REPORT ARAB POLITICS BEYOND THE UPRISINGS

Culture Is the Solution

As Political Reform Stalls, Moroccan Activists Engage Citizens through Art

APRIL 25, 2017 — URSULA LINDSEY

The cultural field in Morocco today contains the most vivid expression of the energies and aspirations of the country's 2011 protest movement, which demanded greater freedom, pluralism, and equality. While the media remains tightly controlled, and the political scene is dominated by the monarchy, many activists have focused on cultural projects as a means to advance their values. They argue that all citizens should have access to the arts, and that the state should invest in education and public facilities that support the arts. Activists and artists believe culture produces more open-minded, aware, and engaged citizens. They contend that restoring this missing element of Moroccan civic life holds a key to the country's development and eventual democratization, and see themselves as working against Islamists' takeover of public space and discourse. But it is unclear how much the activists can accomplish within the current conservative, security-minded context, without the support of a broader social movement or political project.

In early November 2016, the grounds of a derelict industrial complex on the outskirts of Casablanca were transformed. The city's old municipal slaughterhouse, known as Les Abattoirs, is a vast, surprisingly attractive Art Deco building that sits unused and crumbling. For years now artists and activists have lobbied the municipal authorities, to no avail, to be allowed to turn it into a cultural space. Even without official permission, they routinely use the complex to hold events, and have slowly covered its walls with murals and graffiti.

This is where the Moroccan nongovernmental organization Racines ("Roots") staged the second edition of the États Généraux de la Culture au Maroc, a three-day "general assembly" dedicated to discussing the role of culture in Morocco, presenting data on the cultural practices of Moroccans and recommending policies that promote access to the arts for all. Racines' definition of culture, and the one that I use in this report, is expansive. It encompasses all fields of creative expression (such as music, theater, visual arts, cinema, literature) both amateur and professional. It includes the dissemination and consumption of creative work as much as its production. To many activists, as we will see, "culture" also connotes the values that they believe engagement with the arts can foster: freedom of thought and expression, tolerance of diversity, critical thinking and openness to debate, secularism, and pluralism.

The event in Casablanca featured concerts and art installations; workshops in graphic art and parkour; and a space in which associations connected to culture manned stalls explaining their work to the public. In the evenings, a crowd filed into a large circus tent to watch a performance by the itinerant troupe Théâtre Nomade that included traditional storytelling, giant puppets, and acrobats. Some of the most enthusiastic members of the audience were children from the neighborhood who had participated in theater classes.

The following week, the capital Rabat hosted Visa for Music, a three-year-old festival dedicated to showcasing music from Africa and the Middle East. Later that month, Rabat also hosted the sixth edition of the festival Migrant'scene, which features music, theater and cinema on the theme of migration, and is a meeting point for migrant artists in

CHILDREN IN THE AUDIENCE DURING A PERFORMANCE BY THÉÂTRE NOMADE AT THE ÉTATS GÉNÉRAUX DE LA CULTURE AU MAROC, NOVEMBER 11, 2016. CREDIT SAUPHIANE IDLCADI

Sebaa's history; an exhibition of young photographers' takes on the neighborhood; and a "citizens' museum" of the area including artifacts and recorded testimonies.

In Morocco today, the number of associations, gatherings, spaces, and initiatives dedicated to promoting culture are hard to keep up with. In recent years the country has witnessed a sustained wave of cultural activity that includes graffiti; street theater; dance and music festivals; open-air cinema nights; mobile libraries; private galleries and museums; and new cultural centers and spaces.

Yet according to a report by the Economic, Social and Environmental Council of Morocco—an advisory body that conducts research and recommends policies—"Moroccan society is witnessing a gap between the modernization of its infrastructure and institutions and a persistent deficiency in matters of culture."[1] It is common to hear laments over the number of cinemas that have closed in Morocco in recent decades; the very limited audience for literature; or the lack of facilities for young artists and musicians to train, rehearse, and produce their work.

It is common to hear laments over the number of cinemas that have closed in Morocco in recent decades; the very limited audience for literature; or the lack of facilities for young artists and musicians to train, rehearse, and produce their work.

"There is a general feeling that the cultural question is important, but this feeling is not translated politically,[2] said Driss Ksikes, a prominent Moroccan playwright, novelist and public intellectual.

The many cultural initiatives being launched by individuals and by civil society in Morocco are in fact the symptom of a great sense of lack and urgency. Cultural activists are working to fill a void left by the state. Most share a common vision of culture as a missing and vital element in Moroccan civic life and argue that it is key to the country's economic development and democratization.

What I call cultural activism includes efforts to make the production and consumption of culture as widely accessible as possible, founded on the argument that access to art is each citizen's right. It also includes cultural outreach undertaken to push particular agendas: to carry out voter education campaigns; to fight discrimination against migrants and refugees; to carve out a greater place for the arts in urban development; to counter the influence of Islamism among marginalized youth. Finally, cultural activism involves lobbying the Moroccan state. In most Arab countries as well as in France, which is a significant model for Morocco, the state is an important patron of the arts. Cultural activists call on their government not so much to fund the arts (although they demand that too) as to implement policies that will facilitate a vibrant local culture for all Moroccans—including its production, its dissemination, and access to it.

Cultural activism in Morocco is the most visible prolongation of the country's 2011 protest movement. Culture, more than politics or the media, is the field in which that movement's aspirations—to greater freedom, pluralism, and equality—are most clearly expressed today. It is a space from which activists feel they can push back against Islamism, social conservatism and authoritarianism, from which to articulate new forms of citizenship.

Racines may be the most articulate proponent of this vision. An umbrella organization that partners with and brings together many others, Racines focuses on infrastructure that regulates artistic production and consumption. Its main mission is to lobby the Moroccan government to adopt public policies—be they cultural, educational, urban, or legal—that promote the daily production and consumption of art. Its ultimate goal, however, is to empower citizens by encouraging creativity and debate.

"We work with culture to have children and adults who are free in their heads; who can't be manipulated,"[3] said Aadel Essaadani, one of Racines' founders.

Cultural activism has taken place despite—or perhaps because of—the closure of most avenues for significant political engagement, especially on the part of progressives. Six years after the Arab uprisings brought prodemocracy protests and a new constitution to Morocco, its political scene remains dominated by the monarchy. Its newly elected parliament is weak, fragmented, and deadlocked between Islamists, who have gained new prominence within the political system, and opponents allied with the Palace and bent on limiting the Islamist newcomers' influence. The authorities have cracked down on human rights groups and the independent press. Public space and public discourse remain closely monitored and governed by a conservative consensus.

Yet while there is censorship in Morocco—particularly of cultural productions with the potential to reach large audiences, such as movies and rap music in the Moroccan Arabic dialect—state repression here is not as heavy-handed as in many other Arab countries. The government remains committed—rhetorically if not in practice—to a vision of progress and gradual democratization. The authorities are concerned with projecting a moderate, modernist image and sometimes find liberal cultural milieus useful in countering the influence of ascendant political Islam. This means cultural activities, if they are not too subversive and if they avoid taboo areas such as religion, the monarchy, and national "unity," have a significant margin of autonomy.

But there is an ongoing debate between those working in the cultural field on whether their activities can catalyze social and political change or whether, unaccompanied by political support or a broader social movement, their efforts can only create vibrant but vulnerable islands of openness. The cultural field may appear dynamic in Morocco largely because the energies concentrated there have nowhere else to go. The question is how much can be achieved through cultural activism and to what extent, under a system in which demands for political reform and greater economic justice have been successfully contained, culture can replace or circumvent politics as a vector for change.

Morocco's Short Spring

In February 2011, protesters took to the streets in Morocco just as they already had in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, and Bahrain. The February 20 movement—named after the date of the first demonstration—called for greater equality and democracy and an end to pervasive corruption.

King Mohamed VI responded quickly. In a speech on March 9, 2011,[4] he promised a new constitution that would devolve more powers to regional authorities and to parliament; recognize the indigenous Amazigh, or Berber, identity

and language (which is spoken by at least a third of the country); strengthen human rights and enlarge personal freedoms; make the judiciary more independent; and hold public officials more accountable. He also raised the salaries of public officials.

By taking the initiative, and rallying political parties (including the Islamist Party of Justice and Development, or PJD) in support of a referendum to approve the new constitution, the Moroccan monarchy successfully undercut the protest movement. Although activists called for a boycott of the vote on the constitution, arguing that it did not deliver true reform, it was approved in July 2011 by an overwhelming majority. In the following parliamentary elections, the PJD, allowed for the first time to run unimpeded across the country, won the highest number of seats. Abdelilah Benkirane, the party's head, became Morocco's prime minister, according to a stipulation in the new constitution. In the elections held in fall 2016, the PJD came in first again. Although the PJD is a moderate Islamist party committed to working within the political system, its rise has troubled artists and liberals who worry about a further "Islamization" of society.

Looking back on the February 20 movement, activists have asked themselves why, as Dounia Benslimane, another Racines founder, said: "The people didn't really follow."[5] Driss Ksikes says the collapse of the protest movement led some of its supporters to conclude that "there isn't enough culture for political awareness." Ksikes laments that Moroccan society remains conformist, very religious, afraid of novelty, and unused to questioning authority.[6]

Since 2011, the balance of power in Morocco has not significantly changed. The king, Mohamed VI, is the country's preeminent political, economic and religious authority (he holds the title of "Commander of the Faithful"). He heads the judiciary and the army and appoints the heads of "strategic" ministries and public companies. According to the constitution, he is the guarantor of the "continuity of the state" and "supreme arbiter between institutions."[7] He is the country's largest landowner and was ranked by Forbes as the fifth richest man in Africa in 2015. It is a crime to speak disrespectfully of him. His advisers wield significantly more influence than elected officials.

Moroccans are reluctant to criticize the king, who is seen as a source of unity and stability; very few of them would suggest curtailing his powers. However, there are frequent complaints about the "makhzen"—a key term in Moroccan politics that means "warehouse" in Arabic.[8] In precolonial times, the sultan's army would set out from "bled al-makhzen" (the land of the warehouse, where the sultan stored treasure and wheat), to collect tribute from tribes in "bled al-siba" (the land of dissent). In today's usage, the makhzen isn't the monarchy itself. Rather, it's the network of patronage and influence in public administration and business that revolves around the king and that monopolizes opportunities and resources.

An average citizen arbitrarily targeted by the authorities and disposed of as garbage: Fikri's death could not have been more apt to represent citizens' "hogra" (humiliation) at the hands of the state. Images of his grisly death immediately circulated online, igniting demonstrations.

It was against the makhzen that crowds chanted in the 2011 protests and in ones that have broken out since, such as in November 2016. The latter were triggered by the death of a fish vendor named Mohcen Fikri, who had a load of swordfish—a protected species—confiscated by port officials and police in the northern town of Al Hoceima. Fikri stepped into the garbage compacting truck in which his fish was being disposed of to try to retrieve it, and was crushed to death. An average citizen arbitrarily targeted by the authorities and disposed of as garbage: Fikri's death could not have been more apt to represent citizens' "hogra" (humiliation) at the hands of the state. Images of his grisly death immediately circulated online, igniting demonstrations.

Yet given the breakdowns and civil wars that have followed uprisings in other Arab countries, many Moroccans are relieved that their country did not slip into chaos and is a regional exception today. In the current context, there is little appetite for confrontation or risking a radical change.

"When people saw authoritarian regimes falling with hardly a drop of blood, it was tempting," said Fouad Abdelmoumni, who served time in jail for his student activism in the 1970s and is a pillar of Moroccan civil society today. But, he added, "when we saw what happened in Bahrain, Yemen, Libya, and Syria, we started saying, 'OK, we want change, but not at any price.'"[9]

In fact Morocco has never experienced a socialist revolution or a rupture with colonial powers, as other countries such as Egypt or Algeria did. Instead, it is the forces of conservatism that have prevailed here, more than once, and the Moroccan monarchy has played a key role in this.

Sultan Mohamed V (1909–61) supported calls for the country's independence and was exiled by the French. This only increased his popularity when he returned to the country in 1956, to negotiate the French withdrawal and rule as Morocco's king.

His son Hassan II (1929–99) took power in 1961. Faced with contestation and demands for change from leftist movements and nationalist parties, the new king revealed himself to be wily, ruthless, and dedicated to not just preserving but expanding the monarchy's powers. He survived two attempted military coups and during the infamous "years of lead"—through the 1970s and 1980s—decimated his opponents, who were kidnapped, tortured, disappeared, and exiled.

The new king revealed himself to be wily, ruthless, and dedicated to not just preserving but expanding the monarchy's powers. He survived two attempted military coups and during the infamous "years of lead"—through the 1970s and 1980s—decimated his opponents, who were kidnapped, tortured, disappeared, and exiled.

These included some of the country's preeminent artists and writers—such as poet Abdellatif Laabi—who in the late 1960s founded a groundbreaking leftist cultural magazine called Souffles. Kenza Sefrioui has written a book about the magazine and its "hopes of a cultural revolution." The avant-garde artists involved with the magazine thought there should be no separation of culture and politics, and that culture could be both a tool of decolonization and of contestation against local authoritarianism, a way to unite citizens. In 1972 the magazine was banned and several of its editors tortured and put on trial for trying to overthrow the state.[10]

In Hassan II's Morocco, elections were rigged; the press was censored; the security services acted with impunity. The entire political class was left, Abdelmoumni said, "emasculated" to this day.

Upon Hassan II's death in 1999, Mohamed VI (1963–) ascended the throne. The thirty-six-year-old king made a break with the country's repressive past. He fired his father's infamous minister of the interior and created a truth and reconciliation committee, which heard testimony from the victims of Hassan II's repression but did not identify their torturers. The political system and the press were partly liberalized.

It was at this time that Morocco saw the beginning of a new cultural vibrancy, as musicians, writers, artists, and filmmakers took advantage of the breath of freedom, and hope swept the country. Dubbed "nayda" (it moves)[11] by commentators at the time, an emerging underground scene—largely based in Casablanca and centered around music—

was over-optimistically compared to the Spanish "movida," the cultural flowering that accompanied that country's transition from Francisco Franco's regime to democracy.

Five years after the Arab uprisings, the reform process in Morocco has, if not stalled, slowed to a crawl. The country's democratic transition is "an eternal transition," according to Nabila Mounib, the head of an alliance of small leftist parties, which calls for a "true parliamentary monarchy."

In 2004, Mohamed VI called for a reform of family law that significantly strengthened women's rights. Dubbed "the king of the poor" in the early years of his reign, he oversaw a vast expansion of roads, electricity and water services to the country's cut-off rural communities. Yet Morocco remains poor compared to its North African neighbors, with deep social inequalities. Illiteracy and poverty are concentrated in the rural hinterland and in urban slums. Corruption and the poor quality of public services are a constant complaint. While Moroccans do not demand radical change, they do have higher expectations today, and are more likely to voice them.

Six years after the Arab uprisings, the reform process in Morocco has, if not stalled, slowed to a crawl. The country's democratic transition is "an eternal transition," according to Nabila Mounib, the head of an alliance of small leftist parties, which calls for a "true parliamentary monarchy."[12]

Mounib's party won just two seats in the 2016 parliamentary elections. The leading party is the Islamist PJD, followed by the Party of Authenticity and Modernity (PAM), an anti-Islamist party created in 2009 by a childhood friend and close confidante of the king. Otherwise, the parliament is fragmented between a large number of parties that are in decline or riddled with clientelism; leftist movements and parties, weakened by decades of repression and then compromised by their entry into government in the final years of Hassan II's reign, have seen their influence erode. It is little surprise that Moroccans take a dim view of political parties and, in surveys, express very low levels of trust in public institutions.[13]

Activists are also dismissive of formal politics, where the only real change in the last five years has been the integration of Islamists. According to Essaadani, "politics doesn't work to express oneself: it's gangrened, rotten."[14]

Meanwhile, in the current regional and international context, the Moroccan authorities have had little trouble reverting to a more security-oriented discourse. They have persecuted members of the February 20 movements and other critics, muzzled the press, and harassed human rights activists. The Moroccan Association of Human Rights, the country's

preeminent human rights group, has been prevented from holding gatherings and events.

"Artists expressing criticism of authorities, especially of the police, face the risk of harassment and even imprisonment on trumped up charges," notes a stakeholder submission from Racines and another Moroccan cultural association to the United Nations' 2016 *Periodic Review*.[15] This has particularly been the case for rappers. The reach of their music—which is sung in Moroccan Arabic dialect and is widely available to lower-income youth—as well as their unvarnished depiction of daily life and subversive attitude to authority have made them prime targets of censorship. The rapper Mouad Belghouat, known as Lhaqed ("The Hateful"), left Morocco in 2015 after being arrested more than once on seemingly spurious charges and prevented from performing his songs. Lhaqed became famous during the February 20 movement and is probably best known for his anticorruption and antipolice song "Kilab al-Dawla" ("Dogs of the State"). Several other young rappers have been accused of "insulting a state institution," "incitement to consume drugs," and producing and displaying content that is "harmful to public morality" for performing songs that criticize the police.

MOROCCAN RAPPER LHAQED, BEST KNOWN FOR HIS ANTICORRUPTION AND ANTIPOLICE SONG "KILAB AL-DAWLA" ("DOGS OF THE STATE"), LEFT MOROCCO IN 2015 AFTER BEING ARRESTED REPEATEDLY ON SEEMINGLY SPURIOUS CHARGES AND PREVENTED FROM PERFORMING. CREDIT YOUTUBE/BELRHOUATE MOUAD

The report goes on to argue that self-censorship among artists is common and that the three main red lines are the monarchy, Islam and territorial integrity—meaning Morocco's claim to the territory of Western Sahara, which is disputed by the Polisario independence movement.

Racines: Our Aim Is the Public

Yet despite this closure of political space and public dialogue, Morocco has witnessed a sustained series of cultural initiatives and activities. As in other Arab countries, the protest movements of 2011 triggered a renewed interest in graffiti and street art. Artists have organized public dances, festivals, and theater performances. In a country in which illiteracy still stands at about 30 percent and in which a study showed that Moroccans read, on average, two minutes a day,[16] there have been many initiatives to encourage reading, such as organizing itinerant libraries to visit marginalized neighborhoods and slums, or making books available on public transportation. New art galleries and publishing ventures have sprung forth in Morocco's major cities. Cultural centers that offer rehearsal and exhibition spaces, community outreach, and art classes have been set up in lower-income neighborhoods, either by wealthy patrons or by artists who have known how to fundraise and lobby public officials.

"If there's one thing that's interesting to observe, it's all the cultural transformation that came out of February 20," Ksikes said. He noted that this cultural dynamism intensified during the 2011 protests but that it also predated them. "February 20 was built on cultural and not only political networks," he said.[17]

Racines has been busy strengthening many of those networks. The association, founded in 2010, is an influential and dynamic force in Moroccan civil society.

While some of Racines' activism is overtly concerned with politics—such as a campaign it ran in 2016, ahead of parliamentary elections, to emphasize the value of the vote—it mostly focuses on gathering data to argue for particular cultural policies that could help artists and increase audiences. The organization lobbies on behalf of artists and cultural professionals and calls for incorporating the arts into the educational curriculum and into public spaces.

Benslimane and Essaadani, two of Racines' founders, were already members of the association Casamemoire, which is dedicated to preserving Casablanca's urban heritage. Essaadani is a scenographer and associate director of an institute that trains in technical and administrative jobs in the performing arts.

"We said to ourselves, either we go on complaining or we work on changing the framework, to place culture at the center of urban, social economic development," said Essaadani,[18] who argues that the process of producing and enjoying art is key to the development of an open-minded, thoughtful, engaged citizenry.

"We need a cultural policy that encompasses everything, that goes from the school to the marketplace," Benslimane said. "It's a chain. We wanted to focus on the chain."[19]

She continued: “Our ultimate aim is the public, how to put in place things that will benefit the public—the citizen, the Moroccan man and woman. How can we inculcate values of citizenship, of human rights, of freedom, of respect, of tolerance? That’s our priority. We argue this isn’t possible unless culture is at the heart of all reform plans.”

“Our ultimate aim is the public, how to put in place things that will benefit the public—the citizen, the Moroccan man and woman. How can we inculcate values of citizenship, of human rights, of freedom, of respect, of tolerance? That’s our priority. We argue this isn’t possible unless culture is at the heart of all reform plans.”

“We think the political solutions haven’t worked, the economic solutions haven’t worked, Essaadani said. Hence the slogan of this year’s États Généraux: “Culture is the solution”—which is also a rebuttal of the Islamist slogan “Islam is the solution.”

Racines’ work contains a critique of Morocco’s cultural policies, which tend to favor large events and landmark venues, meant to attract international attention, good press, and tourists. Many cities in Morocco host an annual music festival: a jazz festival in Tangiers, a festival of sacred music in Fez, a festival of Gnawa music in Essaouira, etc. While in some cases they have successfully popularized forms of Moroccan music (particularly Gnawa, a West African genre linked to healing rituals), in others they have been criticized as expensive extravaganzas that burnish Morocco’s image while doing little to promote local musicians. Casablanca’s music festival L’Boulevard, which features rap and hip-hop music, is independent; it has always struggled financially, having to cancel several editions.

A PERFORMANCE DURING THE SECOND EDITION OF THE ÉTATS GÉNÉRAUX DE LA CULTURE AU MAROC, STAGED BY THE MOROCCAN NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION "RACINES." CREDIT RACINES/WWW.RACINES.MA

Morocco has also been building a number of ambitious new cultural venues. The country's first contemporary art museum opened in Rabat in 2014; in Marrakech, museums of photography and of African arts are in the works. A new opera house, designed by Zaha Hadid, is being erected in the valley between the cities of Rabat and Sale. Morocco is also increasingly a destination for international film crews—some of the movies filmed here in recent years include *The Bourne Ultimatum*, *Mission Impossible: Rogue Nation* and *007: Spectre*.

Yet the country lacks smaller spaces where artists and amateurs can practice and perform. There are few institutes dedicated to training cultural professionals in fields such as restoration, sound and video editing, cultural management and administration, curatorial and library arts, set design, etc. Hundreds of "maisons de jeunesse" (youth houses) run by the Ministry of Youth and Sport sit largely unused, because the administrators in charge of them have neither a budget to put on cultural programming nor any training in how to do so. Only officially registered youth associations are allowed access to the *maisons*.

"The government has a policy of infrastructure, not of culture," argued Essaadani. "They built a 1,500-seat theater in Oujda," he said, referring to a town on the Moroccan-Algerian border. The theater that was opened there in 2014 is the largest in the country, although Oujda is only its tenth most populous city. According to media reports, a year after its inauguration, the theater was plagued by water leakages, poor acoustics, poor visibility from its balconies, and untrained personnel.[20] "They just want to inaugurate it and say to the world: Look, Morocco has theater," said Essaadani. "The state uses culture for its international image. No thought is given to how spaces will be used."

An important part of Racines' activism has simply been to document the presence and operations of cultural spaces. The group has created an online interactive map, featuring individuals and institutions associated with eighteen artistic disciplines (the map had more than three thousand data points in the fall of 2016). This allows users to find out what cultural venues, rehearsal spaces or arts institutes are nearby, as well as to see what parts of the country are lacking particular services.

Racines spent 2016 holding public meetings in fourteen far-flung and medium-sized Moroccan cities, documenting the kinds of cultural activities, spaces and demands there. In some cities, it found that there were no public cultural facilities at all; or that existing ones had been closed for over a decade.

The survey found that 85 percent of Moroccans did not have library cards and 64 percent had not bought a book in the previous year. About 80 percent of respondents said they never go to the movies or to art galleries; 73 percent said they never attend the theater.

In 2016 the organization also conducted a survey on the cultural practices of Moroccans, whose results have been published online.[21] The survey found that 85 percent of Moroccans did not have library cards and 64 percent had not bought a book in the previous year. About 80 percent of respondents said they never go to the movies or to art galleries; 73 percent said they never attend the theater. On the other hand, about 70 percent of respondents said they practice some sort of artistic activity (many of them regularly). Singing was the number-one activity, followed by writing poetry and novels, dancing, drawing, and playing music.

Promoting a More Inclusive Identity

Many of the different regional cultural associations that were present at the gathering in Casablanca in November are simply focused on making the arts more accessible, giving Moroccans the chance to learn to draw, to acquire a taste for reading, or to have a space to rehearse with a band.

The association Minority Globe has a more specific focus: it is dedicated to promoting cultural expression by Morocco's migrant communities and to encouraging exchanges between them and Moroccans. The kingdom has long been a country of passage for migrants from sub-Saharan African countries hoping to reach Spain and Europe. But in recent years the migration routes have been ever more tightly policed. Meanwhile, the Moroccan authorities, with encouragement and funding from the European Union, have begun granting residency permits to migrants, encouraging some to stay and envisage a life in the country.

Ghanaian musician Reuben Odoi founded Minority Globe in 2009, as a music and theater production company (thanks to Morocco's new migration laws, Odoi has now been able to register Minority Globe as a nongovernmental organization). A self-taught guitarist, singer-songwriter, and actor, Odoi arrived in Casablanca after living in Mali and taking a circuitous and dangerous route through Algeria. He volunteered with aid groups, formed a band with Moroccan musicians, and joined activists calling for greater recognition and rights for migrants in Morocco. He became known within the migrant community, where he said he found many other musical talents, who often asked him for advice on launching a career in Morocco. "Before everyone wanted to go emigrate, now everyone wants to record," Odoi said. "Migrants are performing at clubs, festivals, private parties."[22]

MEMBERS OF MINORITY GLOBE'S 2016 PROJECT MIX CITY PERFORM PLAYS BASED ON TRUE STORIES ABOUT THE DISCRIMINATION MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES FACE IN EVERYDAY LIFE IN MOROCCO, IN TUNIS IN JANUARY 2016. MINORITY GLOBE FOUNDER REUBEN ODOI, IN BLUE JACKET, IS ON THE FAR LEFT. CREDIT FACEBOOK/THE MINORITY

Minority Globe's 2016 project Mix City recruited migrants and refugees interested in workshopping their stories with Moroccan playwrights and performing them in the street. These narratives tended to be about everyday life in Morocco, and the forms of discrimination migrants face there, such as "being refused by a taxi driver, being insulted, having trouble accessing health care or education," said Odoi. The group's methods are based on "the theater of the oppressed" elaborated by Brazilian director Augusto Boal, who championed accessible, relevant, improvised theatrical forms as a way to engage audiences.

"The spectators are encouraged to become actors," Odoi said. "In the audience, some were shocked at what refugees' life is like. Some were in denial."

Minority Globe is just one of several initiatives dedicated to either supporting artistic expression by migrants or to advocating on their behalf through cultural events. Expressing solidarity with migrants and refugees who are living in Morocco is not just a way for cultural actors to spread the values of tolerance and human rights; it is also a way to question a certain conception of Moroccan identity.

Racines, for example, explicitly positions itself as part of an African rather than an Arab cultural scene. This makes sense because Morocco shares a common Francophone culture and postcolonial heritage with many African countries. But it is also a critique of the traditional Arab and Islamic identity celebrated and imposed by nationalist and Islamist forces here since independence. In the name of "unity" and of a supposedly immutable national identity, this vision of Morocco marginalized the country's indigenous Berber language and heritage. Focusing on Morocco's connections to Africa is a way to emphasize the pluralism of its culture. And as Essaadani said, "we have more to learn from Mali right now than from Egypt."

"We have more to learn from Mali right now than from Egypt."

"The goal of street theater isn't just to come and go," Odoi said, "but to encourage others to advocate in similar ways as well." Yet the Mix City project was seriously hampered by the attitude of Moroccan authorities toward public performances and gatherings. Of the five cities in which they planned to perform, Minority Globe was only able to put on shows in Casablanca and—after asking government officials in the capital to intervene—the northern city of Nador.

The strong interest in street art and public performances on the part of Moroccan cultural actors is clearly linked to the protests of 2011 and the way they allowed citizens to reimagine public space as more open to all. "Demonstrating is a theatrical act," Ksikes noted. In fact, Moroccan authorities often do not make a distinction between public art performances and political demonstrations, and take a dim view of both. They are regulated by the same law and most often prevented from taking place by police in much the same way. Partly in response to these interdictions, Racines has launched a petition calling for new legislation recognizing that "cultural performances and expressions must not be forbidden without a valid reason, peaceful public debate must not be discouraged, women and minorities must have a place in public spaces." The organization is using a new petition mechanism enshrined in the 2011 constitution, which states that the government must consider any petition with more than five thousand signatures.

Claiming Public Space

Another recently launched Moroccan cultural project, Think Tanger, is also concerned with public space. The young Moroccan photographer and curator Hicham Bouzid established the organization in 2015. Bouzid had already helped found an art gallery in Marrakech and an electronic music festival in Tangier.

Think Tanger's goal, as stated on its Facebook page, is to "understand the mutation of the city today, to imagine a better future for the city of tomorrow." Tangier, after being neglected for decades by the authorities, has been experiencing massive development in the last ten to fifteen years—both in terms of ambitious urban renewal and infrastructure projects and in terms of massive unregulated housing construction on the city's peripheries.

AN INSTALLATION BY PHOTOGRAPHER HICHAM GARDAF, MADE DURING HIS RESIDENCE AT THINK TANGER, AN ORGANIZATION THAT ADVOCATES FOR GREATER PARTICIPATION BY TANGIERS RESIDENTS IN THE CITY'S DEVELOPMENT.CREDIT FACEBOOK/THINK TANGER

Bouzid said the plans for the city's development fail to account for its denizens' voices and needs. "They just consider the city's residents as consumers," he said, pointing out that two of the biggest gathering spaces in the 2017 Tanger Metropole development plan are malls. Meanwhile, some of the city's architectural heritage is being quickly lost. Critics of the city's development also question its allocation of resources, for example in the construction of the malls,[23] and of a high-speed train connecting Tangiers to the south of the country. Bouzid noted the shocking disparity between the new hotels and shopping centers and the expanding shantytowns just a stone's throw away.

Nor is this is unique to Tangiers: rural-to-urban migration and real estate speculation is common in Morocco today, leaving citizens of rapidly growing urban centers feeling alienated. In a 2016 study on public spaces and culture, the Economic, Social and Environmental Council of Morocco deplored "the cultural void" from which most Moroccan neighborhoods suffer, the result of "policies that do not value creativity and initiative."[24]

Think Tanger has offered workshops on implementing cultural projects and held public meetings with government officials, urbanists and artists. In the Fall of 2016, eight artists did residencies with Think Tanger and developed works that commented or interacted in some way with the changes the city is undergoing. Some immortalized Tangier's vanishing landmarks; others displayed their works on the blank walls of the apartment blocks that appear almost overnight in the fields on the city's edges.

GUESTS EXPLORE THINK TANGER'S EXPOSITION "CITY MANIFESTO" IN OCTOBER 2016, WITH PROJECTS BY EIGHT MOROCCAN ARTISTS REFLECTING ON THE CHANGING NATURE OF TANGIER. CREDIT FACEBOOK/THINK TANGER

Think Tanger's goal is not to halt the city's transformation but to encourage artists and citizens to be actively involved in the city's mutation, Bouzid said. "It's another way to make your voice heard: to make art and to make social connections."

"We are trying to create a network of cultural actors so when we go to the city we will be stronger," he said. Bouzid's own proposals include using empty public buildings for cultural activities, commissioning art projects in every neighborhood of the city, and placing cultural centers within mosques—an idea he ascribes to the late Tunisian intellectual Abdelwahab Meddeb.

Artists versus Islamists

That proposal to put cultural centers in mosques is all the more striking because artists and cultural activists are almost always skeptical of the influence of religion, which they view as a tool of fundamentalists or political Islamists.

Some cultural activists take a pragmatic approach. The team at Racines said it is open to working with government officials from any ideological background, as long as they do not try to dictate the content of cultural activity. "When our interests converge, we work together," said Essaadani.

But it is clear, Driss Ksikes said, that most artists and cultural activists in Morocco see themselves as "combating the Islamization of society."

For Ksikes, it's hardly surprising that artist and religious conservatives should find themselves at loggerheads. "Islamist ideology doesn't take pleasure into account," he said, and doesn't countenance diversity and pluralism. Ksikes has been on the front lines of such culture wars himself. As editor of a liberal magazine he was taken to court in 2007 over an article he published on Moroccan humor, which featured jokes on sex and religion.[25] Threatened with jail time, he emerged with a fine and a two-month ban on his magazine.

In 2011, after the PJD won the highest number of seats in Morocco's parliament, its minister of communications, Mustapha El Khalfi, suggested the television and radio air the five calls to prayer, as well as more religious programming. Another minister, Najib Boulif, invoked the need for "art propre" (clean art),[26] raising concerns about censorship among artists. One actress responded by having her portrait taken while lying on a pile of trash.

Islamists have inveighed against some of the foreign musicians who come to play at festivals in Morocco—particularly scantily clad female pop stars. And in the media they control, they have stirred controversies surrounding hit Moroccan films, such as the 2005 movie *Marock*, which showed a teenage romance between a Muslim girl and a Jewish boy; or the 2015 film *Casanegra*, a violent noir featuring petty criminals, which was accused of encouraging debauchery.

Ksikes argued that the absence of substantive debate has led to a constant struggle over and policing of public space and discussion—a "hypermoralization." Culture is almost only perceived as a "pretext for an argument, for confrontation." Benslimane made a similar point: "We don't have a real public debate of issues, we have the illusion of debate. Issues are only raised when there is a scandal or a court case and then the buzz dies down quickly."

The latest such "buzz" surrounded the movie *Much Loved* (2015), written and directed by Nabil Ayouch. The drama chronicles, in graphic detail, the lives of prostitutes in Marrakech. The film was immediately banned in Morocco. El Khalfi, the minister of communications, said that the film was pornographic and represented "a grave insult to moral values and to the Moroccan woman, and a flagrant attack on the image of the kingdom."[27] Public opinion in Morocco was largely supportive of the Islamist minister's stance. Snippets of the film, which was shown at the Cannes Film Festival, had leaked online; they were widely viewed in Morocco, causing an uproar. The lead actress, Loubna Abidar, was excoriated online and assaulted in the street, finally going into exile in France.

El Khalfi, the minister of communications, said that the film was pornographic and represented "a grave insult to moral values and to the Moroccan woman, and a flagrant attack on the image of the kingdom." The lead actress, Loubna Abidar, was excoriated online and assaulted in the street.

During the furor over Ayouch's film, Islamists organized a sit-in outside a cultural center in the lower-class Casablanca neighborhood of Sidi Moumen. The center had been founded a few years before by Ayouch and his friend and collaborator, the novelist Mahi Binebine. The picketers warned residents not to send their children there to fall under corrupting influences.[28] The irony was that the center had been created in large part to keep local children from falling under the influence of Islamists.

The Stars of Sidi Moumen

The neighborhood of Sidi Moumen acquired notoriety in 2003, when it was discovered that twelve of the fourteen young suicide bombers who had just carried out the worst terrorist attack in the country's history hailed from the slum. The attacks targeted a hotel, a Jewish cemetery, a Jewish community center (which was empty) and a Spanish cultural center, and killed forty-one people. They shocked a country that prides itself on espousing a moderate vision of Islam.

Binebine visited the area in the aftermath of the attack and was stunned by what he saw there. Hundreds of thousands lived in poverty in this *bidonville*, tucked away behind walls along the Casablanca-Rabat freeway. Binebine saw a group of boys playing soccer in the middle of a garbage dump. "I thought, there are the heroes of my next book," he told me. His 2010 novel *Les Etoiles de Sidi Moumen* (translated into English as *Horses of God)* is an imaginative and empathetic reconstruction of the lives of the young men who carried out the Casablanca attacks, describing how a life of violence and humiliation and a total lack of prospects lead the boys to religious radicalism.

After Ayouch turned Binebine's book into a successful movie, the two decided they should establish a cultural center for the children and young people of Sidi Moumen. They fundraised by auctioning donated artworks (Binebine is also a painter) and persuaded the municipal authorities in Sidi Moumen to lease them a building.

The Etoiles de Sidi Moumen ("Stars of Sidi Moumen") cultural center opened in 2014, in an already changed neighborhood. In the years since the attacks, the authorities have "cleaned up" the district, clearing away almost all the area's shacks and replacing them with functional apartment blocks. The Casablanca tramline connects Sidi Moumen to downtown.

YOUTH FROM THE SIDI MOUMEN NEIGHBORHOOD OF CASABLANCA PERFORM AT THE ÉTOILES DE SIDI MOUMEN ("STARS OF SIDI MOUMEN") CULTURAL CENTER. CREDIT: FACEBOOK/CENTRE CULTUREL LES ÉTOILES DE SIDI MOUMEN

On an afternoon in October 2016, the center was abuzz with preparations for a concert to be held in its outdoor courtyard, featuring its music teachers and some of their star pupils. Art produced by students hung in the lobby. A breakdancing practice was ongoing in one of the studios. The venue boasts a theater stage, a library, a café, classrooms and rehearsal spaces, in which musical instruments are available. Membership costs fifty dirhams a month (less than five dollars); renting rehearsal rooms and attending classes costs an additional thirty dirhams per hour. The center offers popular information technology and foreign language classes.

Houda Boucha is a young woman from the neighborhood who has been hired to manage the center's library. The 2003 terrorist attacks "left a negative impression of the children and the neighborhood," she said. "We wanted to offer another view, to let people know that there are artists here, people who do good things."[29]

The center, like a number of cultural initiatives, has another vocation: to counter the influence of Islamists by offering youth in the area alternative outlets.

The Moroccan security services carried out a massive crackdown in the aftermath of the Casablanca attacks (a crackdown that human rights groups criticized as arbitrary and abusive). They have been on high alert again in recent years, regularly announcing the dismantling of Moroccan terrorist cells that are often alleged to have links to the Islamic State. The country is also home to the banned Al Adl wa Al Ihsane ("Justice and Spirituality") Sufi movement (which does not recognize the monarchy's religious authority) and to Salafi movements that espouse a fundamentalist view of Islam but do not advocate violence and are politically quietist. And then there is the ascendant PJD party, which views

itself as representing mainstream moderate Islam and which is pragmatic rather than radical. Its positions limiting personal freedom in the name of public order and morality are in line with a social conservatism espoused by many Moroccan political parties.

Many artists, activists, and liberals mistrust all Islamists, militant or not—they view them as part of one continuous spectrum, and resent their attempts to monopolize authority through religion.

"Islamists have a lot of money, and people like them because they help them," said Binebine, describing Sidi Moumen and similar neighborhoods. "They are close to people. They are populist and know how to talk to people. We engage on the same terrain—but we have to beg for money and we teach kids the culture of life: You will read a book, you will watch a film, you will dance. We fight with our weapons." It was the mothers of neighborhood children enrolled in classes and activities at the center, Binebine said, who broke though and put an end to the Islamist protest over Ayouch's film.

It's worth noting that the outrage over Ayouch's film was not limited to Islamist circles. Although cultural activists call on the state to intervene and to protect artistic freedoms and some overtly align themselves with the state against Islamism and radicalism (often amalgamated), artists who present unflattering depictions or critiques of the status quo and treat "out-of-bounds" subjects often face state repression as well as Islamist attacks.

"There is no greater threat to the state than a so-called intellectual," the king famously said in a 1965 speech. "It would have been better if you were all illiterate."

Binebine blames authoritarianism and the country's poor educational system for the rise of Islamism. In the 1970s, some of the fiercest opposition to King Hassan II came from high school and university students. Many observers claim that in retaliation, the government purposely hindered development of the public education system, and strengthened religious studies. "There is no greater threat to the state than a so-called intellectual," the king famously said in a 1965 speech. "It would have been better if you were all illiterate."[30]

Today, Morocco's educational system is routinely ranked as one of the worst in the region. "It was a choice," Binebine said. "They manufactured a generation of idiots."

The view that the Moroccan regime purposely promoted conservatism over enlightenment is common. “We haven’t chosen a society based on culture, knowledge, intellectual debate, and creation,” Ksikes said. These are not the priorities of mosques, schools, and the media—“the institutions that format minds.”

Today, Morocco’s educational system is routinely ranked as one of the worst in the region. “It was a choice,” Binebine said. “They manufactured a generation of idiots.”

The Etoiles de Sidi Moumen cultural center is financed by grants and gifts. A sponsorship system allows supporters to pay the membership fees of a child from the neighborhood; the center has close to five hundred registered members, which is its maximum capacity. The project has been so successful that with the help of private patrons there are now plans to open more venues, in the old city of Marrakech, in Fez, and in the Tangier slum of Beni Makada.

“We are two people with nothing and we are able to open four cultural centers,” Binebine said. “We ask ourselves: The state, with all its means, can’t do something similar? It’s not that complicated.”

Will the State Step In?

Racines also argues that the Moroccan state has both the resources and the responsibility to make culture available to all citizens. So far Racines has acted as a sort of shadow ministry of culture, modeling the kind of data collection, public forums, and policy elaboration it would like to see officials carry out. It relies on press coverage as a means of leverage with authorities who are concerned with their image at home and abroad. And it makes use of faits accomplis, such as when it plans a big event at Les Abattoirs without a permit, counting on the fact that since government and foreign officials and journalists are invited, the authorities will not intervene to shut it down. Yet Racines does not aim to position itself only in opposition to the authorities, nor to indefinitely perform work that should be the government’s responsibility.

Their dream is for the Ministry of Culture to take over, Benslimane and Essaadani said. While it is encouraging to see so many cultural initiatives by civil society and private patrons, Essaadani said, philanthropy can only meet a small percentage of the overall need. There is a risk that by relying on private initiatives “you don’t force the state to do its job.”

"Our objective was to start a debate," said Benslimane, who feels they have succeeded. In her view, the États Généraux have been "a turning point." Racines has had some success in opening a dialogue with and influencing the discourse of government officials. Morocco's minister of culture, Mohamed Amin Sbihi, attended and spoke at the event, detailing how his ministry had opened more than fifty new cultural centers since 2012 and subsidized the publication of about five hundred books in 2016. The minister agreed with the members of Racines on the need for the government to play a "structuring" role in the cultural field and to put in place a "national strategy for culture." He spoke about the need to increase his ministry's budget and about his inability so far to pass a law that would allow for cultural centers to be managed differently, and to obtain greater cooperation from other ministries.[31]

Racines and other cultural actors have also put forward a number of specific recommendations. Some of these emphasize the role of education. "We must insist on the connection between educational and cultural policies," said Raymond Benhaim, the president of Racines.[32] Without more Moroccans learning at an early age to enjoy the arts, it's hard to see how the audience and market for cultural production could increase. Racines proposes both that arts education occupy a much more significant place in the public school curriculum and that the state invest in institutes to train young people in cultural professions (restorers, set designers, audio and video editors, curators, librarians) as well as in the management of cultural institutions.

Another key suggestion is to allow cultural centers that are currently inactive to be operated by private-public partnerships, in which a private association receives state subsidies to run the space according to criteria set by the Ministry of Culture. The ministry has actually drafted a law that would allow for this, but has not yet been able to persuade the government to refer it to parliament.

Cultural activists in Morocco have elaborated and pushed into the sphere of public debate a series of policy proposals that seem feasible, sensible, and promising. But their implementation depends on the will of the authorities—not just of the Ministry of Culture but of those of the Interior, Education, Youth and Sport, and Communications, which control municipal and cultural spaces, educational facilities and curricula, and distribution channels. Convincing the state to embrace a genuine, ambitious cultural agenda—one that focuses on the daily cultural exchanges, awakenings and experiences of average citizens rather than on grand public-relations-friendly projects—remains a huge hurdle.

Culture before Politics

The fundamental question remains how much cultural activists can succeed, on their own, in pressuring a political system that has proven quite adept at negotiating and resisting recent demands for change. Some view culture as refuge in which, at the current unpromising juncture, they can keep alive liberal values and democratic practices. Others, more sanguine, view it as the foundation on which to build future social movements and political aspirations.

The Moroccan authorities and the political elite simply do not view culture as a priority, Ksikes said. He argued that the country's cultural dynamism will remain fragile and marginal as long as there is not a strong will to democratize on the part of Morocco's elites and an independent rather than a rentier middle class, whose privileges largely depend on proximity to the makhzen and the state apparatus. He doesn't view this as a reason not to engage in the cultural field, however; quite the contrary. He is himself involved in the launch of a new cultural platform, an online and print publication that will also host events and public debates around the country. "People know we are in a historic phase where everything is blocked, where security is the priority," he said. "They say: At least let's make life in the commons livable."

But Essaadani argued, on the contrary, that it is culture that can jump-start both social and political transformation. "If we don't raise the level of consciousness and of demands, politics doesn't work," he said.

In very repressive regimes, such as the one Morocco once was, artists and activists have a stark choice between dissidence and capitulation. Although under the reign of Mohamed VI freedoms in Morocco are still limited, the opening that has taken place has allowed an ebullient cultural scene to emerge, one in which it is possible to negotiate with and to lobby the authorities and even to make some allies within official circles. The broad consensus around the institution of the monarchy; the general relief that Morocco has not faced the kind of polarization and chaos as other Arab countries; and the official discourse of gradual democratization all provide some common ground around which state and civil society actors can argue what reform should entail. Associations and artistic collectives have been able to pursue a variety of different agendas, to raise awareness of issues like discrimination or urban development, and to try to reach young people in areas where no artistic pursuits are on offer. Cultural life has paralleled political events in the country, waxing and waning alongside the hopes of reformers and the demands of protesters. What has been missing so far is widespread access for most Moroccan citizens to creativity and to the reflection that culture can inspire.

Today's cultural activists have been affected by the effervescence of the Arab uprisings and their disappointing aftermath. Their projects are the most visible expression of the energy and the aspirations of the February 20 movement; they are also aware of the closure that has taken place since then and of the enormity of the transformations they called for. They must confront a society that is simultaneously deeply frustrated with some aspects of the status quo and fearful of instability and change, deferential to the traditional patriarchal authority of the monarchy, and receptive to the rhetoric

of a populist Islamist party. The focus in Morocco today on cultural outreach and activities is partly caused by the lack of credible progressive political projects. It is also the result of a vision of culture as a truly significant field through which to bring about change, one individual at a time.

The Moroccan state and its elites have shown little interest or commitment to promoting culture for all. They may very well view an emancipated, engaged citizenry as a threat to their interests rather than an asset. So it is likely that progress on the agenda proposed by Racines will be limited and very incremental. The Moroccan political system has proven remarkably adept at containing demands for change, adopting reform-minded discourses while setting a very slow timetable for their implementation. The current context is favorable to such foot-dragging, with the political sphere deeply divided between Islamists and those who mistrust them, and a region-wide focus on security and stability. The state of Les Abattoirs in Casablanca seems emblematic. Activists have been asking for years to be allowed to fully use the abandoned space, and have found many creative ways to stake a claim to it. But their presence there remains fragile, tolerated yet not officially acknowledged, as the authorities neither fully reject nor accept the idea of ceding control to cultural associations. They seem more comfortable with this potential public space remaining empty and unused than with it coming to life with forces out of their control.

They must confront a society that is simultaneously deeply frustrated with some aspects of the status quo and fearful of instability and change, deferential to the traditional patriarchal authority of the monarchy, and receptive to the rhetoric of a populist Islamist party.

In the meantime, culture is a way of interacting with society and spreading civic values of tolerance, open-mindedness, and equality—outside of largely discredited political channels and ideologies (or in opposition to the quite influential Islamist ones). It is also a productive vantage point from which activists can unite and diagnose what ails the country, study policies and institutions, and propose practical solutions.

Racines' goals are as specific and practical in the short term as they are broad and ambitious in the long run.

"Cultural dynamism is not an end in and of itself," Essaadani argued. "It's a tool. We're trying to make citizens, not artists." The art, he said, will come on its own.

BANNER IMAGE: CASABLANCA'S OLD MUNICIPAL SLAUGHTERHOUSE, KNOWN AS LES ABATTOIRS, IS

ROUTINELY USED BY ARTISTS TO HOLD EVENTS DESPITE REPEATED REJECTIONS BY THE MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES TO ALLOW IT TO BE TURNED INTO A CULTURAL SPACE. CREDIT FLICKR/AMINA TAGEMOUATI

About This Project

This policy report is part of "Arab Politics beyond the Uprisings: Experiments in an Era of Resurgent Authoritarianism," a multi-year TCF project supported by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Studies in this series explore attempts to build institutions and ideologies during a period of resurgent authoritarianism, and at times amidst violent conflict and state collapse. The project documents some of the spaces where change is still emerging, as well as the dynamic forces arrayed against it. The collected essays will be published by TCF Press in June 2017.

Notes

1. "Inclusion des Jeunes par la Culture,"Avis du Conseil Economique et Social, 2012. ("La société marocaine connaît un écart entre la modernisation de ses infrastructures et de ses institutions et la carence persistante en matière de culture.")
2. Driss Ksikes, interview with the author, Rabat, September 14, 2016.
3. Aadel Essaadani, interview with the author via telephone, Rabat, November 18, 2016.
4. "Discours du Roi Mohamned VI du Maroc: le Texte Intégral,"*Le Nouvel Obs*, March 10, 2011.
5. Dounia Benslimane, interview with the author, Rabat, September 1, 2016.
6. Ksikes, interview.
7. See Morocco's 2011 constitution.
8. Mohamed Kably,"Le Makhzen Revisité," Zamane, September 6, 2016, http://zamane.ma/fr/le-makhzen-revisite/.
9. Fouad Abdelmoumni, interview with the author, Rabat, October 3, 2016.
10. Kenza Sefrioui, *La Revue Souffles: Espoirs de Revolution Culturelle Au Maroc*, (Casablanca: Editions du Sirocco, 2012).
11. "Le Petite Histoire de la Nayda," interview with sociologist Dominique Caubet, director of the 2007 documentary "Casanayda," Made in Casablana, January 26, 2011.
12. Nabila Mounib, interview with the author, Casablanca, October 7, 2016.
13. Mohamed M. Cherkaoui, "L'Ordre Sociopolitique et la Confiance dans les Institutions au Maroc,"Institut Royal des Etudes Strategiques, January 2010.
14. Essaadani, interview, November 18, 2016.
15. "Universal Periodic Review, Morocco 2016," FreeMuse and Racines, 5.
16. "HCP: Les Marocains Consacrent 2 Minutes par Jour à la Lecture et au Sport,"Aujourd'hui Le Maroc, October 29, 2014.
17. Ksikes, interview.

18. Essaadani, interview with the author, Rabat, September 1, 2016.

19. Benslimane, interview.

20. Ali Kharroubi, "Oujda: Le Scandale du Nouveau Théatre," *L'Economiste*, May 18, 2015.

21. See the website.

22. Reuben Y. Odoi, interview with the author, Casablanca, September 28, 2016.

23. Hicham Bouzid, interview with the author, Casablanca, November 11, 2016.

24. "Lieux de Vie et Action Culturelle," *Rapport du Conseil Economique, Sociale et Environnementa*l 2013, 16. ("Le vide culturel dont souffent les différents lieux de vie, résultat de l'absence d'un projet culturel national et d'une politique qui valorise la créativité et l'initiative.")

25. "Morocco's Serious Humor Gap," *Los Angeles Times*, January 15, 2007.

26. "Maroc: l'Art et la Maniere Forte," *Jeune Afrique*, June 28, 2012.

27. "Maroc: Le Film Polémique Raconté par son Equipe,"*Courrier International*, September 16, 201.

28. Mahi Binebine, interview with the author by telephone, October 7, 2016.

29. Houda Boucha, interview with the author, Casablanca, September 30, 2016.

30. "De la Siba à la Revolution," *Zamane*, November 9, 2012. ("Il n'y a pas de danger aussi grave pour l'Etat que celui représenté par un prétendu intellectuel. Il aurait mieux valu que vous soyez des illettrés.")

31. Mohamed Amin Sbihi, speech at the second edition of the États Généraux de la Culture au Maroc, Casablanca, November 11, 2016.

32. Raymond Benhaim, speech at the second edition of the États Généraux de la Culture au Maroc, Casablanca, November 11, 2016.

Ursula Lindsey, Contributor

Ursula Lindsey has lived in the Middle East since 2002, reporting on culture, media, politics and education in the Arab world. She covered the Arab uprisings from Cairo and currently lives in Rabat, Morocco. She has worked as a reporter and editor with local independent media in the region and has written for the New York Times, the Financial Times, The Nation, The Economist and The Chronicle of Higher Education. She is an editor of The Arabist blog.