Remaking the city from the margins: Sub-Saharan irregular migrants' and refugees' encounters with everyday bordering practices and their production of (counter-)space in the informal economy of Rabat

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Mimichou's hair and nail salon in a commercial center in Rabat.

Source: Photo taken by the author, March 15, 2023.

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in Rabat, this thesis explores the urban experiences of sub-Saharan irregular migrants and refugees within the context of Morocco's border regime and the national migration policy introduced since 2013. Urban areas have become critical sites where border enforcement mechanisms intersect with everyday life, significantly shaping migrants' experiences. Migrants navigate an informal economy that presents a dual dynamic of inclusion and exclusion, with structural constraints such as legal barriers on the one hand, and livelihood opportunities on the other. The study draws on participant observation and in-depth interviews with 14 sub-Saharan migrants from West, Central and East Africa, providing rich qualitative data on how they navigate and reshape the city. Using a multi-disciplinary approach, applying theories from different fields such as urban ethnography and critical border studies, offers a comprehensive understanding of the complexity of migration governance and urban dynamics in Rabat. The research reveals that migrants 1) negotiate repressive bordering practices through subtle everyday strategies in public spaces; 2) create alternative counter-spaces such as underground home-based bars, -restaurants, -clubs and house churches; and 3) engage in practices of solidarity, fostering collective action, new forms of sociality and political agency. These efforts underscore the resilience and agency of migrants amidst social and economic exclusion and the lack of state and humanitarian provisions.

***Keywords*:** Morocco, sub-Saharan irregular migrants and refugees, urban bordering practices, counter-space, practices of solidarity, informal economy

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I dedicate this work to the migrants whose stories give life to these pages.

ABBREVIATIONS

AU	African Union
CBS	Critical Border Studies
CSO	Civil society organization
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ENP	European Neighborhood Policy
EU	European Union
GADEM	Groupe Antiraciste de Defense et d'Accompagnement des Etrangers et Migrants
HBE	Home-based enterprise
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ILO	International Labor Organization
MAD	Moroccan Dirham
MDW	Migrant domestic worker
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIMAR	Nederlands Instituut Marokko
ROSCA	Rotating savings and credit association
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees

INTRODUCTION

A visual vignette: inclusion at a higher price

The cover photo of this thesis is taken in one of Rabat's vibrant commercial centers, portraying the everyday dynamics of urban life through the compelling story of Mimichou, a twenty-one-year-old entrepreneur originating from Ivory Coast. She arrived in Rabat as an irregular migrant in 2021, with the goal of starting her own business. Mimichou lives in the neighboring town of Salé situated across the Bou Regreg River, primarily inhabited by lower-income residents who work in Rabat. She managed to open her own salon in an area of a commercial center known as "the African market", where she offers hair and nail services and sells African beauty products.

On the right side of the picture, Mimichou's colorful salon stands out, as she braids a client's hair. However, there lies a harsh reality behind her business; she pays a substantial rent of 2500 Moroccan Dirham (MAD) per month. Across Mimichou's salon, on the opposite side of the pathway, the eye is drawn to an electronic shop run by a local Moroccan merchant, showcasing iPhones. His business operates at a significantly lower cost, paying 1100 MAD rent each month. Mimichou thus bears a heavier financial burden compared to her neighbor. This visual comparison between the two businesses, positioned opposite to each other, illustrates how migrants' experiences in Rabat are shaped by inequalities.

Nevertheless, Mimichou counts herself lucky that she can rent informally from a Moroccan property owner (Mimichou, interview by author, December 17, 2023). Property owners regard it as a favor as they take a risk by renting to an irregular migrant, and consequently charge higher prices. In Morocco, the absence of leasing contracts is a common practice for rental agreements (Bendra 2019, p. 14). This allows irregular migrants like Mimichou to sublet the spaces they occupy. By engaging in informal economic activities migrants can legitimize their presence and contribute to the local economy (Ustubici 2018, p. 184). Yet, relying on informal renting also exposes them to exploitation and eviction.

Mimichou's story reflects what scholars have conceptualized as "inclusion at a higher price" Cvajner and Sciortino 2010), "differential inclusion" (Mezzendra and Neilson 2013), "subordinate incorporation" (Chauvin and Garces-Macarenas 2014) and "bordered inclusion" (De Genova 2015). These concepts imply the integration of individual or groups, such as irregular migrants, into a society but at a disproportionate cost, under unequal conditions or in informal ways. Irregular migrants obtain resources through market channels, such as paying higher rent, accepting lower wages, and extended working hours (Cvajner and Sciortino 2010,

400). While some property owners or employers may be discouraged from renting to migrants due to their irregular status, it prompts others to exploit for economic gain (ibid).

The stark contrast in rental costs between Mimichou's salon and the neighboring phone shop exposes inequalities in urban spaces. Nevertheless, it is also important to recognize the opportunities of informal inclusion, as demonstrated by her renting arrangement. Mimichou's story underscores the need to address urban inequalities, which highlight challenges faced by migrants in navigating urban landscapes marked by economic, social, spatial and legal barriers, while also acknowledging their agency in shaping their own environments. This vignette encapsulates key themes of this research, that is, the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion which will elaborated upon later.

RESEARCH OUTLINE

Over the last two decades, sub-Saharan irregular migrants and refugees who sought to cross the borders of Morocco or aimed to go to Europe are increasingly settling in urban areas, leading Morocco to become a country of destination (Bendra 2019, 3). While most research in migration studies is on border violence, this migrant population also faces discriminations in other everyday spaces such as the city (De Genova 2015; Gross-Wyrtzen 2020b; Bendra 2021; Gazzotti and Hagan 2021). Borders extend beyond physical check points between nation-states and form complex systems that we know as "border regimes" – "the ensemble of discourses, rules, practices and material configurations that enroll a variety of institutions and actors to regulate the mobility of groups of people" (Gross-Wrytzen 2020a, 7). We see borders in everyday racist and xenophobic encounters and in the lack of access to healthcare, housing, education, safety and jobs (Dadusc et al. 2019, 522). Borders do not merely exclude people; they also control the management and movement of their lives. They function as barriers but also operate as "modes of differential inclusion" that regulate access to rights, resources and opportunities, as the vignette of Mimichou's story demonstrates (ibid). Yet, border regimes are also negotiated and resisted.

This thesis explores sub-Saharan irregular migrants' and refugees' encounters of bordering practices and their production of (counter-)spaces in the informal economy of Rabat. The objectives of this thesis are twofold: to explore the spatial dynamics of bordering practices within urban settings, shedding light on how socio-spatial boundaries shape migrants' experiences; and to examine the strategies employed by sub-Saharan migrants to negotiate exclusion and discrimination, highlighting their agency in their everyday lives. By examining

the structural constraints and agency embedded within informality, the research aims to gain deeper insights into migrants' agency and the urban inequalities in Rabat. My research questions are as follows: *How do sub-Saharan irregular migrants and refugees negotiate bordering practices? How do they produce (counter-)spaces and with what strategies do they claim space and resources in response to these bordering practices?*

In the context of this thesis, I will look at "bordering practices", that is, the dynamic and ongoing processes through which physical, social and symbolic borders are constructed, reconstructed and contested in cities, at both formal and everyday levels (Scott and Sohn 2019, 298). With "negotiate", I mean the strategies people employ to deal with both constraints and possibilities caused by borders. There is a dynamic interplay between migrants negotiating borders and how they become positioned by them. The term "negotiation" suggests that agency is situational, involving a constant shift between resistance and conformity in its exercise.

With "the production of space" I mean that as Sub-Saharan migrants navigate these borders, they construct alternatives to meet their basic needs, thereby remaking the city. I will argue that they do so by utilizing strategies such as creating counter-spaces and fostering spaces of solidarity. Through everyday actions, they "claim space" in the city, asserting their presence and rights. Their practices of strategic engagement and resistance with power structures, alongside acts of creation of space, contribute to reshaping the urban landscape.

Concerning terminology, it is important to discuss the distinction between "irregular migrants" and "refugees". A refugee, as defined in the Refugee Convention of 1951, is someone fearing persecution based on specific grounds and unable to seek protection from their home country (UNHCR). A migrant is anyone who moves, internally or internationally, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons (IOM). "Irregular migration" refers to the movement outside of legal frameworks governing entry into or exit from a state (ibid). The term "mixed migration" advocates that some root causes of migration such as conflict and poverty are difficult to separate and acknowledges that people travel the same routes and face the same dangers irrespective of their legal status (Norman 2020, 11-12).

The concept of mixed migration is reflected in my study, which includes individuals officially recognized as refugees, asylum seekers that applied for refugee status awaiting an interview, individuals denied refugee status, and those who have not applied but are unable or unwilling to return home. While legal statuses and personal circumstances vary, they all experience vulnerability and collectively represent a marginalized population. The term *migrant* will be used in this thesis when speaking generally about those who migrate: irregular

migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. If referring only to those who are recognized by the UNHCR as asylum seeker or refugees, the term *asylum seeker* or *refugee* will be used.

Research setting: Rabat

My fieldwork was conducted in Rabat, the capital of Morocco from September to December 2022 and in March 2023. Rabat, or ar-Ribaat, meaning "a fortified place," is the fourth "imperial city" and home to the nation's seat of power and serves as the center of trade and education. The city attracts sub-Saharan migrants for several reasons (Schapendonk 2008, 136). It hosts the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) office, making it a destination for migrants seeking refugee status. Another major draw is that Rabat is thought to be a relatively safe place to reside. In contrast to regions around Ceuta and Melilla, Rabat has a lower deportation rate because migrants are generally treated with more tolerance.[1] The city is home to national and international NGOs, foreign embassies and migrants' rights associations, providing essential support and resources. There are large migrant communities in Rabat which offer a degree of (socio-economic) security for migrants. Additionally, the city's *bidonvilles* (slums) and *quartiers populaires* (poorer neighborhoods) provide relatively easier housing opportunities.

Most of my fieldwork was conducted in Hay Yacoub al Mansour, one of Rabat's lower-income, working-class neighborhoods populated by migrants, where I volunteered at a non-governmental organization (NGO) dedicated to community development, migration, and inter-cultural exchange.[2] The NGO offers a variety of facilities such as a market, a kitchen, a library, a daycare, an internet café, a radio station, a music room, a small theater, and an atelier. Through my involvement with the NGO, I became familiar with the area. Despite living in the city center, I spent most of my weekdays in the working-class districts of Yacoub al-Mansour such as Manal, J3, J5 and Kamra. Yet, some of the migrants I met also worked in the *medina* (the ancient quarter of a northern African city) or *centreville* (the modern part of the city center) of Rabat, which prompted me to conduct fieldwork not only in Yacoub al-Mansour, but also in other parts of the city with "ethnic enclaves" (Jaffe and Koning, 8), that is, areas characterized by a high

[1] This does not imply that deportations do not occur in cities. One of my participants, Mohamed, was in fact deported from Rabat while I was doing my fieldwork there.

[2] The term "the NGO" is used throughout this text to safeguard the anonymity of the participants, in accordance with ethical considerations and privacy concerns. In addition, I signed a confidentiality agreement with the NGO during my volunteer work, to uphold the privacy and confidentiality of the information shared within that context.

concentration of sub-Saharan migrants, that are often found in commercial centers, street markets, or churches.

Figure 1.1 Map with location pins of my fieldwork in Rabat

Source: By the author, based on Google Earth.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

A brief overview of Morocco's migration policy

Before continuing, it is important to place narratives like that of Mimichou within the broader historical and political context of migration in Morocco. This is essential because "differential spaces are produced at the intersection of migrant subjectivities and historicities with specific urban locations" (De Genova 2014, 3-4). Understanding the political and historical context will give important insights into the structures that shape migrants' experiences in urban settings like Rabat.

Migration patterns from sub-Saharan Africa to Morocco have shifted since the 1990s, as observed by several academics (Bachelet 2019; Stock 2019; Sonneveld et al. 2022). This had to do, amongst others, with the outbreak of political instability at that time, such as the civil wars in West-Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which led to an increase in migration to the Maghreb countries, including Morocco (Sonneveld et al. 2022, 15). Another factor was the signing of the Schengen agreement in 1985 by EU member-

states, and its implementation in 1995, after which entry to Europe became more restricted, leading to people staying in Morocco for longer periods of time (ibid, 11).

In the early 2000s, Morocco signed agreements with the EU as part of the EU's "border externalization". These included the EU-Moroccan Association Agreement and the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) tightening border control and migration management. These agreements were influenced by Morocco's strategy to regain regional influence, following its departure from the African Union (AU) and territorial disputes with Spain (Bendra 2019, 4). Following a state of emergence after the terrorist attacks in Casablanca on May 16, 2003, Morocco enacted a law, officially called Law 02/03, that criminalized and securitized irregular migration "while excluding any protection or assistance to migrants" (ibid).

Since the 1990s, amidst this lack of migrant support, there has been an increase in NGOs expanding their services not only to Moroccan migrants but also to sub-Saharan migrants (ibid, 6). Researchers attribute this to "a policy of indifference" on the part of the Moroccan state, adopting a stance of minimum involvement in welfare services, thereby leaving it up to NGOs to address the gaps in government policies (Ustubici 2018; Norman 2019).

Moroccan authorities used violence targeting racialized sub-Saharans, to prevent border crossings near the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, following the death of at least fifteen migrants in 2005 (Bendra 2019, 5). These crackdowns involved massive raids and the deportation of migrants to the Algerian border (Sonneveld et al. 2022, 18). These actions led to a strong civil society in Morocco and migrant-led groups to advocate for migrant rights. In 2013, the Groupe Antiraciste de Defense et d'Accompagnement des Etrangers et Migrants (GADEM) published a highly critical human rights report of migrants in Morocco (ibid, 19).

In response to pressure from civil society and to strengthen relations with sub-Saharan African neighboring countries after re-entering the AU, King Mohammed VI introduced a new Stratégie Nationale d'Immigation et d'Asile (national strategy on migration and asylum) in 2013, marking a significant shift in Morocco's migration policy towards a more "liberal" and "humane" approach (Stock 2019, 2). This initiative led to significant reforms such as the regularization of over 20,000 undocumented migrants (ibid). Yet the legalization of their status was only temporarily, namely a one-year residency permit, and had very little impact on their employment possibilities and access to social services (ibid). Contradictions within Moroccan migration policy remain, balancing humanitarian aspirations with the absence of a comprehensive law on immigration and asylum (Sonneveld et al. 2022, 20), alongside continued violence and abuse against migrants (Ustubici 2016, 317).

Blackness in contemporary North Africa

Researchers have emphasized the importance of shifting focus from dominant Eurocentric narratives and formal policies to the everyday practices and experiences of marginalized groups (Gross-Wyrtzen and Gazzotti 2021). Therefore, we will now turn to the complex history of blackness in the region for a more nuanced understanding that highlights continuities between historical and contemporary forms of domination and resistance. This will help illuminate the present-day experiences of sub-Saharan migrants and how their presence is perceived today.

First, anti-black racism is rooted in Morocco's own pre-colonial history of trans-Saharan slave trade (Gross-Wyrtzen 2022). Morocco's legacies include centuries of slavery, concubinage, and the use of black slave soldiers (King 2020). The link between "blackness" with slavery, leads North Africans to disavow their African identity (ibid). Black people are often referred to as, *az-* (the N-word), *'abid* or *wassif* (slave or servant), and *hartani* (freed slave) reinforcing the link of blackness with slavery (Gross-Wyrtzen 2022, 5).

Secondly, anti-black racism is also rooted in the historical legacy of European colonization of the Maghreb. After independence in 1956 and in the context of Nasser's Arab nationalism in Egypt, the Arab Muslim identity formed the foundation of belonging, excluding the Amazigh and black North African populations (ibid, 16). North Africans refer to West and Central Africans as "Africans", reinforcing a division where Africa begins south of the Sahara and North Africa is "an exceptional space" (ibid, 19).[3] Despite expressions of African and Muslim solidarity, many North Africans identify more with being Arab than the rest of Africa (ibid). Taken together, these historical factors shape Moroccans' perceptions of themselves and how they position themselves within a racialized geography.

The history of slavery and racism in Morocco are taboos that are often denied as part of a larger nationalist discourse that does not acknowledge the magnitude of slavery and the existence of a black minority (King 2020). In 2012, the Moroccan government argued that the concept of race does not apply to Moroccan society so racism could not exist within its borders (ibid). Despite the dismissal of race as a Western construct, anti-black racism remains prevalent in Morocco, particularly evident through border enforcement practices. Scholars have even draw parallels between historical treatment of slaves and contemporary treatment of black migrants (King 2020; Gross-Wyrtzen and Gazzotti 2021).

[3] I am aware that the usage of the term "sub-Saharan" in this thesis reinforces this distinction. However, in scholarly discourse, this term remains widely used. I acknowledge the ongoing debates about its implications and alternatives.

This displacement of blackness regardless of legal status, origin, or religion, has brought the issue of anti-black racism to the forefront. Incidents such as the deportation of black legal residents highlights racialized violence against sub-Saharan migrants across North Africa (Gross-Wyrtzen 2022, 19-20). Furthermore, black North Africans are frequently mistaken for migrants from sub-Sahara Africa (ibid, 21). With the increasing visibility of sub-Saharan migrants in North African societies, they must assert their nationality to counter assumptions based on skin color (ibid). As Leslie Gross-Wyrtzen notes, "the racial logics of border enforcement rework blackness to mark certain people as illegal and fundamentally out-of-place" (ibid, 17).

Increased awareness of anti-black racism has sparked political mobilization and solidarity from Moroccan civil society (ibid, 27). (Police) violence against sub-Saharan migrants prompted initiatives such as an anti-racist campaign in 2014 initiated by local activist (Alami 2014). The campaign's slogan "ma smitish 3azii" (my name is not the N-word), challenged the derogatory term used for black individuals. This campaign is just one example that reflects the continuing role of race in shaping Moroccan society and the ongoing struggle to address the legacies of slavery, colonialism and racism.

METHODOLOGICAL OUTLINE

Research approach

Urban inequalities are becoming more pronounced as global urbanization accelerates (Sheehan and Storey 2020, xii). Rapid urbanization demands substantial investment in the provision of essential services like housing, education, sanitation and healthcare (ibid, xiii). Yet, despite state-led development initiatives and other efforts, governments and international organizations cannot meet the need of all city residents (ibid). Consequently, urban residents often innovate and create alternatives to meet their basic needs (ibid, xiv). Sharing their voices and creativity in makeshift resources becomes crucial. Urban ethnography brings marginalized narratives and everyday realities of living in the city to light.

"The urban" is a highly contested and context-depended concept with many definitions. In the context of this thesis, it entails research not merely *in* cities but *on* cities, directing attention to urban spaces and processes and how they are produced, transformed, and contested (Schwenkel 2022, 48). Rather than viewing the urban as static and bounded entity, urban formations are viewed as dynamic ongoing processes characterized by fluidity, complexity, and contestation (ibid). With the urban as the primary object of study, urban ethnography highlights

the "everyday practices of urban life incorporating an explicit focusing on the city as point of analysis" (Sheehan and Storey 2020, xv).

What renders urban ethnography "critical", is its criticality to hidden power dynamics, societal inequalities, and structural injustices within urban contexts (Schwenkel 2022, 48-49). It stands out because it questions and critiques dominant theories in urban studies and promotes social justice by confronting inequalities in urban spaces (ibid). It also entails being "self-critical", by being reflexive and self-conscious about your research (Jackson 2022, 30).

Whereas traditional ethnography would capture the border as it exists and functions, critical ethnography allows for "counter-mapping" of the border based on the migrants' perspectives and their encounters with it (Gross-Wyrtzen 2020a, 12). Counter-mapping examines processes of rebordering from the standpoint of migrants, drawing attention to how migrants reshape and disrupt the established spatial order and how they challenge exclusionary access to space (Tazzioli 2015). This approach will help me to understand how border regimes operate from the migrants' point of view.

From a methodological standpoint, critical urban ethnography emphasizes the importance of ethnographic fieldwork in understanding the workings of cities. By using ethnographic methods, such as participants observation, in-depth interviews and community engagement, ethnographers gain insights into the lived realities of urban inequality (Sheehan and Storey 2020, xv). This anthropological grounding enables critical urban ethnography to offer nuanced and contextually rich empirically based analyses of urban phenomena. Building on this methodological framework, this study employs a range of ethnographic research methods to which I shall turn now.

Research methods

Participant observation forms the foundation of this ethnographic study. By watching sub-Saharan migrants' daily routines and activities firsthand, I gained insights into how they experience, interact with, and navigate the city. This method has been instrumental in understanding not just what they *say*, but what they actually *do*. Many participants had various side hustles, which they did not disclose during the interviews. Through observation of their actions and behaviors, I learned more about their lives beyond what they shared initially.

In conducting my research, I adopted a balanced approach between "go alongs" and domestic ethnography. I would go along with some of my participants on walks through their neighborhood, visits to the NGO, market, school, or church. By shadowing them in their daily activities, I observed their spatial practices and gained insights into how the city of Rabat is

"lived". In addition, I spent considerable time in migrants' domestic spaces, where they conducted their businesses, such as bars and restaurants. This allowed me to observe their daily routines and interactions within their living spaces. Domestic ethnography reveals not only their spatial practices but also how they create a sense of home and belonging (Boccagni and Bonfanti 2023). Combining both methods, I was able to see my participants in various contexts, both mobile and static, which gave me a better picture of their daily practices and relationships.

With most participants I conducted a semi-structured interview and in some cases a follow-up interview. Usually, I would interview them at the NGO, at their homes, their workplace or in a café. The interviews were conducted in English and/or French, depending on participants' language proficiency. The questions involved around the themes of migration, inclusion and exclusion in the labour market, identity, belonging and social interactions within Moroccan society. The interviews were done in stages, with early interviews informing later data collection and analysis. This approach allowed for the improvement of interview questions and identification of emerging themes throughout the research process. All participants signed a consent form to give their prior, informed consent (see appendix 2).

One of the challenges I faced when interviewing, was that I could not record the interview with any devices. Most of the participants preferred a less formal way of interaction compared to recorded interviews. In some cases, they did not agree to recordings, and in other cases I felt that recording would have a negative impact on the interview. Most of the time, however, it was practically impossible due to interruptions and noise in the background as there were often other people present in the room, such as their customers or their own children who could not be left unsupervised. I also felt that recording would have a negative impact on the interview. Undocumented migrants often felt uneasy about being identified, whether on camera or tape because of fear for deportation. They also negatively associated recording with journalists.

Therefore, I relied on notetaking during the interviews and paused questions and answers so that I had the time to write everything down in detail. As a result, the data of my research are extracts from field notes. They are not literal transcriptions as the interviews were mostly conducted in broken English or French. This approach may influence the quality of my data as my memory may not serve me when reviewing my notes. Even though I would write my notes in the moment or that same day, they are stories that represent my own subjective interpretation.

Additionally, I found that informal conversations were insightful because they flowed naturally, often providing more information than semi-structured interviews alone. I also spoke

with and observed many more migrants, which enriched my research data. Even though I did not conduct as many formal interviews as planned, the data gathered from participant observation and informal conversations exceeded my expectations. These spontaneous interactions created a relaxed atmosphere that encouraged participants to share personal experiences and perspectives more openly.

I used Grounded Theory for my data analysis, a qualitative research methodology that emphasizes the generation of theory from empirical data developed by Barney G. Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967). Grounded theory is an inductive and interpretative approach that aims to help ethnographers develop a theoretical analysis from their fieldwork (Charmaz and Mitchell 2001, 160). Through cycles of data collection, coding and analysis, theoretical insights emerged directly from the data. The analysis involved identifying reoccurring themes and patterns within the narratives and experiences of the participants, thus privileging the perspectives of the participants.

A key component of grounded theory is theoretical sampling, a method to validate emerging concepts and theories to develop a theoretical framework (ibid, 168). To give a concrete example, a large part of my research is based on incidental findings. During interviews, I gained access to the homes of my participants, uncovering their strategic use of domestic spaces as underground businesses. These findings sparked theoretical ideas and concepts and I intentionally selected additional participants who engaged in similar activities to expand the insights that emerged in the initial stage of analysis.

Research participants and gatekeeper/translator

Sub-Saharan Africans in Rabat are incredibly heterogenous in terms of origin, political and economic circumstances, ethnicity, language and socio-cultural capital. The fourteen participants in this study represent diverse backgrounds and experiences within the migrant community in Rabat.[4] Most participants originate from West Africa, including Senegal, Guinea, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso, while others come from Central/East Africa such as the DRC, Sudan and Ethiopia. The participants are both male and female, with ages ranging from twenty-one to fifty-four and belong to various religious backgrounds, including

[4] It is important to note however, that certain data such as age should be approached with caution, because many refugees register their birthday on January 1st because they do not know their actual birthday. Additionally, some participants, particularly females, asked if their age could be reported younger. This highlights the potential inaccuracies in demographic data within migrant populations.

both Muslims and Christians. Participants include individuals with refugee status, asylum seeker status and undocumented status. The duration of participants' stays in Morocco varied significantly, spanning from one to seventeen years.

The research benefitted from assistance of a gatekeeper, Boeba, a colleague of mine at the NGO who is a twenty-nine-year-old half Nigerian/half Ivorian refugee himself and has lived in Morocco for over a decade. His extensive linguistic proficiency, including fluency in Darija, Modern Standard Arabic, French, English and several African languages such as Bambara, Hausa and Yoruba facilitated communication and access to new contacts within the community. My gate keeper also became a participant himself. His perspective and experiences as a refugee provided useful insights, enriching the research with firsthand accounts.

Boeba, being "an insider" of the sub-Saharan community, played an important role in including/excluding informants and giving me access to specific spaces. This is reflected in the demographic makeup of my participants, including large representation from Ivorian and Nigerian nationalities (see appendix 1 with figures on demographics). It is also reflected in the location of my fieldwork, as he refused to go to Takadoum with me, an infamous neighborhood in Rabat, due to safety reasons. Given the language barrier, Boeba also acted as a translator during interviews. Even when conducting the interviews in English, there were occasions where translation was necessary when participants spoke in West African Pidgin English.

Reciprocal and participatory research

While I was working with the migrant community at the NGO, I encountered a phenomenon known as "researcher fatigue". This term, articulated by Boeba, describes how migrants feel worn out from constantly being studied. The study of migration is a "hot topic", attracting scholars from all over the world to the NGO, as Boeba explained. I have witnessed this myself, having met a PhD student and another master student conducting their research there. Migrants expressed their frustration with how researchers handled things, mentioning instances where researchers would collect their stories without offering benefits or solutions in return. They felt exploited by researchers who dug into their personal experiences, bringing up traumatic memories, only to depart without meaningful engagement or follow-up. This cycle of exploitation left many migrants feeling betrayed, questioning the sincerity of researchers' intentions and the potential impact of their studies. Boeba's critique forced me to reflect on the ethical implications of my study to make sure that it served the interests and well-being of my participants.

To challenge traditional power dynamics in academic research and to foster a more equitable relationship, I recognized the importance of giving back to the migrant community by volunteering at the NGO by establishing and coordinating an English language café. I taught the class two times a week, where we would discuss various topics such as family, work, cultural traditions, and aspirations over coffee and sweets. Through this initiative, I forged connections with migrants and refugees, gaining insights into their lives and fostering trust in the community. My efforts have a lasting impact, as the language café continues being taught to this day by other volunteers. Volunteering was one way of giving back, but most of my participants were not taking my classes.

Critical ethnography prioritizes the voices and perspectives of marginalized communities, allowing them to shape the research process and challenge traditional hierarchies of knowledge production (May and Caldas 2023, 6). This ensures representation but also fosters agency among research participants. My participants were involved in shaping various aspects of the research process. They chose their own pseudonyms, for instance, allowing them to maintain anonymity while retaining a sense of ownership and agency over their narratives. The research aimed to honor their voices and perspectives, acknowledging their role as co-creators of knowledge.

Boeba played an important role in teaching me what he called "the rules of the game". Together, we established agreements to ensure the well-being of the participants. This included compensating participants for transportation costs and provided them with a meal so that they did not have to do the interviews on an empty stomach. As part of my commitment to reciprocity and solidarity, I supported the businesses of my participants by buying their goods and services to contribute to their livelihoods. Doing this gave me a close-up look at how my participants run their businesses, offering firsthand experience of the dynamics of the informal economy.

The principle of doing no harm

Following the principle of "doing no harm" (Booth et al. 2016), I adjusted my interview questions based on the advice from my gatekeeper. While my research centered on migrants' experiences in Morocco, I initially included questions such as "How was jour trajectory to Morocco?". This approach could bring up past traumas, including the dangerous routes to Morocco and the losses they endured along the way. While the information could be valuable for context, it did not directly contribute to the specific focus of my research, and I thus chose to leave out questions that might unintentionally cause harm.

Even while avoiding certain questions, participants could get emotional during the interviews when recounting traumatic experiences. As a researcher without formal training in psychology, I often felt unequipped to provide the necessary support beyond empathizing with them. In such instances, I ensured my participants felt comfortable and were capable to continue the interview. At times, it became overwhelming, I made the difficult decision to conclude the interview early, respecting the emotional boundaries of my participants and myself. I was also mindful of safeguarding my own well-being.

I grappled with the weight of carrying their stories with me, experiencing secondhand trauma. Their stories left profound impact and constantly reminded me of the privilege of being entrusted with their experiences. The task of translating their lived experiences into writing was challenging, as I felt the gravity of the task. They were not just stories to be analyzed academically; they were accounts of real human lives, their struggles, resilience, and survival.

What was very helpful in preparing myself for the field was a two-day workshop on the study of migration in Morocco at the Netherlands Institute Morocco (NIMAR),[5] in which twenty junior and senior empirical researchers discussed ethical and methodological challenges one may encounter such as "What to do if migrants ask for help financially because of the critical situation in which they live?", or "What do you do when you get compassion fatigue, that is, the emotional toll of working with traumatized/suffering individuals?". This workshop equipped me with insights and strategies to approach my research with sensitivity and professionalism.

Risk assessment and mitigation strategies

Risk assessment and mitigation strategies are essential components of conducting field research, particularly in contexts that are potentially unsafe (Grimm et al., 2020). I scheduled interviews based on participants' availability, allowing for flexibility and convenience. However, this exposed me to certain risks. For instance, there was an incident where I was robbed after leaving an interview in the slums of Yacoub al Mansour. This firsthand experience highlighted the safety concerns expressed by participants living in such areas.

Before the field, I conducted a risk assessment to identify potential threats and appropriate mitigation strategies and during the field I continuously updated the risk assessment

[5] "The socio (legal) study of migration in Morocco," (workshop, NIMAR, November 18, 2022). More information on the workshop can be found here: https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/news/2022/11/workshop-the-socio-legal-study-of-migration-in-morocco-26-27-october-2022.

based on personal experiences and feedback from locals. I familiarized myself with the research ecology, identifying key locations and established safe travel routes. I also considered factors such as adhering to gender norms to maintain a low profile and avoided risky situations, especially during evening hours.

To enhance data security, I utilized tools such as Firevault full disk encryption and password protection for documents on my laptop. I also employed remote servers like NordVPN and private web browsers to safeguard data transmission. Additionally, I used pseudonyms for respondents, and I removed details that could reveal the real identity of the respondent. By integrating these risk assessment and mitigation strategies in the research process, I aimed to ensure safety and the integrity of the study.

Positionality

As a researcher engaged in critical urban ethnography, I constantly examine my own positionality and its implications on my research. This reflexive approach is crucial, especially when working with communities that face structural inequalities and social injustices (Jackson 2022, 30). In my research with black sub-Saharan migrants in Rabat, my identity as a highly educated, middle-income, Dutch, female researcher impacted my research. My positionality was shaped by intersecting factors such as race, nationality, gender, class, and education. Since I cannot change my positionality, the power relationship, or how people relate to me. I can only reflect on this and use this to interpret the data, which is also known as "situated knowledge" (Haraway, 1988), that is, knowledge situated by my perspective and context.

When reflecting on my positionality, it becomes evident that my identity has afforded me certain privileges in navigating the research context such as easier mobility and access to various spaces compared to my black participants in Morocco. In Morocco, tourists are granted a visa exemption for up to ninety days. As my stay extended to four months, I was required to obtain a residency permit officially. The staff of NIMAR suggested a workaround - travelling to Ceuta, a Spanish enclave, and re-entering Morocco to renew my entry stamp on my passport. What struck me was the lack of concern for this non-compliance with the law. I attributed this to my white privilege and the fact that my mobility is not "undesirable", in contrast to sub-Saharan migrants who are being racialized and deemed as "illegal" (Gazzotti 2021, 279).

As I rode in a *taxi bayda* along the coastline from Tanger to Findeq to cross the border into Spain, I texted with one of my participants, Mohamed, a twenty-six-year-old refugee from Sudan, who recounted his fourteen attempts to cross that same border since his arrival in Morocco (personal communication, November 15, 2022). I felt guilty that his life-long dream

was a relatively easy and short one-day trip for me. This example underscores the disparities in treatment based on racial privilege, highlighting the inherent power dynamic at play in my research and prompting critical reflection on my role and responsibilities as a researcher within a context marked by structural inequalities and social injustices.

My specific positionality in Morocco, afforded me the unique ability to navigate different spheres, bridging gender and cultural boundaries. Unlike local Moroccans, for instance, who were not allowed into the home businesses of sub-Saharan migrants, my status as a foreigner granted me access to these private spaces. Additionally, being a woman facilitated entry into traditionally female-dominated spaces like the kitchen. Yet, because I was a foreigner, I was also able to transcend traditional gender roles and participate in gatherings with men. How I was positioned by others in public spaces depended on the context; often mistaken for a Moroccan due to my Asian features and appearance, I experienced anonymity when alone but faced stigma when accompanied by sub-Saharan migrants, particularly men.

From observation to immersion

"I found refuge among those seeking refuge" – was the thought that came to me as I sat among my participants, sharing meals, and listening to their laughter and conversations. One day, Peace, a twenty-eight-year-old irregular migrant from Nigeria, remarked: "you are my first white friend" (fieldnotes, Rabat, December 2, 2022). This statement made me consider that she perceived me as "white", a label, I had never associated with myself, being a Dutch second-generation migrant of Indo-European descent. This interaction made me reflect on my own positionality and how I am positioned by my participants. In that moment I also realized: she sees me as her friend! Over time, participants became more than research subjects; they became friends.

In the first month of my fieldwork, I struggled with loneliness and a sense of displacement. I arrived in Rabat with a purpose, eager to explore the daily lives of sub-Saharan migrants. Yet doubts clouded my mind: Was I equipped to do this research? Would I find connections? Safety concerns and ethical considerations discouraged me from street recruitment and my attempts to engage with an advocacy group in support of migrants failed. As I struggled to find participants, I contemplated returning to the Netherlands. The waiting game tested my patience and I had to come to terms with the unpredictability of fieldwork.

My immersion in the community of sub-Saharan migrants in Yacoub al-Mansour thanks to the NGO changed my living experience in Morocco. The contrast between my luxurious accommodation in Hassan, and the daily realities of my participants became increasingly

evident. Despite the comforts of my studio, complete with air-conditioning and proximity to the French supermarket Carrefour, I found the disparity unsettling and longed for a lifestyle that encouraged meaningful interactions with Rabat's local population.

The contrast was already apparent during my initial experience navigating Rabat's public transportation, in the city center one can travel by tram, but accessing the outskirts of Rabat requires a bus or the *taxi bayda*, highlighting the disparities in transportation accessibility. Similarly, when I tried to pin down the NGO on the map I bought named "Rabat plan de la ville et plan de la region", I could not locate it on the map, underscoring the differential spatial representation of the outskirts of the city.

This desire for authentic engagement, propelled me to move to a riad in the historic neighborhood *Kasbah de Oudayas*, which is essentially a fortress that protects the city. From my bedroom window, this typical Moroccan home offers a breathtaking view of the Atlantic Ocean and the minaret from the old Mosque of the Kasbah. I embraced a simple lifestyle while living with a Moroccan family consisting of a husband, a wife and four kids. On Fridays, I joined the family for a communal meal of couscous. I showered using a buckle and ladle, cooked with a butane gas cylinder and washed my clothes by hand with a washing board. This shift marked a crucial moment in my journey, stepping out of my comfort zone into unfamiliarity to pursue genuine cultural immersion.

Relevance

In this thesis, I aim to contribute to the broader field of migration studies by shedding lights on unique and previously unexplored spaces that have emerged within the social dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, foreignness and belonging. With the assistance of gatekeepers and participants, I have had the privilege of accessing hidden spaces typically inaccessible to outsiders. My research addresses a gap in existing literature by exploring underground businesses and social spaces that have received limited attention thus far. While there have been some studies on home churches in Morocco (Inka Stock 2019; Berriane 2020a; 2020b and 2021) and sporadic mentions of underground bars in Fez (Gross-Wyrtzen 2020b, 898) and Tangier (Bajalia 2021, 979), the broader landscape of migrant-run businesses remains largely undiscovered.

My study challenges prevailing narratives of Morocco as a transit country for migrants en route to Europe (Gross-Wyrtzen and Gazzotti 2021, 828). While many of my participants aspire to reach Europe or return to their home countries, for a significant portion living in Morocco has been a reality for over a decade. This further justifies looking beyond Morocco's

borders and considering migrants' lives within the urban spaces they are settled in. Additionally, while much research emphasizes border violence, what De Genova refers to as a so-called "fetishism" with physical and territorial borders in migration studies (2015, 3), there has been little exploration of bordering practices that occur in the interior of the nation-state, despite their prevalence. This highlights the need to address the discrimination and exclusion faced by migrants within urban environments.

Moreover, my work addresses the critical gap in the literature by examining the phenomenon of intra-African racism in the Maghreb region. While scholars have extensively studied the rise of racism in Europe in response to migration, it has received limited attention in the African context. However, recent studies have started to address the role of race in border enforcement and migration management in North Africa (Gazzotti 2021; Gross-Wyrtzen and Gazzotti 2021; Gross-Wyrtzen 2022). By focusing on racialized bordering practices in Morocco, my research contributes to filling the gap on literature on migration dynamics in Africa.

One limitation of this study is that it focusses exclusively on irregular migrants and refugees, excluding other regular sub-Saharan migrants who constitute a significant proportion of the urban population in Morocco, such as the student population (Sonneveld et al. 2022, 10). These regular immigrants have also been subjected to anti-black racism, as previous research addresses as well (Berriane 2015; Menin 2020). While acknowledging this limitation, the scope allowed for an in-depth analysis of the experiences specific to these marginalized groups. It is also important to note, however, that the experiences explored in this research are specific and diverse among individuals. Therefore, while insightful, it is by no means broadly applicable or generalizable to all sub-Saharan irregular migrants and refugees in Rabat.

Another limitation due to the scope of this study is the primary focus on the spatial dimension of bordering practices in urban space, while logically, they also have time-related aspects. The border regime not only creates spaces at the margins, but simultaneously contributes to temporalities. While the temporal aspect is occasionally touched upon, the thesis does not fully explore the temporal management of migration nor the temporalities of the migratory experience such as legal procedures, waiting periods and the duration of migratory journeys. By prioritizing spatial aspects, this thesis may overlook critical insights into the temporalities that shape migrants' experiences with bordering practices.[6]

[6] It is important to note here that there has been other research conducted on time and migration (Stock 2019) or the interaction between temporalities and spatial dynamics in relation to the border regime (Pian 2021).

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

In this introductory section, I provided an overview of the research outline, setting, context and the methodological approach. Following this, I outline the thesis as follows: In Chapter 2, I will present my theoretical framework, exploring key themes in the fields of migration studies, urban anthropology, and resistance literature amongst others. Moving forward into the analysis, Chapter 3 is titled "Negotiating borders in public space", which examines how sub-Saharan migrants engage with socio-spatial boundaries in public spaces. Chapter 4, "Challenging borders, creating counter-spaces," delves into the establishment of home-based enterprises and home churches as counter-spaces. Chapter 5, "Transcending borders? practices of solidarity", explores acts of solidarity among migrants, Moroccan locals and humanitarian actors and how solidarities can manifest spatially. The final chapter, Chapter 6, provides a discussion of the findings, analyzing the implications of the research within the broader context of migration studies and urban anthropology and concludes this thesis by summarizing key findings of the study and making suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 1: THEORETHICAL FRAMEWORK

Grounded in disciplines such as border studies, urban studies, migration studies and resistance literature, the theoretical framework combines diverse conceptual lenses. This chapter examines the theoretical concepts of bordering; urban agency; resistance strategies such as the quiet encroachment of the ordinary and the production of counter-spaces; and solidarities. It also looks at urban contexts, particularly the informal economy. Furthermore, these theoretical concepts have been applied by academics across diverse contexts, including Morocco, offering insights into the intersections of these concepts and their influence on the (re)shaping of cities. Together, these concepts provide a comprehensive framework to analyze how borders are constructed, contested and transcended within urban landscapes.

Conceptualizing bordering

My research employs the concept of "bordering", grounded in critical border studies (CBS). Henk van Houtum's and Ton van Naerssen's research significantly reshaped the field, as they challenged the traditional geographic border discourse, which views borders as static and linear physical demarcations, instead portraying them as "a social practice of spatial differentiation" (2002, 126). Departing from this perspective, which adopts a constructivist approach, this differentiation is not only delineated through space, but also through discourse, affect, performativity, embodiment and more. This conceptualization also acknowledges that borders can manifest in various socio-spatial contexts, including urban spaces.

Urban areas have increasingly become sites where border enforcement mechanisms intersect with everyday life, impacting the experiences of migrants. This is a phenomenon Nicholas de Genova has conceptualized as "the migrant metropolis", or the spatial formation in which border enforcement extends into the interior of the nation-state space, primarily through immigration law enforcement, thereby affecting the everyday lives of migrants in the city (2015, 3). Consequently, borders are dislocated and rescaled and urban spaces become sites of border struggles (ibid). Migrants are not just trying to cross the border, rather the border crosses their everyday lives.

In her work on "borderscapes", Chiara Brambilla broadens bordering by focusing on how borders are not merely experienced by being imposed, but also actively practiced through individual and collective everyday actions (2015). Borderscaping involves "practices through which fluctuating borders are imagined, established, experienced, lived as well as reinforced, and blocked, but also traversed and inhabited" (ibid, 30). Her study on the border-migration

nexus in the Mediterranean argues for an alternative conception of the border as a space of "crisis" and "conflict" to "a space of creativity" and "alternative border imaginaries" where "new migrant agencies" can emerge (2016, 7). According to her, everyday resistance to dominant spatial imaginaries is achieved through strategies of "belonging" and "becoming", or identification and transformation (ibid, 8).

In the context of urban bordering, as theorized by James W. Scott and Christope Sohn (2019), urban borders emerge not only out through socio-spatial practices of differentiation but also out of place-making processes and contribute to the creation of specific place idea(ls) and identities. Place-making is "a process through which collective understandings of a place emerge" (ibid, 298). Borders have a dual nature as they can lead to exclusion, isolation and marginalization but also to appropriation and identity formation. They are central to the concept of place-making by "creating, maintaining or transforming a sense of place" (ibid, 299). Similar to Brambilla, Scott and Sohn highlight how borders are shaped by everyday practices, allowing for new forms of agency and identity.

Urban bordering of sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco

While there have been several studies on the bordering of sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco, research on internal bordering remains scarce (Bendra 2021). In her research on the new migration policy in Morocco since 2013, Gross-Wyrtzen shows that the "humane" migration policy did not dismantle the border regime but expanded and respatialized it "from the edges of Moroccan territory into cities in the interior" (2020b, 887). She argues that instead of expelling sub-Saharan migrants to the desert border with Algeria, they are instead pushed back to the city, where they are left to fend for themselves (ibid, 892).

Gross-Wyrtzen argues that their encounters with the border in urban space are best understood as "abandonment", which is not an absence but a governance technique that systematically excludes marginalized populations from societal protections and resources. It operates through spatial segregation, concentrating marginalized communities in neglected zones (2020, 893-895). This does not only perpetuate inequality but also serves economic interests by minimizing costs associated with social welfare and security. This "slow" violence of "inaction, neglect or exclusion" is often obscured compared to "fast" violence of the fences at Melilla and Ceuta (ibid, 890).

In addition to abandonment as a form of urban bordering, Lorena Gazzotti and Maria Hagan focus on the internal dispersal of sub-Saharan migrants that are profiled as "illegal" to cities in the south of Morocco (2021). They emphasize that it is crucial in the Moroccan case to

perceive and trace bordering "as it travels beyond the physical boundary to infect the everyday; how it manifests in imposed unbearability, exhaustion and constant need for self-policing that permeates people's bodies and psyches, urging them to strive for mobility in a political environment that works tirelessly to strip them of it" (ibid, 24). They thus argue that dispersal turns into an embodied condition where migrants experience hypermobility and unbearable living conditions.

Imane Bendra conducted an ethnographic study on Senegalese migrant encounters with everyday bordering practices in Oujda. Similar to Gazzotti and Hagan, she argues that the diffusion of borders impacts the everyday lives of migrants as the borders "stick" to their bodies and become visible with their movement within neighborhoods or cities (Bendra 2021). They carry the border on their skin as they navigate urban spaces, as being black becomes a visible marker of difference, subjecting them to discrimination and segregation. Or as Bendra puts it, "the border is carried on their physical bodies, on their skin; it becomes an embodied condition that generates restrictions on mobility and activities" (ibid).

In an ethnographic study in Rabat, Sebastian Bachelet looked at the creativity of sub-Saharan migrants with which they themselves make sense of their restricted mobility and explored how they identify as "adventures who look for their lives" (2019, 40). He emphasizes the need in migration studies to engage deeper with "the subjectivities of migrants" and how they experience border regimes (ibid, 50). Indeed, subjective experiences of the border regime and structural violence give an insight on how it affects their everyday lives.

The literature on urban bordering in Morocco focuses thus far primarily on the Moroccan border regime, and how migrants experience these, rather than migrant agencies in bordering practices. In her work on bordering in the Spanish enclave Melilla, Krichker recognizes that border studies is greatly indebted to Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space (2019). She rightfully poses the question: "What about space?" (ibid, 8). She argues that Lefebvre's theory on the production of space may be useful for approaching migrants' production of borders. Through her analysis of bordering processes by understanding the spaces they establish, she demonstrates that the space around the forest in the Moroccan province of Nador is actively modified by sub-Saharan migrants' presence, actions and discourses. To gain a more comprehensive understanding how sub-Saharan migrants produce spaces in Rabat, I will now turn to Lefebvre.

Counter-spaces

In his work "The Production of Space" (1991), Lefebvre defines counter-spaces as locations that offer alternatives to dominant spaces that emerge through grass-roots opposition to the control by those in power. He argues that urban space is not "passive" or "neutral", but a socially constructed entity used as "a means of production" and "control" by dominant forces (ibid, 26). Yet, according to Lefebvre, the state "fails to master it completely" (ibid), giving opportunity for counter-spaces to emerge. As he notes, "the rationality of the state, of its techniques, plans and programs, provokes opposition" (ibid, 23).

Counter space, in Lefebvre's view, stands in contrast with abstract space, which is designed by elite groups to serve state and class interests (ibid, 49). Abstract space erases differences and historical nuances and fosters an illusion of consensus to maintain the status quo, suppressing dissent (ibid). This results in the homogenization of space where only approved activities are permitted (ibid, 52). Consequently, counter-spaces emerge through people's spatial practices – their use and interaction with space – in ways that resist the dominant order.

Within Lefebvre's triadic structure of space, counter-space is "lived", in the sense that it is given meaning to and appropriated by its users in their everyday lives as opposed to space "conceived" by planners, architects, state actors and so on (ibid, 362). Counter-space is a form of contestation in response to the conceived space that excludes the spatial needs of marginalized groups. Lefebvre describes what counter-space consists of:

> "(.,.) we can see how counter-space can insert itself into spatial reality: against the Eye and the Gaze, against quantity and homogeneity, against power and the arrogance of power, against the endless expansion of the private and of industrial profitability; and against specialized spaces and a narrow localization of function" (381-382).

Thus, these counter-spaces challenge several aspects of the dominant form of social organization. First, they oppose the notion of spaces for transparency and surveillance, and instead promote spaces of invisibility and safety where people can gather freely without feeling watched or controlled. Second, they resist the emphasis on quantity and homogeneity, celebrating diversity, uniqueness, and local character. Third, they stand against power structures and authority. Fourth, they prioritize the needs and well-being of the community over profit. Lastly, they challenge the compartmentalization of different functions and activities into separate spaces, such as residential and commercial, by encouraging spaces that are multifunctional.

In addition to the characteristics mentioned above, counter-spaces can also be transformational, as they reshape urban environments and social relations. According to Lefebvre, any effort to create alternative space, seemingly small or incremental, is disruptive because it alters established spatial and power structures that seek homogeneity, transparency, control, and order (383).

Another related concept of Lefebvre that cannot go unmentioned is "the right to the city", which involves two principal rights: "the right to participation and the right to appropriation" (Purcell 2002, 102). The first refers to citizens' participation in decision-making processes surrounding the production of urban space, the latter to inhabitants' "right to full and complete usage of urban space in the course of everyday life" (ibid, 103). Deanna Dadusc et al. argue that the right to the city is not merely about "a right to habitat", but about everyday practices of "inhabiting" by all residents and users of space (2019, 524). This includes the possibility to refuse to stay put in confined and controlled spaces and "instead to fully exist by creating alternative socio-spatial relations and new ways of living together" (ibid). I employ Lefebvre's concept to look at sub-Saharan migrants' appropriation of urban space and their production of alternative spaces.

Counter-spaces produced by migrants

In various contexts around the world, migrants create counter-spaces as a means to alter the confines of their involvement in the given host societies. In his research on West-African migrants in Istanbul, Koray Ozdil does not explicitly mention Lefebvre's theory, but he looks at new public spaces established by migrants which "act as a form of resistance against their targeted exclusion from formal citizenship in Turkey" (2008, 280). He argues that these spaces enable them to "collectively organize themselves as a group and to protect themselves from repressive elements produced by local power holders" (ibid).

Similarly, Amrita Pande looks at "intimate" counter-spaces by female migration domestic workers (MDWs) in Lebanon, in the cities of Beirut and Tripoli specifically, which entails their usage of public space to forge intimate and sexual relations (2018). She argues for the transformative potential of these counter-spaces of public intimacy, which can transgress traditional spaces such as male-dominated cafes and orthodox religious spaces (ibid, 783). Yet, she also stresses that despite their transformative power, they do little to disrupt the hegemonic discourse on MDWs, who are often portrayed as hypersexualized and whose presence in public space is stigmatized (ibid, 801).

In her work on rural-urban internal migrants in Bangladesh, Lutfun Lata studies the production of counter-spaces in the city of Dhaka, Bangladesh (2022). She demonstrates that migrants do not confront the state directly, as "the hegemonic power of the state cannot be challenged through usual channels of civil society or a free media", but construct counter-spaces using everyday strategies such as "quiet appropriation of land utilizing migrant networks, using spatial mobility, and making informal pacts with local state and non-state actors" (ibid, 15). According to her, the contested occupation of public space by the urban poor for informal income generation can be understood through the concept of counter-space.

While she does not refer to Lefebvre's concept of counter-space explicitly, Anaik Pain did a study on Senegalese hostels in the neighborhood Takadoum in Rabat that are established through "appropriating the sense of place while also creating functionality" (2021, 7). These "new urban configurations" can be seen as a "consequence of policies to control migration flows" on the one hand, and as "subversive resistance" on the other (ibid). She argues that waiting at the borders is not merely a "form of passivity", but rather accompanied by "a whole economy of resourcefulness" (ibid, 10). These hostels can also be viewed as counter-spaces.

The concept of counter-space is equally relevant in explaining dynamics in Morocco's informal economy. The urban poor, including sub-Saharan migrants, negotiate, construct and contest spaces to create and sustain informal economic activities. The next section delves into the history of the informal economy in Morocco, exploring the socioeconomic forces at play and their lasting effects on contemporary urban life. But first, it is essential to define the informal economy before trying to understand its significance within the Moroccan context.

Morocco's informal economy

The term "informal economy", coined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in the early 1970s, refers to various marginal urban economic activities existing outside the regulatory purview of authorities, predominantly in post-colonial Third World states (Aksikas 2007, 250). This concept was later expanded to encompass informal labor in developed countries as well (ibid). Anthropologist Keith Hart popularized and conceptualized the term within the field of anthropology. His research in West-Africa highlighted the significance of economic activities in urban areas, operating outside formal labour markets and with limited regulation by the state, in providing livelihoods (1973).

The informal economy encompasses a wide range of activities, including street vending, domestic labor, and small-scall businesses. It is known by various aliases, including "shadow economy", "underground economy", "parallel economy", "illicit economy", and "the black

market" (Aksikas 2007, 251). While the informal economy primarily deals with legal goods and services, - although the conditions under which they are produced and traded may fall into a legal grey area - the illegal economy revolves around illicit goods and services, such as smuggling, casual sex work, or the trade of illegal drugs and weapons. However, the two often intersect, as individuals may engage both in informal labor and illegal practices.

Scholars have developed structural and agentic approaches to understand the informal economy (Kinyanjui 2014, 8-14). The structural approach views informality as a product of capitalist systems, either a dualist understanding or a dialectic relationship between the informal and formal economy, viewing the former as inferior and proposing formalization or emphasizing interdependence between the informal and formal economy (ibid). The agentic approach, in contrast, sees informality as opportunity-driven, viewing it as a sphere of maneuverability and potentiality where individuals exercise agency in the pursuit of their aspirations and self-actualization (ibid).

In urban spaces like Rabat, the informal economy is not hidden but in plain sight. Here you find women skillfully applying henna, men hawking cigarettes on street corners, and young boys hustling to sell tissues amid traffic. Despite its visibility, estimating the size of Morocco's informal economy poses significant challenges. Official statistics suggest that the informal economy in Morocco amounts to 30 percent of the GDP and accounts for over 70 percent of employment (World Bank 2023, 8). However, these figures are probably inaccurate as some activities are difficult to detect like street vending and domestic labor. Nonetheless, they underscore that informal employment supports a large group of the urban population.

The Moroccan informal economy emerged during crises in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Firstly the agriculture sector, which has been vital to the nation's economy post-independence, was severely damaged by draughts, compelling farmers to abandon their land and migrate to urban centers like Casablanca, Rabat, and Marrakech (Oulfkir 2019, 131). This rural-urban migration was driven not only by drought but also poverty, and marginalization of rural areas, accelerating Morocco's urbanization (ibid). The weak industrial sector – a legacy of French colonial rule – could not absorb the migrants from the rural areas, forcing many Moroccans into the informal sector and leading to urban slums like Sidi Moumen in Casablanca (ibid, 132).

Secondly, in 1983, Morocco launched structural adjustments under pressure from international financial organizations aimed at global market integration and private sector expansion (Aksikas 2007, 255). The transition from a state-dominated to a private sector-led economy came at a high social cost; poverty increased, unemployment rose, and state services

were reduced, giving rise to the informal economy (ibid, 256). Consequently, a new marginalized working class emerged, finding opportunities in the informal sector. Despite efforts to regularize and formalize the economy, the informal sector continues to flourish, providing a source of livelihood for a significant part of the Moroccan population.

Migrants actively participate in the informal economy to sustain themselves and are often overrepresented in unregulated economic activities, which reflects their weaker position in the formal labor market (Ustubici 2018, 98). The fact that these activities are unregistered, unlicensed, and untaxed also means that labor is vulnerable, exploitative, low paid and working conditions are unstable (ibid). Their deportability renders them even more vulnerable to exploitation, especially in countries characterized by widespread informality like Morocco (ibid, 90).

Despite these challenges, the informal economy remains a crucial source of income for migrants to survive as the absence of regulations presents opportunities for newcomers, particularly those who lack social connections and may find it challenging to secure urban employment or navigate formal bureaucratic procedures required for entrepreneurship (ibid, 98). By situating this study within informality, it seeks to demonstrate how migrants' everyday experiences are shaped by this dual dynamic of the informal economy.

The urban margins: enabling or constraining?

There have been two opposing discourses in the literature on urban studies and migration between "urban agency" versus "urban inequality" (Aceska et al., 2019). The field of urban agency views urban space as enabling, which contrasts with scholars that study urban inequality, who emphasize structural constraints of cities (ibid, 3). It is also tied to the conception of space at the margins as either "positive" or "negative" (Biehl 2022, 114). Urban margins are often seen as spaces of exclusion, market by poor housing, economic insecurity, labor exploitation, racism, discrimination, and lack of protection against injustice (ibid). However, these areas also exhibit dynamism and diversity of the local population, with limited state oversight enabling maneuverability and potential (ibid).

The two opposing views are also present in the literature on sub-Saharan migrants in the informal economy of Morocco. In her research on Rabat, Stock contends that entrepreneurial activities often stem from helplessness and limited alternatives (2012a, 142). These activities often fail to cover migrants' living expenses, leading them to rely on external support such as remittances or charitable assistance (ibid). Furthermore, Stock notes the temporal nature of migrant businesses, with few surviving in the long run (ibid). Indeed, structural barriers such

as legal restrictions and lack of resources can significantly constrain their options. In this context, their entrepreneurial activities may serve pragmatic responses to economic precarity rather than purely creative pursuits.

Stock's argument underscores the importance of considering the broader context in which migrant entrepreneurship operates. Many migrants engage in independent work not out of choice but out of necessity, as their conventional employment options are limited due to legal barriers, discrimination, and lack of resources. Race, for instance, plays a central role in accessing labor markets and working conditions, which is why self-employment is often sought after among Sub-Saharan African irregular migrants (Biehl 2022, 125).

However, acknowledging migrants' agency is crucial. Pickerill emphasizes sub-Saharan migrants' entrepreneurial endeavors as creativity and resourcefulness (2011). Her perspective challenges the notion of migrants as passive victims, reckless adventures, or burdens on local resources (ibid, 411). Instead, she portrays them as creative economic actors that approach their journey rationally (ibid). Many of them demonstrate entrepreneurial spirit by making strategic decisions based on available economic options and establishing businesses in the informal sector. While some businesses may not sustain in the long-run, migrants' ability to shift strategies and explore new opportunities demonstrates their adaptability and resourcefulness in generating income to sustain themselves.

Yet, there is a danger over-romanticizing urban life at the margins as particularly creative and innovative. This framing may unintendedly contribute to a neoliberal discourse emphasizing "hard work" and "self-reliance", wherein survival rests upon self-sustaining labor rather than state-led welfare. In this narrative, migrants are assumed to be skilled enough and have the capacity to alleviate their own poverty, thereby perpetuating distinctions between "deserving" and "undeserving" migrants based on their ability to demonstrate productivity through employment and entrepreneurship (Chauvin and Garces-Macarenas 2014, 427). Such an approach perpetuates the belief that the neoliberal market represents a solution to their labor exclusion, rather than acknowledging it as a root cause.

Therefore, it is important to examine both enabling and constraining environments. As Cvanjner and Scriotino note in their theorization of irregular migration: "the survival strategies of irregular migrants are both based on the systematic uses of the social spaces created by the differentiation of society and by the creative adaptation of other social resources that make up for the lack of inclusion in the political system" (2010, 398). This middle ground approach, between romanticizing and condemning urban contexts, allows for a critical reflection on the limiting power of the urban while exploring agency.

Micro, meso, and macro levels of resistance

Now that we have adopted a middle ground approach to agency and structural constraints of sub-Saharan migrants in the informal economy of Rabat, it is important to determine the levels in which they can exercise agency to transform constraints into opportunities for survival by using available spaces and resources. At the micro-level, individuals employ subtle strategies that resonate with Asef Bayat's concept of "quiet encroachment". The notion refers to "the silent, protracted but pervasive advancement of the ordinary people on the propertied and the powerful in order to survive and improve their lives" (2000, 545). It encompasses everyday acts of defiance that may seem insignificant on their own but collectively challenge power dynamics and spatial limitations. These acts are hardly planned, but rather a natural response to survive (Bayat 1997, 61). It illuminates how seemingly minor actions can accumulate to exert significant influence over time.

Pande's research shifts focus to the meso-level of resistance and the spatial exclusions of MDWs experience in Lebanon and argues that they challenge these exclusions by leveraging spaces such as ethnic churches and informal gathering places, creating meso-level of resistances – strategic acts of defiance that blur the lines between private and individual actions and organized collective efforts (2012, 384). These acts occupy a middle ground, forming a continuum between individual private contestation and organized public expression thereby challenging binary classifications in resistance literature (ibid). This hybrid form of resistance provides a foundation for potentially more radical forms of resistance (ibid).

The macro-level, then, refers to public forms of resistance, which is overtly political in nature, engaged in either by migrants alone or with the support of citizens. While my research focuses on the micro- and meso-level, this does not mean that macro-level resistances are absent in Rabat;[7] however, my participants are less involved in them in their day-to-day lives. After the 24 June incident at Melilla in 2022, also known as "the Melilla massacre", sub-Saharan migrants protested in front of the UNHCR office located in Rabat. Boeba intended to go there but remains very careful with protesting because he still awaits his interview with UNHCR to resettle to another country. This cautious approach underscored a critical tension: while he wants to engage in public resistance, he avoids it to remain invisible and protect his chances of leaving the country.

Another participant pointed out limited freedom of expression and the co-option of civil society. Michel, a fifty-four-year-old Ivorian refugee showed me his press card, explaining that

[7] See for instance Aysen Ustubici her work on political activism of sub-Saharan migrants in Rabat (2016).

he is an independent writer and journalist. He also works for a local migrant association, but according to him, "associations are often financed by the Moroccan government, which is why we cannot speak up and use our voice" (interview by author, March 15, 2023). He told me that once he leaves Morocco, he will publish the critical articles he wrote about sub-Saharan migrant experiences in Morocco. This underscores the complexity of public resistance in environments where political expression is suppressed, compelling individuals to find alternatives.

Practices and spaces of solidarity

As rightfully put by Mariama Awumbila et al., xenophobia and othering in migrant-local interactions has received a lot of attention, while solidarity has received little attention (ibid, 719-720). Focusing on the problematization of bordering practices might reinforce the distinctions between "us" and "them". Therefore, the relations between Sub-Saharan migrants and other local actors should not only be viewed as potentially reinforcing boundaries but also be studied as strategies of transcending borders and of inclusion in society by looking at the solidarities that migrants and locals extend to each other and how these relate to broader working-class formations.

Although solidarity is a longstanding concept in social sciences and migration studies, it lacks a constant definition (Awumbila et al., 2024, 721). Different interpretations coexist, influenced by varied philosophical foundations (ibid). Solidarity means different things across different contexts, explaining a wide range of social practices and relationships. It goes beyond "care, empathy, or altruism", involving "reciprocal expectations" and "shared responsibilities" (ibid, 723). While it can be limited to national communities, excluding outsiders like migrants, it often implies a broader community of equals, erasing insider-outsider distinction (ibid).

At the grassroots level, it involves both civic and political elements (ibid). Civic solidarity focuses on philanthropic missions, addressing the needs of citizens and non-nationals through compassion and care, often providing services and goods (ibid). Political solidarity emphasizes advocacy, addressing injustices and advocating for the rights of specific groups through protests, campaigns etc. (ibid). Examples of the first include humanitarian actors, while the latter might include human rights defenders.

In her work, Bendra highlights for instance that despite the constant risks of street policing and check-ups of undocumented Senegalese migrants in Oujda, the souk, as a place of rich diversity, can provide a space for positive interaction between Senegalese and Moroccan street vendors and customers (2019). In fact, she argues that these relationships are built on mutual dependence: "Senegalese migrants are part of the market's societal fabric, the economic

circuit and daily interactions, whether in buying food from the market, providing charity to older Moroccan women, or helping each other in selling products" (ibid).

In her ethnographic study on the borderscape in Melilla, Krichker shows that irregular migrants do not only alter the area around the forest of the province Nador spatially with their settlements but also socially through solidarity practices between migrants and local citizens (2019, 9). She mentions an interview in which a Cameroonian migrant shared his observations "We are putting our culture in them (local Moroccan people). Before there were no people who talked English or French, but now there are" (ibid).

Furthermore, solidarities have been conceptualized pragmatically as "a strategy of survival in otherwise isolating and marginalizing conditions" (Stock 2019, 110-111). Unlike solidarity based solely on communal belonging, they emerge from shared experiences such as xenophobic violence, religious practice and economic necessity. Migrant communities depend on one another for resources like jobs, housing, and support networks. These solidarities can also be partial and can create dependent relations. Berriane, for instance, concluded that solidarities tend to be circumstantial, such as temporary accommodation among sub-Saharan migrants with eventual financial expectations (2018, 87). In a similar vein, Stock has illuminated the authoritative and hierarchical structures of leadership in Pentecostal churches, which are often treated as solidarity structures (ibid, 112). Relations between migrants can thus be ambivalent, involving both exploitation and support (ibid, 111).

This ambivalence is also present in acts of solidarity by humanitarian NGOs in the sense that "substantial funding is geared toward border control and migration management", contributing to what is referred to as "the migration industry" (Kynsilehto 2023, 159). Bachelet and Hagan rightfully point out that humanitarian actors "often accommodate rather than challenge state bordering practices (…) facilitating the containment of migrants through aid" (2023). According to Dadusc and Mudu, "autonomous solidarity", in contrast to humanitarianism, is an understanding of solidarity that does not seek to *fill the gaps* of the state, but instead *creates cracks* in border regimes (2022, 1207).

Perhaps most interesting for this research, while solidarity is often addressed as a practice, scholars have recently argued that "networks of solidarity are emerging as new spatialities" (ibid, 1216). Migrants create their own occupations and settlements in places where governmental and humanitarian support is lacking (ibid). These spaces of self-organization are an essential part to networks of solidarity (ibid). They continue arguing that autonomous solidarity spaces not only help with survival and adaptation but create spaces of resistance against bordering practices (ibid, 1217). They go beyond improving conditions; it's about

forming new social and political relationships outside traditional citizenship spaces (ibid). Rather than relying on assistance and the fulfillment of basic needs, solidarity approaches entail struggles for seizing "freedom of movement and existence" (1220). These spaces of solidarity closely relate to counter-spaces, as will be further explored in chapter 3 and 4.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has explored a multidisciplinary theoretical framework encompassing CBS, urban studies, migration studies and resistance literature. By viewing borders not only as physical demarcations but social constructs, this theoretical lens has underscored the significance of conceptual tools such as bordering, counter-spaces, and solidarity in understanding how migrants navigate their presence amidst urban border regimes. Additionally, the framework has incorporated insights from the rich literature on Morocco that highlight country-specific contexts such as its informal economy.

Border enforcement has extended into the interior of the nation-state, where migrants often find themselves navigating spaces marked by opportunities and constraints. From marginalization, exploitation and racialization experienced in urban environments to creativity and resourcefulness demonstrated in Morocco's informal economy and counter-spaces. As we move forward to the analysis, the focus will shift to examining the data and case studies to illustrate these dynamics further. It will highlight the encounters with borders, how migrants negotiate, resist and perhaps even overcome borders, highlighting agency in shaping urban spaces.

CHAPTER 2: NEGOTIATING BORDERS IN PUBLIC SPACE

Public space

When one thinks of public spaces in Morocco, images of *qahwas* (coffee shops), mosques, souks, boulevards, coastal promenades, squares, gardens and more come to mind. Moroccan urban spaces have been conceptualized by academics in different ways, as sites for political mobilization, urbanization and development, gender dynamics, and within the colonial and postcolonial contexts. For instance, studies explored public spaces like Avenue Mohammed V in Rabat during the February 20 Movement (Ait-Mansour 2021), women in public space (Newcomb 2009) and French colonial urban planning in Moroccan cities (Bouallala 2022; Kassab 2023).

In Western thinking, the concept of public space has been shaped by the Habermasian ideal of the public sphere as a platform for democratic ideals. However, recent scholarship underscores the importance of moving beyond idealized Western-centric notions to grasp the lived realities of public space, reconceptualizing it as "something lived, negotiated and practices in the formations of social relations, cultural meanings and power dynamics" (Qian 2014, 842). This approach acknowledges the multifaced nature of public space utilization, from political discourse to economic transactions and cultural expressions. While certain practices of publicness may not be overtly political, they are "expressions of urbanity" (Deboulet 2023). Bayat's concept of "quiet encroachment", which has been introduced in the theoretical framework, is an example of this.

Furthermore, anthropologists have criticized the application of the public/private dichotomy as Orientalist (Newcomb 2009, 135). In literature on gender in urban Morocco, for instance, academics often make the simplistic analytical division between the public as male and the private as female (ibid). The lack of nuance is demonstrated by nights during Ramadan when people of all genders go into the streets, or through women's roles in the marketplace (ibid). Men and women are in the same spaces but associate with their own gender (ibid, 139). These examples challenge this simplistic gendered public/private divide.

In addition, Habermas his definition restricts the public sphere to coffee houses and salons where people can freely discuss, while a post-Habermasian perspective includes spaces such as the street (sidewalks, parks, intersections etc.) as an active public space for the people (Deboulet, 2023). What makes the streets "active" is that the actors, in contrast to the expectation of passive compliance, challenge the state authority which controls and regulates their use of it, which Bayat also refers to as "street politics" (Bayat 1997, 63).

Apart from serving as a place where people can contest the authorities, the street also functions as a place for interactions between migrants and citizens. Here, migrants shape the city through their psychical presence and economic activities, and it's on these streets where encounters and frictions occur (Berriane 2018, 89). Public space sheds light on the socialities between sub-Saharans and Moroccans, including drawing boundaries and fostering solidarity. The latter aspect will be examined in Chapter 5.

The Andalusian Wall: a space at the margins

Figure 3.1 The medina and its Andalusian Wall

Source: By the author, based on Google Earth.

Stretching over 1.4 kilometers, The Andalusian Wall is a historical physical barrier delineating the southern border of Rabat's medina (see figure 3.1). Built at the beginning of the 17th century, it once sheltered Hornachero and Morisco refugees expelled from Spain in 1609 after they refused to convert to Christianity (Kassab 2023, 515). During the French protectorate, the wall represented the separation between the medina and the Ville Nouvelle or the colonial city, a materialization of Hubert Lyautey's colonial urban policy known as "the dual city", which delineated the separation between the native Muslim life and modern European life (ibid).

Prior to the protectorate, downtown Rabat was known for its open markets or souks, with street vending being an integral part of daily life (Bouallala 2022, 33). However, colonial urban policies disrupted these markets, viewing it as a misappropriation of space and intruder activity that disturbs Rabat's modernity (ibid). This led to the displacement of the local

population, giving rise to informal economies on the city's outskirts (ibid). Street vending in Moroccan cities can therefore be seen as "a form of resistance to imported planning models", reflecting tensions between informal economies and formal urban planning (ibid, 33). To put it differently, it is a practice of publicness that challenges hegemonic conceptualizations of modernity by creating a counter-public sphere.

Once a haven for displaced communities, for sub-Saharan street vendors the Wall now symbolizes "a space at the margins", which is in fact geographically located in the center of Rabat. Following a symbolic change in May 2014, as part of Morocco's new migration policy, street vendors were granted permission to set up stalls along the walls of the medina upon the condition that they did not enter the traditional souk (Ustubici 2018, 101). This permission confines them to the periphery of the marketplace's margins, where their presence is tolerated.

The wall thus serves a physical barrier and a symbol of exclusion for those unable to access the more profitable spaces within the medina. Yet, this relaxation of regulations can also be interpreted as a step towards inclusion for many sub-Saharan street vendors. By allowing them to operate within certain boundaries, the government acknowledges their contribution to the urban landscape and provides them legitimacy. This policy is an example of differential inclusion, where migrants are integrated into economic activities, but remain socially and spatially segregated within the city.

Moroccans use the term *ferrachas subsahariens* to describe sub-Saharan street vendors, meaning "those who scatter" when they see the police. It refers to street vendors who operate without stalls that usually set up their activity in a public space while remaining stationary (Hajraoui and Messaoudi 2022, 7). Among those street vendors is Marie, a thirty-eight-year-old woman from Ivory Coast. I met Marie as I walked along the Andalusian wall, sitting together with fifteen other self-employed migrant women on small plastic chairs, forming a makeshift market against the backdrop of the wall. Street vending is not just an economic activity to generate income; it is also a space-producing activity. Yet this wall, serves as both a physical barrier and a symbol of exclusion, keeping them out the more lucrative spaces within the medina.

In 2018, Marie arrived in Rabat by plane to become a domestic worker for a Moroccan household. She was informed of this opportunity through familial networks and word of mouth. Migrants from Ivory Coast do not require a visa to enter Morocco, which makes it attractive. Once there, her employer confiscated her passport, a common practice to prevent employees from escaping. This made her vulnerable to exploitation, as she worked for them without pay because her employer falsely accused her of theft, claiming she needed to repay her plane ticket.

After 6 months, Marie made the courageous decision to flee without her papers, in search of better job opportunity.

Her circumstances contrast with those of wealthier entrepreneurs like Mimichou who work in an ethnic enclave in the commercial center known as "the African market". Unable to afford her own boutique in the commercial center and lacking a network there, she is compelled to offer her services alongside the Andalusian wall next to the official market. Here, she offers similar services at more affordable prices. While Mimichou charges 150 MAD for nail service, Marie offers the same for a fraction of the price, just 30 MAD. In conversation with Marie, she shared the challenges she and her fellow vendors face on the street:

> "All of us women have been caught by the police many times, and our property got confiscated. I almost got deported too, but I had an asylum application, and they did not take me because of that" (interview by author, November 15, 2022).

This shows that despite the relaxation of the regulations and supposed toleration, there are still raids and frequent encounters with law enforcement. This exacerbates the precarious situation of street vendors, making it difficult for them to sustain their business as they are being dispersed and dispossessed. Yet, Marie demonstrates her agency by strategically using her pending asylum application to avoid deportation.[8] Her utilization of legal mechanisms such as asylum applications underscores her resourcefulness and adaptability in navigating the ambivalences between inclusion and exclusion.

Additionally, Marie added that the local population's hostility towards sub-Saharan street vendors adds another layer of difficulty. She recounted instances of verbal abuse and physical assault, with locals throwing rocks at her and spitting on her, telling her to go back to where she came from. The animosity towards sub-Saharan migrants is fed by "the stigmatization of the Black body by authorities and competition for labour (…), normalizing practices that punish this population for their presence" (Gazzotti and Hagan 2021, 20). Thus, while the relaxation of regulations has allowed migrants to operate within certain boundaries, they still face challenges such as law enforcement and racist street violence.

[8] Migrants often apply for refugee status at UNHCR even though they may not meet the criteria, because doing so grants them a certificate and certain rights as asylum seekers. However, this is only temporary until their application is processed and their status is officially determined.

Adapting spatial and temporal behavior

Two other women that defend their access to public space from deportation by the authorities, are two of my Anglophone female participants from Nigeria, twenty-eight-year-old Peace and forty-four-year-old Badmus, who are often found begging for alms in the medina or close to the central station. It is particularly common among female migrants from Nigeria to engage in the activity of begging (Pickerill 2011, 403; Ustubici 2018, 187). This tendency is attributed to the language barrier faced by migrants who do not speak French or Arabic, which further marginalizes them (Ustubici 2015, 94). Badmus explained her motivation behind begging:

> "I beg on the street because I don't want to do prostitution. I walk around in the medina in the morning and during the day so I can pay for my rent" (interview by author, November 29, 2022).

Badmus her reluctance to engage in prostitution highlights the limited choices available to female migrants in the informal labor market, where they are forced to choose between stigmatized forms of work. It also underscores intersectional challenges faced by female migrants in an informal labour market that is both gendered and racialized.

In Morocco, begging is also known as *Assalamo Alaikom* ("peace be upon you"), which refers to the greeting used by beggars. This practice is accepted in society, as helping the poor is observing one of the commandments of Islam (Bendra 2019, 12). Both Peace and Badmus are Christians that attend Pentecostal churches but beg near mosques after Friday prayer to maximize their profit, usually earning 50 MAD a day. They thus strategically time and locate their activities, to maximize their profit. Their spatial and temporal strategies reflect their resourcefulness and understanding of urban dynamics and market opportunities in Rabat.

Yet, begging does not come without any risks for irregular sub-Saharan migrants. Peace recalled being caught by the police, leading to pushback further South:

> "I've been deported, sometimes to Agadir and Tiznit, I tried to run from the police. But now I have an asylum application, so they do not take me" (interview by author December 2, 2022).

Again, similar to Marie, Peace employs her asylum request as a way to avoid internal deportation. She further elaborated that in case she did not have her money with her at the time of her arrest, she would have to beg her way back to Rabat and sleep on the street until she can afford a bus ticket, which is very time consuming. Internal deportation forcibly creates a spatial distance of migrants from the border, but also involves dispossession of one's place of life and

one's resources. As Gazzotti and Hagan emphasize, bordering is an embodied condition of unbearability both in terms of migrants' living conditions and in the sense that they are mentally, physically, and financially exhausted (2021). Moreover, internal bordering is not only a mechanism of spatial management but also temporal management of migration, and these migrants become "inhabitants of border space-times".

Badmus stated: "Plenty police on the street ask for papers. I play low to protect myself" (interview by author, November 29, 2022). This is an example of self-policing as strategy to manage the risk of deportation (Gazzotti and Hagan 2021, 24). It is also a spatial tactic of adjusting time spent in public space since even being physically visible in public space becomes a risk (ibid, 15). Living "off-the-radar" becomes a necessity for her, as interactions with authorities could result in deportation. By avoiding unnecessary attention, she reduces the likelihood of being targeted by the police. Her strategy of self-policing reflects a pragmatic response to the constant threat of deportation, but also underscores the profound impact of bordering practices on her everyday life. As Ustubici puts it, "deportability becomes a part of the daily experience, rather than being a mere possibility" (2018, 90).

Clandestine markets, violence, and disparity in access to healthcare

On the opposite side along the Andalusian wall, I encountered another street vendor, a twenty-eight-year-old irregular migrant named Oumar from Guinee Conakry. He was reselling mobile phones alongside other sub-Saharan migrant men. Initially, I observed this location from a distance and mistook it for a gathering place for men. As I approached, I discovered a clandestine market where vendors discreetly offered mobile phones. The mobile devices were displayed on a park bench, but when the police would come, the vendors would quickly hide them in their sleeves. Despite regularly being caught by the police and having his phones confiscated, Oumar persisted in returning to the same spot each day.

When I asked him about the origin of the phones, he disclosed that he obtained them through the resale of used or stolen phones, predominantly sourced from Moroccans (interview by author, November 15, 2024). Because this spot is notorious, thieves come to this place to offload the stolen phones. The urban poor cannot afford the prices of new phones and are thus compelled to buy phones that have been stolen from other city residents. Muggings are common in Moroccan cities, with migrants being easy targets due to their reluctance to seek assistance form the police (Gross-Wrytzen 2020, 898).

One reoccurring theme observed in this business was violence. Oumar recounted regular alterations with customers, particularly when they raised complaints about the quality of the

phones he was selling. Moreover, beyond these disputes, there is also a disturbing reality of bloodshed associated with obtaining phones. Two of my participants, Badmus and Boeba, shared terrifying experiences of being stabbed with a knife by a group of young Moroccan "bandits". The theft and resale of mobile phones in Moroccan cities creates a cycle of violence that is dangerous.

Badmus was attacked and had her phone stolen as she was waiting for a cab in Casablanca, her former place of residence before moving to Rabat. She showed me the knife scar on her shoulder in our interview. Similarly, Boeba informed me via WhatsApp that he was stabbed earlier this year during a robbery where his money and phone were stolen in Takadoum and shared a picture of his stab wound (personal communication, February 13, 2024). It is possible that his phone ended up being sold at the clandestine market where Oumar works. He usually stays far away from this neighborhood out of fear for potentially violent encounters. His avoidance showcases his self-regulation of movement as a spatial strategy to cope with the risk (Gazzotti and Hagan 2021, 13).

Following the attack, he sought treatment at a private clinic for refugees in Rabat organized by UNHCR Morocco and filed a police report. Unlike Boeba, Badmus did not seek medical treatment, because she was afraid that she would not be admitted to the hospital or would have to pay high fees, nor did she report the incident to the police because of fear of deportation. Boeba's and Badmus' different responses to experiences of violence highlight the disparities in access to healthcare and legal protection between irregular migrants and refugees in Morocco.

Internal deportation from Rabat to Beni Mellal

In Morocco, the medical system fails to meet the needs of citizens and migrants alike (Ustubici 2016, 108). The lack of access to healthcare remains problematic, as has been the case for Mohamed. Mohamed fled the war in Sudan in 2019 and sought refuge in Morocco in 2022. Now officially recognized as a refugee, he was still in the process of his application at the time we met. On 24 June 2022, Mohamed was among the victims of the Melilla massacre, which involved a violent confrontation with Moroccan authorities and led to the death of twenty-three migrants (interview by author, December 8, 2022). He was severely beaten up and woke up in the hospital in Nador after being unconscious for seven days. He became deaf on his left ear and had severe brain damage. Mohamed followed my English classes to improve his speech after a language impairment resulting from the inhumane event.

In the month of December, Mohamed's mental health got worse. He did not take his medicine and refused to eat. My colleagues at the NGO called several hospitals, but no one had place for him. He merely got an injection at the ar-Razi publci hospital in the city of Salé, which allowed him to calm down for two days, while he needed to be hospitalized and get proper medical treatment. When Mohamed did not show up at my English classes anymore, I started to get worried. It turned out that Moroccan security forces deported him due to "disturbance of public order", to one of the poorest cities in the country, Beni Mellal.

The internal deportation to the south is a new bordering practice with the goal of pushing back sub-Saharan migrants from border zones in the North that developed after Morocco's new migration policy in 2013 (Gazzotti and Hagan 2021, 11). Before, migrants were deported to the border with Algeria (ibid). Redirecting them to Moroccan cities instead was considered more "humane" (ibid). Isolated towns like Beni Mellal are used as a dumping ground for migrants more than 300 kilometers away from Rabat.

Mohamed's deportation only increased his vulnerability and separated him from necessary support structures such as the NGO and the hospital, thus dispossessing him from his resources. The repetitive encounters with bordering practices, both at the border and in the city of Rabat, through border violence and lack of access to healthcare, further worsened his mental and physical health. This shows that bordering is not only spatial but an embodied condition, making Mohamed's everyday life mentally and physically unbearable.

Figure 3.2 Map capturing the distance between Rabat and Beni Mellal

Source: By the author, based on Google Earth.

A spatial manifestation of labor segregation: The Kamra roundabout

Moving to the outskirts of Rabat, the roundabout in Kamra serves as an informal public space for day labor recruitment. When I went there at 08:30 in the morning, I was struck by dozens of male workers standing on the side of the road looking for day labor. What stood out was the clear spatial segregation: Moroccan workers clustered together on one side of the road, while their sub-Saharan counterparts stood on the opposite side, separated by the tramrail. Among the locals, this location is widely known as a recruitment place for daily workers. Some days, these day workers get hired by Moroccan construction owners who typically pass by in a van or pick-up car, while on other days, they wait till late afternoon for job opportunities. It is an insecure and unsteady job, as employers typically hire them for a maximum of three days, underscoring their disposability.

During my observations, I noted Moroccans were equipped with their own personal gear like paint rollers and wore workwear, such as white jackets splattered with paint and baseball caps, emphasizing their preparedness for work (see figure 3.3). In contrast, the Sub-Saharan workers are unequipped and dressed in worn out clothes. It is also noteworthy to mention that all observed day workers were male, highlighting that migrants' occupations are gender-biased, probably because of the physically demanding nature of the job. Additionally, they appeared to be young and healthy, making them fit for the job.

In Rabat, most jobs for male migrants are available in the construction sector (Bendra 2019, 11). Before obtaining refugee status, Boeba relied on day labor for survival in the year 2015 for a period of approximately six months. He complained that the sub-Saharan workers were underpaid compared to the Moroccan workers. While sub-Saharans can earn 30 to 50 MAD per day, Moroccans commanded double the amount, around 100 MAD. He recalled tasks like cleaning animal waste from transportation vehicles and working in construction like lifting heavy loads of sand and cement mixing.

When I asked about competition with Moroccan workers, Boeba mentioned that this was rare given the substantial wage gap; Moroccans simply decline to work for such a low rate. He added: "things they do not like to do themselves, they will let us do those things, like cleaning shit" (interview by author, March 10, 2023). Instead, he noted that competition was more prevalent among fellow "blacks". Another study, however, surveyed 2,700 Moroccan respondents regarding competition from sub-Saharan migrants, suggesting that Moroccans are indeed concerned about competition and potential wage level reduction due to sub-Saharans accepting lower pay (Buehler et al. 2023, 755-756).

When I asked Boeba how he set himself apart from other day workers, he emphasized the importance of building a good reputation: "If you work hard, it depends on whether the boss appreciates you and sees that you are working well" (interview by author, March 10, 2023). Boeba explained that if an employer values the employee's work ethic, there is a higher likelihood of being recognized and rehired. He maintained contact with some employers, who would call him when work became available, and he would return to the same spot to be selected for the tasks. He thus employed strategies of reputation-building and network formation to secure his work.

The dynamics of labor recruitment reveal the exploitative nature of informal work arrangements, wherein Moroccan workers hold a privileged position in the labor market, while the labor of sub-Saharan migrant workers is devalued. This disparity reflects the broader power dynamics and racial hierarchies present in Moroccan society. The Kamra roundabout serves as a spatial manifestation of labor segregation and the unequal differentiation of human value that mirrors these broader inequalities.

Figure 3.3 Moroccan workers waiting for day labor in Kamra

Source: Photo taken by the author March 10, 2023.

Echoes of Tunisian racism: Anti-black sentiment across borders

While Boeba did not experience competition with his Moroccan counterparts, other participants did. Ouma has a relatively successful business as shoemaker; he claimed to have more customers than other shoemakers because he charges a slightly lower price and delivers good quality. He is a thirty-seven-year-old irregular migrant from Burkina Faso who has lived in Morocco for over a decade. He came to Morocco to find a job and to cross to Europe. He

attempted to cross into Ceuta and Melilla where he spent one year in the forest in the pursuit of this goal. He also went to Tangier to cross by boat, but without any luck.

He is now settled in Rabat and employed as a shoemaker in the district of Manal. While in sub-Saharan countries cobblers generally carry their tools with them (Pickerill 2011, 406), Ouma has adapted to the Moroccan practice of setting up his tools on a specific corner of busy shopping street (see figure 3.4). He works long hours, from 09:00 to 19:00, six days a week, with one rest day on Friday in observance of his Islamic faith. He has five to six customers a day on average and charges between 10 and 20 MAD to fix a pair of shoes, but sometimes satisfied customers give him an extra tip for his service.

Despite his success, or perhaps because of it, Ouma faced exploitation and aggression from Moroccan locals. He told me about an incident that just happened the day before. He described a confrontation with a Moroccan man who expressed anti-black sentiment, citing recent events in Tunisia as justification, stating that "the same should happen in Morocco as is happening in Tunisia". He was referencing the anti-black attacks in Tunisia following President Kais Saied racist remarks during a National Security Council on February 21, 2023. Said stated in his speech that "hordes of irregular migrants form sub-Saharan Africa" had come to Tunisia "with all the violence, crime and unacceptable practices that entails". He continued that it is part of "a criminal plan" aimed to "change the demographic make-up" of the country (Amnesty International 2023).

This incident exemplifies how recent instances of racism in Tunisia and the intensification of anti-black sentiment have not only sparked national discourse but have also had effects beyond Tunisia's borders. It reflects not only local dynamics but also broader racial dynamics prevalent in North Africa. The Moroccan individual's echoing of events in Tunisia underscores the broader racial dynamics and anti-black sentiment prevalent in North Africa, with events in one country influencing attitudes and behaviors in neighboring countries like Morocco. Ouma further elaborated:

> "Moroccans think they are not African. They see I am working, while they are unemployed. They resent me for it. (…) Sometimes Moroccan customers don't pay and say: 'go back to your own country'" (interview by author, March 16, 2023).

Ouma's insight that Moroccans perceive North-Africans as distinct from sub-Saharans underscores the prevailing notions of identity and belonging in Maghreb countries, as already stressed in the introductory section of this thesis. His experience of resentment from Moroccan

locals reflects broader socio-economic tensions exacerbated by competition in the labor market. It aligns with earlier research by Buehler et al., which suggests that labor market threat perceptions from sub-Saharan migrants are higher among poorer, lower skilled Moroccan citizens, who often work in similar jobs as migrants or facing unemployment (2023, 755). Ouma's incident underscores the interplay between economic dynamics and social perceptions.

Additionally, the issue of non-payment is a re-occurring theme in the interviews, affecting various participants, from boutique owners like Mimichou to street vendors like Marie. Since they are often irregular, they face barriers in pursuing legal options when customers refuse to pay, making them vulnerable to exploitation. They are also confronted with racist remarks when they refuse to negotiate the price during business transactions. The refusal of Moroccan customers to pay, coupled with xenophobic remarks, illustrates the intersection of economic marginalization with racial discrimination.

Figure 3.4 Ouma's shoe repair stand in Manal

Source: Photo taken by the author on March 16, 2023.

Appearing tolerable

Not too far from Ouma's shoe repair stand, I met Ben, a twenty-six-year-old irregular migrant from Senegal, selling women's products, such as cremes to become curvier or to whiten the skin in an open market in front of a shopping center in Manal. He studied Marketing and Communication at the Universite de Thies and afterwards worked for Expresso, a telephone company, for 3 years. He lost his job and came to Morocco due to unemployment. Being the oldest son, Ben left behind his father, mother, two bigger sisters and three little brothers. He has no interest in crossing to Europe, but rather hopes to return to Senegal one day (interview by

author, November 17, 2022). His primary focus is conducting business in Morocco, illustrating that not all migrants seek to cross to Europe. While he realizes that his work differs from his formal education and understands the limitations imposed by his irregular status, he finds fulfillment in his work and proudly identifies as a businessman. The open market in Manal comes to life at night, and Ben can be found there seven days a week from 16:00 o'clock till midnight.

Figure 3.5 Skin-lightening products at the African market located in the NGO [9]

Source: Photo taken by the author. December 24, 2022.

Ben previously sold at the open markets in Kamra and J5 but relocated to Manal due to increased police checks, with instances where his property was confiscated. His current spot is in front of a shopping center which offers him a hiding place from the police. He retreats into the shopping center once the police arrive but resumes his work on the street when they are gone. He employs the strategies of tactical retreats, going invisible and concentrating on particular strategic spaces. However, when the police arrive unexpectedly and time is short, he is forced to abandon his belongings. At times, he resorts to bribing police officers, offering not only money but also the products he sells such as Viagra pills. These "quiet encroachments" allow him to *appear* limited and tolerable while he is in fact resisting and expanding spaces available to him and through this, he alters urban space itself (1997, 62).

[9] The use of skin-lightening products is common in Morocco, reflecting societal norms influenced by European colonial history and the trans-Saharan slave trade. The promotion of skin lightening perpetuates colorism and adheres to beauty standards that glorify white or lighter skin, normalizing societal attitudes that marginalize those with darker complexions.

Ben also regularly encountered problems with Moroccan vendors or locals due to the nature of his products and his predominantly Moroccan female clientele. He explained that his female customers are very loyal, and often seek him out even after he changed locations. However, he told me that he feels being watched by other vendors when selling to Moroccan women. In one incident, a Moroccan man referred to one of Ben's customers as a *kehba* (whore) and *hshuma* (shame) for buying his products, despite Ben not knowing the woman, which highlights the taboo surrounding Moroccan women being involved with black men. More generally, it reflects the gendering of urban space in Morocco and the contestation of degree of interactions between men and women in mixed public spaces (Newcomb 2009, 139). To mitigate criticism and confrontation, Ben adopts a strategy of pretending to be married. Similar to the other strategies, his presentation as a married man can be regarded as a strategy to *appear* tolerable which allows him to navigate the complexities of gendered business interactions in Morocco.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the complex dynamics of negotiating boundaries in public spaces like the Andalusian Wall, the Kamra roundabout and open markets. Contrary to idealized Western-centric notions of public space as platforms for democratic ideals, these spaces in Rabat are lived, negotiated and contested. Migrants engage in various activities in public spaces, from day labor to begging, reflecting both economic necessity and resistance to formal regulations. Urban public spaces reflect and reinforce broader societal inequalities. The spatial segregation at the Kamra roundabout highlights the unequal differentiation of human value in the labor market, while the Andalusian wall, a space at the margins that is ironically located in the heart of the city, serves as both a barrier that limits access to city spaces and a productive space with economic opportunity on the other.

Bordering practices performed by authorities, from internal deportation to confiscation of personal items, infiltrate migrants' daily lives. It imposes spatial and temporal restrictions and produces an embodied condition which causes self-policing and regulation of movement. Disturbingly, it normalizes bordering practices by local communities, such as violence and verbal assault against migrants. The strategies employed by migrants in navigating these borders, such as applying for asylum, bribing police officers, strategic mobility, appearing tolerable are examples of quiet encroachment. While these strategies are largely driven by the force of necessity (Bayat 1997, 58), they encroach on the state's ability to control and discipline migrants and exclude them from spaces. Migrants do not merely encounter borders passively,

but they are actors in bordering processes and their actions have impact on these borders. While bordering hinders migrants' freedom to determine their own mobility, ability to settle, acquire wealth and improve their situation, migrants' encroachment on repressive state practices is all about improving one's life and moving forward. These two opposite forces reflect the interplay between state power and everyday resistance in urban spaces. It shows both the consequences and limits of state power and the room for migrants to maneuver.

In the following Chapter 3, the focus will shift from negotiating bordering practices in public spaces to the creation of self-segregated and -organized spaces within the household. These spaces, including home restaurants, -bars, -clubs and house churches, blur the distinction between public and private spaces, presenting further complexities in understanding urban dynamics and migrants' experiences.

CHAPTER 3: CHALLANGING BORDERS, CREATING COUNTER-SPACES

As my participants often face discrimination in the (in)formal job market and public spaces, they have turned to their private residences, establishing underground restaurants, bars, clubs, and churches. Their withdrawal to private living spaces is partly the outcome of the bordering practices and the lack of access to basic services explored in the previous chapter, Chapter 2. While the negotiation of borders focuses more on managing and adapting to existing conditions, we will now look at the creation of new spaces. The self-organization of migrants can be viewed as a strategy for reconstructing the urban public sphere in response to the constraints being caused by these restrictive spatial regimes, the lack of economic resources and the prevailing racism. In the following chapter, migrants' creation of alternative spaces within their homes will be approached using Lefebvre's concept of "counter-space" as they challenge dominant spatial practices by creating alternative socio-spatial realities.

Private space: Home businesses

The home is an important but often overlooked economic space (Jaffe and Koning, 96). Since Industrialization and the age of Fordism, domestic spaces have been viewed as separate from the economic sphere, being viewed as a female space of social reproduction, such as childcare, cooking and cleaning (ibid, 97). This perspective devalues domestic work and care as "unproductive" while overlooking economic activities conducted within the home (2007 Verrest, 10). Moreover, unpaid reproductive work is integral to the economy, as it supports the well-being of the labor force. Above that, households are important sites for paid work, as numerous economic activities take place within people's private homes (Jaffe and Koning, 97).

A number of anthropologists have studied home-based economic activities, which encompass "the informal production of goods and services from peoples' homes" (ibid). One speaks of a home-based enterprise (HBE) when both the household and the business operate in the same physical and social context (Grant 2012, 202). HBEs involve all types of activities, from services and retail to or a mix of these activities (ibid). Typically, in this limited space, small scale production and services are possible (ibid). There has been a growth in HBE's because of urbanization, particularly in slums where urban poverty has risen. In many of these slums, informal economic activity and informal housing are combined (ibid). Yet, limited attention has been paid to the productive use of households as a vital livelihood strategy providing income opportunities for urban residents.

Research on HBE's has primarily focused on the participation of women in these activities, as they tend to be operated by women (Verrest 2007, 151; Jaffe and Koning, 97). It is attractive for them because they can combine reproductive and productive activities (ibid). It also has to do with structural constraints apart from free choice, such as their lack of access to other segments of the informal labor market (Verrest 2007 151). HBE's are known for generating work and income for women-headed households and for international migrants especially (Grant 2012, 202).

1. Home restaurants, -bars and -clubs

The slums in Yacoub al Mansour consist of densely compacted four and five-story buildings that are divided into apartments. The front door of these buildings is usually open, so anyone could enter, and many people are going in and out (see figure 4.1). Irene a thirty-three-year-old irregular migrant from the DRC, lives in a modest apartment building in J5, where her living room doubles as a makeshift restaurant with wooden pallet benches and a small TV constantly humming in the background. In the kitchen, Irene prepares Congolese dishes for both her family and the customers. While there is a kitchen counter, she usually prepares food on a cooking pit on the floor, as she used to back home in the DRC (see figure 4.3). Irene and her husband started their HBE only two weeks before this interview, when they moved into this apartment.

My first interview with Irene started at an unusual time, at 21:00 o'clock in the evening. It was during this interview, that I discovered the existence of home-restaurant/bars. Irene arrived in Morocco in 2013 after leaving her home country in 2006. Her journey took six years was due to kidnapping, lack of money and becoming pregnant during along the way. She lived in the forest of Nador to cross to Melilla, but decided to settle in Tangier because it was too dangerous with her daughter. Because of frequent deportations and police raids there, she then moved to Rabat. Here she lives together with her three children – a thirteen-year-old girl, a five-year-old girl and a one-year-old boy – and her fifty-five-year-old husband who is from Liberia.

On the top floor of an apartment building in J3, Anita, a thirty-nine-year-old Liberian irregular migrant, transformed her living room into a lively home bar with a big corner sofa and a TV with a speaker attached to it (see figure 1). Next to the TV there is a fridge filled with beer and cola as a mixer for the alcohol. My interview with Anita was also rather unusual, as she runs her business all day and we did the interview while there were nine other people watching the World cup semifinal match between Morocco and Portugal on December 10, 2022. Sometimes, she had to serve her customers liquor mid-conversation as she sells African liquor similar to Irene.

Anita came to Morocco, Rabat, in 2009. She lives together with her fifteen-year-old son and her fourteen-year-old daughter. Her son was born in Mauritania and her daughter in Morocco. Her husband left them and went back to Liberia a year ago. After he left, she started her HBE. With this business, she makes money "small small" to eat and pay the rent. Her story reflects the struggles of a female-headed household. Her end goal is to make enough money to back to Liberia because she does not want to take the risk to cross as many people die and she thinks about her children. Again, illustrating that not all migrants seek to go to Europe.

Figure 4.1 Outside Irene's apartment building

Source: Photo taken by the author on December 16, 2022.

Figure 4.2 Anita's living room and home bar

Source: Photo taken by the author on December 14, 2022.

Both Irene and Anita sell an alcohol beverage that goes by several names in different countries such as *ogogoro*, *nsamba*, *poyo*, *akpeteshie*, or *cane juice*, which is West/Central African liquor distilled from palm wine or sugar cane. The liquor is stored in plastic bottles of which some of them have medical herbs soaked in them as it is also used as medicine (see bottle on the right in figure 4.2). When Irene's baby boy had a cold, for instance, he was given a little shot. They sell it for 5 MAD per glass which is relatively cheaper and more easily accessible for migrants. In Morocco, you can buy alcohol in the stores, but it is very expensive because imported alcohol is heavily taxed. Alcohol sales without a license are illegal and come with grave risk when the police would find out.

Besides serving drinks, Irene also sells homemade food that she prepares in her kitchen. She usually sells dry fish with rice, beignets, and beans and occasionally fufu with chicken stew. She does not have an official menu, but rather customers eat what she has to offer that day. Irene combines different businesses, spending her days "hustling" for money working in the African market at the NGO during the day and at the home bar/restaurant in the evening. She would also prepare the food that she sells at the market, namely Congolese beignets and croquettes. She would knead the dough so she could fry them in the pan in the cardboard box at her market stand (see figure 4.3). She thus combines her roles as both vendor at the African market and owner of a home restaurant, maximizing the earning potential and diversifying her sources of income.

Figure 4.3 Irene's dual business of selling beignets

Source: Photos taken by the author on 18 and 24 December 2022.

There were also longer established home restaurants that I observed. They were more professionally organized, producing food in large bulks and providing an official menu and/or food delivery service. These places charged higher prices than other home restaurants. The most popular home restaurant I went to was run by a Guinean woman that went by the name "maman" where you could pick between two options: either tomato stew or spinach stew. In contrast to Irene who just started her business two weeks ago, maman her business has been established for seven years and is widely known among migrants. Maman's place sometimes had a waiting-line in the hallway with over 10 people and a total of 50 guests a day. It was almost as if you were in an official restaurant with a timeslot, and once you finished your meal you had to leave to make place for the other guests.

Figure 4.4 Menu at a Cameroonian home-restaurant

Source: Photo taken by the author on March 12, 2023.

The biggest home-restaurant I went to, was also a club at night (see figure 4.6). One of my participants, Peace, celebrated her birthday there. While we were eating fried fish with cassava and drinking beers at first, a few moments later we got a performance of women twerking on the music. It was quite the experience. Since it was relatively expensive, I would say this is a place for special occasions, like a birthday celebration. The room is decorated with neon lights and balloons and there is a big music box. On the walls are posters of events at 5eme Avenue Afro Club that features DJs with music from several African countries. This home club is also known as a place where sex workers offer their services for 200 MAD.

The physical transformation of domestic spaces into bars, restaurants and clubs, challenges conventional notions of urban space. What were once private quarters have been

reconfigured to vibrant social venues where migrants gather for food, drinks, music and community (see figure 4.5 and 4.6). Their active reshaping of spatial environments demonstrates their agency in appropriating space. This spatial reconfiguration does not only serve economic purposes but also redefines social interactions within the community.

Figure 4.5 Nigerian home-restaurant/bar in Manal

Source: Photo taken by the author on November 3, 2022.

Figure 4.6 Ivorian home-club in J5

Source: Photo taken by the author on March 17, 2023.

Combining working and living

Irene's and Anita's primary motivation for allowing people to enter their private spaces was survival, both reasoning that they had to feed their children. Anita also told me she was too sick to work outside due to her high blood pressure, not being physically able to beg on the streets for instance (interview by author, December 10, 2024). So, health limitations confine her to her domestic space. Irene added that it is dangerous outside and that she feels unsafe (interview by author, November 4, 2022). She recalled instances when men on the street assaulted her, proposed to sleep with her, as it is often assumed sub-Saharan women are sex workers (Gross-Wyrtzen 2020b, 898), and robbed her while she was pregnant with her middle child. She goes outside when it is necessary, to bring and pick her children from school, or to go to the NGO. Their choices reflect the harsh realities faced by sub-Saharan migrant women in Morocco.

Simultaneously accommodating the concept of working and living, Irene and Anita managed a time schedule so that their domestic space can be utilized at different times a day for different purposes (Grant 2012, 203). Irene usually closed before midnight, while Anita stayed open until 02:00 o'clock in the morning. This likely has to do with the fact that Anita's children are already older than Irene's. Because the domestic interiors were cramped, there was a rhythm of sharing and using space (ibid). When there were a lot of customers or it was getting late, Irene's children would retreat to the bedroom. I also found Anita's children often chilling on the stairway of the apartment building when there were customers inside the house.

Health, safety, and security are often complicated in HBEs (ibid). Concerning health, the children are in an environment in which they are exposed to smoke from cigarettes and weed or hashish, which poses significant health risks. With regards to security, one time, Irene's husband fell asleep on the sofa as he was running the business. By the time he woke up, his money and his fake identity documents were stolen. Furthermore, the consumption of alcohol leads to excessive drinking resulting in aggressive behavior. This poses a significant risk to personal safety for both the residents and guests. These incidents highlight the vulnerabilities associated with HBEs, where personal safety and security of belongings are at constant risk. HBEs lack proper security measures which makes them susceptible to theft and other crimes.

Motherhood, gender, and family dynamics

While the participants whom I interviewed with HBEs are women, I also regularly visited and observed places run by men. Out of all the HBEs I visited that were run by women, they happened to be mothers who often were referred to by guests as "mama", "mami", "maman". When I asked Irene where she got her culinary skills from, she replied with "c'est la maman" (interview by author, December 15, 2022). Attributing her skills to her mother, shows the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and tradition in food preparation. Similarly, Boeba connects the meals served at HBEs to the nostalgic memories of his own mothers' cooking. This demonstrates the intersecting roles of these women as mothers and entrepreneurs within the context of HBEs.

As indicated earlier, Irene's and Anita's decisions to settle in Rabat and operate their businesses from their homes are influenced by their roles as mothers. Their ability to watch over their children while running their business allows them to combine productive and

reproductive activities. Their mobility and their use of space is thus intricately tied to their motherhood, shaping their spatial and economic realities in which they operate. [10]

With regards to the gender of the guests, the spaces were often mixed. While most are men, there have been several occasions in which I observed groups of women who would enter either by themselves or accompanied by men. Regarding the division of labor, it varies depending on the composition of the family unit. In couples like Irene's, it would typically be the husband who serves the alcoholic drinks, while the wife who prepares the food. When Irene's husband was not around, she would do his tasks as well. Yet, in the female-headed households of Anita, she would take on both roles. Similarly, solo male operators handled both the cooking and the serving duties.

In households with children, they would help their parents with small tasks and chores.[11] Anita's daughter occasionally watched over the home bar. One time she entered the house and unzipped her school backpack of 'Blaze and the monster machines', which was filled with beer to restock the fridge. The image of this child using her school backpack, a symbol of childhood innocence, to transport alcohol for business purposes underscores the complexities of children's involvement in such settings. However, this involvement is often a necessity; due to Anita's high blood pressure, she rarely leaves the house except for groceries. Similarly, Irene's oldest daughter would poor the drinks of the guests when her parents were busy cooking or hosting the guests. Involving family members in the operation of these businesses is "a principal survival system of the poor" (Verrest 2007, 183). Children's assistance in the HBEs further blurs the lines between work and family life.

"Welcome to Congo": place-making and re-bordering

Besides being spaces in which services are provided and economic transactions are being made, they also have a public function as meeting spaces and spaces of socialization with other migrants. As argued by Lefebvre, "groups, classes or fractions of classes cannot constitute themselves, or recognize one another, as 'subjects' unless they generate (or produce) a space" (1991, 416). In his view, space is essential to the formation and recognition of social groups. By creating new spaces social groups can form and assert their identity and distinct themselves within the broader society.

[10] For an analysis on women migrants' (im)mobility as they transition to motherhood, refer to Stock (2012b).

[11] Regularly witnessing child labor became an ethical dilemma that I faced as a researcher and as a human being. I chose not to intervene because I would ask myself if it would help or hurt my participants and their families.

"Welcome to Congo" Irene said to me with a smile on her face as four Congolese women arrived at her HBE. People would communicate their arrival via WhatsApp, but most of the times guests would knock on the door and Irene would ask "c'est qui?" (who is it?) which was followed by a response with a name. She knew her guests and guests vice versa knew they could come at her place. It demonstrates one of the advantages of HBE's, that is, the effective use of human capital including friends, relatives, and neighbors (Grant 2012, 202). It also underscores the importance of informal networks in spreading knowledge about these HBEs.

The HBEs attract people from different African nationalities and religions. People come together to eat and drink, sing and dance together to music genres such as Afrobeats, watch football games, play games such as parchis, and talk about various topics such as their daily lives, their memories of their home countries, politics in Africa etc. Irene's HBE can generally be categorized as francophone, and Anita's anglophone, but the people often communicated in more than one language. Within the boundaries of these homes, they also spoke native languages such as Yoruba, Igbo, Bambara, Hausa and Fula. HBEs function as inclusive spaces in which sub-Saharan migrants form bonds across ethnic, religious, and linguistic barriers.

I met Badmus at Irene's home restaurant, when they celebrated the birthday of Irene's son who turned one year old. She also regularly visits Anita's home bar and I would characterize her as a family friend of both. When I asked Badmus why she visits these places, she responded: "I come here to smoke, to think less, smile with people, and feel like family" (November 29, 2022). Badmus fled Nigeria because she was abused by her husband and had to leave her son behind whom she lost contact with for eight years. She finds comfort and a sense of belonging in these communal settings. Like other women, she also went by the name of "mama" and the children called her "auntie". Even as an outsider I got to experience this sense of belonging, because Badmus always made me feel very welcome at Irene's and Anita's houses and approached me with the words "my sister".

Occasionally, Badmus would sell self-made Nigerian eggrolls at Anita's home bar. This way, visitors could enjoy a snack while having drink. Anita's willingness to share her space provided Badmus an opportunity to reach customers who are already gathered in a social setting. It highlights the important of community networks in creating economic opportunities, although small-scale. Moreover, it shows that counter-spaces also function as spaces of solidarity fostering mutual support and collaboration.

Another frequent visitor is Boeba. When I asked him why he went to these places he said: "To be with my brothers and sisters from the same community, to share food and drinks, to pass time, and to talk about politics in our countries" (interview by author, March 10, 2023).

Boeba sees himself as part of the sub-Saharan community. When visiting these places, he was often engaged in discussions about the need for young African leaders. He also told me that he was his "patience was finished" as "every day is the same day" and that going to these places to eat, drink and smoke is a way for him "to pass time". Visiting these spaces can thus also be seen as a way for visitors to cope with this sense of "being stuck" in Morocco. [12] In this sense, the HBEs give substance in time and space to the experiences of waiting and containment.

What is interesting to note is that the business owners only allow other sub-Saharan migrants to enter their homes. Moroccans are usually not allowed because migrants do not trust them and are afraid that they might inform the police. I found out about this when I invited a Moroccan colleague for dinner to a Nigerian home restaurant in Manal (see figure 4.5), and she was not allowed to join me. There is a lot at stake as they risk going to jail for their illegal activities; risk losing their apartments as none of them have housing contracts[13]; and risk being deported as most of them are undocumented.

As Scott and Sohn have argued, urban place-making goes hand in hand with boundary-making (2019, 298). They themselves thus exercise agency and engage in differentiating social space by controlling access to their private spaces. On the one hand, creating these borders by restricting access enables communities to protect and sustain themselves, but on the other hand it isolates them from society (ibid). Through demarcation and appropriation, these socio-spatial distinctions foster a sense of safety and belonging, even as these actions also contribute to their social isolation.

Yet, sub-Saharan immigrants rarely enter the domestic spaces of Moroccan locals either. When I told Boeba about the many instances I have been invited to eat couscous or tajine at Moroccan families' homes, he responded that it was because I am Western, and that they never invite sub-Saharans over. This has also been confirmed by previous research done by Berriane, who argues that encounters take place outside of the domestic space (2018, 92). According to him, this also has to do with gender since "their insertion in the private space of local families that is mainly conceived as a female space, would represent an unacceptable transgression of current social norms and gender barriers" (ibid). Thus, while Boeba's observation underscores

[12] See for instance Stock her book *Time, Migration and Forced Immobility* on the temporal dimension of sub-Saharan migrants' experiences in Morocco (2019).

[13] Housing contracts are not very common in Morocco. I never signed any contract myself either, neither for my studio nor for my room in the riad. This is very problematic, because if undocumented migrants want to apply for refugee status or for residence, they need a housing contract. This rule is highly paradoxical because formal structures are largely absent in Morocco, and most Moroccans citizens work in the informal sector.

racial dynamics, the exclusion from domestic spaces can also reflect gender norms and societal barriers that complicate interactions.

HBEs as counter-spaces

The establishment of Irene and Anita's HBEs reflect broader bordering practices that push sub-Saharan migrants towards creative solutions to economic and social exclusion. By repurposing domestic areas for commercial and social activities, they create alternative economic and social realities, which aligns with Lefebvre's idea of counter-space. HBEs go against the traditional use of private homes and resist dominant spatial practices by giving new meaning to these spaces. They position themselves outside state surveillance, instead providing spaces where sub-Saharan migrants can gather without feeling watched or controlled. They also resist homogeneity, celebrating diversity and local character. By encouraging multi-functional spaces, they also challenge compartmentalization of different functions and activities into separate spaces.

HBEs serve not only as spaces of economic activity but also for socialization, fostering a sense of community and belonging among sub-Saharan migrants. These counter-spaces facilitate interactions, sharing experiences, and cultural exchange, reinforcing social bonds and creating support networks. HBEs foster social integration among sub-Saharan migrants, however, being spaces exclusively for sub-Saharan migrants, simultaneously reinforce bordering practices that might hinder their integration into the broader society.

Moreover, by using domestic spaces for public purposes they enable migrants to collectively organize themselves in their own "hybrid" spaces. The activities of these small informal collectives are neither individual nor overtly collectively organized, but rather at the meso-level of resistance, going beyond individual survival strategies and contributing to collective identity and forming alliances. HBEs lay the groundwork for potentially more radical forms of resistance.

These HBEs are a significant example of informality in Morocco, representing a combination of informal housing and informal businesses. While informality can serve as an important mechanism of inclusion as already described above, it also poses significant risks on personal safety and security. Irene and Anita operate without official license and housing contracts. Without legal protection, they are vulnerable to exploitation, eviction and criminal activities. HBEs illustrate the dual dynamic of the informal economy, showcasing both livelihood opportunities and legal precarity.

2. House churches

At 14:30, I meet Peace at her studio apartment in Hay Nahda to attend the Sunday service of her Nigerian Pentecostal church. She is dressed in her "Sunday best", wearing a beautiful dress and a black wig with straight hair. Observing her now, I would never have guessed that she begs for money. We walk to the house church in the suburb El Youssoufia, which is within walking distance. It is located on the ground floor of a three-story building. From the outside, it would be hard to identify its location. Inside, there are no windows, just a ceiling fan and some ventilators. The room is overcrowded with people and there is a small band with a guitar, piano, and drums along with a choir of three people. The Nigerian church members come from various ethnic groups, but they can all communicate in Pidgin English. Although the church is invisible to the eye, the sounds are very loud. The service starts at 15:00 o'clock, all members line up to go to the front of the church where the pastor pours anointing oil over their heads, assisted by his collaborators. One woman seems possessed by an evil spirit and the pastor performs a deliverance which costs at least half an hour. He shouts: "In the name of Jesus, leave this body, I summon you to manifest yourself!". Next, the dedication ceremony of a baby starts, whose mother is a friend of Peace. The pastor presents the baby in front of the church and offers his blessings, while the mother dedicates her son to God. Empty envelopes are handed out to collect money for the baby, after which the pastor's collaborators pick them up. Then, everyone gathers at the front of the church, the music starts, and people dance, sing and praise loudly. Before the mass ends, two goats are brought in as a gift to the church community from a recently married couple (see figure 1). The service ends at 16:30. With Peace's help, the baby's mother hands out Nigerian meat pies and soda to the members as they leave the church (fieldnotes, Rabat, March 12, 2023).

Figure 4.7 House church in Al Youssoufia

Source: Photo taken by the author. March 12, 2023.

The emergence of Pentecostal house churches

Over the past two decades, numerous Pentecostal house churches have emerged in Rabat and other Moroccan cities due to the increasing presence of sub-Saharan migrants. This phenomenon has been researched by several academics (Stock 2019; Berriane 2020a; 2020b; and 2021). Unlike mainline churches (Protestant and Catholic), Pentecostal churches hold their services in houses situated in impoverished neighborhoods where many migrants reside, such as J5, J3, Takadoum, Al Youssoufia and Hay Nahda. They are "exclusively targeted towards African migrants and do not diffuse beyond the migrants' communities" (Berriane 2020b, 429). Most churches are visited almost entirely by members of the same nationality.[14] According to previous research, the Nigerian community seems to maintain the largest number of Pentecostal churches (Stock 2019, 126).

[14] I say "almost" here because this is not always the case. Anita, for instance, is Liberian but attends a Congolese house church in J5.

Pentecostalism is a Protestant Charismatic Christian movement that emphasizes the importance of the Holy Spirit, ecstatic religious experiences, prayer healing and deliverance from evil spirits. This attracts migrants that prefer a dynamic and interactive style of worship over traditional mainline churches. Because anyone guided by the Holy Spirit can found or run a Pentecostal church (Berriane 2021, 151), house churches are spreading with the increasing presence of sub-Saharan migrants and contribute to the pluralization and diversification of Christianity in Morocco.

While Islam is the state religion, Christianity is acknowledged by Moroccan law, but tightly regulated, particularly regarding conversion from Islam (Berriane 2020a, 142). Christian mainline churches that have been established during the colonial era are controlled by the state and are officially perceived as places of worship for foreigners (ibid). While Moroccans have advocated for religious freedom for Moroccan citizens, the state primarily promotes an image of religious inclusivity and tolerance regarding immigrants and refugees (ibid). Newly established Pentecostal house churches are not officially recognized, but their presence has been more tolerated due to Morocco's attempt to promote itself as a tolerant country since the new migration policy in 2013 (Berriane 2021, 159).

House churches as counter-spaces

The transition of Peace, from a beggar to a respected church member in her Sunday best, shows that the house church serves as an alternative social order where members are supported and valued regardless of their status outside the church. The different functions and roles of the members, including the pastor, his collaborators, the band, and the choir, contribute to a sense of belonging and identity among its members. Religious practices, such as the deliverance ritual and the dedication ceremony reflect the spiritual and cultural roots of the congregation. The acts of collecting money for the baby, gifting the goats, and sharing food, illustrate (economic) practices of solidarity.

The house church embodies the concept of "religious place-making", which entails the transformation of physical space into a meaningful and sacred site that enable church members to build a safe and supportive environment and develop new or existing identities (Berriane 2020a, 134). Overall, the house church allows migrants in displacement who often experience alienation from their country of origin to reaffirm their roots and gives a new sense of meaning and significance to their (temporary) settlement in Rabat.

Peace's house church reminded me of "Ons' Lieve Heer op Solder", a Catholic house church, in my own city Amsterdam. It was built at a time it was forbidden to publicly profess

one's faith as a Catholic since Protestants took over the city in 1578. From then on, Catholics celebrated their mass in hidden house churches. The protestant city government was aware of the existence of house churches but tolerated them. This hidden church is an example of tolerance and freedom of religion that can exist behind closed doors. Similar to Ons' Lieve Heer op Solder, Pentecostal churches are tolerated under the condition that they remain publicly invisible.

Their presence behind doors and their appropriation of space are tolerated as long as their visibility outdoors is minimal. House churches operate under informal agreements with the Moroccan state and its agencies, which makes them less likely to resist powerful state and non-state actors (Berriane 2020b, 430). According to Lata, counter-spaces can act as barriers to collective movements in claiming formal rights, thus reproducing spatial inequality (2023, 17). She argues that in such cases where the informal strategies appear to be more effective than a collective movement, the practice of everyday resistance will likely reproduce social and spatial inequality and consequently "the battle for the right to the city might never begin" (ibid).

Yet, borrowing from Berriane's analysis, I would like to argue that house churches assert their right to the city in a different manner, that is, through sound. Their worship practices characterized by singing, dancing, shouting and playing music are very performative, and an embodied experience of the divine. By employing what Berriane refers to as "sound practices" (2020a, 145), these churches transcend the confines of private spaces, making their religious presence not only seen but heard. Through their use of sound, they actively occupy and transform space, assert their religious presence and "right to the city" and resist against the dominant spatial regime. Moreover, the sound contributes to the sacredness of the place of worship, elevating it above the mundane (ibid).

The appropriation of a non-religious space for religious activities challenges the dichotomy between the sacred and the profane. Migrant women, like Peace, also do the exact opposite - appropriate the sacred space of the house church for non-religious activities such as dating and meeting migrant men (Pande 2017, 796). Peace met her husband, still her boyfriend when I met her, at this house church and they got married there. He is Igbo and she Yoruba, two different ethnicities in Nigeria. As Stock also came to conclude in her research, "Nigerians [in Morocco] above all identify with each other above all on the basis of their nationality and not primarily through tribal membership or ancestry as is common in Nigeria" (2019, 117). The marriage of Peace and her husband shows the role of the house church in facilitating relationships among migrants from different ethnic backgrounds. Their meeting and union within this house church demonstrates its multifunctionality as a spiritual and personal space.

In short, Pentecostal churches in Morocco serve as counter-spaces going against the dominant socio-spatial regime. They not only provide a place for religious worship, but also foster social bonds, communal support and personal relationships across ethnic divides. They challenge dichotomies between public and private/personal, sacred and profane, visible and invisible. By existing in hidden, informal spaces, they create a parallel social structure that provides migrants a sense of community, identity and belonging. Their resistance is manifested through both their hidden physical presence and their loud expressive worship practices. These churches through their very existence, challenge socio-spatial norms imposed by the state.

Conclusion

The emergence of HBEs and Pentecostal house churches among sub-Saharan migrants in Rabat presents fascinating examples of how marginalized communities can create alternative spaces within urban environments. Drawing on Lefebvre's concept of counter-space offers valuable insights in the study of HBEs and house churches as counter-spaces. Both repurpose private spaces for public functions, challenging traditional spatial boundaries. HBEs transform living rooms into social venues, and similarly house churches transform private spaces into places of worship.

HBEs, by transforming homes into commercial venues, challenge the traditional separation between domestic and commercial spheres. They play a vital role in the livelihood strategies of migrant women, and in particular migrant mothers, allowing them to combine productive and reproductive activities. In doing so, they not only offer economic opportunities but also become social hubs where community members gather, interact and support each other. This dual function as economic and social spaces underscores their importance within marginalized neighborhoods. Similarly, house churches have a dual function as they fulfill their religious and spiritual functions, they also serve as spaces of socialization and communal belonging.

These counter-spaces embody contestation against dominant socio-economic structures by creating alternative avenues for social and economic engagement. HBEs challenge labour market exclusion while house churches resist socio-spiritual marginalization. Through their spatial practices, HBEs and house churches play a transformative role in altering the city of Rabat and actively contribute to the creation of more inclusive spaces for migrants. In the next chapter, Chapter 5, we delve into spaces of solidarity and solidarity practices not only within the sub-Saharan community, but also between sub-Saharans and other local actors.

CHAPTER 4: TRANSCENDING BORDERS? PRACTICES OF SOLIDARITY

"Nothing is ever black or white, good or bad"
(Anita, interview by author, December 11, 2022).

In this chapter, practices of solidarities will be studied. Initially, I intended to focus my research on urban bordering, the exclusions and discriminations migrants faced, and how they negotiate and resist this. My participants themselves pushed my research into a more nuanced direction, often emphasizing the ambiguity in their relations with others during interviews. Scholars have also previously noted that the relations in marginal neighborhoods in Rabat are often "ambivalent, involving both solidarity and exploitation" (Bachelet 2019, 44). Therefore, my participants' narrative compelled a broader exploration of the nuances in their relationships. This chapter aims to illuminate how spaces of solidarity emerge within the constraints of violent borders, echoing Scott and Sohn's observation that "everyday bordering practices can open up new spaces that reflect intersection and encounters and new affinities that emerge as part of social life" (2019, 298). By examining solidarity practices among sub-Saharan migrants and other local actors, I explore the pragmatic limitations and transformative potentials of these alliances in challenging and reshaping the border.

Humanitarian solidarities: entrepreneurship or containment?

Upon entering the NGO, the distinct smell of African dried fish that is being sold by migrant women on the African market fills the air. This market at the NGO provides a space for women to sell various products typical of their home countries, including food, cosmetics, jewelry and more. They sell their goods and services in this setting to avoid discrimination at regular markets, as Mimichou experienced, and the risk of confiscation of their property by the police while street vending, experienced by Ben, Marie and many others. Migrant women receive small capital to start their businesses, to buy their products in bulk and so on. Numerous organizations have been financing micro projects to encourage economic independence among sub-Saharan migrants (Pickerell 2011, 407).

Fasika, a twenty-eight-year-old refugee from Ethiopia who has lived in Morocco for four years after fleeing a forced marriage, used to work in a coffeeshop in J3 where she made 15 MAD per day (which is not even two euros). Sometimes, she would not get paid. She remarked, "it is easy for me to find a job, but it is not enough" (Fasika, interview by author, December 24, 2022). Thanks to the micro-finance she received from the NGO, she has been

able to open her own coffee shop at the African market, where she sells Ethiopian coffee and tea for 5 MAD per cup. She also prepared freshly made popcorn, which is a common snack that is part of the Ethiopian coffee ceremony.

However, as Pickerill rightfully points out, the success of these efforts is hard to measure and challenging to quantify (2011, 407). The fact that many of the migrant women have other side hustles, such as Irene running a home bar, demonstrates that their entrepreneurial activities at the NGO alone are often insufficient to sustain a livelihood. They find themselves needing to diversify their income streams beyond their businesses at the NGO to meet their basic needs.

Moreover, these solidarities can also be seen as ambivalent. It can also be argued that the NGO is part of the migration industry, given the delicate balance between managing migrants mobilities and providing care for migrants (Bachelet and Hagan 2023). International donors, particularly European national governments, fund programs that create entrepreneurial opportunities – such as the African market – with the aim of encouraging settlement in Morocco, thus indirectly tightening control over migrants' mobility. The NGO thus play a crucial role as provider of humanitarian assistance while also cooperating in the border regime. The solidarity practices of the NGO are filling the gaps of the state without challenging its bordering practices.

Similarly, vocational training is being offered at the NGO, funded by international donors, to enhance the skills of migrants. However, actual opportunities to secure jobs that match their skills remain limited. As a result, migrants obtain certificates without seeing any job prospects. As put by Kynsilehto, it shows "the dysfunction of the migration industry":

> "funding flows from international donors through country offices and CSOs with specific programs that target beneficiaries (…) but without a concrete path towards what these skills attribute to once the training is completed. Training or program accomplished, boxes can be ticked by the service provider, and results reported in terms of numbers of participants, hours spent in training, perhaps with a list of skills accumulated" (2023, 164).

In addition, I also noted myself that many migrants attend classes for travel compensation of 20 MAD per class to survive, rather than paying attention to what is being taught. There is a danger of over-romanticizing such initiatives as "empowering", as they prioritize self-sustaining labor as a solution to systemic inequalities. This narrative presupposes that migrants should be able to lift themselves out of poverty, overlooking the state's responsibility to provide welfare support. Consequently, these entrepreneurial initiatives fail to confront the structural barriers of labor exclusion such as the lack of legalization processes available in Morocco.

Transformative solidarities: access to school

While some forms of solidarity might seem ambivalent, others have potential to create significant change. Over the course of several months, Irene entrusted me with one of her daily tasks: picking up her five-year-old daughter from school. While Irene was busy working at the home restaurant, her daughter went to a public school only a short five-minute walk away from their home. After ending my English class early, I would pick her up at 17:30 o'clock. It is common in Morocco for children to have a lunch break between noon and 14:00 o'clock, after which they return to school for afternoon classes.

As we walked home, we played games counting to ten in English, French and Darija. Despite her young age, she showed impressive language skills in Darija, which was part of her school curriculum. After our short trip, I began to wonder how she accessed public education. As it turns out, the NGO was facilitating her schooling and acted as the local authority responsible for registering children, both refugees and irregular migrants, in public schools.

Initially, there was a semi-formal agreement between UNHCR and the provincial public education directorate in Rabat aimed at enrolling children from refugees and official asylum seekers in public schools (Ustubici 2018, 193). In practice, however, irregular migrants' children were accepted without proof of birth certificates or documents related to the parents' status (ibid). This is an example of "informal incorporation", allowing migrant children to participate in society in the absence of formal procedures. It also shows the gap between law as written and its everyday implementation. It highlights how NGOs, through their solidarity practices, bridge gaps between legal frameworks and everyday realities for migrant populations.

After civil society demands and as part of the new migration policy in 2013, this arrangement evolved into a new formal regulation that has enabled broader access to public school regardless of the parental legal status (ibid, 110). While the provision of welfare services by NGOs raises concerns, their role has led to formal changes and more inclusive practices that enable migrants to acquire legal access to rights. Irene's daughter's case demonstrates the transformative potential of solidarity. The solidarity of Moroccan and international CSOs and NGOs with sub-Saharan migrants can catalyze macro-level structural changes that are crucial for social inclusion and policy evolution. This alliance has enabled migrants to carve out political space to claim their rights, such as the right to education.

Religious solidarities

Solidarity can also manifest through religious affiliations and spaces. Before the Second Ivorian Civil War in Ivory Coast disrupted her life, Victorien, a fifty-year-old refugee, ran a thriving

business, travelling from Abidjan to Ghana to sell clothes, bags, and hair accessories. She has been living in Morocco for 6 years now. I met her at the NGO where she was braiding the hair of another volunteer. Victorien has many side hustles: besides working at the African market of the NGO, she engages in sex work, for instance, selling her services for 200 MAD (interview by author, November 13, 2022). This again, confirms the argument I made earlier that these entrepreneurial programs offered by NGOs do not suffice.

On Sundays, Victorien heads out from her home in Hay al Fath into the city center with her shopping trolley. She is not the only vendor using a trolley; it is a practical means for street vendors to transport their goods. She makes her way to Place al Joulane where the St. Peter Cathedral majestically stands – a Roman Catholic church built during the French protectorate between 1919 and 1921. Once a church for the French occupiers, it now predominantly draws the sub-Saharan community. Victorien not only engages in worship here, but also sells her homemade juices to churchgoers as they leave the service. She sells two of the most popular street drinks of Ivory Coast namely *bissap juice* made of hibiscus, and *gem juice* made of ginger. Here, amidst the colorful scene of churchgoers dressed in beautiful traditional African clothing, Victorien can be found stationed at the cathedral's entrance, offering her juices to passersby.

When I inquired about her choice of location, she explained that she strategically chose it because of the reduced risk of police confiscating, which can be a concern for street vendors operating in public spaces (interview by author, November 13, 2022). The church's willingness to accommodate Victorien's business and allowing her to sell her juices on its premises, reflects the solidarity between the church and the migrant community. Apart from Victorien's spatial organization, she also structures her business around time, as she attends church every Sunday. This practice is consistent with findings from other research, which note that "Sunday is a day for business for several women who set up their wares at the door of various Christian churches" (Pickerill 2011, 405).

Though her presence at the church may seem communal, her primary motivation is business. She leverages her religious affiliation to expand her customer base, taking advantage of the church goers who exit the church after the service. In doing so, she navigates the spatial dynamics of the urban landscape, transforming a religious space into a site of economic exchange. She does so to meet her economic needs by leveraging a communal public space, thereby challenging existing power structures. It also illustrates how solidarity practices manifest in everyday urban life. By embracing alternative uses of space, this Catholic church contributes to a more inclusive urban landscape.

While I was accompanying Victorien, Michel approached me and asked if he could participate, which was truly an honor. He is a fifty-four-year-old refugee who fled the first Ivorian Civil War and arrived in Morocco in 2006. He goes to the same church as Victorien, but for religious purposes; he is a member of the cathedral choir. During our interview, he was very vocal about the integration of sub-Saharan migrants into Moroccan society. He beliefs that the Catholic church contributes to their integration, because of its very essence, the Bible speaks of tolerance and respecting your neighbors (Michel, interview by author, March 15, 2023). According to him, many churchgoers attend church to create "fraternité" (brotherhood). For him, the church is not only a place of worship, but of community.

Michel continues that the church "listens" to migrants and refugees and puts them in contact with NGOs like Caritas. This is also confirmed by other research which states that churches are "often treated as solidarity structures and as such their leaders are sought out by aid organizations as gatekeepers for initiating contact with the community" (Stock 2019, 111). This shows how one place can have different meanings for different people, from a pursuit of livelihood or support network to a sense of belonging. This multi-functionality of religious spaces was also demonstrated in the house church explored in the previous chapter 3.

Figure 5.1 The St. Peter Cathedral in Rabat

Source: Photo taken by author on October 1, 2022.

Solidarities at work

The sense of solidarity among migrants extends beyond religious institutions and is also noticeable in their workplaces. Mimichou engages in solidarity by employing other sub-Saharan migrant workers at her salon located in the ethnic enclave at the commercial center. She employs two migrant workers for a fixed rate of 100 DH per day. Through this arrangement, shenot only expands her business operations but also provides employment opportunities for other migrants in similar socio-economic circumstances. When I asked her why she employed fellow migrants she replied: "We Africans work among ourselves, that's how it is" (interview by author, December 17, 2023). Her remark reflects both a sense of community among sub-Saharan migrants and the importance of informal networks as a survival strategy (Cvajner and Sciortino 2010, 399).

I have also seen acts of solidarity form Moroccan merchants. In his study of the Moroccan informal economy, Jaafar Aksikas argues that collective solidarity practices in the informal economy resemble those of traditional communities (2007, 259). These traditional structures were disrupted during French colonial capitalism in the early twentieth century (ibid). Shared experiences of marginalization and economic struggle have increased awareness of exclusion among informal laborers (ibid). This consciousness has led to the (re)emergence of community-like structures that provide support in times of need (ibid). The need for solidarity is intensified by oppressive and exploitative forces these workers face from their employers and the state apparatus (ibid, 261).

One example of a collective solidarity practice is claiming street space that is recognized by the community before being used (ibid, 260). When I asked Ben, for instance, how he obtained his favorable spot on the street in front of the indoor market "souk al Amal" and next to local Moroccan merchants selling *gobz* (Moroccan bread)*, hammas kamoun* (chickpeas with cumin) and *babbouche* (snail soup) amongst others, he told me that he earned it by gaining the trust of the community and literally begged them for a place (interview by author, 17 November, 2022). His claim over the working space was legitimized by locals. It should be mentioned that Ben's Senegalese nationality might play a role as they are generally more accepted due to their long history of circular trade with Morocco (Bendra 2021).

When I accompanied Ben when he finished his shift, he showed me that he stored his goods for free every single night in the indoor market "souk al Amal". The market stand was owned by an old Moroccan lady who sells gobz. Occasionally, she permitted him to sell indoors when it would rain or hide his stuff at her market stand when there were police check-ups. The latter is an example in which "a passive network" – which entails two merchants recognizing one another by their common identity and operating in the same public space – turns into active

cooperation and collective resistance when a threat such as a police raid occurs (Bayat 2000, 552). It shows how groups of people without constructed networks or organizations can engage in collective action (ibid).

The market can also be seen as "a spatiality" of a solidarity network (Dadusc and Mudu 2022). In marginal spaces, there is potential for solidarity to emerge as communities form collective bonds and networks in the face of exclusion and hardship. Solidarity is mediated through the market, and Ben hiding his stuff at the Moroccan woman's market stand signifies an act of resistance against bordering practices by the state (ibid). Similar to Bendra's insights on the souk in Oujda, solidarity practices reshape and enrich urban landscapes, bridging divides between migrant and local populations (2021). These solidarities in the informal economy are not merely pragmatic; they establish new social relations that transcend conventional boundaries and, in doing so, produce spaces of solidarity.

Economic solidarities

Economic acts of solidarity manifest through individual acts and through collective informal financial systems. When accompanying Boeba, I noticed that he would always hand out 1 MAD when Moroccans begged him for money on the street. When I asked why he gave money, since he himself does not own much, he replied that he has been in their shoes too and knew from experience that 1 MAD is enough to buy a piece of gobz and survive for the day (fieldnotes, Rabat, December 17, 2022). This shows how his actions are driven by his own experiences of hardship. Having been in that situation, he understands the significance of even a small amount of money for someone in need. Despite his limited means, his decision to give money reflects financial solidarity that prioritizes the collective well-being over individual scarcity.

Another type of solidarity that I encountered was a rotational savings and credit association (ROSCA), which is a popular traditional method of collective savings and lending in Africa (Pickerill 2011, 410). It consists of a network of people who contribute an equal amount of money but only one person takes the total sum of money at a time, usually on a weekly or monthly basis. ROSCAs provides a way to access a significant amount of money without needing formal financial institutions. It also requires trust between participants and fosters solidarity. During her research in Rabat, Pickerill did not encounter this system, but she argues that "it could prove an interesting option" (ibid). And indeed, she was right, as my participant Peace takes part in a ROSCA contributing 500 DH each rotation in a group of ten people to save up money to cross the sea to Europe, which can cost up to two thousand euros when departing from Morocco.

Yet, solidarities involving money can also be ambivalent. Boeba's landlord, for example, sometimes allowed him to pay his rent a week late, but at other times he raised the price when he himself was in desperate need of money. This duality shows that solidarities in such contexts are dependent on the immediate needs and pressures faced by individuals. It also reflects the complex nature of solidarities in marginal spaces, where genuine support and exploitation often coexist.

Economic solidarities among migrants often extend beyond national borders, as evidenced by the remittances send by and to families in their home countries or who are already in their countries of destination (Alioua 2014, 11). One example is Mohamed, who often stands in queues at the Western union to pick up his money sent by his brother who has already emigrated to Germany (interview by author, December 8, 2022). He survives thanks to these remittances and financial assistance provided by the NGO. Tragically, Mohamed was ill and uncapable to work due to his brain damage resulting from the Melilla massacre. His struggle underscores the critical role of support networks and charitable organizations in sustaining migrants who face severe health and economic challenges.

Similarly, Ben also relies on transnational economic solidarities from his family in Senegal. They play a crucial role in supporting his business by regularly sending him the African beauty products from Senegal shipped by a transportation company. As Ben explained:

> "My brother, sister or cousin buy products in Senegal, the driver then takes it from Dakar to Casablanca, to Rabat, and I pick it up in the Medina" (interview by author, November 17, 2022).

His family in Senegal is integral to his business' survival and success. By sourcing and sending his products, Ben's family enables him to purchase goods cheaper than he could at local African markets in Morocco, such as the Senegalese market located in Casablanca. In turn, as the oldest son, Ben regularly sends remittances to his family in his home country. This mutual support demonstrates interdependence and reciprocity, where both sides benefit economically. Thus, whether through direct financial remittances or the facilitation of business operations, transnational solidarities are essential to migrant survival.

Pan-African solidarity

The sense of solidarity is not only limited to economic or social support but also extends to cultural and political spheres. A striking example of this is the collective support and expressions of unity displayed during the World Cup, where sub-Saharans migrants and

Moroccans alike come together to celebrate and support the Moroccan football team, also known as "the Atlas Lions". After defeating Portugal, the Lions came to the semi-final as the first African country in history.

In the media, this achievement sparked a debate in the media on whether this was a victory for Africa or the Middle East (Lyton Ncube et al., 2024, 673). As was already stressed in previous chapters, Moroccans often deny their own Africanity, identifying themselves as Arab and referring to people from sub-Saharan Africa as "Africans", thus "reinforcing the racialized cartography that Africa begins south of the Sahara" (Gross-Wyrtzen 2022, 19). In their critical discourse analysis of digital football spaces on social media during the World Cup, Lyton Ncube et al., speak of "a cultural identity war" and a dissensus over what constitutes Moroccan identity: Arab, Amazigh, African, and/or Muslim? (Lyton Ncube et al., 2024, 673).

In contrast to their analysis on polarized social media discourses, the streets, however, function as a public space where diverse communities come together in solidarity.[15] There were huge street celebrations and plenty of people gathered at the big shopping street Avenue el Fal Oudl Oumeir in Agdal. While I was celebrating the victory there with my colleagues, I witnessed the power of public gatherings in facilitating expressions of identity and citizenship. Among the massive crowd, I encountered a significant moment where a sub-Saharan migrant proudly displayed a sign that read: "Allez le Maroc l'Afrique gagne" (go Morocco, Africa wins) (see figure 2), symbolizing a sentiment of collective pride and pan-African identity. His active participation in the street celebrations reflects a public assertion of belonging and citizenship in Moroccan society.

The NGO also offered facilities to watch the football matches. Here, many other migrants identified with the African dimension of Moroccan identity during the World Cup and were shouting "dima Maghrib" (always Morocco) and "dima Africa" (always Africa) at the top of their lungs. This sentiment was also expressed by Moroccans. In a press conference, the coach Walid Regragui even said: "Morocco and Moroccans are my priority. But obviously, we are also African like Senegal, Ghana, Cameroon and Tunisia, so we hope to fly the flag of African football high" (2022).

George Bajalia's research on the linguistics interactions between migrants and Moroccans during football matches in Tangier's Ibn Batouta Stadium support these findings

[15] It did depend on the match. During the match between Morocco and France, there were also sub-Saharans that supported France, which has a lot of football players from sub-Saharan African descent. Yet, there was also a considerable number of sub-Saharans that hoped to defeat a former colonizer of Africa.

(2021). He argues that the time spent waiting in the journey of migration is “an eventful and productive time” marked by “ongoing social and cultural formations” rather than a passive and empty time (ibid, 981). The expressions of solidarity and collective identity during the World Cup highlight how migrants in Morocco actively (re)shape their identities, embracing both national and pan-African affiliations, challenging static notions of belonging.

Figure 5.2 Man holding a sign during street celebrations in Agdal after Morocco’s victory

Source: Photo taken by author on December 10, 2022.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the concept of solidarity has been explored, which is often overshadowed by xenophobia and exclusion. Solidarity is not only a shield against the oppressive border regime, but also serves as a catalyst for collective actions and for macro-level structural changes. By examining various forms of solidarity that have emerged in response to bordering practices such as state abandonment and differential inclusion, this chapter uncovered how everyday borders have led to new forms of sociality, collaboration and everyday political agency.

Ambivalent solidarity and humanitarian solidarity highlight the complexities within these relationships. While solidarity networks can elevate immediate hardships, they also create dependencies and power-imbalances. For instance, entrepreneurial initiatives facilitated by NGOs can contribute to reinforcing the border regime and maintaining the status quo. Yet, NGOs can also bring about macro-level structural change, turning informal agreements into formal policies, as we saw with access to education for migrant children. This dual perspective

calls for a nuanced approach that acknowledges transformative and constraining dimensions of solidarity efforts in navigating and contesting borders.

Everyday forms of political agency emerge through collective actions that challenge border regimes. People at the market acting collectively against the risk of confiscation of Ben's property or his potential deportation during police raids demonstrates a form of micro-level collective resistance against bordering practices. It exemplifies Bayat's concept of quiet encroachment, where small-scale acts not only address immediate challenges but lay the groundwork for broader social change.

This chapter has also demonstrated the emergence of new spatialities of solidarity. Mutual aid and collective action do not only challenge exclusionary practices but also have a transformative force, asserting claims to space and belonging and reshaping urban dynamics. A space of solidarity emerged, for instance, when St church allows migrant street vendors to sell their products at the entrance of the church. Their very presence challenges the conventional use of this religious public space and thereby reshapes it. The street vendors embody Lefebvre's vision of urban residents claiming their right to the city. This does not merely refer to the right to inhabit the city, but also to inhabit it meaningfully, creating alternative socio-spatial relations and new ways of living together.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to explore the dynamics of sub-Saharan migrants in Rabat, as they encounter and navigate bordering practices. By reinterpreting the border as a social construct, the focus shifted from traditional border violence at the physical checkpoints to the discrimination and exclusion experienced in everyday urban spaces, such as access to healthcare, housing, education, safety and jobs. The objectives were to explore the spatial dynamics of bordering practices, including how they are constructed, reconstructed and contested in cities, and to examine migrants' strategies and agency to overcome exclusion and claim space and resources.

Bordering practices by the Moroccan state, from abandonment in cities to internal deportations to cities in the south, have affected the daily lives of sub-Saharan migrants. Chapter 2 illustrates how these practices manage migrants' lives restricting freedom of movement and imposing limitations on their ability to improve their circumstances. Migrants navigate the informal economy marked by opportunities and constraints, facing marginalization, exploitation, discrimination and racialization. They negotiate these borders through various survival strategies ranging from self-policing to appearing tolerable.

The creation of counter spaces, such as HBEs and Pentecostal house churches, as discussed in Chapter 3, showcase how borders are not only imposed but actively practiced by migrants themselves as well, creating alternative realities in the face of socio-economic and religious marginalization and the lack of state and humanitarian provisions. By repurposing private spaces for public functions, they operate as hybrid spaces that challenge the traditional boundaries between the public and the private. Counter-spaces demonstrate how bordering practices can also contribute to place-making and belonging, providing sanctuary and community and giving substance to migrants' stay in Morocco.

In Chapter 4, the exploration of solidarities reveals how solidarity networks can alleviate hardships in the absence of formal support systems, to help migrants interact with state institutions, like public schools, and access basic services such as healthcare and education. At the margins, everyday acts of collective resistance from Moroccan locals and sub-Saharan migrants challenge oppressive border regimes. These solidarities not only contest bordering practices but also assert claims to space and belonging, reshaping urban dynamics.

While the analysis is separated into three chapters on the negotiation of bordering in public space, the production of counter-spaces in domestic space and the practices and spaces of solidarity, it becomes clear that all three elements are interconnected and present throughout the thesis. Counter-spaces produce borders and vice versa, and the same goes for spaces of

solidarity. One could interpret, for instance, the makeshift market of Marie alongside the Andalusian Wall as a counter-space, or the house church Peace goes to as a space of solidarity.

I have intended to seek a middle ground by considering both the structural violence my participants are embedded in an have little control over, and the ways they "reinvent" their lives through meaning-making efforts and by engaging with their creativity (Bachelet 2019). I studied the interplay between migrants negotiating and resisting borders and how they become positioned by them. My research suggests that migrants' agency is "situational" and that there is a constant shift between resistance and conformity in their exercise of agency. It provides a more complex and nuanced understanding of urban inequality and urban agency.

While this thesis is focused on the spatial dimension of bordering practices and sub-Saharan migrants' experiences in urban space, it has shown in some ways the overlap between the spatial and temporal dimensions. Bordering practices also include the temporal management of migration, as we saw with internal deportations aimed to push back migrants from north to south, buying the state time to manage migration movement and to control its borders. Migrants, however, also adopt temporal strategies, such as Peace and Badmus who beg near mosques on Fridays, or Victorien who sells her juices at the Sunday service. For Boeba, home restaurants, bars and clubs function as coping mechanisms, providing a way to pass time and give meaning to the time spent in Morocco.

While strategies against urban bordering, counter-spaces and practices/spaces of solidarity are critical lifelines for migrant lacking formal support systems, they also face significant limitations. The subtle individual actions enable agency in everyday survival but largely go unnoticed and therefore this invisibility limits the recognition of migrants' contributions and struggles. Counter-spaces, such as HBEs and house churches may reinforce exclusionary dynamics by their nature, and their impact may not go beyond the confines of these spaces or the immediate community. Spaces and practices of solidarity offer crucial networks of support yet may reinforce the border regime by filling the gaps of the state, as seen in humanitarian efforts, thereby sustaining rather than challenging the status quo.

It is crucial to recognize that migrants themselves may not perceive these actions as acts of resistance per se, but rather as necessities to survive and live a dignified life. Therefore, while acknowledging the importance of these actions, it is imperative not to romanticize their impact and instead advocate for policies that dismantle the oppressive and racialized state bordering practices and address the root causes of exclusion and inequalities. Morocco's new migration policy in 2013 has brought some positive changes to the city of Rabat, such as the permission for sub-Saharan street vendors to operate alongside the Andalusian Wall, the toleration of

Pentecostal house churches, or improved access to education for migrant children. Yet this study has also demonstrated that the policy which claims to be "progressive" and more "humane" has significant gaps in its implementation. This is evident in bordering practices such as internal deportations to cities in the south and the lack of a formal asylum procedure in Morocco.

Concerning suggestions for future research, I would further research on other migrant groups within the country. Researchers conducted a literature review on migration studies in Morocco, concluding that scholars almost exclusively focused on sub-Saharan migration in the period between 1980 and 2019 (Nadia Sonneveld et al. 2022, 37). There is a need for future studies to explore the experiences of refugees and migrants from other regions as well. During my fieldwork, I encountered many Syrian refugees and a significant Filipino migrant community for instance. In exploring different migrant experiences, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of migration dynamics in Morocco.

Additionally, because Rabat is the capital and a significant population of sub-Saharan migrants lives there, there has been considerable research conducted in this city (Pickerill 2011; Stock 2012; Bachelet 2019; Ustubici 2016; 2018; Bendra 2019; Berriane 2020a; 2020b; Pian 2021). The high concentration of research in Rabat may lead to an incomplete understanding of the broader migrant experience across the country. It would be interesting to conduct research in more isolated settings and less studied cities such as Beni Mellal, where migrants are being deported to and which presents an urban environment that differs significantly from Rabat.

While this thesis provided a glimpse into how events in one North Africa country such as Tunisia, can affect Morocco, further research is needed to delve deeper into these inter-country dynamics. It would be interesting to see how political discourses, policies and social movements impact attitudes and actions in neighboring countries. Or by comparing bordering practices, for instance, we could learn more about racialized migration governance across the Maghreb region. This would give us a clearer picture how interconnected the issues at hand are.

As I conclude this thesis, I reflect on the ongoing narratives of the people who generously shared their lives with me. With most participants I remained in close contact, and they regularly updated me on their lives. Ben started working as a cook for an Italian restaurant, although informally. Mohamed got hospitalized and obtained refugee status. Irene started expanding her business by selling wigs. Peace got pregnant and delivered her baby not too long ago. Despite having completed my field work, their stories continue to evolve, reflecting continuous adaptation and resourcefulness in the informal economy. While my thesis has captured snapshots of their lives in a specific moment, their ongoing journeys highlight the need for continued study of those navigating urban spaces in Morocco.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: DEMOGRAPHICS

Figure 1 Demographics of respondents by nationality

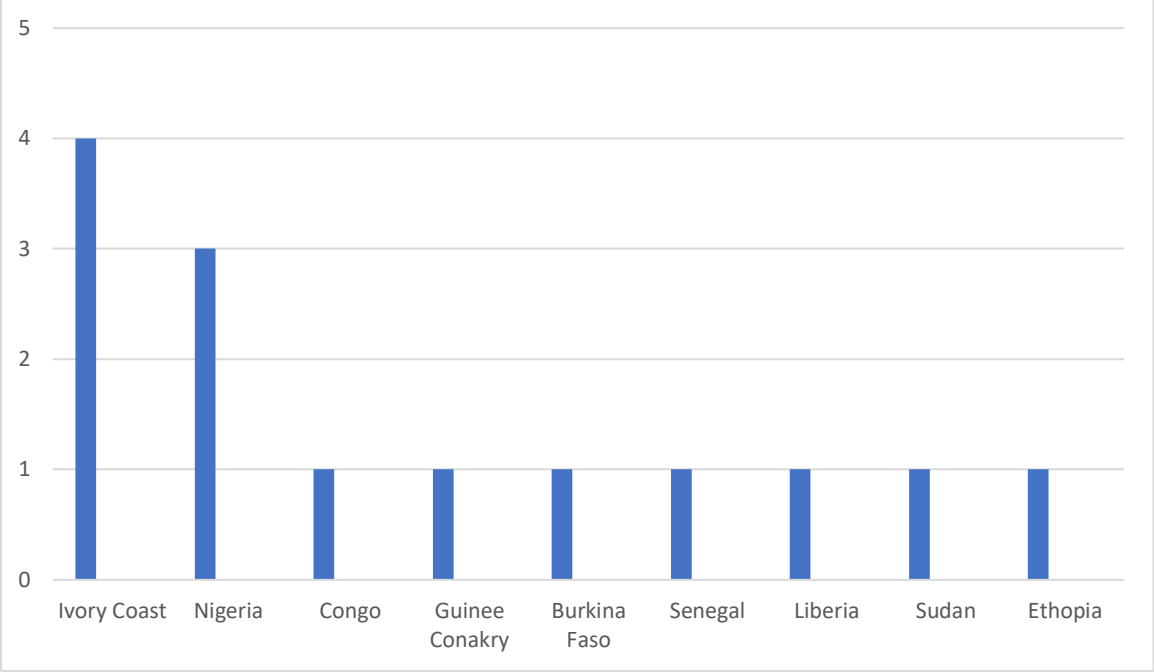


Figure 2 Demographics of respondents by age

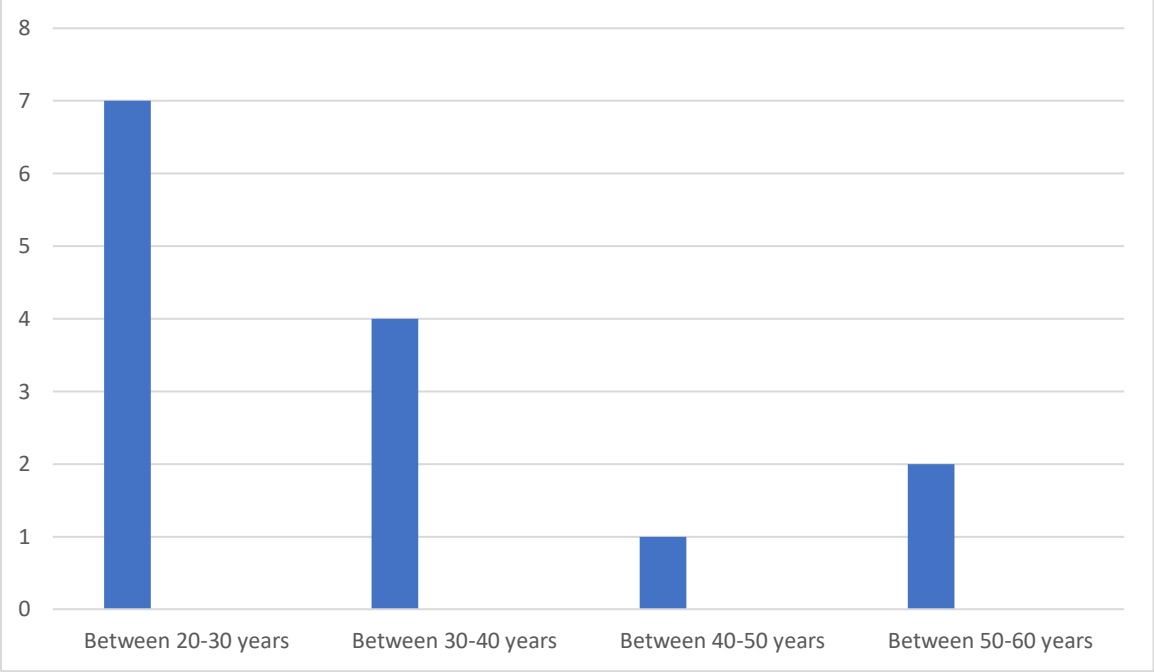


Figure 3 Demographics of respondents by gender

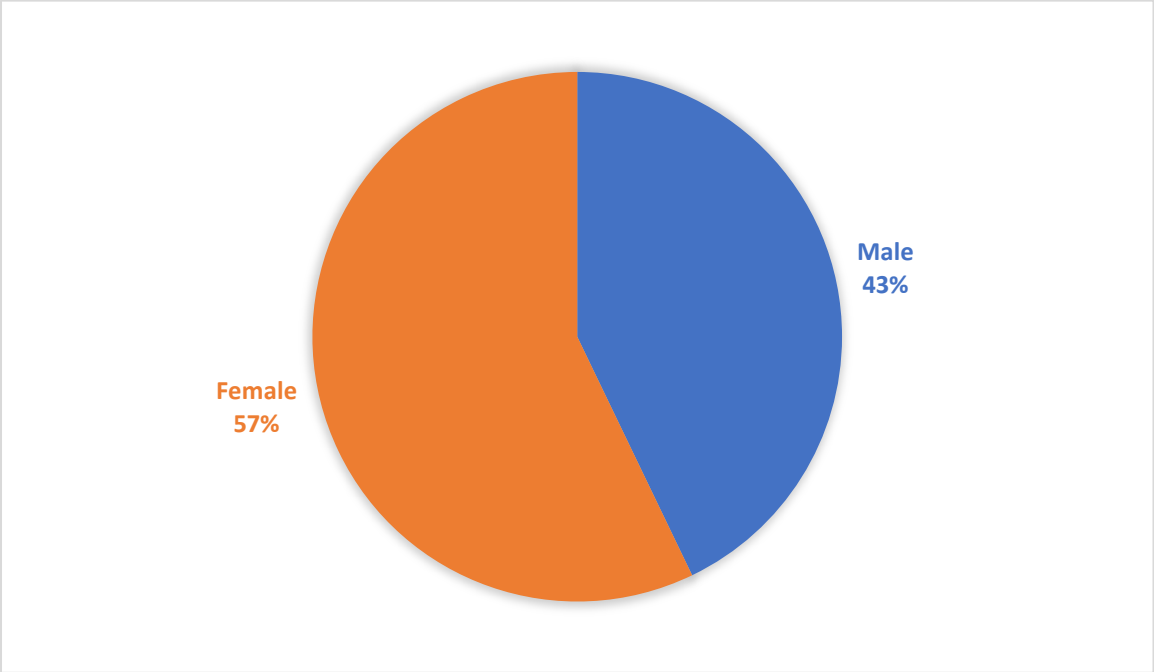
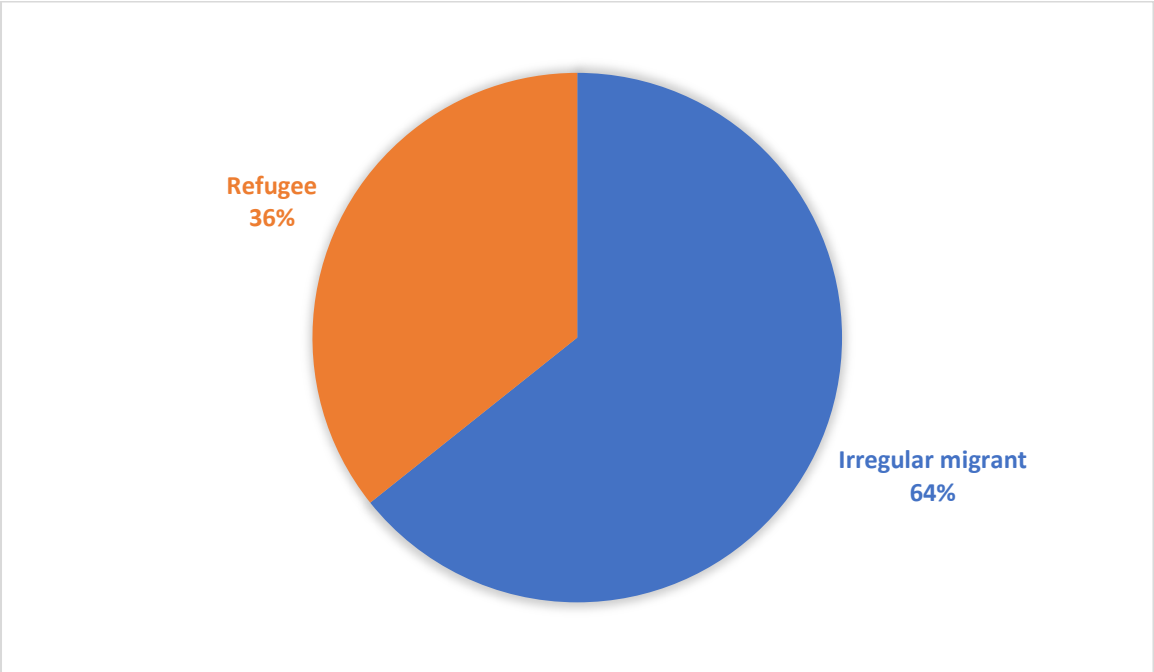


Figure 4 Demographics of respondents by legal status



APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM

Consent form

For the research, it is necessary to use your personal data. To use this data during my research I need your consent.

What data are being used?

The data will consist of interviewing and participant observation. The interview will be recorded with the permission of the interviewee.

What happens if I change my mind?

If you change your mind, you can send an e-mail to r.r.l.blom@umail.leidenuniv.nl with a short message indicating that you want your personal data to be removed.

What will be done with my data after the research project?

The data will be destroyed after the research is concluded (including the recordings).

Declaration of participant

I declare that I have been informed about the nature and method of this research. My questions have been answered with satisfaction.

I agree with my participation in this research. I reserve the right to revoke my participation at any moment and without the need for clarification. I consent to the use of the information collected about me in this research project.

If I have further questions about this research, I can contact Ruby Blom (+31648142704, r.r.l.blom@umail.leidenuniv.nl)

In case of complaints about this research, I can contact the secretary of the committee of Ethics at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Leiden, Marcel Belderbos (+3175273870, ethics@hum.leidenuniv.nl)

Name and signature **Date:**

_____ _____

Use of audio recording

_____