Sub-Saharan migrants' life circumstances under the new Moroccan migration policy

Abstract

The circumstances of migrants in any country are influenced by immigration policies, socio-political conditions of the state and the status of illegality given to them (Willen, 2007 p.10). Over the past two decades, migrants from sub-Saharan countries have populated urban centres in Morocco, leading the country to change from a country of transit to one of immigration and settlement. Like many other countries in the borders of Europe, Morocco serves as buffer state for migrant attempting to enter Europe. In the 9th of September 2013, the Moroccan government announced the adoption of new measures for immigration whereby migrants would be better integrated in the society.

In this paper, I investigate the role of internal and external conjunctures and actors (civil society, media, institutions) in promoting and adapting the new Moroccan immigration policy. I argue that this immigration policy is first a result of internal and external conjectures. Due to its economic and political interests and its position in the world, Morocco has endeavoured to improve its relations with the EU through multiple bilateral partnerships. However, changes in of the geopolitical environment of Morocco—the Arab Spring, the economic crisis and the unresolved western Sahara conflict continues to redefine Morocco's relations, thus compelling Morocco to adopt policy changes e.g migration policy as a soft power to reinforce new southern partnerships.

Second, Moroccan society actors have contributed in the adoption of the new migration policy notably sub-Saharan organisation in Morocco, local and international NGOs and institutions such as (the Conseil National de Droit de l'homme) reinforced the need to adopt a new migration policy.

The second part of the essay deals with the effect of the migration policy on Sub-Saharan migrants' integration in Morocco. I argue that despite the novelty of the migration policy it is hindered by a political and societal deadlock thus limiting its positive effects on migrants' lives. Moreover, migrants' integration is multidimensional; occurring in different spheres of the society. Then I analyse the findings of the research pertaining to integration, notably, the effect of local laws, socio-political factors on the place of migrants in Moroccan society, their status of illegality and their ways of navigating the public space.

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Using an iterative-inductive approach, both migrants and NGO representatives in four Moroccan cities (Rabat, Oujda, Nador, Meknes) were interviewed. 21 Participants from west sub-Saharan countries who have been in Morocco for more than six months were interviewed. Observation of NGOs activities and grey literature including policy and NGOs reports and newspaper articles supported the findings of the interviews.

Some of the findings of the research pertains to the existing Moroccan law which do not account for the country's evolving ethnoscape. Migrants, whether documented or undocumented cannot access the job market or to services such as health or education. Most of them, who work in the informal market, contributes to the economy, but have no rights. Rather, exploitation of such workers is common, and their illegal status makes them dependent on social networks or NGOs to interact with state institutions and access basic services i.e housing, education, health. Migrants who live in cities, chiefly Rabat, have improved access to organisations that can help them bridge social gaps to incorporate themselves into society. Others, however—predominantly those who live in the camps— remain marginalised and have little to no contact with the population or other groups; they are thus the most vulnerable.

I.   Introduction

The circumstances of migrants in any given country are influenced by immigration policies, the status attributed to migrants and the socio-economic conditions within the country (Willen, 2007 p.10). Over the past two decades, Morocco acted as a buffer state for migrants attempting to enter Europe. Consequently, migrants from Sub-Saharan countries have populated urban centres transforming the country from being a transit point to one of alternative settlement. For years, Morocco's migration policy adopted a security approach, Law 02-03, culminating in the containment, mistreatment and deportations of migrants. In return, Morocco receives important grants and agreements from the European Union (EU).

On the 9th of September 2013, the King of Morocco, Mohammed VI, announced a new migration policy. It promised a humanitarian approach to the migrants and possible integration within the Moroccan society. The official Moroccan discourse framed it as a new humanitarian policy, emphasising the participative approach in its endorsement and stressing its effect in changing the migrants' lives and tackling human trafficking. It announced a regularisation campaign in 2014, whereby 23,000 migrants of all nationalities received a one-year residency permit (Chapon, 2015).

The aim of this paper is to investigate the circumstances of this development and explore how the migrants' status (illegality/legality) and the socio-political conditions within the country affect the migrants' potential integration or/and exclusion. In the first section of the paper I argue that changes in the geopolitical environment of Morocco, such as the Arab Spring, the economic crisis and the unresolved Western Sahara conflict, continue to redefine Morocco's international relations. While it endeavoured to improve its relations with the EU via multiple bilateral partnership, Morocco adopt migration's policy changes as a soft power strategy to reinforce new southern partnerships. Moreover, although to a lesser degree, I assert that continuous criticism by local and international organisations (Media and NGOs reports) have contributed, towards the change in policy.

The second part of the paper analyses the effect of the migration policy on Sub-Saharan migrants' integration into Morocco. Based on the migrants' narratives and local

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organisational perspectives, it determines the effect of socio-political conditions and judicial status on the potential integration or marginalisation of migrants. It examines their access to work, health and housing services, education and their relationships with the population. I argue that despite the novelty of the migration policy, a political and societal deadlock creates a barrier to integration, thus limiting its positive effects on the migrants' lives.

II.   Settings of the research

This research is based on two months (May and June 2016) field-work in four cities in Morocco. It comprised semi-structured interviews with Sub-Saharan migrants and NGOs representatives. Grey literature including NGOs reports and newspaper articles supported the findings of these interviews.

Migrants' narratives offered an entry point to a subjective mapping of their experiences, their social position and how they make sense of the world (Eastmond 2007: 249-251). The sample involved 21 participants from the West Sub-Saharan countries; both documented (through the regularisation campaign) and undocumented. (Appendix 1: Demographic profile of participants)

All interviewees had once aimed to reach Europe during their migratory project. They all stayed in Morocco for at least six-month, a period deemed sufficient to experience life in Morocco. Interviews with migrants were conducted in English and French in a public setting (coffee shops) and almost all of them preferred a less formal way of interaction compared with recorded interviews. The aversion, stemmed from the association of the recording devices to journalists who reported on similar topics. The participants stressed that police repression and arrests often followed interviews with journalists. Hence, I relied on note-taking during the interviews and to guarantee anonymity of the participants, I used pseudonyms throughout the paper.

The interviews with NGO representatives aimed to get a perspective on their activities and their views on the new Moroccan migration policy. Both French and Arabic were used in these interviews which lasted for 45 minutes.

The cities were chosen based on their importance to the migratory project. Oujda and Nador are the entry and exit points, respectively. Oujda is the entry point from Maghnia in Algeria, and was a common location for deportations. Earlier studies documented the Sub-Saharan migrants' lives in camps near Mohammed I University or in the Sidi Maafa forest (Stock 2013: 107; Schapendonk 2011: 145). At the time of the research, the state had destroyed all these camps,

thus creating new circumstances in the migrants' lives.

The Moroccan province of Nador is an exit point, about 17 km from Mellila, Spain. Most migrants live in the forest camps and are not easily accessible. However, with the help of NGO representatives, a visit was organised to a camp with 128 migrant inhabitants at the time of the research.

The third city, Rabat, is the capital where most migrants in Rabat seek jobs, and have resided in the city's outskirts and poor neighbourhoods for years. Rabat is home to national and international organisations along with documented and undocumented migrants from Sub-Saharan African countries.

I interviewed migrants in Meknes, in the northern central part of Morocco. Meknes lacks any migrants' organisations, and Sub-Saharan migrants are forcibly transported there by the police as it is far away from any of the borders. As migrants are a mobile population, the research relay accounts of their experiences in other cities such as Tangier, an important port and an exit point to Europe. The next section of this article investigates the reasons supporting the change in Morocco's migration policy.

III.   The new migration policy

Morocco is a hybrid system of authoritarianism and democracy, that balances tradition and modernity to integrate social changes while preserving the continuity of its deep-rooted political system. In developed democratic states, civil society activism and consultative institutions form a powerful force that challenges the institutional order and eventually contribute towards changing the state policy (Augustin and Jorgensen 2013). Similarly, international treaties and conventions, international migration bodies and the locally-adopted rhetoric of human rights affect the liberalisation of domestic policy (Norman 2016: 424). Changes in Morocco's geopolitical position influences domestic policy and social changes. The changes compelled it to use policy changes notably the migration policy as a soft power to increase its economic and political interests. Civil society activism, NGOs, national institutions, and the media have influenced the adoption of the new migration policy. However, boundaries contingent on the monarchy's will and the restriction imposed on civil society space limits the scope of policy change.

1. Morocco's geopolitical position

Before 2003, Morocco did not sense the need to control its borders and therefore became a transit state for the Sub-Saharan migrants and Moroccans migrating to Europe. Morocco had a limited role in the region due to its departure from the African Union (AU) in 1984, frequent conflicts with Spain and the EU's interest in its own internal enlargement. In 2002, the EU included a joint management of migration in its partnerships with bordering countries. An opportunity seized by Morocco to restore its role in regional politics (Natter 2013: 17-18). Law 02-03 adopted in 2003 formalised this commitment, thus guaranteeing, economic and political agreements (Lahlou 2015: 6). Approved following a state of emergency, (the terrorist attacks in Casablanca on 16th of May 16, 2003), the law criminalised irregular migration. It imposed heavy penalties and imprisonment for illegally entering or leaving Morocco, while excluding any protection or assistance to the migrants (Elmadmad 2004: 6; Natter 2013: 16).

The changes in Morocco's geopolitical environment influenced the adoption of the new migration policy in 2013. The economic crisis and the Arab Spring drove Morocco to diversify its partnerships while maintaining a good relationship with the EU. Morocco forged alliances with the Gulf monarchies, as a contingency plan of mutual help to maintain economic stability, security and political legitimacy.

The Western Sahara conflict shapes Morocco's foreign policy. The interruption of economic agreements with the EU (i.e. the EU-Morocco fisheries trade deal in 2011) and the continuous attempts by the United Nations Security Council to conduct human right observations in the territory led Morocco to actively turn towards southern partnerships and non-traditional allies (i.e. Russia, China) (Lamlili 2016). This is noticeable in the African continent. The relationship between the AU and Morocco has been fractious since the Organisation of African Unity's (OAU's) recognition of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in 1984. While relations with African countries were limited to diplomatic necessities under King Hassan II, relations prospered under King Mohammed VI. Trade with Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries reached 7% in 2014 while Morocco is the second largest investor in Sub-Saharan Africa. (Cherti & Collyer 2016: 60).

Morocco's recent request (July 2016) and later approval (January 2017) for re-entry in to the AU punctuate this shift towards Southern partners. During his visit to different African countries, King Mohammed VI emphasised the need for a south-south alliance, and signed hundreds of economic, social and political agreements. Equally, these visits promoted a moderate Islam, and advertised the developments accomplished in the country, a soft power strategy that succeeded in

marketing a positive image. The migration policy, viewed through a similar lens, especially the regularisation campaign is promoted during these visits. In return, Morocco becomes a partner whose position is worth considering if not endorsing in the Western Sahara dispute. (Bensimon 2016; Alioua 2016, cited in Cretois 2016)

2. Civil society: Media, NGOs and Institutes

Media and NGO reports about the mistreatment of migrants due to the security approach, adopted by both Morocco and the EU, prompted the announcement of a new migration policy.

a) *Media reports*

Between 2003 and 2005, the Moroccan media discourse justified the country's security policy by considering Morocco as a victim of its geographical location (Natter 2011: 24). This discourse framed irregular migration as Sub-Saharan African migration. It ignored national irregular migration and supported the restrictive policies adopted by the state. State-based audio-visual media and politically-associated editorials stressed the success in securing borders, while neglecting inhumane deportations. Editorials by other political parties, such as the islamist Justice and Development Party, connected the migrants with moral decadence and the spread of diseases such as HIV (Martinez 2009). Local newspaper articles were the most xenophobic as they reflected a refusal of the presence of migrants in Morocco, and echoed the European perception of the "threat of invasion" (Dehaas 2007; Martinez 2009).

A handful of newspapers are independent in Morocco. While the accession of King Mohammed VI to the throne has reduced the abrupt repression under his father's reign, oppressive tactics have continued under different forms. For the press, critical publications were forced to shut down and censorship or self-censorship remained in practice. Economic actors critical to the survival of these publications withheld their financial support while judicial procedures (e.g. exorbitant fines) forced them to close. (Cavatorta, 2016: 92)

Reports about the mistreatment of migrants, racism and deportations were scarce. A turning point occurred in 2005 following the death of at least fifteen migrants at the hands of Spanish and Moroccan authorities while trying to scale the fences separating Morocco from Melilla and Ceuta. Local independent newspapers, such as Telquel and Le Journal Hebdomadaire, reported the mistreatment, deportation and discrimination against migrants (Martinez 2009).

Intense criticism of migration management in Morocco emanated from the international press. The crisis of 2005 attracted worldwide media attention which tarnished Morocco's

image on an international level making it "the dirtiest affair that Moroccan diplomacy ever had to face" (Natter, 2013: 22). Consequently, Morocco tried to appease its southern partners through conferences and forums (e.g. the 2006 Euro-African Ministerial Conference), and by adopting measures of repatriation. However, continuous international media reports put the country under scrutiny and contradicted the image marketed by the country as safe, liberalised and democratic, commanded by a benevolent ruler. The narrative of Morocco's exceptionalism that became predominant after the Arab spring was challenged with reports on the mistreatment of migrants, compelling Morocco to consider a change of its policy. (Jacob, 2014)

b)The roles of NGOs, institutions and civil society

Local NGOs provided basic services for migrants and refugees in Morocco since the 1990s. The 2005 crisis mobilised organisations such as ABCDS (Association Beniznassen pour la culture le développement et la solidarité) in Oujda to provide legal and moral support to migrants (interview with ABCDS member). Existing human rights organisations such as the Moroccan Association of Human Rights (AMDH), and Sub-Saharan migrants' organisation such as Conseil des Migrants SubSahariens au Maroc, or the Collectif des Communautés Subsahariennes au Maroc advocated for migrants' economic social and human rights (Natter, 2013: 22). However, the state did not recognise organisations created by migrants. Moreover, the ominous context of law 02-03 considered helping migrants a crime leading to the arrest and harassment of many NGOs members. An exception to these limitation is the ODT Organization Démocratique du Travail (ODT) a Moroccan labour union which created a separate migration section at the request of migrants' community leaders. Tolerated by the government, the ODT become involved in pushing for migrants' working rights especially in Rabat and Casablanca. (Natter, 2013: 22).

The regime curtails NGOs activism and based on its requirements, it either rewards or/and punishes them through institutional policy and material inducements. (Cavatorta, 2016: 92). The 2008 project on Freedom of Association in North Africa and the Middle East (FRIDE) juxtaposed two types of local NGOs to highlight their lobbying approaches and joint roles in pressing for change. Organisations such as; The Moroccan Organization for Human Rights (OMDH) adopts a moderate approach of lobbying the relevant authorities while The Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH) assumes a more critical stance. (Jacob, 2014)

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The role of civil society in adopting several reforms, since the ascension of King Mohamed VI to the throne, is prominent, but remains limited. The monarchy establishes itself above all political parties and social actors (local NGOs and labour unions). For different reforms (e.g. Family code reform, Truth and Justice Committee), institutions created at the discretion of the king, appropriate societal concerns and implement a change limited by the monarchy's needs (Cavatorta 2016: 88). This is notably the case of the National Human Right Council (NHRI or CNDH in French). Created by the Royal Dahir No. 1-11-19 of 1st of March 2011 to succeed the Advisory Council on Human Rights, the Moroccan NHRI was unilaterally created by the king without consulting the legislative bodies. The mandate of the institution sphere of competence remains vague and lacks independence in the appointment of its president and other members (Alkarama, 2016). Despite these limitations, the NHRI became an intermediary that voices NGOs concerns and criticism. This is particularly true for the migration policy. Different organisations have lobbied the NHRI to change the migration policy which led to drafting of a report about the situation of migrants in Morocco. The report emphasised the abuses committed by the Moroccan security forces against migrants and recommended several changes that became the basis of the new migration policy.

3. Components of the new migration policy

The migration policy plan aimed to ensure equal opportunities for the migrants, improving their access to economic, cultural and political rights changing the perception of migration in society. The government encouraged different institutions—both private and public—to pursue programmes facilitating this integration (Debbarh, 2014b). The call for projects, mostly for language and socio-professional support, was promptly answered by many organisations, even those lacking expertise in these aspects. The president of ABCDS in Oujda stated:

"Many organisations, some lacking basic knowledge about [the] rights of migrants answered government calls for projects...in one conference meeting, we were surprised to see an organisation specialised in goat-breeding applying for integration projects!"

Despite these limitations, the migration policy recognised the role of civil society in integrating migrants into society. Thus, organisations whose members are chiefly migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa such as Afrique Culture Maroc (ACM), can practice their activities legally,

without any harassment and are able to advocate for migrants' rights. After the announcement of the migration policy, online newspapers such as Yabiladi and Telquel criticised and reported on racism and the mistreatment of migrants in the borders. (Chaudier, 2013; Koslovski, Cretois, Mrabet 2014). The presence of the new migration policy in national media, is framed as a humanitarian focus and most emphasise its novelty with little information on its components or effect on migrants lives.

a)The regularisation campaign of 2014

One of the first initiatives of the migration strategy was an exceptional one-year regularisation campaign in 2014, for illegal migrants, irrespective of nationality. Successful applicants, who fulfilled the criteria, received a renewable one-year residence. The government deemed the campaign successful due to 60% of applicants (16180 out of 27,130 applicants) benefitting from it (L'Economiste, 2013).

One limitation of the campaign was the lack staff training, which resulted in differences in the interpretations of the regularisation criteria. The documents required differed from one province to the others. (Groupe Antiractiste d'accompagnement et de Defense des Etrangers Migrants(GADEM) and Federation Internationale des ligues des Droits de l'Homme (FIDH) 2015 : 8,12,19).

Moreover, the criteria adopted limited the beneficiaries. The five years of continuous uninterrupted residence in Morocco for undocumented migrants, was unreasonable as most migrants had difficulty raising proof of residence. Similarly, a proof of residence and a work contract was difficult to provide. Most migrants work in the informal sector, changed their location frequently and/or live with other migrants.

"They asked me for a lease contract in my name ... when we rent a place, we do not sign a contract ... so I didn't get it" (Sophie, Meknes).

Some migrants did not receive adequate information regarding the applications and therefore received no follow-up. Patrick, whom I interviewed in Nador, explains:

"I applied in Nador but when they called me, I was in Rabat looking for work, so I did not collect it"

In cases where organisations provided legal aid and document translation, migrants had less difficulty meeting the criteria. For example, in Oujda and Rabat, associations facilitated the regularisation of some migrants by explaining the documents required, providing translation for anglophones, and accompanying them during the regularisation process.

The migration policy represents a stark change in the political will in managing migration in Morocco. However, political boundaries and restricted civil society space limits the scope of reforms. The next section analyses the effect of this policy and socio-political conditions in the country on migrants' integration and/or exclusion.

IV.   Life in Morocco between Illegality, Regularisation and Integration

Based on the life stories of documented and undocumented migrants in Morocco, the following discussion explores the different dimensions of the integration of Sub-Saharan migrants into Moroccan society. I argue that migrants, despite the improvements affected by the new immigration policies and the exceptional regularisation campaign, continue to live in an exceptional state of illegality and exclusion. This state is defined through economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions, as well as the ways in which these dimensions are experienced by migrants. Consequently, migrants must rely on social networks and the social capital available to them to navigate the public space. Migrants routinely use various tactics to bridge the social capital gap and create spaces of belonging. However, such tactics only allow them to achieve partial integration, which remains segmented and dependent upon residential, occupational, and social incorporation.

I consider integration as a multi-dimensional process that includes access to employment, housing, health services, and social interaction with the host society.

1. Access to the Job Market

a) *Formal sector*

Access to formal jobs is cumbersome for newly documented and undocumented migrants. Employers often refuse to hire newly documented Sub-Saharan migrants by citing the unavailability of work and the high unemployment rate (22.3%) among Moroccans university graduates (Haut commissaire au plan, 2016). Moreover, migrants' qualifications, especially those

coming from anglophone countries, are not recognised as genuine in the job market.
Racism also explains the locals' reluctance to hire foreign nationals. For years, Sub-Saharan migrants were associated with foreigners in transit, and framed as poor and lacking qualification. Finally, many employers prefer to hire locals or even other nationalities (e.g. Syrians) as there is a sense of belonging to the same culture (interview with ABCDs president in Oujda). Cumbersome administrative procedures, such as obtaining one year work authorisation or a work visa, limit access to the job market. State companies are based on the national preference principle, whereby employers must prove that no Moroccan national can do the work for which any foreigner is hired. The national preference principle contradicts Article 9 of the Labour Code, which prohibits any kind of discrimination. However, despite the call by some organisations to loosen the criteria for national preference, this contradiction remains unchallenged (Euromedright, 2015: 3; Lemaizi, 2014).

The Labour Code (Articles 415 and 416) prohibits foreigners from taking on union responsibilities. Therefore, migrants cannot belong to local or national unions or stand for elections as staff representatives in the private sector (Code de travail, 2005: 84–85). The exception is the ODT, the only union of migrants, tolerated by the government but mostly active in Casablanca and Rabat. (Lotfi, 2012; Gherrabi, 2016; Euromedright, 2015: 4–5).

Local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) support migrants' access to the formal job market by offering workshops and training. Amiyeto Marcel, from Afrique Culture Maroc (ACM) explained:

> *"First, we offer humanitarian aid for the most vulnerable. Then, we provide workshops on migrants' legal rights [so] as to fight discrimination and exploitation by employees. This year, we have trained 30 migrants as caregivers and provided carpentry and computer training."*

Despite plans to include registered migrants in the ANAPEC (Agence Nationale de Promotion de l'Emploi et des Compétences) databases, little change has been evident in practice (Debbarh, 2014b). Results remained limited to Casablanca, while in other cities, demands either have not been answered or have received no follow-up (interviews with ABCDS and ACM members). Consequently, Sub-Saharan migrants are compelled to work in the informal economy under terrible conditions.

b) Informal sector

Migrants in Oujda and Nador work in low-skilled temporary jobs and on farms, for which they are paid between 40 and 60 dirhams per day (3£ to 4 GBP). In Rabat, most jobs are available in the construction sector. Migrants' occupations are also gender-biased; most women work as hairdressers, in bakeries, or as cleaners.

Senegalese female migrants often find work as cleaning ladies for rich families through specialised networks in Senegal or from individuals in the communities (Lanza, 2011: 129-137). This trend reveals the weight of historical representation linked to the memory of slavery, since, before the protectorate, many slaves were brought from Senegal to become concubines or to work for the bourgeoisie (Lanza, 2011: 125-127). Believed to have a natural inclination to serve well, the practice of hiring such women for these jobs has become popular in recent decades (Lanza, 2011: 123). However, Senegalese women are exploited by their employers through overwork and low payment.

> "*I worked for a family in Oujda for 1500 dirhams a month [121 GBP]. I worked all day long, and each time I finished cleaning one thing, she [the lady] brought me something new to do. I couldn't sleep at night. My whole body hurt, so I quit right after and came here to Nador*" (Fatou, Nador).

As stated by the participants in the study, exploitation and low wages in the informal sector are common. Sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco are part of what Standing (2014) refers to as a "precariat" class. This class, defined by the work performed—mainly temporary jobs in the informal economy— has no secure occupational identity or narrative, is underpaid, overworked and subject to exploitation (10–11). By adopting labour laws that regulate the market, while tolerating the informal economy that hires migrants, the government, sustains and reproduces the capitalist system of the neoliberal economy (Lee, 2010: 61-62). They exist in an extreme in-between status; insider/outsider, tolerated and incorporated as a compliant, disposable labour force (Mcnevin, 2006: 141). They are limited by their status as undocumented and/or unrecognised by the society, denizens outside the political system and are denied their rights by the state (Standing, 2011: 94; Suter, 2012: 168).

c) Established businesses and self-employment

Some documented Sub-Saharan migrants are established outside the walls of the medina (traditional market) as street vendors where they sell their products in non-permanent shops. In

recent years, some have moved to permanent shops in a traditional commercial centre in the city centre. In Rabat, they sell ethnic products, traditional clothes, jewellery, and electronic devices (i.e. phones and tablets). In Oujda, they rent small spaces in the medina, next to Moroccan street vendors, that cost up to 50 dirhams (around 4 GBP); a figure that is close to what a self-employed migrant can hope to earn daily. In other cases, Moroccan shopkeepers let migrants stand in front of their shops.

In the morning, the owner doesn't mind us sitting here in front of this boutique, he only arrives at around 12 [...] In the afternoon, we must look for a new place in the souk [market]. Sometimes, we pay the shop-owners 20 to 50 dirhams per day [...] [At] other times, we set our table with no problem" (Ibrahima, Oujda).

Most of the study participants in the market were Senegalese. Due to excellent political and economic relations and cultural factors, transnational commerce has thrived. (Centre d'Etude Internationales, 2016). The transportation of products is done through "suitcase commerce"(Peraldi, 2005: 51). Resembling the activities of North African migrants' commerce activities in French cities, notably Marseille, Senegalese migrants in Rabat developed a particular invisible set of interactions within a circulatory territory in which they act as traders and intermediaries for goods and services (Schmoll and Semi, 2013).

"For this [showing me the product, bazin], I know someone who goes back home and buys it from there… It is cheaper than using transport companies." (Merieme, Rabat)

d) Other activities: Begging (Assalam Alaikom)

Migrants who could neither find work in the informal sector nor establish their own businesses ended up begging on the street. Begging, in this case, is shadow work: "an illegitimate or quasi-legitimate subsistence activities engaged in by street people such as beggars and the homeless" (Wardhaugh and Jones, 1999: 102).

All migrants interviewed in Meknes, Nador, and some in Oujda, begged daily at stop signs and traffic lights. The activity became known as Assalamo Alaikom ("peace be upon you"; a traditional Muslim greeting), referring to the first phrase the beggars use once a car stops. Polite, even servile, they are present near supermarkets in the city centre and often converse with the car drivers stopping at traffic lights for few seconds. Some establish permanent locations, while others move between cities to increase their chances of receiving charity. Whether begging alone

or as a family or group, migrants feel a mutual belonging to the same situation, although competition and conflict may arise among migrants from different ethnic groups.

Begging is not a life choice; it is usually a last resort for migrants. In fact, most of them stressed the unavailability of other choices and the need to beg for survival.

> *"Everyday life here is in begging… I pass my day saying assalam alaikoum… and no man who can beg all day can be happy… The document [residence permit] is a waste. We can work...but there are no jobs…It is an insult to humanity, but we must do it". (Fred, Oujda)*

Begging starts early, and depending on the return, could last from a few hours to an entire day. Begging is also subject to seasonal variation (Wardhaugh and Jones 1999: 110). During Ramadan, Sub-Saharan migrants are joined by significant numbers of beggars from other nationalities. The holy month in Morocco is accompanied by an increase in charity to those in need and a readiness to help the poor, by giving (alms)[1], as a way of clearing the conscience and observing one of the commandments of Islam (Kochuyt, 2009: 3). In the summer, due to high temperatures, undocumented migrants must wait until the afternoon or evening to start their activities.

2. Housing

Finding accommodation is one of the greatest concerns for undocumented migrants, who are excluded from legal forms of rental, due to their illegal status and the limited resources at their disposal. Most of the participants I interviewed had spent extended amounts of time looking for a place to live. This often led them to settle for short-term rental spaces that were more expensive and subject to renegotiation at the discretion of the landlord.

The destruction of the camps, in Oujda and in other cities, after the adoption of the new migration policy changed the dynamics of migrants' accommodation. Migrants became less visible and the majority moved to rooms in poor neighbourhoods. In the interviews, migrants stressed the lack of choices and the precarious living conditions, as about 15 people sleep in 20 m² rooms with irregular and limited access to water and electricity.

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[1] Giving alms in Islam is a responsibility and a way to be thankful for God's endowment of prosperity. There two kinds of alms, Zakat, a specific amount given to Muslims during special events (e.g. at the end of fasting [Eid] and on the new year in Islam [Ashura]) and Sadaqua, which is charity given to all kinds of poor, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, including travellers who do not have enough resources to continue their journey (aber sabil).

Attitudes of the local population towards migrants oscillate between acceptance and complete rejection. Refusals to offer rental accommodations are often rooted in racism within the host society. ABCDS president in Oujda narrated a local case of native residents' refusal to live in the same neighbourhoods as migrants:

> *"Some migrants tried to rent an apartment in one of the rich neighbourhoods in Oujda [Alqods] The local population complained […] and the reason was surprising […] They said their kids were scared of them… then, the authorities asked the migrants to move."* *(Hicham Baraka, 2016).*

To find accommodation, migrants rely on their ethnic networks. Housing transfers based on bounded solidarity among individuals of the same ethnicity help to keep rents slightly lower. The absence of these networks can lead to the exploitation of migrants, especially newcomers. Mohammed from Senegal described his arrival to Oujda, recounting that he had to pay 400 Euros to stay with another group of migrants. When he failed to do so, he was taken hostage by them. Thus, as Khosravi (2010) explains, migrants are not only marginalised by the local population, but also exploited by other migrant communities. They are at the bottom of the social hierarchy and are subjected to conjugated oppression on the basis of nationality, citizenship, and legal status (104).

Migrants must be careful about the possibility of police investigations and are, therefore, at the mercy of landlord restrictions and the prospect of higher rents. Maria, interviewed in Meknes, elaborated:

> *"Here, they don't accept more than four people in the apartment […] telling us we are loud and dirty […] we have to accept to not have any problems with the police" (Maria, Meknes).*

Leasing contracts are not required for renting, a common practice in Morocco, and apartments are available only to documented or undocumented migrants who have national identity papers, mostly passports or IDs.

In Rabat, Sub-Saharan migrants mostly live in neighbourhoods on the outskirts (e.g. Taquadom) and in informal settlements (e.g. Douar Hajja). These neighbourhoods incorporate activities such as cobbling, barbering, and the selling of African products (Edogue-Ntang and Peraldi, 2011: 155-156; Pickerilli, 2011: 40). Due to the widespread insecurity in these neighbourhoods, some migrants, especially those with families, pay higher prices compared to Moroccans for safer neighbourhood.

Migrants who still plan to go to Europe stay in forest camps closer to the enclave of Melilla, near Nador. Similar to camps in other countries, such as Niger or Mali, each community is divided along ethnic and linguistic lines based on a hierarchical structure, represented, protected and managed by a chairman (Brachet, 2014: 79-80; Lecadet, 2014; Schapendonk, 2011: 145).

Camps present in other cities, such as Meknes and Fes, are located behind train stations (Cessou, 2016). Relatively abandoned and quiet, the fields behind the train stations are for the newly arrived, after being forcefully displaced by the police to the south. Confined in socially peripheral spaces, migrants stay in these camps only temporarily. Interviewees expressed the difficulties of being alone and of not belonging to a community in the city when living in these quarters. These migrants rarely have contact with the local population or with organisations (such as churches); their living conditions are the most precarious.

3. Health Services

Migrants' access to health services is minimal. In Morocco, health insurance called The Assurance Medical Obligatoire (AMO) is reserved for individuals who have regular formal jobs. Regime d'Assistance Medicale (RAMED), financed by the state, is reserved for the most vulnerable (Mathiau, 2016) and despite promises, no similar mechanism for migrants has been implemented.

Since 2003, public hospitals assist undocumented migrants who, due to their deteriorating living conditions, especially in the camps, were vulnerable to illnesses. Pregnant migrants' women are a particularly vulnerable segment of the population. Studies by Kastner (2010), Stock (2011) and Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF, 2010) observed that migrant women frequently become pregnant during their travels or their stay in Morocco. Most pregnant migrants, both legal and illegal, whom I met (four women in total) in the non-camp cases, could go to a hospital for a primary check-up, received free ultrasounds, and gave birth. In the Nador camp, women did not go to the hospitals until they had to give birth for fear of being arrested.

Local hospital capacities are limited. Migrants only go to public hospitals in case of emergencies, and often ignore other ailments, due to limited resources.

> *"I had back pain. I went to the hospital… The doctor just gave me some medicine and asked me to do more tests, I could not pay, so I did not go back" (Laura, Meknes).*

In Oujda, migrants often mentioned Medecins du Monde (MDM) as the provider of treatment for minor injuries or illnesses (e.g. colds or headaches). Access to public hospitals is also sometimes acquired through NGOs, since most Anglophone migrants do not speak Arabic or French. Moreover, many migrants stressed that, without an NGO representative, they would not get any medical care. In Nador camps, migrants are transported to the hospital where they are treated after police crackdowns. Sometimes, serious injuries lead to complications or death (AMDH, 2015: 17).

Despite their horrible living, work and health conditions, migrants cannot access any psychological support. MSF used to offer psychological help to migrants, and the ABCDS staff attempts to ease the hardships of the Sub-Saharan migrants by listening to them and offering support. During the interviews, undocumented migrants reported acute states of stress, anxiety and depression caused by their status in Morocco, the hardships they had endured during their journeys, and economic insecurity from their lack of employment and having to beg on the streets. Some expressed that they had faced pressures related to the expectations from their families.

> *"This is no life, I have no work…sometimes, I just cannot get up in the morning to do it again and again…I left to support my family and now I sometimes ask them for money just to survive or to eat… It is humiliating…" (Martin, Nador).*

4. Education and Literacy

Access to education for the migrant is limited to services offered by local and international organisations. While Francophone migrants can use French to communicate with the population, migrants from Anglophone countries are dependent on organisation or their own network to access basic services. Most informants had never received any language training to facilitate their

integration into society. The few who can communicate in Arabic either learned it on the street to survive or acquired some basic knowledge in their home country (e.g. through religious education in Senegal). Language learning is a luxury that many might consider once their basic needs are fulfilled. Organisations such as Asticude and ACM offer dialectal language lessons to some migrants. However, representatives from both noted that, due to the migrants' terrible living conditions, they prefer humanitarian aid over language lessons.

For migrants' children, Moroccan law does not prohibit foreigners from attending schools; however, the administrative procedures discourage many of them, especially those non-regularised, to register and enrol in public schools. On the 9th of November 2013, the Ministry of Education in Morocco granted public school attendance to all Sub-Saharan migrants' children. Nevertheless, since migrants typically do not plan on staying in Morocco, documents like previous school certificates and paternal or guardian identity cards are difficult to produce (Barre et al., 2014: 9).

Barriers to migrant children's learning stem from the remoteness of the camps and the inadequacy of the system. The uncertainty surrounding migrants in camps staying in Morocco discourages most from integrating their children in formal or informal schools.

> *"We live in the forest, and it is too far away, in schools they ask for papers, which I don't have […] In Europe… she can have a good education" (Rose, Nador).*

The teaching of Arabic and Islamic culture in schools discourages some migrants from enrolling their children. Having a different religion and culture, they prefer to wait to move to Europe for their children's education or rely on informal foreign curricula through churches (Barre et al., 2014: 28). Some migrants, however, prefer school enrolment, despite its limitations. This attitude is most common among migrants whose children were born in Morocco.

5. Public Space and Relations with the Local Population
a) *Human rights and police treatment*

Law 02-03 led to frequent abuse and injuries, destruction of migrants' possessions and expelling of migrants by the police to the borders of Algeria and Mauritania (Anderson, 2014; MSF, 2013). With the new migration policy, Morocco has adopted a double contradictory approach that aims to appease both of its allies: offering residency card Sub-

Saharan countries nationals while appeasing Europe by keeping its security approach to migration.

The undocumented migrants are mistreated by the police, although the severity of these encounters depends on the cities and their closeness to the borders. Due to Nador's proximity to the Spanish enclave of Melilla, crackdowns are common (Human Right Watch, 2014: 18-24). In fact, they resumed right after the end of the regularisation campaign (Tyszler, Migreurop and GADEM, 2015: 12).

The legal migrants I interviewed reported that, once they became regularised, the police did not harass, arrest, or deport them to the borders.

> *"Before 2014… it was for all migrants… We came through the road, so we had no documents. The police deported us to the desert. But now… normal, normal… I am documented. When they stop you […] you just show the residency card, and you can go."* (Victor, Oujda).

In Tangiers, another city close to Spain, migrants described the police strategy of dispersion from the borders:

> *"In Meknes, we are fine, but in Tangiers, it is hard… if you meet one of their raids, they take you to Tiznit, in the South […] And it really hurts, because there are women and children, too... Once, my wife called me to tell me that she is in the South […] They don't do that to the Syrians. It is like they target us because of the colour of our skin."* (Emmanuel, Meknes).

b) *Relations with the population*

One of the challenges facing Sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco is the hostility and racism of the local population. The migrants interviewed in this research described the relations between themselves and Moroccans as ambivalent and dependent on location. For example, while locals tolerate migrants in Oujda, Meknes and Rabat, migrants face acute discrimination in the North (Nador and Tangier). One possible explanation for this difference is that Rabat, Meknes, and Oujda are more cosmopolitan than the North, Nador and Rif regions, where autochthony is more prevalent. Tangiers has been home to foreigners for decades, primarily to Westerners, who are considered more desirable. Due to the visibility of migrants on the border and the negative media reports, Sub-Saharan migrant communities are perceived as invasive and undesirable (De Haas,

2015). One of the participants I met in Meknes stated:

In Tangiers, it is bad… People are very rude to us… They tell us to leave… Tangiers is for Tangerois (locals), and no one else should be there" (Emmanuel, Meknes).

Racism in Morocco against Sub-Saharan Africans could also be explained by historical relations and slavery. During the 19ᵗʰ century, the existence of a Sub-Saharan population was linked to the existence of slave workers in bourgeois families as well as the presence of black guards who were loyal to the Sultans, but also (Hamel, 2013: 209–240). While discussing some of the racism from which the migrants suffer in Morocco, Emmanuel justified the discrimination as stemming from a lack of education. Indeed, the Moroccan curriculum does not cover any aspect of Sub-Saharan cultures, histories or actual economic, political, or social situations. Consequently, Sub-Saharan populations and the African continent are seen as inferior and destitute. This is apparent in the verbal attacks that the migrants suffer on the street even in cities such as Rabat where the Sub-Saharan migrant population is significant.

Migrants suffer from discrimination in their interaction with the public space, e.g. transportation. At the camp, I met a woman who had just returned from a nearby village. Infuriated, she told me about her experience with a taxi driver in the city:

"He [the taxi driver] told me I smell bad… and refused to take me. I had to walk 12 km to arrive here… I am clean…I am a human being, not an animal" (Anne Marie, Nador).

The Moroccan Association for Studies and Research on Migration (AMERM) found in a study that more than half of the Moroccans interviewed would accept individuals originating from Sub-Saharan countries as neighbours (62.9%), but only 30% would live in the same house as them. These respondents justified their verdicts by citing "lifestyle differences" (Alami M'chichi and Khachani, 2009: 70–80).

The everyday racism and discrimination is aggravated by the lack of support from the police and other institutions. One of the migrants interviewed in Meknes related the following experience in Tangiers:

"I had a friend of mine who was in Tangiers with a girl walking in the street… Kids threw rocks at him and [broke] his skull open… He got stitches at the hospital… They were insulting the girl and [asking] her, why are you with an azzi [a derogatory term for black-

skinned individuals] ... we went to the police, [but] they didn't do anything." (Emmanuel, Meknes).

For years, the media supported the arrest of migrants by equating the arrival of Sub-Saharan migrants with invasion and therefore aggravating xenophobic and racist behaviour in the society (De Hass, 2014). While certain components of society (e.g. NGOs and independent media) have strongly condemned these publications, the daily negative referral of migrants in Morocco by newspapers (e.g. Africans, poor Africans, and beggars) and their attempts to reach Europe has further cemented this imaginary divide.

It is important to note that some migrants have had different experiences. Many families in Morocco have witnessed at least one family member attempt to reach Europe illegally. The Harraga (those who burn their papers) have tried, since the 1990s, and still try (to a lesser extent) to reach the shores of Europe by any means (Papadopoulou-Kouekoula, 2008: 93). The locals' familiarity with the attractions of the good life in Europe made a portion of the local population compassionate towards migrants. This situation has led to different reactions, ranging from locals giving migrants advice on their journeys, to sharing their experiences of dangers in their own endeavours. One migrant related the following story:

> *"I once met a guy who comes to the shops nearby, so we started talking about Europe He advised me and explained that Moroccans tried before, but very few succeeded, and it is better to stay and work or go back home than [to] leave"* (Ibrahima, Oujda).

Migration leads to changes in the ethnoscape of the host society through the introduction of different languages, cultures, religions, and ideas (Willen, 2015: 60). Joint events involving both migrants and the local population are common and aim to bridge the gaps between different cultures, while decreasing the isolation of migrants. Religion is also a major source of support for migrants due to the importance of social networks available through churches and affiliated institutions. Feelings of belonging and identity, and help with everyday hardships, are some of the services provided by religious institutions. Mosques provide support to some Sub-Saharan migrants, although this is limited to moral support and humanitarian assistance in the form of charity or food. Churches, however, often replace NGOs' work and are hubs for information sharing, housing, job opportunities, and services like education, food, and medical assistance.

V.   Concluding remarks

This paper provided an explanation of the reasons behind the adoption of the new migration policy in Morocco and the effect of legal and socio-political conditions on migrants lives. I argued that media and NGOs activism reports about deteriorating conditions of migrants in Morocco challenged the image of Morocco's exceptionalism as an emerging democratic state. Moreover, the change in the geopolitical situation of Morocco has led it to search for new partnerships notably in the African continent. Owing to that, the migration policy is used as a soft power to acquire more support over Morocco's position in the Western Sahara conflict.

The new strategy for migration represents a stark change from previous policies for NGOs activities. However, it is limited due to political will and a top-down approach of policy application. On the legislative side, apart from criminalising human trafficking, discussions about immigration and asylum laws disappeared from parliamentary debates and Law 02-03 practices are still standing at the borders. Replacing the abusive practices of Law 02-03, is pressing but is curbed by a slow transition and is highly dependent on political will.

The circumstances encountered by migrants in Morocco, and migrants' interactions with the public space, are similar to those of undocumented migrants in Europe and other countries. Undocumented migrants in Europe have limited access to the job market, health care, housing and education due to their illegal status and fear of deportation. Instead, they must rely on their existing social networks, such as nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and ethnic communities. (Bloch, Sigona, & Zetter, 2014; Khosravi 2010; Willen, 2007). However, in Morocco, even documented migrants suffer from partial integration, being publicly welcomed to stay in Morocco but almost completely prevented from enjoying basic rights.

Existing Moroccan laws do not account for the country's evolving ethnoscape. Documented and undocumented migrants, are not guaranteed access to the job market or to services such as health or education. Migrants who work in the informal market, contribute to the economy, but have no rights. Rather, exploitation of such workers is common, and their illegal status makes them dependent on social networks or NGOs. The new migration policy changed police treatment of migrants. Morocco emphasises security along the border while practicing a laissez-faire approach in others. Migrants thus live in an enclave society in which their

safety, movements and lives are contingent on the will of the state. Racism and discrimination increase migrants' vulnerability and invisibility. Indeed, discrimination against migrants in Morocco is particularly evident in their interactions with the public space, and racism is linked to the perceived image of migrants as undesirable foreigners. Moroccan media discourses and stereotypes, exacerbate existing xenophobia compounded by a lack of education about migrants' cultures and countries in the general Moroccan population. Migrants depend on social networks, NGOs, churches and their communities to help them interact with state institutions and access basic services e.g housing, education and health. Migrants who live in cities, chiefly Rabat, have improved access to organisations that can help them bridge social gaps to incorporate themselves into society. Others, however— predominantly those who live in the camps—remain marginalised and have little to no contact with the population or other groups; they are thus the most vulnerable.

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Appendix:

1. Appendix 1: Characteristics of Migrants Interviewed

Migrants	Age	Gender	Nationality	Activity/employment	interviewed in	Regularisation
Patrick	27	Male	Cameroon	Live in camp/begging	Nador	Attempted but no positive answer
Ibrahima	24	Male	Senegal	Sell jewellery	Oujda	Undocumented
Sophie	22	Female	Cameroon	Begging	Meknes	Undocumented
Peter	29	Male	Nigeria	Begging	oujda	Documented in 2014
Kevin	20	Male	Congo	Begging	Nador	Undocumented
Laura	24	Female	Cameroon	Begging	Meknes	Attempted but no positive answer
Martin	32	Male	Cameroon	Begging	Nador	Undocumented
Grace	45	Female	Mali/cameroon	Begging	Meknes	Undocumented
Fred	33	Male	Nigeria	Begging	oujda	Documented in 2014
Mohamed	26	Male	Senegal	Sell ethnic product	Rabat	Documented in 2014
Abdoulay	33	Male	Ivory coast	Begging	Oujda	Documented in 2014
Franck	32	Male	Cameroon	Begging	Meknes	Undocumented
Victor	29	Male	Nigeria	Begging	Oujda	Documented in 2014
Fatou	25	Female	Senegal	Begging/ worked as a house keeper	Nador	Undocumented
Maria	24	Female	Cameroon	Begging/ worked in a bakery before	Meknes	Attempted but no positive answer
Merieme	23	Female	Senegal	Sell ethnic product	rabat	Documented in 2014
Emmanuel	30	Male	Cameroon	Begging	Meknes	Undocumented
Ismail	36	Male	Ghana	Work in a shop	Nador	Documented in 2014
Anne Marie	27	Female	Nigeria	Begging	nador	Undocumented
Eric	22	Male	Chad	Begging	Meknes	Undocumented
Rose	24	Female	Nigeria	Begging	Nador	Undocumented