Regularisation Policy and 'Migration Projects': The Case of Sub-Saharan Migrants in Morocco

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Abstract

In September 2013, Morocco established a new migration policy based on a report produced by the National Human Rights Council (NHRC), which resulted in the regularization of some 25,000 irregular migrants, most of them from Sub-Saharan Africa and Syria. Based on 31 interviews conducted in 2015 with Sub-Saharan migrants living in Rabat (Morocco) at the time of the regularisation campaign, this paper employs the theoretical notion of migration projects to analyze whether regularisation acted as an incentive for Sub-Saharan migrants to modify their migration projects and consider Morocco as a desirable destination country. The paper concludes that the regularization initiatives did not have significant effects on the migratory projects of Sub-Saharan migrants. While migrants faced many obstacles and problems when trying to regularize their status, the regularization campaign failed to develop a comprehensive approach to address them.

Keywords: Regularisation; Sub-Saharan migrants; Geopolitical of migration; migration projects; Morocco

Resumen

Política de regularización migratoria y proyectos migratorios: el caso de los migrantes subsaharianos en Marruecos

En septiembre de 2013, Marruecos lanzó una nueva política migratoria fundada en la recomendación de un informe del Consejo Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDH), cuyo resultado fue la regularización de alrededor de 25,000 migrantes en situación irregular, la mayoría de ellos originarios de África subsahariana y de Siria. Basado en 31 entrevistas realizadas en 2015 con migrantes subsaharianos que se encontraban en Marruecos en el momento de la campaña de regularización, el presente artículo utiliza el concepto de proyecto migratorio para analizar si la regularización migratoria actuó como un incentivo para que los inmigrantes subsaharianos cambien sus proyectos migratorios y consideren a Marruecos como un país de destino. Los resultados muestran que la campaña de regularización migratoria no estuvo acompañada por una política integral que abordara los diferentes obstáculos y problemas que enfrentan los miles de migrantes

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subsaharianos en Marruecos. Bajo estas condiciones, la regularización no tuvo un efecto significativo en los proyectos de estos migrantes.

Palabras claves: Regularización; Migrantes subsaharianos; Geopolítica de la migración; Proyectos migratorios; Marruecos

Résumé

Politique de régularisation et projets migratoires: le cas de migrants subsahariens au Maroc

En septembre 2013, le Maroc a lancé une nouvelle politique migratoire fondée sur un rapport du Conseil national des droits de l'homme (CNDH), ayant comme résultat la régularisation d'environ 25000 migrants en situation irrégulière, la plupart d'entre eux originaires d'Afrique subsaharienne et de la Syrie. Basé sur 31 entretiens réalisés en 2015 à Rabat auprès de migrants subsahariens qui étaient au Maroc au moment de la campagne de régularisation, cet article utilise la notion théorique de projet migratoire afin d'analyser si la régularisation agit comme une incitatif pour les migrants subsahariens à modifier leurs projets migratoires et à considérer le Maroc comme un pays de destination. Les résultats montrent que la campagne de régularisation migratoire n'a pas été accompagnée d'une politique intégrale abordant les différents obstacles et problèmes auxquels font face les milliers de migrants d'origine subsaharienne au Maroc. Dans ces conditions, la régularisation n'a pas des effets importants sur les projets de ces migrants.

Mots clés: Régularisation; Migrants subsahariens; Géopolitique de la migration; Projets migratoires; Maroc

1. Introduction

> *The special connections uniting Morocco to the Sub-Saharan countries of Africa are not political or economic. They are, in fact, human and spiritual. Considering the prevailing situation in some of these countries, a number of their citizens immigrate to Morocco through illegal or legal means. Previously a passage route to Europe, our country has become a residential destination.*

> HM Speech delivered by the King Mohamed VI on the occasion of the 38th Green March Anniversary, March 2013.

In his statement, King Mohamed VI formally recognised the transformations that Morocco has undergone since the beginning of the 21st century and becoming a settlement country for thousands of migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, Morocco is no longer considered an emigration country, but one of immigration as well. Formerly an emigration country, Morocco is currently confronted to long-term immigration due to a blockage and 'cage effect' (Charef, 2014). The security policies and the reinforcement of European borders, to which the Moroccan State actively participates, redefined Morocco as a default residential country (Alioua, 2015) rather than a transit point. Nevertheless, for most Sub-Saharan migrants incapable of crossing the Mediterranean Basin and consequently forced to stay in Morocco, Europe remains their coveted destination.

In September 2013, Morocco established a new migration policy based on a report produced by the National Human Rights Council (NHRC), which exposed the abuse migrants in irregular

situations residing in Morocco experienced. It further correlated the numerous violations of the rights of migrants in irregular situations with the heightened repression of Sub-Saharan migrants and the surge of racist acts perpetrated against them.

This article provides original theoretical notion of migration projects to examine if this regularisation campaign acts as an incentive for Sub-Saharan migrants to modify their migration projects and consider Morocco as a desirable destination country. The analysis is carried out not only through the eyes of migrants but also by considering the relationships with geopolitical factors and the influences of them. The study is based on 31 interviews conducted in 2015 with Sub-Saharan migrants living in Rabat (Morocco) at the time of the regularisation campaign. The results demonstrate that the current migration policy resulted from a geopolitical reorientation of the Moroccan State towards the rest of Africa. The findings show that regularisation did not have significant effects on the migratory projects of Sub-Saharan migrants, since Europe remains their privileged destination, even for those who have been residing in Morocco for several years. This is largely due to factors such as violence and xenophobia, as well as the repressive management of migration flows that continued in spite of the considerable shifts the regularisation policy introduced. This management strategy, required by the European Union (EU) as a means of decreasing the pressure migratory flows applies to its own territory, is consistent with the pursuit of numerous and violent operations targeting migrants, notably those attempting to remain near the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, because these enclaves become a gateway to the «first world» for thousands of people (Nieto Calamaestra and Boulifa, 2008).

As Tsourapas (2017) argues, 'the states of the Global South employ cooperative and coercive migration diplomacy in their management of cross-border mobility' (p, 2370). It is within this dualistic migration policy that the projects and trajectories of Sub-Saharan migrants develop and unfold, and which are subordinate to strategic interests in the calculations of Morocco and his relations with the states of Sub-Sahara Africa and Europe.

2. Migration Projects

The notion of migration projects is employed here to convey the complexity of migration processes and trajectories. Migration projects are not linear or static. The notion of migration project, accordingly, provides a means of grasping the various rationales underscoring migration processes, at once during their course and in accordance with the concerned individuals, whilst highlighting the importance of the context of a migration (Brachet, 2009: 61).

To consider migration as a project enables the analysis of the different factors contributing to the decision to migrate and the orientation of migration trajectories, by articulating the different spatial, social and temporal scales. This further leads to take all concerned elements seriously, including economic, social and cultural factors, since these conjointly determine and orient migration. All these subjective and objective factors, in fact, coexist as interrelated and overlapping elements (Brachet, 2009: 58-59) that shape migration trajectories. De Gourcy (2013: 43) asserts that «individuals are caught in social, political, familial and, more generally, relational configurations that influence their projects, their temporality, and modulates them in a way or another». The author highlights that the experience and the different constraints that migrants face during their trajectory compels them to find new responsive solutions that may correspond or diverge from the social, cultural and professional universe to which they belong (De Gourcy, 2013: 44).

Thus, trajectories 'emerge from the complex interrelations of societal structuring forces and biographical plans and actions in the historical course of time' (Wingens and Col., 2011: 6).

Several migrants trace a route through which they wish to arrive in the country of their choice. They visualize the border crossings, the cities where to stop staying during the transit, where to find help, etc. However, throughout the journey, the situations they anticipate may change as a result of different encounters and interactions as they transit the space or migratory field. Several obstacles or opportunities may appear along the way to which migrants must adapt by developing new routes and strategies in order to reach the destination of their initial choice or another destination that was not initially considered.

As Schanpendonk (2012) argues 'trajectories have a process-like logic in which destinations are moving targets, social connections can be transient, and periods of mobility may easily change into periods of immobility, and vice versa (…) migrants are on the move, but so too are their aspirations' (34, 38). These movements change and evolve in accordance with the socio-political context in which they are inserted. Thus, migration projects evolve with these trajectories. Migration projects are reformulated in light of the particular experiences and different opportunities presented during migration (De Gourcy, 2013: 49).

In this sense, the policy of migratory regularization seeks modifying the migration project of Sub-Saharan migrants by encouraging them to stay in Morocco and, thus, to discourage them from going to Europe.

3. Regularisation programs

In the last 30 years, regularisation programmes have become as one of policy tool of the States to manage the undocumented immigrant population in their countries. Many governments, with disparate results, implement this type of policy (Arango and Jachimowicz, 2005). The regularization programs can be defined as the opportunity, on the part of the state, offered to migrants, who are in a country without authorization, to legalize their status (Levinson, 2005a;b). The right or permission of residence after regularisation may be temporary or permanent, limited or unlimited (depending on possibilities of renewing it) (Apap et al., 2000; Basok and Rojas, 2017; Levinson, 2005a; b.) Apap et al., (2000) identify five types of regularisation: 1) Permanent or one-off (one shot); 2) Fait accompli or for protection; 3) Individual or collective; 4) Expedience or obligation; 5) Organized or informal. In general, regularisation programme is a combination of the five types, but the most regularization programs fall into the first typology, «Permanent or one-off (one-shot)» (Levinson, 2005a;b). Permanent regularisations are implemented on an on-going basis and grant residency to migrants after a certain number of years in the country (e.g., United Kindom 14 continuous years). «One-shot» regularisation are one-time programmes, migrants must apply within a deadline, and may aim to regularize a limited number of migrants or not (e.g., France, Italy, Belgium, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Luxemburg, United Kingdom, Morocco and the United States. (Idem). Also, the regularization can be implemented through law (e.g., Belgium, Italy, Spain, Greece, U.S) or an administrative circular (e.g., France, UK, Morocco) (Apap et al., 2000). The are many reasons for implementing regularisation programmes such: gaining more awareness and control over irregular migration, improving the social situation of migrants, increasing labour market transparency, overcoming labour shortages; enhancing taxation, responding to foreign policy goals, or attaining regional integration (Arango and Jachimowicz 2005; Basok and Rojas, 2017; Levinson 2005a;b; Marmora, 1999; Sunderhaus, 2007).

Analysing regularisation programmes in Europe and U.S, Levinson (2005b:8) lists a series of challenges that regularization programs face in their implementation: «lack of publicity, having overly strict requirements that limited migrant participation, application fraud, lack of administrative preparation, and the reversion of legalized immigrants to undocumented status». For migrants, these challenges represent real obstacles that they need overcome to regularize their situation in the country.

In general, the most regularisation programmes offers temporary or short-term permits, which must be renewed every one or two years (Apap et al., 2000; Basok and Rojas, 2017; Chauvin et al., Garcés-Mascareñas, and Kraler 2013; Menjívar 2006; Messick and Bergeron, 2014; Nascimbene, 2000; Sabater and Domingo, 2012; Sunderhaus, 2007). As Basok and Rojas (2017:5) observe, «conditions attached to status regularization render the legality migrants gain insecure and unstable».

As we will see in the fifth section, in Morocco, the regularization program responds to the first type, i.e. one-off or one-shot, because the migrants had one year to submit a request. If the request was accepted, the government granted a renewable one-year residence permit.

Furthermore, regarding the social and economic impacts of regularisation programmes on migrants themselves, one of significant consequence is that they no longer need to hide from the authorities, and, in theory, they would be in a position to find better working conditions because they can access the formal labor market (Levinson, 2005b). However, Reyneri (2001:52) asserts that, in Spain, during the first regularisation campaign in 1985, some employers fired the majority of their migrant workers to avoid contracting them formally, while others decided to continue employing them irregularly. This author also shows that in France, many migrants continued working in the same job and with the same employer as before the regularisation of 1998, and their labor conditions, as wage or working hours, did not change substantially.

In conclusion, as Levinson (2005b: 9) observes, «most regularisations programmes are to recent to reach definitive conclusions about their long-term demographic, economic, or labor impact».

Morocco launched its first massive regularisation programme in 2013. This campaign was part of a broader review of Moroccan immigration and asylum policies and, as we will show in section six, somewhat broke with Morocco's previous migration policy adopted in 2003.

4. Methodology

This study was conducted between January and July 2015 in the Moroccan cities of Rabat and Nador, as well as in the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in Northern Morocco (see figure 1). These were selected due to the significant presence of migrants and due to their strategic location, as they offered greater possibilities to access different types of resources susceptible to support the pursuit of migration trajectories.

The research builds on data collected data from in depth qualitative interviews, based on a semi-structured questionnaire, with 30 Malian, Guinean and Congolese migrants residing in Morocco(see table 1). In this study we included only those migrants who initially intended to migrate to Europe to examine if this regularization campaign has an impact on migrants' intentions to continue their journey towards the European Union. In addition, to avoid using interpreters,

we selected only those migrants who spoke French. The research developed a recruitment strategy through the network of civil society organisations, which enabled us to inform suitable candidates of the possibility of participating in our research. It subsequently adopted the 'snowball' recruitment method; those recommended were invited to directly contact us to indicate their interest in our study.

This study gathered information pertaining to the decisions to migrate (motivations), migration experiences and trajectories, waiting spaces, the participant's perception of their situation in the transient society, the factors influencing their migration projects as well as the role of their social network in the orientation of their migration projects.

Table 1 : Characteristics of interviewed migrants

Characteristics	n = 30
Gender	
F	12
M	18
Origin	
Mali	19
D.R. Congo	9
Guinea	2
Duration of stay in Morocco	
<1 year	1
1-2 years	13
3–4 years	9
5 years or more	7
Experiences crossing the Europe border :	
Never attempted	10
Attempted and failed	20
Migratory status	
Regular	17
Irregular	13

5. The Moroccan Migration Policy towards Irregular Migrants

Until the early 2000s, Morocco had not officially addressed the situation of irregular migration within its territory and only considered the rights of Moroccan migrants residing outside its national boundaries as a source of concern (Perrin, 2016). Lahlou (2015) defines a time span extending from 1990 to 2002 as a 'non-migration policy' period. For Natter (2013), the government ignored irregular migration in spite of the noticeable increase of migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa to Morocco during the 1990s. This increase partly occurred in response to the heightened restrictions to legal immigration, as well as the intensification of border control and of other entry points (such as airports and ports) in Europe since the establishment of the Schengen agreement, considering that an important number of Sub-Saharan migrants attempt to cross illegally from Morocco (De Haas, 2007).

Schengen transformed the Moroccan territory into a 'transit' space inside of which immigrants wait to cross over into a European country. Henceforth, Morocco was no longer considered a

mere emigration country, but also one of transit, particularly since the start of the century (El Qadim, 2016: 210). The Moroccan government's indifference towards irregular immigration changed when its country became a transit zone to the EU (Perrin, 2016).

Morocco has, since 2002, changed its stance largely in response to the mounting pressure applied by Southern Mediterranean countries in order for Rabat to adopt a more repressive migration policy against migrants in 'transit'. The judicial instruments North African countries developed in 2003 and 2004 to restrict circulation within their territories clearly demonstrate the enactment of this request, whereas such mechanisms did not previously exist (Bensaâd, 2005, Perrin, 2016). In 2003, Morocco adopted the 02-03 Law concerning the entry and sojourn of foreigners in its territory, including cases of emigration and irregular immigration. The promulgation of this law meant the official recognition of Morocco as a 'transit country' (El Qadim, 2016) and inaugurated a security-based approach, which marked a turning point in the Moroccan management of migration. Belguendouz (2005: 17) asserts that the 02-03 Law criminalises migrants and imposes penalties to migrants in irregular situation, who have been assimilated to and treated like terrorists and drug traffickers. This security approach to migration management somewhat positions Morocco as the European gendarme of Northern Africa (Belguendouz, 2003; 2005).

Whilst this law's adoption seemingly places Morocco as a European ally contributing to its constituents' battle against irregular migration (El Qadim, 2010), it would be erroneous to consider Morocco a passive actor subservient to European interests. As El Qadim (2016) states, whilst submitted to asymmetrical international power relations with these 'destination' countries, the governments of the 'origin' countries developed policies answering to autonomous objectives. As Collyer (2016) argues, the relationship between EU and its neighbours 'cannot be understood entirely in terms of an old style geopolitics of dominance' (p, 610)

The adoption of the 02-03 Law must not solely be understood in relation to the pressure it exercises on Europe, but also as a strategic opportunity for Morocco to improve its regional political weight (Natter, 2013). For Bensâad (2005), the combined presence of migrants in the Moroccan territory and the proximity with Europe has been exploited by Morocco as a 'geographic rent'. For example, when considering its European partnership, Morocco has been the second beneficiary of the MEDA program[2] (Hoebink, 2005, 43) and has gained considerable financial benefits from its historical cooperation with the EU (Carrera et al., 2016).

To get back to the implications of this law, the first years following its promulgation were marked by increased repression against Sub-Saharan migrants to counter 'clandestine' immigration. Political discourses building on a fictitious representation of migration as a transit legitimated this repression (Bensaâd, 2015: 246). In 2005, repression turned tragic on the night of September 28 to 29, in Ceuta, when five hundred of mostly Sub-Saharan migrants attempted to enter the Spanish enclave on the Moroccan territory. At least five were killed and many more were injured. A few days later, on October 6th, six more migrants were killed as they tried entering the other Spanish enclave, Melilla

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2. The MEDA program is the main financial instrument of the European Union serving the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. It includes financial and technical support measures for the structural economic and social reforms of Europe's Mediterranean partners http://www.euromedi.org/francese/home/partenariato/meda/index.asp.

The tragedies of Ceuta and Melilla were crucial moments in the development of Morocco's migration policy, according to Bensaâd, since these led to the «second age» of the management of Sub-Saharan migration;

> this repression broke out of the national boundaries of Morocco, at a time when Human Rights became global issues. Relegations into the Saharan Desert, the shooting of migrants climbing the walls of Ceuta and Melilla, followed by sinking boats, move and disturb international opinions. Beyond the national and North African contexts where these situations are denied, issues relative to Sub-Saharan immigration, rendered visible, could no longer be ignored (Bensaâd, 2015: 245).

After the age of repression and denial of the rights of migrants in irregular situation, the second age was one of recognition and acceptance of irregular migration. It was no longer as transit phenomena (*Ibid.*, 241), but became a societal fact (Bennsaâd, 2009: 5).

As Natter highlights (2013: 23), the Ceuta and Melilla tragedies seriously compromised Morocco's international reputation and forced Morocco to reposition itself *vis à vis* Europe as well as Sub-Saharan Africa. This entailed more pragmatic political engagements. repositioning the country as a mediator between the EU and Africa in the management of migration. Morocco became a mediator between the North and South through these geopolitical accommodations (Natter, 2013: 23), which were crystallised by the Euro-Mediterranean Summit held on November 27 and 28, 2005 in Barcelona. On this occasion, the Moroccan King Mohamed VI proposed the organisation of a ministerial Euro-African conference[3], origin, transit and destination countries in order to think about solutions to irregular migration; 'it is, henceforth, time to engage in a sincere and responsible discussion on the fundamental causes of illegal migration, on its various aspects and multiple issues, a discussion that will consider the duty of regional solidarity, the primacy of collective security and the mastery of legal migration dynamics'(Mohamed VI, 2005).

It is necessary to point out that following the Ceuta and Melilla events, Morocco did not completely abandon its repressive methods against Sub-Saharan migrants. Raids and deportations continued, but, due to the activism of the Moroccan civil society, the pressure applied by international public opinion and the repositioning of Moroccan geopolitics, Sub-Saharan migration entered the public scene. For example, the new 2011 Constitution, promulgated after the reforms demanded after the 'Arab Spring' (Cavatorta, 2016: 86), introduced articles founded on the human rights of foreigners and the recognition of the contribution of civil society in public policy (Üstübici, 2016).

Finally, Morocco develop a strategy by engaging in both cooperative and coercive migration diplomacy. For Tsourapas (2017), 'the line between the two types is frequently blurred, cooperative migration diplomacy is predicated upon interstate bargaining explicitly aiming for mutually beneficial arrangements in the absence of aggression. On the other hand, a state may pursue coercive migration diplomacy if it resorts to violence or the threat of force' (p, 2368).

3. This Euro-African conference on migration and development (Rabat Process) was held June 26 and 27 at Rabat and involved 56 European and African countries.

5.1. *The Regularisation Campaign of Irregular Immigrants in Morocco*

On September 9, 2013, the National Human Rights Council (CNDH) published a Thematic Report on the situation of migrants and refugees in Morocco entitled «Foreigners and Human Rights in Morocco, for a radically New Asylum and Immigration Policy». In its report, the NHRC provides an explicit briefing of Morocco's non-recognition of the rights of migrants in irregular situation, stressing the difficulties they experience due to the repressive measures put in place as well as the racist and xenophobic actions they are victim of. In its recommendations, «The CNDH believes that it is time for the government to officially consider the development and establishment of an operation of special regularization of some categories of migrants in irregular administrative situations, according to criteria that take into account the duration of stay in Morocco, the right to family co-residence, the conditions for insertion in Moroccan society, the settlement agreements reached by the Kingdom with other state partners» (CNDH, 2013:8).

On the day following the report's publication, His Majesty the King Mohammed VI asked the government to proceed with the elaboration of 'a new comprehensive policy on immigration and asylum issues, pursuant to a humanitarian approach in conformity with our country's international commitments and respectful of immigrants' rights'(MRE, 2014). January 2, 2014, marked the effective launching of the regularisation operation, in the form of 'one-shot' programme, addressing the administrative situation of foreigners illegally residing in Morocco. Between 25 000 and 40 000 foreigners, most of whom were from Sub-Saharan Africa, were concerned by these measures according to government statements. The Joint administrative circular, «Circulaire régissant l'opération exceptionnelle de régularisation de la situation de séjour des étrangers», managing the exceptional regularisation operation for the residential situation of foreigners and which was published on December 16, 2013, announced that the regularisation operation concerned the following categories of foreigners: 1) Foreigners who are spouses of Moroccan citizens; 2) Foreigners who are spouses of other foreigners in irregular residential situations in Morocco; 3) The children of the two aforementioned cases; 4) Foreigners with effective work contracts; 5) Foreigners who could prove five consecutive years of residence in Morocco; 6) Foreigners afflicted with a severe illness.

The regularisation campaign lasted one year and was terminated on December 31, 2014. In June 2014, a provisional report on the regularisation operation stated that 16 000 requests had been submitted, 2 812 favourable notices granted and 1 604 residential titles delivered (FIDH/GADEM, 2015). However, at the beginning, the operation did not appear promising. Organisations of Moroccan civil society requested adjustments that answered to the practical difficulties they had detected in its enactment. The national monitoring and appeals commission therefore entered into service on June 27, 2014. The NHRC, civil society and migrant associations were associated to the regularisation process with the creation of this this commission. The Commission's primary task was the regularisation of all migrant women in irregular administrative situations, which accounted for 5 060 applications. It further demanded the regularisation of the situation of the members of all migrant associations. The commission's work had a very positive impact, as proven by the significant increase of favourable decisions since its establishment. By December 2, 2014, 10 603 out of the 22 917 submitted applications from citizens of 112 countries were accepted (representing 46%) and 6 601 residency cards were delivered (Ibid.). On February 9, 2015, during a press conference, the Minister of Interior announced the regularisation of 17 916 migrants out of the 27 332 demands.

5.2. Regularisation reasons

As highlighted by Charef (2014: 7), with this initiative, Morocco trying to consolidate its African policy, to reinforce its Euro-Mediterranean role and to position itself as a country respectful of migrant rights. The geopolitical rationale underlying this decision rests on Morocco's 'grand return' to Africa, which consists of a geopolitical reorientation towards the South and efforts to maintain its unifying relationships with Europe. As Cherti and Collyer (2015: 600) assert, whilst Morocco's relations with the North remain of upmost importance, its new interest in the South suggest, nonetheless, a significant political shift. Two fundamental elements explain this reorientation: the situation of the Western Sahara and the economic interests of Morocco in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Since the beginning of 2013, King Mohamed VI repeatedly visited Sub-Saharan Africa in order to gain the support of other countries for the recognition of the region as integral part of Morocco. Such support is fundamental. Accordingly, the regularisation policy represented «a strong symbolic act directed towards the origin countries of Sub-Saharan migrants» (Bensaâd, 2015: 251). Morocco strategically used its migration policy as a foreign policy instrument (Thiollet, 2011: 112). It is important to remember that Morocco had left the African Union in 1984 in protest to the inclusion of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in the organisation, when Western Sahara constitutes for the authorities in Rabat Moroccan territory. Thus, Southern migration issues also represent a diplomatic resource for Morocco. On January 27, 2017, on the occasion of the 28th Summit of the African Union in Addis Ababa held in Ethiopia, Morocco re-joined the African organisation, as it successfully mobilised its allies to vote in favour for its reintegration.

With regards to the economic interests of Morocco in Sub-Saharan Africa, the partnership programs Morocco developed with Africa placed the country as the second-largest African investor on the continent following South Africa. Morocco stands as the first African investor in the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and in the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CAEMC) zone[4]. Morocco's budgetary report for 2014 recorded an increase in exports towards Sub-Saharan Africa of 12,8 billion dirhams in 2012 – as opposed to 2 billion in 2002 –, which represents a tenfold increase over a ten-year period (Ministry of Economy and Finance, 2014 cited in Cherti and Collyer, 2015). A trade surplus were exclusive to countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. It is not, therefore, possible to dissociate Morocco's migration policy from with the country's economic interests in Sub-Saharan Africa, since it is the regional birthplace of the migrants targeted by the regularisation campaign (Bensaâd, 2015: 252)

Finally, as highlighted by Cherti and Collyer (2015), the transformation of Morocco's immigration policy must be considered in relation to this political and economic context. A more humanitarian treatment and greater respect of the rights of Sub-Saharan migrants make sense when the Moroccan State is establishing tight relationships with other countries (p, 601). The rights of migrants, thus, constitute a geopolitical resource for Southern countries (Bensaâd, 2015: 252). As such, 'whilst it was carried by civil society as an appeal, the decision to regularise Sub-Saharan migrants, could not, actually, make its way to the decisional poles of the State without a favourable geopolitical alignment serving the Moroccan State's interests' (Bensaâd, 2015: 250). After years of repression and coercive migration policy to Sub-Saharan migrants, Morocco uses a regularisation campaign, as a tool the cooperative migration diplomacy.

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4. « Le Maroc, hub eurafricain, au cœur de l'émergence », Le Monde, February 9, 2015 [Online] http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2015/02/09/le-maroc-hub-eurafricain-au-c-ur-de-l-emergence_4572578_3212.html

6. Results

6.1. The Effects of the Regularisation Campaign on the Migration Projects of Undocumented Migrants

This section examines the regularization campaign and its influence on the decisions of migrants, mainly if this campaign acts as an incentive for Sub-Saharan migrants to modify their migration projects and consider Morocco as a desirable destination country. It is essential to know how this new political context in Morocco affects and shapes the projects and trajectories of Sub-Saharan migrants and how migrants perceive this turn in the Moroccan migratory policy. It is pertinent to study the influences of the context to understand the evolution of the migratory project better.

6.2. Migratory Regularisation: An Incentive to Stay in Morocco?

Following the conclusions drawn by the Ministry of the Interior on the regularisation operation on February 9, 2015, Moroccan security forces resumed the raids of migrant settlements and arrests, including the dismantlement of the encampment in the Gurugu forest, in the hills located near the Moroccan city of Beni Enzar and at the borders of Melilla. This camp was completely burned[5]. According to different grass-root organisations, between 1200 and 1500 persons lived in the forest and in other encampments near Nador when the arrests occurred. They were all arrested and held in detention centres, without legal processes or guarantees, and subsequently dispersed and abandoned in different Southern Moroccan cities[6] (Media24, 2015). Two of our participants were part of the arrested migrants: '*In 2011, 2012, when police officers arrested you in the forest, they sent you towards Oujda, after the regularisation campaign, February 9 they arrested me and sent me to the South, I was incarcerated for one month in Errachidia… and one morning, they suddenly arrived and «Salam aleykoum, you are free», without giving us anything!*' (Sidy). Keita, on the other hand, was sent to Casablanca: '*I was banished, that is why I am in Rabat… when they drove me out, they left me outside Casablanca and since I did not have the transportation required to return to the forest, I thought I could stay here, with my brothers to look for 20 euros to return to the forest. The police left us beside a highway, and they didn't give a damn, and they left, they told us to get down and walk!*'

The government's attitude exposed the tension between the persistence of a security-driven, repressive and coercive migration policy with a cooperative policy like a regularisation, which recognised the presence of migrants. In spite of the positive aspects of Morocco's new migration policy, the abuses, violence and degrading treatment of Moroccan security forces towards migrants in irregular situations, notably of Sub-Saharan origin, persisted before, during and after the regularisation campaign, particularly in the cities of Rabat, Tanger, Oujda, Nador and around those of Ceuta and Melilla (Human Rights Watch, 2014). As Alioua (2013) states 'the security forces undeniably targeted migrants with dark skin, which led to racist raids… even police brutality (…) within Morocco, this racial profiling and stigmatisation policy led, with a more or less intentional purpose, to the rise of racist acts and statements'.

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5. « Maroc : premier bilan après une régularisation massive de sans-papiers », Le Monde, March 30, 2015. [Online] http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2015/03/30/maroc-premier-bilan-apres-une-regularisation-massive-de-sans-papiers_4605803_3212.html#PIO3bO6PuybtQMOh.99
6. « Le Gadem dévoile la liste des lieux de détention des migrants au Maroc », Medias 24, February 19, 2015. [Online] http://www.medias24.com/SOCIETE/152908-Le-Gadem-devoile-la-liste-des-lieux-de-detention-des-migrants-au-Maroc.html

The context of violence and the social tensions between the migrants and local communities aggravated xenophobia. For example, in November 2012, the front page of a weekly political magazine published in Morocco presented Sub-Saharan migrants as the 'Black Peril', suggesting that their presence favoured the increase of drug trafficking and prostitution[7]. Most of the migrants who participated in this study had been victims of violence or xenophobic acts. This situation makes the lives of migrants in Morocco difficult, even painful, and discourages them from considering the possibility of permanently settling in Morocco rather than pursing their migration projects to Europe. As stated by Mohamed, a Malian migrant that we met in the neighbourhood of Takaddoum, in Rabat: «*regarding Blacks, Blacks are tired of living alongside the Arabs here… homeless people often tried to physically assault us. I don't want to spend 2015 in Morocco, I don't want to waste my time, doing nothing, I want to try once more. In Arab countries, they don't consider Blacks as people just like them, there is too much racism, things aren't right here. Moroccans don't value who you are because you are black*'. Traoré similarly explains: '*in Morocco, Blacks, we are victims of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, we pay more for our housing… two, three times more. We are victims of assaults day after day… «Return to your country! You are not welcome here, Azzi!*[8]»

The common belief amongst the interviewed migrants, even those who had resided in Morocco for several years, was that their journey had not yet come to an end. Although the migration trajectory of some had not taken the direction they desired, their migratory project remained reaching Europe. They believed that Morocco represents a hostile and inhospitable territory: '*we are in great difficulty here… this Europe affair has postponed my time… but we do not have a choice! It isn't about a residence permit, even if we gave me a house here, I wouldn't want to stay here my brother, it isn't about a residence permit… the majority of Moroccans are mean, very annoying (Diamonde)*'. In a similar way, Ibrahim, a migrant from Guinea-Conakry, who had been residing in Morocco for about four years, asserted that '*I do not want to stay here, it is not a «paper» problem, there is no work, there is nothing to do here… it is not a place to settle down… Inch'Allah! I will enter Europe*'.

Without the support of other public policies aiming to y improve the living conditions of immigrants, migratory regularisation itself, does not appear to represent an incentive capable of changing migration projects. The temporary regularisation program implemented in Morocco is an exceptional measure, which does not provide long-term solutions that could stop racial discriminations and violent acts against migrants. As argued by Traoré: '*we are here because many of us are in search of well-being, all that we ask [Moroccans] is to live together, we want them to respect us as human beings, regardless of our administrative situation here in Morocco*'.

As noted above, following the pressure applied by civil society organizations, a political decision was taken to favour women in this regularization process. In fact, in our sample, 9 out of 12 women interviewed had succeeded in regularizing their situation. The remaining three had not yet submitted their application. It should be noted that women are particularly vulnerable in Morocco. They are subject to exploitation and abuse. Among the women interviewed, most had left their country of origin because they had been accused of witchcraft. They have become wanderers. A number of them were only fourteen years old when they arrived in Morocco after a difficult journey, marked by different forms of violence. In this regard, Auclair points out that «women's migration trajectories are characterized by specific social systems and structures that

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7. « Le péril noir ». Maroc Hebdo, no 998, November 8, 2012.
8. The word «Azzi» is a likely derogatory term used in Morocco to designate a «black» person in the Arabic language.

promote or limit their mobility. These axes of social inequality influence the production and re-production of various forms of violence, while characterizing the migration trajectory» (2016: 4). In order to survive in Morocco, many migrant women are forced to prostitute themselves at the Rabat bus station or beg with their children around traffic lights on the streets of Rabat. Migrant women face greater risks of being victims of different types of violence, including sexual violence. Although migrant men also face several difficulties and forms of violence in accessing different resources, in the case of migrant women, these are exacerbated by systemic gender inequalities.

The regularization policy of favouring women was limited to obtaining a residence permit. Once it was granted, no specific initiative was taken to promote the integration of these migrant women, who regular in Morocco. As several women have shown, this change in migration status has not had a significant impact on their situation in Morocco and therefore on their migration pro-ject, «*they told us to fill out the papers, the government of our country has informed us [that] we have to get the residence permit, 'it will help you, if you want the work and so on...'. I did, I went to the police and then they call you to get the residence permit. They quickly gave me the residence permit but there is no work...what should we do...will the Moroccan women agree to leave a place for us here? We are stuck here, the sea awaits us, we give ourselves to God*» (Rosy). Although regu-larisation may contribute to reduce certain forms of insecurity, it appears unable to significantly change their living conditions, «*they gave us the residence card but where is the work? I am always suffering... nothing has changed*» (Beba). In the same way, Celine, a Congolese migrant who ar-rived in Morocco in 2013, says that having a regular status did not improve her situation on the labour market, «*Since January [2015], I have been a victim. I have worked here, in this country for 3 months in a café and they have not paid me my money. Before we started, they told me they were going to pay me 4 euros a day, but I didn't touch that. So, we are victims of many things, since you are not home, to whom are you going to declare [what is happening]? I don't have the money to pay for a lawyer. It's not easy, three months without being paid! We've been regularized, but it doesn't change anything for now*».

Many migrants gained the recognition of their status through regularisation in a context marked by the generalised precariousness of their living conditions, the inadequate access to formal em-ployment and education, daily violence, and racial discrimination. Insecurity even affects those who successfully obtain a legal status, thus creating a form of 'precarious legality' (Basok and Ro-jas, 2017). The children of migrants in irregular situations further expose the inadequacies of the regularisation policy. A female Congolese migrant that gave birth in a hospital in Rabat recalled how she was unable to obtain a birth certificate. The document she received proves that migrants remain politically constructed as temporary: *'I do not have documents. I was told that the King gives us a residence permit, since I did not have any proof, I did not take the documents (i.e. I wasn't able to regularise my status). The baby is also undocumented. When I gave birth, they gave me the child and told me to go home, I do not have documents for him. I gave birth at Souissi, I spent three days there. They did not register the child, not even the birth certificate, I have nothing. Here, if you give birth, they will write the child's date of birth and «born in transit», «only in transit», so children here don't have a nationality, they don't have documents, nothing!'(Stephanie)*

In addition, the transition from 'illegality' to 'legality' through regularisation is not linear (Basok and Rojas, 2017), since residency, cards are temporarily assigned and must, therefore, be renewed for the preservation of the migrant's status. The status of the migrants targeted by the regularisa-tion program is unstable and depends on their capacity to satisfy renewal conditions (*Ibid.*), «*pa-pers are for a one year only, after that, they will begin to chase us again... what will we do*?»*(Nancy)*

Consequently, the 'transit' becomes a (semi)permanent condition that translates as a period of physical and experiential immobility (Basok et al., 2015), because of security measures preventing migrants in irregular situations from moving and attaining their desired destination. This also results from the perceived lack of alternatives from pursing their attempts to cross the Mediterranean Sea. The example of Mamadou clearly exposes this immobility: *'I realised that I stayed too long abroad, I have been in Morocco for four years… If you stay in Morocco, you don't make money. You can't find money to send to your country, you are only here, you are not entering Europe, you are stuck here. The objective was to gain access to Europe, I have not entered, I am stuck here. I am stuck in Morocco'*. Keita similarly explains, *'here, really, I feel like I am stuck, I don't have the means, I don't have a job, it is little difficult for me, I prefer going to the forest because at least, in the forest, I feel comfortable, I am looking at Europe, it can help me attain my objectives, because here, there is nothing to do'*. Like many other migrants, he prefers staying in the forest, near the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. From Mount Gourougou, the Spanish city of Melilla can be seen. This visibility offers a very strong image for the migrants, as it gives the illusion that Europe is at their fingertips: *'every day when I sit, I look at Europe, I always hope to enter because I know that one day, with the grace of God, I will also enter…'*.

Migrant trajectories are threaded within these locations, suspended in time, as migrants hope of one day crossing into Europe. Under current conditions, staying in Morocco is not contingent to the acquirement of valid documents, since they feel that a portion of the Moroccan population will never accept their presence. Since they do not believe that it is possible to live a good life in Morocco, their migration project remains reaching Europe. For many, 'it's Europe or nothing', even if this means death. Beba, a Congolese woman, told us that she wasn't afraid to throw herself in the water and risk her life by crossing the Mediterranean, *'I will try to leave because here, there is nothing, I am not afraid, I am already dead… my breath is sufferance… if I die it is good, I will rest'*.

7. Conclusion

This article has argued for the importance of the concept of migration project in accentuating the link with the new political context in Morocco. Under this theoretical notion, the article demonstrates that the regularisation campaign is not an incentive for Sub-Saharan migrants to modify their migration projects and consider Morocco as a desirable destination country. The findings show that regularisation did not have significant effects on the migratory projects of Sub-Saharan migrants, since Europe remains their privileged destination, even for those who have been residing in Morocco for several years.

As observed, the regularisation campaign is the result of an international political and economic context that reflected Morocco's geopolitical reorientation towards the rest of Africa. This geopolitical reorientation fostered the recognition of the presence of Sub-Saharan Migrants in Morocco as a societal fact. In spite of its relative success, the regularisation campaign was not supported by an integrated policy dealing with the different obstacles and problems to which the thousands of Sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco are faced. As Levinson asserts «programs can be a useful tool for migration management when used in concert with other policy tools, as well as an alternative to ideas such as the wholesale deportation of migrants or the complete sealing of borders»(2005:10):. While access to a residence permit constitutes considerable progress, this has not been accompanied by other public policies aimed at terminating racial discriminations and violence against migrants, especially from the police authorities. Under current conditions,

migratory regularisation does not act as an incentive prompting migrants to alter their migration projects.

Morocco implements both coercive and cooperative strategies in migration management: regularization, but also repression. Violent raids targeting migrants, arrests, deportations and exclusions Moroccan authorities periodically carry out remain daily occurrences. It seems like the «exceptionality» of the regularisation campaign confirms the rule of repression, since the 02-03 Law, which criminalises migrants is still in effect, despite discussions on a new migration policy that has yet to change the prevailing law. Regularisation becomes a sort of royal favour tied to geopolitical interests, but detached from a new broader legal framework.

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At the end 2016, King Mohamed VI announced a new regularisation campaign. It remains to be seen if this new campaign will go further than that of 2013. New provisions should lead to the decriminalization of undocumented migrants and the adoption of a more humanitarian approach. It should notably address the problems that Sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco face, such as discrimination in accessing employment, racism and citizenship rights. To conclude, a sustainable policy should more effectively answer to the new realities of migration in Morocco, advocating for fair conditions for all immigrants and for the protection of their rights. It should strive to implement the right to family reunification, promote their integration in the labor market, support educational opportunities and facilitate the access to housing, as well as social and health services.

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