



External Financing of NGOs and the Construction of Civil Society: The Case of Algeria and the EU

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Abstract

This thesis examines the EU's aims to try to construct civil society abroad together with its more modest actions targeting associations in the case of Algeria. Over the last decade, the EU has committed millions of Euros for civil society actors, essentially NGOs, in the Middle East and North Africa. However there are great disparities, both in its budgets and in its approaches. Following the political transformations in North Africa in 2011, the EU has increased even further its budget for funding civil society.

Algeria is a context with low levels of foreign donor funding. However, with 93,000 associations registered in 2012, it has more associations than any country of the Arab world. At grass roots level, Algerian associations and their relations to the state and to donors have undergone transformations over the last two decades. The thesis explores a number of these associations and relationships across different sectors and regions of Algeria. It asks whether associations are co-opted by state or by donors, as has been suggested, or whether they can be actors in their own right, either in contestation, or in co-operation with institutions. The thesis takes two sector studies to analyse this. Firstly, it explores how heritage associations both challenge the state's vision of Algeria's history and propose alternatives. Secondly, it examines how social associations, in responding to the population's needs, identify problems in social policy and transform people's expectations about how social care should be managed. As this involves risk-taking, associations cannot, it is argued, be seen as simply reacting, either to donors or to the state.

The thesis analyses the EU's presence in Algeria, historical difficulties and its absence during Algeria's conflict. It explores the resulting adaptations, notably in the EU's language in Algeria, which appears comparatively less value laden than in other contexts. It concludes on the interplay between associations and external actors, not only in terms of funding, but also in terms of language and perceptions of what constitutes, or hinders, the construction of a national civil society.



Jury: Lahouari Addi (IEP, Lyon), Olivier Roy (EUI/RSCAS) (Supervisor), Jessica Ayesha Northey (candidate), Patrick Crowley (Univ. Cork), Pascal Vennesson (formerly RSCAS/EUI/ Nanyang Technological University, Singapore)

Bio: Jessica Northey has spent the last four years researching her PhD project under the supervision of Olivier Roy on the impact of external aid on civil society in the MENA region, focusing on the EU in Algeria. During this period she carried out research and evaluation work across the Middle East and North Africa region. She also worked on the Borderlands Project at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, under Professor Raffaella Del Sarto. Prior to this, she carried out a number of short and long term missions with the EU and international organisations in Sub Saharan Africa and in North Africa. Between 2007 and 2009 she worked with many Algerian associations, in the framework of the EU support programme, based in the Ministry of Solidarity in Algiers.