Feminist movements as agents of political change
An analysis of feminist social movements’ impact on labour rights legislation in Morocco

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Abstract

Inspired by the contestatory debate over whether globalisation has brought more benefits or disadvantages, and feminist movements all over the world gaining more agency and leverage every day, this paper is an attempt to connect said components. Morocco is a case where both are highly present. Elements such as the country’s location with neighbouring countries on two continents, a history of a fight for independence, an economy that has undergone major reorganisation, and exceptional feminist movements, will prove paramount for the paper. The purpose is to study whether the feminist movements in Morocco have had a positive impact on the situation of female labourers, a group that has grown rapidly due to a combination of aforementioned elements. Theories of New Institutional Economics, the disproportionate effects of structural adjustment on women, and the importance of social movements to achieve change will be applied in an attempt to find connections. A frame analysis will be carried out and compared to legislative changes affecting female workers, to test whether these theories can be confirmed or dismissed. The results indicate that there is reason to believe that feminist movements have had an influence on labour rights legislation, and also that Morocco is more complex in this aspect than it might initially have seemed.

Keywords: feminist movements, structural adjustment, Morocco, labour rights
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1. Introduction

With an increasingly more globalised world, different aspects of society develop in asymmetrical paces. The market might change in one pace in one direction, and labour rights or gender roles do not necessarily follow. Powerful economic institutions have not always facilitated this asymmetry, but rather aggravated the process in some cases. On the other hand, the world has at the same time seen the rise of many feminist movements and initiatives.

1.1 Research Problem

For many developing countries, the measures taken by aforementioned economic institutions have had devastating consequences on their already critical economy in the 1980s and onwards (Stiglitz, 2002, p. 52). These measures reorganised the economy, causing certain industries to expand explosively. Those industries needed, according to strict recommendations from said institutions, the cheapest labour available. This turned out to be women, and here is where different aspects of society develop in asymmetrical paces (Moghadam, 2011, p. 29). Social structures such as gender roles did not change at the same pace as the economy did, creating a problematic gap between reality and beliefs and expectations. Light was shed on this issue by women political activists – feminists. They started exercising their agency in their struggle for equal rights as an attempt to eliminate, or at least diminish, that gap (Briskin, 2011, pp. 214-216).

All these components can be found in Morocco. It has a history of fighting for independence against both Spain and France, their post-independence economic crises led to the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) from Bretton Woods institutions the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Seddon, 1989, pp. 235-252). This, in turn, contributed to the mass-employment of women as cheap labour at the bottom of the global value chain (GVC). A parallel evolution was that of the feminist movements in Morocco, at first budding but soon blooming (Ennaji, 2008).

The feminist movements in Morocco have long been a leading example in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006). This thesis strives to investigate if social movements, like the feminist movements in Morocco, can achieve political change to improve salient problem areas.
1.2 Purpose and Research Question

This paper aims to connect these two discourses, namely that of the feminist movements and the economic situation’s effect on women, to see if the former has worked to improve the latter. In doing so, the paper strives to determine whether improvements to the situation of female labourers has been a due to feminist action, or if no such correlation can be found. The overarching research question for this thesis is thus as follows;

*How have feminist movements in Morocco improved female labourers’ rights?*

2. Theoretical Framework

This thesis will build upon a theoretical understanding that economics are driven by political choices and societal structures and norms, and that SAPs were harmful in adopting rational expectation models. Further, the theoretical framework will be based on the notion that women were affected worse than men by SAPs and, in extension, the importance of their activism to achieve change and improvement.

2.1 The Concept of Female Labourers’ Rights

*Female labourers’ rights* in this thesis refers to both social rights in the workplace such as protection against discrimination or sexual harassment, and in extension this addresses issues considered gendered, such as maternity leave or child care provision. Labour rights will also refer to union rights such as decent working hours, freedom of association or choice of profession, and employment contracts etc. This understanding of labour rights is drawn from the International Labour Organization (ILO) and is commonly referred to by acknowledged scholars in the field (Moghadam, Franzway & Fonow, 2011, p. 4; Beneria, Berik & Floro, 2015, p. 164).

2.2 New Institutional Economics

Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel Prize in Economics recipient, former economic adviser to the US president and chief economist at the World Bank, points out how the IMF has worked to deteriorate the economic, and in extension, social situation in structurally adjusted developing countries. The programmes assumed, according to market fundamentalism, the *competitive equilibrium* model. This model suggests that all actors make choices based solely on their own economic interest and that the free market automatically regulates this process through supply
and demand. Adam Smith’s *invisible hand* concept perfectly describes this, as a metaphor for how selfish economic benefit as a motive will result in a well-functioning economy. This model, however, requires ‘clearly established property rights and courts to enforce them’ as well as a competitive market and perfect information (Stiglitz, 2002, pp. 74-74).

This critical view has come to be known as New Institutional Economics (NIE). Its main ideas focus on the importance of institutions and that when asymmetric information is prominent, it makes out the logic ground for institutional contracts and arrangements. Hence, under such conditions, the economy becomes heavily reliant on ‘ownership structures and property relations’ (Beneria, Berik & Floro, 2015, pp. 49-51).

Nonetheless, in developing countries subject to structural adjustment these conditions were not satisfied. Thus, making the entire foundation for the Washington Consensus untenable, Stiglitz (2002, p. 74) argues. Instead, the famous fiscal austerity, privatisation and liberalisation has left developing countries worse off, in many aspects, post-implementation.

Now, for clarification purposes, a distinction between the World Bank and IMF is in order. The World Bank is concerned with poverty reduction, and the IMF implements programmes for stabilisation purposes (Stiglitz, 2002, p. 23, 195). What is often criticized here is the conditionality of IMF programmes, i.e. what the IMF required from the structurally adjusted country in exchange for assistance. The lack of consultation from the IMF with the country in question resulted in the implementation of programmes based on preconceptions and completely lacking local expertise. Another critique regarding conditionality was the lack of transparency behind the IMFs agenda. As the IMF refused all kinds of discussion regarding agreements, the country behind the programme struggled to build consensus. Both citizens in the country in question, and World Bank staff, were withheld from discussions and even agreements. This deficiency aggravated the country’s commitment to the programme. And lastly, conditionality received criticism for its claim to be politically neutral. ‘The very notion that one could separate economics from politics, or a broader understanding of society, illustrated a narrowness of perspective,’ Stiglitz (ibid, p. 47) points out.

### 2.3 Women as Shock Absorbers

Stiglitz’ analysis of what drives the economy in general, and the impact of structural adjustment in particular, is well in line with feminist economics. According to Beneria, Berik & Floro (2015, p. 250) feminist economic scholars agree ‘that high levels of income inequality and insecurity are the product of political choices, not the inexorable workings of economic forces over which we have no control,’ i.e. the *invisible hand*. They further argue how political change
is of essence to achieve change in economic policies, and to do so collective action in the shape of social movements is required. In the case of women workers in industries affected by SAPs, it has been argued that social movements play a particular role, as will be discussed below.

Moghadam, Franzway & Fonow (2011, p. 4) justify the extra focus and effort they argue should be put on ‘women’s economic participation and rights’ as follows;

First, the current era of neoliberal globalization is characterized by the feminization of labor; the feminization of poverty; […] and women’s continued responsibility for child care, housework, and elder care. Second, the work that women do spans both the productive and reproductive spheres, or the market economy and the care economy. Third, the vulnerabilities inherent in global capitalism affect women disproportionately, whether in their productive or reproductive roles.

Evidently, women acted as shock absorbers under SAPs. Moghadam (2011, p. 25) goes on to discuss how, during the globalisation era, not only has there been a deterioration in working conditions, degradation of welfare and rising inequalities, but simultaneously the polar opposite has evolved. The rising ‘female labour-force participation’ together with the spread of global norms etc ‘calling for gender equality and human rights, including social and economic rights.’ Undeniably, the ‘low-wage female labour force’ became a favourite among employers but unfortunately, it did not lead to an increased agency regarding agreements and the process of shaping them.

2.4 Women’s NGOs as Agents of Change

These kinds of issues are usually a concern for trade unions but in Morocco, women’s agency in unions is limited. Sadiqi and Ennaji (2006) describe how time-consuming domestic chores, traditional gender roles in society and patriarchal hierarchies within unions challenge women’s participation. Instead, they stress the importance of women’s non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and argue that ‘NGOs have enabled women to critically assess their own situation and create and shape a transformation of society.’ Women’s NGO’s are an important actor for promoting democracy and empowering women, which has been further enhanced by pressure on the Moroccan government and monarch by international actors, human rights NGOs and political parties, they argue. Women’s movements and feminist movements will be used interchangeably throughout the thesis.
These elements constitute the most prominent aspects to the analysis in this paper. They help explain the interrelation between global policies as a cause and the feminisation of labour and poverty, as well as the evolution of women’s social movements on the matter as an effect. It is with these theoretical views as a foundation that the thesis will study what effect some seminal events in the feminist movements in Morocco have had on the legislation regarding labour rights.

3. Methodological Approach

In order to study said issues, a framing analysis of feminist movements in the country will be carried out. The result of that study will then be compared to the legislation for social and union labour rights in an explanatory study, with focus on the chronology. The word *improved* in the research question implies that feminist movements have the female labourers’ best interest in mind and refers to whether legislation has changed according to feminist movements’ demands and desires.

3.1 Research Design

The study of the feminist movements will be a *qualitative text analysis*. This method is useful when specific parts of the textual source are especially important, thus needing an analysis to find those parts. This can be done by placing the material in its social context in order to understand actors’ intentions (Esaiasson et al, 2017, p. 211). The thesis will analyse textual sources by asking questions that have been drawn from Esaiasson et al (ibid, pp. 218-219, own translation).

1. How is the ‘problem’ framed? What *kind* of problem and to *whom*?
2. In the framing, what kinds of *subjects* are there?
3. How is the *cause* of the problem framed?
4. How is the *solution* to the problem framed?

The study will not have pre-determined answer options, as the study neither aims to categorise, nor is there a theoretical ideal type for answers. Instead, answer options will be kept open and completely dependent on the findings. This study will work to analyse actions from the feminist movements where there is reason to believe they have impacted legislation. The perspective of interpretation will aim to be that of the activists or originators. What is relevant for the study is what the authors of the material aimed to accomplish or what message they intend to convey.
The results from this analysis will then make out an important part of the material for the explanatory study of labour rights legislation to see if there is a bivariate connection between feminist movements’ actions and legislative changes, such as ratified conventions, adopted labour laws or changes to the constitution. Demands identified in the frame analysis will hence be systematically compared to the legislative material to see whether said demands have been met with legislative changes. The most important aspect in this study is time, or chronology. Focus will be aimed at whether the legislative changes were preceded by actions calling for those changes.

3.2 Case Selection
Morocco is a relevant choice for a number of reasons. Firstly, Morocco is a country of interest in how it has maintained a close relationship with Europe throughout their contemporary history. Mostly with Spain and France, from being a protectorate to having special trade agreements. Further, the feminist movements in Morocco are relevant to the study due to a multitude of factors. How the different currents have converged and diverged, and how external actors have affected the discourse makes for an intriguing case. Lastly, SAPs and their consequences contribute heavily to the case selection. It is closely interconnected both with Morocco’s relationship with Europe, as European actors heavily influenced the Moroccan economy in various respects, and the feminist movements’ history due to the disproportionate outcomes of SAPs, from a gender perspective.

3.3 Material
Three different events from the Moroccan feminist movements will be analysed. A petition called the One Million Signature Campaign that was launched in 1992 by the magazine of a feminist political civil society organisation and aimed at the Parliament and Prime Minister, a report drafted by Maghrebi feminist organizations called Cent Mesures et Dispositions which was presented at the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, and the leaderless social movement called the 20th February Movement which began in 2011 with a ‘call for protest’-video and led to extensive street protests throughout Morocco. These have been chosen due to their magnitude in engagement, the variety of authors or activists that have originated them, and also the variety in who or where they have been aimed at.

The resources for this analysis are both original documents by NGOs, official documents by the UN and ILO, and literature from Moroccan (mostly) feminist scholars. This literature
includes Salime (2011, 2012), Yachoulti (2015), Naciri (2014), Alami M’Chichi (2014), and Sandberg and Aqertit (2014). The literature will in most cases be secondary sources, as primary sources would have required time spent in the field due to the absence of digital copies. Although, secondary sources are a filtered version of events, there is, seemingly, a consensus amongst feminist scholars on the events that transpired. It could also prove useful for the study to use sources where the events to be analysed have already been put in context, as that is part of its purpose. Hopefully this will be beneficial in reducing the cultural distance between the researcher and the text producer.

These secondary sources are especially relevant to the third event, the 20th February Movement, as the only source from the event’s originators is a two-minute video. Moroccan feminist scholar’s accounts of said video and its aftermath are thus crucial for providing context, whereas for the other two events, the One Million Signature Campaign and the Cent Mesures et Dispositions, originating authors provide these elements as the original source is more elaborate in said aspect. Although for the first event, the One Million Signature Campaign, the original text is very difficult to come by, however many direct quotes are easily accessible. The understanding of movements’ demands have thereby been achieved through different measures, depending on original sources available.

The material researched has been exclusively in French and English, which in practice means that relevant resources in Arabic or Tamazight (Berber language), have been either filtered through a translation process, or simply overlooked. An effort will be made to bear this in mind throughout the study and a consciousness that the selection of material is limited.

The legislative material in the explanatory study will be mostly ILO conventions, whether or not they have been ratified by Morocco and, if so, when. If conventions have been ratified with exceptions this will also be taken into account. International agreements on these issues, e.g. the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) will also make out the material for the explanatory study, as well as changes to the Moroccan constitution. These three kinds of material together cover the relevant aspects of this thesis, namely labour rights legislation, women’s rights and the juridical situation in Morocco. On their own they cover more general areas, but combined they suit the purpose of this thesis.
4. Background

4.1 Morocco in the 19th and 20th century

Up until independence in 1956, Morocco saw European powers operate unscrupulously throughout the country, as well as in neighbouring countries. For a long time, Morocco managed to evade European rule and the Moroccan Islamic monarchy reached a level of stability (Gilson Miller et al, 2019). Nonetheless, when France invaded neighbouring country Algeria in 1830, the Algerian leader Abdelkader subsequently took refuge in Morocco and thereby involved Morocco in the conflict. This resulted in the French bombarding Moroccan cities and Morocco sending armies to the Algerian frontier (Emerit, 2018).

The following years saw Spain expand its territory in Morocco by enclaving Ceuta and Ifni, and later making most of the northern Moroccan coast their protectorate (Gilson Miller et al, 2019).

In the beginning of the 20th century, the new sultan Abd al-Aziz caused civil unrests when he tried to secularise and transform Morocco according to European customs. Some of the European powers took advantage of this state of turmoil and started deciding amongst themselves who would operate where. The Algeciras Conference in 1906 concluded that France and Spain could police ports and custom fees in exchange that they stay out of Egypt out of respect for Britain, and Libya out of respect for Italy. It also recognized the authority of the sultan and the integrity of his domains (Kerr & Wright, 2015; Gilson Miller et al, 2019).

The subsequent sultan, Abd al-Hafiz, had to be rescued from his own people by the French. He was then obliged to sign the Treaty of Fez in 1912, making a large portion of Morocco a French protectorate. For geographical clarification, see appendix.

The French thought they could simply use a blueprint of their course of action in Algeria and Tunisia to rule Morocco but there were a few essential differences between the countries that complicated things for the French. For example, Morocco had been independent for the last 1000 years, it had an Atlantic coast, and it had long played an important diplomatic part towards Spain. Although Morocco was governed by Paris through a French general, Moroccans’ image of their sultan as their leader barely changed. However, the subsequent sultan managed not only to keep his people content but also kept relations with France on good terms (Gilson Miller et al, 2019).

During World War II, Moroccan troops, mainly Amazigh, initially made a significant contribution in France. But when France collapsed in 1940, the sultan began resisting French orders to express his own independence. Around the same time, independence party Istiqlal was
formed and they submitted a proposal for a more independent regime (BBC News, n.d.a). They were not treated fairly by the authorities which upset many Moroccans. The situation in both politics and civil society became increasingly more tense. The Moroccan nationalist movement grew stronger but the French measures to suppress said movement did too (Gilson Miller et al, 2019).

Amazigh and religious leaders started to push for the disposition of the sultan, with tacit consent from French officials and settlers, and gained support from the French government. However, this created an image of the sultan as a martyr and hero for the Moroccan people. Spain strongly criticized France’s actions and Moroccan nationalists sought refuge in the Spanish protectorate. Those who initially called for the sultan’s disposition now recognised the importance of reinstating the sultan and he returned to Morocco in 1956. Independence from the French protectorate was declared, and a constitutional government was formed. Two months later, an agreement of independence from the Spanish protectorate was signed, a much calmer process than that of the French protectorate. Spain eventually abandoned Ifni in 1970 but kept Ceuta and Melilla (BBC News, n.d.b, Gilson Miller et al, 2019).

As is evident from this historical discussion, some important and salient issues which had a bearing are; Morocco saw both Spanish and French protectorates, not to be confused with colonisation. A protectorate is when a state is controlled by another state but keep sovereignty and local autonomy, as opposed to a colony that is subject to the coloniser. However, the difference in practice is rarely this clear but declaring a protectorate is often more easily accepted by the local population than colonisation (Merriam-Webster, n.d.; Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.). Another important issue was how protectorate officials made alliances with native Moroccans; a polarising strategy very common in what came to be called the Scramble for Africa. European powers favorized the native discontents in the colony or protectorate and could pursue their politics through them (Horowtiz, 2000, pp. 147-166).

**4.2 Post-Independence Morocco and its Economy**

France had made many successful establishments in Morocco during the protectorate such as agriculture, industry and communications. After independence, the transition from French to Moroccan rule was relatively undramatic, although the relationship between the two countries was some somewhat complicated. Morocco supported Algeria in their war against France but had to stay on France’s good side because France supplied them with essential technology and financial aid. A first cabinet was installed, where many of Morocco’s minority groups were represented, as had been advised by the French. Other than Amazigh, minority groups in
Morocco include Jews, Shia Muslims and the nomadic Saharawi people, amongst others (Minority Rights Group International, n.d.). The first version of the Mudawana, the family law, was also adopted. This law covers many important areas such as marriage, divorce, inheritance and child custody. It was based on religious law (Shari’a, more specifically Maliki) which has been criticized for making it discriminatory against women. Other laws that were in place regarding alcohol or bank interest, elements that are also mentioned in the Qur’an, were not based on religious laws (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006). The Mudawana and its role in society and everyday life came to be wildly contested, as will be further elaborated below.

Politics in Morocco were not of the most reliable character for the first few decades after independence. The first parliamentary elections were held in 1963 where the Istiqlal and its allied breakout party Union Nationale des Forces Populaires (UNFP) were up against the more conservative Front pour la Défense des Institutions Constitutionnelles (FDIC) who pursued politics in the sultan Hassan II’s interests. The sultan had now officially started calling himself king instead of sultan. The following years, Morocco saw multiple coup d’états and new constitutional laws and it was not until the general election in 1977, that the situation was stabilised (Gilson Miller et al, 2019). Monarchist independents won but Istiqlal was the biggest party (Storm, 2007, pp. 40-41). The King’s politics in Western Sahara, where Morocco was involved in an armed conflict over territory with Spain, Algeria and Mauretania, and the way in which he incorporated the opposition in positions of power, helped him win over the people of Morocco. The King’s involvement in politics and the state’s ditto in economic affairs was very characteristic for Morocco. There were democratic institutions in place, such as an elected parliament, but they rather functioned as facades. This corruption-like culture created an elite, either because of their status as commercial entrepreneurs, or because of their important political role in the independence movement (Joekes, 1982, p. 8-9).

When entering the 1980s, Morocco’s economy was close to destitute. In 1977, the account deficit in the balance of payments was 16.5 % of GDP and the treasury deficit was 15.8 % of GDP. Morocco’s first measure to deal with this was ‘substantial foreign borrowing.’ The combination of a series of bad harvests, the protracted conflict in Western Sahara, and other contributing factors created an increasingly unsettling, and even violent, situation in the country. Public discontent and an untenable economic situation demanded government action. At first, Morocco launched their own stabilisation plan, but failed to improve their economic situation. Pressure from foreign actors grew to take more comprehensive measures and in 1984, Morocco agreed to implement the SAPs that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank so eagerly proposed. Initially, Morocco was quite hesitant and did not commit fully to the
SAPs. An improvement of the economic situation did not occur, and so, Morocco committed fully to the IMF’s agenda in 1987 (Seddon, 1989, pp. 245-263). In 1989, there was a vote in parliament in favour of a divestiture programme. A list of enterprises to sell was made based on their profit which was met with criticism. How would selling the most profitmaking enterprises going to improve Morocco’s economic situation? The process was slow at first, but Morocco’s privatisation later overshined neighbouring countries’ (Khosrowshahi, 1997).

4.3 Structural Adjustment

Morocco was not the only country struggling with its economy in the early 1980s. Developing countries all over Latin America, Asia, the Caribbean and Africa shared the same problématique. After pressure from international creditors, they agreed to the IMF and World Bank’s agendas for stabilisation and poverty reduction (Seddon, 1989, pp. 251-252). These agendas were more or less imposed on countries running desperate due to economic crisis. In exchange for assistance, strict requirements were put on recipient countries (Stiglitz, 2002, p. 44). This phenomenon, which will be discussed in further detail below, was the SAPs.

The programmes were a blueprint solution, meaning that it was implemented through a copy-paste-like method rather than with contextual awareness and adaptations. It was based on macro-economic concepts, which means that it ‘look[ed] at the economy as a whole rather than individual firms or households’ (Elson, 1995, p. 165). The initial aim with SAPs was simply to reduce fiscal deficits, i.e. ‘the difference between government spending and revenue’ (Watson, 1995, p. 75). Further, since it was developed by aforementioned Washington-based institutions, and to some extent, the US government, it came to be known as the Washington Consensus. The elements of the Washington consensus most commonly referred to are privatisation, liberalisation, deregulation, stabilisation, and devaluation, which all work to reduce the role of the state in the economy (Mayer & Pickles, 2014, p. 38). These elements will be explained in further detail below.

Susan George (2007), describes how the Washington Consensus in practice only worked to deteriorate the situation for the already struggling people in structurally adjusted countries, and the only ones who benefitted from it were those who were considered wealthy before implementation. According to her, privatisation only served as ‘get-rich-quick opportunities for local elites and transnational corporations’ (ibid, p. 5). Trade liberalisation was supposed to enhance import opportunities and took shape in reduced tariffs. The aim was to help local industry grow through international trade but unfortunately resulted in both less employment and investment. Market deregulation simply meant less state regulation on the market, leaving
sellers completely dependent on private buyers. Stabilisation programmes aim to reduce demand and take control of inflation through different measures to help economic recovery. However, the government expenditure cuts in stabilisation programmes often affected social welfare, leaving the poorest excluded from essential services. And lastly, devaluation refers to the domestic currency of the structurally adjusted country, making import more expensive and export less profitable (Watson, 1995).

This discourse is put in perspective in Joseph Stiglitz book *Making Globalization Work* (2006). He asks whether the problem really concerns overborrowing, or instead overlending?

Every loan has a lender and a borrower; both voluntarily engage in the transaction. If the loan goes bad, there is at least a prima facie case that the lender is as guilty as the borrower. In fact, since lenders are supposed to be sophisticated in risk analysis and in making judgments about a reasonable debt burden, they should perhaps bear even more culpability.

He describes how lenders, i.e. the IMF, foreign countries’ governments and private actors, have been irresponsible and avoided the required assessment of borrowers’ creditworthiness. Developing countries have even been pressured to borrow excessively, giving lenders a kind of power over them, but also causing a negative effect on the developing country’s economy. Overborrowing increased the risk of crisis and lenders were quick to pull their loans out of countries in crisis. Most loans were short-term and could be demanded back on very short notice. In combination with the ‘volatile’ nature of global markets, loans could quickly rise to unpayable sums. The devaluation also deteriorates the situations, as most loans were measured in currencies such as Euro or US dollars. The value of the loan could then amount to unforeseen numbers, making the repayment impossible for the borrower. Instead of improving the situation for borrowing countries, lenders did all in their power to make them pay. This was done by Washington Consensus measures such as increased interest rates. When this issue was finally acknowledged in 1996, the first version of the highly indebted poor countries (HIPC) programme was made. Due to the very narrow qualifications, it only helped as few as three countries. This was supposedly intentional from the IMF, as it gave them leverage over indebted countries to agree to almost anything the IMF wanted to pursue. It took almost a decade for the IMF to improve the programme and eventually, in 2005, 28 countries benefitted from debt relief (Stiglitz, 2006, pp. 226-227).

SAPs have also been called ‘shock-treatment’ due to the multitude of reforms that are implemented simultaneously. In her book *The Shock Doctrine* (2007), Naomi Klein stretches
this metaphor even further. She equates structural adjustment to electroshock torture. How countries are brought to a state of ruin and then bombarded with reforms that only benefit those whose initiative the implementation was. Natural disasters, just like economic crises, she argues, is the ideal environment for foreign governments, organizations and multinational corporations (MNCs) to influence and operate egoistically. Both politically and economically. She specifically points to private foreign subcontractors as the ‘bad guys’ for exploiting vulnerable societies.

In this thesis, this idea will be further elaborated on by the telling example of the apparel industry in Morocco which was heavily exploited through this exact strategy. Around the beginning of the 1980s, foreign MNCs started sub-contracting the most labour-intensive stages of production in the apparel industry because of the cheap labour in Morocco. Those who were exploited the worst through this were the women as they provided the cheapest labour (Joekes, 1982, pp. 29-30).

4.4 Morocco in the Apparel Industry
The evolution of the Moroccan apparel industry has seen many different twists and turns. The first industrial factories in the sector were established during World War II by French protectorate officials and European immigrants and focused on cloth and thread production. After independence, the Moroccan state took over ownership and encouraged cotton production for the domestic market (Joekes, 1982, pp. 6-8). In the 1970s, investments were made to raise the quality to an internationally competitive level, and private actors started establishing garment factories to meet local clients demands. This was in the 1970s, shortly before Morocco adopted structural adjustment. Factory workers were majority male, the production was aimed at the local market, private entrepreneurs were still uncommon in the industry, as were garment factories, and the apparel industry did not employ more than about 30 000 people (Cairoli, 1999).

Along with structural adjustments, the apparel industry changed. The prevailing cotton industry was not profitable enough and Morocco saw a rapid increase in garment factories instead. It was a low-capital, low-tech and labour-intensive production as opposed to its forerunner. Tax reforms facilitated the transition to export-focused production. Foreign actors recognised how hiring women would lead to a reduction in expenses since they accepted lower wages, and therefore urged factories to hire women (Cairoli, 1999). Employers came to experience that women were more efficient, produced goods of higher quality and were more obedient than men (Joekes, 1982, pp. 13-21).
Outward Processing Trade (OPT) arrangements, *admissions temporaires* in Morocco, such as the Multifibre Agreement (MFA) were put in place. It was a way for European countries to benefit economically on outsourcing the most labour-intensive stages offshore. Morocco’s proximity and historical ties promoted the country as an OPT-candidate. This was especially exercised by Spain and France. They made profit on providing material and selling the finished product, and Morocco provided the labour required between these two components. (Rossi, 2013; World Bank, 2006, p. 22, 40). This was also a way to protect the European market from potential damages caused by importing from cheaper production countries in Asia and the rapidly expanding ready-made garment (RMG) industry there (Goto, 1989).

Due to the MFA *phase-out*, Morocco had to transition to a more fast-fashion kind of production in order to remain competitive at an international level. In practice, this meant a focus on ‘lean production and just-in-time delivery’ which put pressure on factories to reduce costs and lead times, ‘responsiveness to changes in order and flexibility,’ without affecting the quality of the product (Plank, Rossi & Staritz, 2014, p. 129). The transition towards fast fashion also saw an increase in volatile contracts for unskilled workers. They would be positioned towards the end of the production line, doing the finishing steps before the products left the factory (ibid, p. 139).

The apparel industry in Morocco has evolved into something internationally competitive. The products produced require a range of skills from assembly line sowing to embroidery and plaiting to laundry and packing (Plank, Rossi & Staritz, 2014, p. 137-139; Rossi, 2013). The different kinds of labour are divided both between geographical locations, but also between different groups of employees. As previously mentioned, many unskilled workers are employed at temporary or casual contracts. Often, they are young with limited work experience and have migrated from somewhere else in Morocco (Plank, Rossi & Starlitz, 2014, p. 129-130). As opposed to this, there are higher skilled, senior workers who have received specific training and can ‘guarantee quality and stability of production’ and enjoy a permanent contract (Rossi, 2013). By 2011, the industry employed roughly 175 000 people, in 1 600 factories, and was worth € 2 146 mn, and in 2007, 86 % of them were women (Rossi, 2013; Plank, Rossi & Starlitz, 2014, p. 133).

One of the greatest concerns regarding the apparel industry in Morocco and elsewhere is how it exploits women factory workers. When an economic crisis hits, the women are hit the hardest in society (Lesser Blumberg & Salazar-Paredes, 2011, p. 136). The economic crises that hit Morocco, as well as how it was dealt with through structural adjustment, deteriorated the situation for many women. As has been discussed earlier, the feminisation of the work force
was due to pressure from international investors. International investors came into the picture along with structural adjustment. Their argument was, as previously mentioned, that women factory workers could be treated worse than men (Joekes, 1982, pp. 13-22). However, there is a multitude of aspects that all contribute to women’s exploitation here. For example, in Morocco, traditional gender roles have played large part in this. There has been a feminisation of poverty which is a result of both the increase in female-headed households and male privilege. When crisis hits, men are given priority to secure, high-paying jobs, leaving women with no option but to work under precarious conditions with volatile contracts. Married women make out only a small portion of the female workforce but are more respected in society. This in turn makes employers favour unmarried, preferably young girls, in the recruitment process as they have a lower status in society. Thus, employers do not feel as obliged to respect their employees’ rights. Men are still considered breadwinners, i.e. responsible for providing economically for their family, making working women ashamed of taking up a job. Which brings us back to how the most vulnerable women in Morocco make out the foundation of the GVC here, performing labour-intensive work for the European market (Cairoli, 1999, Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006). Arguably, feminist action is required.

4.5 The Feminist Movements in Morocco

In Morocco, feminism is polyvocal, i.e. it is not a homogenous movement with uniform goals and means. In this section, the main currents will be discussed, and the Moroccan feminist discourse will be illustrated through a few key actors and concerns.

What is considered the first expression of the feminist movement that still lives on today was in 1946. The feminist NGO Akhawat Al-Safaa (Sisters of Purity) Association, which was part of independence party Istiqlal, promulgated a list of legal demands for women’s rights (al-wathiqā, the document). The actions of the Akhawat Al-Safaa, which went beyond the al-wathiqā, were facilitated by supportive male colleagues in the Istiqlal. Most members of the NGO had male relatives in the Istiqlal, which gave them stronger bargaining power (Sadiqi, 2016, p. 52). However, for their male colleagues, feminism was rather a means towards achieving something else. Either the image of an enlightened Islamic society, or a move towards European standards. The early post-independence Moroccan state, as well as the King Mohamed V, supported this feminist movement for similar reasons. It became an indicator of high social status to educate daughters, not only sons. When women later entered the work market it was rather ‘part of the unplanned consequences of state policies as well as of development requirements.’ Not for the emancipation and liberation of women per se, as
opposed to feminist women’s incentive (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006). However, the women that benefitted from this were all from middle- or upper-class families, and this is where Fatema Mernissi comes into the picture.

Mernissi was a feminist sociologist and writer who made ground breaking work in letting the voices of marginalised Moroccan women be heard. Some of her work includes interviews with women whose stories were usually not heard, such as domestic workers, rural women or illiterate women. Although she has been criticized for projecting her own values and interpretations on these women’s stories, it was somewhat revolutionary at the time. In 1975, her PhD dissertation *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* was published, and it soon became famous for its secular stance on the issue. Over the years, Mernissi changed her opinion on the relationship between feminism and Islam towards what has come to be known as Islamic feminism (Rhouni, 2016, pp. 131-130).

This brings us to one of the dichotomies in Moroccan feminisms, secular and Islamic feminism. The two can be placed on a spectrum of Moroccan feminisms, and in relation to these two main currents, others are called moderate or radical, secular or Islamic feminisms. Secular feminism, sometimes referred to as liberal feminism, is what was born during the independence movement, as was discussed earlier. Shortly after independence, the men of the independence movement gained high social status through their new work positions such as ministers etc, and they then remarried younger women. This left the women of the independence movement painfully aware of how, although they had higher status than lower class and rural women, the men of their social strata were far more privileged than they were themselves (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006). The secular feminist movement is based on ‘Western’ values where women and men are equal and should enjoy the same rights and possibilities. It initially did not address religion at all but has over the years realized the importance of doing so. It went from criticizing the patriarchy, and avoiding Islam, to criticizing the patriarchal interpretation and practices of it. Secular feminists range from viewing the Shari‘a as constitutionalised oppression of women, to seeing it as something changeable through time and place (Ennaji, 2016, pp. 44-45).

Islamic feminism, on the other hand, believes in the equity, instead of equality, of the sexes. They promote traditional family values and gender roles. They recognize men and women’s different rights and obligations, such as how women have the right to be provided for by their fathers or husbands and how they are thereby obliged to obey them. However, they also recognise that both men and women can be more than only breadwinners or homemakers. Most importantly, they believe that both men and women are equally worth (Ennaji, 2016, p. 39; Sadiqi, 2016, p. 70). Feminism within Islam is as old as the religion itself. The Qur’an has
many stories of women saints, the Islamic history bears many female Muslim leaders and religious scholars. These women have all played their central role in Islam (Ennaji, 2016, p. 36). However, Islamic feminism as activism and politics is rather new. During the early 1990s, male Islamist leaders launched Islamic feminism as a counteract to the growing secular feminist movement (Sadiqi, 2016, p. 63). A challenge for the Islamic feminism is all the women that are neither daughters, nor wives, as they are somewhat excluded. Widows, divorcees and single mothers, are not embraced by Islamic feminism (Sadiqi, 2016, p. 70). Nonetheless, they also call for contextual awareness to the Shari’a, only through slightly different measures. Their *Ijtihad*, i.e. reinterpretation of sacred documents, has been done with the help of religious leaders and with Qur’an as their sole inspiration, as opposed to international understanding of human rights for secular feminists (Ennaji, 2016, p. 37; Sadiqi, 2016, p. 62, 68).

To sum up the Islamic/secular feminism dichotomy; secular feminists were pioneers in their call for women’s rights from the 1940s onwards. They have moved from criticizing Islam to criticizing the patriarchal interpretation and codification of Islam and started addressing religion as they recognized the central role it played in their discourse. Mernissi’s aforementioned journey as a feminist scholar is a telling example of this (Rhouni, 2016, p. 130). Islamic feminism as activism and politics joined the struggle in the 1990s and sees religion as their source of arguments for women’s rights but Islamic feminists today have also adopted selected liberal views. What they share is their fight against patriarchal oppression, and the two currents are not two distinctive movements but rather make out a continuum of feminisms (Sadiqi, 2006).

Another dichotomy in Morocco and its feminist movements is the one of the public versus private sphere. Traditionally, the public sphere belonged to men and women belonged in the private sphere. However, men also held the highest authority in the private sphere. The two different spheres are not separated from each other, but actually interfere in everyday life. For example, women do have reason to visit the public sphere, but the traditional ideal image of a Moroccan woman is one who only does so when it is inevitable. Men do spend a large portion of their time in the private sphere, with exception of the kitchen, both for everyday needs and for religious ceremonies such as circumcision and marriage. These strict practices were challenged in urban areas when women started working outside the home. Women gained a new dimension to their personality where they were more of their own person than someone’s daughter or wife. In the public sphere they were citizens and workers, and in the private sphere, they stayed mothers and wives. In rural areas, the situation is fairly different. The illiteracy rate is higher than in urban areas, especially for women, and their presence in religious contexts is
limited. Nonetheless, they have a strong presence in, for example, the marketplace (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006).

As previously discussed, women started working outside the home due to a changing economic climate. Mernissi was one of the first to illuminate how women were affected by this, especially marginalised women. In her essays \textit{The Degrading Effect of Capitalism on Female Labour in a Third World Economy} from 1979 and the study \textit{Women and the Impact of Capitalist Development} (part I & II) from 1982-83, she highlights subaltern women’s importance in GVCs as well as how development plans for ‘rural modernisation’ has only worked to further deteriorate rural women’s situation. Through the publication of the article \textit{Le Prolétariat Féminin au Maroc} (The Female Proletariat in Morocco) in 1980, she drew attention to how Morocco now had a working class of women. Mernissi called for an end to discrimination against these women and recognition for them as ‘legitimate job applicants’ (Rhouni, 2016, pp. 133-136).

To conclude this account of feminist movements in Morocco, the main themes are; the origins in the independence struggle as activism and politics within left wing parties. Later on, it would branch into a multifaceted and polyvocal discourse. There are two main currents, secular feminism and Islamic feminism, and the two overlap as well as converge and diverge. The Moroccan society bears a dichotomy which is that of the private/public sphere and due to both a range of external factors and feminist action, this dichotomy has changed over time. Lastly, religion has been central in the Moroccan feminist discourse. Whether because of feminist movements themselves, or if unaddressed, by antagonists.

5. Analysis

5.1 Frame analysis

\textit{The One Million Signature Campaign}

In 1983, women of the leftist political party \textit{Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires} (Socialist Union of Popular Forces, USFP), started publishing the magazine \textit{Mars 8}, the title being a reference to the International Women’s Day. The women behind it later formed the political civil society organisation \textit{Union de l’Action Féminine} (Union of Women’s Action) in 1987. The magazine was a platform for raising women’s issues in different aspects of everyday life in Morocco. On the eve of International Women’s Day in 1992, they launched the One Million Signature Campaign. The campaign aimed at gathering one million signatures against the
Mudawana, which they considered discriminatory against women (Naciri, 2014; Sandberg & Aqertit, 2014, pp. 75-77).

What they framed as a problem was how the Mudawana disregarded both the equality expressed in the Moroccan constitution, and the definition of women’s rights in international conventions. The petition claimed to speak for all the women of Morocco but has been criticized for doing so (Alami M’Chichi, 2014). The most central subjects were the women responsible for the campaign. They were almost exclusively young, educated, middle-class, urban, professional women, i.e. the readership of Mars 8. They were accused of reinforcing a harmful narrative of poor, illiterate, rural women (Salime, 2011, p. 53). The authors of the petition arguably lacked intersectionality, and in extension, the demands did as well. However, Islamic women were now considered included in the otherwise very secular movement. As there was widespread disagreement amongst them towards the petition, they took action to dissociate. This was done through a mobilisation of Islamic women, who now created their own separate agenda. As opposed to previously being members of a larger Islamic organization (Salime, 2011, pp. 67-68; Sandberg & Aqertit, 2014, p. 97). This has been considered the birth of Islamic feminism as activism and politics. Some argue that it was the workings of conservative male Islamists who wanted to curb the secular feminist movement, which was beginning to gain momentum (Sadiqi, 2016, p. 63). Others argue that this new Islamic feminist movement urged Islamist leaders to respond harshly to the petition (Sandberg & Aqertit, 2014, p. 97). Another subject-related aspect to take into account is how the campaign was aimed at the Parliament and the Prime Minister. This alone was sensational in a sense. Previously, the Mudawana had been the concern of the King (as Commander of the Faithful) and the Ulama (religiously orthodox practitioners) since it was considered a sacred text (Salime, 2011, p. 44).

According to them, the cause of the problem was how the Mudawana neglected the accomplishments made by feminists, and that the agenda for the ongoing democratisation process overlooked women’s demands (ibid, pp. 33-34).

The solution, according to the petition, was a list of 9 amendments, namely (1) suppression of the wilaya (marital guardianship) and acknowledgment of legal competency for women at the age of twenty-one; (2) instituting equality and complementarity between husband and wife in the family; (3) stipulating that husbands and wives have the same rights and obligations within marriage; (4) equal guardianship rights for men and women over children; (5) the right of women to keep the conjugal home in case of divorce; (6) abolition of polygamy; (7) abolition of repudiation and regulation of divorce through the courts; (8) equal rights for women to obtain a divorce from the courts; and (9) indisputable rights to education and work
Most relevant for this analysis is perhaps the 9th amendment, however they are all correlated, as has been discussed previously. Matters regarding equality were addressed and, as discussed previously, equality makes out the foundation of many issues concerning female labourers’ rights. This was apparently the first time an all-encompassing range of women’s issues were disputed simultaneously.

In conclusion, the One Million Signature Campaign was revolutionary in how it aimed to include all Moroccan women, its broad range of issues, and the politicisation of the Mudawana.

**Cent Mesures et Dispositions**

The very first political women’s NGO in Morocco was the Association Démocratique des Femmes Marocaine (Moroccan Women’s Democratic Association, ADFM). It was founded by women members of the *Parti du Progrès et du Socialisme* (Party of Progress and Socialism, PPS) in 1985, but outside of party structures. In 1991 they created the Collectif 95 Egalité Maghreb by mobilizing organisations in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco (Sandberg & Aqertit, 2014, pp. 63-64, 116). With joint efforts, they drafted the document *Cent Mesures et Dispositions* (100 Steps and Provisions) in which they compared legislation in the Maghreb countries respectively, in Morocco’s case the Mudawana, and the asymmetry towards international agreements on women’s rights. The purpose of this document was to be presented at the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China (Collectif 95 Maghreb Egalité, 1995).

The document states 10 arguments, an *argumentaire*, on which the 100 Steps are based. Here, the problem framed is the discrimination towards women in social, political, economic and cultural aspects for women. It is argued that it originates from the Mudawana and that it hampers the development of legislation as it is considered sacred texts (and therefore, inarguable).

The 100 Steps frames civil society as a key actor, i.e. subject, in these issues and in argument number 5 they address the problématique of viewing all of Maghreb as homogeneous. It points out how it is Berber, Arab-Muslim, Mediterranean and African all at once, and that this is a product of history. So is the patriarchal family structure, it argues, and thereby the role of women and their exclusion from the public sphere, but this is framed as a cause rather than a subject (ibid). Now the public sphere is, as discussed, where the female proletariat, to use Mernissi’s terms, can be found.

Instead, the 100 Steps proposed that women should be able to take the same role as provider as men traditionally have. Moreover, the document describes the view of the *fiqh*
(codification or understanding of the Qur’an and implementation of Shari’a) as something unchangeable, being the cause of the problem. Another cause framed is the legal inferiority of women within the family, and that it is the origin of previously mentioned discrimination towards women (ibid). Again, protection against discrimination is addressed as a means towards equality.

The same argument, number 3, that speaks of discrimination towards women and its origins also frames a solution in claiming that real equality and effective citizenship requires a foundation of respect for women. Both in the public and in the private sphere. Further, the argumentaire discusses the importance of knowledge and information, and in extension, informing women of their rights so that they can exercise them. Lastly, it emphasizes the importance of legislation to achieve change. In general, the document proposes a reinterpretation of sacred texts, re-evaluation of women’s roles and equality in rights, obligation, and the judiciary (ibid).

The 100 articles that follow concern a range of family-related issues, more salient to this analysis, however, is perhaps article 24. It proposes the right for both spouses in marriage to practice a profession, manage their own property, to keep one’s family name, and to move freely (ibid). What is most important here is the right for both spouses to practice a profession as that could raise the status of working women, from a long-term perspective. The previous discussion on the status of working women concludes that their position in the social strata has led to a lack of respect towards them, both in society and in their workplace. It also goes well in line with the ILO understanding of labour rights.

The document is somewhat ambiguous in its overall problem framing as it both claims not to question Islam as religion, cultural heritage and form of civilisation whilst also saying that inequality is strongly interlinked with difficulties to secularise (ibid).

The demands of the 100 Steps are very similar to those of the One Million Signature Campaign, since they both address the Mudawana. However, the 100 Steps pleaded to the international community when it was presented at the Beijing Conference, which was new.

The February 20th Movement
The revolutions throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region that came to be known as the Arab Spring inspired young Moroccans to mobilise. What initiated the February 20th Movement was the ‘call for protest’-video posted on the internet in January 2011. It shows Moroccan people stating their individual reasons for joining the movement. Most of them are young, both men and women, and both Arabs and Amazigh, are represented. The idea was
borrowed from the corresponding movement in Egypt. The video spread quickly and on February 20th, there were rallies all over Morocco. The movement was active well into the autumn of 2011 with different protest and actions (Yachouli, 2015, Youtube (mariamelmas9), 2011).

Reasons stated in the ‘call for protest’-video worked as a framing of the problem and laid ground for what came to be the movement’s demands. The lack of universal access to education and medical care, a democratic constitution, illiteracy, demanding more respect for labour rights and an end to exploitation were some of the reasons. In general, freedom and equality were emphasised (Youtube (mariamelmas9), 2011). The demands regarding labour rights in the February 20th Movement were in accordance with the ILO’s understanding of the concept. Together with other demands concerning equality and freedom, e.g. ending exploitation, the interpretation of female labour rights made by feminist scholars has been addressed. The movement can be rather difficult to analyse as it was very multifaceted. It has been described by feminist scholars as a leaderless movement with a prominent pacifist message (Salime, 2012).

The same difficulty applies to the question of subjects as the movement was independent from all political, religious, and foreign agendas, although NGOs with such profiles later became involved. Both secular and Islamic NGOs wanted to lead the movement but failed to gain recognition from activists. Also, young feminists involved in the movement criticized the past feminist movements for their elitist approach, according to academic literature (Alami M’Chichi, 2014). When the King addressed the movement by establishing the Commission Consultative pour la Révision Constitutionnelle (Consultative Commission for the Revision of the Constitution CCRC), many feminist NGOs withdrew from the February 20th movement to get involved in the draft of the new constitution. In reality, this meant that instead of protesting in the streets they participated in meetings and debates with people in power. Activists of the February 20th movement were reportedly disappointed in older generations of feminists for their unwillingness to include women’s issues in a broader social justice agenda (Salime, 2015).

The originators behind the movement were the young generation who had only experienced a relatively humble King, Mohammed VI, and government. As a result, they were more fearless than older generations and were not discouraged from partaking in the uprisings for such reasons. Furthermore, they pleaded to the Moroccan people, promoting a bottom up approach, recognising the importance of all citizens’ engagement for a more democratic Morocco. Feminist scholars have described how the February 20th movement generally did not draw special attention to women’s issues but rather incorporated equality in all aspects of their
agenda. An agenda which came to call for political, economic and social changes. These scholars’ accounts of the aftermath of the ‘call for protest’-video say that corruption has been framed as the cause of the problem, and more democratic institutions and only a constitutional monarchy, were framed as the main solutions to it (Salime, 2015; Yachoulti, 2015).

The February 20th movement was very different to previous actions for women’s rights. It was not launched by a well-known feminist NGO, women’s issues were incorporated in a broader struggle for freedom and equality, and both men and women, urban and rural, Amazigh and Arabs were engaged.

5.2 Explanatory Study
The One Million Signature Campaign in 1992 was followed by both the first ever changes to the Mudawana and Morocco’s ratification of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The former concerned family related matters such as polygamy, divorce and tutorship. One could think that the ratification of CEDAW was a seminal event for women in Morocco. Unfortunately, Morocco made reservations to articles 2, 9 (2), 15 (4), 16 and 29, resulting in a very hollow ratification. These articles were considered to oppose Islamic law, namely the Mudawana (Human Rights Watch, 2010). Article 2 concerns all forms of discrimination towards women, binding signing states to change legislation in a manner so that it works to eliminate discrimination of women. Article 16 concerns discrimination in marriage and family matters, and 16 (g) says ‘the same personal rights as husband and wife, including the right to choose a family name, a profession and an occupation’ (UN Women, n.d.). Hence, the 9th amendment of the One Million Signature Campaign, ‘indisputable rights to education and work’ was not assumed. It was not until 2008 that the King Mohammed VI would make a commitment to lift these reservations, four years after a new Mudawana was implemented. This meant that Morocco no longer had a reason to keep reservations as they did not contradict Moroccan law anymore. Unfortunately, reservations were not lifted until 2011. Morocco then also joined the Addition Protocol which works as an organ for enforcing the CEDAW (Human Rights Watch, 2010; Unicef, 2011).

The constitutional changes that followed the One Million signature Campaign concerned family and marriage matters such as polygamy and forced marriage. Many feminists were disappointed since most changes were only slight alterations to the previous law. On the other hand, the petition was revolutionary in how it had successfully politicised a sacred text, making
it negotiable for the first time since it was written in 1957 (Ennaji, 2016, p. 33; Sadiqi, 2016, pp. 56-57).

For the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, where the 100 Steps was presented, Morocco was officially represented by a delegation led by one of the King’s male advisers. After the conference concluded, the Moroccan delegation expressed its disagreement with paragraphs regarding sexual relations, abortion and inheritance (Sandberg & Aqertit, 2014, p. 122). The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action touches upon important areas regarding women and the economy. Strategic objectives on the matter include the promotion of ‘women’s economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources’ and ‘harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men’ and the elimination of ‘occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination’ (UN Women, 2014). However, the conference was an opportunity for women NGOs to acquaint themselves with foreign allies and gain new perspective (Sandberg & Aqertit, 2014, pp. 121-124). New laws promoting women’s participation in the economy were adopted through the 1996 Code du Commerce (Commercial Code) stating that women were free to engage in business and now had a right to enter into employment contracts by law (Naciri, 2014; Ministère de l’Industrie, du Commerce et des Nouvelles Technologies, 1996).

Furthermore, only four years after the conference, the Moroccan government published the Plan d’Action National pour l’Intégration de la Femme au Développement (The Plan for Integration of Women in Development), commonly referred to as PANIFD, NPA or simply the Plan. It had been formulated through workshops and debates between representatives from NGOs, human rights organisation, political parties, academia and state departments. It touched upon issues such as education, reproductive health, access to training and employment, as well as women’s participation in politics. It did not address religion but instead used the UN understanding of human rights. The Islamist protesting rally the following year made the Moroccan government withdraw the plan and it was never adopted (Naciri, 2014; Salime, 2011, pp. 71-72, 75).

Following the February 20th movement, a new constitution was formulated, and it contained a number of articles addressing gender equality and women’s issues. The aforementioned CCRC seemed to have made an impact. Article 19 stated the equality of men and women before the law, more specifically ‘freedom and equality of all citizens and their participation in the political, economic, cultural, and social spheres’ (Yachoulti, 2015, Secrétariat Général du Gouvernement, 2011). Also, the aforementioned reservation of the
CEDAW were lifted and the additional protocol was joined. Moreover, Morocco signed the ILO Maternity Protection Convention from 2000 (a revision of the 1952 version). It prohibits employers from dismissing women during pregnancy or maternity leave. It also gives women the right to take daily breaks for breastfeeding, and a maternity leave of 14 weeks, with a minimum of 6 postnatal weeks (ILO, 2000). In 2013, Morocco also signed the ILO Minimum Wage Fixing Convention from 1970. Something that can be seen as a response to the February 20th movements’ demand for raised salaries, although belated.

5.3 Discussion
Evidently, change has been accomplished and women’s movements have been central to the discourse. Having said that, there are a few aspects to bear in mind that have not been mentioned in the analysis. This section will relate the findings of the analysis back to the theoretical framework, but also to a broader context.

According to the findings, what was ultimately successful in achieving full gender equality before the law, was not NGOs, nor was it the negotiations with the King or open letters to the parliament. The 2011 changes to the constitution was something that previous movements had demanded, implicitly or explicitly. What is striking is perhaps how the very contrasting strategy and structure of the February 20th movement managed to accomplish the motives of the earlier feminist movements it criticized. Was it really all thanks to a leaderless bottom-up pacifist movement with a broader social justice agenda? Clearly, the earlier movements analysed were not fruitless. Arguably, UAF and the ADFM with Collectif 95 Egalité Maghreb, laid vital groundwork which made milestone achievements. As previously discussed, these milestones, considered compromises for the feminist movements, were met with outrage from antagonists. I.e. protesting rallies by Islamists. If the demands made by said feminist movements had been met at the time, unimaginable reactions would have followed, certainly. Hence, the three movements analysed seemingly created a process in which gender equality was successively achieved.

Moreover, critics claimed that the male feminism of early post-independence Morocco made a comeback. Although all change towards equality is beneficial, it has been argued that it was occasionally not made because of intrinsic values. For example, the NPA has been accused of being a strategy from the Moroccan government to appeal to foreign investors (Salime, 2011, p. xviii). The feminist movement was once again hijacked by male actors with ulterior motives. Perhaps this helps explain the failure of the NPA. It was not anchored enough in Moroccan society.
There has been a dichotomy, or rather rivalry, between these two perspectives. The secular, liberal, leftist side wanted to separate religion from politics and use international frameworks for human rights both to justify and promote their agenda. This has gained them international support but in Morocco, opinions differ. On the other side were Islamic actors, both Islamic feminists and more conservative Islamists, who dismissed the former perspective as an adoption of Western values and a threat to the Shari’a. In this context, the term ‘Western’ is strongly interlinked with historic legacy from protectorate times and is thereby something to avoid. Islamic feminists have instead argued that the inspiration for a feminist agenda can be found within the Qur’an.

Another external factor that might have contributed to the success of the February 20th movement is the Arab Spring. Not only because it inspired Moroccans to protest, as previously discussed, but also because the King might have taken action out of fear of a revolution and deposition, something that occurred in neighbouring countries.

Now, for the more specific focus on labour rights. As is evident from the analysis, feminist movements have considered women’s right to a profession or occupation in their broader agenda. They have also addressed issues in general that are highly relevant to women in the workplace, such as discrimination and sexual harassment (Alami M’Chichi, 2014). Moreover, the movements analysed have been followed by adoptions of new laws and ratifications of conventions beneficial to women. Both for workers in general, such as the minimum wage convention, but also for women in particular, such as the maternity protection convention. The ratification of the maternity protection convention is a good metaphor for how women have not only entered the public sphere, but also that the private/public sphere dichotomy has become a defuse phenomenon. Something that can be viewed as a victory, since it historically has limited women.

Returning now to the theoretical framework, the analysis has both confirmed and dismissed theories. The findings show that social movements were required for political change, as Moghadam et al. argue. Something less distinct, on the other hand, is whether there should be extra focus on ‘women’s economic participation and rights.’ Evidently, incorporating women’s issues into a broader social justice agenda was exceedingly successful. Nonetheless, the February 20th movement could have been an exception since it was close to a revolution, in comparison with other movements analysed. Further, the same logic can be applied to Sadiqi & Ennaji’s argument urging the importance of NGOs. In the case of Morocco, it does not necessarily apply, but one cannot rule out that is due to the exceptionality of the Arab Spring circumstances.
6. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to study how feminist movements in Morocco had improved female labourers’ rights through a frame analysis and an explanatory study. The findings show that there have, at times, been a bivariate connection between feminist movements and changed legislation for labour rights. It is difficult to reach an unambiguous conclusion since there is reason to believe that more variables than those analysed have contributed to the outcome. This paper cannot rule out that there are mechanisms, yet unexplored, that have impacted the chronology more than what has been studied here. Having said that, the findings of the analysis point to a carefully positive answer to the research question.

Future research would benefit from comparing Morocco to other countries, both in the Maghreb and other parts of the world, to see what potential of generalisability there is. Morocco was not chosen for being a representative case, rather because of its exceptionality. Also, seeing as this paper has exclusively looked at legislative documents, conventions, and the like, there has been no consideration to whether they are successfully implemented. This area would also make for interesting future research.
7. Appendix

Map of Morocco during the protectorate era
References


