Sub-Saharan migrants in Fes: 
A presence on the margins of an evolving city

Mohamed Berriane¹ and Mohammed Aderghal²

¹ Euro-Mediterranean University of Fes
² CERGéo - University Mohammed V - Agdal
Corresponding Author E-mail: m.berriane@ueuromed.org

Abstract
In recent years, the city of Fez has become a major destination of European and sub-Saharan migrants. We postulate that this is not linked to endogenous dynamics, but rather to a symbolic representation of a city that had its economic and cultural glory in the past. For Europeans it is generally a choice and a mean to start a new project of life in the south, or a way of being at the same time ‘here’ (Fez) and ‘there’ (place of origin). Whereas sub-Saharan perceive Fez in reference to its historical functions, spiritual, commercial and haven for students, the role played by the city throughout centuries. And because of these links Fez is represented as a city to which sub-Saharan migrants can travel illegally and in which it is also possible to settle without identity breach while keeping links with home territories and African identity.

Sub-Saharan migrants, have mixed with students or pilgrims whose presence in Fez has become familiar, contributing to the consecration of an existing ‘otherness’ and for which the host society has developed ways of coping with. There is neither assimilation nor integration planned, nor that the society has overcome the problem of coping with ‘others’, but, in all its various layers, it offers slots to allow settling and in some cases even social promotion.

Our aim in this paper is to analyze the role played by Fez in attracting flows of African migrants, as well as to see how far it can exceed its symbolic function in order to respond positively to of people’s expectations regarding employment and social and cultural integration, whose primary reason for migrating is economic.

Keywords
Urban fragmentation, sub-Saharan migration, African identity, otherness, urban margins, social diversity, segregation, home territory, exclusion

Introduction
Fes is one of the cities in Morocco, which has occupied a central position in traditional economic spaces, essentially those structured by flows of trade and transnational exchanges connecting the Sahara on one side and Europe via the Mediterranean Sea on the other. Whilst the city remained continental, its economic, political and cultural reach extended beyond
Morocco borders, which meant that, throughout the whole pre-colonial period, it acted as a magnet for populations from diverse origins.

This diversity, which is not simply geographical but also cultural and religious, raises questions about the manner in which it has been managed. Fes is often described as a cosmopolitan city. This description serves to paint a positive picture of its capacity to deal with difference in reference to what the Mediterranean maritime city has been: a “commercial interface and city of mixings and meetings”. Even though the city’s moment of economic glory is now behind it, this has certainly not resulted in an urban framework where these mixtures between different populations would have been possible. For even though the city’s structure does not give the impression of a mosaic of districts differentiated by ethnicity, race or religion (except in the case of the Jewish Mellahs in former times), the fact remains that a spatial and anthropological distance marks out the locations of differentiated social groups in sites around the city. This is the physical reality of the city, which can be traced across various periods of its history.

Founded in the 8th century, it initially had a dual structure, comprising two urban hubs separated by the Fes wadi, one occupied by the Arabs and the other by the Amazigh, joined by other populations coming from Andalusia. In the 8th century, Fes-Jdid, a third hub outside the city walls, was built by the Marinids in opposition to Fes el Bali, as a location for the Makhzen, palace and administration, in addition to districts occupied by new migrant populations and the Jewish Mellah. With the protectorate, a fourth hub was built in the form of a colonial new city reserved for European populations and distinct from the Arab city.

With each of these phases in the city’s development, social distances were managed with reference to standard distinctions under the categories of religion, culture, economy and geographical or ethnic belonging. At present, the city’s urban structure is more complex, and segregation between the different populations is based less on ideas, being basically determined by material factors and social class.

Over the past few years, the city of Fes has been introduced into an era of openness, becoming a destination for transnational European and Sub-Saharan migrants.

Our hypothesis for this work is that this openness is not due to an endogenous process, but rather to a symbolic impression of a city, which has had its moment of glory, both economically and culturally. For Europeans, it is generally chosen and experienced as a way of starting out afresh to build a new life in the south, or a way of living between here (Fes) and back there (the place of origin). Meanwhile Sub-Saharanans perceive Fes in terms of the historical, spiritual, trading and student haven roles it has played over the centuries. It is because of these links that Fes is seen as a city to which Sub-Saharan migrants can travel without the need for valid papers, and in which it is also possible to settle without any risk of losing one’s own identity, as an extension of African soil, society and identity [1].

What is the reality of the situation facing the Sub-Saharan migrants in a city characterised by the strength of its cultural identity and the weakness of its economic performance? What are the opportunities for work, housing and recreation, which allow them to live in the city and visit its different spaces? How does the city of Fes, the producer of marginality, simultaneously encourage links between groups who are distanced by ethno cultural and
sometimes religious differences, but close through their social allegiances? These are questions we shall attempt to answer in this paper. Our end objective is to analyse the role currently played by the city of Fes in polarising flows of Sub-Saharan migrants, to see how far it is capable of going beyond its symbolic function to respond positively to the aspirations for employment, social and cultural integration expressed by populations whose primary role for leaving their country of origin is economic.

Our hypothesis is that Fes, a Moroccan city which “seems to have constructed itself around the idea of duality”[2], has not evolved towards forms of exclusion, relegation and confinement of the least privileged social classes. Whilst its urban structure resembles a fragmented space, movement around the city is not hampered. The presence of the State in the most marginal districts, through various community-based services, enables us to consider this fragmented reality as understood by Bouchanine [3]. In other words, where the city’s sprawl fosters the emergence of districts, which are unequally equipped and disconnected from the centre, without this truly resulting in the confinement and isolation of the least privileged social classes.

This is why we feel that Sub-Saharan migrants who have come to latch onto groups of students or pilgrims whose presence in Fes has become commonplace contribute to the entrenchment of an otherness which already exists and to which the host society has developed means to adapt. It is not a question of assimilation or planned integration, nor does it suggest that society has overcome the problem of the stigmatisation of others, but that society, in both its lowest and highest echelons alike, offers openings for settling in and maybe even social advancement. As for recently arrived Moroccans, relegation means precarious economic conditions and a lack of time spent in the city to internalise its norms, in other words the norms of those already established there and who proclaim themselves to be “Fassi” [4].

**Methodology**

This work is based on the results of fieldwork, a survey and interviews, conducted in 2009. Of 400 Sub-Saharan migrants selected for the survey, 371 (of whom 27.5% were women) responded to the questionnaire, giving information about their demographic and socioeconomic profile. They were contacted in the districts where they live and the places they most often visit (university campuses and places where Sub-Saharan students live, Internet cafés, Western Union and Money Gram branches). From this survey, 40 respondents were chosen to take part in detailed interviews with questions about their migratory route, their daily life in Fes and their relations with society and the places they visit, along with the prospects for their migratory project.

This article is divided into two main sections. The first section covers the urban duality of the city of Fes over time, and the city’s failings, socio-spatial fragmentation and marginalisation, arising from an imbalance between demographic growth and the performance of the city’s underlying economy. The second section is devoted to Sub-Saharan migrants bringing new styles of urban living, seeking freedom of the city.
1. Fes: the duality of an historic city and the growing complexity of today’s urban fabric

1.1. Fes: duality within/outside the historic city

**Compartmentalisation of the Medina’s internal spaces**

Throughout the whole pre-colonial period, Fes was an urban melting pot and a place for migrants attracted by the city’s prosperity to converge. But although its strong polarisation and universality derived from its position in a borderless space, its inner spaces were inaccessible to non-muslim foreigners. Thus, religious factor introduced a distinction between the interior and the exterior, confirming the opposition between Muslims, Jews and Christians. The religious factors was also used to impose the dominant official version of Islam, to the detriment of other variants of a popular Islam which may exist in society.

That distinction between the inner and outer world was reinforced by an organisation based on spatial separation between different social categories. The social hierarchy constructed around wealth, power and sometimes the nobility of one’s origins imposed a spatial distribution of the population which reflected a tendency towards the introduction of compartmentalisation between residents within a single location [5]. Those are divides which have run through the city’s social body over different periods of its history.

Under the Protectorate, movement in Morocco’s centre of gravity towards the coast was the trigger for a process in Fes leading to its economic downgrading and evolution towards a new dual urban configuration which sets the Arab city against the European city [6].

**The colonial city, openness and modern/traditional duality**

The colonial city, constructed within a separate socio-spatial class, become a symbol of modernity and the concentration of power. It was the place not only for Europeans to settle, but also for the Moroccan upper middle-class. A number of families tried to move closer to the new centre, either by work or by residence. This gradual shift of the more prosperous families to the modern city was in line with a process of cultural integration of the elite sought by the Protectorate; there is also evidence of a change in behaviour towards Europeans, driven by a search for the profit and commercial opportunities offered by the colonial economy. This drove the Fassi, over the first half of the 20th century, to emigrate to the port cities; Casablanca, in this case.

1.2. Towards greater complexity in the urban fabric

Alongside its traditional city functions as a regional centre for trade and spiritual capital, Fes saw the development of an industrial, essentially textile sector. This increased its attractiveness and stimulated its rapid growth. Its population multiplied, going from fewer than 100,000 inhabitants in around 1900 to 361,258 in 1982, 769,000 in 1994, and 946,000 inhabitants in 2004. This is currently a city of a million inhabitants. In association with the growth of the city’s population, two intersecting processes started; firstly, the city lost a large proportion of its middle-class contingent with the emigration of the families most...
representative of the Fassi\(^1\) elite to more dynamic cities, whether in Morocco or abroad; secondly, it became the destination for migrant populations, initially Moroccans from a rural or even urban setting, and then foreigners through European and Sub-Saharan transnational migration.

The distribution of the new arrivals happened in a differentiated manner, depending on the opportunities offered by the city for a mixed population whose reasons for settling in the city varied.

**Uncontrolled urban expansion**

The urban expansion of Fes under pressure from migratory flows took two forms. The first was to do with increasingly dense occupation of the Medina. It fell into disrepair and, due to the low rents and working opportunities on offer became the place to settle for new arrivals from diverse geographical origins. It remained a place which was sustained by its traditional trades and crafts, but the social and urban environment was subjected to a deterioration which was to become alarming over time. The second form can be seen in the drive for anarchic urban development in the city’s outlying spaces. These new districts including Montfleuri, Narjis-Quinat El Hajjaj, Jnanate, Sahrij Gnaoua and Dhar Lakhmis and Bensouda, constructed around modest housing plots, are places which are socially and economically poles apart from the medium- or high-prestige residential suburbs.

The spatial failings arising from that anarchic growth are, in fact, simply an echo of the general outline of this city built upon a socio-spatial structure which was fragmented from the start. Not only are the new districts under-equipped and lacking in community services, but the population here experience spatial marginalisation, being located far away from the centre, and economic marginalisation, subject to modest material conditions, unable to access the commercial and leisure spaces invented by and for the modern city.

There is no doubt that deficiencies in terms of urban management have led to the social exclusion which is often made manifest through the poverty, the environmental and security risks to which the people are exposed.

**Mixedness and segregation: two sides of a single city**

The contrasts between the historic district comprising the Medina, symbol of traditional authenticity, and the new city with all its modernity, are not just spatial, but also economic and cultural, with reference to different models of the city living cultivated in each place.

The centre brings together the main activities constituting the city’s economic base. At the same time, it is open to people from the margins, coming here to find work, to study, to shop or simply for leisure. But the fact that a specific place is not out of bounds does not mean that the people who only have a temporary right to be there are not stigmatised through their belonging to the marginal places of residence. The range of stigmas covers several aspects, and has as much to do with the physical aspect of these districts as the socio-cultural and economic features of the people who occupy them. These marginal districts are generally of low architectural value, built either illegally or in anarchic plots; the social classes occupying

\(^1\) An inhabitant of Fes
them are identified as caught between two worlds, between a rural approach to life which is still evident in the way they live in the city, and a contingent floating urbanity deriving from recent immigration into the city. This stigmatisation of populations on margins is in fact a recycling of the vocabulary once used to describe new occupants of the Medinas following the departure of the Fassi families. A large part of these populations exercised a residential mobility towards some of these districts and, thanks to their past and their passage through the Medina, they consider themselves to be part of the Fassis, thus distinguishing themselves from the new migrants who have settled directly in the periphery.

But stigmatisation does not mean a fixed social reality. Over time, migrants build up their social capital, manage to integrate into the city and adopt its norms by adapting them, which in the end it produces a hybrid Fassi culture.

2. New south-south migratory flows: new populations on the margins?

The city of Fes has played an historic role in polarising the flows of exchanges occurring within the trans-Saharan economic space. Even today, it continues to occupy a privileged position as a religious centre for adherents to the Zawiya Tijaniyya, and a university centre for students originating in Francophone African countries. But Fes has long been on margins of the circulatory itineraries of Sub-Saharan arrivals in Morocco with a migratory project.

One could hypothesise that the direction of migratory routes to the countries of North Africa, and Morocco in particular, is a modern-day recreation of the commercial and religious relations which have always linked the countries located on either sides of the Sahara.

The mosaic of Sub-Saharan countries from which the immigrants we met in Fes originated indicates a recent development in the Sub-Saharan migratory situation in Morocco. Because not only does the phenomenon include countries located deep in the heartlands of African continent, and where the relationship with Morocco is strongly linked to recent migratory developments, but also because the geographical distribution of Sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco is not subject to the attractiveness of key locations on the international migratory routes (see Map 1).

This situation results from the convergence of two factors. The first is to do with the restrictive European policies on immigration, which result in the abortion of migratory projects among a large number of Sub-Saharan migrants with Europe as their destination. The second is the opportunity for Sub-Saharans stuck in Morocco to be able to circulate and settle in different places, relying on solidarities, which are built up of the course of journey, or who rely on communities already established in Morocco.

From interviews with migrants, Fes emerges not as a destination city, nor even a transit city, on the route to Europe. A number of them were even unaware that it existed, and its name was only revealed to them as a possible destination once they had arrived on Moroccan soil. However, the city of Fes is presented as a haven offering opportunities for migrants wearied by their travels to recharge their batteries, but this does not by any means allow all of them to envisage settling there permanently.

But despite its recent, irregular nature, Sub-Saharan migration to Fes has became an established fact. It shows itself through the presence of migrants seeking possible inclusion in the city, either through accommodation, or through work, or even through religious practices.
Beyond the date of arrival and the issue of what these migrants represent in numerical terms, the important thing is to see how this presence, as fleeting as it may be, makes its mark on the space and influences social relations with Moroccans on one side and migrants from other nationalities on the other.

In order to tackle these aspects, we have looked at the profiles of these migrants and their lives in Fes, through the spaces which they occupations, visit and activities in which they engage.

2.1. The socio demographic profiles of Sub-Saharan migrants in Fes

The migration of Sub-Saharan towards Europe, in its illegal form, involves populations made up of both men and women belonging to the youngest age groups. The preponderance of young people can largely be explained by their specific living conditions, and the push factors to which they are subjected, encouraging them to leave. These are the categories most affected by unemployment and under-employment. In countries affected by political instability and war, it is often young people who are forcibly conscripted into the army or militias; meanwhile, women also find themselves exposed to violence of all kinds. Given the harsh travelling conditions and the scale of the risks to be taken, particularly when the route is through the desert [8], [9], [10], [11], [12], [13], it is indeed only young people, with few ties to their country, who are likely to embark upon the adventure of emigration by hazardous routes. Finally, it is young people within African societies who most aspire to better future and improved living conditions that emigration makes them possible.

Young male migrants

The distribution by age of Sub-Saharan migrants in Fes shows a predominance of those age groups between 20 and 35 years old, i.e. 338 people, making up 91% of the survey population; those aged over 35, i.e. 38 people, account for just 8.3%. The ages at extremes of the scale are 48 for the oldest and 19 for the youngest.

The mean age upon arrival in Fes is in fact 28, and can be explained by the fact that this is a population on the move and seeking out opportunities outside its country of origin.

It is also an essentially male population, with women making up 27% of the total number. They can be found in the 20 to 30 years age group, which accounts for 77.4% of them. The sex ratio is 263 over the population as a whole, and ranges from 248 for the under-30s to 308 to the over-30s. Women are therefore more numerous among the younger people.

Single status, cohabitation and children born during the journey

A breakdown by marital status of Sub-Saharan migrants before embarking on migration shows a predominance of single people, who make up 65.5% of the total, but there is a variation between men (66.9%) and women (59.8%). This difference is greater in the case of married people, at 4.9% compared to 12.2% for men. However, divorced Sub-Saharan women are more numerous, at 16.7% compared to 0.3% for men. The greatest characteristic of this Sub-Saharan collective in Fes is the practice of cohabitation, involving 15.4% of the survey population.
The marital status after departure changes in a great many cases; thus, it can be seen that the proportion of each marital status is lower except for the case of cohabitation, which has seen a rise of five percentage points, i.e. 20.2%, particularly among women.

However, we remain sceptical about the institutionalisation of these partnerships, insofar as these are often non-lasting relationships, and sometimes simply based on circumstance [14], [15].

This supposition was confirmed by the interviews, which revealed cases where this kind of relationship has been used to establish links of mutual solidarity. These unions are not established exclusively between migrants, but may be mixed, between a migrant and a student. A number of these relationships entered into along the way, or once settled in Fes, result in children being born, some of whom are not acknowledged by the father. Of the 371 people surveyed, 175 said they had children to care for before leaving their country, i.e. 47.1%, but only 20.6% said they were married, compared with 42% single people and 17% divorced or widowed individuals. In addition, 22 people, i.e. 12.6%, said that their children lived in Morocco, whilst the others said they had left them in their own country with family members, or had simply abandoned them.

The number of children living in Fes with their parents has reached 82, only 16 of whom were born to migrants arriving in Morocco prior to 2005. Of those children, 40% live with married parents, 30% with cohabiting parents, and 29.1% in single-parent families, where the parent is either unmarried, divorced or widowed, and generally the mother.

Unmarried mother status, though not included in the survey, is clearly in evidence. This poses problems of a different kind, particularly what status to accord to those children born outside the institution of marriage as legally constituted in Morocco. What will be the fate of those children born during their parents’ travels who, upon reaching school age, will need to face the issue of finding a school place? This situation is illustrated by the case of an Ivorian mother. Having studied to Baccalaureate level, this young woman returned to Morocco via Casablanca airport in 2004. She lived initially in Casablanca, where she met her future husband, with whom she was to live in Rabat for about 4 years. One child was born from that relationship. After separating from her husband, she came to Fes in 2009, accompanied by her four-year-old son. She is currently experiencing financial difficulties in paying for her child to attend a private school, since there is no state educational provision in Morocco for children in this category2.

**Literate migrants with an elementary level of education**

Among the Sub-Saharan community in Fes, those who say they have received an education account for 92.7%, compared with 6.2% without any education. But whilst people with an average level of education, not having progressed beyond secondary level, account for 76.7%, the presence of migrants educated to university level is remarkable: 14.02% of the total.

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2 Interview with an Ivorian emigrant woman
Table 1: Levels of education among Sub-Saharans in Fes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of education</th>
<th>Gender of survey subject</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
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<td>--------</td>
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<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: E3R survey, October 2009.

In addition, we see that school education is more widespread among women than among men, and that they account for a higher proportion of those educated to primary and higher level.

The level of education therefore indicates a community comprising men and women who have gone through school and aspire to find a job, which will enable them to establish a purpose for their lives in Fes.

The level of education says much about the social origins of these migrants. For it is generally accepted that advanced levels of education in Africa, despite the efforts made by certain countries in respect of development, literacy and education, remain one of the distinguishing features of the socially advantaged urban environment.

2.2. Before leaving, immigrants were engaged in urban occupations

A breakdown of Sub-Saharan by activity type prior to departure is very suggestive of the social situations from which they have come. These are migrants who were working in an urban setting, even though many of them are of rural origin and have recently arrived in town. Those who say they were working prior to the departure account for 60.7%, of whom 33.2% are women. Although we know that unemployment and under-employment among young people are structural problems in the economies of Sub-Saharan Africa, within the survey population those who were not working because of unemployment made up barely 2.7% of the total, and 36.9% were not working because of school.

Among those actively employed, 5.7% belonged to the agriculture and husbandry sector, and 30% were involved in commerce or the service sector. That proportion rose to 45% among women.
Among the declared service activities are small jobs as hairdressers, cobbler s, dressmakers, and traders are often retailers with no fixed business premises. They are more like itinerant traders than true shopkeepers. The area of business may often be centred on a town and constitute an occasional activity, or it may extend to remote buying and selling locations with a certain stability of trade.

- Take the case of the young man who had become an occasional clothes trader in Cotonou:

  “I stopped studying, and I haven’t been to school for two years. I stopped school in the 4th year, and I learned a trade in refrigeration and air conditioning. With the life I was living, I stopped work and decided that I’d make my own way. I was a bit of a lad; when I had a bit of money, I’d spend all my time going out, drinking beer, going to nightclubs. I don’t want to go to work anymore, I want easy money. The boss was being a real nuisance at work; he used to hit me, it really annoyed me, and I decided to stop. When I go to the market, I buy a pair of “Jeans” trousers for 1000 fr and sell them on for 2000 fr, trousers, jumpers, shoes. If I buy something for 500 fr I sell it on for 1000 fr; if I buy shoes for 1500 fr, I sell them on for 2500 fr, so there is a lot of profit.”

- The case of an itinerant trader working between Ndjamen a and the Chad/Cameroon border:

  “I haven’t studied much. I went to secondary school until the 3rd year, then I was involved in trade in Chad. I bought little things like salt, sugar, tobacco, cigarettes, and sold them on the border with Cameroon. That’s to say, just before the border. There’s a little town, let’s call it a village, “Lama”. I’d go to Ndjama na to buy goods and then set

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3 Interview with a Beninese emigrant man
off to Lama at the border. I’d travel by bus. I had roughly 25,000 to 30,000 CFA as capital, which wasn’t much. For each week and each journey, I could make 5,000 CFA.

In Africa, commerce and services seem to be the sectors where activities are dominated by the informal market, and serve as an outlet for a large proportion of the under-employed populace whom the structured economic sectors are unable to accommodate. The most highly qualified of the jobs done in the country of origin, at 12.7%, were those of mechanic, electrician, hotel owner or haulier; meanwhile, those who had occupied stable posts such as administrative employees were very few, at 2.7%.

Those in active employment are generally educated, at 93.8%, of whom 41.7% have been educated to secondary level, and 0.4% to higher level.

It would therefore appear that the Sub-Saharan migrants in Fes were not the poorest of the poor. This is a category of urban dwellers, some of whom were originally from the countryside, who have taken on board the concept of the makeshift economy. Which should set them apart from the majority of young people from the Sub-Saharan African countries where, in 2005, around 62% of the population was aged under 25, and three out of every five unemployed people were young, and an average of 2006 of young people lived on less than two dollars a day.

But although they are engaged in an activity which enables them to build up a nest egg, young Sub-Saharan migrants are sometimes bound by commitments to their families, whom they have to help. In cases where they still live with their parents – or one of them, if they are separated – the children contribute to expenditure. In fact this is seen as a gift, which they expect to be returned to them upon them committing themselves to financing personal plans, particularly migration.

3. Sub-Saharan migrants: a new way of city living, but difficulty obtaining the freedom of the city

Among the categories of migrants in Fes, Sub-Saharan migrants bring an urban culture which they have acquired in their places of origin, and which they do not manage to express, given the marginal position which they occupy in the city which, in spite of the changes it has seen, does not manage to fulfil the role of a real metropolis. By which we mean a metropolis which has a strong economic base, making it attractive for migrant populations seeking to settle permanently there, and not simply to see it as a transit stage to other places. Through their daily lives, Sub-Saharan actually come to represent very diverse situations. However, they suffer from the marginalisation which they suffer when trying to find a place to fit into the spatial and economic life of a city which is physically open but socially founded on segregation.

3.1. The distribution of Sub-Saharan migrants in the city of Fes.

For many Sub-Saharan migrants, settling in Fes was not planned in advance. In the majority of cases, it occurred following an encounter with a compatriot or Sub-Saharan “brothers”
familiar with Fes, having stayed there as students, in some cases, or as pilgrims or travelling migrants in other cases.

Inclusion into the settled community takes place at a distance. With an address in Fes, the migrant is sure of having somewhere to stay upon arrival. In Fes, the prime hub for the Sub-Saharan community is composed of pilgrims and students whose activities have made their mark on two areas of the city (Dhar el Mehraz campus and surrounding districts for students, and the Medina around the Zawiya Tijaniyya for pilgrims). It would therefore be reasonable to assume that migrants would tend to settle in those same places. But the reality of the geographical distribution emerging from the survey results provides an opportunity to verify this hypothesis in case of the student areas, although with some nuances, considering two elements: (i) the rented accommodation on offer takes demand into account, resulting in an increase in the rental value of apartments in the districts nearest to the university; (ii) the emerging trend for greater autonomy among Sub-Saharan migrants when choosing their accommodation, which can be seen in a gradual spread to more and more marginal districts relative to core university district.

Concentration in the working-class districts in the south-eastern sector of the city

The survey results reveal a high concentration of migrants in districts located in the city’s south-eastern sectors. The districts of Montfleury, Sidi Brahim and Saada are home to 40.4%. These districts lie further out from the districts of Lido, the Dhar El Mehraz student halls of residence and Erac, where 26.7% live (see Map 2).

Two groups of districts which play a satellite role are located at each end of this central band. In the north, there is the area comprising the city centre, Adarissa, Atlas, Annajah and Assaada districts, which are home to 16.2% of the migrants surveyed, and in the south there are the districts of Narjiss, Al Karama, Douar Dalou and Al Amal, with 12%. The Medina is notable for the small number of Sub-Saharan choosing to settle there, at just 1.2% of the total number.

Distribution across districts displaying social mixedness

Without a doubt, the spatial distribution of Sub-Saharan migrants in Fes can be seen to mirror the geography of the city, which is characterised by a twofold social and spatial fragmentation.

The districts where Sub-Saharan migrants are concentrated emerge as places which are accessible to classes with modest incomes, and which allow new arrivals to find accommodation easily. These districts, located close to the university campus, and not far from the city centre, and where rents are acknowledged to be modest, are hubs where Sub-Saharan students prefer to settle.

Lido, Dhar el Mehraz and Erac districts are located alongside Dhar el Mehraz plateau which is characterised by outdated accommodation, despite there being a few recently built high-rise buildings. These places are close to the military barracks, the campus and the industrial district, where the working classes rub shoulders with the middle classes. But they all share a space where they have put down roots after moving there for reasons of study or work.
Other districts with unregulated housing are also places for social mixedness. The Montfleuri district, for example, comprises illegal developments which sprang up on agricultural land between 1970 and 1990. The dwellings with ground floor plus two floors above have not only made it easier for social categories who are less established in the city to own a home, but they have also increased the rental offer at lower prices than in the city centre.

Other places have been transformed into shanty towns taking in the poorest social categories, as it is the case in Aouinat el Hajjaj to the south of Sidi Brahim industrial zone.

Map 2: Neighbourhood of residence of the surveyed sub-Saharan in Fez
These are districts which, in spite of the State’s efforts to do away with slums and restructure districts which have been illegally developed for housing, continue to develop spontaneously under the effects of demographic pressure and the existence of spatial segregation.

In the face of that pressure, rising land prices and the trend towards selective urban development have given rise to the appearance of new districts differentiated by the social levels and status of their occupants. On the one hand there are the rich districts reserved for the city’s traditional middle classes and the new elite, and on the other are the modest or poor districts extending into new private plots intended for the new populations arriving in Fes, some of whom are from Sub-Saharan origins.

3.2. Migrants facing the problems of unemployment and underemployment

Sub-Saharan migrants, whether employed or independent, have difficulty finding work. 197 (i.e. 53.1%) of them say they are or have been engaged in paid work since their arrival in Fes.

Low-qualification activities in the informal sector

This sector of the population is widely affected by under-employment, and devotes itself to activities with low demands in terms of qualifications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>commerce</th>
<th>small jobs and services</th>
<th>domestic work</th>
<th>labourers</th>
<th>call centres</th>
<th>other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of persons</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Activities undertaken by Sub-Saharans in Fes

This basically means activities for survival which are undertaken on the margin of the organised employment sectors.

Thus those working in commerce are essentially dealers in or retailers of products imported from their countries of origin or smuggled goods [17], [18]. They generally have no premises and their profits are often shared with a number of other individuals. The situations described in some interviews reveal a certain joining of forces between Sub-Saharans with varying residency status and material possibilities on the one side and Moroccans on the other. Thus, a trader whose residency papers are not in order has merchandise brought in by a Sub-Saharan student, and to sell it on he leaves it with a Moroccan grocer. Alternatively, he might rely on a small network of Sub-Saharan retailers.

Others with a little bit of money behind them, and who have papers enabling them to travel within Morocco, occupy themselves by selling on smuggled goods from the border towns of Oujda, Tetouan and Nador.

Those engaged in small jobs and services work mostly as cobblers, tailors, mechanics, joiners, builders or hairdressers. Women work as maids, work in the catering industry, or specialise in braiding hair.
In addition, of those who describe themselves as day labourers, the majority of Sub-Saharan who work are employed, at 58.8%. The others describe themselves as independent, particularly traders (accounting for 34 out of a total of 64) and cobblers.

Only 60.9% of these activities are permanent. But permanency here is more in terms of the activity they undertake, namely how they make their living, because regularity of employment, especially for those who are employed, is rare. 38.6% of workers are taken on for periods of less than a fortnight, with 60.9% working on a day-to-day basis. Those taken on for a month make up 35% of the total, whereas those whose period of employment is not specified, since they have to work on a task-by-task basis or on commission, make up 25.7% of the total.

Those taken on for a month at a time basically comprise those who work in call centres, who make up more than 50% of that category, i.e. 48 people out of 80.

*Low wages*

The wages they receive vary, and depend not only on the activity in which they are engaged, but also its regularity. The declared amounts reveal wages of 80 MAD per day, 20% less than the minimum wage which in Morocco is capped at 2200 dh. More than 50% of workers taken on a month at a time say that they receive pay of between 1200 MAD and 2000 MAD. Wages are no more than 4000 MAD per month, even among those working in call centres where the working day can be as long as 16 hours a day5.

3.3. *Working conditions in contravention of current regulations*

In fact, the wages declared in the survey, taken at face value, do not reflect the working conditions, nor the amount of time spent at work, nor the nature of the tasks demanded of workers. In addition, these are gross salaries, without any social security contributions on the part of employers. This is black market labour with many irregularities.

*Exploitation of women in domestic work*

The interviews speak volumes on this subject. Take the case of “K”, a Senegalese women employed in a Fes middle-class family home. She had to work for one year for a salary of 1300 MAD, but actually only received 300 MAD. The difference was, in principle, being paid by her mistress into a bank account in her name, but she was unable to recover it after being dismissed. Her working day started at 8 o’clock in the morning and finished at 6.30 pm every day of the week, including Sundays:

“When I arrive in the morning, I set the table straight away, [the mistress’s] husband has his coffee and cornflakes and then goes. After that, the wife comes down, has her breakfast and tells me about my tasks for the day (…). They go off, I but stay in the house (…). At about midday I finish my housework and set the table for lunch for them all, when they come and eat with their children (…). I clear the table, do the washing up and tidy up. After that I go down into the garden, I clean, sweep, take out the rubbish, then I go down into the cellar, then I do housework. After that, I do the cleaning in the

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5 Interview with an Ivorian emigrant man
husband’s gym room; then at about 6 o’clock I finish there and gather my things together to go home.”

The dawn of the call centre for educated Sub-Saharan

In call centres, the work in which a large majority of Sub-Saharan migrants are involved, both those educated to university level and students, is a recent activity in Fes. The city is in fact becoming a base for international call centres. In addition to the existence of a workforce suited to call-centre activities, thanks to the presence of the university, the attractiveness of Fes for this new kind of activity resides in the property prices, which are still relatively low compared with cities such as Rabat and Casablanca.

Job offers in this sector are aimed at university graduates with language skills, particularly in French. But given the modest salaries, between 1800 and 2800 MAD per month, and the language handicap for many Moroccan students, the offer seems more advantageous for students and Sub-Saharan migrants educated to an advanced level.

We have no statistics on the number of Sub-Saharanists employed by call centres, but judging by the number of survey subjects declaring that they work there, our view is that this is a factor which adds to the attraction of Fes for educated Sub-Saharan migrants.

Sub-Saharan migrants who work do not enjoy the benefits of current employment legislation in Morocco. These job seekers are in an irregular position with regard to the authorities, added to which Fes, like cities in developing countries, can only offer small jobs in the informal sector to a large part of the working population. Sub-Saharan migrants find themselves in a situation, which, if not actually worse, is at least similar to that of the majority of Moroccan migrants flocking to Fes from the surrounding regions. However, a distinction can be made. Unlike young rural Moroccans settling in Fes, some Sub-Saharan migrants have a level of education, which enables them to engage in new activities falling within the sphere of communications and IT.

3.4. Use of space and tackling subsistence problems

With their places of residence located on the margins of the city, the Sub-Saharanists occupy spaces, which are poorly integrated with the centre. The public transport which is available imposes expenditure which the migrant would rather devote to food. In fact, very few of these people travel into the city centre. A large number of the Sub-Saharanists we interviewed are unaware of the existence of the Medina, and live a separate lifestyle. For several of them, with an elementary level of education, the space they frequent is limited to the room where they cohabit with other Sub-Saharan migrants, or the street on which their home is located, and where they go to buy things, telephone or visit the Internet café. Those who feel free to move around have the privilege of an education, which helps them to pass themselves off as students, and to go to spaces, which are open to the public, such as going to a café or night club, for example, or going to play football with Moroccan people.

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6 Interview with an emigrant Senegalese woman
Sub-Saharan migrants in Fes, for reasons to do with their characteristics as travellers seeking ways out of Morocco to get into Europe, are not always driven to put down roots in the places to which they move.

In response to the shortcomings of Fes where job opportunities are concerned, they have developed a system of solidarity between individuals facing the challenges of day-to-day survival. This solidarity is formed around accommodation, but also extends to food. Without necessarily being of the same nationality or belonging to the same community of origin, those renting a single apartment or room will share all their expenses. In cases where the migrant does not have the means to contribute, they are looked after until they manage to gain an income through working, begging, or receiving money from relatives or friends.

**Conclusion**

The influx of Sub-Saharan migrants into Fes has been dictated by a changing migratory context. But the city’s attraction is not founded on a strong economic base, and it suffers from an urban structure which hinders any attempted integration by foreign migrants, especially when they lack tangible resources and have difficulty in maintaining their subsistence through stable, regular or well-paid work. In the case of the Sub-Saharan, we have noticed that, contrary to Moroccan emigrants from the countryside, they bring experience of urban life. Their youth and level of education predispose them to adapt better to job offers provided by sectors of the city’s activities which have more to do with the economics of globalisation [19].

But their presence in the city is characterised by a sort of marginalisation which is not planned but suffered, given an urban order which seems to regulate life in Fes on the basis of each individual’s material wealth.

The geographical distribution of Sub-Saharan migrants in Fes is conditional upon their financial capabilities, and the offer of low-cost housing is only there in the far-flung districts which suffer from economic and social marginalisation. In the districts where they live, Sub-Saharan migrants share the same spaces with Moroccans and sometimes live together with them in the same houses, and even the same rooms. But even though they share the same spaces, relations between Sub-Saharan and Moroccan migrants in Fes have yet to move beyond the mercantile dimension of commerce, the offer of accommodation or a few precarious and poorly-paid jobs. Sporting and religious activities give rise to opportunities for forging links with the Moroccans, but not only do these links remain confined to the place which has brought them about – the Mosque or football pitch – but they only involve a minority of people.

It can therefore be said that the city of Fes produces segregation between peripheral districts and the centre, but that it is a city where spaces are open, and populations occupying the marginal districts do not suffer confinement, except that imposed by the precarious economic conditions. “Taken as such, segregation is no longer a problem of exclusion, but of access to the city where otherness is found.”[20]
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