



## Conviviality and mobilities: discussing post-cosmopolitan cities in the mediterranean

العيش المشترك والتنقلية: مناقشة حول مدن ما بعد العالمية في  
البحر الأبيض المتوسط

## Convivialité et mobilités: discussion sur les villes post-cosmopolites en méditerranée

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### ملخص

لطالما اعتبر البحر الأبيض المتوسط مهد الحضارة، ومركز الهجرة، ونقطة التقاء بين الشرق والغرب، وقلب مفهوم المدينة العالمية، إلخ. ومع ذلك، لم يتم إجراء سوى القليل من الأبحاث حول هذه القضايا في سياق النقاش المتوسطي، والذي تم نقله بطريقة ما إلى عصر التنقلات المعاصرة. وفي الواقع، هناك نقص شديد في الإنتاج العلمي بسبب انتشار السمة العالمية في الأبحاث حول البحر الأبيض المتوسط. من خلال مثالين لمدينة طنجة (المغرب) ومدينة وهران (الجزائر) سنناقش كيفية فهم العيش المشترك والحركة على المستوى الحضري وتشكل مدينة ما بعد العالمية، ونحلل سماتها الخاصة من حيث الحضرية والتنقلات والتعبئة والاستدلال في اكتساب العيش المشترك والحق في المدينة في عصر التنقلات العالمية. استنادا إلى العديد من الدراسات التي أجراها المؤلفان، يدرس هذا المقال الأشكال المتعددة للعالمية التي كونت هاتين المدينتين.

الكلمات الدالة: العيش المشترك؛ العالمية؛ المدينة العالمية؛ التنقل؛ سمات المدينة؛ منطقة البحر الأبيض المتوسط.

### Résumé

La Méditerranée a longtemps été considérée comme le berceau de la civilisation, la plaque tournante des migrations, la région de rencontre entre l'Orient et l'Occident, le cœur de la conception de la ville-Monde, etc. Cependant, peu de

recherches ont été menées sur ces questions dans le cadre du débat contextuel méditerranéen, transféré d'une manière ou d'une autre à l'époque des mobilités contemporaines. En effet, la production scientifique fait cruellement défaut de la prévalence de l'attribut cosmopolite à la recherche sur la Méditerranée.

À l'aide de deux brefs exemples, nous discuterons de la manière d'appréhender la convivialité et les motilités à l'échelle urbaine. À partir des multiples visages de la ville de Tanger (Maroc) et de la ville d'Oran (Algérie), nous abordons les formes de pensée de la ville post-cosmopolite, en analysant leurs attributs particuliers en matière de métropolisation, de mobilités et de mobilisations et d'inférence dans l'acquisition de la convivialité et du droit à la ville à l'ère des mobilités globales. À partir de plusieurs recherches menées par les auteurs, cet ouvrage s'interroge sur les multiples formes de cosmopolitisme qui ont configuré ces deux villes.

**Mots-clés:** convivialité; cosmopolitisme; métropole mondiale; mobilité; attributs de la ville; région méditerranéenne.

### Abstract

The Mediterranean has long been considered the cradle of civilization, the *plaque tournant* of migrations, the meeting region between East and West, the heart site in the conception of the *ville-Monde*, etc. However, little research has been conducted on these issues within the contextual Mediterranean debate, transferred in some way to the time of contemporary mobilities. Indeed, scientific production is sorely lacking in the prevalence of the cosmopolitan attribute to research into Mediterranean cities in the global age; particularly at a time when the revival of the adjective 'cosmopolitan' is in greater use than ever in the social sciences. With the help of two brief examples, we will discuss how to understand conviviality and motilities at the urban scale. From the multiple faces of the city of Tangiers (Morocco) and the city of Oran (Algeria), we address the forms of thinking the post-cosmopolitan city, analysing their particular attributes regarding metropolisation, mobilities and mobilization and inference in the acquisition of conviviality and the right to the city in the age of global mobilities. Based on several pieces of research conducted by the authors, this work reflects on the multiple forms of cosmopolitanism that have configured these two cities.

**Keywords:** conviviality; cosmopolitanism; global metropolis; mobility; attributes of the city; Mediterranean region.

### 1. State of the art

The argument of our article falls within the wider literature related to our scientific interest and the context of Mediterranean cities. Particularly, in the changing faces of communities, the clash of old cultures and their complex perception of place and identity and the fight for natural resources with the ensuing confrontation between native and foreigners or their coalitions are universal issues.



Nevertheless, the state of the art cannot address the wider historiographical terms or give a full review of the accounts of urban communities in the Mediterranean's long *durée*. This review article is unable to address this hypothesis in empirical terms. In historiographic terms, however, there are very few blended accounts of cultural adaptation in these cities. Instead, historians of the Middle East treat the cities as composites of several discrete communities – Greek, Jewish, Turkish, Arab, French, and so on – each pursuing their own interests and economic activity and residing in their own quarters. For purposes of clarification, the article gives succinct examples of the two cities best known to researchers; yet it is not intended either as a comparative article or case studies for contrasting.

The general background of the discussion of the state of the art is very broad, ranging from those against “the cosmopolitanism turn”, to debates on contemporary modernity, the association of cosmopolitanism with globalization (in relation to human rights, multiculturalism, diasporas, elite mobility, citizenship). This broad and growing literature needs to be located in a geographical perspective, which in the case of this article is the Mediterranean (North African façade).

The general literature context is equally broad, ranging from studies on the Arab city to those on the walled Arab city; the importance of the *caravansars* or *fondacos* in Arab Medinas for the growth of maritime trade in the Mediterranean; the importance of the context of cosmopolitanism and intercommunal relations in late Ottoman cities; the importance of cities of the Levant like Alexandria, Smyrna and Beirut, multicultural trading cities that linked the economies of Europe and Asia and were considered “windows on the world”, in contrast to inland capitals like Cairo, Ankara and Damascus. In a contemporary context, we could also highlight the importance of British and French imperial/colonial history as mirrors of the ongoing debate on the relationship between cosmopolitanism, universalism and imperialism in the Mediterranean, using Mignolo's notion of “border thinking”. This related coloniality to the darkest side of modernity, adjusting interior and exterior borders in the making of modernity/coloniality in the Mediterranean (Giaccaria, 2012), to cosmopolitanism and “expat bubbles” or to the new formation of transnational African diasporas in Morocco (see authors' ongoing research, 2023). We could also embrace many new critiques of cosmopolitanism in relation to the new paradigm of Afropolitanism in relation to Pan-Africanism – developing the racialist discourse of 18th



century enlightenment thinkers and their stereotypes regarding blackness (operational in the present day). Despite this unquestionably broad context, the following sections will narrow it down, in preparation for a major reflection on issues related to conviviality and mobilities.

## 2. Central questions and methods

The city has long been a strategic site for the exploration of major subjects confronting society. In the first half of the 20th century, the study of cities was at the heart of sociology –evident in the work of Simmel, Weber, Benjamin, Lefebvre and the Chicago School or French historians of the twentieth mediterranean century<sup>1</sup>.

However, such observations originated mainly in North America. In the mid-20th century, the work of the so-called Manchester School, when British sociologists working in Africa (especially in Southern Africa) observed a profoundly urban character and ethnic links, indicating that the city was not considered to oppose traditional social relations, but rather reformulated and interacted with them, as a means of embedding citizens inside the city.

This contrasted with the colonial vision of the ‘African’ as essentially rural (fixed in a past without history, encapsulated as an *indigène*). In such cases, there were two main biases: the urban character of African societies, and the marginalisation of research from other areas of the world, mainly North Africa, which are never placed at the centre of mainstream analyses of urban cosmopolitanism. The central question of this article therefore paves the way for a major reflection on these case studies which have traditionally been concealed in mainstream publications.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibert (1991) considers the Mediterranean model to be more than just an ideal paradigm; he sees it as cultural reference that has determined and structured modern society. However, in the Mediterranean discourse, he establishes different types of ideal-typical setting, the tone of which are port cities. It is the 19th century city-states that coincide with the invention of modern Greece, the birth of Turkey, and the fall of the eastern empires prior to the birth of the Near East. Like Beirut, the inmost example, the port-cities of the Ottoman Empire have gradually moved from a stage of dynamism and brilliance to that of dismantlement, almost chaos... Understanding such a process requires an analysis of the very specific urban order which characterized them at the time of their apogee: they were cosmopolitan cities functioning practically as genuine city-states, organized around the power of their elites, the social and cultural weight of their communitarian system and of the relative autonomy of their municipal agencies.



A second key objective is to demonstrate urban complexity through two case studies (an example of an entangled urban complexities rather than a comparison). Through such examples, we can obtain an insight into urban complexities, highlighting a wide selection of themes from urban life. This complexity recalls the work of Jacobs (1961), who shed light on the problems of a city's system or orders, which form a complex network. Within this network, we have highlighted diversity, the mixture of uses and the mixture of populations with all those elements that convert the conditions for a city's diversity into an essential issue for consideration. It is through such conditions that we can understand the fabric of the city and neighbourhood voices, as a means for observing the ways of returning neighbourhoods to the city, again following Jacob's observations.

A further central issue is to open up the debate for conviviality in certain geographical settings. Following Gilroy, conviviality refers to the "processes of cohabitation and interaction that have made multicultural a common feature of social life in urban areas of Britain and other post-colonial cities" (2004: xi) and a context for the study of the "experiences of daily contact, cooperation and conflict between the supposed imperishable barriers of race, culture, identity and ethnicity" (2004: XXI).

The methods concerning urban ethnographies take place in the research spaces of the home, family, school, work and street life of people who often find themselves in uncertain spaces of city life, mainly by observing the opportunity to record the multiple stories and experiences of different urban communities<sup>2</sup>. The based information -in the border-city of Tangiers- lays the foundations for understanding residents' social norms and expectations. The methodologies used were based on basic ethnographic tools, namely participant observation, field notes, and traditional interviews (Tangiers 2003, 2009 and 2012). In the case of Tangiers, the article combines ethnographic specificity with original theoretical thinking, conveying the relevance of the ethnographic imagination to the contemporary world in specific geographic

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<sup>2</sup> . These encounters provide an opportunity for gaining an insight into the space, power dynamics, and relationships between participants. As outsiders to the urban spaces of our chosen cases, the fieldwork implied personal challenges, including the acquisition of the areas' social capital and culture in order to integrate into the community (Bourgeois, 1995).



settings. The fieldwork in Oran was conducted between 2012 to 2016 and consisted of seventy-three interviews with Spanish people living in the city as part of short-stay mobilities. The fieldwork sought to capture the motivation of the transnationally living (Algeria-Spain), describe the itineraries and explore socio-spatial strategies in the city of Oran. The interviewees' names were modified for reasons of confidentiality.

## 2.1 Observing the city

We have revisited “the site of field observance” on, returning to the cities of Oran and Tangiers on numerous occasions. On our most recent visit to Tangiers, we were surprised by the radical changes we witnessed, attributable to global impositions and the socio-economic crisis of 2018. The polarization between the two cities of Tangiers and Beni Makada, considered the periphery of Tangiers has grown appreciably in neoliberal times, tearing at the nostalgic memories of the cosmopolitan representation (or “co-existence”), represented by the three types of cemeteries preserved in the city (Muslim, Jewish, and Christian).

Furthermore, new artists had arrived in the city, attracted by what they consider an eclectic scene. The city is constantly undergoing a challenging re-interpretation: today it reflects a new iconization of the city built on the biographies of the famous artists. In physical terms, despite a radical transformation, the urban physiognomy continues: the streets in the old medina are seen from a sense of permanence. Based on our recollections, we observed that many aspects have remained unchanged since the late 1980s. In contrast, other parts of the city have been targeted as large investment zones for urban renewal and historic conservation.

The city of Oran lies on an open bay on the Mediterranean coast, approximately midway between Tangier, Morocco, and Algiers, at the point where Algeria is closest to Spain. The city is divided into a waterfront and old and new city sections, occupying terraces above it that were formerly divided by an old ravine (it has been recently built over). The old Spanish-Arab-Turkish city, called La Blanca, lies west of the ravine on a hill. The newer city, called La Ville Nouvelle and built by the French after 1831, occupies the terraces on the east bank of the ravine. La Blanca is crowned by the Turkish citadel of Santa Cruz, which was subsequently modified by the Spanish and the French. Today, this urban space is a witness to postcolonial continuities in socio-spatial processes the result of multiple migration and mobility patterns that influence the space-making practices of migrants and



locals within the context of Oran's emergence as a globalising city and its political instability.

What is the reason for the constant reinterpretation of the city? A key reason is that the right to the city is a vast concept. In broad terms, it includes the right to live in a place where residents can create a sense of belonging and memory, particularly when there is a colonial past. In this article, Tangiers and Oran are considered complex examples for the analysis of the appropriation of the urban space by its residents. From the multiple faces of the city of Tangiers and particularly, its medina, together with the multiple spatial uses of Oran, we address the forms of thinking the post-cosmopolitan city, its mobilities and its forms of mobilization. The existing boundaries of urban polarization and rigid divisions raise old questions about the cosmopolitan city and the class barriers within it.

In Tangiers, for instance, the legacy of the city carries an inter-community weight, recalling the time when communities lived within their different groups and were proud of their identity. The symbols of this identity were overt, with the blatant exhibition of their crosses, *kippot* and *haiks*. In this cosmopolitan medina, Spaniards symbolized the dominant community and followed what they considered a Spanish lifestyle (Da Cruz, 2013).

A different case was the position of the Spanish community regarding the poor or null knowledge of the vernacular Arabic language, *Darija*; the same was probably true of the "pied noirs" in Oran during French colonial times. Curiously, very little research has been conducted that includes a contemporary reading of this cosmopolitanism from a North African or Maghrebi perspective.

In Oran, cosmopolitanism was recreated in the city during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Under French colonialism, Spaniards and Algerians mingled on the busy streets of the so-called *Oranesado* and in particular, in Oran, taking a walk with Italians and French. Spanish migrants fleeing the economic crisis due to the collapse of the agricultural sector found a new home in Algeria, drawn by the geographic proximity, Mediterranean climate and similar working conditions. They were perceived by French settlers as second-class citizens, on a par with the indigenous Algerians, which brought them together. This closeness was reflected in the languages that emerged from that cosmopolitanism: the mixture of Spanish and Arabic in the lyrics of Rai songs, or *patuet*, a language which was a melange of Spanish, Arabic, Valencian, Majorcan, and Catalan.



The social uses of the city by the different communities, foreign and local, intermingled within the Mediterranean urban space, especially under the construction of the period of the Spanish protectorate in the area of the *Oranesado* during the sixteenth century. The Church of Santa Cruz in the upper part of the city was a landmark in this sense, and to this day it provides an insight into the city's diverse urban and social changes.

From a theoretical approach, based on qualitative data obtained from the several pieces of research conducted both in Tangiers and Oran, we analyse the many faces of the urban space, its attributes, and how its citizens use it in relation with the various societies present inside the city (autochthonous, foreigners, communities and so on). We will first focus on the knitted space that emerged from their social production, before going on to consider its relevance as a cosmopolitan attribute in cities in the past, before discussing the current evolution of post-cosmopolitan cities.

In doing so, in the first part of the article, we will examine the common attributes that both cities share before going on to reflect on particular manner of identifying the cosmopolitan city, its evolution, and the current impact on this use of space.

## 2.2 The city's attributes

We consider the city<sup>3</sup> as part of the research that drives discussion on contemporary urbanism as a form of a city-centric vision of the current geo-historical moment (Brenner, 2013). According to Hard and Negri (2009, p.250), within this focus of interest, the contemporary metropolis has become a locus of socio-political mobilisation comparable to the role of the factory during the industrial era. The metropolis is the central space of production (production of the common), of encounters (singularities are organized

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<sup>3</sup> This focus on the metropolitan is certainly present, but it goes in hand with other urban issues inherited from earlier times: the importance of the urban question, the right to the city — bearing in mind the works of Henri Lefebvre (1998) — and Certau's sociology of everyday life (1990; 1998), all conforming a space for political action. We can also add the importance of demographic heterogeneity in our vision of the city. In this last respect, we recall classic references, such as the Chicago School of Sociology, especially Wirth (1969), who delineated the analytical contours of urbanism with reference to a classic triad of sociological properties: large population size, high population density, and high levels of demographic heterogeneity.



politically), as well as of antagonism and rebellion (against the violence of hierarchy and control), which can be understood in a capitalist world.

A planetary urban metamorphosis (Lefebvre, 2006) forces us to rethink the concept of the metropolis, or in our approach, the city, and its attributes, both its historical and new parts. This reflection points to the coexistence of many cities at the heart of it: new and old neighbourhoods, (the metropolization attribute), slums and displaced internal migrants, external migrants, wealthy migrants and displaced local populations (the border attribute). They all lead us to reflect on who has the right to the city and how to entail the use of this right: where the population can live in a dignified way and use the urban space as a space for civil mobilization, particularly when analysing urban spaces with a historical colonial past, or colonial attributes (Njoh, 2009).

In this sense, urban rights today exceed the classical rights at the time of the planetary transformation, and also include the right to live in a place where residents can build a sense of belonging, historical membership and shared heritage (with a common memory experience), in a metropolitan context, and within diversity. These multiple layers of the city can be opened up in many ways; indeed, there are many different ways of considering post-cosmopolitan cities in the Mediterranean region today.

### 2.3 The bordering attribute

Cities can include paths, axes, and districts that conform a map to be displayed. Those elements can clearly be seen in the study of a border town like Tangiers or Oran. Tangiers (bathed by two seas, with a clear view of the shores of the Iberian Peninsula), which is at the same time a transitional place (a gateway to Africa and a bridge to Europe), home to a rich cultural melting pot, and where some sense a decline and nostalgia for the city's former international status, combined with new forms of strategic economic development<sup>4</sup>.

In turn, Oran represented second migration opportunities for Italians, Spaniards, and Maltese migrants in the 19th and early 20th centuries, as well

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<sup>4</sup> Tangiers was the city which romantically attracted people from many backgrounds who arrived in search of exoticism and freedom, as portrayed by various writers such as Choukri, Ben Jelloun and Serhane in the 1960s. Interestingly, this period also saw the early waning of these legends, reinforcing border city elements in a global context.



as at the end of the first decade of the 21st century, and in the later 2000, due to the economic downturn that drove emigration from Southern European countries to Algeria (Bredeloup, 2016). Back-and-forth mobilities have alternated between both sides of the Mediterranean, jeopardizing the question of the border controls. An example is the ongoing contention surrounding visa requirements between Spain and Algeria.

On the one hand, Algeria's government has followed the principle of reciprocity regarding visa requirements due to the imposition of visa requirements for Algerian citizens following Spain's entry in the EEC in 1985. On the other hand, Spanish transnational companies, businessmen, and individuals in general, have called on the Spanish government to abolish this requirement (Cabezón-Fernández, et al. 2021) in the interests of the trade connections that the Spanish government had promoted through bilateral commercial agreements with the Algerian government.

So, whereas wealthy migrants pushed the Spanish government to change its border policies, the main obstacle was the irregularity of the movement of population. Algerian *harragas*<sup>5</sup> (*brûleurs de frontière*, clandestine migrants, continue to arrive at the Spanish coast, and Spaniards also resort to their national sense of the picaresque to cross the Algerian border to do business or seek job opportunities in irregular conditions in Algeria.

One of the most convoluted impacts of globalization is reflected in the renewed border restrictions on the movement of people, as symbols of a dominating force, in stark contrast with the mobility that people desire and the free movement of goods across borders (Ribas-Mateos 2005). In such a narrative, this corner of Africa had served as a strategic location for the study of mobilities in a highly specific selected border place, within the context of globalization. It represented a space for the analysis of a specific level in these places which are materialized by physical barriers and control spaces.

In general terms, we witnessed how capital, products, and ideas became more mobile, whilst certain job categories, constrained by immigration law, remained under the control and the criminalization of mobility. In terms of border closures (militarization, increased police guards, etc.), this type of border city also represented a place of resistance to globalization. However,

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<sup>5</sup> See the term *harraga* –encyclopaedia of migration. Sempere 2024 (forthcoming in Oso, Ribas-Mateos and Moralli, EE).



despite the intensification of checkpoints and border closures, these borders are continuously challenged by those who practice mobility and think their lives are structured on a continuum in the context of transnational processes.

When attempting to identify the elements of the border-city, we must first distinguish the notion of the border within a conception of typical lineal structures that delineate a geo-political discontinuity, expressed on a physical, symbolic, and imagined level. Borders were emphasized and relevant because historically, they had been the spatial delimitation of the State. Furthermore, we enriched the border concept by a review of its historical trajectory: the well-known border between civilizations, from the architectural past of the city that gave us an account of cosmopolitan sociability, built from cultural diversity in principle by the coexistence of communities in what is considered today as the centre of the city.

Through its multiple facets, the border town articulates the place of passage and transit. In this urban world of internal and external migration, propitiated by the magnetism exerted by border cities, which is translated into a marginalization of space through the emergence of informal occupations and precarious habitat types expressed in a very polarized way in the spatial scene as we will show later in the specific cases of Tangiers and Oran.

## 2.4 The cosmopolitan lens

The context once again refers to conviviality in the processes of cohabitation and interaction, turning multiculturalism into a feature of everyday life and social exchange and the study of contact, cooperation and conflict between the supposedly imperishable barriers of race, culture, identity and ethnicity (see Gilroy 2004).

How do philosophical cosmopolitanism and social scientific cosmopolitanism entail a plurality of differentiated cultures? To what extent is the legacy of a past cosmopolitanism present? From an anthropological perspective, cosmopolitanism emerges as a means of explaining the formation of societies as a “cosmopolis” (Hannerz, 1990, p. 70), where local traits mix with cultural traits of the “global others” who form part of the cosmopolis. Revised conceptions can be found, following Hannerz (1990) and his consideration of cosmopolitanism in the global sphere, and Vertovec (2009), who sees cosmopolitanism as associated historically with the elites, due to their position and thus ability to gather resources to achieve the traits considered to be cosmopolitan.



A cosmopolitan is someone who “has gone with more formal education, travel, and leisure, as well as sufficient material resources to permit the cultivation of knowledge of the diversity of cultural forms” (Hannerz, 2004, p. 74). However, movement alone does not automatically make a person cosmopolitan. Indeed, such a consideration requires contact with and an understanding of other cultures, as well as the capacity to interiorise them. The experiences and aspects of the “other” are not merely a collection of elements; instead, they are new elements that transform the personal perspective of being (Hannerz, 1990). Furthermore, cosmopolitans are people who intend to move to another place, without being pushed by an external factor, and also have sufficient resources to do so.

Several groups of authors have pointed out the shortcomings of the early years of Cosmopolitanism, arguing that the universalistic ethos was a way of homogenizing the world’s different societies and imposing upon them a Eurocentric point of view in order to undermine processes of modernity from other origins that are different from those of the old continent. Ultimately, this criticism supports the idea that cosmopolitanism should be of a universal nature whilst still acknowledging cultural differences and, indeed, different forms of modernity developed in other regions of the globe.

The same sense of openness found in this critical form of Cosmopolitanism can also be found in early Cosmopolitanism, but in the case of the latter, the type of universalism promoted acknowledged different cultures, only to exclude them at a later stage. In this line of reasoning, this understanding of cosmopolitanism also breaks with the idea of a single European modernity by recognising local modernities. In other words, it recognises diversity by prioritizing the local sphere over the global one, such as the “indigenous modernity” (Hosagrahar, 2012).

When applying this analysis to the past of multi-cosmopolitan Mediterranean cities such as Tangiers and Oran, Naciri (1985) reflects how French colonial studies used a perspective of society in which knowledge served urban management, referring specifically to *Fessi* society studies as well as the reports about Fes and Casablanca (written by Jacques Berque and André Adam), after Moroccan independence. Adam captures the citizenship nature of ancient cities and its transformation into a way of life linked to “western modernity”, especially in Casablanca, and underlines how the idea of ruralization emerges as a constant vision for the population, whereby rural



migrants are integrated into the city but experience severe difficulties in obtaining recognition as new social actors.

### 3. Examples: dialogues among different urban traits in the Mediterranean

#### 3.1 Tangiers or the configuration of an international city

The historical context requires a genealogical perspective of the city. The city works as an urban pole of migratory attraction as well as receiving the heavy impact of current global changes. The city was the most important port of Morocco until 1912 and the onset of the French and Spanish protectorates. However, this more recent historical perspective has also been marked by a number of earlier dates that shaped the city's evolution since the 19th century, when it was the target of myriad colonial ambitions. The city's international vocation dates back to before 1923, since the Committee on hygiene, which was set up in the 1880s, was managed by foreign consuls, administering a municipality thanks to the cession of prerogatives by the Sultan. Urbanism, paving, sanitation, cleaning and water were all dependent on these committees.

During the international period, there was a *mendoub* (Governor), who lacked real authority, as power remained mostly in the hands of France. The city's international period was dominated by the conflict between France and Spain. Both attempted to play a greater role in the city: the former through its properties and influence, and the later through the large colony of Spaniards present in the city.

It is an international era that can be traced much further back in time, and the period when the sovereign Sidi Muhammad Ben Abdallah made Tangiers the diplomatic capital of Morocco. By the end of the 19th century, new neighbourhoods outside the city were emerging, such as the Mershan, where members of the European colony and some notable Jews or Muslims settled. It was also during this international period that the city saw the construction of the "cheap" houses (*casas baratas*) in the District of San Francisco, the "social housing" built by Spaniards<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup>They are works by the Basque Father Lerchundi In Tangiers, among others: biblioteca Arábiga (1880), Church of Purísima Concepción (1880-81) and so on.



At this time, France controlled almost half the trade in Tangiers, whilst Spanish trading activity<sup>7</sup>.

The international period lasted for 33 years. On the one hand, it allowed the free entry of entrepreneurs from many parts of the world, but also concealed the marginalization of the Muslim population and the poverty of large sectors of the Spanish colony (see data in López García, 2015). After the establishment of the French protectorate in 1912, Tangiers' status was a source of tension. In 1923, a statute for Tangiers was discussed that would satisfy all the colonial powers and ease tensions. Tangiers became a strategic city, attracting international capital.

As a result of this status, government of Tangiers was entrusted to international authorities. An administration was created that brought together representatives from the French, Spanish, English, Italian, Dutch, Belgian, Portuguese, and Moroccan communities. A total economic freedom in this portion of the territory was controlled by a representative of the sultan. It became a free trade zone, attracting not just businesspeople, but also spies and artists. Tangiers remained an international city between 1923 and 1956, when Morocco obtained independence. This brief historical outline tries to show the genesis of Tangiers as a cosmopolitan capital, the result of this international period. However, this cosmopolitan attribute was not always considered positive, since the international period was also considered a colonial occupation.

In historiographic terms, the Moroccans were intensely critical, as exemplified by Abdellah Guennoun, a key figure in the implementation of schooling in Arabic in the city, who noted: "in Tangiers, a world-class city, I felt as a hostage of another civilization" (Tafersiti, 1998). Other documents also inform us about a harsh colonial occupation that tried to occupy the Moroccan territory, but "he knew how to resist and did not admit the foreign yoke" (Ibid:141). Thus, while some boast of its internationality and cosmopolitanism, others refer to the distrust generated by the city itself: the

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<sup>7</sup> However, 1923 saw the onset of changes to the city's internationality. According to López García (2015), after the Paris Conference, which concluded in December 1923, the city was a hybrid of French and British projects, which clashed with Spain's idea of annexing the city to the Spanish Protectorate.



stereotyped image by Southerners, has been as the city which has been sold to foreigners.

Yet in fact, the city's distinct cosmopolitan character began to emerge at the beginning of the international period (1923-1956). It was at this time that the uniqueness of the city was underlined, with qualities and features that set it apart from other Moroccan cities. International Tangiers was governed by a legislative assembly, with twenty-six members appointed by the consuls and the *mendoub* – the Muslim and Jewish members. In addition to the Assembly, there was also a committee composed of diplomats appointed by the City Administrator.

Regarding the administration of justice, the city had a mixed tribunal composed of French, British and Spanish magistrates for subjects linked to the signatory States of the Treaty of Algeciras (except for North American citizens). In addition, a police force and a gendarmerie replaced the old French and Spanish tabors in 1906. The State of 1924 also marked the beginning of French political control over institutions in Tangiers. The city had already begun a phase of growth characterized by a busy medina, an urban belt surrounding the old city with radial roads that emerged from the outside souk (Souk El Barra), as well as a large number of buildings in the areas of Hasnouna and on the Mershan plateau.

The structure of Tangiers differs radically from that of other Moroccan cities, where a different type of spatial organization prevailed. For example, there were clear differences in the urban planning of the Spanish and French protectorates. In the early years of the French protectorate, the separation between the new and old towns is seen as drawing a fundamental distinction, even in terms of their ethnicity. Our analysis of this dual urban model is in line with Abu-Lughod (1980). Despite his good intentions, Lyautey (a French citizen resident in Morocco between 1912 and 1925), reshaped the city to his own liking, delimiting the medina area for Moroccans (referred to at the time as the indigenous residents), establishing a profound separation, allegedly in the interests of conservation.<sup>8</sup> This segregated form

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<sup>8</sup> Therefore, defending a way of preserving the cultural identity, thus maintaining what today we would call as protection to authenticity, which ended up creating –in Abu-Lughod's words (1980) - a cultural and religious form of apartheid. Thus, the existence of an urban philosophy, which is corroborated by a speech of Lyautey alluding to how "the Muslim is jealous of his private life, accustomed to narrow streets, hides domestic



would structure the development of the European city, and partially separated the medina and its inhabitants. However, this segregation resulted in the creation of a disconnection between the economy and culture: the industrial activities were carried out in European part of the city (Bravo Nieto, 2000).

Secondly, in this spatial organization, Tangiers was also different from other cities with a *mellah* (the Jewish quarters); here the Jewish houses were inside the medina. These houses were characterized by their large windows and balconies, in contrast to the Muslim houses in the medina, which typically looked inwards with supposedly little interaction with the exterior). They also featured neoclassical and modernist decorative elements, and occasionally a Star of David could be seen on the façade. Tangiers is known for being one of the first cities in Morocco to show signs of European influence. Modern Tangiers is the result of the city's thriving economy and the explosion of its real estate market, placing the city at an advantage over northern cities (Bravo Nieto, 2000, p.127).

Thirdly, the cosmopolitan attribute appears to be different here in comparison to the rest of the country. However, this is not unique: Mediterranean cities have frequently been classified as symbols of cosmopolitanism –an example is Alexandria in Egypt. According to Bravo Nieto (ibidem), the cosmopolitan vision of Tangiers can be considered a fundamental trait that defines the colonial city. Legislation also differed from that of other northern cities, due to the strong French-British diplomatic influence. Broadly speaking, his main hypothesis in all his extensive works is that the urbanism and architecture of the period had been developed by Spaniards (Bravo Nieto, 2000, p.121). However, at the same time, this cosmopolitanism is interspersed with nostalgia for a mythical past which

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life, (...) It must remain protected for prying", by contrast," the European House, with their superposed floors, its modern skyscrapers... is an attack on the traditional way of life" (Abu-Lughod, 1980). According to this author, the protectorate period created what was to become substantial in the structure of the Moroccan cities, which resulted in the spatial segregation of social classes. Initially, the new opposition medina/city referred to the opposition indigenous/European, by deduction, marked opposition between (Muslim) disadvantaged classes and privileged classes (European and Muslim bourgeoisie)



leads to different idiosyncrasies, different Arabic dialects, different folklore, etc., factors that make the people of Tangiers feel different<sup>9</sup>.

An alternative analysis reminds us of the need to complete these visions of cosmopolitanism from the perspective of a "Psychology of colonialism" and sociability, as indicated by the classic works of Franz Fanon. In the case of Algeria, he indicates how the Arab characters in French literature of colonial Algeria were always discarded from the main plot. Similarly, the same is true in the novel by Vázquez, "La vida perra de Juanita Narboni", which shows peripheral role that Muslims play in the medina at the time of international Tangiers.

For all these reasons, this historical memory consists of various historical phases which reflect its uniqueness as well as its historical diversity. Even though the city is today fully integrated into Morocco and in recent years has attracted strategic Metropolitan pole, it also has a legacy of heterogeneous populations and a diversity of communities. This heterogeneity is obviously the result of a history of internal and external migration. Those in the city, who recall many bittersweet anecdotes, allude to the precious time of international Tangiers and remember it as an essentially cosmopolitan period. While today the city attracts other Moroccan and sub-Saharan populations, in the past it attracted Spaniards, British and European Jews (among others). It is easy to find these many new migrants in this border city, who see Tangiers as a place of settlement, transforming the city into a kind of Mediterranean Caravanserai (Ribas-Mateos, 2005).

Obviously, finding a blending attribute for the city of Tangiers is not simple: there have been, and still are, multiple Tangiers. Like many other cities, it is characterized by a sharp contrast of zones which shape and embody in it – forms of urban polarization. In Tangiers, this is evident through the various circuits of daily life: in the medina, the old port zone (today completely transformed), the Beni Makada districts, etc. Lovers of the old Tangiers have reinvented the capacity for mixing they claim characterizes the Tangerine: Muslim, Christian and slightly Jewish, alluding to the idea of coexistence and cohabitation, through the tolerance of the different communities. For the unconditional lovers of Tangiers, all these elements are important,

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<sup>9</sup> Some interviews during our first ethnographies referred to a blending of cultures that occurred in the city's daily life, "where one simultaneously heard the call to prayer from the minarets and the chimes coming from the Catholic Church, all in the medina".



although they tend to forget the current Tangiers, becoming ensnared by the nostalgia-laden speeches of sociability.

Finally, we must mention the question of cultural diversity within this population diversity. Tangiers is home to many cultures: Yebala, the Rif, Arubia (alluding to a peasant culture and directed at the people who are not from the North, in a somewhat scornful tone) and therefore also implies an acknowledgment of the multiple and very diversified ways of speaking the Moroccan dialect, which also affords an insight into Morocco's own cosmopolitan mosaic. It is precisely through these new arrived populations that we have witnessed the discoursed on the "decadence of Tangiers".

### 3.2 The articulation of the "eclectic medina"

On this tour of the city, it seems central to continue with the aforementioned divisions marked by urban polarization that characterise this border city and the clash between the urban centre and the urban periphery. Configured as essential poles, the medina and the boulevard are robust images of the centrality of the city. With a strongly defined centre, the city's living space is overlaid by a centrifugal force that provides the majority of visitors and residents with a central narrative. It is the symbol of the space of the city: the place of memories and of identification with the urban civilization in ethnographic discourse. However, part of the population has brought its rural nature to an urban character (Martin-Hilali, 1996, p.49).

The rural exodus, which is sometimes compared to a "ruralization" of cities, has led urban observers to distinguish between different models of consumption and a division of the urban population<sup>10</sup>.

However, we do not define this medina as a wall enclosure, as the wall has been formed by multiple historical layers, demolitions and many reconstructions, making it eclectic in nature. This is suggested by the various styles, which were combined from late 19th simultaneously: historicism, classicism, modernism, Art Nouveau, art deco, as well as the proliferation of neo-Arab style. These trends are intertwined with the supposedly

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<sup>10</sup> On the one hand, we can observe neighbourhoods with villas and houses of superior quality, and on the other hand, popular neighbourhoods (*shaabi*), such as Bir Chifa. Originally, the medina coincided with the city, as the walls defined the sealed-off area: indeed, the wall would become the Gordian knot of the city.



traditional elements of the Arab home, which already existed in the medina from the time of the Portuguese occupation. This mix of styles is not unique to Tangiers. It must be remembered that in the early 20th century, North Africa received the aesthetic models from Europe's principal centres of creation. Formal and ideology-based options flowed freely, producing an atmosphere conducive to creation, change and transgression (Bravo Nieto 2008, p.287).

According to this author, North African cities became authentic driving forces for this movement: "these cities were constituted in laboratories of creation since they accuse profound urban transformation, within a framework of rabid modernity" (Ibid: 287) and of course, this transformation would frequently occur within a cosmopolitan atmosphere.

Not only in Tangiers, but also in the Spanish protectorate in northern Morocco, we can observe the emergence of a strong interest in the administration of the old medinas<sup>11</sup>. This could be perceived through a feeling of nostalgia and romanticism for a culture that has clear associations with the Andalusian world (which for many was also an example of cosmopolitan society). Nevertheless, according to Bravo Nieto (2004), we should bear in mind that the artistic achievements of Córdoba or Granada during the Arab period constituted a source of national pride and not exotic orientalism, as interpreted on the rest of the continent.

So, how does this city eclecticism reveal itself today? Over the last decade, the reconstruction of ancient and cosmopolitan Tangiers has taken the form of brand-new iron lanterns; the rebuilding of the mosque of Souq El Barra (including the addition of a large clock); the somewhat "vintage" reconstruction of the Cinema Rif, now known as the Cinémathèque de Tanger; the school on Paris Street – which was improved with the addition of a few wooden benches and large palm trees. Moving towards the sea, the

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<sup>11</sup> In this way, the medina had established its importance during the colonial period as it was thought to have reflected the essence of the ancient city of North Africa. If, on the one hand, it was perceived from an orientalist vision, on the other hand, the ideals of the Islamic city were also trapped in a static analysis of the urban. In addition, at the end of the 1960s, there was a growing awareness of the cultural value of the *medinas*, common also to the cases of the Kasbah of Algiers or the association for the protection of the medina in Tunis.



urban restoration is even more flagrant: it started with the almost total reconstruction of the old facades of buildings facing the sea and the Rif hotel, which reopened. These few changes that took place at the start of the 21st century opened up a different time in a future full of hope for a new urban skyline. However, much remained to be done.

The energy invested in reconstructing a scenario is related to all the memorial compound site which is defined by the strong presence of the medina: its memory and its reconstruction. And within, to underline the sector belonging to the Jewish memory of the city, represented by emblematic buildings such as the Nahon synagogue (1876) or the Jewish Beit Hayam cemetery located inside the medina. Numerous blogs discussing Jewish traits in Tangiers refer to these questions. The idea of reconstructing the setting refers to the events of 2013 and the centenary anniversary of Tangiers' Cervantes Theatre. This raised many questions regarding the iconic nature of international Tangiers, again reflecting the powerful Spanish presence to the point of the exclusion of other communities.

### **3.3 The metropolitan attribute**

The attribute of the metropolitan is related to the new configuration of an urban condition; new urban patterns and reforms focusing on the creation of new regions in the age of globalization as part of a contextual site of cosmopolitanism. It has been used as a justification for the creation of regional spaces with an emerging significance in the world system, as occurs with the industrial recent fabrication of the Tangiers-Tetouan pole.

The city of Tangiers allows us to observe how different hubs in a multiplicity of layers conform a specific Metropolitan scenario. Today, an extensive bibliography is available for the city (much larger than the one we were able to find in the late 1990s). More recent bibliography focuses on a general reflection on the territorial impact of the great project in the region, which locates a map of privatization and neoliberal practices in Morocco. The fundamental change in the region (Tangiers-Tetouan), encompasses a multifunctional Tanger Med project (since 2007), designed as a central strategic point between Africa and Europe. It is related to trade containers and a territorial network of industrial parks and logistics also accompanied by the creation of brand-new towns. The key axis in literature focuses on the region of Tangiers-Tetouan and on transformation: new shopping areas and industrial sectors (especially following the arrival of the Renault factory in 2010) that have developed earlier networks of outsourcing and offshoring



as well as opening up new railway (high speed) and motorway infrastructures.

Yet this context is far broader. Externally, Europe is deepening its visa policy: entry is also closed to refugees; and Morocco is undergoing a political transformation (administration, civic society, new strategies for human development, parliamentary change, regionalization, the strategic development of the *Tingitana* peninsula). Secondly, the urban level has seen the creation of new neighbourhoods-nearly cities, which are product of the complex dynamics of internal migration and rural exodus. A third level is the global economy, where neoliberal capital is increasing from production, the growth of export processing zones and the relocation of Spanish telecom services, the textile and automotive industries as well as consumer patterns, and the extension of smuggling routes in border regions<sup>12</sup>.

These new projects force us to rethink the metropolization of the space, on the basis of democratic forms of multiple centralities that exceed the segregation, and on the articulation of mobilities in the urban space as well as on the preservation of the heritage. Rethinking changes forces us to look beyond the notion of preservation without change; in other words, as if the medina were to be considered stationary, reified, painted, photographed, orientalist, and change exogenous to it.

This metropolisation would find its urban origins in the context of the construction of a tax-free industrial zone during the 50s, giving the city a third position in the national industrial textile industry, after Casablanca and Fes. Highly feminised, it emerged on the outskirts of the city, contributing to the creation of new slums. This period also coincided with the expansion of the municipalities of Beni-Makada and Charf. In the 1940s, migration to the city was Rifian origin (in an attempt to escape the harsh living conditions and even starvation), but this also coincided with industrialization. During the 1980s and 1990s, urban planning was characterized by an uncontrolled occupation of the territory, especially in the peri-urban areas. The urban agencies were established by the Royal Decree in 1998 – public entities

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<sup>12</sup> However, it is since the monarchy's decision to make the North a pillar of development that a new phase of the border city can be considered. Apart from Tanger-Med port and the creation of new industrial zones and the ex-nihilo formation of cities, we can also see the opening of new malls and new homogenised consumption practices (for example, the introduction of Sonae Sierra in Tangiers, the world leader in shopping malls).



financed by the Moroccan State under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

In the early 1980s, the city did not have a singular weight in the history of Morocco, which was characterized by urban problems that occupied the foreground of the political stage. Following the 1981 riots, the urban question featured in government discourse. A decade later, the problems of urban neighbourhoods were widespread in a wide variety of questions: a lack of infrastructure, non-existent services, and above all the intervention policies concerning the fight against shantytowns and informal housing and the ways of dealing with them. Tangiers was not exempt from all these urban processes which were attributed to a major acceleration of the rural exodus<sup>13</sup>.

### **- Oran, from the loss of the cosmopolitan trait to post-colonial continuities**

In line with the researchers who claim the particularities of Mediterranean cosmopolitanism, here we understand Cosmopolitanism as an “answer to the limits of the citizenship” where diversity is a common trait. That was the case in the city of Oran during the colonial period for the various communities who shared places and spaces (not social contact or social reproduction dependant on the communities). Nevertheless, the cosmopolitan traits appear to no longer fit, at least in the relation between Spaniards and Algerians in the urban space. Instead, postcolonial attitudes and civic contest shares spaces in the city without contact between them, as we will see next.

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<sup>13</sup>This segregated population of the peripheries remained in Tangiers on the fringes of the city, isolated from all the elements of urban life, conforming a radical setting for social inequality. For this population, even the smallest action was interpreted as a form of recognition. Indeed, a simple electric wire could be interpreted as an acknowledgement of district administration and a first step towards integration in the city (Abouhani, 1999, p.355). As Kutz (2010) indicates, it is the spatial injustice of the aesthetics of the global city which brings to light the incompatibility among the practices of management and the ideologies clashing with the basic needs of the population.



### 3.4 Spatial configuration and the burden of the colonial past

The evolution of the metropolitan area of Oran has been coupled to the population dynamics since its early origins. It presents a contrasting urban model to that of Tangiers. Indeed, it was not until a few years ago that Oran had a medina, following the creation of Médina J'dida (Boudinar & Belguidoum, 2015), as an emblematic neighbourhood for transnational business inserted within the urban structure.,

The city was founded in the year 903 by Andalusian sailors. It was structured as a Muslim city until the later development of the urban space during the Spanish colonial period. The city was then built intramurally, directing its expansion towards the interior of the city, in connection with the Errihi riverbed (Benkada, 2008). From 1792 onwards, the city underwent a second period of transformation with the arrival of the Ottoman Bey Mohamed El Kebir, who developed the right part of the city, meanwhile the *intramuros* Spanish zone was abandoned after being destroyed by an earthquake. As Benkada also points out, a third transformation would take place during the French colonial period, which determined a preserved part of the city.

The period between 1880 and 1930 was one of repopulation and land expropriation, followed by a time of urban planning in the 1950s. In fact, the desire to turn the city into the second economic hub would lead the French government to promote the construction of the port of Mers El Kebir along with the Front de Mer promenade, as well as the construction of the main rail networks that connected the city with the capital, Algiers.

Furthermore, peripheral neighbourhoods were configured as Gambetta, Es Senia (the industrial district where the international airport is now located) or Sidi Chahmi. In 1936, parts of the walls of the Spanish period were destroyed, enabling a connection with peripheral neighbourhoods along wide boulevards in the French style. Suburbs populated by European middle classes then emerged, whilst the Muslim neighbourhoods were huddled around the harbour, where there was a demand for labour, with people migrating from the countryside.

The end of the colonial period left a chaotic urban space, mainly due to the exodus of Europeans from 1962, who began to leave the central areas of the city and the periphery. These areas then began receiving autochthonous immigration, to the point that "by the end of the summer of 1962, half of the city's population had deserted" (Ibid: 292).



### 3.5 The cosmopolitan attribute in colonial Oran

During the colonial period, different cultures and communities lived together in the *Oranesado* (*L'Oranie*), all of whom had previously settled in historical periods of the city. These included Arabs and Berbers (both indigenous or native to Algeria), Jews, the *Sefarditas*, the French, and a group of Europeans who settled in the *Oranesado* seeking better living conditions. Their arrival was a result of the policies of French repopulation, which favoured the arrival of foreign immigrant population (Menages i Menages & Monjó i Mascaró, 2012).

In this last group of immigrants, the French settlers were the elite, and the remainder was made up of Italians, Maltese and a large group of Spaniards (many of them gypsies) who the French government referred to as the "Spanish danger" (Bautista Vilar, 1989, p 201). Logically, Spanish relations with North Africa have a long history, so it is not surprising that the migration flow of Spaniards to Algeria began to increase before 1850, and there was already a small community in the country.

At the time, Algeria and North Africa in general were profiled as new destination market by the Spanish, at the same time that the various African states were caught in an ambiguous trap between opening businesses with foreign partners or considering them as an enemy on the point of invasion. As Bautista Vilar claims, there is an evident tradition rooted in the historical links between Algiers and Oran, its navigation closeness responds to reasons of geographical proximity and commercial tradition. This historical connection is evident with both Algiers and Oran.

The first of these cities receive patrons from the Balearic Islands. Its commercial relations with that port date back to the time of the Turkish domination of Algeria. In turn, Oran served as a centre of attraction for the Alicantine fleet, a presence in the city and in its ante port of Mazalquivir linked with the tradition of three centuries of Spanish domination (Bautista Vilar, 1975).

During the period of European labour migration, agricultural work in the country needed the farmers' help. We should remember that the climate is very similar to that of the south of the Iberian Peninsula, especially in terms of rains, so the crops are also very similar. The predominant crops were tobacco, esparto, and vines. This was clearly a decisive factor in choosing Algeria as an emigration destination for all those who worked with such crops in Andalusia.



This was the Algerian context until 1850 when the balance of the migration flow of Spanish to the different cities of Algeria increased greatly. On the one hand, the migrations are called “swallow type”, named due to their seasonal nature, as all exits and entrances occurred year after year at the same time. This type of migration occurred mainly during the years 1847 and 1848, but later they continued to occur, but this time was mixed with the definitive or long-term migrations.

In 1911 there were 95,000 French, 93,000 Spanish and 92,000 naturalized French (Stora, 1994, p.31) registered on the population census. This cultural diversity gave rise to an "original, heterogeneous and distinct society at the same time from French, Spanish and all other colonial societies" (Sempere 1990, p. 34).

However, this original society was mostly formed by Europeans, who independently related to the indigenous Algerian population to a greater or lesser extent. A lower class of *pied noirs* had been formed that did not fully identify with the culture of their home countries, or with that enacted by the French government of Algeria, but in which "Mediterranean origins and the Arab-Muslim component had been mixed" (Ibid. 35). This class, mixed with local society (Muslim, Berber, Andalusian) shared many social class traits against the configured French elite. Such mixtures have also left a legacy in the sociolinguistic dialects of Algerian Arabic.

### **3.6 The post-colonial continuities in the globalising cosmopolitan city**

Today, the city of Oran continues to display the features of a postcolonial city: the most picturesque elements relate to the most decadent French-style streets, and are also mixed with old small business pooled together with large hotels. In addition to the new hotels, national and international business buildings have also been constructed, especially since the successful EU-Algeria Association Agreement signed in Valencia (Spain) in 2005. Since then, there has been economic diversification and a number of large development projects, with the renovation of infrastructures and the emergence of new neighbourhoods on the outskirts (Cabezón-Fernández & Sempere Souvannavong, 2017), in a construction boom led by Chinese companies.

Unlike other cities, where the newly international arrived population settled in the centre, “expatriates” chose certain specific neighbourhoods of the city of Oran. Migrants are now concentrated in different areas of the city, entering Algerian spaces yet with hardly any cohabitation experiences with



them. This was the period when the new Spanish migrants gained visibility in the city of Oran, where all these major projects were taking place.

The building of the Conference Centre, the Meridien Hotel and the tramway system were triggers for large and medium-sized companies as well as independent Spanish entrepreneurs who seized the opportunity to become involved in Algeria's emerging economy. These projects, as well as other less ambitious initiatives, opened the door to a vast number of possibilities across national borders which were only an hour away by plane. This context was also touched upon by the General Consul of Spain in Oran, Jose María Ferre, who in 2013 mentioned that the construction of the Conference Centre was a "pull factor" for Spanish companies, entrepreneurs and independent professionals (Cabezón-Fernández & Sempere-Souvannavong, 2015).

A North-South labour mobility started to develop, eased by attractive expatriation conditions which drew new arrivals to lead an elite lifestyle in cities and in the countryside. The new migrants had the opportunity to enjoy a higher disposable income. This mobility had begun years earlier due to the international cooperation projects launched between the governments of Spain and Algeria, or by the actions of the Instituto Cervantes, present in the capitals of Oran and Algiers. Until 2012, the good working and living conditions were maintained, and the various job profiles were periodically transferred to Oran because of the good conditions and the desire to know new cultures.

From the interviews, we can identify the cosmopolitan nuances of these transnational practices. Their motivations to move were linked to expectations for career development and better quality of life, an increase in profits (in the case of the entrepreneurs) or the opportunity to acquire international experience, a skill required by transnational companies. The experience narrated by one of our interviewees highlights this type of social mobility.

For example, one of the interviewees, Carlos, expatriated from Spain to Algeria for the first time in 2008. He could access to his first international job experience in one year, just by changing to another company when the first job was finished. This first experience was valued positively by the second Spanish company that hired him. After the second posting in Oran, he embarked on his third experience, but this time in Latin America, after being expatriated to Panama to work on a two-year project. Following that



experience, he returned to Algeria through another process of expatriation.<sup>14</sup>

Motivations, attitudes and practices displayed in Algeria during that period point to the cosmopolitan traits outlined by Hannerz (1990, 2004), Cohen and Vertovec (2002), Beck (2008), just some of the scholars who have focused on one or several branches of cosmopolitanism. Following these trends, cultural cosmopolitanism has painted the cosmopolitan migrant as a wealthy migrant who is a member of the dominant social spheres. This status allows them to move freely when they think the time is right, with regards to their life expectations, and for the period of time that they see fit, without any constraints or needs (in terms of resources) that might stop them from fulfilling their desires.

According to Hannerz's theories, a cosmopolitan is someone "who has gone with more formal education, travel, and leisure, as well as sufficient material resources to permit the cultivation of knowledge of the diversity of cultural forms" (Hannerz, 2004, p. 74) "[a person] who know[s] when they are there that they can go home when it suits them" (Hannerz, 1990, p. 243). Whilst the first characteristic of cosmopolitans is their ability to voluntarily decide when, where and for how long they will move or migrate within the transnational arena, their second characteristic, as theorised by the scholars, is their "citizen of the world" ethos. Openness to other cultures and a motivation to interiorise some of their values and traditions were other supposed traits identified when studying expatriates. Following this line of reasoning, Algeria is a Muslim country, and therefore also a place where expatriates can reach their expectations in terms of growing closer to other cultural models and values.

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<sup>14</sup>His comments show how the excessive benefits given to expatriates by their companies allowed them to enjoy a standard of living that was higher than that which they were used to in Spain: "The expatriation with OHL [a Spanish company in the construction sector] was really good, they paid for first class flights plus other benefits. Work was harder regarding the working day because I had to be available 24 hours a day [...] I started to work on the construction of a tramway with Isolux in 2009. Conditions were really good, in fact, some people spent the money from this project on installing Jacuzzis in their homes" (Carlos, an expatriate in Oran, interviewed in 2013).



If we relate the assumptions made by scholars to the cosmopolitans mentioned above, we see that the bulk of Spaniards' comments matches the idea of "openness behaviour". They argue that Algeria represents an opportunity for a life experience in a Muslim or Arab country (showing that the boundaries between both terms are blurry in their minds). Their curiosity is coupled with the aim of exploring another cultural context in order to discover different ways of life (Hannerz, 1990).

In line with this way of thinking, we found that Spanish migrants who initiated their transnational experiences in north Algeria before 2012 matched the *ethos* of modern cosmopolitans. An example of this attitude is a quote from Cristina. She moved in search of a new experience overseas after a life working in Madrid that limited her possibilities to travel abroad. Other comments which follow a similar pattern are those of Andrés, an expatriate from Alicante who moved abroad in 2009 and returned to Spain in 2011. He was relocated to the host country with other colleagues and his partner to develop an infrastructure project in Oran. He explains the following: "My major motivation to move was a life experience. I had always liked everything about the Arab World. I have taken trips to several countries in North Africa for holidays. I considered this opportunity [to work in Algeria] as a way of improving my professional experience" (Andrés, an expatriate in Oran from 2009 to 2011).

Encarni, an expatriate's accompanying partner, moved to Oran in 2008. The couple was living in Casablanca in Morocco when the company offered her husband the opportunity to move to Algeria. She already had some ideas about the country thanks to books she had read: "When we were in Casablanca, my husband's company offered him the opportunity to move to Oran to work on a new project. Moving to another country appealed to me. I already had some ideas about the strength of Algerian women and their struggle, rai music and the openness of the country... I got these ideas through books that I had read in the past" (Encarni, 2008).

In short, prior to 2012, the transnational strategies of contemporary Spanish expatriates matched the classic vision of cosmopolitans as wealthy migrants who move voluntarily for work-related reasons and/or personal ones, to satisfy their curiosity and desire to discover different cultures. They move with the idea of staying for a few years before returning to their country of origin: from their comments, settling down is not a future project. Despite Algeria's status as an unknown neighbour on the other side of the



Mediterranean Sea, its geographical proximity to Spain is the key element in the decision-making process when it comes to the prospect of a transnational experience. In stark contrast to the idyllic context of modernity associated with cosmopolitans, the onset of the crisis in 2008 saw cosmopolitan attitudes being replaced by survivalist ones. Their context has totally changed to a scenario dominated by uncertainty following a harsh blow to the Spanish economy which shook the very foundations of transnational companies.

The tightening of the economic and social crisis led large companies to reduce the benefits offered until then by expatriations to Algeria. Coupled with high unemployment rates and the destruction of small businesses, the city of Oran in particular ceased to be perceived as an exotic place in which to gain professional experience and became an unwanted but necessary destination to survive the conditions of the 2008 crisis. In other words, new challenges have transformed the behaviour of the contemporary Spanish expatriates, and all the nuances of cosmopolitanism have been lost.

Encarni, a civil servant from the Instituto Cervantes, explained: “I have wanted to apply for a transfer for a while now but “the Cervantes” is stuck in a rut due to the crisis”. In Spain, the public sector recruitment system works by publishing vacancies that need to be covered and civil servants apply for positions via a competitive selection process. The direct consequence of the crisis was that the State was not able to open new positions in institutions abroad (or even within national borders).

Consequently, civil servants who were expecting to change destination after having spent a few years in Algeria were “stuck” in the country. The business community experienced similar consequences, albeit under different circumstances. Before 2012, starting a business in Algeria was seen as a response to the goal of opening new markets, but afterward motivations shifted to saving the company in Spain from bankruptcy.

The destruction of small businesses, the stagnation of markets, and a lack of liquid assets due to debts resulting from the slump in activity in the building sector changed some entrepreneurs’ perceptions of Algeria. The country, once seen as an “impossible” option, became a “necessary” one if they wanted to survive the crisis. For the Spanish expatriate elite, after 2012, being hired by a transnational company specifically to work in Algeria became common practice, as did being hired in Algeria directly (by a Spanish transnational company).



Secondly, transnational companies began a process of cutting back on expatriation costs. During the initial stage of this process, cost-cutting was aimed at eliminating excessive benefits, such as private jets, allowances or the number of (paid) trips back to Spain. This reduction in perks was followed by a second phase which led to real precariousness regarding work conditions.

Conditions reached a point where workers were paid the same salary for working in Algeria as they would receive in Spain, with the difference being that there were far fewer jobs in Spain. Once their expatriation was over, the employees and their accompanying partners faced three possible scenarios: returning to the company in Spain and waiting to see if there were resources available to relocate them; accepting an international posting with the same company in Algeria or another destination; or searching for a new position in a different company.

### **3.7 The right to the city of expatriates and Algerian civilians**

The city of Oran offers multiple socio-spatial layers where different encounters take place among its citizens. For contemporary Spanish expatriates, the perception of cultural difference emerges as the basis of their postcolonial vision of Algeria. This perception underlies the spatial segregation confined to the urban space where their professional practice develops. On the other hand, vibrant changes are taking part in the context of the effects of the Arab Spring in the Maghreb, and it is in this context that an important part of Algerian society is recovering the right urban context to get organised, finding the city as a revived place of contest.

Thinking of the city as space, together with the social practices reproduced by contemporary expats in the city of Oran, leads us to think of the fragmented metropolitan space due to a spatial segregation that does not transform into segregated neighbourhoods, but rather into the segregation of the "other" daily practices carried out in the urban space in the most invisible way possible; that is, without being perceived by the local population as the construction of the "Other" in the urban space.

In literature, segregation performed by migrants on the host countries has been represented in several ways. The "bubble of expatriates", "the golden cage" or "the colony", are some of the labels used to represent the isolation of migrants who constrain their spaces of social reproduction and their social networks to ones that are different from those of the locals. Beaverstock (2005), in his study of British expatriates in New York, posits how



expatriates “reproduce their cosmopolitan interests in the ‘residential and leisure-orientated spaces, which along with the location of headquarters, tend to cluster dominant functions in carefully segregated spaces” (Beaverstock, 2005, p.247).<sup>15</sup>

This rhetoric chimes with that of most of the interviewees in affirming that, in the early stages of their time in Algeria, their life unfolds inside a “bubble” or, as Pau (interviewee) calls it, an “expatriate’s golden jail”. In this case, the bubble represents the comfort zone of contemporary expatriates. Whereas some individuals go beyond the bubble at some later point, others remain inside it for the duration of their experience. Contemporary expatriates who hold a position in Algeria (civil servants, expatriates, entrepreneurs and wage earners in Algerian companies) build their daily routines between the household and the work sphere, passing through the public space in the company of a chauffeur or a taxi driver, or, for those who are more present in the public sphere, commuting on public transport or walking through the streets.

Mobility inside the globalising city is one of the first boundaries that contemporary expatriates must deal with. Moving around in the public sphere represents a space where they can come into contact with the unknown “other” but also with the fears about “being lost”, using public transport and having to face contact situations in which expatriates do not feel confident due to their unfamiliarity with the city, the public transport system and their lack of know-how when it comes to haggling the price of a taxi (official or clandestine). As the research conducted by Yeoh and Willis (2005) explains, “forays into the city itself were traversed in the comfort and

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<sup>15</sup> In a completely different context, from a global city to a globalising city such as Oran or Algiers, Willis and Yeoh (2002) focused their early research on the Singaporean and British transmigrants in China. The scholars present the same representation of “expatriates’ enclaves” as segregated spaces, as regards residential areas and “shopping, education and leisure possibilities” (Willis & Yeoh, 2002, p.558). They also use the conceptualisation of the “contact zone” formulated by Mary Pratt to analyse encounters between colonizers and colonized in the colonies. It is argued that expatriates in China recreate several contact zones where a “tendency to ignore their ‘co-presence’ with others in a place” can be built as “psychological and physical barricades, or by maintaining distance in ways reminiscent of colonial cultural strategies” (Yeoh & Willis, 2005, p. 282).



isolation of their husband's chauffeur-driven cars, while social 'conversations' were transacted over transnational space, through phone calls". From this dynamic, part of the Algerian population is treated instrumentally in the urban space regarding the Spaniards postcolonial continuities.

However, for the Algerians, the urban space is again one for contesting the government. Bouteflika's government represents a hybridization of multiple political systems grounded in the "classical authoritarianism" in which "the absence of rule of law and utter corruption were the hallmark of Bouteflika's regime. Bouteflika generally used the parliament as a rubber stamp for his policies" (Shaki, 2019, p.8).

Heightened awareness of the corruption perpetrated by the government, the President's inability to appear in public due to health problems since 2012, and the movements inside the elites to prepare a transition to the new government maintaining the same rules in its basis, have promoted the re-appropriation of the urban space by Algerian society.

Even though riots were less usual on the streets of Algiers than in Oran, the military elite contested each of them to avoid its propagation. Nevertheless, the announcement of elections and Bouteflika's intention to stand, led to the use of the urban space for political content, the demand for the transition to a second republic, in the same scenarios that had witnessed calls for independence and a solution to the crisis in the late 1980s.<sup>16</sup> Safir<sup>17</sup> refers to a number of traits of this social movement, highlighting embracement of the contest by the various areas of Algerian society (culture, politics, sciences and so on); the rejection of the political elite; the crucial role of social media in the organisation and mobilisation of the demonstrations; and the approach to other social movements. Furthermore, Algerian youth form the

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<sup>16</sup> The demonstrations started in February 2019 with slogans that read "Makach ouhda khamsa,"- "No 5th term"-, then in Kherrata and Khenchela: on 16 February with the call for "No to the 5th term of shame", before taking on a national dimension by the millions" with more than 500 riots recorded in a month (Zoubir 2019, p.11). From the beginning, demonstrators called for calm to prevent the type of street violence that led the government to send in the army during the disturbances of 1989.

<sup>17</sup> See <https://www.diploweb.com/Algerie-2019-une-crise-majeure.html> Accessed on 18/09/2022



cornerstone in this contest. They represent the largest demographic group in Algerian society.

Despite their level of education, they are unable to find jobs due to the crisis and the lack of opportunities resulting from the priorities of the public policies in the hydrocarbon processing industry, the basis of the Algerian economy. What is striking, however, is that the Algerian youth was not actively engaged in social activism or political association activities. From the analysis of the results of the SAHWA Project made by Omrane (2019), Algerian youth was minimally engaged with volunteering activities, seen as a means of acquiring a better profile for employers. The data obtained from the SAHWA project survey in 2016 show that only 25.4% were engaged in politic or civic association activities, with similar values by rural and urban areas and gender.

The city of Oran offers multiple socio-spatial layers where different encounters among its citizens take place. For contemporary Spanish expatriates, the perception of cultural difference emerges as the basis of their postcolonial vision of Algeria. Such perception is behind the spatial segregation confined to the urban space where their professional practice develops. On the other hand, vibrant changes are taking part in the context of the effects of the Arab Spring in the Maghreb, it is in this context that an important part of Algerian society is recovering the right urban context to get organised, finding the city as a revived place of contest.

## **Conclusion**

The differing historical memory of place displays various phases that reflect its uniqueness as well as its diversity. The Mediterranean, considered the cradle of civilization, at the heart of polarised global mobilities, has opened up a discussion on how to understand conviviality and motilities at the urban scale. The city is a strategic locus for the exploration of major subjects confronting society. The strengths of this article are twofold: its contribution to Maghrib urban studies through an insight into cultural, socio-economic issues; and a general description of the co-existence of urban communities in the Maghreb.

Here we focus on the value of the study, which has been invisibilized by mainstream social sciences studies, thereby creating a path to critical takeaway messages, despite limitations related to other illuminating examples of the urban conviviality in the Mediterranean. From the colonial visions of northern African divisions and their border



colonialities; from the urban complexities highlighting diversity and their forms in the right to the city we see important changes.

Moreover, from the capturing of the neighbourhood differences and everyday living voices, we have sought to give meaning to all these elements in neoliberal times, tearing at the nostalgic memories of the cosmopolitan representation (or the experience of iconic “living together”). Thus, we underline the right to live in a place where residents can build a sense of belonging, and also a sense of historical membership and shared heritage, in a metropolitan context and within diversity, through a sense of neighbourhood belonging. These multiple layers of the city can be opened up in many ways: indeed, there are many different ways of considering the current post-cosmopolitan cities in the Mediterranean region

We have shed light on the urban renewal shaped by the attributes acquired by the cities of Tangiers and Oran since the beginning of the 20th century to the present day. This reflection points to the coexistence of many cities at their heart: new neighbourhoods, old neighbourhoods (the metropolisation attribute), slums and displaced internal migrants, external migrants, wealthy migrants and displaced local populations (the border attribute). They all lead us to reflect on who has the right to the city and how to entail the use of this right: in other words, where the population can live in a dignified way and use the urban space as a space for civil mobilization.

While thinking the city as space together with the social practices reproduced by contemporary expats lead us to think of the fragmented metropolitan space due to a spatial segregation that does not transform into segregated neighborhoods, but rather in the segregation of the "other" through daily practices carried out in the urban space in the most invisible way possible, that is, without being perceived by the local population as the construction of the "Other" in the urban space.

Studying the case of Oran and Tangiers has enabled us to address the forms of thinking the post-cosmopolitan city, together with its mobilities and its forms of mobilization. As a context, we have referred to conviviality in the processes of cohabitation and interaction, turning multiculturalism into a feature of everyday life and social exchange and the study of contact, cooperation and conflict between the supposedly imperishable barriers of race, culture, identity and ethnicity. We have highlighted diversity, the mix of uses and populations with all those elements that make the conditions for a city's diversity an essential issue for consideration. Furthermore, by



rethinking cities and their cosmopolitanism, we have considered the central theoretical and empirical use of the urban question in the age of mobilities. This has been an exercise in rethinking cities in the global times, a time of contentious mobilities, by wondering whether or not “the cosmopolitan spirit” persists, or whether it forms part of a structure of social inequality.

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