleness and slow work-pace within the planned economy: one man reads the paper, while another stares out of the window at the office across the street. In contrast, employment opportunities for young people in Bab el-Oued today are few and far between, with available options being invariably low-paid and almost always without the social security benefits which must legally be paid by employers. Other, riskier solutions can – and frequently are – found, from pick-pocketing to prostitution; or from hawking to *tharrab* (drug running).

"We usually set up a stall in Ramdan, buy merchandise and re-sell it. Slippers, tissues, whatever… water, soft drinks that are about to go off. Then there are other ways of making cash. A dealer will ask you to take 50g of dope round to some place in Bainem or Ben Aknoun, and off you go with your back-pack. It's really risky! I never wear a tracksuit, I try not to look like myself. Sometimes I wear a *qāmīṣ*, or a proper shirt and dark glasses. You can earn 5000 DA for a run. If you steal it and sell it yourself, you can earn way more. But that's super risky." (Kader, 18).

For a minority of people I talked to, particularly more middle-class residents possessing some of the trappings of material success and emigrants returning to the neighbourhood for visits, two decades of state intervention in the economy was perceived as having created a sense of entitlement among the population, which still expects everything to be handed to it on a plate, instead of working hard to make better lives for themselves. This is very much the capitalist narrative of free enterprise and personal responsibility, maintaining that jobs *were* available, but young Algerians were just afraid to get their hands dirty and had unrealistic expectations about where they could begin their careers.

"I swear to God, some people don't want to work. The typical young bloke, no education, practically doesn't even know how to hold a pen, will tell you he's going to work in an office and get paid this much and, do this and that…" (Saliha, 27).

Ideological concerns aside, the result of the full employment policy was a decade of rising living standards for average Algerians. People in Bab el-Oued therefore remember the 1970s as a time of relative prosperity, memories that are supported by statistics. Gross household income increased from 13 billion DA in 1967 to 55 billion in 1978, while per

capita income rose by 6% per year in Algiers. To offset rising costs of living among low-income earners, the state increased the minimum wage by 66% over the three plan periods, while average wages increased by 68%. Throughout the seventies, prices doubled, but per capita household income tripled, resulting in a 48% increase in real purchasing power between 1969 and 1978.[244] State enforced austerity meant that few consumer goods produced outside Algeria were readily available, which forced a sort of saving programme on households, many of which had more money than they could actually spend. This was remembered in Bab el-Oued through frequent representations of low prices in relation to wages and general ease of living standards. This was by far the single most common narrative encountered on the seventies in Bab el-Oued, crossing generational and ideological divides.

"It was the good life, the living standard. We ate as much as we wanted; a sandwich cost 3DA; lemonade cost 40 centimes. I worked in a state company as an archivist. I earned 700 DA a month, that was a good salary back then! With that, I could buy clothes, and eat as much as I liked. You could get a plate of sardines in a restaurant for 40 centimes, not even a dinar! Packets of cigarettes for 60 centimes. See? We lived well!" (Noureddine, 63).

"Everyone misses that time, because they used to live well. There was a real middle class, purchasing power, salaries allowed people to live comfortably, enjoy life, maybe buy a car, go on holiday or to the cinema. Now, the middle class has completely disappeared in the last 15 years – it's coming back slowly." (Lyès, 44).

Although they reproduced their parents memories of rising living standards, often using the phrase *kānū 3āychīn bien* (they used to live well), young people also contrasted their parents' memories of rising living standards in the 1970s to their own experiences.

"Prices have gone up. My parents tell me how much you used to be able to buy with a dinar. Now it's not like that. People were working, and had full stomachs. You had your job, your salary. Now, even if you've studied, you end up working as a cleaner and earning 6000 DA a month. What are you supposed to do with that? It's enough to buy bread and milk, that's all." (Narimene, 29).

When asked if his parents ever talk about the past, Kader replied – exasperated – describing a set of circumstances he is unable to recognise, with a clear sense that his quality of life will not be as high as that experienced by his parents.

"Loads! Way too much! They'd prefer it if people were like they used to be. Before, it was better, because there was housing… they'd get married and find a flat. Now, there's no housing, or money. So they say those days were better than now. The old days, hey? What am I supposed to do when I get married? No job, no house. Where am I supposed to bring my bride home to? To the cemetery?! There's nothing in this place. No work, no housing, no money. Nothing!" (Kader, 18).

[244] M. Bennoune, *The Making of Contemporary Algeria*, p. 254-6.



Front page of El Moudjahid announcing the beginning of free healthcare, 1 January 1974.

As well as being remembered through work, salaries and purchasing power, the seventies was also remembered as a time when people began to see the fruits of independence in a more general sense. The decade saw tangible signs of improvements in quality of life as proof that the long sacrifices of the war and the post-independence period were finally paying off. During the 1970s Algerians gained access for the first time to universal education and free healthcare. By the end of the decade, 71% of Bab el-Oued residents had secondary level or lower schooling, and 53% middle school level or lower.[245]

"Boumediene said everyone should have a loaf of bread and a carton of milk, that everything should be shared equally. He worked hard. He built the airport, the university in Bab Ezzouar, the 5th of July stadium… It was him that built the hospitals, him that started free healthcare, him that built the schools. After him came the democrats and the Islamists, all the styles you can imagine. But what have they done? Nothing!" (Nadir, 33).

Although people in Bab el-Oued regularly complained about inefficiencies in the education and health systems they now take for granted, it should not be underestimated how much these advances meant to Algerians at the time, especially after the privations suffered during the preceding periods, and the extent to which these memories continue to inform perceptions of the period.

[245] *Recensement Générale de la Population 1977*, Office Nationale des Statistiques.

Socialist Materiality and Class

As Algeria prepared to embark on a new decade a year after Boumediene's death at the end of 1979, a special feature in El Moudjahid noted that not only had quality of life improved immeasurably since 1970 – though it recognised that living standards had perhaps not reached the levels hoped for – but that households owned more fridges, gas cookers, televisions, record players and washing machines than ever before, many of which were made in Algeria.[246] In Bab el-Oued therefore, the seventies thus stood for increased upward mobility; a period in which Algerians first tasted the possibility of accessing the comforts of middle class life.

Despite the fact that, excluding hydrcarbons, industrial output tripled over the three plan periods, low productivity meant that production lagged behind growing consumer demand throughout the 1970s.[247] The availability of consumer products manufactured by state enterprises was, as even the article above admitted, sporadic. Furthermore, state protection of nascent domestic industry meant that consumers were forced to buy Algerian. For example, officially, people could only buy clothes made by SONITEX,[248] which are remembered for their poor quality and synthetic fibres. Since desirable foreign consumer goods were hard to come by in Algeria, small goods were often brought back from Europe. Returnees from France would bring clothes for each family member, a classic trope represented in the film *Zawāj Mūsā* (1980), in a homecoming scene in which a returnee hands out gifts unavailable in Algeria to patiently waiting family members.

Standardisation of nationally produced goods meant little consumer choice and variety, meaning that many Algerian homes would contain similar products. Shared aesthetic references thus link people of the same generation, who grew up with readily identifiable stylistic references. Furthermore, the slower pace of obsolescence of socialist era goods meant that generations from the late-1960s to the early-1980s often shared the same references, in contrast to today, where a few years can mark significant generational differences.[249] People in Bab el-Oued during the nation-building period thus remembered – with a combination of fondness and humour – that most households owned items such as a framed picture of a child praying with tears running down his cheeks, a standard issue

[246] "1980: L'Algérie à l'aube d'une nouvelle décennie", *El Moudjahid*, 19 December 1979.
[247] J. Ruedy, *Modern Algeria. The Origins and Development of a Nation*, p. 219-20.
[248] Société Nationale des Industries Textiles.
[249] M. Nadkarni and O. Shevchenko, "The Politics of Nostalgia", p. 489-519.

sideboard with cupboards and shelves, and a mug with a cartoon picture of Noah's ark filled with animals. Memories of the standardisation of socialist-era aesthetics also reinforce perceptions of the absence of class differences and locate the 1970s before the onset of the more individualised consumerism that emerged in the 2000s.

While clothes could be brought from abroad, importing larger items such as cars was much more complex, and costly. Purchasing a car in Algeria required compiling a weighty dossier and submitting it to the local SONACOME[250] office. Consumer choice was limited to vehicle type: passenger car, van or truck. Since there was no credit, the entire sum had to be pre-paid in cash and customers would wait, sometimes for years, to take delivery of their vehicle. SONACOME mostly imported French cars until the mid-1970s, when Soviet Ladas and Yugoslav Zastavas became favourites, along with ubiquitous Volkswagen Passats, Fiat 128s and Honda Accords. As a result, these cars continue to define the aesthetic of the late-Boumediene and early-Chadli periods for many Algerians. Car ownership was remembered as having increased dramatically during the decade. Amel remembered her father buying the family's first car in the early-1970s, a shiny black Peugeot 404 imported from France, which was used as the neighbourhood's semi-official wedding car for most of the rest of the decade.

While many Bab el-Oued residents preferred imported products during the 1970s, there was also a conflicting perception that the private sector cannot be trusted to provide quality, particularly regarding goods imported from other developing countries. Thus, there remained a strong narrative on the quality – even superiority – of Algerian-made manufactured products of heavy industry, such as ENIEM fridges or trucks made by SONACOME. Such items were routinely referred to as *ḥāja ṣḥīḥa* (tough, well-made). This narrative expresses extremely positive memories and attitudes toward the industrialisation policy of the 1970s. Representations of the durability of socialist-era industrial products evoked images of a strong state attempting economic independence through industrialisation, political and economic austerity, and a sense of technical skill, in which industrial prowess was closely linked to masculinity. A similar reputation was enjoyed by anything manufactured in Russia – one friend told me "If you don't want a massive dent in your car, don't argue with a Lada". In contrast, the Chinese cars that have flooded the Algerian market in recent years were routinely dismissed with the distainful comment "*ma icheddlekch*" (it

[250] Société Nationale des Constructions Méchaniques.

won't last you). Indeed, the Indian-made Maruti has become somewhat of a symbol of poor quality, and is the subject of several jokes.

"Even though now we have the private sector, the quality of products was better before. The private sector will sell you anything, bad quality, just to make money. Now, everything's imported from China. Things used to be more solid : SONACOME trucks are *ḥāja ṣḥīḥa*. Another example: my gran has a fridge from back then, and it's still going strong. Now, you buy a fridge and it'll last you 3 or 4 years. Algerian products were good, and they also imported stuff from Russia. Even the cars were solid. They didn't bring over Marutis… they fall apart, those. I don't care if there wasn't much choice, at least you knew you were getting something decent. They didn't bring any old crap. Now, there's tons of choice, but not everyone can afford it." (Hichem, 19).

In parallel with representations of increasing well-being, an enduring image of the 1970s is one of intermittent *pénuries* (shortages) of basic goods, from foodstuffs to medicine. The state's drive for economic self-sufficiency entailed the increase of agricultural production through rationalisation, the manufacture of synthetic inputs and farm machinery, land redistribution and collectivisation, and large scale rural development projects. In the official discourse of the era, the lingering productivity problem was referred to as *la bataille de la production*,[251] in what amounted to a race between agricultural output and exponential demographic growth. Despite gargantuan state investment in agriculture throughout the decade, the problems of the Algerian countryside, including underemployment, low pay and rural depopulation, conspired with a lack of technical skills, high rates of adult illiteracy, bureaucratisation of decision making and lack of coordination between public sector bodies, slowed the absorption of state investment.[252] Although production doubled or tripled in almost all foodstuffs during the 1970s, vast increases could not keep pace with a population growth rate of 3.2% per year, meaning that Algeria had 6 million new mouths to feed during the 1970s. To make up the shortfall, Algeria began to import more and more food: by 1978 the value of food imports was 5 billion DA, or one fifth of hydrocarbon exports. This dynamic ended up both undermining investment in industry and increasing foreign debt.[253]

Paradoxically therefore, as well as standing for rising living standards, the 1970s is also remembered as the decade of endless queues outside the Bab el-Oued's main retail points: the covered market in Trois Horloges or Place Nelson, or the state-run Souk el-Fellah supermarket and Monoprix department store.

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[251] *Algérie Actualité*, 29 February – 6 March 1976.
[252] J. Ruedy, *Modern* Algeria, p. 221-3; Bennoune, M. *The Making of Contemporary Algeria*, p. 209-12 and 216-7.
[253] M. Bennoune, *The Making of Contemporary Algeria*, p. 217.

"There were shortages, but not for essentials like bread. If there was a shortage of oil, you could usually find butter to cook with instead. But there weren't enough cars or televisions. Sometimes, there were shortages of tomatoes or potatoes, but there was always something else to replace them. That was towards the end of the seventies, but when Chadli came in, there were less shortages" (Larbi, 48).

"There were endless queues at the supermarkets. I think it started in 73-74. It lasted, well, until about 2000, pretty much. Now, we import absolutely everything. Before, there may have been problems with availability, but it was cheap. Now, if you can afford it, good for you; if not, you have to go and talk with God." (Samir, 55).

Young people – who have grown up in a neighbourhood well-known throughout the capital for the bargains to be found in the endless small shops selling everything imaginable – found these depictions of shortage and austerity amusing and slightly incomprehensible. The distance from these memories in the younger generation is a result of the emergence of a consumer society during the late 1990s and early-2000s. Young people simply cannot imagine going to the market and only being able to find peppers or watermelons. As a result, the seventies stood for austerity and lack of colour for many young people.

"There was just one type of each product, no diversity. There were no small corner shops, and there were no nice things, like cheese or chocolate, just the bare minimum. When people went abroad, they'd bring back gifts, things which are totally normal for us now, but that you couldn't find in Algeria, because there was no free commerce. Can you imagine? Going to the market and finding only one brand of water, yoghurt or clothes!" (Inès, 26).

Many in the older generation sought to dignify what must have been far from ideal circumstances with a narrative of 'we didn't have much, but we were happy'. As one man in his thirties put it, "*il y avait tout malgré qu'il y avait peu, mais ils se contentaient de peu pour vivre bien*". Depictions of stoicism in the face of shortages also frequently articulated criticism of today's society as being excessively materialistic and the emergence of socio-economic disparities often associated with the mid-1980s, which was almost always closely linked with increasing individualism and the breakdown of traditional social relationships. Against this, living through shortages was used as a badge of honour, proof that one did not belong to the "soft" new society represented by *ṣḥāb l medda* (those obsessed with material wealth) and that one instead possessed *qinē3a* (satisfaction with what one has), as well as the strength to endure austerity.

"Despite the lack of freedoms, and terrible shortages of many things, we were used to it. We were happy with what we had, even if it was the bare minimum. We were happy with whatever our father brought home. And we lived well." (Lamine, 54).

However, many in the older generation readily admitted that materialism was present during the 1970s, as Algerians rushed to acquire the trappings of modern life, but many highlighted that desire for material wealth was only one of a series of principles, and was offset by strong family and community ties, portrayed in memories of sharing and being considerate of others. Most older people encountered were thus critical of the use of materialism as the only yardstick of success.

"The *vivre ensemble* was a reality back then. There were no differences between us. Now, it feels like there's been a rupture, the relationships have changed. It's a society that's trying to find its way ; it's no longer the ideal society we once dreamed of. It's all about profit… that's what I see. We're not as united as we were. The measure of success for a young person now is to have a nice car, to have money." (Daho, 52).

Faced with such criticism of their generation, young people either participate in the depictions of 1970s *qinē3a*, or question the validity of their parents' memories. For example, Chafiqa highlighted that whereas there used to be only one or two brands of each product, now there is a bewildering choice and people are pressured into buying the most expensive, resulting in excessive economic stress on family income, as well as jealousy between neighbours as people compare their material success with others. She also highlighted the lower expectations of the past, saying that people may have wanted material goods such as cars, but would have been satisfied with any kind of car, whereas now people needed to have the latest model. Chafiqa explicitly used her parents' memories of the period to critique the materialism and consumerism of her own generation. However, depictions of shortages caused other young people relativise their parents' nostalgia for the 1970s. This was commonly expressed though the idea that their parents' experience of the war of independence made any kind of stability seem like a golden age, despite the authoritarianism and austerity that characterised everyday realities in the 1970s. Indeed, after the structural inequalities and poverty produced by the colonial system, it seems reasonable to assume that even small improvements in living standards would have been seen in a positive light. To a generation used to colonialism and exhausted by 7 years of war, intermittent shortages of oil or potatoes probably did not seem so bad. Looking back on those days from today's consumer society however, produces quite another feeling:

"Sometimes, I say to them 'How did you cope ? There was nothing!'. It seems like everything was a muddy brown colour, and there was nothing to do. They say it didn't matter, people wanted simple things and were more pious, in a way; happier. I think it's because they were getting their first taste of freedom, that was the most important thing for them, more than material stuff. Colonisation was terrible, so even with its problems, the seventies seemed way better." (Inès, 26)

"My parents still call it the *belle époque*, despite all the shortages. It's normal, they were proud of what little they had." (Walid, 24).

A major topic of public concern, the issue of shortages became a regular newspaper topic from 1974, coinciding with the nationalisation of food distribution networks. The *pénuries* were initially blamed on lack of coordination between the complex system of public bodies created at local, wilaya and national levels to act as middlemen between producers and state retail outlets. Accounts of resource mismanagement made front page news in July 1974, just after the state had taken control of produce distribution networks, resulting in a very public spat between *El Moudjahid* and the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform. The newspaper accused OFLA, the national fruit and vegetables distribution body, of dumping 1200 tonnes of rotten potatoes into a landfill site outside Algiers due to the slow pace of work at OFLA's sorting centre in Birkhadem. Workers at the dump said that OFLA trucks had been bringing load after load every morning over a period of two months, and this just after a period when potatoes had been impossible to find in the city's markets.[254] At an emergency session of the APW of Algiers, called in response to the scandal, the representative for Bab el-Oued summed up the general tone in the assembly: "The man in the street is aware that *le pouvoir* is taking revolutionary decisions in the interests of the popular masses. But he is equally aware that certain bodies responsible for implementing these revolutionary policies are, in many cases, deficient."[255]

Problems of policy implementation in rural areas were highlighted in a special series of articles on the fertile plain surrounding Algiers, titled *Mitidja '76*, which took a brutally honest look at some of the problems faced at local level by rural communities, in attempt to get at the roots of what had become structural shortages of basic goods. The article on the small seaside town of Aïn Benian, a community that has always had strong links with Bab el-Oued, identified shortages of drinking water and medicines, and insufficient budget earmarked by the Plan. Of the five agricultural cooperatives created in the area during the Agrarian Revolution, four were running a deficit.[256]

As Boumediene's push towards socialism left him increasingly politically isolated towards the end of the 1970s,[257] newspapers began to find scapegoats, blaming shortages on

[254] *El Moudjahid*, 24 July 1974.
[255] *El Moudjahid*, 1 August 1974.
[256] *El Moudjahid*, 21-22 March 1976.
[257] Visible in the spate of resignations, sackings and suspicious deaths of members of the Conseil de la Révolution during the early-1970s. See P. Balta, *La stratégie de Bomediène*, p. 333-4.

"reactionary elements" and "private sector speculation",[258] though one article admitted that the nationalised distribution bodies did not have the capacity to replace the private market due to a lack of funding and poor institutional linkages. While recognising the possibility that population growth may be overtaking production capacities, even quoting official figures showing that population was growing 15% faster than production, and comparing a 6% rise in wheat production with a 20% rise in demand between 1969 and 1972, the same article explained that to use demographics as the only argument would necessarily lead to a (clearly undesirable) re-evaluation of policy, concluding instead that "these shortages reveal the political practices of those that stand against the Agrarian Revolution and against socialism".[259] These 'profiteering' elements were specifically identified as managers in local and regional level distribution bodies that were selling off produce to the private sector, instead of ensuring its distribution to retail outlets. This period saw increasingly common rhetoric on the reactionary nature of the bureaucracy as standing in the way of the regime's progressive policies, coupled with the aspirations of an emerging bourgeoisie connected to public sector jobs that was searching for opportunities to display its newfound status. Due to tight controls on the market, the redistribution of state resources for personal reasons became a major issue in the planned economy of the 1970s and was key in the social differentiation of the period.

In order to reduce socio-economic disparities, the state increased the wages of low-income earners faster than other income groups during the 1970s. In urban areas, the gap between high and low income groups narrowed slightly over the three successive plan periods. Income of senior staff in 1968 was 6.7% higher than that of workers, decreasing to 5% in 1976. However, despite serious efforts by the state to reduce inequalities, income disparities persisted. Overall however, the economic policies of the period resulted in relatively equal distribution of income among the population. By the end of the 1970s, Algerians were not only demonstrably better off, but even better fed, per capita food intake having risen by 40% since 1962. Living standards would doubtless have risen more dramatically had it not been for rampant demographic growth throughout the decade.[260]

Selim, whose parents worked for the postal service during the 1970s, remembered that the poorer parts of his family enjoyed "*une certaine promotion sociale*". Similarly, many

[258] *Algérie Actualité*, 7-9 November 1977.
[259] *El Moudjahid*, 23March 1976.
[260] M. Bennoune, *The Making of Contemporary Algeria*, p. 256.

older people spoke of little perceptible difference in living standards between *milieux populaires* and more comfortably off public sector *cadres*. Money was universally remembered as having been less important in people's lives, since people could not hope to amass large sums in a bank account and even where they did, austerity meant that little could be bought with it in Algeria. The few that possessed significant wealth were subject to strong social disapproval against displays of material ostentation, which were much less socially acceptable than today, given the state's hostility to large inequalities in wealth and the accumulation of property in private hands. A common trope representing this was the phrase: "Back then, even rich people drove Renaults like everyone else".

"There were no rich people! Even if you were rich, you couldn't do anything with your money; you couldn't buy a villa, or whatever. It was the socialist system. Everyone lived in apartments. You could count the rich people on one hand, not even that!" (Said, 60).

However, class differences certainly existed during the 1970s, but given the lack of wide income disparities, austerity and lack of available consumer goods that characterised the time, such differences were expressed in ways other than displays of material wealth. As today, language was used as a major gauge of social stratification, with French being used, either on its own or mixed with Algerian Arabic, to denote refinement and culture. Knowledge of French was widespread in the neighbourhood, since many older residents had been educated to primary or middle school level by the church during the late-colonial period. By the late-1970s, 52% of Bab el-Oued's population could read and write in both Standard Arabic and French (against 29% of illiterates that could only speak Algerian Arabic).[261] Other ways of differentiating oneself included through dress, casting oneself as *wlīd l blēd* (someone from the capital) against rural migrants or not mixing with "village kids" when visiting family in the area surrounding Algiers. The principal form of socio-economic differentiation was articulated through privileged access to goods that were supposed to be collectively owned: either by gaining a position in a state company that allowed for bargaining for a greater proportion of state resources, or by knowing the right people and making the best of one's contacts. Djamel tells the story of how his family obtained its first car in the mid-1970s, showing how state privileges, in this case for *anciens moudjahidine* were put to use within the wider family:

"Our first car was a Renault 16, bought for 12,000 DA. She was beautiful! Back then, it was difficult to buy a car, or to import one. My grandfather, God rest his soul, was a taxi driver and *ancien moujahid*, and had been

[261] *Recensement Générale de la Population 1977*, Office Nationale des Statistiques.

imprisoned for two years by the French. He was allowed to bring in a car from France, and used this to get us a car." (Djamel, 20).

Use of public resources for private gain was relatively commonplace, and was explicitly linked to the appearance of new social hierarchies based on access to the system and its resources rather than on income and material success. The meaning of the term used to describe the use of patronage networks, *ma3rifa*, reveals that the important commodity was literally knowledge, not money. The use of personal connections to get what one wants, which in Bab el-Oued is today both bitterly complained of and enthusiastically participated in – often by the same people – and often associated with the present rather than the past, would seem therefore to have its roots in the social coping mechanisms developed to survive in an era of a state controlled economy, endemic shortages and low levels of monetarisation.

"We'd queue because there were shortages in the state supermarkets, like the Souk el Fellaḥ. But, there was always *ma3rifa*, hidden priorities… you could navigate the system, someone always knew someone, and from there classes began to appear in society. It was in that period that *ma3rifa* began. And the system of corruption we know today began to emerge." (Mourad, 45).

Likewise, current depictions of a gulf between state and society, between 'us and them', also seem to hark back to the realisation that the socialist system created its own injustices and disparities. For the overwhelming majority of those interviewed, this realisation came in the mid-1980s, as the socio-economic disparities and *ma3rifa* that already existed in the 1970s became more infinitely more visible due to economic reforms that privileged the private sector and the economic crisis of 1986.

"You'd see queues for bananas and eggs, but they would send their children to Europe and buy Dior and Boursalino. It's when I got older that I realised, during the 80s. If you were well connected, you could live like a prince. Socialism for all, but queues for us. Not for them, though; they lived well." (Daho, 52).

Indeed, the emergence of a gap between a recognisable political and economic elite under the socialist system and the population at large opens up the question of the other narrative of the 1970s, that of authoritarianism.



Cartoon by Slim in *El Moudjahid Culturel*, 25 October 1974.

Remembering 1970s Authoritarianism

All of those encountered in Bab el-Oued clearly remembered the politics of the day as authoritarian. The most frequent word used when talking about the politics of the period was *dictateur*, in relation to Boumediene himself. Authoritarianism was sometimes – but by no means always – associated with a lack of political representation and accountability, with particular reference to the one-party state, and was couched in negative terms.

"There was the single party. Because his [Boumediene's] mentality was socialist. When you have only one party, there's no freedom, no democracy, automatically. A dictator is never a good thing, because the people can only tolerate it for so long and there comes a time when they turn … it could never stay like that forever." (Saliha, 27).

Perhaps because political comparisons between the past and the present were often seen as providing little contrast as far as genuine political representation was concerned – the political institutions built by Boumediene continue to exist today and are widely associated with a lack representativeness – authoritarian politics per se was hardly explicitly mentioned at all when remembering the politics of the 1970s, almost as if this fact was self-evident. In contrast, the most common component of memories of authoritarianism was freedom of

speech, especially in relation to the average citizens' right to criticise the regime and its policies, an area in which there is significant contrast with greater freedom of speech in the present. Major topics thus included freedom of the press and media, and particularly the inability to criticise the state in public settings such as cafés, due to constant awareness of the possible presence of the Sécurité Militaire (SM). During the 1970s, expressing radical opposition to the state was therefore not an option for most people, leading to a split between public and private topics of conversation that most people came to experience as second nature.

"We didn't speak out, there was no freedom of speech. We didn't talk about Boumediene, or the ministers, or the generals, nothing at all. The SM was everywhere, at the cinema, in the markets… maybe even at home. Everything was fine, everything was pretty. But behind closed doors, they said he was a dictator, because in Boumediene's time, as soon as someone spoke out, they were in for it !" (Djamila, 52).

"You couldn't talk about politics! On every corner, there was someone spying on you. If you talked about politics, you never knew when they'd come to take you away. You'd be rounded up." (Abdelatif, 60).

Because many had grown up during the 1970s and harboured fond memories associated with youth, authoritarianism was sometimes a delicate subject and caused the foregrounding of more neutral, less problematic memories. One way around this was to use humour to describe the authoritarianism and lack of freedoms, seemingly as a way of confronting uncomfortable memories.

"Even in a cafe, the conversation we're having now would be forbidden. There was the SM. If you started to say the word Boumed… you'd be finishing your sentence at the police station!" (Malek, 53).

"My father told me this story: back then before the film started at the cinema, they'd show the news. So, Boumediene disguises himself in a *qachabiyya*, and goes to the cinema with his bodyguards, to see how people react. At one point during the news, they mentioned Boumediene and everyone stood up. Confused, he stayed sitting down and the guy next to him nudges him and says quietly, "Come on, get up, do you want them to arrest you, or what?" (Mehdi, 25).

Despite depictions of differences in public and private speech, some sort of criticism was possible during the 1970s and interestingly, this was not remembered by anyone met in Bab el-Oued. The official daily newspaper, *El Moudjahid*, contained a regular 'letters to the editor' section, in which the public could give their opinions on issues raised in the news. While letters were doubtless vetted by the newspaper's editorial team and major criticism of state policy was obviously out of the question, individual complaints against local authorities or about the specifics of the implementation of a particular national policy were regular

features. For example, Djamel Benmiloud of Avenue Colonel Lotfi in Bab el-Oued wrote a letter in December 1972 to complain about the implementation of the national language policy. While dutifully recognising that Arabisation was an "irrefutable goal", he complained of out-dated school manuals that bored children to tears, learning of grammar by rote, and a dearth of anything that would fire the imagination, such as science, sports, adventure and travel. He went on to complain that Arabic training for civil servants was dull, anachronistic and lacking the administrative and technical terms that would make it adapted to public sector realities.[262]

Numerous articles and satirical cartoons in the press throughout the 1970s reflected public concerns over administrative sluggishness, shortages of foodstuffs and medicines, or public hygiene. However, while problems were clearly recognised, self-criticism and suggestions for improvement were often overshadowed by scapegoating. Much like other socialist countries, the key here is that constructive criticism of everyday realities – particularly if these involved the poor, or any kind of exploitation – and policy implementation was permitted, but this was not to grow into dissent that questioned the appropriateness of the policies themselves.[263] Indeed, this arrangement formed part of the tacit contract between state and society that characterised the nation-building period in Algeria from independence to 1988: a separation between private and public life in which people retreated from politics into private affairs and material concerns, in return for security and freedom from political harassment. Ordinary citizens were generally spared the repression meted out to political opposition figures. Apart from one case, no one in Bab el-Oued knew anyone that had been a victim of state repression. The possibility was enough to maintain a level of fear:

"We heard of people being arrested, but we never saw it and it never happened to anyone we knew." (Abdelatif, 60).

However, the potential danger of airing political views in public meant that most adhered to the unspoken contract between state and society on political quietude and ushered in a split between politicians and their opponents, fighting political battles above people's heads, and the everyday. The possibility of repression contributed to politics being understood both as a subject best avoided in conversation and as a dangerous game at once divorced from daily

[262] *El Moudjahid*, 2 March 1972.
[263] S. Lovell, *Destination in Doubt. Russia since 1989* (London, 2006), p. 13.

life, raises the issue of the veracity of representations of popular support for the Boumediene regime.

Alienation or Mobilisation?

What did people remember of their relationship to politics during 1970s? Although the question of the level of support enjoyed by the regime remains outside the scope of this thesis, it is useful to look at some data from the 1970s that gives an impression of what local politics was like, against which memories and representations can be viewed. Based on his observations of elections in Kabylia during the early-1970s, Hugh Roberts has maintained that despite all candidates having FLN affiliation, campaigning for local elections was enthusiastic and represented a degree of real public choice.[264] Although there is no way of verifying their reliability, statistics show that turnout was not particularly low. For example, in the second APW elections, held in June 1974, *El Moudjahid* published photographs and information about all the candidates for every municipality in the country, demonstrating that considerable effort went into showing people they had a choice. Eighteen candidates, all civil servants, teachers, technicians, journalists or doctors, stood for Bab el-Oued. Turnout was 67% in Algiers, lower than the national average of 78%.[265] A by-election for a replacement APN representative for the *daira* of Bab el-Oued in April 1978 gave voters a choice between 3 candidates: a 38 year-old female personnel manager; a 48 year-old male financial inspector; and a 51 year-old male director of an agricultural planning company. There was no indication that any of the candidates resided within the *daira*. The election was won by the female candidate, Baya Hocine, with 19,330 votes. Turnout was 22% of a total of 147,793 eligible voters. This figure may be more a more realistic gauge of public involvement in politics, since the by-election took place outside the mobilising environment of a nationwide election. Such low enthusiasm reflected what some people told me in Bab el-Oued, that only older people and young people ideologically affiliated with socialism voted during the 1970s.

Today's representations of the degree of involvement in politics during the 1970s varied greatly. While those choosing to express themselves regularly in French, on the left of the political spectrum and in liberal professions were more likely to maintain that the regime had intense popular support, others – particularly the older generation with lower incomes –

[264] See H. Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria*.
[265] The election was won by Majid Yaker, a 36-year old doctor, with 17,272 votes.

highlighted people's alienation from politics during the 1970s. One event remembered, if vaguely, by some people were the public debates held in late-spring 1976, in which citizens were invited to openly express their views on the future direction of the country in all areas, as a precursory step to drafting the National Charter. While some people depicted an exciting moment of flourishing and genuine public debate, others remember being guided, pressured and even brainwashed by 'them' (politicians and members of the elite), an omnipresent pronoun that translated memories of significant divisions between the people and their political class.

"The National Charter debates were infinitely more democratic than all the debates on constitutions we've had since. It was a real social debate! People had seen improvements in their daily lives, and wanted more. They discussed it in cafés… everywhere… and made all kinds of proposals. Society was really involved. The FLN, the mass organisations … the UGTA, organisations of women, farm labourers, moudjahidin, youth… all played a real role; they supervised society. Of course, with all the limitations these organisations had, but also with all the contradictions of society which they were unable to totally silence, which were all expressed in public." (Selim, 47).

"We were encouraged to accept it, without knowing what it was really about. We were told, tomorrow there's a conference… there was an orientation. Neighbours that worked with 'them' said we had to attend, that we should encourage people to go. So, stupidly, we went. There was pressure, brainwashing, even. If you met someone who worked with them, he'd impress you, tell you a whole load of nonsense, and you'd accept. We weren't as shrewd as we are now. We just wanted to live: eat, be clothed, go to school… we didn't think about big projects. When you have nothing, all you can think about is what's in front of you." (Lamine, 54).

"There was no real debate. They did whatever they wanted. Anyway, people had just come out of poverty … they wanted to work, bring up their kids, eat, sleep. That's all. Nobody dared talk about politics." (Abdelatif, 60).

A minority of those I spoke to in Bab el-Oued maintained that the regime had intense popular support that translated into an ideological adherence, again particularly those on the secular political left that made a clear opposition between the 1970s as representing a secular, peaceful, Mediterranean society and the Algeria that emerged from the 1980s as a more Islamised space from which they felt culturally estranged.

"There was support for Boumediene's politics, real popular support. Because the youth, the students, were left-wing and there was a strong alliance between Boumediene and the left. It was the time as well ; the Communist Party in France had 28% of the vote, can you imagine ? This left was everywhere, and Algeria was part of that. There were all the reforms, like the Révolution Agraire, and society really took to it. That's why the system worked." (Lyès, 44).

In contrast, most people spoke of their lack of involvement in, even estrangement from, the socialist ideology espoused by the state in the 1970s. Implicit in this was Algeria's tacit social contract; the idea that politicians should get on with politics and people should stay out of it and get on with their daily lives. While there was certainly a segment of the population that provided the regime with active ideological support and, at the other end of the spectrum, conservatives or liberals ideologically opposed to socialism. As in other socialist polities, the majority in the middle seem simply to have taken their social and political system for granted. One man in his late-40s told me, "*on suivait, mais pas trop convaincus*". However, ideological support must be differentiated from broad tacit support for a regime seen by the majority as providing rising living standards. Despite tacit support from a population that wanted to get on with everyday life, alienation from all things political was maintained by the threat of repression, conceptions of politics as being reserved for politicians, as well as the fact that the intense ideological propaganda of socialist Algeria, with its increasingly hackneyed vocabulary of popular mobilisation, production targets, economic plans, working masses and revolutions ended up making people switch off, as defence mechanisms against the invasive repetition of dogma were developed.[266]

"There was just the FLN, people didn't follow politics much, they didn't really care, because politics is for the politicians. Young people didn't vote, just the moujahidine." (Anis, 37).

Some that were in their late teens or early twenties during the 1970s sought to downplay once felt affinities with the regime because the politics of the time is now frequently labelled as authoritarian. This was particularly evident in the ways in which people talked about their experiences of volunteering as students during holidays to carry out various tasks relating to the implementation or monitoring and evaluation of state policies. That not a single respondent offered this information without being specifically asked points to the uncomfortable relationship with 1970s authoritarianism. For example, Samir initially dodged my question on political involvement, before mentioning the *volontariat* campaigns and ashamedly admitting he had been "taken to cut trees". This was immediately followed by a justification: "I only did it once! I wasn't interested! I had my own line, and I followed it." However, when a younger friend contributed his own more positive experience, saying "My father helped restore a fleet of vehicles. Lots of people did it. We were motivated. Everyone participated gladly", Samir produced a more nuanced, but still apologetic, explanation:

[266] See S. Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford, 2000), which shows how Soviet citizens organised themselves to cope with systemic scarcity by similar means.

"It was all new for us, and we wanted to give… to contribute. That's why people participated. Sometimes they were pushed into it though. You can't really say they went voluntarily! If you didn't go, you'd be frowned upon by your bosses. They could then use it against you. There was pressure." (Samir, 55).

Similarly, involvement in activities run by the *organisations de masse* always seemed to require some kind of justification, as if the naivety of youth should be tempered by the sensibleness of adulthood.

"I participated with the UNJA, but without being affiliated. It was the time of the *Révolution Agraire* in 74-75, I saw guys a bit older than me going off to Zéralda to help the farmers, and I wanted to be like them. It was the era of 'all for one, one for all', an ideal society. We wanted to share, we wanted justice." (Daho, 52).

"I remember the Révolution Agraire. Back then, even if I didn't agree with Boumediene, I did participate in some reforestation near Larbaatach. I was about 15. It was voluntary, we were free to participate or not. I thought it was a good idea. Every time there was a cleaning campaign, I took part. I'm always up for a good deed. Young people volunteered a lot back then. I wanted to be part of everything that benefited the community. But those Révolution Agraire people, I didn't like them." (Mohamed, 64).

Apologetics and justifications aside, those who participated in *volontariat* explained that they felt – at the time at least – they were doing something good that was contributing to making Algeria a better place to live. There was a palpable sense that Algeria was a project under construction and that taking part in this project was attractive to many young people. Though perhaps viewed in retrospect as having been naïve, no apologies were made for this sentiment, even though people sought to disassociate themselves from a socialist ideology now seen as anachronistic. Nationalism is firmly separated from ideology here. On a more prosaic level, participation in *volontariat* was also very much an opportunity to get away from home for a few weeks and go on an all-expenses-paid adventure somewhere new with friends.

Many older residents were uncomfortable talking about politics, even in today's climate of greater freedom of expression. Several residents clearly told me before interviews began that they did not want to talk about politics. That the thought of recording a conversation on political subjects was clearly so unnerving shows the extent to which the unspoken contract of the Boumediene era continues to inform behaviour by delimiting what can be talked about in which spaces. This relationship with politics is also transferred from generation to generation, visible in Imed's anger when he learned of his son joining a political party:

"I don't get mixed up in politics; I go to work, do my shopping, and go home. Personally, I say whatever I want, but I don't talk politics, because it's beyond me. As far as I'm concerned, I'm married, I have children, a job, and it ends there. Once, my son joined Hamas; when he told me, I said to him, 'well, you can go and sleep there tonight then!' He went to cancel his membership straight away. I'm not having that under my roof." (Imed, 71).

It is important to stress that this estrangement or alienation from politics does not, however, necessarily imply implicit opposition to the political system. Rather, it expresses a gulf between 'us' and 'them' that can translate opposition, neutrality or even tacit support. Often couched as a man of the people, Boumediene was often excluded from the 'them' category, and exonerated from any role in injustices, the blame for which was laid with more untrustworthy 'politicians' who did not practice what they preached.

"We weren't interested in politics. I was busy with the family – I became a father at 20. But, we were a bit nationalist … we loved our president, truth be told. We were proud of him. As for the lack of freedoms, we told ourselves it wasn't him that was responsible for our hardships. The foreign policy was great, but domestic policy was bad for us. Everyone said so, but on the quiet." (Samir, 55).

If such representations demonstrated an avoidance of ideology, and a past and present reluctance to engage directly with politics, opposition to authoritarianism was expressed in other ways, particularly freedom of expression in a more general sense. Older people remembered limitations on civil liberties and crackdowns in the name of public morality led by Minister of Religious Affairs and Original Education, Mouloud Kassim, as conservative segments of the population railed against the *dégradation des moeurs* in the press at the beginning of the seventies.[267] In this climate, wearing a short skirt for women or having long hair for men was not only fashionable, but subversive; especially since the reaction of the authorities could be severe:

"Back then, the authorities didn't like long hair [on men]. The police would take us to the station, and just cut it off. But it was our right to do what we wanted with our hair! It was the fashion then too… the Beatles, Johnny Halliday, all that. I asked them why it was a problem, and they just cut it all off. And we said 'Thank you', but sarcastically, mind. What else could we do!" (Abdelatif, 60).

Freedom of movement around the city was even somewhat curtailed, as young people – especially those with long hair – were frequently stopped and asked for their papers by police. Even hanging around in certain areas after dark could be a subversive activity, a way of contesting public space.

[267] See the discussion in M. Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria* (Reading, 1996), p. 49-54.

"The only bad thing about the period was the police, the gendarmerie. There wasn't much freedom, we were always being watched … we felt persecuted, especially young people. They'd ask for our papers all the time. They wanted to educate us by force. If you were in the street at 7 pm, they'd ask you, 'What are you doing here? Get home!' At 7 pm in summer, it's still daylight! The worst thing was when you left your papers at home … as if there was a war or something! Guys with long hair went crazy because they got stopped by the police all the time. But we were used to it, and we even thought it was normal. Now, there's no way we could accept that!" (Lamine, 54).

Such estrangement from politics has important legacies today. The much talked about political apathy of Algerian youth, often expressed in Bab el-Oued as *khāṭina la politique*, far from being a recent phenomenon, seems to have its roots in the authoritarianism of the 1970s. If people remembered being apathetic about political engagement because the political sphere seemed beyond their reach, something they as normal citizens were unable to have any effect on, many felt the same thing about present politics. Dissatisfaction with current politics was overwhelmingly expressed in terms of anger against high-level corruption and the lack of distribution of revenues from the country's natural resources, which were keenly felt to belong to the people.

"The people in power weren't corrupt. Because the president was tough with them, he kept an eye on them. Now, it's all just promises and they all lie. Everything for them, just for them. They just use us when they need us. Boumediene was the perfect man for Algeria, because he managed things well, even if he did kill some people. But he was fair, if you stole... you were finished. Do what you like, but on one condition, don't con the people, don't steal, and work hard to make things better. There were people who didn't like Boumediene, but in his time there weren't people who got super rich. If you did get rich, you had to benefit everyone with your money, employ people, not take it away to European bank accounts." (Anis, 37).

"Personally, I prefer before! Even if it was strict! Now, I think there's too much freedom … Now it's freedom of speech that's changed, we can speak openly, whereas before we were afraid to. But now, there's too much corruption and it's unfortunate. That's why I prefer before, because of the corruption. I've lived through both eras, and I prefer the one before, because there was security and respect. Yes, we had less freedom than we do now, but life was better." (Djamila, 52).

Boumediene and Principled Politics

Rather than being couched ideologically, the politics of the day was very clearly seen in moral terms. As mentioned above, people seldom referred to the lack of political representation in the 1970s, or to socialism's incompatibility with Algerian culture or religion – only one person said that *dictature* amounted to putting oneself on a par with God. Instead,

politics was evaluated on a moral scale, based on its adherence to commonly held principles of social justice and integrity. Such values were often associated with the characteristics ascribed to Boumediene himself as leader, and were often couched as being absent from present politics. Indeed, descriptions of Boumediene's character and those of Algeria during the 1970s seemed to become intertwined in a narrative of both economic and personal austerity. Political integrity was defined in two main ways that were used to highlight what was expected of politicians in the present: firstly, as straightforward honesty and a lack of corruption; secondly in the concept, closely associated with masculinity, of remaining true to one's word and following up these words with concrete actions that improved the lot of the average Algerian.

"I'd like to live in that period. It's true that people say he was a dictator, this and that. But for me, the most important thing about Boumediene is that he took his decisions on his own, that he did what he said he was going to do, that he always put Algeria first. He deserved his job, that's how I see the Boumediene period." (Nadir, 33).

When thinking about what Algerians were prepared to accept from their political system, the case of Selim's father, a PAGS militant who, despite being tortured, continued to support the Boumediene regime after his return from exile, was particularly interesting. According to Selim, the only thing his father could not accept were what he described as "*fuites en avant*": people betraying their declared principles, belying a gulf between words and actions. He resigned from a position within the Ministère des Anciens Moudjahidine in the late-1970s when a "known ḥarki was appointed as minister". He could, however, accept repression because of "*raison d'état*". Indeed, the PAGS' support for the Soviet Union made it difficult to criticise Algeria, especially since the USSR supported the regime, not the PAGS. Repression was borne by PAGS militants, who always felt somewhat on the defensive due to the PCA's late support for the nationalist cause. In Selim's analysis, these factors contributed to the PAGS' conciliatory stance and the nuanced support, or *soutien critique*, it lent to the regime. So while regime repression was somewhat tolerated by those who bore the brunt of it, and personal suffering was subsumed in ideas of a common good, what could not be accepted – under any circumstances – were failures linked to social justice and equality, such as anomalies between austerity for national development and personal enrichment. Therefore, Selim's father, "could accept the authoritarianism of the regime, provided it showed integrity".

Indeed, the two main criticisms of the current political system were that the country's wealth is unequally redistributed, and that corruption is rife. This was often referred to in everyday moral terms as thieving (*serqa*) from the public, and was contrasted with representations of the 1970s as being characterised by little corruption, often accompanied by proud assertions that under Boumediene, harsh punishments were meted out to those caught stealing from the public purse. However, only one or two large-scale cases of corruption made newspaper headlines during the period. In 1970, Mohamed Khelif was sentenced to death for his role in the embezzlement of 30 million DA from the Société Nationale des Transports Routiers.[268] Cases like this are today regarded as isolated incidents, and contrasted firstly to today's large scale corruption cases, such as the Khalifa case or the more recent scandal involving Chekib Khalil, in which no one has been brought to justice and trials are postponed time and time again;[269] and secondly to the perceived increase in small-scale corruption expressed through the concepts of *ma3rifa* (use of personal connections) and *chippa* (bribes), which were seen as being on the increase.

"Back then, there was a bit of corruption, but the real corruption started with Bouteflika. During his first campaign, he said to the ministers, 'I know you've all had free meals, and even I've had mine.' I was with my wife watching it on TV, and I said to her, 'That's it! He's just announced the beginning of open season!' That Bouteflika's done a lot of harm to Algeria" (Malek, 53).

"Corruption began twenty, twenty-five years ago, at the most. If you ask my Dad about corruption, he'll tell you he never experienced it. We didn't have that before. Now, if you want this, it's a bribe; if you need that, it's a bribe." (Nadir, 33).

It would certainly make sense that corruption was dealt with more harshly during the 1970s, since the existence of widespread corruption would negate the claims of egalitarianism, development and social justice made by the Boumediene regime. Since the 1990s, the state has retreated from these declared aims – while still providing a minimum of redistribution to buy stability – to focus on security and the rise of a business elite. This shift in focus means that corruption is no longer inimical to the state's *raison d'être*. However, memories of times when corruption was perceived to be less prevalent than today, continue to provide a major blueprint for popular expectations of politicians.

[268] *El Moudjahid*, 26 February 1970.
[269] *Le Quotidien d'Algérie*, "L'Affaire Chekib Khelil: quand la justice est au service du régime", 4 December 2013.

Honesty and integrity are political ideals closely associated with Boumediene and the period in general, and usually surface quickly during discussions of the leader, even among his greatest critics.

"It's become a country of *ma3rifa*. In those days we didn't have those things at all. Boumediene was strict about that. Lately, it feels like *ma3rifa* just gets more and more." (Narimene, 29).

"Back then, there wasn't a single person who stole a single dinar from society. If it did happen, it wasn't like a crime, it was like you'd betrayed the whole country ! Now, this place is like a box of cheese and everyone's taken a piece. Before, it wasn't like that. Then, if you stole from a state company, you were in the shit! People would denounce you because everyone lived together. Now, it's all about money… a hypocritical *pouvoir* that only thinks of itself and leaves us to fight for the scraps. " (Mehdi, 25).

"Boumediene didn't profit from the state, or his position and he didn't abuse his power, and he could have had anything he wanted – he was president of Algeria." (Nadir, 33).

"Politicians back then were clean … they didn't have lots of money or fancy possessions, despite their position. Now, everyone knows a general has bought La Madrague. Either you work for your country, or you're in it for the money. None of them are honest. Since Boumediene died, it's finished !" (Lamine, 54).

Perceptions of the political class' lack of integrity have clearly deepened pre-existing popular estrangement from politics and contributed to the chasm that has opened up between Algerians and their political elite since the 1980s. As a 48-year old father of four working as an air steward put it:

"I remember when Boumediene died, Chadli said, 'the treasury is full'. The problems started just after that, so where did all the money go? I prefer the Boumediene era, even if there were shortages, there was no corruption, because people behaved better, they didn't just look out for themselves. Once I met a member of parliament, and I said to him, 'I've heard that you representatives say Algeria's a big cake and everyone has to take their part'. He actually said yes! So they're just there to serve themselves. Back then, when a minister came aboard the plane, we were all there to greet him: 'Good morning Minister.' Now, even if the president himself came aboard: 'Go to hell, leave me alone!'. I don't give a damn. When I see that gang of criminals, I think at least my hands are clean." (Larbi, 48).

Columnist Kamel Daoud illustrated this relationship between past integrity and present corruption in an article complaining that the paralysis of Oran's traffic at the end of December 2013, the extensive use of police vans, white gloved policemen directing traffic and Gendarmes on every corner was not in aid of some visiting foreign dignitary, but due to

the fact that the director of the DGSN was marrying his son in the city. The article ends with a firm and petulant phrase: "Boumediene would never have allowed this to happen".[270]

Another major theme in descriptions of Boumediene and, by extension, of the principles that governed Algerian politics during the 1970s was the concept of *redjla* (masculine honour, pride). *Redjla* was often used to describe someone who has integrity; is honest, trustworthy and upstanding; has a certain presence; is respectful and inspires respect, someone with broad shoulders that people can always rely on. Within this definition of masculinity, Boumediene is the very personification of *redjla*:

"Boumediene was a man! Because even if he was dictatorial, he never touched his people. He didn't leave his people in the shit! He raised Algeria's prestige. He had presence! He had a firm hand, and he wasn't afraid. He had integrity, and never filled his own pockets. If he'd stayed, the country wouldn't be like this. His reputation, and Algeria's, were irreproachable on all levels. He went to every country in the world, but he never set foot in France. When he was asked why, he said, 'I didn't fight France to then go and seek it out!' That's a real man!" (Nawel, 63).

For young people, similar concepts of masculinity were expressed by the noun *lizomme* (from the French, *les hommes*). The definition below shows that the contours of *redjla* are delimited by concepts of weakness and cowardice associated with male homosexuality.

"Boumediene was a man because he helped this country, he raised it up, he wasn't like the others… He built us houses, gave us security, did away with those bandits, he did loads of stuff. A man. Algeria was well-known, not like now. Back then, we even had tourists, people wanted to come here. We learned at school about the Sahara coming up to eat up the coast, and he made the *barrage vert*. Boumediene *lizomme*, that's what they say. *Lizomme* means you stick by me, you're a real man. We laugh together, if things get tough, you'll be there, you're with me when the going's good, you're cool, you're with me. The opposite of *lizomme* is a poof. Like, if someone comes to beat me up, you run off, you don't try and protect me. If the police come to arrest me, you scarper, like a fag. *Lizomme* are Algiers born and bred, not afraid, show respect to women, build you up, love you, stand by you, help you, advise you. That's *lizomme*." (Kader, 18).

This sense of integrity was also expressed in terms of following up words with actions; particularly with a sense that politicians were committed to a series of ideals that translated into policies that attempted to improve living standards for the majority of Algerians. As a young teenager growing up in Bab el-Oued during the late-1960s, Daho remembers the impact of seeing a charismatic president on television speaking about social justice:

[270] See http://www.algerie-focus.com/blog/2014/01/de-boumediene-au-mariage-du-fils-du-dgsn-par-kamel-daoud/, consulted 6 January 2014.

"He shook me up the first time I saw him on TV. He was talking about poor people, progress… He wasn't just talking about us, but to us – not to the bourgeois – about how to make things better for people who'd just come out of a horrible war, how to build up the people. That was what he was about. I said to myself, this one's not like the others. It wasn't just words, it was about *actions*. " (Daho, 52).

Once again, this view of Boumediene as putting Algeria first – often expressed through the phrase *dār men 3anduh* (he did his bit/he gave of himself) – translated a strong conviction that the nation's wealth belonged to all Algerians and should be distributed accordingly, being reinvested to improve the socio-economic situation of the average citizen. Strongly held belief in equality and social justice was one of the defining features of worldviews in Bab el-Oued, crossing boundaries of age and gender. Such principles bear the hallmark of the nationalist and socialist rhetoric that emerged from decolonisation and continue to define expectations of present politics. Thus, the past remained as a blueprint against which present political standards were judged, with depictions of integrity used to draw negative contrasts with today's political class as corrupt and self-serving.

"He thought about improving the country. He thought about Algeria, about the people, instead of filling his pockets, the opposite of what happens today." (Youcef, 27)

"Boumediene got the country on its feet. That man did his bit… he did a lot. He did the Agrarian Revolution, built us houses… We all cried the day he died!" (Lamia, 64).

"It was like there was this trust between the government and the people. When our parent's generation talk about Boumediene, you know, they talk about him like a hero. Because he always put the country first. You could feel the guy was there, he was for the people." (Mehdi, 25).

"He always tried to put everyone on the same level. Now they're just laughing at us!" (Hocine, 30).

The mythical status of Boumediene was visible in numerous accounts of his alleged assassination, variously by the Soviets, Iraqis or Americans, in which he was poisoned either through food, cigars, or sometimes by a toxic camera flash that went into his blood. Whatever the method, Boumediene is martyred over and over again in popular memory. The theory is even subscribed to by some major public figures.[271] Sometimes, Boumediene was eliminated by the shadowy figures that have really controlled the Algerian state all along, in a retro-projection of popular assumptions about the murky nature of contemporary politics, despite the existence of a strong narrative according to which Boumediene's *redjla* made him master of all he surveyed. But far from idealising Boumediene as a great father-leader figure, the

[271] Such as Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi's article "Je ne crois pas à la mort naturelle de Boumediene", in *El Watan*, 24 June 2013.

majority seemed realistic about his defects and those of Algeria during the 1970s, in much the same way as Algerian writer Tahar Djaout, who described him as "a combination of Stalin, Cromwell and Robespierre", highlighted reasons behind the staying power of the Boumediene myth:

"Boumediene, with his excesses, charisma and obstinacy, will remain for a long time the embodiment of a proud, feisty, chivalrous Algeria that did not always know how to stop and reflect on the future."[272]

In Bab el-Oued, Boumediene was viewed as a sort of flawed hero, a man who had made plenty of mistakes but remained a reference nonetheless – perhaps, as the young lady below eloquently suggests, because Algerians have had no leaders they feel they can trust since the long period of political reforms, unstable transition and political violence that followed his death, and because, since the 1980s, Algeria has been without a strong political project with clear ideals that could federate its diverse populations and interest groups around a set of common developmental goals.

"He was a revolutionary, a man of charisma who wanted to change things. He did a lot for Algeria, no one can deny that. He's liked by a lot of people here. He's a reference. He makes me think of sincerity, honesty, love for our country, working so that Algeria advances, becomes strong, fighting the countries that try and take our resources, having our own production… independent economically, with everyone as equals. For that, he's a reference. Not so much for freedom of speech or democracy. But it's as if we don't have a true hero, so we take him with his defects…. to have something constructive from the past." (Inès, 26).

Intervening filters to memory: crisis and violence

The crisis of the Algerian state during the 1980s, epitomised by the disconnect between a discourse of revolutionary egalitarianism that seemed increasingly irrelevant in the face of the rising social inequalities, economic crisis and urban decay that gripped the country from the mid-1980s, was experienced, particularly by young people, as *ḥogra*. This word, which became ubiquitous in urban Algeria during this period, denotes contempt or violation of people's right to consideration and respect – particularly by the authorities. Many residents in Bab el-Oued maintained that the word was not in common use in this form during the 1970s. Indicative of a widening gap between state and society, *ḥogra* also translated a bitter disappointment and outrage that the state was not living up to its promises and reflected a sense of having been cheated by history.

[272] *Algérie Actualité*, 29 December 1988 – 4 January 1989, p. 20.

The pent up anger and frustration of the first generation since independence to be worse off than their parents exploded in nationwide riots in October 1988, which began in Bab el-Oued. Young people attacked symbols of both state power and the growing wealth to which they had little access. In a total rupture with accepted notions of authority, young people sacked the police stations. In Bab el-Oued, parading policemen through the streets in a ritual act of public humiliation; in Belcourt, the police chief was forced to strip to his underwear and the crowd was encouraged to taunt and slap him.[273] A shocked nation watched the hitherto unimaginable scene of the army turning its guns on the People it had proudly led to freedom from colonial rule. The wave of revulsion and outrage that followed immeasurably deepened the already growing rift between state and society and destroyed what little faith there still was in the postcolonial system.

"There were running battles on Said Touati street in front of El Fath mosque and in Trois Horloges. They smashed everything to do with the state, like the Monoprix, insurance companies and everything, because people were sick of the state's lies, they saw some getting richer and the people were living in the blackest poverty". (Anis, 37).

In the social memory of the neighbourhood, October 1988 marked the turning point between the stability of the 1970s and the horrors of the 1990s. Rather than being seen as a moment when popular protests brought an end to the single-party state, releasing political energies that ushered a new constitution and the Arab World's first experiment with multi-party democracy, this turning point was viewed in an overwhelmingly negative light. Instead, October 1988 was remembered with hindsight as the starting point of a transition that opened up the gates of hell, ushering in a period of violence, economic hardships and social fragmentation. Since October 1988, Algeria's political system has lurched from the classic authoritarian politics of a one-party state to an authoritarian pluralism in which elections represent an opportunity for the "periodic distribution of shares among majority stakeholders",[274] and an underlying consensus about not rocking the boat among those political parties not relegated to meaningless opposition, despite various different branding strategies as nationalist, Islamist or secularist. In popular parlance, this complex state of affairs even has a name that eloquently expresses the high levels of both political savviness and cynicism palpable in Algeria: *la démocrature*.[275] Political parties were continually

[273] N. Khadda and M. Gadant, " Mots et choses de la révolte", in *Peuples Méditerranéens*, 52 (1990), p. 22. See also A. Charef, *Dossier Octobre* (Algiers, 1989).
[274] J. McDougall, "After the War", p. 40.
[275] For an example of this term in use, see the song *Liberté*, by Algerian hip-hop group *Intik* (2001).

lambasted in Bab el-Oued as being self-serving, co-opted and ineffectual. Despite criticism of the past for its lack of freedom of speech, there was a strong feeling that transition to a multi-party system had not led to positive change.

"They talk about democracy today, but I don't think we're as democratic as they say. We haven't had democracy in the past or in the present. Maybe now it's better because there's more freedom of expression – but we still don't have the legal right to protest. Two years ago, we protested here in Bab el-Oued, and the police started beating everyone up. If you can't demonstrate, it's not a democracy." (Youcef, 27).

"Now there are lots of parties, there's democracy…. bla, bla. But has the system really changed? The private sector is back, political parties, but the parties… pfff… The representatives have no proper training, they come and rule over you and, what's more, they do nothing, just make idle promises and get paid a fortune! Honestly, you see some things… you're like, why is it always *our* country where everything's crooked? Why? The problem is, the state treats us like animals. Read our constitution, and you'll find all these amazing laws! You'd think we were an amazing country. But if you look at the application, there is none. That's why I said they treat us like animals. There are no real laws. And if you demand your rights, they'll arrest you." (Saliha, 27).

As Saliha suggests, there was a sense that little had changed in relation to political accountability. While the style of politics has altered, paying lip service to transparency, Algerian politics remained highly opaque, with decisions taken behind the same closed doors erected by Boumediene. Alienation from the political sphere in the present thus echoed that remembered in representations of the 1970s, with a similar sense of a post-conflict society wishing to get on with life after the instability of recent years. The terms used to refer to the current political power structure illustrated this opacity: *le pouvoir*, *les hommes de l'ombre*, *les généraux*, *la mafia*. The black box of present-day Algerian politics, governed by shifting relationships between different groups within the intelligence services, the presidency, and the army was contrasted to the simpler days of the 1970s, when everyone knew who was in charge. This partly explains the prominence of Boumediene in memories of nation-building.

October 1988 thus remains of key significance in relation to perceptions of current political change because, as far as many were concerned, little positive change has followed. Disappointment that the release of political energies in 1988 has not brought about greater political accountability and social equality reproduces the theme of confiscation of the revolution at independence found in social narratives of the past in Algeria, pointing to the existence of a widely-held view that popular attempts at revolt against the existing order have not borne out popular aspirations of greater freedom and social justice. This is not to say that

people no longer believed in these ideals – quite the opposite – rather that because the zeitgeists of both November 1954 and October 1988 are both widely believed to have been confiscated by nebulous powers-that-be, the idea of change itself has become suspect and has produced a deep cynicism about the possibility of bringing about meaningful political change through collective means. Compounded by the persistence of problems such as unemployment and overcrowding, Bab el-Oued has been experiencing massive alienation from politics that reflects nationwide trends. According to the Arab Barometer, 94% of Algerians support no political party, 80% find the system corrupt, and 68% were not interested in politics.[276] Despite widespread lack of confidence in conventional political structures, and cynicism about political change, Algeria sees thousands of localised, demand-based riots, sit-ins and protests every year articulating piecemeal demands such as the availability of social housing, poor infrastructure, or job security. Official figures show 112,878 interventions by riot police in 2010 and 18 interventions per day in the first half of 2011. [277] Rather than articulating explicit demands for political change at national level, the protests in Algeria represent the normal channel used by communities or groups to articulate their demands to the state. This points to the existence of a radical, demand-based popular political culture that uses direct action to communicate with the state[278] – a kind of "political activism without political expression".[279] However, that the demands of both the daily round of protests and the complaints about everyday life in the present in Bab el-Oued continued to resonate with the redistributive and egalitarian claims made by postcolonial nationalism highlighted the important legacy of this period in defining what Algerians most expected of their state: redistribution of what was definitively understood as collectively owned national wealth.

[276] See *Taqrīr ḥawl istiṭlā' al-bārūmītr al-'arabī: al-Jazā'ir* (July 2011), at http://www.arabbarometer.org/sites/default/files/countyreportyAlgeriaII.pdf, consulted 15 April 2014.
[277] Quoted in *Liberté*, 5 December 2010 and *El Watan*, 9 June 2011.
[278] N. Jabi, "The Impasse of Political Transition in Algeria: Three Generations and Two Scenarios", Case Analysis Series (2001), Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, p. 27.
[279] See "Knowledge and Power in Algeria: an Interview with Daho Djerbal on the Twentieth Anniversary of Naqd", by Miriam Haleh Davis (31/01/12), at http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/4206/knowledge-and-power-in-algeria_an-interview-with-d, consulted 8 July 2014.

Freedom of speech, social justice and the redistributive state

Many comparisons between past and present opposed greater freedom of expression in the present to greater social justice in the past. Speeding along Algiers' elegant colonial-era sea front one evening, I noticed the taxi driver had a small picture of Boumediene stuck in the top left-hand corner of his windscreen. When asked about it, the driver foregrounded the living standards of the era, as well as Boumediene's zero tolerance with corruption and criminals. Silencing the woman in the back of the taxi, who was about to follow up her initial assertion of "*gā3 iḥebbūh*"(everyone loves him), the driver launched into a comparison with today's political system, which he characterised as guaranteeing a high degree of freedom of speech, but not providing for people's basic socio-economic needs. What's the point of democracy, or any system, he asked, if it can't provide *khobz w khidma* (bread and work)?

Desirable governance was defined according to the political principles outlined earlier: integrity and redistribution of wealth. Echoing the taxi driver, Selim reminded me that democracy was a means, not an end. The ultimate aim was always to create a better life. Well-being, development and equality could be achieved through other means. In any case, he continued, "Boumedienism was democratic in that in responded to the expectations of most levels of society". These hopes remained the same in today's Bab el-Oued, where state legitimacy was based on the perceived ability to deliver dignity through wealth redistribution and aspirations to *avancer l-lōr* (to move forward, progress). By this standard, the all-powerful state of the Boumediene period did 'make things better' for the vast majority, whereas today's state was perceived as hindering any improvements, which were often seen in terms of material goods provided by the private sector. The narratives of the taxi driver and Selim reproduced the socialist idea of substantive – as opposed to formal – democracy espoused by state in the 1970s, in which democracy was measured in the equal distribution of social goods, rather than in terms of political freedoms.[280] The term *démocratisation* was in use, but usually referred to the state increasing access to public services.[281] This narrative was also reproduced by some of the neighbourhood's young people today, who claimed that if they had a decent standard of living and security, freedom of expression would not be necessary, because there would be nothing to complain about. Once again, the unspoken pact

[280] To see Boumediene speaking on this issue, see documentary *'alā āthār Boumediene*, by ENTV, aired in Algeria 27 December 1997.
[281] An example of this is *démocratisation de l'éducation* (increased access to education, often referring to the building of schools within the framework of regional development).

of the Boumediene era became visible: political quietude in exchange for freedom from repression and provision of a decent standard of living.

"People don't talk much about politics. Eat well, live your life, but don't get involved in politics. It's true that back then, there was no freedom of speech. But there wasn't really that much to complain about! Boumediene knew how Algerians think. If I let you have more than ten on the freedom scale, you're just going to create chaos, so I'll limit it to ten, but without taking away what's necessary to live a decent life." (Mehdi, 25).

"Now, there's more freedom of speech, but the standard of living isn't as high. Even if there was freedom of speech back then, what would you say? The state isn't good because it tries its best to make everyone equal? You see? It would be a bit odd to criticise that when it's just logical." (Hocine, 30).

"Even if, in inverted commas, there wasn't much freedom of speech and all that… who cares? Don't give Algerians freedom of speech. Let them live well, and that's all. I couldn't give a shit about freedom of speech. If I have a good standard of living, why should I complain? If have a house, I can have fun, I can go out in safety, why should I want freedom of speech? I don't need it!" (Hichem, 19).

For a small minority of people – young and old – this disappointment with the present led to nostalgia for the sureties and discipline of the one-party state. Noureddine, a music teacher from Notre Dame was adamant that the multi-party system was responsible for "this chaos". As we sat outside the café in Lelièvre Square with the usual group of old men, he raised his voice and thumped the following words out on the floor with his walking stick:

"Since we've had all these parties, Algeria's never been the same [*Dzāyer rāḥet fīhā*]. When we had the single party, things were good. The party decided for you. It gave you what you needed: it gave you work, it fed you …. We wanted for nothing. Eh! It must be said! Since the multiplication of parties, we've been abandoned!" (Noureddine, 63).

As can be seen above, this narrative was sometimes linked, almost always by young people, to essentialist definitions of national character in which Algerians were often characterised as needing discipline. The phrase *lāzem lnā l-3ṣā* (we need the stick) was encountered on numerous occasions. Despite often being intended as self-criticism, there was an underlying element of pride taken in self-presentation as unruly and rebellious.

"Things were strict. Like I said, there wasn't much freedom of speech. But you shouldn't give Algerians freedom of speech, you have to watch them, otherwise they won't fall into line. Give them a bit of slack, and you can see for yourself what's happened. Just look around you. You can see the difference in the photos of how Bab el-Oued was and how it is now. Before it was strict but good because people were afraid of the police. Families could go out normally." (Hichem, 19).

Those employing this narrative always positioned themselves as one of the rare exceptions to the rule, indicating practices of self-narration in opposition to a European civilised other. A common way of illustrating the *lāzem lnā l-3ṣā* narrative was to use the metaphor of a classroom: if a teacher was friendly and easy going, students would take advantage and become disruptive. However, strict but fair teachers gain the respect, and control, of their classrooms. Indeed, the link between the imagery of instruments of authority and the paternalistic state's role as disciplinarian was common:

"It was a bit of a dictatorship, not so severe, but still a dictatorship. Personally, I think it's the best thing to do with Algerians. We're a country that doesn't know its limits. That's why we say this country needs a truncheon, a stick. We used to have that, and that's why people who grew up under Boumediene are more respectful of others." (Walid, 24).

However, this narrative was almost always a knee-jerk reaction following discussions of the trials and humiliations of everyday life in the present, and was more indicative of what was felt to be lacking in the present, translating the desire for security, order and social justice, rather than a genuine wish for benevolent dictatorship. Despite longing for the rising living standards experienced by their parents' generation, young people in Bab el-Oued would clearly not approve of the lack of freedom of expression they experienced. Indeed, after extoling the virtues of past authoritarianism: it took Hichem all of a few seconds to begin introducing caveats to his previous willingness to abandon freedom of speech:

"OK, but they have to leave us Internet. We're not in North Korea! [Laughs]. And TV, too. They do need to control things a bit, but not too much." (Hichem, 19).

Further narratives, always with the central element of greater social justice in the past, relativised the importance of freedom of speech in different ways. Some questioned whether today's greater freedoms contained any potential for political and social change, maintaining that everyone speaking freely about whatever they want creates a cacophony of differing opinions constantly arguing against each other, in which individual voices can easily be ignored and attention can be distracted from major issues, while above people's heads, in the political sphere, all remains unchanged. This narrative unpacks the unspoken contract offered under Bouteflika: freedom of expression, within the limits established by the regime, in return for lack of involvement in politics.

"There is more freedom nowadays. If you want to criticise the president, there's no problem. If you want to go into the police station and cause a scene, you're free to do it. No one has the right to do anything to you. Back then, if you went to the police station to make a complaint against the authorities, you'd probably be staying

there for a long while! It's amazing, the freedom we have today, compared to back then, but what's the point of it? There's no real benefit. You go out, protest for 24 hours… but it changes nothing. Newspapers say all sorts. People criticise the government on TV. They just let us speak, but we don't see any effect. So, I don't think there's been a real change. That's not real freedom." (Lamine, 54).

Another discourse in defence of the past suggested the existence of greater freedom from persecution during the 1970s compared to the 1990s. Mostly secular-minded liberals argued that while the vast majority of families during the 1970s had never experienced the SM knocking on their doors, everyone knew someone who had been affected in some way by the political violence of the 1990s. For the radically secular, or those with particularly traumatic experiences of the 1990s, the choice was simple:

"At least back in the day, we didn't have fundamentalists. I prefer a dictator to a fundamentalist. It's like what happened in Iraq: I'd have preferred Saddam to the fundamentalists in power now." (Lounès, 29).

However, the vast majority of younger people viewed the choice between arguably greater freedom of expression in the present and the past's greater equality and rising living standards as a false one. Though never clearly enunciated, many were exasperated by prevailing past-present representations that forced them into an impossible choice between freedom and social justice. Many young people thus rejected both the past for its authoritarianism and the present for its lack of social justice, producing ambivalence about both the past and the present and a sense that "things have never been right".

Beyond Past and Present

Memories of the politics of the seventies articulate a strong division between politicians as authoritarian (if principled) figures on one hand, and a society concerned with getting on with life on the other. The risks involved in open criticism of the political system of the day, the numbing effect of constant propaganda, the firm control of the political sphere by Boumediene, and assassinations of opposition figures contributed to the view that politics was at best beyond the reach of the average citizen, and at worst a dangerous realm that was best avoided. Not so, however, the policies themselves – which seem to have enjoyed broad support due to their success in transmitting the idea of competent state institutions able to deliver on the egalitarian promises of postcolonial nationalism and attain tangible improvements in living standards for a post-war society more desirous of stability and the good life than participation in politics within the framework of the one-party state. This

relationship to politics is mirrored today by the equally strong desire of a post-conflict society to enjoy the stability and material goods offered respectively by renewed state control and consumerism since the 2000s, and equally by the feeling that the political sphere, though nominally more democratic, remains closed to the average citizen. However, if similar alienation from the political existed in both the present and the 1970s, the major difference in the present lay in the perception of a breakdown of the state's redistributive duties and the emergence of an increasing wealth gap. Indeed, the broad popular support for the Boumediene regime was a result of social consensus on two factors: the construction of an effective administration structure with consultative institutions that allowed access to stable public sector jobs; and the policy of control over national resources through the nationalisation of foreign capital, allowing massive state investment in the economy and social welfare.[282]

Wealth redistribution was continually identified in Bab el-Oued as the state's most important function. While this role is still viewed as largely successful during the 1970s, even constituting a yardstick by which the performance of today's state was measured, the state's willingness to redistribute was seen as having decreased dramatically. This retreat of the state from its responsibilities is visible in depictions of increased corruption and a widening wealth gap that left residents in Bab el-Oued feeling angry and abandoned. If a closed political sphere could be broadly accepted during the 1970s because of its provision of a sense of social justice and integrity, as well as rising living standards, today's equally closed political sphere, despite greater freedom of speech and much democratic window-dressing to disguise the continuation of authoritarian political practices, proves unacceptable due of the absolute failure of the reformist FLN to capitalise on the improvements of the 1970s and deliver "a better life" to the majority in the 1980s and beyond. As a man in his sixties told me, walking down Bab el-Oued's main street one evening, "Before we had social justice but no political freedoms, and now we have neither". In these terms, the comparison obviously favours the past over the present.

But far from wallowing in nostalgia, without exception, all hold strong positions in support of the freedom to criticise politics in public, based on its ability to meet the generally accepted criteria of furthering inclusive socio-economic progress and improve the lot of the average citizen. Greater freedom of speech today means that people are unwilling to turn the

[282] H. Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria*, p. 16.

clock back to the 1970s, despite an overwhelming belief that the state was no longer performing its redistributive function satisfactorily. The essentialist narrative of discipline outlined above therefore expresses the tensions between experiences of greater freedom of expression in the present and memories of past stability and rising living standards; as well as an incomplete political transition from authoritarianism to a more open polity.

While some in the older generation highlighted their enthusiasm for building a new Algeria on egalitarian principles, for others, fond memories of youth sat uncomfortably with participation in mass organisations and erstwhile involvement with a politics now seen as authoritarian. The foregrounding of representations of everyday life allowed those who lived through the period to depoliticise memories of the 1970s, masking previous relationships the politics of the day. Like other societies experiencing transitions from socialism,[283] nostalgia was often cast in apolitical terms, as highlighted by memories of youth and social equality, suggesting that the authoritarian practices of the time required some justification. This alone shows the political distance travelled by society since the 1970s. While most seem to view the socialist rhetoric of the day with a suspicion born of hindsight, general appraisals of the political system were based on living standards. Distinctions were made between various flagship policies of the day: between the Agrarian Revolution, which was viewed as having been a failure by the older generation and only vaguely heard of by young people, and the industrialisation policy, which was well-known and universally regarded in an extremely positive light as a source of national pride. Younger people expressed disappointment and anger about the greater opportunities for socio-economic advancement experienced by their parents, based on the perception that life had improved more between the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s than over following twenty year period. The rising living standards of the 1970s therefore represented a missed opportunity for further progress in the 1980s, and a sense of once experienced hope for the future not shared by today's younger generation.

Despite these divergences, common to broad sections of all generations was a strong desire to move beyond both the limitations and privations of the 1970s *and* the increased social disparities of the present. The use of memories of the past to criticise present politics on its ability to deliver social justice, as well as the absolute rejection of a return to the dichotomy between private and public speech all articulate the most significant political principles for the residents of Bab el-Oued in the present: wealth redistribution by a strong

[283] M. Nadkarni and O. Shevchenko, "The Politics of Nostalgia", p. 510.

state, social equality, political integrity and freedom of speech. In this sense, the content of memories of the past therefore translated the principles on which any future Algerian polity should be based.

This chapter has sought to move beyond diametrically opposed perceptions of the nation-building period as authoritarian dictatorship or golden era of social justice, and to unpack the ways in which different narrative elements express present concerns with living standards, the materialism and class differences of a consumer society, as well as corruption and questions about the continued redistributive capacity of the state. In their broadest sense, these social memories of nation-building provided a template against which the present is judged, and defined what people in Bab el-Oued expected of their state. However, if relationships to 1970s authoritarianism were often ambiguous and problematic, memories of urban space, sociability and everyday life in the 1970s – the subjects of the following chapters – constituted the preserve of nostalgia par excellence.

Chapter 4

Reimagining the City: 1970s Urban Planning, Space and Memory

Urban space is the palimpsest on which layers of memory are overwritten. As well as setting Bab el-Oued within its urban context by exploring the socio-economic changes that have occurred in Algiers since independence, this chapter also deals with postcolonial urban planning within the framework of socialist-inspired state-led development during the 1970s. It argues that though well-conceived and effective, the late implementation of serious urban planning during the middle of the decade left planners playing catch up with already serious urban problems and the realities of unplanned urban expansion. Furthermore, the socialist model of planning and housing provision produced inequalities based on access to state resources and public sector work hierarchies that continue to articulate representations and relationships to urban space in Algiers. Nevertheless, the period was remembered in Bab el-Oued more for seriousness in urban management, and hardly at all for the problems of urban life which were exclusively associated with the present, despite frequent mention in the press of the day. Such contemporary re-imagination of 1970s urban space is linked partly to the portrayal of the period's urban spaces as symbols of a forward-looking modernism that was proudly remembered as a collective project, and thus associated with temporal disjuncture and a sense of faded once-held hopes for the future.

Subsequently, the chapter moves on to examine how the previously working-class European neighbourhood of Bab el-Oued was resettled by Algerians after 1962. This process was revealed by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood as a tentative process that lasted at least until the early-1970s, challenging commonly held ideas about an Algerian rush to reclaim the city from the coloniser. Significantly, resettlement also articulated the close-knit social networks of the Casbah in the newly appropriated space of Bab el-Oued, though sociability will be dealt with in detail in chapter 5. This point provides the basis from which to question the usual inside-outside binary used to approach public space in the Middle East and North Africa, and to look ethnographically at the social meanings attached to public space in Bab el-Oued over time, analysing constructions of public and private space as a shifting series of concentric circles of intimacy and otherness delimited by codes of honour and traditional solidarity. Of key importance here is the sense of ownership over local space through the

concept of *ḥouma* (the physical neighbourhood and the solidarities existing within it), and representations of lack of ownership over more anonymous public space in general that articulate a continuing gulf in the relationship between society and the state. Present-day representations of urban space during the 1970s as clean and well-ordered, translated a sense of seriousness in the management of public affairs and a certain pride in 'doing things well' by a state that had not yet retreated from its responsibilities. Nevertheless, such depictions clashed with newspaper archive material from the 1970s highlighting Bab el-Oued's housing crisis and increasingly dilapidated infrastructure. Such silences and overabundances can be explained by the overarching role of memories of past urbanity as a lyrical space from which the present can be criticised, articulating the disjuncture between the dynamism of once-hoped for futures and the stagnation of the present.

Urban Planning, Monumentality and Modernism

The departure of almost 400,000 Europeans from Algiers at independence signalled the beginning of a period of hitherto unparalleled social mobility: 700,000 housing units changed hands.[284] Furthermore, independence saw the rupture of the ethnic segregation that had characterised the colonial city, as flats and houses were either sold by Europeans at rock bottom prices, or occupied by Algerians after their departure. These so-called *biens vacants* soon passed under the control of the Algerian state, to which rents were to be paid by those having occupied apartments vacated by Europeans. The state's rent setting policy had the effect of "blocking rents in social housing and working-class neighbourhoods to maintain low income groups in these areas",[285] and also meant that initial occupiers in more expensive central areas had to move out, leading to the re-population of colonial-era shanty towns. These dynamics led to the gradual substitution of colonial ethnic segregation for a new socio-economic segregation mapped along the spatial divisions of the colonial city.[286] However, this does not seem to hold true as neatly for Bab el-Oued. As a European working-class neighbourhood, Bab el-Oued had always been both socio-economically and ethnically segregated – given its majority Spanish, Italian and Maltese population. Shifting from a purely working class to a low to middle income profile in the mid-1960s, Bab el-Oued's

[284] K. Hadjiri and M. Osmani, "The Spatial Development and Urban Transformation of Colonial and Postcolonial Algiers", in Y. Elsheshtawy (ed.), *Planning Middle Eastern Cities. An Urban Kaleidoscope in a Globalizing World* (Abingdon, 2004), p. 44.
[285] N. Semmoud, *Les stratégies d'appropriation de l'espace à Alger* (Paris, 2001), p. 25.
[286] *Ibid*, p. 74.

socio-economic segregation deepened steadily throughout the post-independence period, not without outbreaks of the oppositional stance to central government for which it had become known since the French army's blockade in March and April 1962 during an OAS[287] insurrection against Algerian independence. Though spatial divisions in the city were not always clear cut, Central Algiers and the heights above it gradually became the preserve of Algeria's emerging bourgeoisie, while the flatter eastern periphery of the city towards the centre of the Bay of Algiers became dominated by the lower-middle and working classes.[288]

This trend was confirmed by the three main spatial divisions that had emerged by the time of the 1966 census, with generally higher incomes in the west than the east. Firstly, there were the more privileged areas of Alger-Centre, El Biar, Hydra, Kouba and Bir Mourad Rais, with larger than average residence sizes, lower than average occupation rates per room and a majority of skilled workers, middle-level civil servants, cadres and liberal professions. As the European neighbourhoods par excellence under French rule, these areas saw the largest number of properties changing hands after 1962. Secondly, areas such as Bab el-Oued, Bologhine and Bouzareah were characterised by average levels of occupation per room and housing size, populated by middle income groups of skilled workers, employees and middle managers. Thirdly, higher than average densities in much smaller housing units, and underequipped urban infrastructure fell into two areas: the previously European working-class eastern periphery (Hussein-Dey, El Harrach) and areas with majority Muslim populations before 1962 (Casbah, Oued Koriche, El Madania).[289]

The first urban planning initiatives date from 1963, and reproduced the colonial-era directives of the Constantine Plan:[290] the protection of the surrounding agricultural lands in the Mitidja plain, the reinforcement of the tertiary nature of the city centre and its eastwards extension along the bay. Similarly, the French land division system of *lotissements* and Zones à Urbaniser en Priorité (ZUPs) remained unchanged, with work continuing on several Constantine Plan social housing projects, such as the Cité des Annassers, which was completed in the late 1960s and extended over the following decade. Colonial planning remained in force until the creation of the Bureau d'Etudes des Techniques d'Architecture et d'Urbanisme (ETAU) in 1968, whose functionalist conception of the city was that of a

[287] Organisation Armée Secrète.
[288] N. Dris, *La ville mouvementée*, p. 125.
[289] N. Semmoud, *Les stratégies d'appropriation de l'espace à Alger*, p. 75.
[290] Announced at the height of the war on 3 October 1958, the Constantine Plan was De Gaulle's comprehensive economic plan for Algeria, of which housing for Muslims was an integral part, and which was aimed at breaking grassroots support for the FLN.

collection of isolated spaces more or less adapted to the implementation of a given project, rather than a single integrated space in which different economic, social and political actions are articulated.[291] This functionalist approach was tasked to the Bureau Nationale d'Etudes Economiques et Techniques (ECOTEC), and was further concretized by the founding of the city's first postcolonial urban planning authority in 1968, the Comité Permanent d'Etudes de Développement, d'Organisation et d'Aménagement de l'Agglomération d'Alger (COMEDOR), which was to ensure inter-sector and territorial coordination and was composed of representatives of ministries, the governor of Algiers and the directors of ETAU and ECOTEC. Aiming to gear urban development to socialist economic planning, COMEDOR produced the first comprehensive plan in 1975, the Plan d'Orientation Générale de Développement et d'Aménagement de l'Agglomération Algéroise (POG), which continued the idea of the city's westwards expansion along the Place des Martyrs-El Harrach axis.



Cité des Annassers 1, completed in the late 1960s.

Due to the absence of effective planning during the late 1960s, by the time the POG was introduced in the mid-1970s, Algiers was already in the grip of a significant urban crisis, characterised by overcrowding, loss of agricultural lands, congestion of the city centre and

[291] N. Dris, *La ville mouvementée*, p. 116.

rapid population growth. As a major source of public concern, the degradation of the urban environment was regularly taken up in the press throughout the 1970s: from public hygiene campaigns to overstretched public transport and relentless traffic jams, in addition to a growing housing shortage. The prevailing logic for housing construction remained tied to the model espoused by the Constantine Plan: high-density housing social housing blocks as the fastest way to meet demand for new housing and protect the fertile Mitidja.[292] However, the slow rate of construction was predicated in part on the continuing myth that the colonial-era housing stock would be sufficient to cover demand,[293] as well as restrictions on private building.

Despite a slow start, by the mid-1970s, the state was making serious attempts to regulate and organise urban space on a nationwide scale. In 1974, local authorities with more than 7000 residents were required to draft a Plan d'Urbanisme Directeur (PUD). These measures at local level were aimed at homogenising urban space and eliminating regional disparities through the inclusion of all urban centres into a pyramidal hierarchy through the effective and efficient application of a National Equipment Table, which stipulated exactly what kind of healthcare, educational, administrative, commercial and cultural facilities would be needed by different sized settlements at the three levels of territorial organisation: commune, daira and wilaya.[294] Such legislation led to the inception of significant public works projects across Algeria, as the state engaged in massive reinvestment of hydrocarbon revenues, resulting in a sustained period of construction and development that lasted from the late 1960s until the early 1980s, with special programmes aimed at the country's most under-developed regions.[295] However, a standardised approach to urban development that privileged the national over local specificities created its own inequalities and cleavages. In addition, the state-centric nature of planning meant that legislation severely curtailed private construction, thus clashing with the desire of the emerging bourgeoisie to stamp their new social status on urban space through real estate investments, and forced low-income families to join long waiting lists for social housing. State control of the real estate market was thus accompanied by a significant problem of illegal construction on agricultural land, fuelled by a lively black market trade in construction materials siphoned off from state companies. The result – a

[292] N. Semmoud, *Les stratégies d'appropriation de l'espace à Alger*, p. 32.
[293] N. Dris, *La ville mouvementée*, p. 118.
[294] J. C. Brûlé, "De la construction du territoire aux territoires en question", in A. Bendjelid, J. C. Brûlé and J. Fontaine, *Aménageurs et aménagés en Algérie* (Paris, 2004), p. 26-7.
[295] *Ibid*, p. 16. The Special Development Programmes targeted the Oasis (1966), the Aurès (1968), Kabylie and Titteri (1969), Tlemcen and Sétif (1970), and Saida and El-Asnam (1972).

major phenomenon in 1970s Algeria – was the appearance of large peripheral neighbourhoods in the east of the city, consisting of illegally-built, densely packed individual houses within unplanned and under-equipped urban space, on cheap land near industrial areas in Chérarba, Aïn Naadja, Oued Smar, Sidi Moussa, Baraki, Rouiba-Reghaia and Beni Messous.[296]

Given the lack of domestic expertise, another major characteristic of 1970s transformations in urban space was the use of foreign architects for the construction of symbolic modernist projects. Such plans are reflected in the construction during the early-1970s of well-known city landmarks such as the Foire d'Alger (1972), Oscar Niemeyer's Université des Sciences et de la Téchnologie Houari Boumediene (1974) and Cité Olympique (1975), as well as the Soviet-built Aurassi hotel (1975). Beyond Algiers, such projects included Fernand Pouillon's Mediterranean modernist holiday complexes in Zéralda and Sidi Fredj (1967-8), Niemeyer's campus for the Université Mentouri in Constantine (1969), and Ricardo Bofill's socialist agricultural village in Abadla (1973).

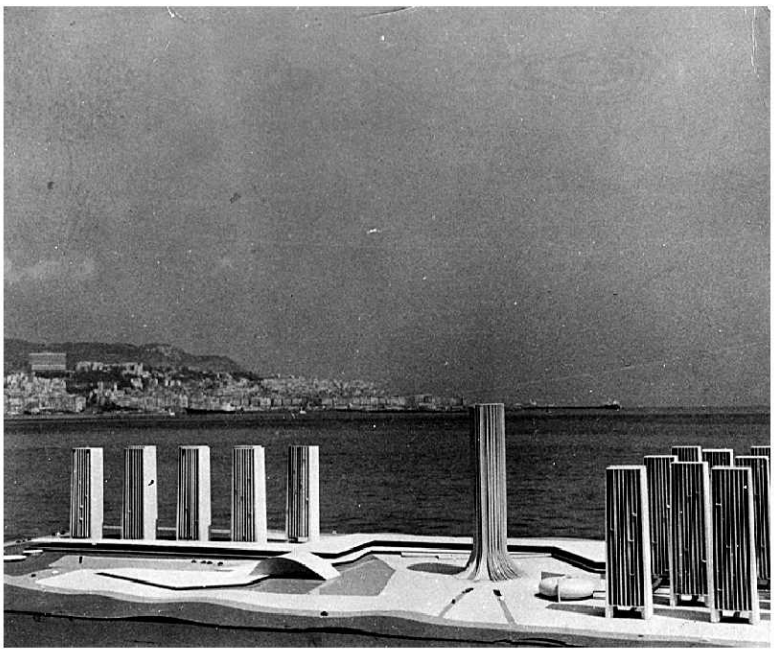


Oscar Niemeyer's Université des Sciences et de la Téchnologie Houari Boumediene (USTHB). Photograph taken in May 2014 by Midou Baba Ali.

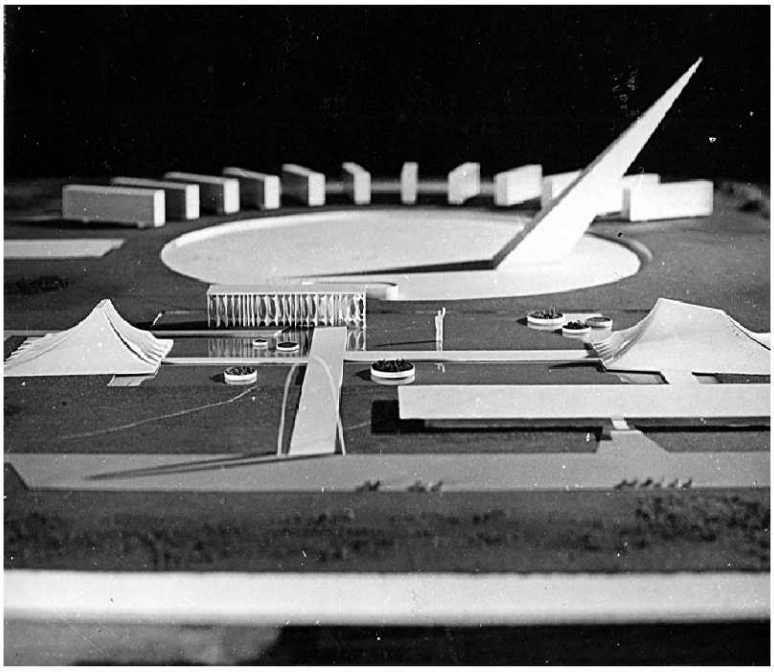
[296] N. Semmoud, *Les stratégies d'appropriation de l'espace à Alger*, p. 35.

In addition to these landmark projects, the mid-1970s saw ambitious plans for the transformation of Algiers into a modern capital that had turned its back on the colonial past, in a *mise en scène* of symbolic space in which taking power was equated to taking the city, in which Niemeyer's designs featured heavily. ECOTEC proposed a secondary governmental hub in the east of the Bay of Algiers, in spatial continuity with the colonial centre, but detached in both meaning and function, based on the need to move away from an increasingly congested centre and produce new political symbolism for a socialist society. However, this idea seemed to echo – though with very different rationale – the colonial decision to move all administrative functions from an increasingly restive Algiers in 1959 to the new town of Rocher Noir (Boumerdès). COMEDOR's proposal for a multi-centre model gained the ascendancy, with a business and administrative centre located outside the colonial city on the coast between Bordj el-Kiffan and Mohammedia. The brand new urban centre, Alger-Est, would have 11,000 new housing blocks and become the capital's new governmental and business hub. Furthermore, a new transport hub was to be located by the airport, as well as a university of science and technology, and a new diplomatic quarter in Dergana.[297] This radical reorganisation of urban space was expressly aimed at breaking with colonial urban structures and reflecting the image of an egalitarian, modern, urban society. The projection of the state into the city and the inscribing of socialist ideology on urban space were underpinned by the modernist notion that reorganising urban space into a rational environment with a radically new aesthetic would modify the social conditions and behaviour of inhabitants. In practical terms, this meant the creation of a new legal framework in 1975-6 to regulate the construction and planning of new urban areas, with a strong focus on housing, and which remains in use today: the Zone d'Habitation Urbaine Nouvelle (ZHUN), planned by the state according to a model dictating the infrastructure and amenities required and executed by state companies.[298] However, only the Université des Sciences et de la Téchnologie Houari Boumediene and part of the diplomatic residences in Dergana were actually built, due to lack of funding and more pressing spending priorities.

[297] *El Moudjahid*, 19/2/76 ; *Algérie Actualité*, 18-24 April 1976.
[298] Although today, work is often undertaken by private contractors. See R. Sidi Boumedine, "Désordres ou *des* ordres urbains", *Naqd* 16 (2002), pp. 27-45.



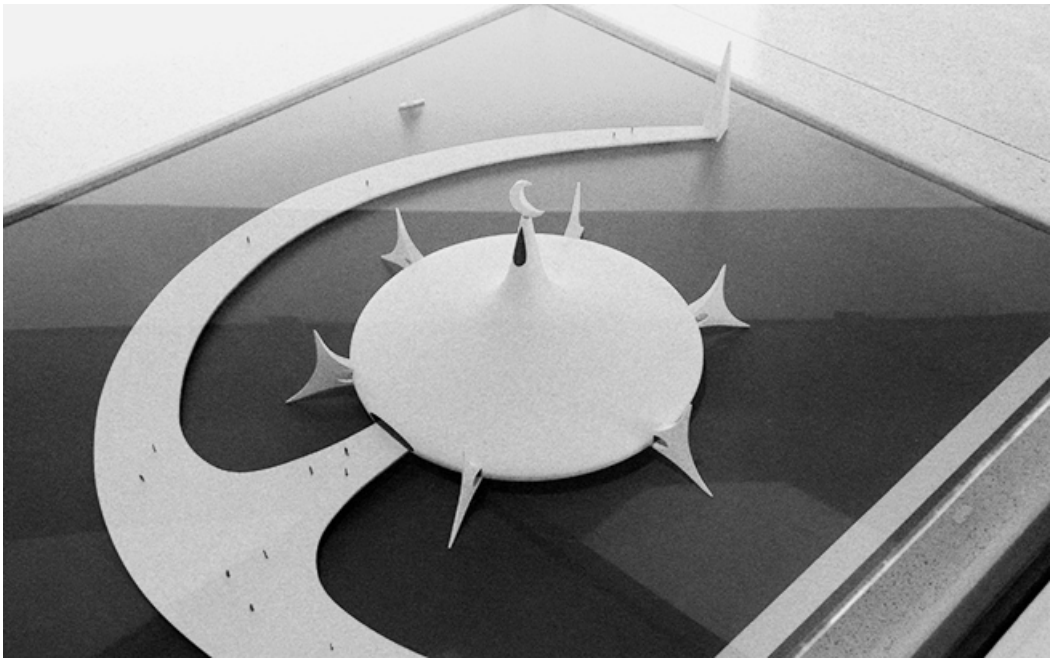
Niemeyer's unrealised Cité des Affaires, Alger-Est, 1968. The original sketch comprised five groups of ten clustered blocks, and a central plaza with a skyscraper seemingly rooted in the ground.[299]



Niemeyer's unrealised Centre Civic, 1968. Located across the highway and inland from the Cité d'Affaires, the

[299] The following three images are courtesy of Jason Oddy, a photographer that has worked on Niemeyer's legacy in Algeria. See http://www.smithsrow.org/images/uploads/Concrete_Spring_Jason_Oddy_Guide.pdf, consulted 24 November 2014.

Centre Civic was made up of ten huge slab blocks arranged on one side of a monolithic sundial structure, and another series of buildings on an artificial lake, connected by floating walkways.



Niemeyer's unrealised model for Boumediene's *mosquée révolutionnaire*, 1968. The futuristic dome shaped structure set the tone for the later Complexe Olympique.

During the late-1970s, the POG was gradually abandoned due to its inability to stem the process of illegal urbanisation of agricultural land in the Mitidja. Under President Chadli, urban planning authorities were reorganised, with the creation of the Centre National d'Etudes et de Réalisation en Urbanisme (CNERU) in 1980 and its new Plan d'Urbanisme Directeur (PUD). Nevertheless, urban planning in the following decades confirmed the state-centric pattern established in the 1970s: successive administrations replacing plans before proper implementation, unequally applied norms, elite objectives taking precedence over social realities in planning decisions, and political interference in urban planning.[300] Administrative coordination was further hampered by the splitting of the Grand Alger region into three wilayas (Algiers, Tipaza and Boumerdès) in the territorial reform of 1984. CNERU's proposals for the city's development continue to influence the city's growth pattern today: a hyper-centre based on the colonial city and secondary centres in Draria, Bab Ezzouar and Aïn Benian, all peripheral settlements which have experienced massive urban expansion since the early-1990s, being swallowed up by the Algiers agglomeration in the process.

[300] N. Dris, *La ville mouvementée*, p. 119.

Chadli-era urban planning was characterised by multiple dynamics that contributed to the increasing wealth gap of the 1980s. On one hand, certain measures were designed to meet the long-thwarted desires of middle-class consumerism: liberalisation of building regulations and the real estate market in 1983 led to the so-called *boom du lotissement* and a dramatic increase in private construction that reinforced the wealthier character of the western districts and reduced neighbourhood cohesion due to greater spatial mobility; new motorways appeared around the city; the Hamma district was regenerated and gentrified in 1987, including the construction of the Sofitel and the new National Library. However, the most important Chadli-era urban project was the construction of the Riad el-Feth shopping and entertainment complex and the famous Martyrs Monument with its highly militarised museum of national history. The new urban space of Riad el-Feth brought together 1980s consumerism and the legitimacy-conferring power of revolutionary imagery within the continuation of the earlier paradigm of transformative modernism using foreign technical expertise.[301] On the other hand, the period saw the clearing of shanty towns and forcible relocation of residents to their wilayas of origin in 1983, after a brutal media campaign blaming rural migrants for the city's increasing urban malaise,[302] as well as new legislation that complicated the allocation of funds for the construction of social housing in the ZHUNs, resulting in widening socio-economic disparities.[303] These dynamics were accompanied by the continued degradation of the colonial urban fabric, which particularly affected lower-middle class districts of the centre, such as Bab el-Oued and Belcourt. Despite being portrayed by the 1966 census as a diverse neighbourhood of the middling sort, by 1983, Bab el-Oued was the most densely populated neighbourhood in Algiers, with 660 people per hectare and an average of 8.5 people per dwelling.[304]

As a result of these changes, a more socio-economically divided city emerged from the 1987 census: a heterogeneous central area, greater concentration of higher-income families in the west, as evidenced by transfers from the city centre to peripheral residential areas like Draria, Chéraga and Dely Ibrahim, and a generally less wealthy east, where progressively poorer and more semi-urban neighbourhoods are located on an north-south axis

[301] S. Gray, "An Explanation of an Irrelevant Monument. Memory of a Memorial", *Ibraaz* (28 November 2012), available at http://www.ibraaz.org/essays/53.
[302] Rural migrants were blamed for all of the city's ills, from crime to shortages of consumer goods to epidemics. However, most of the shanty town residents were from other areas of Algiers and employed. See N. Semmoud, *Les stratégies d'appropriation de l'espace à Alger*, p. 39.
[303] K. Hadjiri and M. Osmani, "The Spatial Development and Urban Transformation of Colonial and Postcolonial Algiers", p. 47; N. Semmoud, *Les stratégies d'appropriation de l'espace à Alger*, p. 26.
[304] CNERU (1983), quoted in N. Dris, *La ville mouvementée*, p. 129.

from Hussein-Dey to Baraki. Within this broad structure, five areas with distinct associated social representations can be delimited:[305]



Groupe Taine and now cleared shanty town, Bab el-Oued, early-1980s.

1. The socially marginalised areas adjacent to the city centre, the Casbah and Oued Koriche, especially in the ghettoised colonial-era HLMs[306] of Diar el-Kef and Climat de France, characterised by overcrowded housing, a majority of employees and unskilled manual workers, high unemployment and poor urban infrastructure and associated with crime, drugs and violence.

2. The heterogeneous central neighbourhoods of Bab el-Oued, Alger-Centre, Sidi M'Hamed, Hamma, and El Madania, with similar proportions of middle and low-level civil servants, employees, and manual workers in an urban environment characterised high levels of urban infrastructure with rapidly deteriorating but still socially desirable colonial-era apartment buildings, some with very high occupation rates.

3. The mostly bourgeois and highly sought-after heights of Algiers, formed by upper Didouche Mourad, El Biar, Bir Mourad Rais, El Mouradia and Hydra, highly urbanised areas

[305] This categorisation is based on that used by N. Semmoud, but has been considerably added to in light of first-hand observations made in Algiers during fieldwork.
[306] The French acronym for *Habitation à loyer modéré* is sometimes used for older social housing in Algeria.

with low density colonial housing stock with significant pockets social housing and a majority of middle managers, liberal professions, and business people.

4. The predominantly middle-class neighbourhoods of Draria, Dely Ibrahim, Kouba, Birkhadem, Bab Ezzouar, Mohammedia, Dar el-Beida and Bordj el-Kiffan, characterised by a mix of colonial villas, ZHUNs and the newly desirable housing model of the ostentatiously decorated, extended family new-build, that are home to middle managers, industrialists, liberal professions and business people.

5. The eastern working-class neighbourhoods of Hussein-Dey, Bachdjarah, El Harrach, Bourouba, Gué de Constantine, Ain Naadja, Baraki and Les Eucalyptus, composed of a poorly integrated and poorly equipped mix of wartime *cités de recasement*, Constantine Plan HLMs, post-1962 HLMs, and illegal individual constructions, with a demographic profile of employees and unskilled labourers.

From the perspective of the more socio-economically divided, class-ridden and consumerist society of the 2000s, the egalitarian claims that inspired the urban projects of the past have become located within new systems of meaning. These were frequently used to criticise the state's perceived withdrawal from goals of social justice in the present. Thus, such spaces continued to represent the hopes once associated with the future and gave off a sense of truncated progressiveness. As sites of memory, despite the authoritarian politics with which they remain closely associated, the stark, sweeping concrete curves of sites such as the USTHB university and the Olympic complex stand as monuments to a past vision of the future, faded relics of a once-held belief in transformative politics that, despite their crumbling concrete, still seem more futuristic than the contemporary shopping malls springing up on the edge of Algiers today. The emblematic spaces of seventies urban planning are now often interpreted by Algerian academics and planners as symbols of a project that ended in disaster, as the unfortunate products of a top-down model that rode roughshod over social realities.[307] This is particularly true of the period's housing, criticised as a form of violence against residents excluded from the design process – who reacted by re-appropriating urban space in diverse ways: rearranging the standardised interiors of HLMs or annexing communal space. The critique of the uniformity and standardisation that characterises many of the period's HLMs is also present in the jarringly repetitive, perspective-dominated paintings of Driss Oudahi.

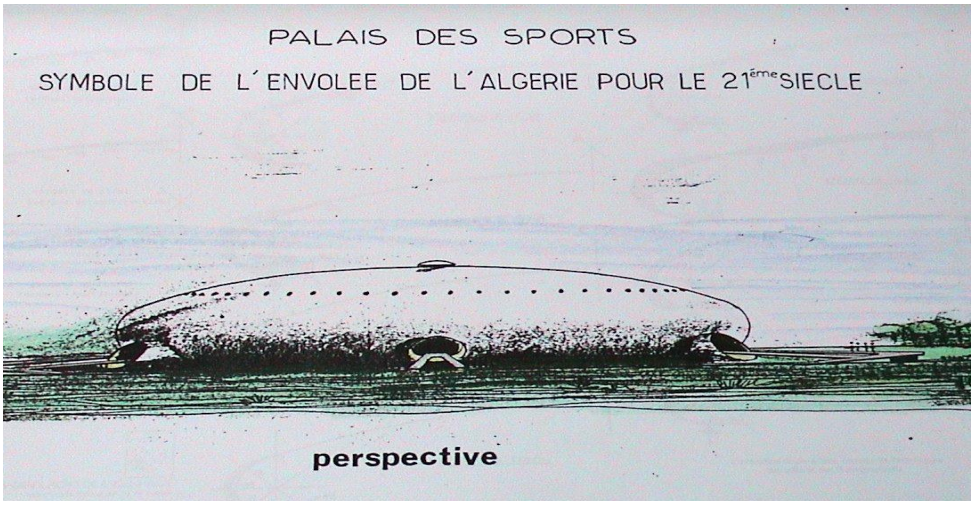
[307] See N. Semmoud, *Les stratégies d'appropriation de l'espace à Alger*; and N. Driss, *La ville mouvementée*.

However, the view from Bab el-Oued of such landmark projects in no way mirrored the highly generalised reappraisals of modernist architecture and planning that have become orthodoxy in European societies, despite the similarities between Algerian and European experiences of emerging post-war concretopias[308] in the sixties based on a shared model of modernist industrialisation that morphed into the monstrous dystopias of the eighties. Despite evident signs of decay and mismanagement, Algeria's symbols of socialist modernity – the flying saucer-like dome of the Olympic complex, the large-scale housing projects and industrial complexes – have not suffered the semantic shift from landscapes of the future to mistaken fantasies of the past, unlike the suspended concrete walkways and modernist shopping arcades of contemporaneous European social housing projects, many of which are now earmarked for demolition. With socialism in Europe now universally cast at worst as statist dystopia, at best as embarrassing interregnum, it has become hard to imagine that people not only once welcomed modernism, but understood it as part of a collective project.[309] While people in Bab el-Oued were highly critical of the state's absence in the maintenance of social housing today, the concept of social housing was universally subscribed to – even expected – as part of what was regarded as the necessary distribution of collectively-owned national wealth. Projects associated with socialist modernism in Algeria remained as symbols of national achievement and pride, strongly linked in memory to a period of becoming that was remembered for its dynamism, seriousness and assiduity that was often expressed in Algerian Arabic through the term *serieu* (from the French *sérieux*). Today's slowly decaying remains of past futures were therefore powerfully evocative of the political and social energies that once mobilised significant popular hopes for a brighter tomorrow and served as uncomfortable spatial markers of temporal dislocation that threw the current political stagnation of the Algerian state into sharp relief. As such, memories of past futures reflected in urban space translated the failure of the modernist dreams of dignity, development and equality espoused by Algerian nationalism at independence. However, they also exposed the state's present inability to articulate a transformative politics that could produce a credible trajectory into the future. This sense of estrangement from the future was very much visible to people in their urban surroundings, as well as in the tribulations of everyday life in the present.

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[308] The word is borrowed from J. Grindrod, *Concretopia. A Journey around the Rebuilding of Postwar Britain* (London, 2013)

[309] O. Hatherley, *Militant Modernism* (Winchester, 2008), p. 9.



"The Palace of Sports. Symbol of Algeria's take-off for the 21st century." Sketch for Niemeyer's Complexe Olympique, constructed by Algiers-based engineering firm Aguerrabi (1972-4).[310]

From the perspective of Bab el-Oued then, the modernist projects of postcolonial nationalism in Algeria – especially the large industrial complexes – were still recognisable as resolutely forward-looking symbols of progress, remnants of a time when Algerian society was embracing an exciting new modernism with confidence, especially in comparison to the projects that characterised the subsequent urban planning in the following two decades.

"Boumediene built the steelworks at El Hadjar, Chadli built the Martyrs Monument, and Boutef is building the Great Mosque. When you see it like that, there's only one project that's turned towards the future. The other two are about politicians using the past." (Selim, 47).

However, it should be remembered that while the two major projects associated with Chadli era – Constantine's Emir Abdelkader Mosque and the Martyrs Monument in Algiers – that sought to instrumentalise memory to bolster ailing political legitimacy and shore up Islamic credentials were indicative of the absence of a clearly defined project for the future that could federate the nation's energies, these projects were originally the brainchildren of the Boumediene era. Nevertheless, representations such as that above remained closely tied to positive evaluations of the state's vision and political will during the seventies, despite its relatively late intervention in urban space and the problems inherent in the model as undertaken at the time. The sense of *serieu* that pervaded representations of 1970s public management translates a broadly held perception that "Algeria's prosperous years were those of social levelling initiated by the state, which equated spatial proximity with social

[310] See http://www.agguerabi.com/axel-engineering-agguerabi-salle-virtuelle-cite-olympique-alger.html, consulted 9 May 2014.

equality".[311] Thus, like the manufactured goods of the period, the urban projects conceived during the 1970s were seen as being well-conceived and durable, especially by the older generation, and were frequently contrasted to depictions of current corruption or non-application of regulations, and the emasculating presence of Chinese and Turkish construction conglomerates that have undertaken large-scale infrastructure projects, such as the East-West motorway, which Algeria no longer seems to have the capacity to undertake.

"Back then, there was a state construction company, the DNC. If it still existed, it could do better than the Chinese. The state built the university in Bab Ezzouar, the housing in Bachdjarrah and Sidi Moussa. It was a super-efficient company with real technical expertise that employed lots of people. Their employees were even given flats. Now it's all changed, there's a total imbalance." (Farid, 62).

"People didn't used to build with this anarchy. It was the state that built everything. Now it doesn't matter; even if you don't have the right papers, you just have to grease someone's palm" (Said, 60).

Such representations of seriousness and 'going by the book', of course forget the important phenomenon of illegal construction that was such a major concern during the 1970s, and much else. Though not necessarily inaccurate in themselves, these representations produced omissions that clearly marked them as oriented towards criticisms of the present, rather than balanced rememberings of the past as experienced at the time.

However, as suggested above, there is another side to 1970s urban planning in Algiers – a side more evident when looking at housing. In addition to the landmark projects already mentioned, the construction of large social housing estates, such as Bachdjarrah (1970-2), located east of the city centre between Kouba and El Harrach, translated the emergence of increased public debate about the housing shortage throughout the early 1970s. In contrast to their colonial-era forerunners, the apartments of post-independence HLMs were more generously proportioned and better equipped, and took into consideration cultural factors, with hallways in dog's leg formation and an interior spatial separation into reception areas and more private family rooms. However, HLMs remained subject to an exclusively quantitative logic based on speed of construction, characterised by industrialised building methods, imported technology and design, as well as standardisation throughout the country, despite Algeria's vast climatic diversity. The result, as can still be seen in Bachdjarrah, is endless serried rows of long parallel blocks, built using poor construction materials resulting in premature degradation. By the late 1970s, Bachdjarrah was already suffering from a range of social problems related to lack of investment: reduced social cohesion, lack of amenities or

[311] N. Dris, *La ville mouvementée*, p. 191.

street lighting, poor transport links and bare spaces between blocks that became mud baths during rains.[312] Along with Bab el-Oued's Cité des Carrières (1960), which offers significantly worse living conditions, Bachdjarrah now has a dubious reputation as one of the city's toughest neighbourhoods.

In contrast, many of the housing estates built during the late-1960s and 1970s continue to enjoy a positive reputation as desirable places to live. Many of these estates were built for workers of specific state companies, such as the Cité SONELGAZ[313] in Ben Aknoun, a self-contained community with 23 point blocks and numerous amenities. Such estates, firmly separated from HLMs in the city's social and spatial imagination, inhabited by lifelong state employees and their families, engendered a strong community spirit from the outset and have remained respectable middle-class areas that continue to benefit from the positive image of public sector work, due to the stability that comes with being allocated a *logement de fonction*. The design and layout of these estates, especially those built for cadres and managers, such as COPEMAD in Kouba, or Les Sources in Bir Mourad Rais, clearly demonstrate the will to create a more aesthetically pleasing and less repetitive space, with amenities such as green spaces and car parking, larger room sizes and better quality materials. The very different logics that lay behind the housing estates in Bachdjarrah and Les Sources reveals a two-tier housing system that reflected new forms of social stratification and inequalities based on access to bountiful state resources, especially through public sector employment, that emerged from the socialist system. Furthermore, such housing complexes also had their own internal hierarchies, with more desirable apartments being assigned to higher level state employees. The fact that such housing estates continue to maintain a high level of social desirability is testament to the positive evaluations attached to modernist urbanity. Equally though, the difference in social values attached to spaces such as Les Sources and Bachdjarrah testifies to the enduring memory of the inequalities produced by socialist planning in Algeria.

[312] *El Moudjahid*, 7-8 March 1976.
[313] Société nationale de l'électricité et du gaz.



Image of the degraded state of the then relatively new Cité des Annassers, published in *El Moudjahid* 29 January 1974.

Bab el-Oued after 1962: Resettling an Empty Neighbourhood

As independence loomed and the violence of the ultra-right wing OAS began to die down after the military blockade of the neighbourhood in March 1962, the European – predominantly Spanish and Italian in origin – inhabitants of Bab el-Oued began to leave for France, and what had been one of Algiers' liveliest neighbourhoods took on a surreal calm. Today's older residents describe a gradual occupation of the neighbourhood by previous inhabitants of the Muslim areas to the south of Bab el-Oued: the Casbah, Climat de France and Fontaine Fraiche. Some apartments were sold by departing Europeans, while others were vandalised and yet others were simply occupied by those who 'came down' from the higher ground to the south.

"I opened my eyes for the first time in Bab el-Oued. My parents were living in Climat de France and everyone came down after independence to live in Bab el-Oued. My father bought this apartment from a French woman." (Safia, 52).

"In summer 1962 my wife was pregnant. I was a bit of a tearaway at the time, usually in trouble with the police. I found an empty pharmacy in building D of Les Eucalyptus, cleared it out and we moved in. The authorities came five times to try and get me to leave, but I wouldn't budge. In the end they saw we needed the place, so they said we could have six months. Three months after my wife gave birth, we left. I found a job in the HLMs and was given a flat by the government." (Imed, 71).

One of the overwhelming representations of this process was that of an empty neighbourhood with an eerie calm. This sense of emptiness was universally represented as having endured at least until the mid-1960s.

"After independence it was empty. I was born in 1958, and even my first memories from 1967-8, Algiers was empty. The trolley buses were empty, there just weren't enough people!" (Redouane, 56).

"We arrived in Bab el-Oued from Médéa in summer 1962. Down by the seafront, it was practically empty, but no one really wanted to live there. Our Mum always told us to stay away from that part of the neighbourhood. There was hardly any traffic. Mohamed Saadaoui street was so empty we played football on it most days when we were young. But around Lelièvre especially, people came from the Casbah." (Mohamed, 64).

"It was empty! You could buy an apartment for almost nothing. There were whole buildings that were empty because people preferred to live together. Either you just took over an apartment, or you bought it from an Algerian who had the keys, or there were some French people still around and you could give them a bit of money and you got everything. After that you just had to go to the CIA [*Compagnie Immobilière Algérienne*] and legalise it all. In 1960 we moved into the new flats in Carrières Jaubert [Diar el-Kef], and after independence we took over a flat in the centre of Bab el-Oued, by the market. There was so much choice! Things didn't get really crowded until the mid-1970s, from then there were 2 or 3 families in the same apartment, after that they started building on the roofs." (Said, 60).

Memories of calm and emptiness in the years immediately following independence challenge stereotypes of a tidal wave of occupations occurring in July 1962. As seen in Mohamed's account above, unoccupied parts of the neighbourhood were regarded with suspicion by new inhabitants: lingering fears of OAS violence were conflated with the few *pieds noirs* that had remained after independence, and sparsely populated space had no neighbourhood cohesion that would ensure safety and respect of social norms, resulting in large parts of the neighbourhood being regarded as off limits and an association between empty space and danger.

"When we came down from Fontaine Fraîche, Bab el-Oued was divided into two parts. The people from the Casbah settled in the high part of Bab el-Oued or around the market and Lelièvre, but down by Rmila, the whole part between Trois Horloges, the police station and the sea… there was nobody down there. We came down to Maxime Noiré, where it was safer. But it was scary down near the sea, just silence, empty buildings and no lights at night. People said the OAS had booby trapped the apartments, so there was hardly anyone there." (Said, 60).

Residential areas surrounding Bab el-Oued, such as Notre Dame underwent a similar process, though those in these neighbourhoods viewed the whole of Bab el-Oued with suspicion.

"There were still Pieds-noirs in Bab el-Oued and Notre Dame. They were born here, so it's normal! Most of those that stayed after independence left after the putsch in 1965. Before 1962, the OAS was killing Arabs on

sight, so after independence people still had fear in their hearts and they didn't want to go down to Bab el-Oued. The neighbourhood didn't really get full until the late 1960s to early 1970s. When the French left in 1962, the empty villas were occupied by people from Notre Dame. They made sure people from outside the neighbourhood were kept out. We bought our villa from Monsieur Vassal in 1960, because he decided to leave. So many people bought villas at ridiculous prices." (Noureddine, 63).

Such memories show that colonial urban space was not appropriated rapidly with an assertive confidence that came with independence, in which taking the city mirrored taking power; but was part of a faltering process spanning the years both before and after independence characterised by adaptation to new surroundings and circumstances, all the while haunted by memories of the war and enduring feelings of insecurity. A lively trade in re-sales quickly emerged, with men holding whole buildings and ensuring that apartments were occupied by family members and acquaintances from their original neighbourhoods. The need to group together in new and uncertain surroundings meant that pre-existing solidarities from old neighbourhoods, based on traditional family ties or the new solidarities engendered by the war, were reproduced in the new environment of Bab el-Oued. Such forms of solidarity endured throughout the 1970s, giving Bab el-Oued a strong sense of social cohesion.

"For example, you'd get a flat from someone you used to know in the Casbah. If someone found an empty building, they'd bring people down from the Casbah." (Farid, 62).

"After independence my father came to Bab el-Oued; he was a *moudjahid* in the Casbah. He took over this building in Lelièvre and gave out the apartments to people he knew, so his friends from the Casbah all came down here. Even later, when I was growing up in the early-80s, we were like a family, we all knew each other. We'd go and play with the other kids in the building and they'd come over to our place. At meal times, we'd get given food in whatever apartment we landed in." (Anis, 37).

"Every street was a neighbourhood. We used to play football matches against other streets. But our closest friends were usually from the same street. We didn't have television back then; just football and the beach." (Mohamed, 64).

Delimiting Public Space in Bab el-Oued

Such depictions of neighbourhood cohesion during the nation-building period require an analysis of the social meanings attributed to conceptions of space. Definitions of public space must necessarily go beyond a definition in which public space is cast simply as the residue of private space.[314] Such an understanding sets up a binary in which space must either be private or public, and disallows nuances between different spaces to which people have varying possibilities of access and in which different codes of behaviour apply. Rather than a clear-cut public/private dichotomy based on concepts of *dākhel* (inside) and *berra* (outside), Algiers has several different 'outsides' articulated around concentric spaces on the scale between the space governed by the protection of family ties and the relative anonymity of public space: from those accessible to all, to those controlled by residents. Mobility and morality are thus more useful tools for grasping such delimitations than crude binaries. Broadly speaking, however, if *chez-soi* is a space of sedentariness and protection of honour, the *zanqa* (street) is a sphere of mobility, mixing and otherness in which the norms of honour cannot be guaranteed. Gender is of key importance here, since in traditional society the moral uncertainties born of anonymity mean that public space is one which women must traverse; in the *zanqa* then, women are mobile and only men can be stationary.[315]

Between the home and the relative anonymity of the boulevards stands the semi-private space of the *ḥouma*. Understood as a neighbourhood in its most reduced sense, *ḥouma* represents a territory with blurred edges that can be as small as a street or a few blocks, in which social relationships are based on "conviviality, solidarity and mutual-aid",[316] and is opposed to spaces inhabited by 'others'. The *ḥouma* is thus associated with sameness, becoming the ideal space in which the norms of the enlarged family and traditional codes of morality are applied. If the *ḥouma* formed a space of preservation of group integrity, cohesion and protection from the 'other' of the colonial city, such solidarities have been extended into the post-colonial period in Bab el-Oued, due to the reproduction of pre-existing solidarities from the Casbah or elsewhere. Now a hallmark par excellence of spatial identification in working class neighbourhoods of Algiers, increased mobility of settlement since the 1980s has eroded traditional solidarities of the *ḥouma* in other urban areas, and the word has

[314] F. Navez-Bouchanine, "Public Space in Moroccan Cities", in *Colonial Modern. Aesthetics of the Past, Rebelions for the Future* (London, 2010).
[315] D. Abrous, *L'Honneur et le travail des femmes en Algérie* (Paris, 1989).
[316] N. Dris, *La ville mouvementée*, p. 187.

practically fallen out of use in wealthier neighbourhoods.[317] Thus, in working class neighbourhoods like Bab el-Oued, the more traditional sense of *ḥouma* based on affective ties and traditional morality is accompanied by a broader sense of *ḥouma* in the form of a strong neighbourhood identity that is an important signifier for young people, visible in phrases like *Bab el-Oued chouhadā*, used to remember the martyrs of October 1988, and in identification with football teams.



Central Bab el-Oued, image taken 5/11/14.

Belonging to a *ḥouma* in working-class contexts thus implies not only a spatial attachment, but also has an experiential dimension based on a common perception of undergoing the same hardships of daily life in which living standards play a key role, as well as a temporal dimension rooted in the legitimacy conferred by time lived in the neighbourhood. Here, identification is by opposition: the 'us' of the *wlēd ḥouma* (sons of the neighbourhood) or *les anciens* (long-standing residents) as people who have grown up together, stands in contrast to the 'them' of new arrivals and unknown individuals traversing the space of the *ḥouma*. As a space of familiarity, it is within the *ḥouma* that traditional codes

[317] *Ibid*, p. 193.

of honour defined by *ḥorma* (respect for social boundaries, especially those between men and women), *nīf* (honour), and *redjla* (masculinity) can be guaranteed. Such norms require specific modes of behaviour: respecting adults and old people, lowering the eyes when a woman passes, helping people in difficulty. As such, the *ḥouma* functions as an enlarged family unit in which there is severe control over the individual, who is at once protected and controlled. The presence of outsiders in the *ḥouma* is regarded as suspicious, unless there is a good reason for being there, or some sort of acceptance of their presence.[318] In the film *Omar Gatlato* (1976), the *wlēd ḥouma* are alerted to the presence of a stranger, who is regarded as up to no good and promptly chased off. Today, the seafront benches and breakwater at Kettani are sometimes used as a meeting place for young lovers from neighbourhoods other than Bab el-Oued seeking anonymity. Teenagers from the adjacent *ḥouma* of Rochambeau reinforce their solidarity and the honour of their *ḥouma* by throwing stones at the couples and chasing them off. Furthermore, as a space in which residents feel at home, the *ḥouma* confers certain rights of occupation of space not tolerated, or seen as transgressions, in more anonymous public space: stopping one's car and blocking traffic to unload or talk to acquaintances, playing football in the street, using pavements to sell merchandise or setting up chairs on pavements to sit and chat, or watch the world go by.

Public space proper begins on larger streets or boulevards governed by other modes of behaviour: shopping, gender mixing, wandering. In contrast to the familiar space of the *ḥouma*, the city centre represents the anonymity of public space in the extreme. The *khālouṭa* (unregulated intermingling) of unknown individuals in the centre hampers the control exerted by the social codes of the *ḥouma*, and the risk of violations of the moral order is constant. The centre thus becomes a space where transgression of norms – harassing passing women, pick-pocketing, swearing or insulting – becomes possible. However, the anonymity of the centre also provides space for the co-existence of groups with different values, as well as for meetings between men and women away from the prying eyes of the *ḥouma*. Despite general awareness of their existence, contraventions of dominant norms can exist in the centre, provided they are subtle enough for the majority to un-see. Thus, bars serving alcohol must have neutral facades and closed doors, while those engaging in gay cruising must pretend to wait for buses. From the perspective of the *ḥouma* then, the city centre is invested at once with a sense of freedom and moral undesirability.

[318] *Ibid*, p. 189. This is why being associated in the wider community with established spaces of socialisation, such as the gym and the association were key to my acceptance in the neighbourhood.

Whereas representations of the city centre in the 1970s highlighted a sense of prestige centred on the latest fashions and smart restaurants that marked it as a very separate space from the much more traditional Bab el-Oued, people today complained of the degradation of the centre's urban fabric, portraying it alternately as a place of danger or unwanted mixing amid the *ghāchī* (tumultuous crowd), that at once attracts and repels. The emergence of new, peripheral spaces in which to shop and wander, such as the new shopping mall at Bab Ezzouar or the Ardis hypermarket and its restaurants in Mohammadia, has contributed to reducing the prestige of the centre. In contrast to the more dubious nature of the centre, these new spaces are seen as *sécurisés*; as being both physically and morally safe for families. In this sense, the private security guards and car-based logic of such peripheral public spaces guarantee the absence of the poor young males looked down upon by the more aspirational classes emerging from the relatively recent advent of a consumer society since the 2000s.

Anonymous public space outside the *ḥouma* was often referred to as *tā3 l beylik* (belonging to the Beylik), a term that harks back to the Ottoman era and refers to everything perceived as belonging to the state, understood here as an exogenous, repressive stranger. This usage rests on a conceptual division opposing spaces belonging to the central power to those seen as the preserve of a particular community. That such a term is still used today reflects a deep sense of lack of ownership not only over the postcolonial political system, but estrangement from what might be thought of as a string of different 'beyliks' (Turkish, colonial, postcolonial) with which the community has had little relationship other than those dictated by mutual benefit and advantage. When asking about the contradiction between constant littering and continual complaints about the neighbourhood's rubbish problem, responses varied from a dismissive '*tā3 l beylik*', to a resigned '*l blēd jēyya hēgda*' (the country's already like that [i.e. dirty]). This relationship was evident in portrayals of spaces directly associated with the state, such as government buildings, which are often attacked during riots, as generating feelings of alienation, exclusion and even anxiety. By no means, however, did this signify an absence of national identity, which was often regarded as being at its strongest in the authentic space of the *ḥouma*.

"I swear [to God], when I go to the *wilaya*, to the *mairie*, I don't feel Algerian. I feel Algerian in my neighbourhood, with my brother, my sister, *wlēd ḥoumti*, in the stadium, at the beach, when I'm watching an old film. In all those places that belong to the state, I don't feel Algerian, because it's not the Algeria I know or my parents knew. They don't represent us." (Yacine, 20).

As such, public space in Bab el-Oued became an arena in which tensions in the state-society relationship were performed, through spatial practices such as the privatisation or appropriation of public space or littering. Though obviously pre-dating the nation-building period, this relationship to public space was compounded by the populist politics of the 1970s, which associated the public with social levelling and therefore had the effect of diluting individual responsibilities within utopian slogans of the masses and social equality.[319] Here, because state property belongs to no one in particular apart from to the abstract notion of "the people", public spaces and resources become fair game for individual appropriation.

"We used to go camping in Staoueli, and we'd go into the fields, because it wasn't all built up then, and we'd take tomatoes, courgettes and fruit to eat. It was a self-managed farm with a *village socialiste*, so it belonged to the State, it has to be said. It's not as if we were stealing from people! You'd find a guy selling off peppers from the farm by the road, at really cheap prices." (Said, 60).

However, traditional divisions of public and private space articulating the opposition between state /non-ownership and community/ownership coexisted uncomfortably with internalised civic norms of public hygiene and respect for public space imposed by the state since the clean-up campaigns of the early-1970s, and concomitant attitudes against littering and 'anti-social' uses of public space. The policies of the 1970s are therefore responsible for both reinforcing alienation from public space, through authoritarianism and populism, and eroding the divisions between semi-private and public space through the internalisation of continual exhortations to become more civically minded. A common example of the resulting tensions over uses of public space in both the *ḥouma* and more anonymous public space was the ubiquitous phenomenon of *parkingeurs*, men with some sort of link to the neighbourhood who appropriated a slice of urban space as their own in order to charge residents to park their cars on the street. Though many residents displayed understanding due to harsh economic circumstances and high youth unemployment, others railed against the use of public space for personal gain. Refusal to pay can lead to conflicts, reprisals and even the intervention of the police.[320] Older residents linked the emergence of this phenomenon to the late-1980s and the breakdown of socialist era employment certainties in the public sector. Another example of this kind of informal employment is *trabendo* (street hawking of black market goods), a phenomenon that certainly pre-dated the Chadli era and had its roots in the endemic shortages

[319] *Ibid*, p. 185.
[320] See "Profession: Parkingeur", in *La Presse*, 28/ May 2007, at http://www.presse-dz.com/revue-de-presse/profession-parkingeur, consulted 15 March 2014.

of consumer goods within the socialist economy, but was practiced on a much smaller scale and focused on family networks. Such informal forms of employment flourished with the privatisation, easing of travel restrictions and increased unemployment that marked the 1980s. In contrast, during the 1960s and 1970s however, parking control was exercised in certain areas of Bab el-Oued by war-wounded or unemployed *moudjahids* wearing authorisation badges issued by the APC, and was remembered as having being subject to the same regulation and order that characterised seventies urban management. The increase in personal appropriation of public space is visible in the conversion of the space adjacent to the neighbourhood's ex-Souk el-Fellah, symbol of seventies social levelling par excellence, into a car park taken over by a drug addict known for his aggression towards non-paying motorists, with residents displaying outrage at the inaction of the also adjacent APC.



'Don't litter, you ass!'. Grafitti in Rue Ahmed Hassena, central Bab el-Oued. Image taken 8/11/12.

Norms of public hygiene were more strictly applied in the semi-private space of the *ḥouma* than in the more anonymous public space perceived to be the responsibility of the state. The image below shows the focal point of a *ḥouma* on Rue Montaigne: a small green space and mural revealing a somewhat Eurocentric ideal of urban space, funded and implemented by residents tired of waiting for local authorities to intervene on the site of a

demolished cinema. As well as the slogan on the wall visible in the image below, the rubbish containers sported notices reminding residents in Arabic and French to put their bins out only after 7 pm. The underlying sense here is of *ḥouma* pride, of individuals' responsibilities to respect public hygiene within their own community, something which cannot be guaranteed by non-members. Just around the corner, in an adjacent *ḥouma*, community initiatives were viewed as being threatened by the existence of outsiders passing through.

"In the *ḥouma*, we clean things up regularly. Especially in summer, when there's no rain. Once every few weeks, people come out with hoses and brushes and clean everything up. It all gets worse after a week, because even if the people from the neighbourhood are careful not to litter, there are people passing through who aren't from the *ḥouma*, and they don't care. They wouldn't like it if someone did it where they live, but if it's someone else's neighbourhood, they don't give a damn." (Walid, 24).

However, despite greater feelings of community ownership of the space of the *ḥouma*, residents still expected the authorities to perform their declared duties. Underlying these actions is therefore sense that local authorities cannot be relied upon to provide basic services. As displayed by a large piece of graffiti beside An-Nasr mosque, people asked themselves: 'Wīn al-baladiyya / Où est l'APC?' (Where is the council?).



"A clean neighbourhood means safety for you and your children". Image taken 21 December 2012.

Reimagining Public Space

By far the most common representations of Bab el-Oued's urban space in the 1970s were centred on order and hygiene. The neighbourhood was unanimously remembered, even by those not old enough to have experienced the period themselves, as being *nqiya* (clean) and *mseggma* (tidy) and *mnaḍḍema* (organised).

"It was a lot cleaner, more organised. Things in the buildings were more organised, there were cleaning ladies that mopped the stairs, and residents shared the maintenance costs. There weren't as many people, and not as many family members in each apartment" (Inès, 26).

"It was more organised. For example, the market wasn't so chaotic. It's simple things, things that make life complicated, that have changed. Now there's not much street lighting, things are just more run down." (Kamel, 27).

"You don't even need to ask what it was like. You can see it on the photos. There's no comparison. No wonder my parents never wanted to emigrate to Europe! It was clean, nothing hanging off the balconies, not as many people. It made you want to go out. Now it's so horrible out there, there's no point in going out. You make up all kinds of excuses to stay in: the effort, the heat, people everywhere." (Hichem, 19).

Depictions of cleanliness were often referred to in terms of 'proper' management of urban infrastructure by the authorities, in representations that both link back to portrayals of a moral politics and were clearly intended to highlight the seeming lack of interest of today's local authorities in maintaining the neighbourhood in a satisfactory state. The resulting sense of past-present disjuncture often produced an alienation from today's urban fabric, especially amongst older residents who frequently pointed out that they no longer recognised their neighbourhood.

"Before every Ramadan the APC would send out notices for residents to organise the repainting of their buildings, so the neighbourhood would look nice. The authorities did everything they could to improve the image of the *commune* before Ramadan. They don't do that anymore. I feel like this is no longer my neighbourhood. I can't even go down to the market anymore. It's hard. It's so hard." (Imed, 71).

"Every night, they'd pass through the streets with a truck and hose the streets and pavements down with sea water. In the morning, it was all clean again and you could smell the sea everywhere. They stopped doing it during the 80s, because people complained about their cars rusting." (Redouane, 56).

The strong sense of order that comes across in these representations was often expressly related to the existence of a strong state that would sanction any anti-social behaviour and was strict about applying rules. This was often seen as going hand in hand with authoritarian

politics, and was contrasted to a state of affairs today defined by the concept of *khorṭi* (randomness, anything goes) and a pervading notion of the state's absence.

"There's no will these days. Back then it was very strict. You couldn't even hang your clothes out to dry on the balcony before 8 pm, otherwise you'd be fined. Now it's less severe, and the police have more important things to think about anyway." (Kamel, 27).

"Bab el-Oued was always clean. Really, really beautiful. At 1 pm sharp, all the tables in the market were put away, not like today where they commandeer the street all day long." (Abdelatif, 60).

"It was much better organised than now. I'd like it if they applied the laws now like they did back then." (Saliha, 27).

"The taxis were all the same colour, yellow and green. Each city had a different colour. Now you can't tell a taxi from a normal car. Taxi drivers wore a uniform – grey shirt, tie and cap. Not anymore. Can you imagine? It was the single party, they decided everything." (Kader, 18).

As well as the strict application of norms, there was also a strong sense that people were either more self-reliant and involved in the upkeep of their neighbourhood, or that residents in the 1970s were more *mrebbiyin* (well brought-up, polite), and by implication were therefore civically minded and took better care of their surroundings. Such changes are the result of the absence of the state, social fragmentation, and the more individualistic consumer society that has emerged from the conflict of the 1990s.

"They say the neighbourhood was cleaner. Every two or three months, people would group together and clean their street, rather than wait for the authorities to come and do it. If you want to do something, you've got to do it yourself. There's an old photo of our building with loads of flowers out on the balconies, which is something you never see now. Now, some of the buildings don't even have windows. It was cleaner before. Of course it was!" (Nadir, 33).

"You could see that people cared about their environment, that's why it was better maintained than now. It's people's own fault – they just don't look after their neighbourhood. No one cares. It's like a kind of selfishness, everyone just thinks of themselves." (Youcef, 27).

Another frequently mentioned theme in relation to memories of changes in the urban fabric was the disappearance of green spaces, accompanied by a strong perception of the current impossiblity of escaping increased congestion and overcrowding in the city. Representations of a less crowded city in the 1970s were often talked of in terms of spaciousness and calm, in contrast to today's congested and overcrowded urban space, from which people frequently said they felt they could not escape.

"There's hardly any people. Now it's so overcrowded, it feels like there's nowhere to go." (Narimene, 29).

"There are more cars; before there were much less. It all seemed more spacious, now there's roadworks everywhere, cars, traffic, crowds… there's nowhere to go." (Mourad, 45).

Those parks which still exist, such as Jardin Marengo in Bab el-Oued, are now the preserve of unemployed youth, drug dealers and muggers, causing them to be perceived as no-go areas that are unsuitable for respectable families or lone women. Other once green areas, such as the top end of the swathe of park that cuts through the neighbourhood perpendicular to the sea at Boulevard Abderrahmane Taleb, have been given names - *jnīna ferṭāṣa* (bald park) - that reflect past memories of a greener city. During the photo elicitation activity, interviewees noticed the contrast with today's city, since many of the images from the 1970s foregrounded green spaces that no longer exist, such as the park on the Front de Mer by the Hotel Safir, around the Grande Poste, or beside the Grand Mosque next to Place des Martyrs. Such remarks often included references to the state's active destruction of spaces that made the city a better place to live, actions perceived as a form of violence against the city, against beauty and especially against its inhabitants.

"Another green space they've eliminated. I don't know why… Shit! The state is a bunch of vandals. They've ruined everything ! I really don't know what to say. This could be such as beautiful country…" (Abdelatif, 60).

"Maybe we Algerians are the enemies of green. Wow, look at all those flowers. Now it's all concrete, delinquents, tramps, pigeons and the smell of piss!" (Smail, 32).

"Look at it! Everything's so organised… there's grass! It's as if Algerians are enraged against anything green, against anything that's beautiful. Three months ago, they cut a tree down here; it's like, whenever they see something pretty, they have to get rid of it, break it. It's amazing, all this green. Now, as soon as you arrive in Place des Martyrs, you feel hot: the crowds, the buses, the shouting, the traffic." (Hichem, 19).



Place des Martyrs, early-1970s. This park was replaced by a multi-story car park in the mid-1980s. Postcard, SNED.

Such representations were often accompanied by the extremely frequently employed phrase *c'est voulu* (it's deliberate), used to express the idea that the current state of malaise caused by the city's many problems – from lack of opportunity and jobs, to the failure to sufficiently redistribute wealth, to the lack of urban management – were actively encouraged by the country's elite to maintain poverty and protect their own interests, articulating an unbridgeable divide between 'us' and 'them'. On viewing an image of the open air swimming pools on the seafront at Kettani, one young man reproduced this overwhelmingly common discourse:

"Go and see it now; it's a fucking mess. See? That means it's deliberate! Other countries progress, we go backwards. They told me that every night they'd wash the streets with water. Every night! They could easily do that now, but they're busy scoffing all our money. They could give jobs to hundreds of young people by doing that. You see? I'm telling you, *c'est voulu*!" (Hocine, 30).

Along with depictions of green space, there were frequent mentions of the colours of Algiers during the 1970s that went beyond stereotypical portrayals of *Alger la Blanche* to take in the colours associated with the urban fabric of the time (blue, green, yellow), which were contrasted to a colourless present.

"There's no more green now, they just continue to remove it. The zebra crossings were yellow back then, the yellow and green taxis, the blue and white RSTA buses." (Amel, 42).

"It was beautiful. Algiers when it was *la blanche*. Now it has no colour." (Farid, 62).



Kettani open air swimming pools, early-1970s. Postcard, SNED.

Another recreational space in Bab el-Oued often perceived to have undergone negative change since the 1970s is the waterfront esplanade and open air swimming pools at Kettani, which once hosted international sporting events during the 1975 Mediterranean Games and which now stand empty, with locked gates and slime-stained swimming pool walls. As well as complaints about upkeep and poor hygiene, like the local parks, the pools were viewed as *mal frequentés* (attracting 'the wrong sort of person'), which was usually code for *ṣḥāb redjla* (poor young males defined by certain styles of sports clothing), making the pools into an environment deemed unsuitable for women or families.

"My parents used to go. It was well frequented. Now it's been closed for 4-5 years, but even before there were just *ṣḥāb redjla*. Even if it was open, we'd never go, because of the dirt and the kind of people that go there. There's no way you could go with your sisters, they'd get hassled and that'd cause problems between the guys, fights and stuff." (Youcef, 27).

However, older people remembered that during the 1970s, the pools were off limits for the neighbourhood's more conservative families, due to the presence of bikini-wearing women from other, perhaps more central neighbourhoods of the city. As such, different uses of space

in different periods, in this case both marked by undesirable moral behaviour articulated through codes of dress, demarcated spaces of respectability and access within the city.



The Grande Poste, early-1970s. Neatly clipped trees (which no longer exist), freshly painted yellow road markings and light traffic give a sense of order and calm. Postcard, SNED.

When looking at the image above, Hichem's immediate reaction was '*tqūl māchī l'Algérie*' (you wouldn't think it was Algeria). Representations of the city's urban infrastructure in the 1970s were often associated with images of European urban space as a familiar and accepted yardstick against which present-day Algiers was measured. In this sense, for the younger generation, the urban space of the 1970s was regarded as an unfamiliar and foreign space belonging to a by-gone era and explained through the equally foreign *mentalitiés* of the time.

"Algiers was like the Champs Elysées." (Anis, 37).

"They had that mentality of French people, they were living *à la Française*. You know, not littering, not messing things up." (Saliha, 27).

"The neighbourhoods were nicer, now it's not clean and there's rubbish everywhere. Back then we put the bins out after 7 pm. France left us laws, and they were applied." (Redouane, 56).

Casting past urban space as foreign urban space articulated a keenly felt sense of past-present disjuncture, expressed through representations that clearly articulated temporal dislocation through depictions of spatial dislocation. Such disturbances were not only visible in older people lamenting that they no longer recognised, or felt at home in, their own neighbourhood; but also through young people's reactions to images of their city during the 1970s, many of which they struggled to recognise and place within their own mental maps, sometimes causing younger people to be perplexed and speechless in front of the images.

"Even the buildings are shining! If I showed this picture to someone who didn't know, they'd say it was abroad. Even me, if it wasn't for the two mosques, I wouldn't be able to tell you where it is." (Narimene, 29).

If those in their forties and upwards sought refuge in a time before contemporary disfigurements to the familiar urban landscapes of their youth, young people cast the urban environment of the 1970s as a place where *dégoûtage* or *leggya*, words almost always pronounced with a scowl and whose meaning lies somewhere between stultifying boredom, cynicism and disgust at the world around, did not affect the lives of young people. The following exchange between two young people looking at images of the 1970s illustrates the generational tensions expressed though the both reproduction and gentle mocking of the nostalgia harboured by their parents' generation, as well as the humour with which people must use to confront their realities:

Mehdi: "Everything looks is in its place. You just know that these people are not disgusted with the world. It feels peaceful, calm. No complexes. Even the street lamps are beautiful. Pfff…"

Hocine : [Laughs] "Beautiful lamp posts? Listen to yourself! I've heard it all now! So do you reckon we've advanced or gone backwards then? "

Mehdi: "We've advanced backwards!" [Both burst out laughing].

The last phrase of this dialogue, in Algerian Arabic *avansīnā lel arrière*, was sometimes ironically deployed by people in Bab el-Oued to express past-present disjuncture. However, the phrase goes beyond this to articulate a temporal reversal, and a breakdown of the once expected movement from the past through the present to the future. It translates a strongly felt perception of shrinking temporal horizons associated with the loss of notions of progress and the fading of the brighter future promised by the transformative politics of the seventies.

Those old enough to remember the 1970s invariably drew on a wealth of phrases used to express past-present disjuncture through nostalgic remembering, especially when

describing the lived environment of the period: *yā ḥasra*, *ayām zmēn* (days of old), *bekrī* (back in the day), *ki kānet ddunya dunya* (when the world was as it should be), *kifech kunna w kifech wellina* (how we were and what we've become). Resting on clear-cut notions of two Algerias, one before and one after the conflict of the 1990s, such phrases were sometimes employed by those in their late-twenties to mark their ability to remember at least the end of the 'good old days' in the early-1980s and thereby to distinguish themselves from the generation born during the 1990s, which was often regarded as being turbulent, troubled and *sans repères*. However, those with no direct experience of the 1970s did not always reproduce their parents' nostalgia. The wall on the quiet street behind An-Nasr mosque that is a favourite hang-out of Bab el-Oued's hip-hop community displays this sense of frustration, amid images of Che Guevara as symbol of once possible revolutionary change and characterisations of Algiers as "Ghetto 16"[321]. The wall is dominated by a large graffiti reading, 'Pourquoi nous? 100% skāra fellī fessdū le blēd' (Why us? 100% contempt for those who wrecked the country). The intention here, according to the authors of the graffiti, none other than Mehdi and Hocine whose voices were heard above, was not only to point the finger at a corrupt political elite, but specifically at their parents' generation as a whole, due to their inability to transmit the same standards of well-being and sense of hope for the future to the Algeria inhabited by their children. A major source of generational divisions, anger at the older generation's failure is thus literally inscribed onto the urban fabric of Bab el-Oued by a younger generation attempting to place its mark on the city through the expression of their frustrations at a keenly felt sense of lack of optimism and opportunity.

"What's certain is that we never got to live through that period. We only know what they tell us, but we know it was better than this. It's their fault. They're the generation that should have done everything they could to preserve the harmony they lived through." (Mehdi, 25).

"You know, it's not just like bla bla… You should see their faces when they talk about that time. Their eyes! They look so proud. I just can't relate to this pride. I love this country, don't get me wrong, they've given us that, but there's no way I'm *proud* of it. How could I be? They don't say it out loud, but you can tell they're saying 'It's a shame you didn't get to experience it with us'; and we're like, 'Then why the hell didn't you fight for it? You gave up!'. They let it all go to the shit, and then they come and tell us that it's all our fault because we're out of control. No one ever guided us!" (Hocine, 30).

[321] Sixteen is the wilaya code for Algiers, used on postcodes and car number plates. Terming Algiers *le seize* reproduces the French hip-hop practice of numbers as territorial identity markers.



Grafitti in the street behind En-Nasr Mosque. Image taken 11 June 2013.

Housing and Urban Space

The housing crisis that characterised the 1970s was more visible in primary sources, such as newspaper archives, than in the social memory of contemporary Bab el-Oued. If the shortage of housing was being referred to as the *crise du logement* by 1971,[322] the 1966 census already showed only 1.98 million units for 2.28 million households, giving a national shortfall of 300,000 homes, casting serious doubts on the accepted idea that existing colonial housing stock would suffice. Construction continually lagged behind the upsurge in demand for housing throughout the seventies: the 1977 census revealed an increase in housing units of only 1.3%, while population had increased by 40% over the same period. In rural areas, the housing situation was worse: a 1974 newspaper article on a housing estate in Tiaret revealed a grim picture of damp, rubbish, peeling paint and 20 people per flat.[323] From 1968 to 1978, only 125,959 housing units were built nationwide, of which just 69,000 in urban areas where population was growth stood at 5%. By the end of the decade, the deficit had risen to 700,000

[322] This was the earliest mention found of this term, in *"*Parer au plus pressé*", Algérie Actualité*, 14-20 November 1971.
[323] *El Moudjahid*, 21 May 1974.

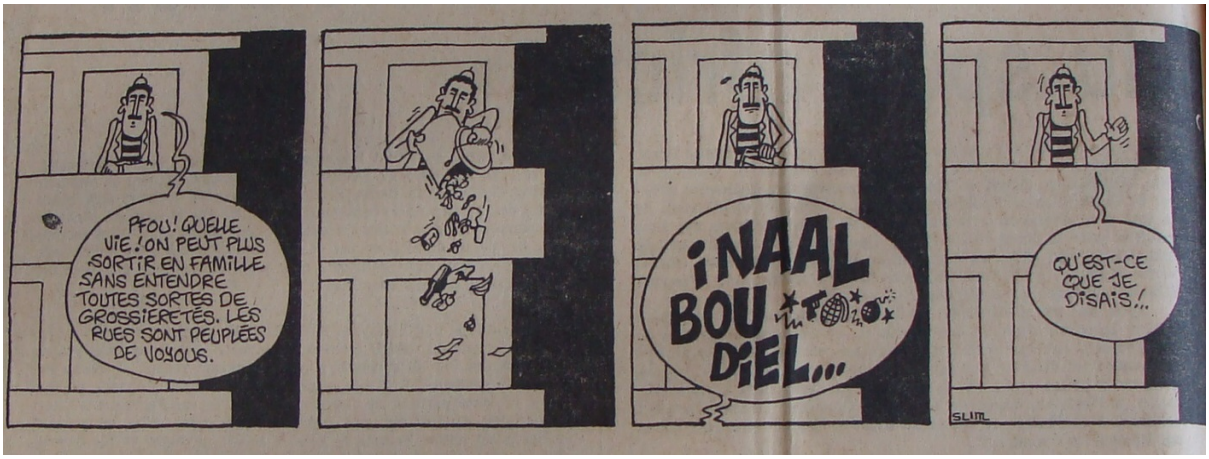
housing units.[324] Such data uncontestably defines Algeria as being in the grip of a serious housing crisis by the late-1970s. Merzak Allouache's 1976 film *Omar Gatlato* shows overcrowded conditions in the Climat de France housing estate above Bab el-Oued, with the protagonist surrounded by numerous screaming children and old relatives, a domestic scene that was familiar enough by the mid-1970s to be portrayed in realist cinema, and to be instantly recognisable to the viewing public.

As a matter of growing public concern, residents wrote letters to newspapers to complain about particular housing problems, often as a last resort after repeated requests to the APC had gone unanswered. One such case was a petition by residents of a building on Rue Léon Roche in Bab el-Oued, located in the poorer area of Maxime Noiré, whose staircase between the ground and first floor had collapsed, leaving residents stranded or having to use ladders. Residents claimed in the letter that their demands to local authorities over several months had received no response.[325] Similarly, there was concern over the dilapidated state of many of the neighbourhood's Constantine Plan HLMs. A 1970 article focused on the "dreadful" state of affairs at the Cité des Eucalyptus. Comprising of eight twelve-storey blocks, the estate was completed in 1959, before being damaged by OAS bombings and subsequently used to house internally displaced persons from rural areas in 1962. Just ten years after its construction, the article painted a desolate picture of Les Eucalyptus: open spaces commandeered by "turbulent youths left to their own devices", broken glass in entry doors, missing railings on staircases and walkways, blocked rubbish chutes causing associated stench and rat problems, broken lifts and lighting, interior walls blackened by rising damp, and clothes drying areas on rooftops either being rented out, built on, or becoming night-time refuges for drunks. The residents association complained of the estate's total abandonment by the authorities, highlighting that a 1967 report recommending refurbishment had produced no tangible action. However, M. Lounès, the Director of the Office Public des HLM, while admitting that the lifts had been broken for five years, laid the blame with residents, some of whom he accused of not paying rent since 1964, complaining that efforts to improve the estate had "come up against a wall of bad faith", and that "everything would be better if residents were more civic-minded".[326]

Newspaper reports of urban infrastructure problems routinely followed this general line: while acknowledging the unresponsiveness of the authorities, residents were frequently

[324] M. Bennoune, *The Making of Contemporary Algeria*, p. 238.
[325] *El Moudjahid*, 10 May 1972.
[326] *El Moudjahid*, 23 March 1970.

blamed for contributing to the degradation of the urban environment, while the very real issues of lack of investment, population growth and overcrowding were often minimised or ignored. Such incomprehension of the problems experienced by residents is evident in the recurring issue of hanging clothes to dry on balconies, an activity authorities attempted to eradicate during the clean-up campaign of 1970, due to its unsightliness. A specific timetable for hanging out laundry was established by law in April the same year, with clothing and rugs having to be removed by 9 am, and fines of 20 DA for non-compliance, with even prison sentences of up to 3 months in severe cases.[327] None of these articles addressed the real issues of overcrowding and building on rooftops that were traditionally used for drying laundry, leaving residents with little choice but to use balconies. Instead, the clean-up campaigns employed a paternalistic tone, and aimed to "educate and raise awareness" among the public, which was called constantly upon to display greater *civisme*, and whose double standards were often questioned in the press, as in the cartoon below.[328] Despite pointing to the authorities' lack of understanding of the social changes taking place, as well as their paternalistic attitude toward the public, the washing on balconies trope featured strongly in memories of the period in Bab el-Oued, but was often cited as a positive example of seriousness in the management of urban space. Rather than translating the gulf between governors and governed during the 1970s, fines for hanging out washing were used to criticise the laxity of present-day public management by local authorities.



Cartoon by Slim in *El Moudjahid*, 4 April 1978.

Perhaps more surprisingly, the *crise du logement* was not prevalent in contemporary representations of Bab el-Oued in the 1970s, with housing problems not forming a significant part of social memory, beyond general representations of more street-based overcrowding in

[327] *El Moudjahid*, 31 March 1970; 5-6 April 1970.
[328] *El Moudjahid*, 10 April 1970.

the present contrasted to the "empty" neighbourhood od the past. Where overcrowded housing was mentioned, it was not necessarily seen as a problem and was always counterbalanced with positive representations of urban life during the period.

"My grandmother had ten children, there were twelve of them in a three-bedroom flat. But when my Dad talks about it, it's as if they lived in a villa. They had everything; they went to the cinema, they bought clothes for Eid. Yes, it was a bit overcrowded, there was a housing problem, but it wasn't that bad back then." (Nadir, 33).

There was a universally held perception that the neighbourhood was more overcrowded today than 40 years ago. A humorous trope used to express this change was: "Nowadays, you could throw a shoe and it wouldn't touch the ground".[329] The continuing existence of a housing problem in a neighbourhood hemmed in by high ground and with no room for expansion, helps to explain the absence of the housing problem in the 1970s from contemporary representations. Social memories of urban space were always based on a sense of past-present disjuncture and used to criticise the present. However, the existence of a housing crisis in the 1970s meant there was little past-present disjuncture on which to base a critique of the present. In addition, these representations locate the 1970s as a sort of hinge decade, between the calm and spaciousness of the late-1960s and the more overcrowded, fractious urban environment that emerged from the mid-1980s, especially after the economic crisis of 1986 and the demographic changes of the 1990s.

As such, the neighbourhood was universally depicted as not having "filled up" until the mid to late-1970s, which tallies with a gradually worsening housing problem throughout the decade whose effects became more acute during the less equal environment of the 1980s, despite the existence of extreme cases such as Les Eucalyptus from the early-1970s. The transitional nature of the seventies, marking the first glimpses of social problems that would become more acute during the following decade, thus helps to explain the ambiguity of housing in social memory. What is certain is that by the late-1970s, Bab el-Oued had acquired a reputation for "a host of social problems that are sometimes so serious that they poison the life of residents",[330] with press reports citing the usual mixture of youth delinquency and lack of public awareness, but also highlighting the difficulty of maintaining hygiene levels when the neighbourhood was experiencing water shortages that left only a few hours of running water available per day.[331] Though many of the same problems complained of today clearly existed in the 1970s, some older residents hotly denied the veracity of such

[329] In Algerian Arabic : "*Termī blīgha, ma ttīḥch!* ".
[330] *El Moudjahid*, 13-19 October 1977.
[331] *Ibid*.

newspaper reports, since they plainly did not fit into the trope of idealised urbanity retained in memory. The gap between the period as remembered today and the past as it was viewed at the time therefore points to the reimagining of the seventies through social memory, and its casting as a lyrical-ideal temporal space in which present problems did not yet exist.

"Now, it's become like a huge shanty town. It's overcrowded, total anarchy: disorder, dirt, pollution. It's un-livable in. In the 70s it wasn't like that. You could go into a nice bistro, get good service and nice food. It was clean. But since the 80s, we've been in freefall." (Smail, 32).

Despite the reality of the seventies as presaging many of the social problems that exploded as burning social issues during the following decades (use of personal connections to circumvent the system, urban mismanagement, cultural divides, increasing consumerism), social memory firmly located the decade as the culmination of the aspirations of independence, and as an overwhelmingly positive past counterposed to a negative present that ran from the mid-1980s to the present day. Much of the content of memories of urban space was focused on visual aesthetics of city life, that would evidently not retain the more subtle social problems that began to affect society during the seventies. Indeed, the late-1970s and early-1980s marked the end of an era, since "the functional characteristics of the inherited city centre (pavement cafés, cinemas, restaurants, parks and promenades) transmitted modes of occupation and lifestyles that went undisturbed until the end of the 1970s".[332] The negative opposition between past and present urbanity mirrored the series of negative oppositions established in relation to Algiers today, which were always based on a series of absences (green space, café terraces, adequate management, entertainment) and overabundances (dirt, traffic, people, pollution).

During the 1970s, urban degradation was also blamed in the press on the lack of neighbourhood associations (*comités de quartier*) and residents' associations (*comités d'immeuble*). The latter received a legal framework just after independence[333] in which cleaners and concierges of apartment buildings were to be paid by residents, and live-in *concierges* would receive a 50% reduction in rent. By the early-1970s, caretakers were complaining of residents' total disinterest for problems in buildings and unpaid charges to workers employed by residents associations for maintenance. As a result of lack of funding, proper premises and assistance from authorities, residents associations were beginning to disappear, accelerating the pace of urban decay and compounding the lack of intervention by

[332] N. Dris, *La ville mouvementée*, p. 232.
[333] Decree 68-88 of 23 April 1963.

the state: in 1972, only 1884 *comités d'immeuble* existed in Algiers, with an average number of 144 in Bab el-Oued.[334] The presence of *concierges* is also retained in social memory as a declining phenomenon during the 1970s, with blame being laid on policies of social levelling and rising aspirations contributing to changing perceptions of such work as menial and undesirable, as well as the increasing social fragmentation of the 1980s as contributing to the inability of residents to agree on how buildings should be maintained.

"We used to have concierges that took the bins out after 7 pm, so the neighbourhood was clean during the day. But it was Boumediene who ended those habits. He said why should people have someone to take care of their bins; everyone should take out their own rubbish. That's how the *concierges* disappeared. Before that, each building had a manager [*syndic*]. If there was a problem, he'd go to the *mairie* to sort it out. But they disappeared too. That's when things started to go downhill. At first we all decided to split the cleaning between us, on a rota system. It didn't work. Then we organised for a woman to come and clean the stairs, but then some people didn't pay. There was no organisation. Now there are poor women who come and clean the stairs and the entrance and then they go from flat to flat asking for money. The people on the 5th floor say it's clean in front of their flat, so why should they pay, but we all use the entrance hall! So the cleaning sort of works, but there's no organisation for repairs and the building is just getting worse and worse." (Larbi, 48).

Access, Movement and Public Space

Depictions of 1970s urban life portrayed a spacious city with few constraints on movement. From lack of traffic jams and empty beaches to neatly-clipped green spaces and the absence of invasive crowds, the city of the seventies is associated with calm, security and ease of movement. Despite frequent complaints in the press about transport infrastructure and increasing traffic problems, descriptions of journey times and numbers of cars pale in comparison to the monstrous gridlock now experienced in Algiers on a daily basis.[335] One older resident assured me that in the early-1970s he had travelled the 19 km between Champ de Manoeuvres and Aïn Benian in twenty minutes; a journey that today could take up to two hours. If 60% of demand for public transport was satisfied by the city's buses and trains in 1972, this figure had fallen to 45% in 1982 and just 20% by 1995, though the dramatic drop in the 1990s is partly due to the commencement of private bus services running between the city centre and the suburbs.[336] The taxi system was also remembered as having changed. While today, to remain affordable, all taxis ply established routes within the city and are

[334] *El Moudjahid*, 5 January 1972.
[335] *El Moudjahid*, 20 March 1970.
[336] A. Amziane, "Dynamique urbaine et système de transport dans les principales villes algériennes", in *Villes, Transports et déplacements au Maghreb* (Paris, 1996), p. 79-89.

shared by multiple passengers that can flag down a cab at any point along its route, the 1970s were fondly remembered, not only for the standardisation of their colour and the uniforms of their drivers, as already mentioned, but for their strict no sharing rules and willingness to go to any destination desired by passengers. While by the end of the seventies, concerns were being aired about the scarcity of taxis and the emergence of *taxis clandestins*, there was still no indication of people having to share taxis on intra-urban routes, as is normal today.[337] Representations of the luxury of splendid isolation in a taxi that would take clients anywhere they wished translated the often unwanted mixing and close proximity with others in today's overcrowded transport, and was counterposed to the ever-present refrain of "*māchī ṭrīqī*" (it's not my route) by current taxi drivers.[338]

However, depictions of movement within urban space went beyond physical transfers to include issues of freedom of access to the city and beyond. Here, the sense was of a city where little was off limits and in which public access, even to major governmental buildings, was possible. One woman in her forties from the city centre recalled doing roller-skate jumps in the mid-seventies off the steps leading to the entrance of the Palais du Gouvernment – once a popular hang-out for young people – as ministers and officials filed in and out. This carefree image stands as a stark reminder that the post-1990s city, with its heavy police presence, checkpoints on major arteries and with the whole area around the Palais du Gouvernement now closed off to the public, is plainly one in which the state no longer trusts its own citizens.

[337] *Algérie Actualité*, 23-29 August 1979.
[338] Taxis will still take individual passengers to a specified destination off their usual route, "*en course/corṣa*", without picking up other passengers, but this is understood as an exceptional and higher price service seldom used by Algiers residents.



Moretti beach resort, early-1970s, SNED postcard.

Similarly, many older residents remembered trips to the beach at Club des Pins and Moretti, purpose-built resorts with a decidedly modernist seventies aesthetic. Club des Pins especially has become an often quoted example of public amenities that have become privatised. Such representations foregrounded depictions of 'the public' – state resources, urban space – becoming the preserve of the elite. Originally built for *tourisme populaire* as part of a state-subsidised travel industry intended to provide affordable holidays for the average Algerian, Club des Pins was closed to the public during the early-1990s to become a veritable bunker for Algeria's political and military elite during a time of civil conflict, and remains a luxury gated community that hosts the luxurious Sheraton hotel, and the villas of retired *haut-cadres* living among luxurious gardens and lots of gendarmes. Access to Club des Pins today requires a special pass, or an invitation from a pass holder. In Bab el-Oued, such changes were remembered through the paradigm of privatisation of public space and "confiscation from the people".

"Now we have no more beaches left, nowhere to swim. Either they've been taken by the army and turned into private clubs or they're too crowded. We hardly go to the seaside anymore. If we do go, it's towards Béjaïa; it's cleaner and people are more open." (Said, 60).

"Club des Pins used to be open to the public, now it's only Daddy's boys or people with connections." (Mehdi, 25).

Furthermore, memories of more limited access to public space foregrounded the security conscious atmosphere that has reigned in the city since the 1990s, especially through a generalised reluctance to spend time in places seen as not *sécurisés*, and a largely internalised feeling that one should be home by nightfall. Despite the much safer environment that now exists, the social practices born of conflict in the 1990s have reduced appetites for mobility within public space, especially access to rural areas. Mirroring the situation in Bab el-Oued just after independence, the absence of human presence has again become synonymous with danger. As a result, many had not travelled to parts of the country beyond rural areas deemed safe due to the presence of family networks. This state of affairs stands in stark contrast to the 1970s, when *camping sauvage* in northern Algeria's endless mountains, deep forests and pristine beaches was a favourite and affordable form of tourism. Greater access to public space in the seventies was seen as belonging to a time of innocence and human relations unmarred by the social mistrust between individuals that has been perhaps the most damaging – and painful – consequence of conflict during the 1990s. Sitting in a Bab el-Oued café, Said recalled a trip in the mid-1970s to the Corniche Jijelienne, a region to the east of Algiers where steep, densely forested mountains plunge into the sea. The area's natural beauty made it a popular camping destination during the 1970s and 1980s, but Jijel became a no-go area during the 1990s due to the presence of several armed Islamist groups hiding out in the mountains, causing many *Jwājla* to migrate to Bab el-Oued.

"On the way about midnight we got tired, so we just switched off the engine and slept in the car. Now that's impossible! Too dangerous!" (Said, 60).

Greater access to public space in the 1970s as opposed to the reduced mobility since the 1990s thus also formed a significant experiential divide between generations since, compared to their parents' generation, young people often had little experience of their own country. This was one aspect of the resentment of the opportunities enjoyed by the older generation. Young people, especially those that had grown up constrained between four walls during the curfew of the early 1990s, were incredulous that their parents had been able to experience the freedom to camp, hike and even talk to strangers in unknown regions of the Algerian countryside. Perhaps most of all, what seemed strange to young people was the idea that empty space had once been synonymous with relaxation, rather than tension and fear. Furthermore, journeys from Algiers to other parts of the country now often involve travelling

through impersonal, transient and *sécurisé* spaces, such as the airport or the East-West Motorway, which erode a sense of place by transforming spaces of potential interaction with the natural environment and rural society into "scenery". The recasting of empty space as worthy of suspicion, and the proliferation of such non-places means that young people have grown up with a very different relationship to space than that of their parents' generation.[339]

"My Dad told me he used to go camping in the mountains a lot with my uncles. They even slept in the tent at night, no worries about security. They describe these amazing days, camping out on the beach. Can you imagine sleeping by the sea? Even in Yakouren forest in Kabylia. You'd have to have a death wish to do that these days! They'd make picnics and go off to enjoy nature. When we drive on the motorway, my Mum tells us the names of the peaks; she's been to most of them. My sister and I don't even know where we are outside Algiers." (Inès, 26).

"There was security. My aunt told me they used to go and camp out in the wild, and it was *sécurisé*. They could stop anywhere and spend the night, no problems. I regret not being born earlier, because I'd love to go off and have adventures like that with my mates. But as soon as we go anywhere, my parents are calling us and everything, they panic if we're late, because they still have the scars of the *décennie noire*. Even us, we have complexes, we're still afraid to do things. Like if someone said 'Let's go to Bouira, now', someone younger than us would say yes like a shot, but not me. The memory of the *décennie noire* is still there, even if nothing would happen now. My parents also got to travel, they even went to the USA for three months in 1980. Even if I sold everything I own, there's no way I'd even be able to afford the air fare, let alone spend three months there." (Walid, 24).

Layers of re-imagined urbanity

This chapter has shown that despite serious efforts by the Algerian state to organise urban space as part of massive public investment throughout the 1970s, such efforts were focused at the national level in order to eliminate regional disparities and consolidate state control over the territory as a whole. Such prioritisation of the national was mirrored by the relatively slow realisation of localised urban planning, with Algiers finally receiving its first comprehensive postcolonial urban plan thirteen years after independence, by which time the city was already in the grip of what the press of the day reported as a significant urban crisis that necessitated several clean-up campaigns and exhortations by the authorities to greater *civisme*. The growing urban crisis of the 1970s was not reflected in the social memory of Bab el-Oued. In fact, past urbanity was reimagined as a lyrical space opposite in almost every way

[339] This is not always the case, however. Some families I met in Bab el-Oued retained close links and made frequent visits to their extended families outside the capital.

to present urban space. There are a number of reasons for this: the 1970s was a decade during which a series of urban problems that became more acute during subsequent decades first began to appear, and as such, seventies urban space was cast as a time before these problems began to severely affect daily life in the city, thus making the past seem 'better' in comparison to the present. Here the role of a reimagined past urbanity was clearly used to criticise the present. Further obscuring rememberings of the past is the fact that the ways in which the state intervenes in urban space have experienced ruptures and continuities. If the central neighbourhoods of the colonial city, such as Bab el-Oued, have clearly experienced an urban management deficit that has resulted in serious degradation since the 1980s, creating representations of the state's absence, the authorities continue to use the logic of the 1970s in relation to new urban spaces, though now playing catch-up with the housing shortage generated during liberalisation in the 1980s and the existence of more pressing security issues that occupied the state during the conflict of the 1990s, by building large new social housing estates on the ZHUN model, as well as slowly refurbishing older HLMs, such as the Cité des Annassers and Cité des Carrières.[340] Despite Bouteflika's focus on housing construction since the beginning of his second mandate, the country still suffers from a considerable housing shortage. Although the ideal of wealth redistribution through social provision means that the state is clearly not totally absent, such efforts were often seen as too little, too late – especially from Bab el-Oued, which has received little in the way of investment for urban regeneration, apart from cosmetic changes to the waterfront esplanade between Kettani and Rmila, which were beginning at the time of fieldwork.

In addition, representations of past urbanity as part of a forward-looking collective undertaking manifested in certain landmark projects and retained in social memory as representing once-felt hopes for the future translated widespread disappointment that the egalitarian promises of the past had not borne out popular aspirations of greater progress toward social justice and equality. Here the lyrical city of the future as imagined by the urban planners of the mid-1970s to reflect a modern and egalitarian society is mirrored by the equally lyrical city of the past reimagined today from the perspective of Bab el-Oued's severe urban decay, as re-imaginings of past futures and present pasts interact to create multiple

[340] The state currently offers two major formulas for subsidised housing: HLMs for the lowest income brackets, in which residents pay heavily subsidised rent to the state; and the increasingly popular formula of *location-vente*, for which applicants must meet certain income critera, produce a down-payment and pay a subsidised mortgage to the state, after which they gain ownership of the property. See www.aadl.com.dz, consulted 13 May 2014.

dissonances and interferences that serve to further increase the pervading sense of past-present disjuncture in relation to the city's constantly evolving urban space.

Chapter 5

‘How we were’. Representations of Sociability and Public Morality

“The *décennie noire* was a turning point. There was the old Algeria, stability and solidarity, and now there’s a completely different, new Algeria. It’s a radical change. This change affects us all, every day.” (Djamel, 20).

“There’s a gap. I’d choose to live from 1965 to 1980. No later than 1988. From 88 onwards, it’s not my country, it doesn’t belong to me. It’s like I’m on a train, the landscape passing by is the same, but I don’t recognise it anymore.” (Redouane, 56).

The Centrality of the 1990s in portrayals of Past Solidarities

In Bab el-Oued, depictions of sociability during the 1970s tended toward overt nostalgia for a time when social relationships remained governed by traditional forms of morality, such as family honour, respect for others, solidarity and warm relations between neighbours, and adherence to age and gender-defined social boundaries. Such representations were almost always contrasted to a more fragmented and fractious social environment that was viewed as having emerged from the identity politics of the 1980s and particularly from the conflict of the 1990s, which was remembered as having a lasting effect on social interactions within the neighbourhood. Once again, the image of two Algerias was predominant – the familiar pre-1990s lifeworld governed by traditional modes of sociability and solidarity, and the fragmented post-conflict consumer society, with its ideological oppositions, consumerism, individualism and unhealed wounds.

Such a neat binary between decades must be problematized. The 1980s was frequently cast as a transition period that contained both the solidarities of the immediate post-colonial period and the frictions and tensions that generated later civil conflict. However, the transitional nature of the 1980s meant that depictions of an ‘authentic’ Algeria, unsullied by the ravages of conflict and before the appearance of ethnic and religious paradigms, fell squarely on the preceding nation-building period. As such, when people remembered the sociability of this period, there was a strong sense that the underlying narrative was directly linked to expressing the effects of the 1990s on the embodied practices of daily life, a way of underscoring discontent with the society that had emerged from the conflict, which was experienced with particular vehemence in Bab el-Oued.

As well as being the initial theatre of the riots of October 1988, the central part of the neighbourhood is home to Es-Sunna mosque, where the FIS was founded on 8 February 1989, and which formed a major centre of Islamist opposition during the early-1990s.[341] Local elections in 1990 produced a landslide victory for the FIS, which doubled the score of the FLN and won control of the country's major cities, including the APC of Bab el-Oued.[342] The cancellation of the second round of general elections on 11 January 1992 by the military and the subsequent illegalisation of the FIS and detention of Islamists in Saharan internment camps marked the beginning of a civil conflict that is routinely claimed to have cost 200,000 lives.[343] During this period, Bab el-Oued also underwent significant cultural and population changes, in addition to a curfew, assassinations by both the security forces and armed Islamist groups, arbitrary arrests, gunfights and numerous bombings.

The chapter will begin by examining representations of 1970s sociability, which read like a palimpsest under which the darkness of the 1990s and its effects was almost always present. Particular focus will be given to depictions of changing gender relations and religious practice, as well as to analysing memories of the 1990s from a local perspective, especially the increased spatial mobility and social fragmentation that was a direct result of the conflict, as a way of framing relationships to the past.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, neighbourhood solidarities and codes of honour that regulated everyday social interactions in Bab el-Oued during the seventies were transferred from the Casbah through changes in post-1962 settlement patterns, after much of the Casbah's population resettled in Bab el-Oued. The family trajectory of seventy-one year old Imed was typical of late-colonial and early-postcolonial period spatial mobility, with grandparents that moved from Tizi Ouzou to the Casbah in 1939, a childhood spent in the Casbah during the war of independence and his occupation of an apartment in Groupe Taine, as a young man in 1963. Imed described the atmosphere that reigned in the Casbah just before independence, highlighting the principles and codes of morality that structured the upbringing of the older generation. Reading against the grain here also allows a glimpse of the principles older people felt to be lacking in today's youth through the focus on specific principles: honesty, generosity, respect for elders and traditional gender boundaries.

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[341] M. Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, p. 111, 116.
[342] J. Fontaine, "Les elections locales Algériennes du 12 Juin 1990 : approche statistique et géographique", in *Maghreb-Machrek*, no. 129 (July-September 1990), pp. 124-140.
[343] Though official estimates of the death toll have reached 150,000 in 2005 (see http://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2005/02/200849155453867369.html), Algeria Watch has placed the figure at 200,000 (see http://www.algeria-watch.org/en/aw/200000_dead.htm), consulted 12 March 2014.

"There was sincerity and honesty, no pilfering. If someone had to go and work elsewhere for a time, his family never wanted for anything. If any family couldn't afford a sheep for Eid, they'd be given meat by their neighbours. Women who had given birth didn't do any housework for a few months, everyone pitched in. At mealtimes, women would share the cooking, and send each other different dishes. We men were totally forbidden from accessing the roof terraces, which were only for women. We all lived on top of each other, sharing those houses, but somehow it worked. When a man came home, he would cough in the hallway, so the women that weren't related to him would have time to cover themselves or go back to their rooms. There was total respect and sincerity. As kids, we had to obey if someone told us to go and play somewhere else, because if they told our father we'd been naughty, we'd get a hiding!" (Imed, 71).

Such sentiments were echoed by others in the older generation whose families had moved to Bab el-Oued after independence:

"Coffee time in the afternoon was important – I remember the women in the building would take turns to make cakes and we all ate them together, like a big family. Everything was shared. If your wife wasn't around, everyone would send you food, and as kids, we'd eat with the family of whatever other children we were playing with. There was such solidarity between us: if your father was in prison because he was a Moudjahid, you never wanted for anything." (Farid, 62).

Born in El Biar in 1957, Redouane's parents came to Algiers from Sétif before independence, before moving to an empty apartment in the apartment blocks of La Consolation in Bab el-Oued in 1969, where he still lives. Growing up in the neighbourhood, he remembered a similar atmosphere of neighbourhood solidarity, mutual aid and warm relations to that described by the previous generation in the Casbah.

"When my mother went to work, the neighbours would have us over to eat, no problems, and my Mum would feed other kids when their parents weren't around. It's scary how much things have changed. Before, most of the apartment doors were open, just a sheet covering the entrance and the kids would go from flat to flat playing. We'd spend the night at the neighbours place and they'd get us ready for school the next morning. It was normal!" (Redouane, 56).

Others identified the pervading sense of solidarity as stemming from recognisably similar socio-economic circumstances between families inhabiting the same space. This was often expressed through the phrase '*kunnā gā3 3ēychīn kīf kīf*', which has two semantically interlinked meanings ('we all lived together', or 'we all lived on the same level'), pointing to an equation between physical and socio-economic proximity that was very much associated with the 1970s and emerged strongly in representations of social relations within urban space. This dual sense of togetherness articulated memories of pre-1990s era solidarities, and depictions of present-day sociability and neighbourhood relations often pointed to both the

spatial and socio-economic aspects underpinning traditional solidarity as having been disrupted by intervening events that remained fresh in living memories, creating a sense of lost innocence that transformed the Algeria of the 1970s into a lyrical space.

"Relations between neighbours were good. *Kanū gā3 3ēychin kīf kīf*. Everyone knew each other and helped each other out. I was young, but I still remember it enough to know it's not the same anymore. Before there was more contact between people, now everyone is after their own interests" (Mourad, 45).

"People were nice. We were innocent, I suppose. We all helped each other out, and we lived well, despite the fact that none of us had much." (Abdellatif, 60).

The remembered solidarities of the past were translated through the commonly used trope of open doors within apartment buildings, an idea that represented trust, familiarity and cordial relations between neighbours. The image of open doors was also reproduced by younger people who had not lived through the period, and was frequently introduced using the words *iqūlek* or *qālek* (they say), pointing to the transmission of memories within the praxis of social – and particularly family – relationships between generations.

"They say everyone would help each other… they were blessed, even if they were kind of poor, but they had a life. They all ate together, like as if a loaf of bread could be shared between eighty people. Now, one loaf isn't enough for one person. Maybe it was because the system was communist, I don't know. They say the doors were all open, with neighbours coming and going all the time. Imagine!" (Narimene, 29).

Generational and gendered markers of sociability and honour

Beyond general depictions of solidarity, there were several key concepts used to describe social relations during the 1970s, all of which related to traditional codes of honour and respect for social boundaries: *terbiya* (good manners, politeness); *qder* (respect for others) and *ḥorma* (respect for behavioural norms relating to age and gender divisions structured by honour). Many representations of seventies sociability by older people who had grown up during the period strongly featured memories of respect for elders, a quality that was usually perceived by this generation to be on the decline. Such respect for age boundaries was often expressed in terms of doing what one was told and refraining from certain forms of behaviour in front of parents, for example smoking or swearing. Again, such representations translated a focus on discipline and the *ḥechma* (shame, modesty, decorum) that was to be displayed by children and younger people in the presence of their elders.

"It was the *belle époque*. We were like a family. Everyone knew everyone, we'd sit and talk, go to matches, the neighbours would make us things to eat, someone would bring a *derbouka* and we'd sit outside in the neighbourhood and talk until late… Those days will never come back. And people were polite, not like now. There was *terbiya*, *ḥorma*, *qder*. Young people and old people, each in their place. Now there's a big difference. If an adult asked you to go and buy something for them from Martyr's Square, you'd go happily, and you said to yourself: 'He asked *me*, so he trusts me'. Not like now." (Malek, 53).

"It was good back then. We feared the adults, our parents… I mean we respected them. Back then, they were on top of us all the time. They were strict. I'll never forget the kick my father gave me. I was 15 and smoking in the street, and he saw me. I threw away the cigarette and he told me to turn around. I had no idea what he was going to do. He gave me a kick up the backside so hard, I was on the floor for 10 minutes. I didn't stop smoking though, but I never smoked in the neighbourhood again, I can tell you!" (Lamine, 54).

"Some people didn't know each other, of course, but there was always respect. If an adult sent us to go and buy something, we used to do it. Once, I refused and my Mum was standing nearby. She told me to do as I was told and get moving. If a neighbour saw you doing something wrong, they could give you a clip round the ear. If you told your Dad about it, he'd do the same, harder probably. But the neighbours also defended us like lions if we were ever in trouble or in danger. Now, you can't even trust your neighbours." (Said, 60).

Such memories underscored the view that young people's behaviour today did not conform to traditional norms of respect for elders. The younger generation was often perceived as unpredictable, and their reactions as potentially aggressive. Furthermore, these memories also translated a change in the locus of responsibility for instilling values and enforcing social norms from the wider community, as expressed above, to parents within a more nuclear family structure in an environment of greater mistrust between neighbours that has eroded traditional forms of solidarity. For example, older people were reluctant to intervene when observing anti-social behaviour, for fear of negative reactions either from the young people themselves, or their parents. The sense of moral decay was often expressed in reference to the horrific nationwide spate of child kidnappings, child murders and child suicides in 2012-13 that caused profound soul-searching, and which was frequently said to have been impossible in Boumediene's Algeria.[344]

"We spent more time outside playing than the younger generation, now with drugs, muggings and kidnappings going on, plus the internet and everything, it's different. But there was a certain education too, which has changed. Back then everyone was involved in showing kids their boundaries. Now if I see a kid breaking a wall

[344] This recent spate seems to have begun with the murder of an 8 year old girl in Zeralda in December 2012, followed by the March 2013 kidnapping and murder of two boys under 10 years old in Constantine, and several subsequent cases in the same wilaya and nationwide. March 2012 saw three apparently unconnected suicides by hanging of boys ranging from 11 to 12 years old in the commune of Tizi Ouzou. See "Retour sur le monstrueux meurtre de Haroun et Ibrahim : pourquoi ?", in *Liberté*, 24 March 2013 ; and "Les enfants perdus de Kabylie", in *Libération*, 4 May 2012.

or a window and I go and tell his father about it, he'd say, "What do you care, was it your window?" So you end up just walking on and keeping quiet". (Larbi, 48).

"In the neighbourhood, we respected other people. If a neighbour told us off, we listened. Because if they told your parents, you were in for it! Now, if you tell a teenager off, he might pull a knife out on you." (Mohamed, 64).

For others, the increased spatial mobility that has existed since the liberalisation of the real estate market in the 1980s, and especially the displacements that resulted from the violence of the 1990s, have eroded the familiarity between neighbours necessary for the existence of *ḥorma* by undermining traditional codes of honour based on people knowing each other. Rural migrants, often males with no family networks, thus presented a threat to the existing moral order.

"Young people today are arrogant, badly-brought up. Why? Because if people stayed in their original neighbourhoods, *ḥorma* remains. But when someone comes to Algiers on his own from Oran or Constantine, there are no uncles or brothers around to keep him in check. So what is he afraid of? What does he have to be ashamed of? Nothing! [Stamps his walking stick angrily on the floor] I don't recognise this society anymore!" (Noureddine, 63).

In its broadest sense, *ḥorma* was defined as, "respecting neighbours, being polite, not arguing or fighting", and was therefore linked to the concepts of honour, face saving and social decorum. However, *ḥorma* was also defined as, "giving women the respect they deserve – but not more!", and invariably encompassed a heavily gendered concept that tended to outweigh these more general principles of respect. Representations of gender relations during the 1970s were thus dominated by the concept of *ḥorma*. These memories foregrounded the 1970s as having been governed by traditional gender roles and must be contextualised within the much greater access to public space enjoyed by women today in Algiers. If in 1977, only 14% of women in Bab el-Oued worked, twenty years later the figure had doubled to 30%.[345] Thus, much of the content of social memories among men about gender relations articulated perceived differences with the present and portrayed a past when women were more relegated to the home or in subordinate positions (*f plāṣethum*; 'in their place'). A common trope used to illustrate this was the neighbourhood's central market, described by many as having been the sole preserve of men, who did all the shopping. Segregation between men and women did not seem to have been complete however, but male-female interactions were understood as having been governed by *ḥorma*, whose

[345] *Recensement général de la population*, 1977 and 1997, Office Nationale des Statistiques.

behavioural manifestations were explained as respect for women, expressed through male bashfulness, avoiding conversation with unknown women, refraining from the use of bad language in front of women, and giving women plenty of physical space when passing in the street. However, on a deeper level, *ḥorma* was also defined in terms of male honour, which was linked to the behaviour of the women within a given man's family.

"You have your sisters, and I have mine. If I ever see you with one of my sisters, I don't know what I might do to you ! So, I don't touch your sister, and you don't touch mine. If we're neighbours, from the same *ḥouma*, you can talk to my sister, of course; but only in a neighbourly way! She'll be like your own sister. So *ḥorma* is like mutual respect. There are certain things you can say, for example, you could never use bad language in front of a woman. You can make her laugh, of course, but not flirt, try and incite something. But *ḥorma* is also more than men and women, it's about respecting people in general, even if you don't know them. It's a basic principle." (Noureddine, 63).

"We were shy around women, we respected them. Women were a bit sacred. You couldn't use the same language around women as you did with men, you had to be extra respectful, because men's honour is linked to women. They say the image of each man is reflected in his wife, in her behaviour. Now there's no respect, it's gone! Now we have mixed lycées, unlike before. Girls and boys were only together for primary school. It wasn't like in Europe, where there can be friendship between a man and a woman; impossible! That hasn't changed, but there was much less interaction – women with women and men with men. Now it seems like there's no difference." (Mourad, 45).

"If someone in your neighbourhood had a beautiful sister and you liked her, automatically you wouldn't look at her in the eye. You couldn't! And women from outside the neighbourhood, if they were passing through and some of the lads chatted her up, you'd defend her. If you chatted a girl up in public and her brother saw you, you'd get beaten up on the spot." (Imed, 71).

Such strict norms governing male-female interaction made it difficult for young people to meet, and elaborate ways of breaking the rules were required for some kind of unchaperoned courtship to take place. The last scene of the film *Omar Gatlato* (1976) depicts the familiar trope of the forbidden space of the girls' lycée. The protagonist falls in love with a female voice he found on a recording, and after going to great lengths to obtain her phone number, enters into a purely vocal romance with the as yet unseen girl that symbolises the strict physical distance that society imposed in male-female interaction. When Omar and his love finally agree to meet, outside the girls' lycée after school, and he finally sees her, the world begins to spin and he flees, his *ḥorma* preventing him from going to talk to the young woman, who has become a symbol of unattainability. Indeed, the trope of young men hanging out around girls' high schools was remembered in Bab el-Oued as a fairly common

phenomenon, but one not without risks, since there would often be a police car parked nearby to deter suitors.

"They told me that back then, you'd never see couples walking arm in arm, like you do today. There was *ḥorma*. If you saw a girl you liked, you had to talk to her very discreetly, or go and find her family and ask for her hand. You couldn't just meet up and go for an ice cream, like young people can now. *Ḥorma* is respecting someone else's privacy. You couldn't just walk up to a girl and start talking to her, or say stuff to her as she passed, like they do now. Someone would see you, they'd know where you live and tell your brother or your father, and you'd get massacred! We never even thought of having a girlfriend, it was impossible. You had to be very discreet. You could wait outside the hammam and try and smile at her, or say a few words quickly. You could write a love letter and leave it for her to find, and she'd leave an answer in the same place. It was all more honest, kind of naïve." (Anis, 37).

In contrast, for many women, the easing of traditional codes of honour was a welcome development, that has allowed much greater access to public space. Perceptions of increased lack of respect for women in public space were often interpreted as a corollary of their much greater presence in the public domain today. The respect that was often said to have characterised male-female interaction in the past was universally decried as having disappeared, and was linked to a general moral decay that also comprised respect for others irrespective of gender, within the framework of greater mobility and the breakdown of the close-knit neighbourhood relations needed for the operation of traditional moral codes.

"Now there's such a lack of respect. But women are freer, we have more freedom of expression. Much more than before! It's been a long process, from the war and after independence, women have freed themselves. Because after independence, girls were going to school for the first time, and that's a step towards freedom." (Saliha, 27).

"We weren't raised like girls nowadays. My mother worked at the post office, and when she was at work, my sisters and I never left the house as teenagers. If we wanted to go out, she would take us to the cinema or the park. It was out of the question that we go out on our own! Now, parents are more open. But before it was strict! For example, a man couldn't sit with his wife while his father was present, or even take his son in his arms. Impossible! Men and women would never eat together, even sometimes in the same family. Now, it's more evolved, more open. But at the same time, a lot of families take it too far. My husband and I are open with our children, and we talk to them about everything, but there are still limits. There still has to be respect." (Djamila, 52).

"Algerian women have suffered. The responsibility is all on us now. We're in the street, at home, at work, in the market, in the fields. Before women would stay at home, no work… just home and children. Nothing else. This is because not a lot of women were educated. Now, thankfully, it's different and women do well in their studies. Because frankly, the boys at university… pfff. But it's the mentality that's changed, which isn't good. Before,

families would go out together, to Staoueli on summer evenings, because they knew they'd be respected. Now your brother doesn't want to take you, because he knows he's going to overhear someone making an inappropriate remark about you, and then there'll be a fight. So you end up going out in a car, just driving around. That's what we do… Round and round." (Narimene, 29).

For some men, the increased presence of women in public space and the erosion of *ḥorma* clearly made today's women less worthy of respect. However, despite portrayals of moral decline in present-day Bab el-Oued, the *ḥouma* continued to function as a space in which solidarities and codes of traditional honour were articulated. Therefore, hassling a girl while she was walking past was still seen as unacceptable behaviour, and most men found it unthinkable to attempt to chat up a girl from the same neighbourhood. The *ḥouma* provided a familiar, protected environment in which women and girls could go down to the street or nip to the shop wearing house clothes that would not be worn in more anonymous public space, such as a loose *jibba* or pyjamas and slippers. The situation was quite different in the more anonymous public space of the boulevards, where the possibilities of transgression of *ḥorma* not only exist, but were recognised as normal. This was especially true of the city centre, where women had to run the gauntlet of groups of young men, ignoring all sorts of comments, sometimes of an explicitly sexual nature. To be in public space therefore meant to be at risk of possible transgressions (verbal, physical), but simultaneously allowed greater freedom. Archive material demonstrated little change over time in the spatial division of harassment of women in anonymous public space into mobile women and stationary men; the only difference being perhaps the attitude of the authorities. If authorities seemed unconcerned with this issue today, in 1970, over one hundred *drageurs* were handed prison sentences of 6 to 9 months for harassing passing women, in much the same way as today, showing the power dynamics and spatial manifestations of harassment have changed little, despite portrayals to the contrary in social memory that pointed to a reimagining of the past through problems existing in the present.[346]

Eighteen year-old Kader lives in the narrow streets of Rochambeau, which are where, he boasted, "you can buy the best shit in Bab el-Oued". This extremely run down area is adjacent to the seaside esplanade of Kettani, the semi-anonymous space that is a favourite evening hang-out for young couples escaping the rules governing gender interaction in their own neighbourhoods. Kader and his friends regularly threw stones at, and chased off, young couples sitting on the benches overlooking the sea, since their presence was viewed as a lack

[346] *El Moudjahid*, 31/7/70.

of respect for the moral codes of *their* neighbourhood. Thus, honour was linked to perceptions of proper gender interactions, and not to illegal activities, such as drug dealing, which were instead worn as a badge of pride.

"There were no couples hanging around in Kettani back then! If you wanted to get married, you might not even have seen the girl. Your gran would tell some of her friends you were looking for a nice, decent girl. Then she'd go and ask the family for you. But you wouldn't see her until the day after the wedding. Can you imagine? She might be cute, or a total ugly cow! Now, by the time you get married, you've already known her for two years, made love, taken her out to the city centre; it's normal! In the 80s, *ḥorma* started to slip, and in the 90s, chatting up and pulling women in the street became normal. Now it's open season. We're like cavemen, trying to get women by dragging them by their hair. That's what it's like. [With sarcasm] Progress!" (Kader, 18).

While complaining of the more permissive moral atmosphere in the present, some older men also complained that the brothels that had existed in the Casbah and especially in Blida, which had a large military barracks, had closed since the early 1990s. For these men, brothels allowed the sexual frustration generated by strict traditional moral codes to be released. The current environment, which combines greater gender mixing, but delays marriage due to economic hardship, as well as the internalisation of a normative and heavily moralizing Islamic public discourse, is one that increases sexual tension for both genders. Young people transgressing such norms were still subject to police intervention: during my time in Bab el-Oued, a large group of teenagers of both sexes were arrested for allegedly engaging in an alcohol-fuelled party in the basement of an abandoned building in the neighbourhood, where it was implied that 'sexual activities' were engaged in.

At the centre of these portrayals of both increased social freedoms and moral decline stood the fragmentation caused by the conflict of the 1990s. In order to attempt to understand the effect of civil conflict on the life of a neighbourhood like Bab el-Oued, it is perhaps salient to provide context by first briefly exploring some personal memories of what has become universally referred to in both French and Algerian Arabic as the *décennie noire* (the black decade).

The 1990s and the erosion of traditional solidarities

The *décennie noire* is an official term that emerged from the purposefully neutral political discourse surrounding the state-sponsored *Charte de Reconciliation Nationale* or *mouṣālaḥa* of 2005, which offered amnesties to Islamic militants in the maquis. This document, submitted to referendum, officialised the state's version of events – that the security forces had not been involved in any extra-judicial killings – and penalised those questioning the official narrative with prison sentences, as well as requiring the disbanding of civil society groups, such as those run by families of the disappeared.[347] The resulting absence of the civil war in the press and in public discourse has prevented a cohesive narrative on the decade from forming in social memory, and personal recollections in Bab el-Oued remained unstandardized and extremely raw, especially since everyone in the neighbourhood had been personally affected by violence.

"I was about eleven, and I was cutting through El Kettar cemetery. I heard noises and hid behind a tree. There were three terrorists, and they had a guy I knew from our neighbourhood who was a policeman. He was crying and begging them not to kill him. Then he just started reciting the *shahāda* over and over, crying, and trying to show he was a good Muslim. I saw them slit his throat, right there, like 20 metres away from me. I can't describe it, but it doesn't look anything like it does in the movies. My stomach churned, and I just ran, and ran, and ran." (Hocine, 30).

"I remember spending my childhood indoors, parked in front of the TV. We were always scared when my Mum went to the market, because there had been a bomb there and we didn't know if she would come back alive. Saying that now, I realise how much responsibility that is for a child, having to be worried for your parents. You learn not to trust people, because you never know who is who. You learn to read the expressions on people's faces… not to talk to such and such a girl because her brother has a beard… to watch where someone is putting their bag. It's bizarre to for a child to have to think about these things." (Inès, 25).

"Once we were up on the roof terrace at night, and we could hear screams and a woman's voice shouting "Why are you doing this to us?". Then it all went quiet. After that, the men put up a siren in the neighbourhood, to warn everyone if they came down from Bainem forest to kill people in their houses at night. We didn't sleep much. We were always on our guard, thinking maybe today is our turn and they're going to kill us. Sometimes we would see dead bodies in the street on the way to school. That was our life. We spent almost ten years like that! Fear does horrible things to people." (Saliha, 27).

"I was very afraid, but I *never* showed it. I would go out in the morning to the market as if nothing was wrong. I would do my prayers normally. I always prayed for my children. I *never* allowed people to see I was afraid, but every time I stepped out into the street, I said to myself, 'My God, am I actually going to come back?' I never

[347] See, International Crisis Group, "The Civil Concord: A Peace Initiative Wasted" (Algiers/Brussels, July 2001) and E. Goldstein, "Algeria's Amnesia Decree", 10/04/06, at https://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-institutions_government/algeria_3435.jsp, consulted 25/11/14.

thought of leaving, though. I was born here, my parents are buried here. Bab el-Oued is my neighbourhood and it always will be. If they have to kill me, then too bad." (Nawel, 63).

"I was little, but I remember the end of the 90s. I remember my Mum holding me firmly by the arms with tears in her eyes, and telling me to never, ever talk about our family's religious beliefs at school, never to follow a stranger, and never to trust what people were telling me. In 1998, when I was 5, my Dad would go out at night with an axe and a rifle and take turns with the other men to keep watch over the neighbourhood from a tall building at night. Even when you're little, you still know what's going on. We saw the news and especially, especially, the fear in people's faces." (Djamel, 20).

"I remember hearing bullets whistling when there were gun fights between the police and terrorists. You couldn't go out after 6 pm, because of the curfew. I remember one morning, seeing a dead guy in the street and some bits of brain on the wing mirror of a car. It wasn't just the terrorists though, some of them were OK, we knew them and they were just fighting against the system. We saw them more as rebels at the beginning, before the armed groups started killing civilians. By then, we were just as afraid of the police, all wearing balaclavas and they could shoot anyone anytime, no questions asked. It's like we had the police in front, and the terrorists behind us. And we were caught in the middle. The best way to manipulate people is to make them afraid." (Mehdi, 25).

"My brother was a policeman, and they killed him right here outside our building. My Dad was a retired military man, and he died in a bomb the following week in a café in central Algiers. A neighbour, this guy who used to come and eat at our table, gave the armed groups all the information because he was with them." (Anis, 37).

The often horrific lived experiences of this period were remembered as having undermined traditional solidarities between neighbours. Conversations in Bab el-Oued about social cohesion quickly became focused on the manifestations of the social production of mistrust at micro level that was a direct consequence of the fear, suspicion and violence of the 1990s. The generation that grew up during the 1990s was often described by older people as being "disturbed" or "lost", as traditional structures of group-enforced discipline of children, *ḥorma* and trust were eroded. Much has been written about the famous question of who was killing who during the 1990s, but from the perspective of Bab el-Oued, a further issue was who was informing on whom. The production of mistrust also had spatial implications; the open doors between apartments and the neighbourly comings and goings of the 1970s quickly gave way to the phenomenon of *bāroṭāge*, the reinforcing of apartment entrances with sheet metal doors and sets of bars, as physical manifestations of insecurity that proliferated as life turned inwards and contact between neighbours broke down. Mirroring the situation during the period immediately after independence, empty space and darkness once again became the objects of fear and apprehension, with the important difference being that mistrust had now entered apartments and families and eroded social relationships.

"Before the 90s, everything was normal. But the *décennie noire* changed everything. You couldn't trust anyone. You were even afraid of your neighbours. That whole generation is disturbed, because their parents weren't stable. We were scared of someone knocking on the door, because the police used to come and just take people away during the night. That's why everyone flies off the handle so easily, even now. If you have a disagreement, you can find yourself with a screwdriver in your chest; it happened in the next building a few weeks ago." (Redouane, 56).

"People became much more aggressive after the *décennie noire*. We all saw horrible things. It was carnage. I was 16 when I first saw a dead body, decapitated. After you've seen things like that, nothing can shock you. There are no boundaries anymore. We spent so long being scared that nothing can scare us." (Smail, 32).

"All the neighbours used to be like a big family; especially in Ramadan. We'd take food up to the roof terrace and eat together, play games, talk and laugh. Whatever you needed, you could always go to your neighbours and ask. Absolutely anything! Everything changed after 1988. We started to be scared of each other. I was working for the army, so I stopped going to the neighbours' place because I wasn't sure if their cousin was a terrorist. After 1988, everything was different. So people hid in their houses and guarded their secrets, always afraid the children might give things away, so they weren't allowed to play with the neighbours' children anymore. It was a catastrophe. The Algeria my generation grew up in was gone forever." (Imène, 41).

In addition to the social mistrust caused by conflict, traditional neighbourhood relations and solidarities were disturbed during the 1990s by changing settlement patterns and greater spatial mobility. Such changes were both an indirect consequence of the much more intense conflict in the area surrounding Algiers, as people fled the violence and massacres occurring in the Mitidja towns and the eastern region of Jijel to seek refuge in the relative safety of the capital. As Bab el-Oued received incomers from other places, new peripheral areas were growing on the edge of the city, in a real estate speculation boom fuelled by the non-application of building regulations while the state's energies were focused elsewhere. Faced with an increasingly degraded and overcrowded urban environment, violence between police and armed groups, and tempted by rising house prices due to increased demand from those seeking to move into the capital, many long-time Bab el-Oued residents saw their chance to escape an increasingly tense neighbourhood. Those who did sell up made a profit and bought cheaper, larger houses in the expanding suburbs of Draria or Dely Ibrahim, signalling the peripheralisation of much the population that had lived in Bab el-Oued since independence.

The urban space of these new suburbs reflects the spatial and social dynamics that emerged from the 1990s: a preoccupation with security and the emergence of a consumer society. These neighbourhoods are characterised by large, extended-family homes turned in on themselves behind high walls and metal gates for security, but with ostentatious exterior

decoration aimed at marking social status displayed through material wealth. However, many of those that had moved away complained of a lack of public space in the impersonal streets and walls surrounding the villas of the new peripheral areas, and had established a routine of returning to "their" café in Bab el-Oued to socialise in their old neighbourhood, with which they were unable to make a clean break. In contrast, those that stayed in Bab el-Oued had to contend with new neighbours, still within the atmosphere of reduced trust and solidarity engendered by the dynamics of the 1990s, which slowed down the process of integration of new inhabitants. At the time of fieldwork this process was ongoing, and many longstanding residents – *les anciens* – portrayed the solidarities of the pre-1990s period with great nostalgia.

"It's expensive now in Bab el-Oued, a two bedroom flat will cost you 8 million DA [about £60,000]. So people saw their chance; you could sell a flat here and buy a villa somewhere else. In my building most people came from other wilayas, some from Algiers. There's only two old residents, the rest are all new; young couples and families. When I see them on the stairs, it's just 'Good morning', a polite nod, and that's it. We don't know each other. The old neighbour Hakim, he knows I live on my own, so his wife sends me couscous. But it's not like it used to be, you become isolated. No one pops round. It's dead." (Anis, 37).

"A lot of neighbours have left. Apart from two or three of the 20 that live in the building, *les anciens* all left, they all left. I don't even know who lives above me on the first floor! I know all the shopkeepers, we chat, but I don't really know anyone. It's like France now, each in his own flat." (Nawel, 63).

Though similar dynamics were expressed by residents of adjacent neighbourhoods, such as Notre Dame, this was not seen to be the case in other areas. St Eugène (Bologhine) was known in Bab el-Oued for its calm atmosphere with few Islamists, and generally having experienced little change. Used as a contrast to illustrate the settlement and social changes experienced in Bab el-Oued, this idea of a neighbourhood protected from change was expressed through the phases *bqāw hūma hūma* (they stayed as they always were) and *nēsshā nēsshā* (its people are those that have always been there). Indeed, compared to the frenetic and overcrowded Bab el-Oued five minutes by road to the south, St Eugène retained the air a sleepy village, with quiet streets and a relaxed atmosphere. In places such as St Eugène and the old centre of Aïn Benian, one can still glimpse the kind of atmosphere that might have prevailed elsewhere before the upheavals of more recent times, or at least an atmosphere on which reimaginings of the past were based. A day spent with Djamel's family for Eid at their home in Aïn Benian offered a glipmse of what other neighbourhoods may have felt like before the mid-1980s: endless couscous shared by multiple family members with extra places generously laid at the table for new arrivals, lively discussion and exchange, as well as much

laugher, open windows and sea breeze, the boys peeling off for a swim with others from the neighbourhood, jumping off the rocks into the sea just below the house, a walk around the neighbourhood that involved stopping every ten minutes to chat or enquire after someone. Though doubtless influenced by special nature of Eid, the atmosphere was one of neighbourhood goodwill based on the familiarity born of length of residence that fuels traditional solidarities. Other neighbourhoods, however, have not been so lucky.

"It was like a big family, we all celebrated together on holidays, but not anymore. Everything's changed. If I know you, I can trust you. But now there are so many new people. We don't have relationships with them because we don't know them. If you don't know someone, you're a bit wary of them, you don't know his motivations. But there's still a lot of *les anciens*. In Notre Dame, *nēsshā nēsshā*. It hasn't changed as much up here as in Bab el-Oued. Now everyone has metal bars everywhere, because there's no security. People changed, even if some people stayed as they always were [*Tbeddlū l-3ibēd, même si kāyen li bqāw hūmā hūmā*]." (Lamia, 64).

Increasing individualism and consumerism were also frequently pointed to as contributing to the deterioration of traditional neighbourhood relations. People highlighted the accelerated pace of life, as well as a new sense of social competition rooted in the measurement of success in material wealth that was absent in the weakly monetarised society of the seventies, with its endemic shortages and lack of consumer goods. This new fragmented, consumer society was often referred to as *ṭag 3lā man ṭag* (everyman for himself).

"*Ṭag 3lā man ṭag* means everyone is on their own, like everyone does whatever they want. If there's a fight, you're on your own and I won't defend you. It's like the individualism you have in Europe. No one helps each other." (Saliha, 27).

"Nowadays people don't know if their neighbours are ill. Back then, if you hadn't seen your neighbour, you'd knock on their door to see if they were OK. Now you read in the newspaper of old people lying dead in their flats for 4 or 5 days, until people notice the smell. I've always worked as a postman, and I've seen the change. By the 90s, if a letter wasn't properly addressed, I'd knock on the ground floor flat to ask where such and such lived. They'd tell me they didn't know, 'no one here knows anyone, that's how we live'. That was in the city centre; in Bab el-Oued it's not as bad as that: I've got about 50 neighbours and I know them all by name. But it has changed, even here. Back then, there was more solidarity: Algeria would have run itself, even without Boumediene." (Malek, 53).

If a considerable part of the fallout of the 1990s has translated into reduced social contact because of greater mistrust – in particular a generalised reticence to walk the streets at night outside Ramadan – and individualisation has been increased by the consumer society

that has emerged since the end of the conflict, the rise of technology was also identified, especially by some young people as being responsible for greater atomisation. Although the latest census data from 2008 shows that only 5% of homes in Bab el-Oued have an internet connection,[348] the recent introduction of ADSL technology by Algérie Télécom has meant increased internet use at home, and the neighbourhood is also home to numerous cyber cafés. Facebook has 4.5 million users in Algeria, 90% of whom are under 30 years old.[349] Contrary to much excitement in Western media and policy cirlces surrounding social networks and the Arab Uprisings of 2011, the young people I met in Bab el-Oued used Facebook in apolitical ways, sharing images and conversing with existing friends from their own homes. The use of such networks is thus at once social, because of increased interaction, but is also isolating, since the interaction takes place alone. Chafiqa explained the double-edged sword represented by interaction on social media, and their inability to combat the crushing boredom experienced by many young people in Bab el-Oued due to the lack of spaces available to young people:

"You connect to Facebook. You refresh the page to see what's new; again and again. There's nothing new. People just stay in and connect using technology. It makes people lazy. You can't travel anywhere in Algeria, or abroad, so we travel using technology, to escape. But it's not real; when you switch off, you look around, and you're in the same room you started out in. There are places to go, shopping malls, *salons de thé*… but if you want to meet up, you always have to spend money. And there's nothing related to culture or entertainment. The cinemas are closed, because they think people do 'other things' there. The ones in the centre of town that are open show old films that we've already seen on line. There's nothing to do, nowhere to go. Even in the family, people are just in their rooms on their computers, doing their own thing." (Chafiqa, 25).

The abstract, collectivising and over-psychologising view of Algerian society as traumatised by violence explains away complex social problems and functions as a catch-all that shuts down discussion of the deep ways in which social fragmentation operates. The traces of the 1990s are still present in ways that may not be obvious to many outside observers: the demobilisation of political assertiveness and the fear of anything classed as overtly political, mistrust between neighbours and the breakdown of traditional solidarities, increased spatial mobility and the challenges posed by population change within the neighbourhood, the emergence of a consumer society in which people think and act as individual consumers, and the dual role of technology in providing new ways of connecting and further individualisation.

[348] Recensement Général de la Population 2008, Office Nationale des Statistiques.
[349] See article at http://archives.tsa-algerie.com/divers/l-algerie-a-la-41e-place-des-pays-utilisateurs-de-facebook_24029.html, consulted 22 May 2014.

Dress, gender and nostalgic aesthetics

Changes in perceptions of gender were also expressed through representations of women's dress. The 1970s – and a broader sense of 'tradition' that was perceived as stretching back to Ottoman times – was often associated with the *ḥāyek*, the white silk garment used by women in central and western Algeria over clothes when outside the home, that covers the hair and the body and is held closed with one hand, and the *3ajār*, the white lace veil covering the nose, mouth and chin. Worn up to the late-1980s by married women, especially in working-class neighbourhoods, the *ḥāyek* was a mark of respectability and remained clearly associated with traditional codes of morality and was understood as the physical manifestation of *ḥorma*. The *ḥāyek* was contrasted to the other clothing style of the day for women, a below the knee skirt or dress, often termed *à la française* or *civilisée*, worn by girls and married women alike. The rapid social changes of 1989-1991 meant the virtual disappearance of both these styles in the neighbourhood, and the predominance of non-Algerian, Middle Eastern styles of Islamic dress for women: *ḥijāb* (usually defined as some sort of headscarf with loose-fitting clothes, but with much variety) and *jilbāb* (an enveloping set of loose garments in dark colours, sometimes with face covering, often associated with Islamism). Today's Bab el-Oued presents a great diversity of dress styles for women. Though *hijāb* predominated (ranging from the loose and modest to the form-hugging and trendy), with the *ḥāyek* only being worn by a few old women, there was also a sizeable minority of unveiled women and girls, and a small minority of *jilbāb*. The term *civilisée* remains in use as a hangover from the colonial period, and continues to denote unveiled women, but is now opposed to *ḥijāb* rather than the *ḥāyek*.

"Some women were *civilisées*, some in *ḥāyeks*. Some women had lived with French women, and they were beautiful back then. Classic style, short hair or Grace Kelly cuts. At 18, some girls would start wearing the *ḥāyek*, always showing the lower part of their legs with an ankle chain and low heels or white sandals – that was how they wore them in the 60s and 70s; or they'd stay *civilisées*, depending on the family. Maybe 75% with *ḥāyeks*, and 25% *civilisées*. But they were all elegant and refined, women from Algiers were known for their sense of style." (Mourad, 45).



The *ḥāyek* style of the 1970s, Central Algiers. Image from the nostalgic Francophone Facebook Group, *Alger à une certaine époque*.

Despite its use as an orientalist trope of traditional Arab society in opposition to modernity and its use as a mainstay in colonial-era images of the Casbah, pictures of women in *ḥāyeks* descending the steps and alleyways of the old city were omnipresent on the walls of homes and cafés in Algiers; colonial imagery appropriated and internalised as tradition. Despite this evidently problematic relationship, the *ḥāyek* was fondly remembered by men and women alike, and particularly since the 1990s, has been transformed into a symbol not just of *traditional* morality, but of *Algerian* traditional morality, as opposed to Middle Eastern styles and traditions imported with Islamism. As such, the garment not only stood for tradition in a general sense, but for a culturally authentic lifeworld that existed before the emergence of the more recent identity paradigm of Islamism. In contrast, *jilbāb* was regularly singled out as being a foreign import.

"Women didn't wear *ḥijāb*. They wore the *ḥāyek*, and I find it really elegant. The *hijāb* and *jilbāb* are not our culture, they're from the Middle East. And *jilbāb* especially, it's not clean. It's so long, that it drags all the dirt and dust along with it, it's disgusting. Some people even say you get extra points with God, because you're effectively sweeping the street. It's totally ridiculous. If they really want to clean up the neighbourhood, all they have to do is pick up a brush and get to work!" (Walid, 24).

"It wasn't totally crazy! My Mum and my aunts told me that there were miniskirts, but it was limited to a certain elite, and you wouldn't see them in Bab el-Oued; a bit like today, I suppose. Those people were less affected by terrorism anyway. The *ḥāyek* was replaced by a sort of Afghan chador, *jilbāb*. It has nothing to do with our culture. The white of the *ḥāyek* is beautiful. Women had a certain charm, not like a woman covered from head to toe in black, with gloves in summer. Back then they'd wear heels with the *ḥāyek*, you could see their calves, it was feminine and classy. Like, you could be beautiful but modest too; showing your femininity. And the *ḥāyek* is light and airy, made of a really fine silk." (Ines, 26).

Girls wearing *ḥijāb* who had grown up in the more normative religious atmosphere of the 1990s and 2000s tended to produce a narrative according to which their mothers and aunts used to dress "*kīmā les français*" (like French people), despite the past ubiquity of the *ḥāyek* in low income neighbourhoods like Bab el-Oued, and often interpreted this as an internalisation of their status as colonised subjects unaware of their 'true' culture, which for the young people, was based on Islamic values of which their parents were blissfully unaware.

"They were influenced by the French culture that was left behind after 1962. They dressed modern and people followed the French lifestyle unconsciously. Old people not so much, but they were trapped in that sort of modernity the French left us." (Chafiqa, 25).

"We're different from Tunisia and Morocco; they kept their traditions.[350] Now it's rare to see a woman wearing a *ḥāyek*, but whenever I see one, it touches me. I say to myself, 'well done, you kept it up!'. My aunt is the only one in the family who still wears a *ḥāyek*, the others all started wearing *ḥijāb*, during that period with the Islamists and everything. Before that most of them were *civilisées* in the 70s and 80s, with flares and short skirts and everything. They dressed like European women. My Mum started wearing *ḥijāb* during that period; they were naïve before that. But they didn't have the complex we have about who wears *ḥijāb* and who doesn't. But even though I love the *ḥāyek*, I couldn't wear it now. First of all, I wouldn't know how – there's a technique! And it's for old women; so people would think it was weird. And anyway, I'm young and I want to follow today's fashion." (Narimene, 29).

"They all rushed to put on *ḥijāb* when the terrorists started to appear. Some of them did it because they were scared, and others were convinced." (Saliha, 27).

[350] The discourse about Morocco and Tunisia keeping their traditions (*qa3dū cheddīn f les traditions tawā3hum*) was extremely prevalent. Algeria was often seen as unstable because of its lack of tradition.



Central Algiers, 1969. Image from the nostalgic Francophone Facebook Group, *Alger à une certaine époque*.

This discourse was shared by women that had grown up in the less religious atmosphere of the seventies, but who had since started wearing *ḥijāb*; on this issue then, religio-ideological orientation was more a more significant factor in determining relationships to the past than generation. Safia is a health worker at Bab el-Oued's hospital, whose parents had come down from the Casbah in 1962 to occupy an apartment in Rochambeau. Smiling, she underlined her close attachment to the neighbourhood she grew up in: "I opened my eyes for the first time in Bab el-Oued. It was the first thing I saw in this world". After proudly showing me the yellowed photographs of her brother on his military service building the trans-Saharan highway in the mid-1970s and recounting how he was shot in 1994 by armed Islamists for his links to the police, she traced her bitterness back to the day when "our world fell apart": 5 October 1988. Another turning point for Safia was "*kī jā el-Islām*" (when Islam came), in reference to the rapid changes in the neighbourhood from 1989. This phrase gave the clear impression of a new cultural dynamic that felt unfamiliar at the time, transplanted from elsewhere. She described how strange she felt putting on a *ḥijāb* for the first time during this period, but underlined that it was still preferable. However, the link between modernity and being unveiled remained strong: she does not wear *ḥijāb* at work, seeing it as unprofessional. Similarly, her mother exchanged her *ḥāyek* for *ḥijāb* during the same period,

and the fact that both women mentioned that it felt uncomfortable at first pointed to the taking up of *ḥijāb* by the older generation as a difficult transition that was far from the acceptance of a long-lost heritage portrayed by younger people.

On the other hand, women who had not veiled during the 1990s reacted indignantly to younger people's claims that they had been "living like French people". Such an accusation, especially for the generation born during or just after the war of independence, was received as a great insult. These women, generally headstrong and outspoken, always underlined that female family members in their generation enjoyed more freedom to dress as they wished than today's younger generation.

"My mother is 64, and I can assure you, I could never wear the stuff she used to wear in the 60s and 70s nowadays. Short skirts and low necklines… I'd risk getting assaulted. Before the 90s, you could dress pretty much as you wanted; people went out, no problem. It seems like everyone's been brainwashed since the early-90s. Actually, it was the brothers. The fathers mostly never forced their daughters to do anything. But in the neighbourhood, people would start to say to the brothers: 'Your sister isn't wearing *ḥijāb*, how can you accept that?' Young people are always saying that the older generation lived like French women. As if we weren't Muslims before! We've always been Muslims!" (Amel, 42).

In contrast to representations of women taking up *ḥijāb* during the early-1990s, there were also some women who talked about the opposite – of women they knew stopping wearing *ḥijāb* or the *ḥāyek* during two other periods: immediately after independence and at the end of civil conflict in the more stable environment of the early-2000s. Here, veiling was seen as a form of protection in times of political instability – either the war of independence or during the 1990s – that was no longer as necessary during times of peace and stability, when the social cohesion necessary for the operation of *ḥorma* could be guaranteed. Although Nawel, a singer in her early sixties and long-time resident of Bab el-Oued still wore black *ḥijāb* outside because she felt that the situation was not secure enough in Algiers, after arriving at her home for an interview, she quickly changed into leopard skin print leggings and a sequined top, and revealed her dyed auburn hair. Veiling here had little to do with religion, with ḥijāb being deployed in contextual and strategic ways reminiscent of Fanon's view on the political and identity-based usages of the veil.[351]

"After independence my father made the women in my family take off their *ḥāyeks* – he never liked the veil anyway, and he said that we were independent now, so there was no need to be protected from French soldiers.

[351] See F. Fanon, 'L'Algérie se dévoile', in *Sociologie d'une Révolution (L'an V de la révolution algérienne)* (Paris, 1959).

Then after 1988, we were obliged to start wearing *ḥijāb*. But now, I know a lot of women who started wearing the veil then, but don't anymore, because it's no longer dangerous. Women have got back a bit of the freedom they used to have in the 70s and 80s." (Nawel, 63).

"I dress normally, *à la Française*. I have nothing to be ashamed of. I'm religious, and I fast every Tuesday and Thursday, as well as during Ramadan. Now things are easier, you see girls with *ḥijāb* and girls without. A lot of the girls who started wearing it in 88-90 don't wear it anymore. They started wearing it because they were afraid, what with everything that was going on back then, or because their families thought it was better. I never did, because I'm no hypocrite. If I did wear *ḥijāb*, it would be for myself, not for others. All those *ḥijābs* come from the East anyway. If I did veil, I'd wear a *ḥāyek*, of course!" (Djamila, 52).

The existence of different styles of Islamic dress for women in Bab el-Oued – as everywhere else – therefore had multiple meanings expressing different symbolic representations: from nostalgia for the *ḥayek* amongst young women who would not actually want to wear it, to (post)colonial representations of modernity through the term *civilisée*, through uneasy appropriations of what people thought they should feel was their ancestral culture, to strategic uses of the veil to please parents and give an image of *ḥorma*, or to as contextual protection during political instability when traditional codes of honour were threatened.

However, for the younger generation born during or since the 1990s, such ideological pressures related to dress seemed more distant. As we have already glimpsed, many young people did not automatically associate Islamic dress with true piety and were much more likely to consider the absence of hypocrisy as a better indicator of moral fibre. The friendship groups of teenage girls included both those wearing *ḥijāb* and those without, and representations were based on dress as an expression of personal choice and individual identity, in which difference was seen as positive. Perhaps more significant was the changing attitudes of their male peers, as the generation born in the 1990s began to re-evaluate the cultural situation inherited from increasing Islamist influence on social values.

"In my extended family, there are some people who became really religious and treat us like unbelievers. My cousin used to come over all the time and help out my Mum in the kitchen. Because I only have brothers, she was like a big sister to me and we used to talk for hours. Now she wears *jilbāb*, she won't even give me two kisses when we see each other, because she says it's against religion. We're the same family, so what does it matter? When I see her now, we talk, but always with this distance, so it's not the same. We used to be so close. I respect her decision, but it makes me so sad. Once, I wanted to hug her goodbye and she recoiled. It actually made me cry. […] Back in the day, some women wore the *ḥayek* and some wore skirts. There was respect. That's the big difference between now and then. Now there's no respect for difference. But it's changing, I think. We're a new generation. I have friends who are girls and friends who are guys. I think you have to respect

women, whatever they want to wear, or however they behave, even if we can't understand their motivations. We're all human beings, and we're all equal. And that's the end of it." (Djamel, 20).

Representations of styles of dress as part of a changing symbolic field were, of course, not limited to discussions of the veil. Men's clothing was also remembered in Bab el-Oued, though such representations were less ideologically charged or expressed in terms of *ḥorma*. Most people, young and old, referred to flares, moustaches and tight shirts with wide collars as representing men's fashion in Algiers during the period; as well as the particular attention given to being *bien looké* (stylish) for the purpose of attracting girls. Saturday nights were the time when men made the most effort to look their best:

"I remember my older brothers. They had long hair, flares and really tight shirts. On Saturday nights, you could feel the tension as they got ready to go out. They'd go and get their hair trimmed, or get the hair dryer out and spend ages on it. It was important to look good. They'd start by going out to the bars in Bab el-Oued and have a drink there, maybe a pastis or a beer, then they'd move on towards Rue Michelet, stopping in bar terraces on the way and drinking with friends they met. And they'd spend the evening like that, bar hopping." (Daho, 52).

"We were just like everyone else in the world. We followed the fashion of the time, we listened to the Beatles, KC and the Sunshine Band, Johnny Halliday, and all the other French singers. *Cha3bi* too, of course. But we weren't like these young people today, with their jeans hanging below their behinds and showing off the brand of their underwear! No! We dressed elegantly, jeans, nice shirts, sometimes suits too. We were proud to look good. Even I had long hair back then [laughs]! We all did!" (Noureddine, 63).

"I had long hair too. All my sisters were *civilisées*. We were losing our traditions, but we didn't notice at the time. The war had been hard for our parents and we just wanted to live our lives, be in the moment and follow fashion. Our parents didn't mind so much, they saw the development of society on television and had nothing to say about our choices, as long as we behaved in a decent way, with respect. They let us have a lot of freedom to experiment." (Mohamed, 64).

Other styles for men identified with urban sub-groups were the *bleu de Shanghai*, a cobalt blue cotton uniform originally worn by sailors and fishermen in the port of Algiers, and named after the Chinese dye used to create the distinctive colour, consisting of loose fitting trousers and a button up jacket and often worn with a *tricot marin*, a t-shirt with blue and white horizontal stripes. By the post-independence period, the *shanghai* had become synonymous with an image of the hyper-masculine wide-boy wheeler-dealer, always ready for a fight in the name of honour. Those wearing the shanghai were linked spatially to the lower Casbah, where throughout the 1960s and 1970s, they were engaged – amongst other activities – in protection rackets for bars and cafés and especially with acting as pimps in the brothels in the area around Jem3a el-Yahoud. Such a reputation earned them the name *ṣḥāb*

redjla (literally, the 'masculine ones'). Although the garment's roots extend back to the 1930s, the *shanghai* was worn as a badge of identity that translated traditional concepts of masculinity, as well as a strong sense of belonging to Algiers, linked both to a certain way of speaking and to the *cha3bi* music scene.

"We call it *redjla*, meaning being a real man. He'll stand by you, and even if you're in the wrong, he won't abandon you. My brother used to wear one. If you saw someone wearing a *shanghai*, you knew he was pure Algérois." (Farid, 62).



Three male aesthetics: *qachābiyya*, suit and younger fashion. Médéa, 1974. Image from family album.

After independence, Algiers dockers wore an updated version of the shanghai, a denim jacket and trousers known as the *trois fils blancs* because of its triple rows of white stitching. With a similar tough guys image, dockers enjoyed a better reputation linked to their more honest work than *ṣḥāb redjla*. In today's Bab el-Oued, many older men still wore both outfits, with the shanghai being much more common. Continuing to wear these clothes articulated a desire to be associated with the values of *redjla* represented by images of *le vieux Alger* and to disassociate onself from more recently arrived rural migrants.

Today's younger generation in Algiers has its recognisable urban subgroups, with a dizzying amount of social diversity identified though styles of dress, use of language, behavioural patterns and music: *akhīnā* ('Islamists' defined by their Middle Eastern long white *qāmīṣ*, sandals, beard without moustache, and use of Standard Arabic); *ānānīch* or *chī chīs* (posh kids from the heights of Algiers, known for their designer brands clothing, snobbish attitudes, and extensive use of French); *nqūcha* or *3aṭayyīn* (male homosexuals); *ṣḥab zzeṭla* (stoners); *djāj 3arab* (girls wearing sexy, tight clothes, *ḥijāb*, make-up and

designer sunglasses, constantly attached to their mobile phones); *ḥallābīn* (young men only interested in picking up girls, defined by tight jeans and pointed shoes and continual boasting about their cars); *qīqīs* or *ṣḥāb redjla* (tough guys, mostly from poor backgrounds, defined by their tracksuits, football shirts, love of raï music and elaborately gelled hair styles, often viewed as undesirable elements); *hrādes* (the heavy metal crowd and pseudo-goths); *bnēt famīlia* (well-brought up girls from good families defined by their respect for *ḥorma*); *rappeurs* (defined by the international hip-hop aesthetic); *kwāva* or *chbārek* (rural migrants, derided for their lack of politeness, regional accents and cheap clothes); *mrēyel* (men who go to raï cabarets, known for their unbuttoned shirts and penchant for alcohol and prostitutes).

Within this mix, for most young people in Bab el-Oued, clothing brands held significant importance as identifiers. Nike recently opened up an official store in the neighbourhood, and the latest models of trainers were available in the myriad of sports and shoe shops on the main shopping street. Kader, whose personal style oscillated somewhere between East London gangster chic and New York hipster, guided me through the maze of aesthetic representations that defined Bab el-Oued's youth cultures:

"It comes from France, from the *cités*, especially Lacoste. If you wear tracksuit bottoms with Air Max, you're a *caillra*. Bab el-Oued's like that: Lacoste and Nike… even if you don't have money, we like to wear brands, not like some hillbilly. But everyone has their style. Look, if you see a guy wearing Lacoste and *Larīnī*,[352] he's *ṣḥāb redjla*, he sells dope, he steals. How else could he afford it? The *Larīnī* cost 20,000 DA [about £200]! Of course he's at it! They also put loads of gel in their hair, football shirts from the Spanish teams, Lacoste caps, Kangol trackies, and a *qachābiyya* [traditional thick wool tunic] in winter. It's like a whole culture, right? Then there's the Nike guys, they're usually sporty, play in some club, or whatever. Then there are the rural migrants, they just wear whatever they can find, tired old jeans, and a fake Lacoste with the giant crocodile, and you're like: he's definitely not a city guy! There's the football supporters, too. Mouloudiya supporters wear Joma, because they sponsor the team. And we USMA supporters used to wear Nike, but now we're with Adidas." (Kader, 19).

Despite the stricter operation of *ḥorma* in the neighbourhood and less freedom of movement for women in the past, and the presence of a greater diversity of aesthetics today, pointing to greater freedom of individual expression, the 1970s was viewed by many young men as a time of greater acceptance of different styles of dress and lifestyles. The nation-building period therefore stood for respect for traditional codes of honour, especially for more religious elements of the older and younger generations, who associated it with a reassuring social conservatism; but for most of the younger generation, and less conservative older

[352] A type of light-weight running shoe, with a web-like rubber design covering soft cloth. The term *larīnī* comes from the French word for spider, *l'araignée*.

people, the seventies was also associated with greater acceptance of difference and individual freedom, especially for those opposed to Islamism.

"Back then you could go out in shorts, but now these new *akhīnā* say you can't because it's *ḥarām*. You're walking along, minding your own business, and one stops you and says, 'Hey, don't wear sunglasses because the prophet didn't!' or, 'Don't wear Nike because it's American!' Back then, it was normal, there wasn't this generation that thought it could tell everyone else what to do. You could wear pretty much what you liked. No one interfered in other people's lives. They weren't thinking about what other people were wearing. Now these guys that pray a bit think they can tell you what to do. But they don't do it themselves, of course. Women could go out wearing skirts, but now all those *ṣḥāb redjla* would be surrounding them, making comments." (Hichem, 19).

As a result of this view of the 1970s as standing for greater tolerance of difference, and because of the general nostalgic narrative inherited from their parents, a certain retro look closely linked to the aesthetics of old Algiers has begun to emerge among middle-class young people. Clothes, images and music associated with post-colonial Algiers that gave off an air of *belda* or *rīḥet el-blēd* (the atmosphere of old Algiers) are increasingly in vogue. However, for this younger generation, such symbols of the past are often not limited to the nation-building period, and span a length of time running from the 1940s to the late-1970s, giving a pastiche sense of pastness that was as yet uncommodified, but was certainly the mark of the trendy young educated Algiers urbanite, expressed through activities such as listening to or playing ch3abi and gnawa music, wearing the *bleu de shanghai*, or smart vintage clothes associated with a sense of *ḥaṭṭā* (class), often described using the English phrase 'old school'. This kind of self-expression of a new generation mirrored the vintage trend in Europe and North America, but was manifested in ways that spoke to the local context. In 2013, a group of young women launched a successful Facebook campaign in aid of Ḥāyek Day, for which a large group of young women gathered in the city centre wearing their grandmothers' *ḥāyeks*, in an embodied performance of nostalgia. The initiative was repeated in March 2014, this time expanded to include men wearing only the *bleu de shanghai*, and was widely reported in the press.[353]

"*Belda* is about wearing a tricot marin, *bleu de shanghai*, sitting in your chair, smoking a Bastos [now defunct cigarette brand previously made in Bab el-Oued], looking out at the sea or going fishing on the rocks, or staying in the neighbourhood chatting into the night. I wear my Dad's old *tricot marin*; it has *rīḥet el-blēd*. He told me all the stuff he used to get up to when he was wearing it; believe me, it's seen some life! It used to be too big for me, but I've grown a bit now. I'll never get rid of it. He used to have a *shanghai* too, but he threw it out. My

[353] *L'Expression*, 17 April 2014.

Gran stopped wearing her *ḥāyek*, and he stopped wearing the *shanghai*. I'd wear it if he still had it, because I don't like the new ones, it's got to be that special kind of faded blue, not too bright and new. It's like, my heritage. When you think of Bab el-Oued, that's what you think of: shanghai, Bastos, days by the sea, long evenings, cha3bi always playing, tea, the fishing port… *Yīh, yamēt zmēn* ! [the days of old]." (Kader, 19).

Changing relationships to religiosity

Representations of religion during the 1970s focused on three main themes: syncretism, generalised lack of practice, and age-defined relationships to religiosity. Simultaneously, however, the younger generation, as well some older people, also sought to explain the disjuncture between such phenomena and today's more normative Islam, using the latter as the definition of religious truth and a yardstick by which to judge the religiosity of the past as erroneous. Here, 1970s society was viewed as having been unaware of what was couched as an ancestrally authentic and purified religiosity denuded of syncretism, false understandings and superstitions that had been (re)discovered by subsequent generations, thus simultaneously accounting for changes in religious practice and eliding the historically situated nature of today's more normative religiosity, which emerged during the late-1980s.

Safia, who spoke about the moment when Islam 'arrived' in the neighbourhood during the late-1980s, remembered an environment of similar syncretism during the 1970s, describing heavily-female gendered religious practices. Both religious devotion and requests for spiritual intercession in personal matters could be enacted equally with a trip up to the mausoleum of Sidi Abderrahmane, located just inside the Casbah on the edge of Bab el-Oued, by sitting next to the marabout's tomb and perhaps asking for help with a marriage proposal; or alternatively by making the short trip in the other direction up to the basilica of Notre Dame d'Afrique, to light a candle beside the altar and recite a prayer. Both sites were places where women of the neighbourhood would meet, perform intercessionary rituals and socialise. Safia also remembered that her mother, who described herself as *bent De Gaulle* (a daughter of De Gaulle), would swear an oath by simultaneously enunciating the usual Arabic term *wallāh* and making the sign of the cross with her right hand. Now, she said earnestly, "we know that such practices were wrong and not really Islamic".

Religious practice in Bab el-Oued during the 1970s remained influenced by commonplace forms of religious syncretism inherited from the colonial era. Selim, who grew up in the fishing village of Bou Haroun, remembered his father as "*un pêcheur dans les deux*

sens" (using the French term denoting both 'fisherman' and 'sinner'). He described religion in the village before and just after independence as constituting a mixed field of symbols and representations. For example, his uncle, despite being a pious Muslim, would help the local priest, and his grandfather participated in the annual procession of fishing boats carrying the statue of the Virgin Mary from the local church. After independence, the Pied Noir tradition of *kémia-anisette* remained,[354] and the village's bars were well frequented by the area's moudjahids. Apparently, no one saw any contradiction between his grandfather's heavy drinking and his observance of Ramadan, which seemed to have functioned more as a period when, as well as fasting, religiously frowned-upon but socially acceptable practices such as drinking acohol were temporarily given up. Similarly, it was normal for Bab el-Oued's many bars to close for the month of fasting.

Selim's depiction of his grandfather was echoed by many in Bab el-Oued through the trope of the option existing during the seventies between "*le bar ou la mosquée*". This trope, which appeared as a central feature of social memories of relationships to religion and was repeated time and time again by people of all generations, articulated the extent to which being Muslim did not exclude certain activities now regarded as illicit, and translated a certain discomfort among some older people with the heavily normative nature of religious discourse and its increased role in the regulation of social behaviour since the late-1980s.

"If you wanted to go to the mosque, you could; and if you wanted to go to the bar, you could. You were free to choose. But now, they always want to impose things on people. I'm a Muslim, but I like a drink. My sons don't like it, but that's their problem." (Imed, 71).

Age-defined religiosity was also a central feature of these representations. Though young people were encouraged to be extremely respectful of religion, religious practice was universally seen as the preserve of older people. In contrast, young people were expected to enjoy their youth and not concern themselves with religious practice. Such expectations also delimited the boundaries of respect between generations: religion was a serious domain that required the experience and maturity for proper understanding and correct practice, and was therefore inappropriate for the young, who owed their elders respect for their greater religious practice and experience. Translating this age-defined relationship based on respect for the sacred was an often repeated trope of young people being turned away from mosques, with older practitioners invariably using the phrase '*mā zāl rāk sghīr!*' (you're still too young!).

[354] Taken in the afternoon, this small meal served in bars often consisted of cured pork and Pastis.

Beginning religious practice therefore constituted a rite of passage that marked the transition from a single young man who remained *māchī fāṭen* (unaware of the matters spiritual) and who was expected to *yez3ā* (enjoy life), to a more stable family man, and thus a definitive transformation into maturity; much as starting to wear the *ḥāyek* often marked the passage to respectable family life for women. More traditional age-defined religiosity was used to criticise what was often seen as today's more hypocritical relationship with morality and religious practice.

"It was only old men that went to the mosque. I started to pray, properly, at around 45. People didn't really care about praying back then. I even started doing Ramadan late. I only started when I married and had children. It was just something you started doing when you settled down. It's like the *ḥājj*, something you do when you're old. Like atoning for your wild days and getting your virginity back [laughs]! Listen, you had to be mature to deal with religion. Our Prophet started his divine thing [*il a eu le truc divin*] when he was 40, not 20!" (Samir, 55).

"In each family, there were two or three people who practiced. Everyone was religious, just not practicing. Most people fasted and everyone believed. That's how it was. But praying wasn't for young people – and it was more honest, because we respected people who prayed. You knew that once you started praying, there was no more fooling around. You couldn't have double standards. Now people have no problem praying, then going out and stealing something. Once when I was young, I was with an older friend who was a bit religious, and he asked me to go into the mosque to pray with him. I didn't want to, because I felt at the bottom of my soul that God was inside, and I didn't even know how to perform the prayer, I was scared and felt it would be disrespectful." (Said, 60).

"We used to drink beer, it was normal. We did all sorts. Between you and me, we even used to go pick-pocketing on Rue Didouche. We knew religion forbade it, but we weren't conscious. But that's being young – you have your crazy times, then you settle down." (Abdellatif, 60).

"Neither of my parents ever prayed. Young people especially didn't pray, but they were respectful of others. Now it's the opposite: everyone prays, but everyone just thinks of themselves". (Imène, 41).

"Before, religion was seen as too serious, too sacred. Young people weren't old enough to assimilate it. Why do you think there was all that killing in the 90s? Young people thought they understood religion. Little pipsqueaks who suddenly thought they could interpret the Quran and criticise others. It's not right! What the hell could they know? Just because you can read *Sūrat el-Fātiḥa* in Arabic, doesn't make you an Imam!" (Amel, 42).

The narrative of unawareness was used by young people that had grown up with the normative religiosity that has prevailed since the early-1990s to explain the lack of religious practice of their parents' generation, which was compassionately portrayed as either wanting to enjoy life after independence and therefore understandably not concerned with religion; or

as being ignorant of their own religion due to their proximity to the French influences of the colonial period (*mā kānūch 3lā bēlhum* – 'they didn't know'). In the younger generation – and some members of the older generation whose traditional process of settling-down and increased religious practice had coincided with the early 1990s – the new form of religiosity was thus portrayed as the rediscovery of cultural authenticity hitherto hidden underneath the foreign influences that lasted until the late-1980s.

"This new generation has brought a lot of things. It's true that I was *jeḥla* (ignorant) before, I didn't know." (Samir, 55).

"They were ignorant. Not in a bad way, it wasn't their fault. Like in my family, we used to celebrate Mouloud [the birthday of the Prophet], but we stopped because they say it's *bid3a* [innovation]." (Chafiqa, 25).

"We thought you could do all the prayers you hadn't done during your life on the Warm Rock [*ḥajara skhūna*] in the afterlife, and then just get into heaven. So people would say, 'Nevermind, I'll just live my life and make up the prayers at the end'. But in the late-70s, the Muslim Brothers started to encourage people to pray. People began to learn about their religion. They found out lots of things they didn't know. They were doing lots of things without knowing why, just because it was tradition. And some of it was wrong. There is no rock in the afterlife." (Noureddine, 63).

"It's because they didn't study, they didn't have an education. They were going to visit saints' tombs, like Sidi Abderrahmane, but it's *ḥarām*! They'd go and make requests to the saint, make promises, light candles, take food and sit. They didn't know. There was no one to explain to them the meanings of the verses in the Quran, so they didn't know how to apply it. They also had all these superstitions: not drinking out of a broken cup, no sweeping at night, upturned slippers bring bad luck, not looking at your reflection in a broken mirror, not singing in the house. We've studied, so we know it's not true! They didn't study, this is the main thing. France didn't let them, and wanted to attack our culture and our language." (Narimene, 29).

The rapid rise of the FIS was explained by some as a result of this lack of knowledge, making society susceptible to 'extremism'. While the methods used by Islamism in Algeria during this period, especially in relation to recruiting from the most vulnerable segments of society, were often disapproved of, the normativity and visible orthopraxy brought by Islamism, with its greater emphasis on interdictions, remained heavily internalised. As a result, there was an overarching narrative about society having been religiously vulnerable as a whole and having been taken in by the FIS.

"They were denied a religious education. France forbade it. Even in the 60s and 70s, there was no religious education. So there was a rupture. It wasn't like the day after independence they could just go back to their religion. You have to learn first. You can't become a Muslim without doing research. In the 90s, a lot of people became Muslims just because other people were, and they got used. But the people who really studied, who

really understood religion, didn't follow the FIS. That's why we went into such chaos during the *décennie noire*: you can't just start saying such and such is a sin, you have to spend time to understand why first." (Slimane, 34).

Anis described the initial attractiveness of the FIS movement to residents of Bab el-Oued, who were initially won over through their social and charity work; but were disappointed by their nepotism during their period governing the local council.

"It all changed after 88. People realised they didn't know their religion. The FIS started to attract people. They seemed like they were on our side. They had an Islamic Souk in Lelièvre, where the café is now, and they were selling potatoes at 1 DA per kilo, giving out sandwiches, and sheep for Eid. They got young people into the mosques, and people liked them. I went to their meetings a few times, to see what it was about. I saw people from all over the country, a real feeling of togetherness and brotherhood. Someone you didn't know would ask you sit and eat with his group. There was warmth. But we didn't know what was going to happen afterwards. I should have known that politics and religion don't mix, because religion is all truth and politics is all lies. When the vote came, they won the local council and started to become something else. Suddenly there'd only be *akhīna* working in the Mairie, no women. They were taking advantage of their position, giving jobs to their friends. Their image began to change, and we began to see them for what they really were." (Anis, 37).

However, for those heavily involved in FIS activism, the same period is remembered as a golden age of solidarity and the exciting promise of a new society that seemed just over the horizon. The period was described with similar nostalgia as that used to portray the nation-building period. Older FIS activists explicitly linked the two periods as standing for the same principles of solidarity and traditional morality.

"We lived the same period from 89 to 91. People became well-behaved again, like we were in the 70s. The mentality almost became like it was in the 70s, true Islam. We were experiencing the Islamic Republic, there was love, brotherhood. We went back to the days when we had *ḥorma*. In the late-70s, I was 20 and I'm telling you in 89-91, it was the same period. They were the best years of my life; we had hope again." (Malek, 53).

This comparison was based on memories of 1970s sociability, not the politics of the time – which were viewed negatively by Malek as 'communist' and as having portrayed Islam and social conservatism as reactionary. Here then, those espousing Islamist ideology participated in the generalised nostalgia for seventies sociability, in spite of the politics of the day. Furthermore, linking the rise of Islamism with the authenticity of 1970s sociability – if not the religiosity of the period – seemed to lend credence to the Islamist project. At the other end of the spectrum however, on the secular left, the cultural policies of the 1970s were routinely blamed for having paved the way for Islamism through the recruitment of Arabic teachers from the Middle East during the Cultural Revolution, many of whom were thought to be

Muslim Brotherhood members, and who were seen as gradually Islamising a new generation through their influence in the education system.

Though all coincided on the importance of religion as one of the foundations of society, young people wholly rejected the idea of compulsion in religion, through their disapproval of the trope of the bearded Islamist telling people how they should live their lives. Attitudes toward religion within the generation that grew up in the 1990s were regulated by individualism, with *bīnī w bīn rebbī* (it's between me and God) often used as a rebuttal of unwanted interference in their forms of self-expression from those displaying an outwardly religious appearance. Some young people thus projected their individual relationship with religiosity and anti-Islamist stance onto the 1970s, which came to stand for secularism understood as an individual relationship with religious practice illustrated by tropes of the 'bar or the mosque', that were used to express the pressure and conformism felt in the heavily normative atmosphere of today's society.

"The bars were open, you could have a beer on a café terrace. It was almost secular. Personally, I agree with secularism, because religion is between you and God. Even if someone doesn't believe in God, it's his choice. They say before we were ignorant of our religion, but I don't buy it. We'd just come out of the war of independence, but we weren't *jāhilīn*, not completely ignorant of religion. People knew they were Muslims, but they did as they pleased – between them and God. Now they want to impose religion. For me, people were more aware back then, and the *jāhiliyya* is now. […] I'm a musician, and they're always coming up and telling me I should stop the playing the guitar when they see me carrying it around. Once there was this guy on the bus, he came and sat next to me. I was chewing gum, looking out of the window and he goes, 'Sorry to bother you, but don't you know chewing gum is *ḥarām*?'. I was so sick of it that day, I just looked at him and said, 'Fuck *ḥarām*!' [*el-ḥarām netnāk 3līh*]. He got off at the next stop." (Djamel, 20).

"I get people asking me if I pray. I tell them it's none of their business, *bīnī w bīn rebbī*! The Quran says 'there's no compulsion in religion'. So if not even God can't force me to do something, who the hell do you think *you* are to tell me what I should do?" (Walid, 24).

"My uncle is an *akhīna*. When he comes round, it's not like a normal person, who'll ask you how you're doing, how's school and maybe make a joke. No! He comes in [puts on serious voice], '*Salām 3līkum*'… he sits down and starts nagging. He can smell cigarette smoke on me, why haven't I been doing this, why am I wearing that. He doesn't even ask how I am. All judgements. That's what they're like. Not all of them though, I know some who are totally amazing." (Kader, 18).

Many young people complained that *akhīna* were judgemental (*iḥekkmū fīk*) and high-handed, violating deeply internalised principles of social equality by placing themselves above others, as well as traditional codes of honour by commenting on the foibles of others in

public. Chafiqa, a veiled girl from a conservative family, echoed the points made by much more secular-minded Djamel above, explaining the difference between *tarhīb* (forcing people into religion with threats), which she associated with the period from 1985 to the present; and *targhīb* (convincing people with positive arguments), which she associated with the period from independence to 1985.

"In the 70s, everyone was free to live their religion as they wanted, to practice or not. Now there isn't that freedom anymore. Now there's always someone telling you what to do. You know what the [spiritual] consequences are for breaking the rules, you're aware. But it's your choice." (Chafiqa, 25).

Adding to this narrative on Islamists and the role of religion in society, was the trope of the hypocrisy of those displaying their religious beliefs through their outward appearance, and especially the link between *akhīna*, materialism and business networks. Thus, today's focus on appearances, particularly in portrayals of the standard Islamist symbols of the beard, *qāmīṣ* and *jilbāb* were sometimes associated with practices – paying bribes, not helping others, selling lingerie – seen as antithetical to the religiosity declared through outward appearances. Such religious insincerity was contrasted to what was sometimes seen as a more genuine religiosity, despite the absence of practice, and the lack of importance given to outward signifiers of religiosity during the 1970s.

"It's like they say, 'never judge a book by its cover'. Now people are all about appearance, the façade. But are they really religious? Some people just have beards so they can get into the business networks, or to make customers trust them. But there are also people with beards who are really respectful. Like Abdallah, he's an *akhīna* in our neighbourhood, he sees us totally drunk sometimes, but he just smiles and says '*Salām 3līkum*', but some of them will look at you like you're a piece of shit. When he says that, it makes me ashamed, because even drunk, he respects me." (Mehdi, 25).

"They may not have read the Quran back then, but you know from how they behaved that they were applying Islam. Now it's supposedly religious, but lots of people who say they're religious do things that are against religion. I've even known Islamist paeodophiles. Some of them cheat you on the scales at the market. All the richest jewellers are 'brothers'. They've got all the businesses, and they're all making profit off us and just using religion as a mask. There's good and bad though. (Djamel, 20).

It is important to underline, as Djamel does above, that Islamists were far from homogenous. For example, many residents made a distinction between *akhīna* from the neighbourhood that were seen as upstanding members of the community, and Islamists from outside the

neighbourhood that had benefitted from the 2005 amnesty for Islamic militants.[355] Usually running shops selling religious items that were widely thought in the neighbourhood to be fronts for laundering money gained though terrorism during the 1990s, these *repentis* had little relationship with the neighbourhood, and even prayed separately at some mosques. This inter-Islamist cleavage demonstrates another commonly made association with *akhīna*, the view that some had blood on their hands and the existence of a certain amount of suspicion in relation to them.

These negative views of some *akhīna* clashed with their aura of piety. Since being honest and respectable (*mdeyyen*) was semantically and conceptually linked to the concept of religion (*dīn*), the perceived inconsistencies and hypocresies in the behaviour of *akhīna* were even more noticeable and exposed to social disapproval. Furthermore, the following quotes show that a degree of religious syncretism continues to exist. While classical Arabic formulas, such as the formula used after saying the name of the Prophet by Walid below, were non-existent in the spoken dialect of Algiers during the 1970s and are a marker of the rise of normative Islam during the late-1980s, some religious words were routinely said in French within Algerian Arabic speech: such as *mosquée* (mosque) and even *Coran* (Quran).

"They were honest without religion [*kānū mdiynīn blā dīn*]. Now it's like a religion 'made in China': lots of *ḥijāb*, beards, praying; but then the same people smoke, drink and pull girls. They're just using Islam to cover their backs. That's why we say it was better back then. Maybe they didn't even know the Quran [*waqīla mā kānuch même pas i3erfū l Coran*], I dunno… but at least they didn't have as many double standards: they loved God, didn't do so many bad things, respected women and old people. Like, discipline. (Kader, 18).

"They believed in God and Mohammed (SAWS), even if they didn't pray, drank alcohol and didn't fast sometimes. Now it's the opposite: it's all fake. They make up new *ḥadīths*, fake *sūras* on Facebook, just to tell people what to do. There were little shits in my class who now wear the *qāmīṣ* and think they can tell me what to do, when just a few months ago they were stealing, drinking and smoking dope. And in the shops, you see these 'religious people' selling bad quality stuff for inflated prices, and they're supposed to be good Muslims! They just use the *qāmīṣ* so people will trust them." (Walid, 24).

As Kader hinted at above, the omnipresence of the moral codes linked to the emergence of a new normative Islam during the 1990s, with the appearance of non-traditional

[355] In September 2005, a referendum was held on the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, which was implemented by Presidential decree in February 2006. The charter granted immunity from prosecution for guerilla fighters that had not "committed the worst crimes" and for army personnel. The amnesty caused much controversy within Algerian society about ex-emirs benefitting from state protection, as well as in the international human rights community. See report by the FIDH at http://www.fidh.org/fr/maghreb-moyen-orient/algerie/Projet-de-charte-pour-la-paix-et.

forms of Islamic dress from the Middle East, stricter social taboos against non-practice and certain forms of gender interaction, had not – in the view of most residents – improved the moral fibre of the neighbourhood, with traditional pre-Islamist codes of morality often seen as having been more effective in regulating social behaviour. Surprisingly, this discourse was also shared by those defining themselves as religious. Ali, a devout young man from one of Bab el-Oued's large housing estates, sporting the trademark *qāmīṣ* and beard, was brought up by a secular father and experienced a 'conversion' to Islam after the earthquake of 2003.

"There used to be *ḥorma*, and now it's completely gone. It comes from your upbringing, not from religion. And it's people's upbringing that's changed. Even though people are more religious now, there's less *ḥorma*. Now it's all mixed up, you find people who pray, then they think they can do whatever they like, and they don't conform to *ḥorma* at all. It's about what's in your heart and your actions, not about whether you've got a beard or not". (Ali, 26).

Individualism and consumerism were also tied to contemporary expressions of religiosity through *ḥasānāt* (good deeds). This word was often defined as 'good points' ensuring access to paradise, instead of acts of charity or goodwill. For some, decisions were made according to how many points would be obtained, in reference to a sort of spiritual accounting system at the centre of which stood the individual as consumer.

"I always pray at the mosque. When you pray alone, you get one *ḥasāna*; but if you pray in a group, you get twenty-seven. The more people there are in the mosque, the more *ḥasānāt* you get. Also, the longer you walk to a mosque, the more good points – every step is a *ḥasāna*. If you go to the one just here, it's only 30 steps; but the one in Place des Martyrs might be 100 steps." (Mohamed, 64).

Despite widespread suspicion of the motives behind overt symbols of religious belonging and practice, that pointed to a new generation no longer impressed by Islamism, the majority of young people showed deep respect for religion. While individual practice such as prayer among young people was intermittent or non-existent in most cases, attendance at communal prayers among young people was extremely infrequent: some did attend Friday prayers, though often chose the mosque based on how short the sermon would be. However, some young men used the mosque outside prayer times as a space to meet and chat with friends, escape the pressures of city life, as a quiet space to do schoolwork given the overcrowded conditions in most apartments, or to ask the Imam things like 'how to make money or if chatting up girls is *ḥarām*'. While most insisted on the lack of importance of appearances, young people's relationship differed from that of their parents in the proliferation of religious information and interpretations made available via internet. This

much more globalised Islam in which the individual must navigate the bewildering number of interpretations and tackle the relativisation of truth, while still searching for a single truth, was sometimes experienced as exasperating, creating a sense of nostalgia for a perceived religious simplicity experienced by past generations.

"We don't apply our religion properly. You're born as a Muslim, but when it comes to how, sometimes we don't know what Islam to apply; so we just end up praying and that's it. One person tells you it should be like this, the other tells you no. Everyone recommends something different. Where's the true Islam? What truth should you apply?" (Saliha, 27).

Two Algerias

In terms of memories of sociability, the 1970s represented a time when community solidarities remained strong, before the fragmentation caused by conflict. This was also true of religiosity, which in the present was expressed within a framework of increased individualism. Seventies religiosity was remembered for its greater syncretism, age-defined boundaries for access to religious knowledge and practice, low levels of normativity, and adherence to purely communal expressions of religious belonging such as fasting during Ramadan and Friday prayers, to the detriment of individual practice. In contrast, today's religion was highly normative in relation to behaviour and dress, but also much more individualistic in terms of the need for the development of personal understanding of religious norms (a task sometimes seen as bewildering), and feeling 'ready' to begin practicing certain elements that now define a sense of being religious, for example, wearing *ḥijāb* or performing individual prayers.

Many across different generations clearly saw the increased presence of religion in the public sphere as an improvement, visible in representations of past unawareness, and there was a strong view that the religiosity of the seventies had been erroneous for its syncretism, lack of individual practice, non-adherence to dietary prohibitions and traditional practices such as visiting saints' tombs, now seen as unorthodox. However, in spite of the pervasive influence of Islamist discourse present in these narratives, young people often viewed those with an outwardly religious appearance with suspicion, characterising them as judgemental or hypocritical. Despite perceptions of improved religious knowledge and practice though the (re)discovery of a purified, authentic Islam, this relatively recent normative Islam was often seen as having failed to stem the decline in a set of the moral values that were associated with

the traditional society and religiosity of the 1970s. As Ali put it, 'there used to be morality but no religion, and now there's religion but no morality'. Here again, memories of the past were used to criticise the present, producing surprising admissions from Islamists themselves that their brand of Islam had not succeeded as a moral project.

This chapter has attempted to explore representations of social, moral and religious change through memories of the nation-building period and has shown how memories of the past provide a compass with which to navigate in the search for a moral order within a social world that has experienced rapid changes associated with modernisation, Islamisation, economic liberalisation and violence. Experiences of conflict formed the central reference point of these representations, giving a strong sense that talking about the 1970s was actually a way of expressing the massively destabilising effects of the 1990s. Representations of moral decay and the decline of traditional forms of solidarity and morality translated larger concerns over the breakdown of community and increased social fragmentation visible in a series of oppositions. Warm neighbourhood relations and open doors were contrasted with reduced solidarity as a result of mistrust symbolised by closed doors with metal bars. Images of all Algerians being on the same socio-economic level, and a certain feeling of unity after independence were contrasted with the polarising effects of the identity politics and the increased liberalisation of the 1980s and 1990s. Memories of the 1970s translated the passing a certain innocence; of a mutual trust and the desire to be together as a society, illustrated by Nawel's father's decision to have the women in his family unveil after independence because after the Pied-Noirs left, '*qe3ednā bīnetnā*' (it was just us); or Said's recollection of being able to sleep in the car by the side of the road without fear, something now unthinkable: 'We all used to trust each other, and no one was scared. It breaks my heart.'

The traditional codes of honour and respect that regulated social interactions were also counterposed to increased individualism, consumerism and greater access to public space for women. Authentic Algerian tradition as a symbolic universe represented by the *ḥāyek* and the *bleu de shanghai* was contrasted with the appearance of forms of dress and religious ideologies imported from the Middle East. The syncretism and age-defined nature of religious practice interpreted both as ignorance using the yardstick of the normative Islam of the 1990s and as standing for a more tolerant religiosity by those for whom normative Islam's primary feature was to limit individual freedoms. The traditional solidarities articulated by representations of spatial proximity and socio-economic equality in the term *kīf kīf* were contrasted to both the spatial and social fragmentations experienced in the transition from a

socialist economy, increased consumerism and individualism, as well as changes in social relations and settlement patterns as a result of conflict. Memories of the 1970s were thus used to commiserate over the dizzying changes experienced by Algerian society over the last thirty years, though in diverse ways to make different points about present social subjectivities. What emerges most strongly is the image of an Algeria before the 1990s and another after the *Décennie Noire*, and a sense that better days stood behind – rather than in front of – Algerian society.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: The Future Past

Time, Space and the Loss of the Future

In 1972, Algeria's future looked bright. A decade after independence, the country seemed to be steaming ahead on many fronts, embracing an exciting new modernism with confidence that generated hope for the future. Algeria had recently become the first in the region to successfully nationalise its oil and gas reserves and citizens were enjoying free universal education for the first time.[356] Production was beginning at the gigantic new steel complex at El Hadjar, while the first of the 1000 Socialist Villages, model settlements that would revolutionise the countryside, was completed near Tlemcen, and agricultural labourers were gaining ownership of land under the Agrarian Revolution. Construction work was underway on the luxurious Hotel Aurassi, as well as Oscar Niemeyer's Olympic Stadium and the Bab Ezzouar university campus in Algiers. As the myriad of state-owned companies were initiating bold new worker self-management programs, the first families were moving into the thousands of apartments that made up the new social housing complex in Bachdjarrah, and ideologically-motivated young people, the *coopérants*, were arriving from around the world to participate in Algeria's future as teachers, doctors and managers. In the capital, the bilingual residents of a cosmopolitan metropolis shaking off its colonial past steered the latest Peugeot 504s down spotlessly clean streets lined with bright white buildings, toward the brand new modernist public beach resorts at Club des Pins and Moretti. Women planned weekends in Paris with no need for visas, while long-haired young men in flares drank beer or Pastis at pavement cafés. In the evening, people queued outside the Koutoubia nightclub, from which echoed the beats of the latest funk and soul hits.

Despite the existence during the 1970s of a series of problems ranging from frequent shortages of goods and a growing urban crisis centred on the lack of housing, older people in Bab el-Oued remembered looking forward to a better future based on notions of visible

[356] The rate of school attendance of school-age children (6-13 years) rose from 25% in 1962 to 71% by 1977 (83% for boys and 58% for girls), falling short of the projected figures of the first four-year plan. Enrolment in secondary schools rose from 164,000 in 1966 to 742,000 in 1977 (See Bennoune, *The Making of Contemporary Algeria*, p. 224-5).

progress in living standards when compared to the preceding colonial or immediate postcolonial periods.

"We thought the future was going to be better – of course we did! You just had to look back to independence to see that we were already living better. So the future looked good." (Larbi, 48).

Postcolonial nationalism in Algeria advanced a coherent imaginary of the march of time, based on the movement out of a past characterised by the indignity of colonial rule, through a present of nation-building whose austerities and sacrifices seemed more than justified by the prospect of a bright future of social justice. Official history – with its many exclusions, backward projections, mystifications and simplifications – conjured up a heroic revolutionary period of national unity that overcome the ultimate humiliation of colonialism, with an empowered Algeria as the only African country to win its freedom by force of arms, having taken its destiny into its own hands rather than waiting for independence to be granted. The narrative of the present was expressed in spatial and temporal terms through *al-tashyīd al-waṭanī* (nation-building) and *tashyīd al-ishtirākiyya* (building socialism), clearly articulated with reference to "the utopian dream that industrial modernity could and would provide happiness for the masses".[357]

If the imaginary of the anti-colonial struggle had been eminently *spatial*, with the goal being the physical dislodging of the colonial system and gaining national sovereignty over a territory within established borders, in the postcolonial period, it was *time* that was of the essence. Building the future meant calling upon a socialist political imaginary that equated revolutionary time with economic modernisation, transforming time from a vacant category waiting to be filled with future events, into *the* field for the exercise of discursive power. Underdevelopment meant the present was an obstacle to be overcome, and time would only stop with the achievement of socialism. The last truly spatial obstacle to Algeria's economic modernisation was removed in 1971, with the nationalisation of hydrocarbon resources.

[357] S. Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2002), p. xiv.



Le Conseil de la Révolution dresse le bilan de l'effort entrepris depuis le 19 Juin 1965

LA REVOLUTION ALGERIENNE A FRANCHI DES ETAPES DETERMINANTES DANS L'EDIFICATION DU SOCIALISME

La promotion de l'homme a été le souci constant dans toutes les actions menées par le Pouvoir révolutionnaire

LES RESULTATS AUJOURD'HUI DESSINENT DEJA LE VISAGE DE L'ALGERIE DE DEMAIN

• Construction de l'Etat sur des bases solides et démocratiques

• Organisation du Parti selon le principe du retour à la base

EL MOUDJAHID

La Révolution par le peuple et pour le peuple

Jeudi 11 Juin 1970 — 6ème Année - 1.553 — PRIX : 0,25 DA

Alger - 20, rue de la Liberté - Tél: 63-73-80 à 85 - Télex 91.952

LE RESEAU NATIONAL DE TELEVISION INAUGURE LE 19 JUIN PROCHAIN

La TV pour 80 % de la population

après la mise en service des nouveaux émetteurs

• 3 stations supplémentaires (Mettia - Djelfa - Nador) en 1972 pour couvrir les régions sahariennes

"The Algerian Revolution has taken decisive steps in the building of socialism […] Today's results are shaping the face of tomorrow's Algeria", headline from El Moudjahid, 11/6/70.

With exponentially increased revenues and unfettered legislative powers, Algeria's meta-narrative of modernisation now undertook the effective nationalisation of time,[358] with Boumediene holding absolute power over both material and temporal resources, willing development to take place and decreeing the speeding up of time. Protectionist measures of austerity were intended not to isolate Algeria spatially, but to give the nascent industrial economy *time* to catch up. Despite being portrayed in spatial terms as the "battle of production", the rapid pace of industrialisation was literally a race against time, in which Algeria was set to achieve economic independence, and create a modern, egalitarian society that would not only match, but morally surpass the developed capitalist nations across the Mediterranean. In the 1970s, the message was clear: the paradigm of industrial modernity would propel Algeria toward a brighter tomorrow to embrace a new world without owing anything to anyone.

Given Boumedienism's strong logic of social transformation, the legitimacy of the state as supreme sovereign power rested not on the liberal claim of formal democracy based on universal suffrage, nor solely on the anti-colonial struggle, but on the socialist claim of

[358] M. Heller, *La Machine et les rouages : La formation de l'homme soviétique* (Paris, 1985), p. 65.

substantive democracy based on the egalitarian distribution of social goods. Political power was to be judged in terms of historical progress towards social justice and equality, in an imaginary of time that, as long as it remained victorious, legitimated its own rule. Boumedienism was therefore not only characterised by the creation of a narrative of a glorious past, but equally by its futurism. The rising living standards and job opportunities experienced since independence were plain to see, and were accompanied by a sense of progress and hope for the future that was reinforced through the triumphal propaganda of state-controlled newspapers, which in 1970 were already telling the nation that "the popular masses envisaged the future with confidence", thanks to "the construction of a socialist state on solid and democratic foundations".[359] During the celebrations for the twentieth anniversary of the beginning of the independence struggle in 1974, headlines were confidently proclaiming that "by 1982, Algeria will be able to say it has come out of under-development".[360] As such, the 1970s was fundamentally anti-nostalgic: with colonialism in the rear view mirror, any hankerings for the past were politically and socially impossible. By the end of the decade, even France was taking note of the tangible improvements in the country's economy and living standards. In 1979, *Le Monde Diplomatique* wrote that "in less than 20 years, Algeria has become one of the economic powers to be reckoned with in the Mediterranean region".[361]

Algeria's political and social experiences since the mid-1980s – and the current memories of the preceding nation-building period – reflect the breakdown of this imaginary of time, predicated on the legitimacy crisis of a state no longer able to formulate an overarching project capable of federating the energies of the nation; one in which large numbers of citizens might see their aspirations for the future. In contrast to their parents' recollections of a dignified past, to the young people that form the majority of Bab el Oued's population the present seemed to be anything but dignified; offering only the meagre prospect of endless daily struggles and humiliations: the struggle to find a job; to eke out an existence; to get about in an overcrowded city; to find some private space; stay out of trouble with the police; get a visa to go anywhere; to stay positive and make the best of things. Sitting in the neighbourhood's stadium drawing heavily on a cigarette, wearing dark glasses and a desirably faded *bleu de shanghai*, Yacine compared the future once imagined by his parents with the uncertainty faced by his own generation:

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[359] *El Moudjahid*, 19/6/70.
[360] *El Moudjahid*, 1/11/74.
[361] *Le Monde Diplomatique*, February 1979.

"In their time, they never imagined it would turn out like this. My Mum never wanted to emigrate back then. She said Algeria was better, that it was going to become something. They loved this place… they never thought it would turn out like this. They had lots of hope. That's why we young people are nostalgic for a time we never even lived through. For the moment, I'm surviving. Nothing is stable here. Overnight, things could explode. They tell me to keep studying, get my diploma, be someone. But the future is much more uncertain, compared to the optimism they felt. We're always between optimism and pessimism. *Mqawda wal ḥamdulillāh!*" [362] (Yacine, 20).

Yacine's clear illustration of a once glimpsed, fading horizon translates the shifting sense of time bound up with the unravelling of the state-led project of industrialised modernisation, as both the heroic revolutionary past and the utopian future created by postcolonial modernism have gradually faded from view and become totally divorced from everyday realities. Yesterday's tomorrow is not today. Algeria is not unique in this sense, but rather is part of a broader, global picture. While modernism in its various forms was obsessed with a present future, the late twentieth century became obsessed with a present past, reflected in a search for history of the other and a turn towards 'ends' (end of history, death of the subject, end of metanarratives) that has been coterminous with fears over a loss of origins,[363] in which the future has become a thing of the past. Jameson's affirmation in the early 1980s that not only was the past now dead, but the future was either irrelevant or unthinkable was nothing new;[364] it echoed Adorno's statement in 1956, that "the horror is that for the first time we live in a world in which we can no longer imagine a better one."[365] In effect, the passing of the future has meant that the world as it could be has today been collapsed into the insurmountable confines of the world as it is, in an amputated temporality that offers only a futureless present in which promise is over, and in which access to the future can only be gained either through acts of memory, or through the admission of temporal defeat in the spatial act of clandestine migration.

[362] This sarcastic and frequently used phrase perfectly translated the sense of pessimism tinged with black humour used by the younger generation to describe the unsatisfactory state of the present, and might be translated as 'It's fucked, but thank God anyway'.
[363] A. Huyssen, "Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia", in *Public Culture* 12(1):21-38, 2000.
[364] F. Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire called Utopia & Other Science Fictions* (New York, 2005), p. 287-288.
[365] T. Adorno and M. Horkheimer, *Towards a New Manifesto* (New York, 2011), p. 70.

Comparing Temporalities

As the utopian dream of industrial modernism is discarded in favour of a reimagined authentic past, or a postmodern appeal to differences that splinters the masses either into individual consumers in search of their own personal utopias, or into a fragmented identity politics – a turn of events that has had particularly catastrophic effects in Algeria – and technological advances place the future in our hands before we have time to imagine it, the past and the future are gradually sucked into a single synchronous space. The sense of shrinking temporal horizons caused by what Huyssen has called the "retreat from transformative politics", marking the "end of the capacity to found collective institutions that rest on aspirations for the future"[366] has ruptured the nevertheless still expected movement of progress from the past through the present to the future enunciated by modernism, replacing it with a frozen present characterised in Bab el-Oued by routine, boredom, socio-economic hardships and an overwhelming cynicism about the possibility of positive change for the future.

Such shifts in notions of time are reminiscent of transitions from socialism in the former USSR and Eastern Europe, where scholarship has pointed both to an ever-receding utopian future[367] and an eternal present of rituals, reports, plans and parades[368] under the late socialism of the early-1980s. Comparisons with these postsocialist polities help to shed light on the changes in temporality described above, and similarities with postsocialist nostalgia experienced elsewhere abound, not least because socialism's claim to moral superiority continues to structure expectations of progress and social equality, and because economic liberalisation and the trappings of democracy "have not, at the level of daily practices, ushered in forces comparable to those displaced".[369] Algeria and other postsocialist polities share defining features such as the precariousness of legal power, the prevalence of personalised protection structures, and the system of representations and strategies actors must use when the state repeatedly fails its duties in situations where there is a gulf between *pays légal* and *pays réel*.[370] Though the material gained from source material here has

[366] C. Maier, "A Surfeit of Memory? Reflections on History, melancholy and denial", *History and Memory* 5:2, 1993, p. 147-50.
[367] S. Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York, 2010).
[368] A. Yurchak, *Everything was Forever Until it Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, 2005).
[369] C. Hann, "Farewell to the Socialist Other", Chapter 1, in C. Hann (ed.) *Postsocialism. Ideas, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia* (London, 2002), p. 11.
[370] C. Giordano and D. Kostova, "The Social Production of Mistrust", in C. Hann (ed.), *Postsocialism. Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia* (London, 2002). For Algeria, see A. al-Kenz, *Algeria: The Challenge of Modernity* (London, 1991).

demonstrated that the use of personal networks to circumvent the state and redistribute resources began under socialism[371] and increased exponentially with the retreat of the state in the 1980s, the increased divide between state and society, the effects of neo-liberal economic doctrine, nostalgia for the lifeworld of socialism and the rise of alternative ideologies such as religion as vehicles of social cohesion all point to the usefulness of comparative studies in postsocialism for understanding contemporary Algeria.

Approaching Algeria as a postsocialist society is clearly not unproblematic. Comparisons with postsocialist states in Europe are tricky: Algeria's socialist experience was postcolonial, shorter and consciously less orthodox – as visible in the term *socialisme spécifique*, intending to blend socialism and Algeria's Islamic tradition – than those of the Eastern Bloc. Furthermore, far from being in the Soviet orbit, Algeria formed its own centre, standing at the forefront of the Third World's dialogue with both the capitalist West and the socialist East, exemplified in Che Guevara's 1965 speech to the Afro-Asian Summit in Algiers. Approaching Algeria as postsocialist therefore requires adjustments for Algeria's special position in relation to the geo-politics of the time, but is all the more attractive due to the dearth of studies from a postsocialist perspective on postcolonial states that adopted socialist-inspired systems. Another major sticking point is the difficulty in pinpointing when Algeria became *post*socialist. Did the socialist era end with Boumediene's death, Chadli's reforms in the 1980s or in October 1988? To make matters more complex, while scholars continue to argue over the legacy of socialism in Algeria, the state-centric nature of much of Algeria's economy and institutions continues to survive to this day. Much analysis of Algeria during the events of 1988-1992, when massive changes were simultaneously sweeping both the Eastern Bloc and Algeria, was over-simplistic and continued a tendency to look at Algeria as a Soviet satellite, lumping October 1988 and its shockwaves in with the fall of the Berlin Wall. This resulted in a west-centric narrative of transitology based on a dichotomy between hardliners and reformers being used in commentary on Algeria throughout the late-1980s, as well as to facile comparisons between the FLN and the CPSU.[372] These problems aside, a postsocialist approach offers the possibility of opening up the study of Algeria, which has been regarded at worst as exclusively 'belonging' to French academics or at best as eternally linked to France, views which the postcolonial approach has perhaps reinforced. Furthermore,

[371] See S. Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism. Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford, 2000).
[372] For a discussion of this and other issues relating to the one party state, see the chapter "The FLN: French Conceptions, Algerian Realities" in H. Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria*, p. 34-63.

after twenty years of academic focus on Islamism, looking afresh at Algeria through a postsocialist lens offers a welcome opportunity to take Algeria out of its usual Arabo-Islamic field of analysis.

The periods presided over by Boumediene (1965-1979) and Brezhnev (1964-1982), while representing very different stages of mature socialism in the USSR and the more energetic postcolonial socialism in Algeria, are frequently couched in both countries as a sort of 'golden age', despite the existence of narratives foregrounding the authoritarian politics of the time.[373] In both countries, the 1970s has been remembered as a period of stability and relative prosperity, viewed through the hardships of economic reform in 1980s, the increased violence and corruption of the 1990s and the reinforced authoritarian state power of the 2000s. Under Gorbachev and Chadli, the political establishments of both Algeria and the USSR depicted the 1970s as periods of economic and spiritual stagnation to legitimise reformist agendas. However, certainly in Russia and arguably in Algeria as well, stigmatisation of the preceding period during the 1980s seems to have had little longitudinal effect. While no statistical information is available for Algeria, continual surveying in Russia shows the Brezhnev era to be exceedingly popular, though this varies over time and in different generations. In 1994, 36% viewed Brezhnev years positively; in 1999 after the rouble crisis, the figure jumped to 51%.[374] By end of 90s, the period was viewed as a golden age instead of one of stagnation. When asked in what period they would have liked to live, respondents in the age groups 35-44 (34%), 45-59 (39%) and above 60 (41%) expressed a strong preference for the Brezhnev years, with only 10% of the respondents aged 18-24 voicing similar feelings.[375] However, when compared to other periods offered, the Brezhnev period was the main choice of those who did not choose contemporary Russia. One can imagine similar – or higher – figures for Algeria, though my own research in Bab el-Oued showed no clear delimitation of attitudes by generation or social class. Another similarity emerges from these statistics: support for the Brezhnev era as the best time to live reflected dissatisfaction with the present. As a result, the 1970s has been remembered as embodying the economic and social certainties of socialism, as well as the sociability of the past, predicated on portrayals of warm relations between socialist citizens that decry the rise of individualism and consumerism.

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[373] On Russia, see O. Nikolayenko "Contextual effects on historical memory: Soviet nostalgia among post-Soviet adolescents", in *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 41, 2008, pp. 243-259.
[374] Information from the All-Russia Center for Public Opinion, cited in E. Bacon, "Reconsidering Brezhnev", in E. Bacon and M. Sandle (eds.), *Brezhnev Reconsidered* (Basingstoke, 2002).
[375] O. Boele, "Remembering Brezhnev in the New Millennium: Post-Soviet Nostalgia and Local Identity in the City of Novorossiisk", in *The Soviet and Post-soviet Review* (2001), p. 29.

Unlike Algeria, Russia and Eastern Europe have developed highly commodified nostalgia industries, focused on everything from East German retro furniture to socialist themed restaurants and nightclubs in Budapest. Nostalgia for the 1970s in Algeria is less immediately visible, precisely because it is less commodified. Algeria's lack of generational change at the top of the political system has meant that there has been no official political break with the past that has sought to revise history and erase an entire lifeworld of lived experience. While Russian nostalgia for the 1970s began only after the clear-cut rupture of 1991, nostalgia for the 1970s seems to have emerged in Algeria during the late-1980s, and was clearly visible by the October 1988 riots, fuelled by economic crisis and a perceived rupture with the egalitarian promises and temporal imaginary that had guided Algeria since the mid-sixties, even while the state continued to pay lip service to the slogans and achievements of the socialist past.[376] Politically at least, Algeria's experience is more akin to that of Putin's Russia, which has sought to create a seamless coexistence of old and new orders, successfully marrying Soviet and Russian identities, through measures such as the reintroduction of the Soviet national anthem. As one of Boumediene's closest allies, Abdelaziz Bouteflika attempts a similar link between past and present, demonstrating that nostalgic feelings arising from temporal ruptures can be projected back into the public sphere by politicians to assert continuity and bolster legitimacy. Despite not being as popular, and certainly having less *redjla*, this amalgam was certainly key in the undoubted popularity enjoyed by Bouteflika during his early terms in office.

Once again, nostalgia for the past in Algeria is part of a larger picture of the current fascination with the past that is not limited to a postsocialist or postcolonial other. Although identified in the work of Pierre Nora with the dislocations brought about by modernism,[377] this more postmodern pastiche goes further, advancing a sense of pastness that articulates nostalgia for the utopian projects of industrial modernisation that animated much of the twentieth century, and is concurrent with a postmodern politics has abandoned the assumption of unitary progressive movement from remembered past to optimistically envisioned future, the detritus of which seems to be visible in a nostalgic obsession with a present-past.[378] The retreat from transformative politics is accompanied by the widely held view, based on a deepening financial crisis, that late-capitalism in the liberal democracies of the rich North has already peaked and that the future holds little more than slowed growth,

[376] See the book commemorating twenty years of independence, *'Ashrūn sana min al-injāzāt*. (Algiers, Ministry of Information, 1982).
[377] P. Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire*. *Vol. 1 : La République*.
[378] A. Huyssen, "Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia".

environmental degradation and increasing social inequality.[379] By contrast, mid-20th century economic growth becomes reimagined as a heyday of optimism and social mobility – though denuded of its bitter social conflicts and contestation – that is highly visible in today's popular culture, through the eclectic, hip sense of mid-20th century pastness present in the vintage and hipster trends engaged in by a generation whose opportunities are markedly fewer than those of their parents, and which express a sense of longing for the 20th century's attempts at building a new society that once seemed just beyond reach. Mirroring these global phenomena, in Bab el-Oued, this sense of nostalgia for a past future was visible in relationships to the urban space of the 1970s, in particular to the still futuristic decaying remains of modernism, as well as in nostalgic performance through dress, such as the *ḥāyek* and the *bleu de shanghai*, associated by the younger generation with a vague sense of pastness that translated both a need for cultural authenticity in an age of globalisation, dissatisfaction with the present and once felt optimism for the future.

The lyrical space conjured up in many representations of the past, with its idealised urban space and sociability denuded of the pressing urban problems and generational splits clearly recorded in the press of the day, suggested that social memories of the 1970s had little to do with the past as experienced at the time, but rather articulated present concerns. However, data demonstrating increases in living standards, educational standards and job opportunities also showed this remembering to be based on firm ground: people were talking about the past, but only selectively. Here, the past-present relationship was dialectic, circular and mutually reinforcing. If the past was reimagined in the present in order to provide a space from which the present could be criticised that was also rooted in a sense of Algerian-ness, memories of rising living standards and of more efficient wealth redistribution by the state simultaneously provided a template on which perceptions of the present were based, guiding behaviour and offering principles through which present conduct could be formulated and judged, thus simultaneously defining the content of criticisms of the present.

It is worth pointing out that Algerian society in the 1970s and the 2010s bear striking similarities. Both could be described as emerging from protracted periods of violent conflict – the war of independence and the 1990s – and were characterised by both the overwhelming desire for stability and tangible improvements in daily life after difficult times, as well as by

[379] See the latest 50 year forecast by the OECD, *Policy Challenges for the Next 50 Years*, 2 July 2014, at http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/policy-challenges-for-the-next-50-years_5jz18gs5fckf-en, consulted 16/7/14.

feelings of lack of ownership over the political process. In the past, given the broad sense that the state was performing its redistributive function relatively well, maintaining corruption within tolerable limits and ensuring rising living standards that transmitted a sense of hope for the future, popular alienation from politics did not necessarily engender a split between state and society, despite the state's infantilisation of the mass public through entrusting control over the means of production to the imaginary masses, rather than to actual individuals. In contrast, current perceptions of the state's retreat from effective wealth redistribution, coupled with the difficulties of making ends meet for many families, foregrounded the lack of ownership over politics, simply because the political system was not seen as performing the duties society expected of it. With their roots in the need to overcome the humiliations of colonialism, these expectations were generated by the populist-egalitarian claims of postcolonial nationalism, and thus form the nation-building period's most lasting and significant legacy. In Bab el-Oued, the legitimacy of the Algerian polity continued to be judged against this standard of substantive democracy, using the yardstick of wealth redistribution, or lack thereof, in the present.

However, in articulating critiques of the present, memory also described a set of hopes and desires, providing a vocabulary that traced the contours of the polity people in Bab el-Oued would like to live in. Along with memories that described the politics of the 1970s as characterised by integrity, pride and austerity that were linked to the person of Boumediene, expectations of greater social justice and wealth redistribution by the state articulated a series of principles that reproduced the narrative of the moral polity that postcolonial nationalism set out to create in Algeria. These fragments of the past were simultaneously used to critique the present *and* describe a still-believed-in future. The images and tropes that made up social memory in Bab el-Oued translated a set of principles – social justice and equality, solidarity between individuals, traditional morality, seriousness in the management of public affairs, political integrity and dignity – that provide a map for the future based on a reimagined past. In short then, the social imaginary of the past in Bab el-Oued tells us more about the present – and the future – than the past. These principles have acquired special relevance in the aftermath of the Arab Revolts of 2010.

Partage* not *dégage[380]

Although seemingly bypassed by the Arab Revolts, localised street-based protests and riots daily fill the headlines of national newspapers in Algeria. These protests began at least half a decade before the onset of the Arab Revolts and have continued unabated both during the zenith of the uprisings in the region and throughout their aftermath.[381] Indeed, long before the actions of Mohammed Bouazizi that sparked the Tunisian Revolution, Algeria's first case of self-immolation dates from May 2004, when a 40-year old man from Djelfa in the High Plateaux of central Algeria set fire to himself after the seizure of his assets by the courts. In October 2009, a father doused himself and his entire family with petrol and set them alight in front of the council offices in the north western city of Chlef after their home, deemed by authorities to be an illegal construction, was demolished.[382]

The Algerian protests are qualitatively different in two respects from the mass demonstrations in Egypt and Tunisia that led to the downfall of Ben Ali and Mubarak. Firstly, they are geographically fragmented. These localised protests are not limited to Algeria's largest cities and have left few corners of the country untouched, affecting almost every province, even the deep south, as well as numerous small towns. In addition, their spatial organisation is also different from those in Tunisia or Egypt during the Arab Revolts, since they occur not in main squares and emblematic public spaces, but in front of council offices and at makeshift roadblocks, highlighting their specificity in both intent and audience. Secondly, the protests articulate specific issues that affect everyone, but which are not expressed as collective action, rather in separate, localised and individual actions that have no means of linking up with each other. The immediate causes of these protests fall into several main categories: insufficient availability of council housing and especially anger over irregularities in the allocation of new social housing; insufficient infrastructure including the state of roads or other means of transport (especially after accidents) and, to a lesser extent, the reliability of water and electricity supplies; environmental protests over waste dumping; student protests over changes to the higher education system and campus facilities; and labour related disputes, including those relating to job security, salary and sectorial strikes by teachers, doctors and other public sector workers.

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[380] "Share not get out", this formula – for which I am endebted to Imed Messaouda – uses the French slogan of *dégage!* (get out!), used by Tunisian protesters during the revolution of 2010, suggesting that equal sharing of social resources is more important to Algerians – at the moment at least – than regime change.

[381] Official figures showed 112,878 interventions by riot police in 2010 and 18 interventions per day in the first half of 2011. See *Liberté*, 05/12/10 and *El Watan*, 09/06/11.

[382] See "Voyage dans l'Algérie des immolés", in El Watan, 29/01/12.

While we must beware of essentialist portrayals of Algerians both as a people imbued with unshakable revolutionary spirit that will always collectively rebel against injustices, a view that only echoes officially-sponsored historiography, *and* a traumatised people cowering in fear of a return to the violence of 1990s (frequent riots, sit-ins and protests show that Algerians are clearly unafraid of standing up for what they believe in), the immediate concerns motivating Algerian protests do point exclusively to socio-economic motivations that express local or sector-specific issues articulating feelings of *hogra*. Protesters do not appear to be demanding a change of government – much less formal democracy. Rather than articulating explicit demands for political change at national level, the protests in Algeria represent the normal channel used by communities or groups to articulate their demands to the state – demands which articulate anger over the lack of wealth distribution by the state and the corruption which prevents it – pointing to the existence of a radical, demand-based popular political culture that uses direct action[383] to communicate with the state, eschewing conventional forms of contestational politics through opposition parties or civil society organisations, and that – significantly – draws on the imaginary of substantive democracy as its conceptual basis.[384] In this sense, Algeria is "in a phase of political activism without political expression".[385] Now well over a decade old, this cycle of localised protests and piecemeal palliative measures used by the state to quell unrest has become part of the normal interaction between state and society, in which both sides have learned to absorb high levels of localised protests and rioting. As a result, the riots that broke out in Algiers in December 2010 in Bab el-Oued over the removal of subsidies on oil and sugar just before the outbreak of the Arab Revolts did not have the same impact on public opinion as disturbances in Tunisia and Egypt. Algerian society was simply not shocked, while Algerian police are well-trained in dealing with protests and riots.

The daily round of protests in Algeria do not therefore mirror those of the Arab Spring, but instead respond to internal Algerian socio-political dynamics that have their roots in the decolonisation struggle and the emancipatory promises of the post-independence populist politics, which have deeply instilled expectations of social justice and equality within

[383] N. Jabi (2012) "The Impasse of Political Transition in Algeria: Three Generations and Two Scenarios", Case Analysis Series, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, p. 27.
[384] J. Goodman, "The Man Behind the Curtain: Theatrics of the State in Algeria", in *Journal of North African Studies*, 18:5, 2013, p. 779-795.
[385] See article "Knowledge and Power in Algeria: an Interview with Daho Djerbal on the Twentieth Anniversary of Naqd", by Miriam Haleh Davis, 31/01/12, available at www.jadaliyya.com.

Algerian society. The experience of the Arab World's most profound revolution[386] and the fact that Algerians can look back to a period during the 1970s when the state seemed to be delivering on its promises of greater social justice – however they may characterise the politics of the day – are at the core of defining what Algerians expect from their state and are at the root of the willingness to unequivocally voice opposition to injustice that is a central feature of popular political culture in Algeria.

However, this willingness to stand up against injustice can, of course, take different forms over time: to fight against the French, to join a collectivised farm or volunteer to plant trees to stop the advance of the Sahara, to battle – peacefully or otherwise – for a more Islamic social and political order, to fight for the officialisation of Tamazight or for changes to the Family Code, to demonstrate in front of council offices because decent housing should be available to all, to block a main road to protest about the worsening potholes that cause accidents, to burn tyres and smash windows out of frustration at a life that seems blocked at every turn or to strike because your pay as a civil servant means you cannot afford meat more than once a week. The point here is that while the motivation for standing up for what is perceived to be right comes from similar roots, its expression varies and can take broad collective, localised or individual forms.

The other key factor in understanding present relationships to the political in light of memory is the palpable cynicism about real change. Disappointment that the release of political energies in 1988 has not brought about positive change at once mirrors and reproduces the theme of confiscation of the revolution at independence found in other Algerian social narratives of the past, pointing to the existence of a widely-held view that popular attempts at revolution are not perceived as having borne out popular aspirations of greater freedom and social justice, but rather are hijacked by shadowy military figures and nebulous powers-that-be, so that the idea of change itself has become suspect.[387] Compounded by the persistence of basic daily problems at local level, Algerian society has been experiencing massive alienation from politics[388] and cynicism regarding the possibility of bringing about meaningful political change through collective means. Indeed, groups of young men have been chanting "The people want free hashish" (*ech-cha3ab yurīd zeṭla baṭel*) at football matches, sarcastically echoing the popular Arabic slogan of the Arab

[386] H. Roberts, *The Battlefield*.
[387] T. Serres, "Contre-révolution en Algérie".
[388] According to the Arab Barometer (2012), 94% of Algerians have no political party, 80% find the system corrupt, and only 15.5% are interested in politics. See article, "Démocratie, gouvernement, partis, religion, économie, citoyenneté… Ce que pensent les algériens", in El Watan 17/01/12.

Revolts, "The people want the fall of the regime" (*esh-sha'ab yurīd isqāṭ an-niẓām*).[389] Today's localised demand-based protests in Algeria are perhaps best seen as the remnants of the imaginary of notions of modernist progress: the still unforgotten dreams of the good life promised by modernist industrialisation and frustrated desires for collective change turned in on themselves and expressed in de-ideologised and localised bouts of anger that reflect the fragmented nature of Algerian society in the post-1990s era.

The fragmented nature of narratives on a contested past obstructs the articulation of a platform for both present political action and future change. The fragmentation between different groups articulating different versions of the past was even spatially visible in journalist Ghania Mouffok's description of one of the protests held by the Arab Spring inspired Coordination Nationale pour le Changement et la Démocratie (CNCD) in February 2011 in Algiers. Massively outnumbered by riot police, the relatively small group of protesters were divided over the presence of former FIS leader Ali Belhadj and young working-class counter-demonstrators, who were accused not only of being "yobs", but of being "paid by the authorities" by other protesters. The young counter-demonstrators hit back by arguing that the CNCD protesters were bunch of middle-class interlopers in "their" working-class neighbourhood of Belouizdad that could no more be trusted to run things on behalf of poor people than the present elite. Despite initially chanting pro-Bouteflika slogans, after the CNCD protesters sloped off for lunch at midday, the counter-demonstrators occupied the square and soon started chanting slogans in favour of the Arab Spring. That the CNCD marches did not draw significant support from the youth and popular classes is indicative of continuing class and generational divides. Mouffok describes the formation of "one circle of police to contain the Islamists who, after negotiations, accepted to be present as individuals rather than as a party; another circle to surround the democrats, and yet another to encircle the 'yobs'. Algeria shattered, divided, gaping wounds and cordial hatreds".[390] Mouffok's piece provides spatial testimony of the role played by the fragmentation of social memories of the past expressed through generational, ideological and class cleavages in inhibiting the development of large scale movements demanding political change.

The contradiction facing Algeria in the present lies in the coexistence of the desire for social justice as a major motivational force behind localised protests and a knowing cynicism in the ability of revolts and rebellions to bring about lasting political change. The interaction

[389] "Algerians go to poll in nation left behind by Arab Spring", in *The Guardian*, 09/05/12.
[390] See article "La révolution de onze heures à midi", by Ghania Mouffok, available at http://www.ism-france.org/analyses/La-revolution-de-onze-heures-a-midi-article-15115, consulted 1/9/14.

between the two sides of this contradiction will largely determine Algeria's direction in the medium term. Of utmost significance here is that both the desire for social justice and the all-pervading cynicism about the possibility of bringing it about are fuelled by different aspects of social memory offered by both the past future of the 1970s and the elided possibilities of previous attempts at collective change through popular uprisings.

Modernity and Tradition

However, memories of the past in Bab el-Oued were not limited to articulating a sense of being cheated by history out of the modernist dream of justice and plenty. Social memory also translated recent experiences specific to Algeria, by foregrounding the warm relations and trust between neighbours of the seventies that translated a split between the lifeworlds of pre-1990s Algeria with its traditional solidarities, spatial proximities, and pre-Islamist moralities on one hand; and post-1990s society, with its social and spatial fragmentations, consumerism, individualism and unhealed wounds on the other. Rupture with the spatial proximities of the past were articulated through the appearance of reinforced steel doors in apartment buildings and changing settlement patterns in the neighbourhood that were frequently attributed to the arrival of newcomers during and since the conflict that were routinely cast derogatorily as rural migrants with little respect for the social norms of city life, but were also part of a process of peripheralisation of many long-term Bab el-Oued residents to new suburbs since the 1990s. Equally, the relative socio-economic equality and lack of monetarisation that existed during socialist austerity was counterposed to the emergence of a consumer society in which success was measured in material wealth, often described as suffering from reduced cohesion and characterised by the phrase "every man for himself".

Religiosity in the past was characterised by age-defined boundaries to religious practice and high levels of syncretism, which have endured in linguistic terms after the spread of a highly normativised form of religiosity since the early-1990s that sought to purify religion of both 'foreign' influences and traditional North African forms of practice, which has been especially successful. If religiosity during the 1970s articulated the enforcement of communal values and forms of practice, linked to traditional morality and respect for social boundaries through the concepts of *ḥorma* and *qder*, religiosity in the present was expressed in more individualised ways that translated ideas of personal choice and understanding in relation to religious concepts and teachings, from the need for individual prayer, to feeling

'ready' to start wearing *ḥijāb*, to navigating solo through the plethora of internet information on religion, to maintaining a sort of religious accounting system of points for the hereafter, to the widespread rejection among young people of being judged for their behaviour by those with a religious appearance. Though today's religiosity was much more normative and prescriptive, it was thus paradoxically accompanied by strong currents of individuality that were also reflected in religious practice, expression and understanding. This led many, including Islamists, to decry present morals and to look back with nostalgia to the traditional morality of the seventies before the emergence of the normative religion that initially set out to cure society of its ills and restore a reimagined tradition.

Memories of sociability and religiosity therefore showed that, as well as being remembered for its modernity and sense of futurity, the 1970s was also remembered as being the last period when traditional solidarity and morality was intact. The predominance of both modernity and tradition in memory as an unproblematic conjunction raises several important issues. Firstly, that these two areas were precisely those in which the ideologies of the 1990s par excellence – both the liberalism that inspired the restructuring of Algeria's planned economy and the Islamism that overturned the country's social landscape – accused socialist inspired postcolonial nationalism of having failed: respectively for not delivering modernity, or for not safeguarding a moral order inspired by tradition. Despite the evidently uncomfortable memories relating to the absence of freedom of speech in the past, subsequent ideologies – because of their equal inability to articulate a social order resting on aspirations for the future – have clearly not been at all successful in displacing the concepts of progress articulated by the modernist paradigm at the level of everyday practices. Secondly, memories of the period in Bab el-Oued as standing for traditional morality also ran against both the political science literature of the same period, which cast past tradition and contemporary modernity as a mutually exclusive binary. This binary is today reflected in the full frontal opposition between the secular and the religious found in debates in France - and increasingly, elsewhere in Europe. This binary is not new to Algeria, where it has evolved and takes different forms from those found in France and has, as a result, become an Algerian narrative. In its least nuanced form, the terms of this debate pit a top-down brand of secularism, imbued with modernist concepts of republicanism, rationality, and toleration of difference against the normative version of Islam that emerged in the mid-1980s, equated by secularists with intolerance, anti-rationality, social repression and obscurantism. In Algeria, the binary nature of this debate has been intensified by a much oversimplified political split

between *éradicateurs* and *conciliateurs* during the conflict of the 1990s and which continues a series of binaries that exist in socially held depictions of the Algerian past (Algerian/French; Arab/Berber, internal maquis/frontier army, etc), that are "not so much historical frames of analysis but rather a series of politicised positions".[391] Conversations with those espousing this secular view, particularly outside Bab el-Oued in the middle-class neighbourhoods of the heights of Algiers, always pointed to the 1970s as a time when religion occupied the 'proper' space of the private sphere, or was completely irrelevant. On nostalgic Francophone Facebook pages, such as *Alger à une certaine époque*,[392] that host images of a pastiche past that mixed images of colonial-era Casbah authenticity and seventies urbanity, the latter period was often expressed in terms of women's dress, as the era of the miniskirt and the *ḥāyek* living side by side in harmony. As such, the 1970s becomes the decade of secularism and modernity par excellence and is opposed to a perception of a wave of tradition since the 1990s represented by the rise of the FIS. As in much of the political science literature on Islamism, within this nostalgic binary, the traditional present was cast as winning out over a more modern past.

Memories from Bab el-Oued, however, were far from fitting into an opposition between tradition and modernity, since the 1970s was remembered for its tradition and sincere religious practice. Indeed, older people in Bab el- Oued remembered the profound respect that existed for matters religious, and also foregrounded the increase in the neighbourhood's religious infrastructure during the period. New religious spaces appeared as the state attempted to meet the demands of a growing and ageing population during the mid-1970s, as well as to combat pressure from incipient Islamist movements that had already begun to infiltrate institutions such as the Scouts. New mosques were built in central Bab el-Oued, such as Es-Sunna and En-Nasr. Where architecturally possible, some old churches were demolished to make way for new mosques, such as the Église St Joseph which became El-Fath Mosque, while others remained as mosques within old church buildings, such as Et-Taqwa Mosque. Loudspeakers replaced the traditional 'unplugged' call to prayer and the cannon shots marking the end of fasting in Ramadan were abandoned. The period was remembered for its sincere religious practice by those of appropriate social status and for increasing state investment in religious infrastructure. The idea of liberated miniskirt-wearing

391 See article by N. Vince, "In Amenas – a history of silence, not a history of violence", available at https://www.opendemocracy.net/natalya-vince/in-amenas-%E2%80%93-history-of-silence-not-history-of-violence, consulted 2/9/14.
392 See www.facebook.com/Algeraunecertaineepoque?fref=nf.

women sitting on café terraces was also challenged from Bab el Oued, where many would not have condoned such behaviour in the 1970s. Women's access to public space was depicted as being more limited than in the present. Unlike today, the central market in Bab el Oued was the sole preserve of men. Women would never stop in cafés, and the *Salons de Thé* and ice cream parlours that are now major sites of female sociability on Bab el-Oued's main commercial street did not open until the 2000s. Lower-income neighbourhoods seem to have been more socially conservative in the 1970s than the wealthier city centre and the desirable heights above it; indeed, older people in Bab el-Oued remembered the styles and tastes of the city centre, when making family outings to the elegant flagship state-run department store, the Galeries Algériennes, as being "like a trip to another world". Even those politically involved in the heyday of the religious movement blurred the modern/past – traditional/present binary, by equating their own golden age, between 1989 and 1991, with the *terbiya* and *ḥorma* that had defined social relations in the 1970s, and also by criticising the laxness of present morals, individualism and women's gains in public space. For these older Islamists, with hindsight, the society presided over by the godless one-party socialist state did not seem so bad in comparison to the present, and the attempt at a return to an 'authentic' religious past defined by an end to syncretism and the spread of religious practice to all age groups was recognised as having been unable to stem the tide of individualism now deemed responsible for moral decline.

These memories turn the secular/modern-religious/tradition binary, predicated on the battle between modernisation and tradition in the immediate postcolonial period and the victory of the traditional in the 1990s, on its head. In its place, the distinction observed from Bab el-Oued articulated a past remembered for its combination of an exciting new modernity with traditional solidarities and morality – a moment when Algeria was at once becoming modern, but still rooted in its traditions – and was counterposed to a present which offered neither the inclusive modernisation of the past with its sense of hope for the future, but declining standards of living, nor a sense of tradition, which was being unsatisfactorily modified either by an imported Islamism or an equally imported consumerism, both of which had the effect of splintering the imaginary of the masses and glorifying the individual.

Pausing for some time to look at an image from 1973 of farmers sitting on the ground listening to a speech on the Agrarian Revolution, under a banner proclaiming *3adāla ijtimā3iyya* (social justice), 63 year old Nawel smiled, and with a heavy sigh said, '*kunnā nnūmū*' (we were dreaming). The sense of having been failed by history, of things not turning

out how they should have, only comes once the dreamer has awoken. To those inside the dream of modernity, its logic seems flawless, its assumptions self-evident. Recognising the dream as a dream is the moment of disenchantment, an awakening that shatters the dream's coherence, leaving only scattered images of once felt desires and erstwhile certainties. In varying degrees, all of our societies have been through this awakening in the last three decades. There is immense tragedy in the broken dreams of modernity and the discarding of their corollaries: social utopia, historical progress and material plenty. If the modernist dream repeatedly turned into a nightmare during the last century, we now know that genocide, environmental disaster and war have not been eradicated with its passing, and that a world governed by global capital does not make them any less possible. In any case, these catastrophes must be analysed within the political frameworks in which the dream found expression, rather than in terms of the dream itself. Left with a world that no longer seems capable of imagining aspirations for a future beyond the fantasy of late-capitalist consumerism, let alone clearly enunciating them, access to the future can only be gained through acts of memory in which the fragments of the dreamworld assume an importance that belies their size. Given the impossibility – and undesirability – of turning back the clock, the choices seem, as so often depressingly palpable in Algiers, to oscillate between submitting to nostalgia, idealising and reimagining the past and giving it a wholeness it never had, or submitting to a cynicism in which accepting defeat preludes actual defeat.

However, it should also be clear that the fragments of the dream, because they no longer fit the dominant narrative, have the power to challenge an orthodoxy in which history is said to have completed its course. The third choice then, lies in the possibility, as suggested by Buck-Morss and Hatherley amongst others, of daring to excavate the ruins of the future, of working through the rubble to rescue the hopes of utopia, simply because we cannot afford to let them disappear. At its best, this was precisely what the astute and critical remembering the residents of Bab el-Oued were attempting, with its overwhelming rejection of authoritarianism and unwillingness to turn back the clock, but also its absolute refusal to let go of the utopian dreams of social justice, radical equality and the transformation of daily life. These memories provided a sharp reminder that the challenges of Algerian independence – to build a democratic, social state that is at once modern and respectful of tradition – are still very much there for the taking. The danger in the task of digging up the future, however, lies in a facile retro-futurism that ends up reproducing the present's current subjugation to the past, and thus becoming null and void as a tool for reclaiming the future. The key is perhaps

to remember the feeling – the affect – produced by the existence of yet to be surpassed horizons, allowing the fragments of once held dreams to remind us that the ruins of past futures also hold the promise of alternatives for our own future, which remains, whether we choose to see it or not, beautifully open.

Appendix 1

Fieldwork Sites and Techniques

This research used ethnographic methods during a one year fieldwork stay in Algiers. Firstly, ethnography and the length of fieldwork seemed most appropriate for the subject matter because prolonged and sustained contact with Algerians in their daily lives, through participant observation, was needed to respect the complexity of the social world and give a rich, sensitive and credible account of the way Algerians related to their recent past. Secondly, the complexity of the subject matter required a flexible inductive approach to methodology, a reflexive design process operating at all stages of the project that allowed space for the research to unfold.[393]

Fieldwork was initially planned as multi-sited, focusing on two neighbourhoods with differing socio-economic profiles, with 6 month consecutive stays in each: Bab el-Oued and El-Biar, the latter being a middle class neighbourhood of the colonial urban periphery with pockets of working class population. However, soon after arriving in Algiers, it was realised that the time needed to both adapt and gain the trust of residents would preclude the dual-sited option, leading to the decision to focus solely on Bab el-Oued. Dedicating one year to a single neighbourhood allowed for a densely textured urban ethnography, rather than attempting to be representative, but losing depth in the process.

As well as field notes written up early in the morning of each day, data was gathered through semi-structured interviews of between one and two hours in length from a purposive sample[394] of 50 individuals. Given administrative barriers to obtaining frames to allow random sampling, the sampling process was ongoing, since deciding where to be and who to interview is not a one-off decision, but part of continually unfolding ethnographic practice.[395] Because this research did not set out to be statistically representative, informal data-gathering approaches were considered more appropriate for the context than survey techniques, firstly because respondents would have been reluctant to set personal information to paper and

[393] M. Crang and I. Cook, *Doing Ethnographies* (London, 2007), p. 17; M. Hammersley and P. Atkinson, *Ethnography. Principles in Practice* (London, 2007), p. 21.
[394] J. Ritchie and J. Lewis, *Qualitative Research Practice: a Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers* (London, 2003).
[395] K. O'Reilly, *Ethnographic Methods* (London, 2012), p. 44-45.

handing out questionnaires would definitely have aroused the suspicion of the authorities; and secondly because survey techniques are less useful for investigating complex attitudinal issues that require open-ended questions. While efforts were made to make this sample as representative as possible, the reality of gender boundaries in the field made male-female parity almost impossible. The results therefore have a significant gender bias: 74% of those interviewed were male and 26% female. The age breakdown of interviewees was relatively balanced, condsidering the overwhelmingly young population of Bab el-Oued: 46% were between 17 and 35; 34% between 36 and 55; and 20% between 56 and 75.[396]

Interviews did not commence until six months into the fieldwork, after undertaking extensive participant observation that allowed a deeper sense of the forms taken by past-present narratives. This allowed me to formulate interview questions based on experience in the field rather than using pre-determined questions, and to build relationships in the neighbourhood, after which a series of three pilot interviews were performed. All interviewees knew about the topic of research beforehand, and already knew the researcher within the framework of relationships based on mutual respect that allowed participants to be comfortable during interviews, feeling able to interject, wander off the point, change their story and add reflections afterwards. Due to the nature of this personal relationship, many of the interviewees became collaborative partners, rather than informants, that helped analyse the subject matter and showed genuine interest in the research. In this sense, ethnographic interviewing was construed as an on-going process encompassing spontaneous interviews, informal chats and spur of the moment questions that transcended the interview itself.[397]

Some of the interviews were performed with more than one interviewee, either because people preferred to be interviewed with a friend to bounce ideas around, or because sometimes interviewees decided to spontaneously help out by bringing along a friend, or in one case because a wife could not be interviewed without her husband. This was undertaken with the knowledge that some people may have been less participative in group situations, and because group interviews make it harder to observe consensus because common sense ideas often go unremarked, whereas contested areas tend to show up quickly,[398] thus forming another potential area of bias. However, I decided that, in these cases, it was preferable not to make people uncomfortable by insisting that one of the participants leave the interview.

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[396] According to the 2008 census, 51% of Bab el-Oued's population was under 35 years old (33,577 people). Source: Recensement Générale de la Population 2008, Office Nationale des Statistiques.
[397] K. O'Reilly, *Ethnographic Methods* (London, 2005).
[398] J. Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview* (New York, 1979).

When making an appointment for an interview, participants were reminded briefly what the project was about and given the chance to ask questions. To help them feel more comfortable, participants were encouraged to choose the place and time of the interview. Use of the word interview was minimised, due to associations with formalised situations where people feel 'on trial', such as job interviews. Instead, the interview was be couched as a conversation or chat. Participants were informed in advance about what sort of questions would be asked, how long it would take, and what would happen to the data they provide. They were also assured that their responses would remain strictly confidential and that they did not have to say anything they feel uncomfortable with. Special emphasis was given to letting participants know that if they feel the researcher is asking the wrong questions, they could say so and add new ones, as well as change their minds about answers already provided. Because finding quiet spaces for interviews in an overcrowded neighbourhood was no easy task, a few participants suggested that the gardens of the neighbourhood's hospital be used for their interviews. This neutral outdoor space provided an ideal, relaxed setting for many of the interviews, and was suggested when interviewees were unsure of where they would like the interview to take place. All interviews were carried out in the language in which respondents felt most comfortable: Algerian Arabic or French, though more often than not interviews turned out to be in a mixture of both languages in varying degrees, reflecting the code switching that is characteristic of Algiers.

Interviewees were also informed that they would be recorded. Because of the tension between inviting someone to an informal chat and recording it, attempts were be made to explain that recording leaves the researcher free to think and listen. Furthermore, special attention was paid to that said before and after the recorder is turned off. Interviews were begun by putting the participant at ease – talking about the place or making a joke. The aim was to always begin the conversation fluidly and to ease into the subject matter by accessing it from the edges. Once the interviewee seemed more comfortable, the interview proper began with a participant-led activity: drawing a timeline. Interviewees were given a blank piece of paper and asked to draw a timeline representing movement from the past to the present and/or future, on which they could plot events or periods of global, national, local or personal importance. Participants were assured that they had total freedom to begin and end the timeline at any point they felt valid. This activity provided a way into in-depth interviews focusing on the main research topic. In general, the timeline activity was better understood and more enthusiastically undertaken by interviewees under the age of 35. Many older

interviewees had difficulty seeing the point of the exercise, felt uncomfortable putting their views down on paper, and may also have felt insecure about their writing skills. This was partly due to expectations of a standard interview format based solely on a recorded conversation. Rather than making an interviewee uncomfortable for the rest of the interview, the timeline activity was skipped in these cases. As a result, timelines were drawn by 54% of interviewees, with only 4 interviewees over the age of 35 completing the timelines.

Exploring how the past produces the present in Algeria required asking about the past in interviews, by digging into the links made with the present when talking about the past. Conversely, looking at how the present produces the past necessitated asking about the present, and observing the links made with the past when talking about the present. Interviews were therefore roughly divided into two sections, the first asking about the past and the second about the present. Since the past-present and present-past links made by participants in interviews seemed consistent, the responses in each part of the interview should provide a degree of internal triangulation. Inconsistencies, which were expected given the contradictory nature of past-present representations in Algeria, were treated with great interest and formed the subject of follow-up conversations.

Rather than a fixed set of questions, a checklist of issues and topics was used to help guide the interviews. No two interviews were the same. Interviewees were encouraged to express individual memories by talking about the family and sensory perceptions of the past: the music they listened to, the food they ate, the noises and smells present in their street.[399] Questions took the form more of 'what' and 'how' questions, than 'why' questions, which can leave participants stumped.[400] Such questions were deemed unnecessary since the 'why' should be implicit in participants' responses without having to ask for it directly. The interviews included structuring questions derived from research questions, and were carefully thought through beforehand to aim for the greatest breadth possible. These questions had to be answerable and encourage people to respond based on experiences and perceptions. Structuring questions formed the skeleton of the interview, sometimes taking the form of grand tour questions that provided a general overview, such as 'What is important for you about the 1970s?', or 'Tell me about what the neighbourhood was like back then? How has it changed?'. These questions were supplemented by follow-up questions for depth, detail and nuance such as asking for examples and experiences to keep participants talking, fill gaps or

[399] S. Pink, *Doing Sensory Ethnography* (London, 2009).
[400] S. Kvale, *InterViews: an introduction to qualitative research interviews* (London, 1996).

complete ideas, such as 'What happened next?'.[401] Silence was also used on occasion as a tool, encouraging the participant to add further information.[402] Opinion questions were left until well into the interview, since people often try to be consistent with opinions given early on. Therefore, rather than asking 'Have things improved', more open-ended, less leading questions such as 'What changes have you noticed?' were prefered. The subject matter of the questions asked was thus descriptive, structural and comparative to get at the analytical, typological and relational ways in which participants see the past-present relationship.[403] Towards the end of the interview, photo elicitation was used to explore the narrative content further. Images were obtained in Algiers and were chosen by the researcher. They included images of Houari Boumediene, Algiers during the 1970s and examples of state-led social mobilisation. To reduce the effect of image self-selection, participants were encouraged before the interview to bring an object that they associate with the period: a family photograph, an heirloom or keepsake, which was used as a talking point to try and get behind the pre-established social narratives that are likely to emerge through the preceding parts of the interview. However, only two interviewees brought along such objects.

After turning the recorder off, interviewees were given opportunities to add remarks and ask questions about the research. The researcher provided a quick summary of what was said and encouraged participants to correct and augment the information with the recorder off, as some participants revealed more interesting information in a more relaxed, post-interview setting. After taking leave, I took time alone to reflect, work through the information given and identify themes for follow-up interviews. Notes were made immediately afterwards with details such as setting, body language and atmosphere. Due to time constraints however, interviews were not transcribed until the end of the fieldwork stay.

Interview transcripts were subjected to various levels of analysis, as outlined by Kvale and Spradley. Firstly, transcript content was condensed, with long statements compressed into briefer ones so as to rephrase the main sense in fewer words. Secondly, meanings were grouped into 23 categories arising during fieldwork and analysis.[404] Meaning categorisation

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[401] The typology of questions is from S. Kvale, *InterViews* (London, 1996); and J. Rubin and S. Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: the art of hearing data* (Thousand Oaks, 2005).
[402] S. Kvale, *InterViews* (London, 1996).
[403] Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview* (New York, 1979).
[404] These were: work, living standards, rural migration, social justice/welfare, pre-1965 past, Algeria in the world, nation building policies, free time/entertainment, education, urban space, tradition/morality, authoritarianism/freedom of speech, dress/fashion, general atmosphere, sociability, material objects, the 1990s, generations, Boumediene, corruption/crime, the 1980s, the future, current politics.

allowed analysis by social background, gender, and so forth. Thirdly, narrative structuring was used to work out plots and structures in the stories told during interviews. Mishler has defined three aspects of narrative that were used in analysis of the data collected: a temporal sequence (pattern of occurrences), a social dimension (communicating a message), and a meaning (plot providing unity).[405] To this end, the past-present relationship emerging from interviews was summarised in a single paragraph to bring out the structure. Lastly, the results of these forms of data analysis were contrasted with observations gained through broader reading and participant observation to access deeper meanings in order to recontextualise statements within a broader framework. The larger themes brought out during this process then formed the basis for the chapter plan of the thesis.

[405] E. Mishler, *Research Interviewing: context and narrative* (Cambridge, MA, 1986).

Appendix 2

List of Interviewees

No	Name	Gender	Age	Bio
1	Selim	M	47	Member of left-wing political party. Grew up in a small village outside Algiers. Secondary education. Both parents civil servants. Father PAGS militant. Lives in Bainem.
2	Chafiqa	F	25	Finishing undergraduate studies. Father retired bank employee. Lives in Bab el-Oued.
3	Daho	M	52	Works in civil society. Secondary education. Family has strong military connections. Lives in El Biar.
4	Moh	M	18	In final year of secondary school. Hopes to join his father's business. Lives in Bainem.
5	Sara	F	25	Postgraduate student. Parents civil servants. Lives in Rais Hmidou.
6	Kader	M	18	Expelled from secondary school. Father chauffeur, mother health worker. Lives in Bab el-Oued.
7	Sofiane	M	53	Secondary education. Retired civil servant. Lives in Zghara.
8	Samir	M	55	Secondary education. Retired technician. Lives in Bologhine.
9	Amel	F	42	Postgraduate education. Works in publishing in Bab el-Oued. Lives in Belcourt.
10	Malek	M	53	Public sector employee. Ex-FIS activist. Lives in Bab el-Oued.
11	Inès	F	26	Undergraduate education. Father retired journalist. Lives in Bab el-Oued.
12	Yacine	M	20	Musician and student at Beaux Arts. Parents both civil servants. Lives in Ben Aknoun.
13	Walid	M	24	Engineering student. Father civil servant. Parents from Médéa and Oran, resident in Bab el-Oued since mid-1970s.
14	Lyès	M	44	Owns business in Bab el-Oued. Secondary education. Originally from Batna. Lives in El Biar.
15	Ali	M	26	Works in retail in Bab el-Oued. Father orphan and retired civil servant. Lives in Cité de l'Armaf.
16	Lounès	M	29	Musician. Undergraduate education. Lives with mother in Mohammedia.
17	Nadir	M	33	Makes money as counterfeiter. Parents born in Casbah. Lives in Bab el-Oued.
18	Kamel	M	27	Doing business diploma. Parents teachers with Kabyle origins. Lives in Cité des Eucalyptus.
19	Youcef	M	27	Works in management. Originally from Cheraga.

				Parents work in liberal professions. Lives in Bab el-Oued.
20	Farid	M	62	Retired engineer. Parents moved to Bab el-Oued from El Biar in 1962.
21	Said	M	60	Primary education. Retired taxi driver. Parents moved to Bab el-Oued from the Casbah in late-1950s.
22	Mourad	M	45	Works for state television. Lives in Bab el-Oued.
23	Djamel	M	20	Media Studies student and musician. Kabyle origins. Family has lived in Aïn Benian since before independence.
24	Imène	F	42	Bank employee, but has worked for the army. Kabyle parents, came to Algiers in mid-1950s. Family resident in Bab el-Oued since 1966.
25	Anis	M	37	Public sector employee. Parents from Médéa, family resident in Bab el-Oued since 1962.
26	Hocine	M	30	Unemployed, musician. Middle school education. Parents from Médéa, family resident in Bab el-Oued since mid-1960s. Father absent.
27	Mehdi	M	25	Unemployed, musician. Secondary education. Parents journalist and teacher. Father born in France, mother in Constantine, both with Kabyle origins. Moved to Bab el-Oued in 1965.
28	Nawel	F	63	Professional singer. Parent's from Kabylie. Moved to Casbah in 1930s, and to Bab el-Oued in 1940s.
29	Narimene	F	29	Middle School teacher. Parents families from Cherchell and Kabylie, parents born in Algiers. Family has lived in Cité Perez since it's construction in 1952.
30	Saliha	F	27	Middle School teacher. Sister of Narimene.
31	Imed	M	71	Primary education. Retired civil servant. Parents from Tizi Ouzou, moved to Casbah in 1930s. Lived in Bab el-Oued since 1962.
32	Noureddine	M	63	Music teacher. Father in metal business. Family moved from Douera to Casbah in 1930s, then to Notre Dame in 1962. Lives in Notre Dame.
33	Abdelatif	M	60	Bus driver. Primary education. Family from Médéa, parents born in Casbah, but resident in Bab el-Oued since 1961.
34	Larbi	M	48	Works for national airline. Middle School education. Family from Médéa, moved to Bab el-Oued in mid-1970s.
35	Djamila	F	52	Housewife. Middle School education. Mother from Tlemcen, father from Bordj Bou Ariridj. Grew up in Oran, moved to Bab el-Oued to marry in early-1980s.
36	Safia	F	52	Health worker at Maillot Hospital. Father from Médéa, mother born Algiers. Grew up in Climat de France, moved to Bab el-Oued in 1962.
37	Redouane	M	56	Bank employee. Middle School education. Born El Biar, parents from Sétif. Family resident in Bab el-Oued since 1969.

38	Lamia	F	64	Housewife. Primary education. Father moved to Algiers from Béjaïa after 1945. Family has lived in Notre Dame since 1962.
39	Naila	F	44	Hairdresser. Secondary education. Lives in Notre Dame.
40	Linda	F	32	Unemployed. Secondary education. Lives in Notre Dame.
41	Lamine	M	54	Retired bank clerk. Secondary education. Family origins from Biskra, but grandfather born in Algiers. Born in Climat de France, grew up in Rue de Tanger, family moved to Bab el-Oued in 1971. Lives in Ain Benian.
42	Mohamed	M	64	Retired bank employee. Secondary education. Family moved to Bab el-Oued from Médéa in 1962.
43	Smail	M	32	Street vendor. Secondary education. Family moved from Kabylie to Bab el-Oued in 1945. Lives in Bab el-Oued.
44	Hichem	M	19	Secondary education, unemployed. Father public sector employee, mother housewife. Family moved to Bab el-Oued in early-1970s.
45	Karim	M	20	Undergraduate student. Parents civil servants. Lives in Bainem.
46	Mouloud	M	75	Receptionist. Middle School education. Parents moved from Kabylia to Casbah before independence, then to Bab el-Oued in 1962.
47	Hamza	M	39	Employee in local council. Undergraduate education. Born in Bab el-Oued, lives Bab Ezzouar.
48	Slimane	M	34	School warden. Secondary education. Family lived in Bologhine before independence, father still lives there. Lives in Rouiba with mother.
49	Hakim	M	34	Elected member of local APC for opposition party. Family of Kabyle origin, lived in Bab el-Oued since 1962.
50	Rachid	M	42	Small business owner. Secondary education. Family originally from Kabylie, moved to Bab el-Oued in 1962.

Appendix 3

Map of the Commune of Bab el-Oued



Source : URBANIS, Agence d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme de la Wilaya d'Alger, 2013.

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