Urban renewal and social development in Morocco in an age of neoliberal government

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In this article we argue that Morocco has experienced fundamental political change over the past decades. This transition however cannot be understood in terms provided by the mainstream narratives linking economic liberalisation to democratisation. Rather, transition reflects a shift towards authoritarian modalities of neoliberal government. We focus on how political power has been reconfigured into new forms of 'hybrid' government where 'state', 'market' and 'civil society' interact in novel ways, by discussing the political dynamics of high-end urban development and the rationales underpinning social development policies to explain how 'poor people' are integrated into the realm of the market.

Keywords: Morocco; urban politics; political change

Introduction

The recent mass uprisings in the Arab world have created a new momentum in the study of political change in the region. While mass protests have led to the end of the rule of Ben Ali and Mubarak in Tunisia and Egypt respectively, in other countries such as Morocco, Syria, Bahrain and Yemen, people are also defying authoritarian rule and expressing their desire for change. As such, the current upheavals will certainly reinvigorate the debates on democratisation and authoritarian resilience that have dominated the study of political life in the region (see Valbjørn and Bank 2010). Today, there are many pressing and obvious questions about political change, democratic transition and the future of many Arab states, but we must not forget that the current pressures for change are rooted in the political transformations of the last 30 years. These transformations are the subject of this article. In the following contribution we focus on the case of Morocco. Over the last 30 years the country has undergone a fundamental political transformation that is intimately related to changes in global capitalism and the political economy of the ruling classes. The critical question therefore is not so much whether government in Morocco, or elsewhere in the Arab region, is authoritarian or democratic, but rather *how* (authoritarian) modalities of government have changed over the years and how these changes have an impact on the government of particular people and places, thereby creating and aggravating the historical conditions for the current social and class struggles.

Since the beginning of the 1980s, with the introduction and implementation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank-advocated Structural Adjustment

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Plan, Morocco chose to reorient its economy along neoliberal lines. This major shift in the economic organisation of the country also led to important political changes that have remained largely unnoticed in mainstream debates on democratisation and post-democratisation (*ibid.*). The specific social impact and political implications of these specific forms of 'actually existing neoliberalism', especially in non-Western settings, need further clarification (Brenner and Theodore 2002). Moreover, general ideas about good governance measures (such as decentralisation, economic liberalisation, participation and empowerment) as vehicles for political change, have in fact obfuscated the political nature of the emergence of new forms of spatially differentiated government and class projects.

In contrast, we argue against the hypothesis, often taken for granted, that 'the political and social cleavages between those who profit from globalisation and those who do not can be bridged by "modern" or "good" governance' (Lemke 2007, p. 54). Contrary to this hegemonic narrative, the implementation of neoliberal reform does not bring forth overall economic growth and prosperity but leads to a geography of uneven development in which some places are privileged over others (Harvey 2006). In this account we will explore the contingent forms of neoliberal reform on the ground and the specific ways in which class agency shapes the possibilities and constraints of political life. Crucial to understanding neoliberal politics is its *exploitative character* and the concomitant relations of power embedded within class relations. David Harvey describes neoliberalism above all as *class strategies* (*ibid.*). Neoliberal reform, whether in Morocco or elsewhere, entails the increase of capitalist class power over subaltern classes and their social interests. Despite the fact that structural adjustment was not an option deliberately chosen by many political leaders in the Arab region, increasing market-oriented reform has not necessarily affected state power and the dominant position of political elites in Morocco (Catusse 2009). Quite on the contrary, a rather smooth synergy developed between neoliberal restructuring and the more particularly Moroccan institutional configurations and domestic political style of economic exploitation concentrated around the monarchy (Bayart 2007, pp. 41–42). Nevertheless, neoliberal reform and increasing linkages with foreign investors and corporations did create or extend the conditions for capitalist class formation alongside older neo-patrimonial and clientelistic formations of power that used to be mainly based on close ties with the rural landowning class.[1] Through the changes in the political economy of the country, the monarchy extended its social base in the urban areas and incorporated a growing group of entrepreneurs and young businessmen into its sphere of influence (Catusse 2008).

It is on the urban and not the national scale that the scope and significance of these changes are most clearly revealed. Consequently, the city presents itself as the site par excellence to study the current political transformations in Arab political life. Of course, modern cities have always been the locus for both social inequality and economic opportunity. However, the neoliberal reforms pursued since the 1980s have exacerbated urban disparities and have increasingly turned cities into spaces of extremes (Bayat and Biekart 2009).

This article draws from different case studies looking at both ends of urban extremes. First of all we will discuss the political dynamics of high-end urban development schemes such as the Bouregreg project in Rabat and the Tanger Med project in Tangier. In recent years, cities like Casablanca, Rabat or Tangier are being redesigned and radically restructured in order to satisfy the desires and interests of global capital. Second, we will highlight the political rationales underpinning the social development schemes such as the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH) and the *Villes Sans Bidonvilles* project to explain how 'poor people' are being integrated into the realm of the market and – under the pretext of 'participation' – are involved in the creation of a specific

political world in which the ability to claim and articulate political rights are not only restricted by 'the regime' but also by the sanctions and incentives of the 'free market'. At first sight these two different kinds of urban restructuring projects highlight the ways in which uneven development in urban space is produced and governed, and how the Moroccan city is subject to a broader political project in which public authorities participated in the attempt to prioritise the *exchange value* of the city (centred around the question: how can we sell the city?) over and above the *use value* of the city (how can we make the best possible city for our citizens?). Urban development, simultaneously encompassing luxury and high-end urban renovation projects as well as slum-eradication and/or upgrading schemes, has become an important terrain upon which state–society–market relations are being redrawn. When classic neoliberal models based on privatisation, structural adjustment, financial deregulation and the roll-back of direct state intervention in the domestic economy proved incapable of sustaining durable growth and poverty alleviation, the beginning of the 2000s witnessed a transformation in market-oriented government with a focus on participatory development and a clear concern with security. Both cases thus testify to the changing role of the state in market-oriented reform, either by the creation of new governmental agencies to directly influence the promotion and coordination of so-called urban mega-projects or by using state leverage and subsidies to support private initiatives in tackling pressing problems such as poverty, social marginalisation and urban security. In contrast to its role as a developmental state until the 1980s, the state now acts as a broker or referee, directing market policies and setting up new forms of cooperation between the public institutions and private actors.

Redesigning the city: high-end development schemes as a political economic strategy

The implementation of the first Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in 1983 generated radical reforms. It was the watershed moment from which the current political transformations and the concomitant Moroccan state-reformation process are to be explained (Catusse 2008). To begin with, the state bureaucracy and its public administration had to be downsized to meet the new requirements of neoliberal reform. The well-known formulae of market liberalisation, deregulation, fiscal discipline and the privatisation of industrial activities and public services constituted the new governmental toolbox to decrease the public deficit. While the Moroccan political economy contained characteristics specific to a developmentalist model until the 1980s (Catusse 2009), this changed after 1983, echoing larger changes in global capitalism. The third world debt crisis at the end of the 1970s marked the beginning of the end of developmentalism (the Southern variant of Fordism) and a definite turn towards the fundamentals of neoliberal globalisation mentioned above (Corbridge 2002). In that sense, structural adjustment can be seen as the beginning of an economic, but also a political and a social rupture. First of all, characteristic of neoliberal reforms is the reconfiguration of political and economic life so as to reflect market incentives and demands. Second, the processes of political change were not confined to the internal or domestic Moroccan political scene. Local ruling elites, international institutions, global corporations and investors, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society and foreign governments are all embedded within growing networks and (transnational) political spaces, making government more a 'global enterprise' rather than simply a national one (Cohen and Jaidi 2006, p. 3, Zemni and Bogaert 2009).

In this political economic reform process, a lot of attention has been paid to the emergence of the 'global city' as a key locale in the regulation of the global economy and as

evidence for the declining significance of the national economy (Sassen 2000). But the impact of global capitalism cannot be reduced to the key role of a few global cities. It has generated far-reaching transformations which concern nearly every city in the world. No Moroccan city, for example, can claim that it is able to participate in, let alone determine, the direction and management of the global economy (Catusse *et al.* 2007). Nevertheless, in recent years, Moroccan cities are being intensively redesigned and repackaged to position themselves in the global market. This is a process that has become prevalent only during the last decade. Despite the radical economic restructurings since the 1980s, the Moroccan economy remained fragile for several reasons. Compared to other regions in the world, foreign direct investments in North Africa, while growing, remained low and reflected the subordinated position in the world economy (Bush 2004, White 2007). In the case of Morocco, the general economy was still largely dependent on the agricultural sector for economic growth and employment (Davis 2006). Yet, in order to break these patterns, the Moroccan monarchy tried to redirect its focus on urban development and the urban economy. Within the context of contemporary global market integration, the city has become not only a place to live but also a product in itself to attract foreign investment and stimulate economic growth. It was above all on the impulse of King Mohamed VI that Morocco positioned the city as the prominent site for the promotion of economic development and capital accumulation. Since his reign, Morocco has been busy catching up, preparing its cities to welcome more businesses, tourists and (real estate) investors. Massive infrastructural works are under way to upgrade the Moroccan urban areas and prepare them to globalise. In its recently published 'National Strategy for Urban Development', the Ministry of Housing and Urbanism underlines the necessity to prepare Moroccan cities in order to expand the country's share of global investments and financial flows (MHUAE 2009, p. 30) – and with relative success. Although Morocco's rural economy (agriculture, forestry and fishery) remains the biggest sector for employment (34.3%), the urban economy is now by far the most significant producer of national economic growth. Three-quarters of the national GDP is generated within the urban economy (*ibid.*, p. 21).

A typical strategy for the contemporary city in general and also in Morocco is the reliance on large-scale urban development projects or 'mega-projects'. These projects are part of local government's efforts to reinforce the competitive position of urban economies in a context of rapidly changing global competitive conditions (Swyngedouw *et al.* 2002). Several ambitious urban development schemes were launched in the first decade of Mohamed VI's reign. These projects are becoming the showcases of an '*urban revolution*' – as the local press[2] boasts – with striking flagship projects such as the Bouregreg Valley, the Marina in Casablanca, Tangier City Centre and the Tanger Med project in the north. Furthermore, major infrastructural works – highways, tramways (in Rabat and Casablanca), a high-speed train connection (between Casablanca and Tangier), bridges, mega-malls, marinas – are being put in place in order to prepare the country's cities for further capitalist integration.

The attraction of 'global fixed capital investments' (infrastructural projects) and 'circulating capital' (e.g. tourism) are the components of a 'nearly universal economic development strategy' (Paul 2004).

Urban restructuring in Morocco since the 1980s cannot be reduced to the implementation of mere economic reform. On the contrary, neoliberal reforms coincide and are intimately intertwined with significant state-institutional reforms. One of the most significant expressions of new institutional state reform is the establishment of what Neil Brenner has called 'new state spaces': i.e. new institutional configurations in which political power has

been resituated in an attempt to influence the geography of capitalist accumulation (Brenner 2004, Bogaert 2011a). In Morocco, large-scale development projects are placed under the authority of newly established governmental institutions. Through these institutional reforms the Moroccan ruling elites have managed to pull important economic projects and developments out of the realm of control of the national and local elected government bodies. These new arrangements of state power are best understood as an *assemblage* of (public and private) political actors 'lodged' within a particular site (Allen and Cochrane 2010). As such, the new state space framework is not solely concerned with structural determinants but also focuses on questions of agency and strategy (MacKinnon and Shaw 2010). Consequently, a new state space such as the Bouregreg Valley (see below) should not only be viewed in terms of a rescaling of state power (spatial height) but also as a reassemblage of power in terms of '*spatial reach*' (*ibid.*). Characteristic of the institutional arrangements that coordinate urban mega-projects is the involvement of foreign investors and global capital. But in the sense that neoliberal globalisation has pulled global or transnational capitalist relations into local politics, it does not necessarily mean that the state has lost authority or autonomy, but rather that these 'external' relations are drawn within reach. In other words, authority and government are not the result of a zero-sum game between local and global actors – as suggested by some (Strange 1996) – but they are shared and negotiated between various actors *on the field of the state* (Panitch 1998). State power and state regulation are still largely necessary to establish business connections, but also to establish the essential infrastructures and juridical conditions for a 'good business climate'. Consequently, in the process of implementing neoliberal reforms, the Moroccan state has not withdrawn from the economy, but rather has restructured its relation to it (*ibid*.). If we want to understand Arab politics we should not only look at the behaviour of 'the regime' but consider how local politics are closely related to shifting power balances in global capitalism and how these shifts result in the 'localisation' of wider political interests and projects that involve local, national, regional and global actors (Smith 1998).

The political restructuring of the Moroccan city is now inscribed in a global political project that reflects and defends (global) market requirements and connects local business networks with the outside world. The new priorities within this competitive urban logic are real estate development, international trade and investments, offshore activities and of course tourism. Today, several large urban development projects are reshaping the cityscapes of Rabat, Casablanca, Tangier, Fez and Marrakech. The economic centre of the country, Casablanca, is currently being restructured with major projects such as Casa-Marina and the Casanearshore Park. The latter was the first Moroccan offshore park to be officially opened. At the moment it is the largest offshore zone in North Africa. Promoted as 'the dream of every outsourcer' it advertises top-notch, low-cost services to multinational firms (Zemni and Bogaert 2009). Casa-Marina, a prestigious seashore project right next to the historic pre-colonial city, was launched in 2007 and provides new high-end business, residential and leisure facilities in downtown Casablanca. Furthermore, five city regions in Morocco have developed or are preparing to develop offshore zones: Casablanca, Rabat, Fez, Tangier and Marrakech. These industrial free zones and offshore zones are newly reconfigured islets inscribed into the Moroccan national territory, where specific laws and regulations exist from site to site. But two projects in particular are worth attention here because they exemplify the creation of new state spaces in Morocco.

First of all, the Tanger Med project, a new international seaport with an industrial hinterland (Tangier Free Zone), is the most prominent flagship project and symbol of Morocco's commitment to global market integration. Designed to exploit the strategic location of Tangier as a redistribution centre for international trade, the project 'Tanger Med I' was

launched in 2002 and aimed at a capacity of 3.5 million containers. This first section of the port became operational in 2007. By the year 2016 the port hopes to increase to an estimated capacity of eight million containers (Tanger Med II) and become a nodal point between the African, European and Asian markets. When Tanger Med becomes fully operational, it will be the biggest commercial port in Africa, and on the Mediterranean Sea. The project is accompanied by the development of an economic free zone, the Tangier Free Zone (TFZ), which was launched in 1999. It is located only 30 km from the port. With an area of approximately 500 hectares it is the biggest free economic zone in the country. Currently more than 475 foreign and domestic companies are settled in the TFZ, and an area of 60 ha is dedicated to the development of the 'Tanger Automotive City' that will support the further expansion of the Renault holdings in the country. In order to service the economic development of the city region of Tangier, highways between Rabat and Tangier and between Tétouan and Tangier are now under construction. To complete the transformation of Tangier, the authorities planned the development of the 'Tanger City Centre' (TCC), a new business district in the east of the city. On the TCC website we can read that 'Morocco is about to become very big business indeed, so the well informed investor can expect significant returns from this world class destination which is set to return to its former glories'.[3]

The international port of Tangier is governed by a powerful institutional configuration, the Tanger Mediterranean Special Agency (TMSA) (Planel 2009, Barthel and Planel 2010). The TMSA, established in 2002, is responsible for the planning, developing and management of both the Tanger Med complex and the TFZ, the industrial free zone hinterland of the port, and represents the institutional configuration which brings together both local and international political economic agency.

Second, besides industry and outsourcing, Morocco's urban economy and new investment strategies focus on its most valuable sector: tourism. Growth in the tourism industry has averaged a 9% contribution to GDP in recent years and sustained growth of 15% over the last decade.[4] Currently, several large-scale and luxury projects are being developed, especially in the neighbourhood of Marrakech, targeting specifically the 'superconsumers' (Klein 2007). The Bouregreg project is probably the most salient example. It is one of Morocco's icons for waterfront development and 'showcase urbanism' (Barthel and Mouloudi 2009, p. 56). On 7 January 2006, Mohamed VI officially launched the ambitious project for the restructuring of the valley. This royal project is situated strategically alongside the Bouregreg estuary within the valley between the twin cities of Rabat and Salé. It covers an area of approximately 6000 hectares (including public beaches and Salé's former military camps). The valley was previously largely unpopulated and left fallow. Nevertheless, more than 50% of the territory was private property. The whole project will be implemented in six stages. Over the course of these stages, the project plans to bulid a port for cruise ships, two marinas, luxury hotels, apartments, villas, commercial centres, a conference centre, a museum, a theatre, offices, an amusement park, a science park, a golf course and eco-tourism facilities. The new state space of the Bouregreg Valley is governed by the Agence pour l'Aménagement de la Vallée du Bouregreg (Agency for the development of the Bouregreg Valley) (AAVB). The state-controlled AAVB was established by law 16-04, with the specific mandate to develop the Valley and giving that the agency exclusive authority over the project within its legally determined territorial boundaries. Moreover, all public competences related to the Urban Planning Agency of Rabat-Salé (AURS), the prefectures and the local municipalities have been transferred to the new state agency (for more details see Bogaert 2011a). The first stage, 'Bab al Bahr' (gateway to the sea), is currently under construction and will be finished in 2013. This stage is managed by

the Bab al Bahr Development Company, a joint venture between the AAVB and the Abu Dhabi-based property development company Al Mabaar. The other stages are still in their study phase or in the first stages of their development.[5] Bab al Bahr is located at the mouth of the Bouregreg River. It is bordered by the two ancient *medinas* of Rabat and Salé and the historical fortress of the Oudaya, which is located in front of the medina of Rabat on the coast and dates back to the twelfth century. Together with Bab el Bahr, a new bridge (Moulay Hassan), two tramlines and a tunnel underneath the historic fortress of the Oudaya are under construction in order to improve access between Salé and the Moroccan capital. Every day, 650,000 people cross the Bouregreg River to go to work or for other purposes.

Developing the other urban extreme: violence, security and the urban poor

The urban has not only become an important place to attract investments, but as a site for new class politics it has also become a privileged terrain for violent action. This in turn has consequences for issues of development and governance (Beal 2007). During the last decade Morocco, like other countries in the region, has been hit several times by attacks and bombings. On 16 May 2003, the country was struck by a series of violent suicide attacks. On that day, several suicide bombers killed 40 Moroccan citizens in different locations in Morocco's biggest city, Casablanca. These attacks, as well as the following three suicide bomber incidents in 2007 and the 2011 Marrakech bombing, have induced a particular kind of response from the authorities. As the young people responsible for the suicide attacks all came from the slums around the city of Casablanca, several politicians and royal counsellors summoned the Moroccan captains of industry to consider new strategies for development and wealth creation, so that the 'root causes of terrorism' – quickly identified as poverty and social and economic exclusion – could be overcome. The attacks not only stigmatised the slums as a breeding ground for radical Islamists, but also negatively affected the city's 'unique selling proposition' and its image as a reliable destination for investment. As a result, the official discourse on slums or *bidonvilles* has changed significantly over the last two decades. From a stigmatised 'non-place' within the urban fabric inhabited by 'inferior' people, the inhabitants are now described as victims of socio-economic development or rather a lack thereof. This, presumably, makes these inhabitants 'vulnerable' to 'radical' political ideologies.

Since 9/11, the idea of the slums being breeding places for extremist Islamism has gained momentum. Poor neighbourhoods are readily seen as places of alienation, poverty and anomie that make their inhabitants easy prey for ideological indoctrination and political violence. Slums are further described as places of lawlessness that undermine traditional forms of family solidarity. In the context of the 'war on terror' the concern with the violence coming from people living in the slums of Arab cities – represented as 'Muslim' cities – has been conflated with debates on the nature of Islamist mobilisation. Since the 1990s researchers have described the poor residents of these neighbourhoods – based on fragmentary evidence gathered in Egypt and Iran – as the backbone of Islamist violent mobilisation. Today, the same informal neighbourhoods scattered around cities in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region are seen as the breeding and recruiting grounds for the transnationally organised *jihadi* groups presumably linked to al-Qaeda. Yet, as Asef Bayat (2007) has argued for the Egyptian and Iranian cases, these assertions are based on assumptions that are empirically problematic on two accounts at least. He shows, first, that the key to the habitus of the urban poor is not anomie, lawlessness or extremism but 'informal life', i.e. a life that is characterised by flexibility, pragmatism and

negotiation. In addition, the urban poor's relation to the Islamists is an instrumental and contingent one. Second, he argues that the poor do not constitute a specific target group for Islamist activism. While Marxist and other 'third world' movements have tried to mobilise the poor as active political agents, the Islamists seem to approach them more as a 'moral category'.[6]

The May 2003 Casablanca bombings 'instilled an even greater sense of urgency into the commitment to eliminate slums as breeding grounds of antisocial behaviours', as a World Bank report stated (World Bank 2006, p. 11). 'Kamikaze cities', as several Moroccan newspapers dubbed them, were seen as places where there was a lack of social cohesion in which the culture of the *derb* (the traditional urban working class district) had withered away in the absence of any real economic activity (Belaala 2004). Non-liberal forms of regulation and social transformation, while commonly seen as a consequence of people and places being situated outside globalisation, are, on the contrary made possible precisely by globalisation (Duffield 2002). The rise of the Moroccan 'version' of *jihadi salafism*, an extremist form of Islamic militancy, is testimony to this insight. Moroccan *jihadi salafism* is in fact offering the young people and other slum-dwellers a new form of social cohesion and personal identification, as it reflects a form of actual development and wealth creation (shadow economies) as well as social regulation that resists liberal norms and values. As such, entirely this modern and global enterprise is seen as potentially destabilising and thus becomes the target of development and aid schemes.

The implementation nationwide of large-scale social and human development policies after a period of structural adjustment and economic deregulation during the 1980s and the 1990s is testimony to the fact that the Moroccan authorities understood that new social risks and urban poverty were associated with the perverse effects of earlier capitalist adjustment. In general, poverty in Morocco had risen sharply in the 1990s (Catusse 2008). In that sense, Morocco followed a global transition. Structural adjustment had made clear that market deregulation and price incentives were not enough to spur economic growth in developing countries.

Therefore, under the impulse of the then Chief Economist at the World Bank, Joseph Stiglitz, the idea emerged that supporting a free-market economy required a certain state capacity in order to adjust market failure and integrate those who were excluded from the market (Kapoor 2008, p. 29, World Bank 1997). This shift, which gave rise to the 'Post-Washington Consensus', recognised the important role of local governments in regulatory economic policy. Again, market reform in Morocco, as in other countries, went hand in hand with a reconfiguration of state power. As the political produced the 'free market', new logics of competition and privatisation were injected in social spheres that were, until then, somehow protected from direct market intervention.

The issue of the slums was incorporated in a larger vision to combat poverty. With several public speeches throughout 2003 and 2004, the new king stressed the importance of human development and in 2005 he officially launched the ambitious National Initiative for Human Development (INDH). This new programme sets out to address poverty and social problems through the setting up of a comprehensive framework of policy-making. It addresses social deficits through the promotion of local projects and civil society initiatives that attempt to improve access to social services, create employment opportunities and combat the poverty of the most vulnerable groups within society. A year earlier, as an immediate response to the Casablanca attacks, another prestigious development plan, the *Villes Sans Bidonvilles* (VSB, cities without slums) programme was launched. After the Casablanca bombings the Moroccan government, helped and backed by NGOs and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) as well as international organisations

such as the United Nations Development Programe (UNDP) and the World Bank, carried out an impressive number of studies, updating its database on slums, numbering and mapping them. The Ministry of Social Development, Family and Solidarity carried out several surveys to uncover the 'social needs' of the slums[7], and the programme aims to eradicate all slums by 2012.[8] Thus slums became the priority of poverty alleviation policies.[9]

Reconnecting the city: services or politics?

The separation between a 'normal' city where the rules of urbanism apply and the 'irregular' *bidonvilles* is etched in the reality of the Moroccan cities. Unemployment, poverty, and marginalisation are an essential feature of one part of the urban extreme. For a long time the slums have been tolerated as a way of maintaining stability and urban demographic pressures. Lamia Zaki (2008) argues convincingly how in the past slums were politically 'managed *in absentia*' by the authorities. The slums were more or less tolerated to preserve social peace as long as they retained the character of temporary and transitory settlements. This 'management *in absentia*' kept the slum dwellers in pseudo-illegality because they were never recognised as formal city-dwellers despite the fact that they did obtain some civic rights (such as voting). Nevertheless, and especially after the Casablanca attacks, this tolerance would give way to a more active government of the slums in an attempt to integrate the slum dweller into the formal city and its formal market economy. As a result, social development initiatives such as the INDH and the VSB programmes required state agencies to become more actively involved in the economic sphere to alleviate social inequality. Consequently, poverty and social inequality are seen as mere technical problems that can be resolved through market-oriented approaches that reflect the requirements of efficiency, expertise and the best cost–benefit analysis.

Within the INDH and more specifically the VSB project, the problems of the slums are not analysed from a structural point of view, nor framed in a specific discourse on economic and social injustice. Instead, the problems are visualised and made comprehensive in terms of the spatial metaphor of slums being only remotely connected to the city and its social and economic services. Globalisation, seen as the facilitation of the flow of goods, capital, services and labour and market integration, had to be brought to the slums and their inhabitants as a solution to their problems. The main goal of the VSB project was to relocate slum dwellers to social housing apartments. New modalities to improve the citizen's participation in slum relocation projects (e.g. through public–private partnerships and state-directed NGO intervention in the slums) and specific arrangements to improve the slum dwellers' access to capital to finance the move (e.g. state-guaranteed loans and micro-credit) were some of the techniques of social engineering that exemplified the top-down strategies to integrate the slum population in the formal city. However, this meant that the whole idea of 'integration into the city' was reduced to a housing question. The slum dwellers had no say in where they were to be relocated (mostly towards the peripheries of the cities) and once transferred many of them were confronted with new costs (e.g. bills for electricity, water, public transport) in addition to the obligation to repay their loans (for a more detailed discussion see Bogaert 2011b). The relocation of slum dwellers and their integration in a market economy (especially the social housing economy) are a crucial strategy in what Ananya Roy calls 'the alliance that lies at the very heart of *poverty capital*'. This alliance brings together those who 'control access to the poorest' (e.g. microfinance providers, NGO teams intervening in the slums and the public operator) and those who 'control access to capital' (e.g. the commercial banks) (Roy 2010, p. 31). The actual purpose is to explore and exploit a 'new frontier of capital accumulation' through the inclusion of the urban

poor in the urban economy; i.e. those people who have not been served by financial systems and markets before (*ibid.*, p. 53). The complex but crucial question, according to Roy, is whether poverty capital will ensure the financial inclusion of the poor on fair and just terms, or whether these financial innovations are new ways to exploit them. More generally, is the support of the state in the VSB project – via subsidies, tax cuts and financial guarantees – a way of giving the urban poor new hope for the future, or is state support rather a convenient (class) instrument to privatise benefits and socialise risks and losses?

These types of intervention are far from neutral or apolitical, as they are often presented by local governments, international actors and NGOs. One of the major new features of both the INDH and the VSB is the incorporation of a participatory approach to development. The involvement of citizen participation and civil society organisations at the local level, as well as the integration of public, private, social and economic agents in a single process, seems to become the central methodological tool of local development. Yet, while Morocco stresses the importance of decentralisation and therefore advocates the (partial) transfer of power to local elected bodies, it is instructive that the INDH is vertically organised around the provincial governors (*walis*) who effectively control the Local Human Development Committees. It is also instructive that the INDH's financial planning and management has been allocated not to the Ministry of Finance that normally supervises all financial, budgetary and economic activities, but to the same provincial governors. The fact that the governors are not elected but directly appointed by the king proves a direct bypassing of local elected bodies in favour of a top-down approach in which the king and his 'agents of authority' call the shots. Also, in the VSB, local city contracts are concluded to map out all the different relocation operations and bring the different actors together under the authority of the local governor. As such, the Ministry of the Interior (which supervises the local 'agents of authority') remains the central locus of the regulation of the monarchy's power and acts as a way through which a restructuring of the (royal) authorities that bypass (or at least 'balance' the power of) elected local institutions is initiated. Therefore, the INDH and the VSB initiatives – while aiming to 'broaden the choices of the citizens' – are also ways of reorganising the control of the Makhzen (Berriane 2010). While the 'local authorities' or 'agents of authority' used to be the direct executives of royal power and the securitisation of the territory – referred to in Morocco as the eyes, ears and hands of the king – it seems that today they are reorganising themselves along more participatory lines. The logic of participation has become a matter of linking state institutions with 'non-state' experts, NGOs and other social and economic partners. This technocratic approach to development evacuates to a large extent the possibility of politics as conflict is translated into a development target that has a solution based on certain kinds of expertise and knowledge. Influenced by the new orthodoxies of development thinking and poverty alleviation schemes, the monarchy created institutions and foundations that are coordinating – in close association with the private sector and civil society organisations – the fight against poverty.[10]

Conclusion

Two decades ago, François Burgat (1990), with reference to Egypt, wrote that while there is no infallible way for political scientists to understand Egyptian politics, there are numerous ways to be deceived. He was criticising political and social science for being over-concerned with institutional approaches focusing on parties, elections, 'the regime', etc. With the end of the Cold War, and even more, after the end of the second Gulf War and the Oslo peace process, numerous observers believed that the Arab world would move towards political and economic liberalisation. After this short-lived period of optimism,

assuming that the third wave of democratisation was also hitting the Arab shores, it became clear towards the turn of the century that change was not occurring along the lines of the road maps and plans sketched out behind the office desks of international institutions or university seminars. These observers agreed that the Arab world had undergone major economic changes but they failed to understand the intrinsic political nature of them. Politics, and more concretely political power, were and are still very much associated with the Arab 'regime' or the Arab state and less with the changes related to the political economy of neoliberal globalisation. Consequently, scholars attempted, above all, to uncover the illiberal nature of the regime in order to describe a broader picture of political change in the region. As the different Arab countries – their differences notwithstanding – were not marching on the pre-formatted path to democratisation, they set out to pinpoint the presumed internal obstacles for genuine change and thus, by the same token, tried to 'label' and 'define' the current Arab state. Hybrid state, semi-authoritarian state, liberalised autocracy, deliberalised state – these were just some of the concepts vying to 'define' the Arab state (e.g. Brumberg 2002, Kienle 2003, Springborg 2006).

Morocco was an interesting case in this respect. At first, the kingdom was considered by many journalists and international observers as a promising test case for democratisation theory when the late King Hassan II and later his son Mohamed VI embarked upon a see-mingly ambitious political and reform process in the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s. By the end of the 1990s, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch argued that Morocco had dramatically improved its human rights record (Zemni and Bogaert 2006). On top of that, the World Bank lauded Morocco as being one of the 'success stories' of global market reform (World Bank 1990). Overall, the kingdom was seen as a model refor-mer in the region, an exception to the wider regional trend of authoritarian durability. Yet, the idea of a 'Moroccan exception' was shattered for the first time in 2003 with the suicide bombings in Casablanca. After the attacks, some argued, the monarchy reverted to more authoritarian modes of governance reminiscent of the past decades. Others, however, still thought of Morocco as a valuable case for democratisation theory to understand its gradual transition to a Western-style liberal democracy (Storm 2007). Even today, the press-ures for political change that followed the events in Tunisia and Egypt, and the immediate answer of the king on 9 March 2011, ordering the establishment of a constitutional commit-tee charged with the revision of the Moroccan Constitution and reviving the process of pol-itical reform, seemed to suggest that Morocco can still be a valuable case to study the gradual transition to democracy. The explosion in April 2011 at the Argana café on the very popular Djema'a al-Fna square in the tourist city of Marrakech, killing 16 persons, has prompted a harsher response by the authorities to the demonstrations and protests. However, the mass mobilisation against terrorism throughout the country and the official denial that the al-Qaeda Movement in the Maghreb (AQMI) was connected to the attack, have kept the pressure for reform alive.

In the margins of this debate, it became clear that socio-economic pressures have worsened in Morocco. Ever since the events in 2003, Morocco has experienced a series of local protest actions against the high cost of living, rising unemployment and increasing cor-ruption, especially in smaller cities and villages, where citizens and different kinds of social organisations have been demanding social, economic and political change. These local actions were definitely a prelude to the broader protest movement in Morocco today (i.e. the 20 February [youth] movement), especially as many of the same actors are taking part (e.g. the Moroccan independent and leftist human rights movement Association marocaine des droits humains). Nevertheless, the predominant preoccupation with democratic transition in the Arab region has often failed to take into account the impact and political meaning of

these socio-economic pressures. Instead, the phenomenon of political freedom and reform has often been considered only in the light of a (possible) linear transition to (liberal) democracy, thereby ignoring the crucial interrelation between increasing capitalist development, neoliberal globalisation and local resistance. Narratives on the desired democratic reform and contemporary globalisation-tended to be framed by a sense of inevitability and the glorification of Western-style liberal democracy and free-market society. Consequently, the possible differences between countries and political systems around the globe were then explained as if some countries and/or systems are just 'behind' (Massey 2005). According to Doreen Massey, these kinds of political and academic narratives do not allow us to imagine other (non-Western) countries and political forces in the world to have their own specific trajectories, their own particular histories, and the potential for their own (different) futures. Additionally, these narratives also misunderstood that it was not so much a lack of economic reform that caused the increasing socio-economic pressures but precisely the manner of the integration of the region into the economic and political processes of global capitalism.

In this study we explored some of the directions and perspectives that enable us to understand political change in Morocco as a process that is, without a doubt, intimately related to the changes and shifts within global capitalism. If we look beyond the specific ideological packaging of social development schemes such as the cities without slums programme, with its focus on participatory development, the virtues of home-ownership etc., and mega-projects like the Bouregreg-project, with its focus on attracting investments, tourists, jobs and economic prosperity, then a political reality becomes perceptible in which it is not so much that poverty alleviation and socio-economic development *per se* really matter, but rather *how* these political objectives can be integrated in a neoliberal class project. In this project the exchange value of the city is privileged over the use value of the city. As a result, government now works primarily for investors, tourists and the rich while most other people are going to be pushed more and more to the peripheries of the cities, either under obligation (through the cities without slums programme) or by necessity (because city-life in the centre has become too expensive).

This opens up, for example, a radically different perspective on newly launched social development projects such as VSB and the INDH. As we argued in the paper, a programme like VSB is not just any social programme to alleviate poverty. It is a particular project that fits perfectly within a neoliberal rationale and, as a result, incorporates exploitative class relations. As a consequence, programmes like VSB fundamentally redefine social policy in Morocco according to free market requirements and should therefore be viewed more as new frontiers of capital accumulation than as real sustainable solutions to the pressing socio-economic problems of Morocco (Roy 2010). These kinds of programme are more likely to *reproduce* social inequality instead of alleviating poverty. Moreover, the specific neoliberal rationale behind development programmes such as VSB enables us to link these projects with other kinds of projects, which at first sight seem to have a completely different logic. This is what we have tried to do by considering the broader political transformations that are represented by both social development schemes and high-end urban development projects such as those in Rabat, Tangier and Casablanca. In contrast to a popular understanding of globalisation, often pictured as an unavoidable, even natural process to which we all have to adapt, we have described some of the urban politics that are implicated in the making of that globalisation. Current globalisation is thus essentially a *political project* which assembles the interests of local and global class forces and contrasts with the interests of the majority.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1. This point is also mentioned by Harvey (2006, p. 42). In addition we should observe that Morocco already had some type of market-based economy before the implementation of a Structural Adjustment Program in 1983. So some kind of class formation was already established, especially during the 1970s with the *Moroccanisation* of the economy.
2. *Telquel*, no. 390, 2009. Available from: http://www.telquel-online.com/390/index_390.shtml [Accessed 10 October 2009].
3. See http://www.tangercitycentre.com/project.html [Accessed 24 September 2010].
4. Oxford Business Group, 2010. Newsletter on Morocco: tourism on the up [online]. Available from: http://www.zawya.com/story.cfm/sidZAWYA20101010053818 [Accessed 8 October 2010].
5. For more information, see: www.bouregreg.com.
6. It is true of course that the urban poor on several occasions joined the rallies of the larger Islamist movements. During the Iranian revolution for example, the poor took to the streets in support of the revolution when it was already in its final phase. The populist rhetoric of the Iranian clergy referring to the *mustadha'afin* (the downtrodden) is also mainly post-revolutionary (Bayat 2007).
7. See: http://www.social.gov.ma/fr
8. Recently, there has been talk about a new deadline (2015) in the Moroccan press as it becomes clear that the previous goals will not be met.
9. In total, 270,000 households were seen as being in slums, 212,000 of which were in 886 slums scattered over 83 urban zones. Eighteen of these 83 urban zones include 82% of all slum residents. The coastal cities in the triangle between Casablanca, Fez and Tangier have the biggest concentration of urban slums. Out of 886 slums, 509 (58%) have fewer than 100 households, 280 (31%) have 100 to 500 households while 97 (11%) have more than 500 households. Casablanca houses 25% of the slum population (World Bank 2006).
10. The *Fondation Mohammed V pour la solidarité* and the *Fonds Hassan II pour le développement économique et social* were created in 1999 and are active in many development initiatives. In addition to these royal foundations, the *Agence de développement social* (ADS) was founded in 1999 by the government and plays an active role in engaging slum-dwellers in relocation programmes and mediating between them and technical government institutions and private partners.

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