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Contested Spatialities of Lifestyle Migration Public policies, local democracy and global market forces

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ABSTRACT

«Quest migrants »: Trajectories of French people searching for a New Life in Morocco

In the writings about contemporary migrations in the Franco-Moroccan space, the studies presenting Morocco as an emigration country and France as an immigration country seem to develop the same point of view and describe mobility exclusively from the South to the North. Even if it cannot be compared with the Moroccans migratory flow to France, however there is a migration in the opposite direction (from the North to the South). Indeed Morocco is a destination appreciated by a lot of French people: residential tourists, expatriates, retired migrants, students, family-based migrants, labor migrants, investors, “quest” migrants, etc.

French people can freely move between France and Morocco, easily build their migration project during their different stays and even leave France without a defined project. It is possible for them to settle in Morocco with the only objective to search for a better quality of life. Indeed, the migration channels of some French people reflect the views of some writings about lifestyle migrations described by O'Reilly¹ as “*relatively affluent individuals, moving ‘en masse’, either part or full time, permanently or temporarily, to countries where the cost of living and/or the price of property is cheaper, places which, for various reasons, signify something loosely defined as quality of life. The key motivation for those migrations has been the search for something intangible, encapsulated in the phrase ‘quality of life’.*” This paper based on two different empirical researches (a thesis on the trajectories of mixed couples in Morocco² and a research on transnational

¹ O'Reilly, K. (2007). The Rural Idyll, Residential Tourism, and the Spirit of Lifestyle Migration, in Conference Proceedings of Thinking Through Tourism. London Metropolitan University: ASA.

² Therrien, Catherine. Des repères à la construction d'un chez-soi. Trajectoires de mixité conjugale au Maroc, (thèse de doctorat - Université de Montréal) 2009 [en ligne]. <http://handle.net/1866/4048>

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migration in the Franco-Moroccan space³) proposes to explore more specifically the trajectories of a particular migrant category that I call the «Quest Migrant».

What seems to be the main characteristic of those migrations is a desire for 'somewhere else' which refers both to a search for a new life and a desire for a change of scene. This desire for somewhere else was juxtaposed, in the data collected, with a feeling of weariness due to the social, economic and political climate in France.

Such migration project can take various aspects from an artistic quest to a spiritual vocation, the search for recognition, the desire for a comfortable way of life or even the fulfilment of a dream. The narratives of those migrants evoke 'a quest', 'a call', 'destiny', 'personal development' or 'spiritual progress'. Their migration to Morocco allowed them to "start afresh on new bases", "to start a new life", "to be acknowledged at last", "to give a meaning to daily life", "to explore a new way of being", "to hold aloof from some painful memories", etc.

This paper will throw new light on these "quest migrants" trajectories, specially by pointing out the questions of citizenship and affiliations, the biographical elements which may have directed their migration projects, the different representations of home, the desire for recognition and the absence of return project which take a particular meaning in the course of their life.

³ Transnationalisation, Migration and Transformation: Multi-Level Analysis of Migrant Transnationalism' (TRANS-NET), a three-year cross-country study of transnationalism funded by the European Commission 7th Framework Research Programme in Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities
<http://www.uta.fi/laitokset/kasvlait/projektit/transnet/dissemination.php>