MELILLA
PERSPECTIVES ON A BORDER TOWN

Michaela Pelican and Sofie Steinberger (eds.)

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PERSPECTIVES ON A BORDER TOWN

**Special issue
edited by Michaela Pelican and Sofie Steinberger**

EDITORIAL

This special issue deals with the complex situation of Melilla as a border town that links Spain and Morocco, Europe and Africa. It addresses this subject from a historical and contemporary perspective and integrates various forms of reflection, including academic, personal, and photographic accounts.

The contributions in this volume shed light on the city's historical, political, and social context, and provide insights into the everyday lives of Melilla's diverse inhabitants. They delve into the city's political history, and explore the physical and ideological transformation of the border from a zone of contact and interaction to a strict line of separation and exclusion. The chapters introduce the reader into the homes and lives of families of Rif-Berber and Spanish descent as well as to the *Centro de Estancia Temporal de Inmigrantes* (CETI), the camp for the 'temporary' stay of (im)migrants, where refugees and migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia have been awaiting entry into mainland Europe. The contributions integrate perspectives from within and outside the city, including the neighbouring province of Nador. They attest to the existence of multiple social and economic networks that share long crisscrossed colonial and national borders and have challenged exclusionary discourses of nationalism and identity.

This special issue has resulted from ongoing exchange and collaboration between the contributors, who present their insights from their specific points of interest and professional expertise. Our special thanks go to the members of the University of Cologne Forum 'Ethnicity as Political Resource: Perspectives from Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Europe' and of the *oxígeno laboratorio cultural*, the organization that grew out of the participatory art and action project *Kahina*. We also thank the *Centro de las Culturas de Melilla* for supporting the project that has led to this collaboration.

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We dedicate this special issue to our late colleague and friend Fernando Belmonte Montalbán, the former managing director of the *Institute de Las Culturas de Melilla*, who, in his questioning but openhearted way, was always keen to debate and to contribute to making Melilla a multicultural city.

Cologne, 17 May 2017

Michaela Pelican and Sofie Steinberger

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GLOSSARY

alcalde-presidente	mayor
Amazigh (pl. Imazighen)	name of the ethnic group living in the Rif region, also categorized as (Rif-)Berbers
asamblea	legislature
barrio	neighbourhood
Barrio Chino	one of the five border crossing points between Melilla and Nador
Beni Chiker	one of the five border crossing points between Melilla and Nador
Beni Ensar	one of the five border crossing points between Melilla and Nador
boza	originally meaning 'victory' in Fula; here: the jump over the border fence
Centro de Estancia Temporal de Inmigrantes	camp for the 'temporary' stay of (im)migrants
Ceutí (pl. Ceutíes)	person from Ceuta
ciudad de las cuatro culturas	city of the four cultures
ciudades autónomas	autonomous cities
comercio atípico	atypical commerce, border trade
comunidades autónomas	autonomous Communities; they are the first level of political and administrative division in Spain.
convivencia	peaceful coexistence
Dey	title of the rulers of Algiers (Algeria), Tripoli, and Tunis under the Ottoman Empire (1671 to 1830)
españolidad	Spanish-ness
estatutos de autonomía	statute of Autonomy; each autonomous community or autonomous city has its own Statute of Autonomy
EURODAC	European Dactyloscopy is a fingerprint data-base for identifying asylum seekers and irregular border-crossers installed by the European Union in 2003.
Guardia Civil	Spanish military force with police duties; it acts under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defence
Gurugú	mountain near Melilla, on the Moroccan side
la jaula	literally 'the cage', revolving metal doors at border post
la península	mainland Spain
Marruecos Español	Spanish Morocco, northern part of Morocco under Spanish protectorate (1912-1956)

Mauretania Tingitana	name of Roman province (40 AD)
Melillense (pl. Melillenses)	person from Melilla
Mlila	name of medieval Berber city which later became Melilla
Nadori (pl. Nadori)	person from Nador
Partido Popular	People's Party
Plaza de las Cuatro Culturas	Four Cultures Square in Melilla
plazas de soberanía	places of sovereignty; Spanish sovereign territories in continental North Africa
plazas mayores	major sovereign territories (Ceuta, Melilla)
plazas menores	minor sovereign territories (islets)
porteadoras	female couriers
presidio	garrisoned place, military post or fortified settlement in areas currently or originally under Spanish control, term popular in 16th to 19th century
Reconquista	historical period, 8th to 15th century, conquering back of Spanish Catholic territory
Riffians, rifeños, Rif-Berber	people of the Rif of Amazigh decent living in Er Rif, a mountainous coastal region in northern Morocco.
transfronterizos	border crossers
valla	border fence
valla antitrepa	fence that impedes any hold for fingers or toes

ABBREVIATIONS

APDHA	Associación Pro-Derechos Humanos de Andalucía
CETI	Centro de Estancia Temporal de Inmigrantes
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
EURODAC	European Dactyloscopy
GSSC	Global South Studies Center at the University of Cologne
o2lc	oxígeno laboratorio cultural
SIVE	Integrated Exterior Surveillance System
UoC	University of Cologne
VAT	Value Added Tax

1. INTRODUCTION

by Michaela Pelican, Antonio Sáez-Arance, and Sofie Steinberger

Over the past years, the image of African migrants sitting astride the high-security fence in Melilla which separates Spanish and Moroccan territories has become a familiar trope. In the view of the European public, the Spanish exclave of Melilla has become a symbol for the tragedy of irregular migration and the failed migration policy of the European Union.(1) Desperate to find their way into Europe and to a safer and better life, many refugees and migrants camp in the Moroccan wilderness on the neighbouring Gurugú Mountain, while they plot how to cross *la valla* (the border fence), sometimes storming it in their hundreds. Concurrently, the Spanish authorities have taken increasingly elaborate steps to secure the fence, adding several layers and hemming it with concertina wire. Human rights organizations as well as the European Commission have severely criticized Spain for violations of local and international law, including acts of physical violence against migrants as well as collective expulsions without due administrative and legal procedure. Moreover, in 2016, the vulnerable situation of unaccompanied minors in Melilla – mainly Moroccan children and teenagers between ten and eighteen years of age – became a highly contentious topic discussed in local and national contexts. Undoubtedly, these current issues have drawn public and media attention to Melilla. However, most people in Spain and Europe only have a schematic and oversimplified idea of the city, ignoring Melilla's long and rich history which has given rise to complex collective identities and social interactions.

La ciudad de las cuatro culturas

Melilla has officially been promoted as *la ciudad de las cuatro culturas*, 'The City of Four Cultures'. This portrayal is usually linked to a narrative according to which the city is host to Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Hindu populations who live together in peace. And truly, when walking through the streets of Melilla, various cultural and religious influences are visible in terms of architecture, food, fashion, street names etc. However, critics have accused the local government of exaggerating the harmonious cohabitation of different "cultures" and of promoting an idealized vision of *convivencia* (cultural and religious coexistence). In fact, Melilla hosts one of the most important Jewish communities on Spanish territory; but like the Hindu community, it is small. Only about 1,000 of the 86,000 people living in Melilla are Jews or Hindus.(2) The slogan of *la ciudad de las cuatro culturas* could thus be interpreted as an attempt to distract attention from the fact that some 50 percent of Melilla's population are Muslims of Amazigh (Rif-Berber) background.(3) Furthermore, the slogan ignores the presence of a substantial number of migrants and refugees living in the *Centro de Estancia Temporal de Inmigrantes* (CETI). Supposedly, their stay is temporary. However, many end up staying for years, while being physically and socially excluded from city life (see Bondanini in this volume).

The term *convivencia*, used so positively nowadays, is controversial in itself: It is based on the popular narrative that since the eighth century, Christians, Jews and Muslims have lived in harmony on the Iberian Peninsula, culminating in a period of artistic splendour and cultural vitality, associated with *Al-Andalus*. This, however, is a historically faulty and oversimplified description of the time leading up to the *Reconquista*, which ended with the Castilian crown reconquering the Kingdom of Granada in 1492. The original phase of *convivencia* finished, at the latest, with the Muslims' expulsion from the Spanish peninsula and the end of the *Reconquista*. The *Reconquista*, however, is one of the justifications for Melilla being part of Spain rather than Morocco, despite its location on the African continent (see also Saéz-Arance in this volume). Thus, the official insistence on the harmonious and peaceful coexistence of four 'cultures' in Melilla could also be interpreted as part of a political discourse aimed at alleviating underlying conflicts over the city's national identity. At the same time, it can be read

as a local political strategy to divert attention from the sometimes problematic cohabitation of Christian and Muslim *Melillenses* (people of Melilla) from different sociocultural and economic backgrounds (see also Friedrichs in this volume).

Melilla's complex history and the resultant identity dilemmas are also reflected in the local govern-ment's uses of cultural and political symbols. For example, the official holiday of the city is the *Día de Melilla* (Day of Melilla) which commemorates the Castilian (and Christian) conquest of the city by Pedro de Estopiñán on 17 September 1497. In 2010, reflecting its identity as a culturally and reli-giously diverse city, the Melilla government declared
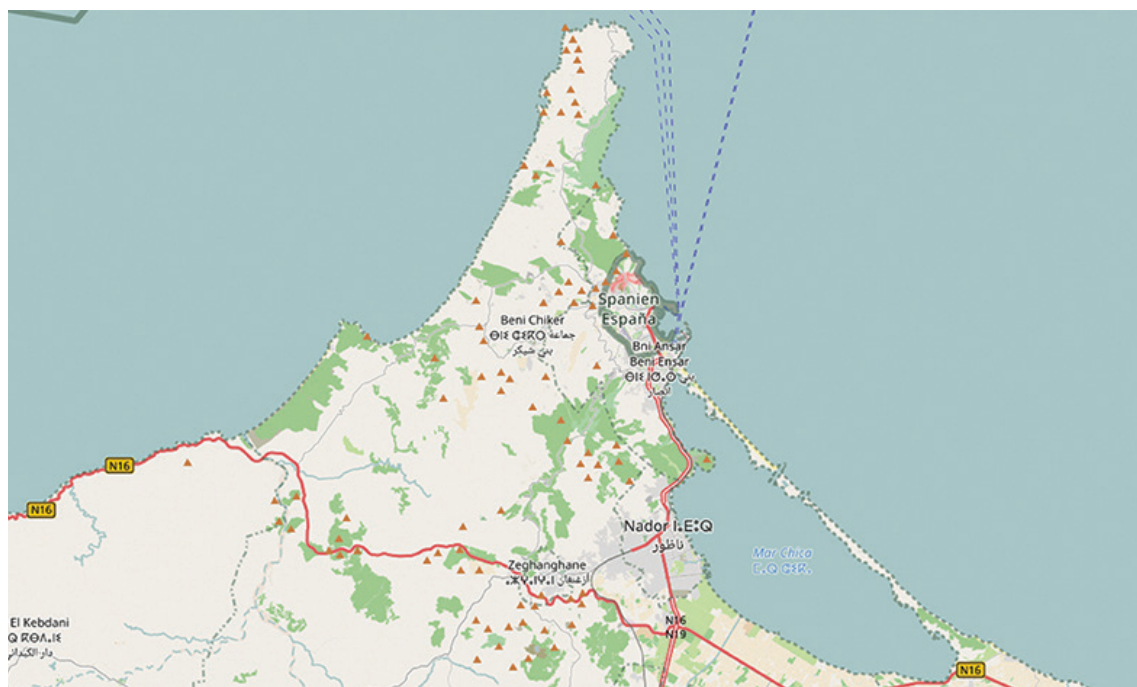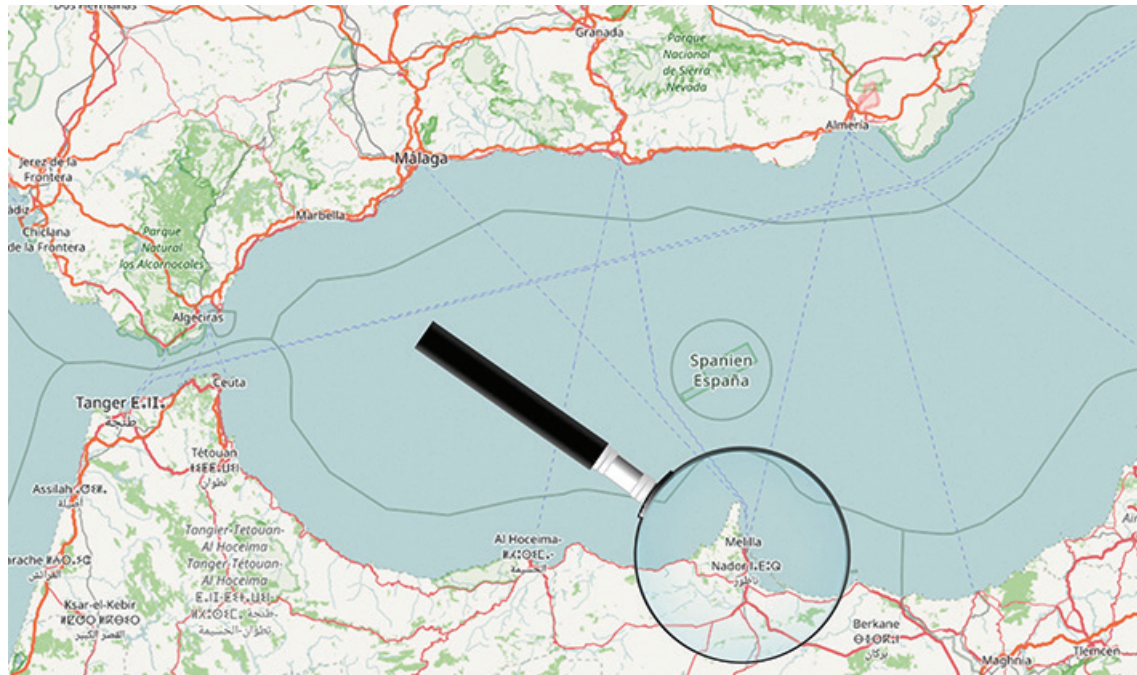

Figure 1.1-1.2: Spanish-Moroccan Mediterranean area, border region Melilla-Nador. © OpenStreetMap contributors (www.openstreetmap.org). Data made available under the Open Database License (www.openstreetmap.org/copyright/en, www.opendatacommons.org/licenses/odbl/).

the Muslim holiday of *Aid al-Adha* or *Aid el-Kebir* (Feast of the Sacrifice) an official public holiday. This was the first time since the *Reconquista* that a non-Christian religious festival has officially been celebrated in Spain. More problematic, however, are some of Melilla's political symbols, such as the high-security border fence (*la valla*) and the statue of General Francisco Franco in the city harbour, which is the last such figure on Spanish territory. The official argument for its maintenance is the fact that the statue represents Franco as a commander and co-founder of the Spanish Legion in the 1920s, and not as a dictator after 1936. Yet the colonial character of Melilla as a military unit, let alone its implication in war crimes and crimes against humanity both in North Africa and Spain, seem irrelevant in public debate. Both monuments can thus be read as attesting to the city's colonialist past, and as highlighting its historical and contemporary role as Christian/European vanguard on the southern side of the Mediterranean.

Melilla between Spain and Morocco

Officially, Melilla has been a Spanish city since 1497. However, since Morocco's independence in 1956, now and then debates arise about Melilla's territorial belonging to Spain or Morocco, which have sometimes caused diplomatic frictions. In 1995 Melilla became a so-called *ciudad autónoma*, an autonomous city. This status was given to Ceuta and Melilla, two inhabited Spanish sovereign territories in North Africa. This meant that the two cities became administratively independent from the Spanish mainland and are able to introduce their own interests in the form of bills at the Spanish Parliament. However, in comparison to other Spanish administrative units, the autonomous cities did not gain complete legislative powers. This was in order to prevent the possibility of a political separation from Spain, in case a Morocco-friendly majority was to emerge – a scenario that so far has not materialized (Cajal 2003: 187-188).

While insisting on Melilla's *españolidad* (Spanish-ness) in terms of territorial sovereignty, the Spanish government seems to be more lenient in other regards, such as immigration policy and human rights standards. Here, Melilla's Spanish-ness is somewhat selective. In situations of political expedience, the Spanish state refrains from enforcing its sovereign rights, e.g. by allowing Moroccan border police to act against irregular immigration on Spanish territory, at the expense of the Spanish constitution as well as European standards of the rule-of-law (see Steinberger in this volume).

Internal and external perspectives

While from an outside perspective, the border question has been at the centre of interest, everyday life in Melilla focuses on different issues that are of importance to its residents. For generations, cross-border relations have been part and parcel of everyday life in Melilla and the neighbouring province of Nador, and have furthered the region's economic and social development (see Soto Bermant, Boukllouâ in this volume). In recent years, however, economic depression, youth unemployment, ethnic segregation, and Islamist influences have been on the rise. The areas most affected are the less privileged neighbourhoods on Melilla's outskirts, where much of the Muslim population congregates. Conversely, the city centre is dominated by Christian Spaniards, many of whom are better-off and well connected with the Spanish mainland. Ethnic segregation and social tension are pertinent issues that have also been addressed by local organizations, such as *Kahina* or *oxígeno laboratorio cultural* (see Bondanini et al., Mesaud Barreras and Steinberger in this volume).

In this publication, we wish to provide a broad impression of Melilla as a border town by including different perspectives. Besides presenting contributions that offer a more profound insight into the historical and political background, we will also shed light on the everyday life of the *Melillenses* and their relations across the border, as well as perspectives from inside the CETI and from the neighbouring province of Nador.

ABSTRACTS

Between Europe and Africa: Dynamics of exchange at the Spanish-Moroccan border of Melilla
by Laia Soto Bermant

The opening chapter by Laia Soto Bermant starts by introducing Melilla, as it is widely known from

news footage: A manifestation of 'fortress Europe', besieged by refugees and migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa who try to penetrate its highly secured border, while affluent Spaniards are playing golf on the other side of the fence. The chapter argues for going beyond this media portrayal and exploring how the border impacts the everyday lives of Melilla's inhabitants, as well as how the latter have turned it into a socially and economically productive space. Soto Bermant introduces us to the extended transnational social networks of local families of Amazigh (Rif-Berber) background that span various locations in Northern Africa and Europe, and that are constitutive of family life and the local economy in Melilla, Nador and neighbouring communities. Using smuggling, or *comercio atípico* (atypical commerce) as it is known in Melilla as an example, she highlights how locals make profitable use of Melilla's special border situation. The chapter ends with a view on Melilla's current refugee situation from a historical perspective, interpreting it as part of Melilla's long-lasting and complex relationship with the outside world.

From a Medieval Christian Vanguard to a European High-Tech Fortress: Melilla's historical background
by Antonio Sáez-Arance

Antonio Sáez-Arance provides a critical discussion of the (ac)claimed *españolidad* (Spanish-ness) of Melilla and Ceuta, calling for a historically sensitive analysis that pays due attention to Spanish colonialism and the exclave's entrenchment in global history. Sáez-Arance traces Melilla's origins to the ancient and medieval period, and elaborates on the strategies used by the Castilian-Aragonese crown to expand its rule into northern African territory. He explains that from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century, Melilla was immersed in ongoing regional conflicts that engendered structural mutual mistrust, with deep roots in common collective experiences of conquest, occupation and expulsion. Taking a critical look at Spain's colonial expansion in the late nineteenth and first half of twentieth century, Sáez-Arance outlines the strategically important role of Melilla as a military and economic outpost; characteristics that are still relevant today. He delves into the troubled memories of the Franco period, of

which the last publicly displayed Franco statue in Melilla's harbour is a telling reminder. The chapter ends by drawing our attention to the contemporary period, emphasizing the role of the city for the historical narratives regarding the Spanish Civil War.

Living in Melilla: Perspectives of Christian and Muslim *Melillenses*
by Roxanne Friedrichs

Roxanne Friedrichs focuses on the coexistence of Christian and Muslim populations in Melilla. She starts with a telling ethnographic moment, when a local garbage collector's comments made it clear that coexistence is more complex than the popular label of Melilla as 'The City of Four Cultures' might suggest. Her chapter introduces us to different population groups that inhabit the city on a permanent or temporary basis. All the groups, in their own ways, are part of Melilla and thus are *Melillenses* (people of Melilla). She explores the city's social and spatial organization as well as practices of segregation that facilitate coexistence in this small but diverse border town. The chapter then engages with the ambivalent ways in which Christian and Muslim *Melillenses* characterize themselves and the city. It discusses their strategies to deal with the city's limitations, and highlights the relevance of transnational mobility and social networks. The chapter ends by returning to the garbage collector's comment and the implications of living in a city where physical and imaginary boundaries have become part and parcel of everyday life.

From *Kahina* to *oxígeno laboratorio cultural* – promoting social inclusion through art, action, and research
by Francesco Bondanini, Michaela Pelican, and Sofie Steinberger

This chapter introduces the participatory social action and research project *Kahina* and its successor organization *oxígeno laboratorio cultural*. Both are aimed at addressing social inequality and ethnic coexistence in Melilla by way of using the universal language of art. The chapter briefly discusses the organization's objectives and illustrates their activities with a selection of photographs.

Personas Silenciosas (Gentle People): A photographic portrait from the Central Market in Melilla
by Fátima Mesaud Barreras, and Sofie Steinberger

The photographic essay by Fátima Mesaud Barreras addresses Melilla's ethnic and cultural diversity through the prism of the city's main market. Being a *Melillense* (person of Melilla) and a media professional, Mesaud Barreras provides an esthetically and culturally sensitive insider perspective. Her photographs engage with the popular trope of Melilla as 'The City of Four Cultures' and literally give it a human face. The portraits of people working in different roles in the main market open a window to their professional and personal lives, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and their varied experiences. The market here stands as an example of an integrative space that engenders social and economic relations across different population groups both from within and without Melilla. The essay thus resonates with many of the other contributions in this volume in stressing Melilla's particular economic situation as a vital factor of inclusion and exclusion.

Melilla – a perspective from Nador
by Mostapha Boukllouâ

Contrasting with the other contributions, Mostapha Boukllouâ provides a biographical (rather than an academic) perspective on Melilla. Drawing on his family history and the experiences of his parents' and grandparents' generations, he vividly describes the then close economic and social relations that linked the city of Melilla to the province of Nador. He notes that despite a long history of troubled political relations between Morocco and Spain, the local Amazigh (Rif-Berber) population adopted an inclusive approach towards Melilla and its residents. For them, Melilla was not only an attractive location for trade but also the door to Europe, promising access to industrially manufactured goods as well as job opportunities. Boukllouâ then describes changes in the border management, including the institution of manned border posts and the establishment of a refugee camp on the Moroccan side, both of which have contributed to estranging Melilla from its surrounding environment. He concludes by high-

lighting recent investments in the city of Nador by the Moroccan government and diaspora, which further contributed to reducing Melilla's economic and social relevance for the region.

Melilla – a border town of international interest
by Sofie Steinberger

At the heart of Sofie Steinberger's chapter is the transformation of the physical border in Melilla that separates Spain from Morocco, Europe from Africa. The chapter provides a brief overview of the early history of the Spanish-Moroccan border demarcation, which reaches back to the fifteenth century and did not originally involve any physical structures. Steinberger then focuses on the introduction of the physical boundary in the second half of the twentieth century and its impacts on people's belonging and mobility on both sides of the border. She traces the boundary's gradual transformation against the background of changing national policies, such as the *ley de extranjeria* (foreigners' law) introduced in the 1980s that confronted many of Melilla's inhabitants with an unforeseen change of nationality. Furthermore, she analyses the border's visible fortification and securitization over the past twenty-five years in relation to the migration policies of the European Union. She draws attention to EU measures to externalize its border control which involve the collaboration of both the Spanish and Moroccan governments. Today, the border in Melilla is made up of a highly securitized four-layered wired fence that limits people's mobility and attests to the significant geo-political transformations of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.

Migration on the Borders of Europe: The case of Melilla
by Francesco Bondanini

Francesco Bondanini takes us into the *Centro de Estancia Temporal de Inmigrantes* (CETI), the camp for the 'temporary' stay of (im)migrants. Here refugees and migrants who have managed to cross the border are housed, while waiting for their transfer to mainland Spain. His contribution is based on participatory research, conducted between 2010 and 2012. It is necessarily a temporary snapshot,

as the size and composition of the refugee and migrant population has fluctuated over the years due to changing conflict scenarios and border policies. Bondanini introduces the CETI, its history, and its goals and political justification. He then provides an idea of the people housed in the camp and sketches how their composition has changed over recent years. Here it is remarkable that during the period of Bondanini's fieldwork, it was predominantly young men from sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia who lived in the CETI. A few years later, the camp had to be adapted to the needs of families, including women and children, fleeing from conflict in the Middle East. In the main part of the paper, Bondanini discusses migrants' strategies for crossing the border, the difficulties and risks they encountered, and the expectations associated with arriving in Melilla. He describes everyday life in the CETI and the migrants' struggle to deal with the frustrations of immobility, isolation, and boredom. It becomes clear that although many migrants stay in Melilla for several months and are free to move around in the city during day, there is little opportunity and incentive to establish contact with other population groups. Both physically and socially, the CETI remains separate from the city and a universe in its own.

Concluding remarks: Melilla – a small place with large issues
by Michaela Pelican

In concluding this special issue, Michaela Pelican discusses the Melilla case in relation to academic debates on ethnicity and diversity. Drawing on the authors' contributions, she highlights the use of identity discourses as a means of inclusion/exclusion at the local, national, and transnational level. She analyzes local practices of dealing with cultural diversity and social inequality, and reflects on Melilla's spatially and socially fractured character. She concludes with a desideratum of more research on the interconnectedness of Melilla's seemingly separate social spaces and identity discourses. ■

Notes

(1) While some authors use 'enclave' to describe the geographical-political status of Ceuta and Melilla, we use the term exclave in this publication, as it more appropriately captures the city's geographical location: Melilla belongs to Spain and has no connection to Spanish territory by land. It is partly surrounded by Moroccan.

(2) See the statistics about 'Población por comunidades y ciudades autónomas y sexo' on the website of the National Statistics Institute (INE). Online: http://www.ine.es/. (Last visited 24/03/2017).

(3) Amazigh (sing.), Imazighen (pl.) is the name of an ethnic group in North Africa which also lives in the Rif region of Morocco. Their language is Tamazight. While they call themselves Imazighen, they have also been known as Rif-Berber in academic literature and public representation. In this publication, we generally use the emic term Amazigh/Imazighen.
According to the Barómetro Autonómico of the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, about 35 percent of Melilla's population are Muslims (CIS 2012). However, if residents with Moroccan citizenship are counted in, the Muslim population amounts to fifty percent (*Comunidad Islámica* 2017, *Público* 2009).

2. Between Europe and Africa: Dynamics of exchange at the Spanish-Moroccan border of Melilla

by Laia Soto Bermant

On 3 April 2014, around two hundred African migrants tried to climb over the six-metre-high security fence that separates the Spanish exclave of Melilla from Morocco. They had been hiding on Gurugú Mountain for months, sleeping in makeshift camps as they waited for an opportunity to cross the border into Melilla. In order to overcome the Spanish and Moroccan military patrols, they had organized a 'coordinated' break-in, with hundreds of migrants climbing over the fence at once. The jump took place in broad daylight and, as had become customary, the Spanish military police were waiting for them, ready to deter any potential break-ins. But this time something was different. Aware of the increasingly frequent deportations that many of their compatriots had faced at the hands of the Spanish police, around thirty migrants scaled the fence and, instead of climbing down on the Spanish side, they sat on it for hours. They feared that, as soon as they set foot on Spanish soil, the military police would return them to Morocco through one of the 'service gates' that connect the two sides of the border. They waited atop the fence for hours, crying 'Freedom! Spain!', until their exhausted bodies gave in and they were forced to surrender, only to be immediately 'returned' to Morocco. The long stand-off between the migrants and the Spanish

Civil Guard was caught on camera and reported live in the national and local media.

Over the following weeks, Spain became immersed in a public conversation about the legitimacy of the 'immediate return' policy. The Minister of the Interior claimed that the unusual geopolitical position of the two Spanish North African exclaves, Melilla and Ceuta, justified the deportations 'on the spot', while lawyers, activists and NGOs insisted that the they were a breach of international law, and that migrants should be entitled to legal and medical assistance as soon as they stepped onto Spanish soil. Meanwhile, a photograph taken by a local activist showing a dozen migrants sitting atop the fence while a group of *Melillense* (people of Melilla) calmly play golf on the Spanish side of the border made international headlines and shocked European consciences. Could there be a more visual (and 'media-friendly') metaphor for Fortress Europe and

Figure 2.1: Golf course in Melilla with migrants sitting atop the border fence. Melilla, 2014. Photograph by José Palazón.

its 'migrant crisis' than the image of this prosperous bastion under siege by desperate hordes of African migrants? Melilla, news outlets reported, is one of the borders where the economic divide between one and the other side is most pronounced: 'just a few rows of chain link and barbed wire separate the wealth of Europe from the despair of Africa', reads an article published in the New York Times (New York Times 31/03/2014). The metaphor is as recurrent (the same has been said many times, for example, of the border between the US and Mexico) as it is misleading.

I first arrived in Melilla in the summer of 2008. The exclave had been in the spotlight briefly in 2005, following a violent episode at the fence that had left fifteen Sub-Saharan African migrants dead, but the border had been relatively quiet since then. I had originally planned to trace back the migration routes between Spain and Sub-Saharan Africa. Instead, I spent most of the following year researching the dense networks of exchange that tie Melilla to the neighbouring province of Nador, in an attempt to understand how these linkages had shaped place-making discourses and practices.

Until the 1990s there was no significant physical barrier between Melilla and Nador. The exclave had first been fenced off in 1971, after a cholera outbreak in the Moroccan hinterland, but the one-metre-high fence that was put in place at the time was later broken through in several places to allow for the passage of goats and traders carrying their merchandise on bicycles, mules and donkeys (Driessen 1999; see also Steinberger in this volume). Several roads and footpaths connected Melilla to the Moroccan hinterland, and many people made a living trading in foodstuffs and other goods between the two sides of the border. Melilla grew to become a trading centre in the wake of British and French imperialism, when the exclave was declared a free port (1863) and began to serve as a point of entry for European-manufactured products into North Africa. Trade in and through the region grew, with caravans travelling from Algeria and from other regions of Morocco to buy European-manufactured products and sell agricultural produce. Over the following century, and particularly during the years of the Spanish Protectorate (1912–56), local transport infrastructures were improved and Melilla was consolidated as an important trading hub.

Kinship and other social networks also cut across the border. Since at least the early twentieth century, the exclave had been home to a large Muslim community of Amazigh (Rif-Berber) descent, and people travelled back and forth between Melilla and Nador for weddings, funerals, religious holidays and other social occasions (see also Boukllouâ in this volume).

Fatima, my host mother, was around sixty years old when I met her. Like many women of her generation, she was illiterate, and she did not know her exact age. Born in Melilla to a family of Amazigh descent, she had married young and moved to the Moroccan border town of Beni Ensar with her husband, a Moroccan truck driver of Arab descent named Hassan. There, she gave birth to and raised eight children; three boys and five girls. When I met them, Fatima and Mohammed had moved away from Beni Ensar and settled, along with three of their daughters, in a larger town in the Riffian hinterland. Like many *Nadori* (people from Nador), they belonged to a relatively new class of 'transnational' families, families that are economically dependent on the remittances sent by close relatives living in Europe.(1) The eldest daughter, Rachida, lived with her husband and newborn child in the Moroccan city of Oujda, by the border with Algeria. Hassan, one of the middle siblings, lived with his wife and two children in Melilla. Lamia had emigrated to mainland Spain with her family and her youngest brother, while the eldest son had settled with his Moroccan wife and children in Belgium.

It was August of 2008 when I first visited my host family. They had all gathered in the new family home to celebrate Miriam's (one of the middle daughters) wedding, and I had been invited to attend as a guest. The days following my arrival passed in a frenzy, as we travelled back and forth between different markets and different towns, across the border into Melilla and back into Morocco, searching for fabric for the dresses, negotiating with vendors, choosing the furniture for the large tent where the wedding was to take place, and so on. During that week, communication with relatives living in Melilla was constant; certain items needed for the celebration were not available in Morocco and had to be brought in from the exclave; others were available, but more expensive. The celebration, which was to take place in the new family home, would host over

60 members of the extended family from different parts of Morocco. Fatima and her family, who was spread between Melilla and Nador, had to coordinate and pool all their resources to put together a celebration that would satisfy the expectations of all. During those days, as we slowly made our way down an interminable list of errands and to-dos, I had the chance to converse with the women of the household at length.

One of those evenings, we were sitting on the flat rooftop of the house watching the August sun go down and, as she meticulously covered her long hair in a thick, home-made henna paste, Fatima, the *mater familias*, reminisced. Her father, she told me, used to smuggle arms across the border, from Melilla into Morocco. The smuggling of guns had been common since at least the late nineteenth century (Pennell 2002), when the exclave became a free port. Basic foodstuffs such as meat, vegetables, fruit, grain, wood and water were then brought in from the Moroccan hinterland, and sold in exchange for money, textiles, medicines, tools, weapons and ammunition. When Fatima was a child, she recalled vividly, she would help her father smuggle weapons out of Melilla, concealing them under her *jellabah* (Moroccan traditional dress). In exchange, her father received money, land and goods from the Moroccan king. For a time, she told me, before her father remarried and formed a new family (abandoning her, her mother and her siblings), they lived a comfortable life.

Fatima had already married Mohammed and moved out of Melilla when Spain joined the EU and the porosity of Melilla's border was reframed as 'a threat'. It was then that the Spanish government attempted to pass a new immigration law that would have turned 85% of Melilla's Muslim population into 'illegal migrants' (Planet 1998). Months of protests and unrest forced the government to backtrack and grant citizenship to those who could prove birth and residency in the Spanish exclaves. A few years later, in 1992, Spain introduced visa restrictions on Moroccan citizens, and cross-border transit between Melilla and Nador first came to be controlled and regulated. Fatima, who had been born in Melilla, made arrangements to obtain Spanish citizenship, but on the day when she was supposed to go to Melilla to sign the paperwork her husband forbid her from going. She complied. And so, she explained regretfully, her chance to get Spanish citizenship was lost.

By the late 2000s, Melilla was surrounded by three rows of barbed-wire fencing equipped with infrared cameras and microphones, and patrolled day and night by the Spanish military police. Helicopters surveyed the perimeter of the city every night, and motion and noise detectors alerted the military police of any possible break-ins. The militarization of the border had important geopolitical consequences. EU subsidies for border surveillance began to flow in, and a whole bureaucratic apparatus was built to justify expenses for 'migration control'. New jobs, institutions, and infrastructure were created in the name of 'migration control', as Sub-Saharan migrants continued to camp across the border waiting for an opportunity to break in, and the exclave became increasingly dependent on the 'business' of migrant illegality.

But the securitization of Melilla was carefully planned to safeguard cross-border economic relations. Despite the new security measures, then, Moroccans from the neighbouring province of Nador were allowed to cross the border on a daily basis. In 1992, Spain and Morocco had signed an agreement granting unrestricted transit across the border to local residents in an attempt to minimize the damage that increased border control could pose to the local frontier economy (Ferrer-Gallardo 2008).(2) *Nadoris* thus continued to move in and out of the exclave with relative ease to visit relatives, conduct business, buy and sell produce, trade and so forth, while 'illegal migrants' were subject to increasingly violent deportations at the hands of the Spanish and Moroccan military police, or became indefinitely stranded in Melilla's centre for the 'temporary' stay of (im)migrants (CETI; see also Bondanini in this volume). This system of 'selective permeability' allowed Melilla to live up to EU expectations regarding migration control while maintaining local labour mobility across the border, thus securing access to a cheap supply of Moroccan workers for Spanish restaurants, cafés, construction companies, and households. Around 2,000 of these workers were legally registered in the exclave as frontier-workers at the time of my fieldwork (2008-2009), but the great majority were (and still are) employed informally. Peddlers, domestics, construction workers, handymen, cooks and waiters, merchants and even sex workers make up a mobile labour force that straddles the border. Amongst

them, smugglers constitute the largest contingent. Food, toiletries, electronic commodities, car tyres, home utensils, clothes, blankets, and shoes reach the port of Melilla every week, only to be smuggled out of the exclave, and sold across the border. From the point of view of Spain, taking goods out of Melilla is not illegal; the transit of goods out of the exclave and into Morocco (for sale or otherwise) is the exclusive concern of the Moroccan authorities. At the same time, the exclave's status as a 'special economic zone' means that imported goods are exempt from VAT (value added tax) and EU custom duties. Imported goods are subject, instead, to a local tax from which Melilla's city council derives between 40 and 50 million euros annually – that is, around 40 per cent of its total budget (López-Guzmán and González Fernández 2009: 41). The city, then, profits vastly from this commercial economy, which is locally known not as smuggling or contraband, but as *comercio atípico* ('atypical commerce'). This, in turn, works to the advantage of smugglers, who are free to organize their trade in plain view throughout the city without fearing legal sanctions, and must only concern themselves with the passage of goods across the border. This trade generates revenues of around 600 million euros per year (López-Guzmán and González Fernández 2009), employing around 45,000 people in the Rif, and a further 400,000 through the distribution and sale of smuggled products throughout Morocco. The Moroccan government publicly condemns this trade, but has rarely taken any concrete measures to stop it. In 2003, Casablanca weekly Al Ayam estimated bribes to custom officers in the Spanish borders amounted to ninety million euros annually (cited in Cembrero 2013).

In the areas surrounding Melilla, the consolidation of this frontier economy opened up new opportunities. That was the case for one of Fatima's sons, Hassan, who quit his day job as an electrician in Melilla and set up a business smuggling tiles across the border along with his cousin, his younger brother and his brother in law. They rented a warehouse in Melilla's industrial park, where they stored the shipments of tiles from mainland Spain, and every morning they hid them in the trunk of the car and drove them across the border to Morocco. Smuggling, he explained, paid much better than working as an electrician, and it allowed him to provide for his wife and children in Melilla. Otherwise, he said,

'we would have to live in Morocco'. But Hassan was fortunate to generate enough capital to start his own business. In fact, the vast majority of the smuggling trade is conducted by *porteadoras* (couriers, mostly women) hired by Moroccan businessmen and professional smugglers who distribute smuggled goods throughout Morocco. Every morning, hundreds of couriers gather on a field by the side of the road leading up to the checking-point of Barrio Chino to collect large bales of goods (which can weigh up to one hundred kilograms) from the middle-men employed to drive the merchandise from the industrial park, where it is stored. Across the road, the Spanish Civil Guard keep watch, ready to intervene when fights break out. Couriers are paid between three and five euros per trip, and the more times they can get across the border the greater the chances of earning just enough to make a living. But often there are more *porteadoras* than bales to be smuggled, so the younger and fitter fight fiercely for their bales, pushing aside anyone who gets in their way. Those who succeed in appropriating one of the bales have to face further dangers at the border. The crossing-point consists of three narrow gated passages with revolving metal doors at each end, popularly known as 'the cage' (*la jaula*). Each *porteadora* must pass through these doors pushing, rolling or carrying their bales lashed to their backs in order to reach the other side of the border. The crowds are large and accidents are common. In 2008, a young Moroccan woman died, crushed in 'the cage', and many others have since been injured fighting their way across the border. On the other side, men with carts and mini-vans wait to transport the merchandise and to pay the couriers.(3)

Europe's southern borders increasingly seem like a battlefield where different 'crises' concatenate (the 'migrant crisis', the 'refugee crisis', the 'humanitarian crisis', the 'crisis of global terror') to justify an increasingly violent process of securitization and militarization. Scholars from different fields have rightly criticized both this process and the political language in which it is couched (De Genova and Tazzioli 2016). But how are these 'crises' lived on the ground? How are places, and the people that live in them, affected by changing economic, political and media agendas? As I have tried to sketch in this brief piece, the reconfiguration of the border of Melilla created new sets of relations between the

exclave and the hinterland. For those categorized as 'illegal migrants', the border became a barrier, a final and often deadly frontier; for the EU, a buffer zone and a line of defence against unwanted migrants. For Moroccan and Melillan traders, it opened up new opportunities for profit; for the unemployed and the destitute, it created a new means of livelihood, but also new forms of exploitation. In some respects, then, the reconstitution of this region as a *European* borderland re-signified Melilla and Nador as the two opposite sides of a wider conceptual, political and economic divide – between 'wealth' and 'despair', between 'citizens' and 'migrants', between 'Europe' and 'Africa'. But what emerged was considerably more complex than a clear-cut line, for the border is indeed a conduit as much as a barrier (Nugent and Asiwaju 1996). Between Melilla and Nador, old and new linkages coexist in complex and often contradictory ways. Melilla has always relied on connections to the outtide for its survival; indeed, it is impossible to understand the history of the exclave (and of the region more generally) without taking into consideration its relationship to other places (Soto Bermant 2014). For all the changes brought about by Melilla's incorporation into the EU's security regime, then, in the *longue durée* this is but one of the many shifts that have historically reconfigured the relation between Melilla and the outside world. ■

Figure 2.2: *Porteadoras*. Melilla, 2017.

Figure 2.3: Transborder commerce. Melilla 2017.

Figure 2.4: Packages transported by *porteadoras*. Melilla 2017.
Photographs by Jesús Blasco de Avellaneda.

Notes

(1) The region has a long history of seasonal labour migration (to neighbouring Algeria since the 1830s, and to Europe since the 1960s), but increased border control in the 1990s turned seasonal migration into permanent settlement and today one would be hard pressed to find a family in Nador with no ties to the other side of the Mediterranean (McMurray 2001).

(2) The agreement applied to the Moroccan provinces neighbouring the exclaves of Melilla and Ceuta, and instituted an exception to the visa restriction that applied to Moroccan citizens attempting to enter Spanish territory. Residents of those provinces were granted permission to enter the Spanish exclaves during the day simply by showing their passport or ID, but were obliged to return to Morocco at night.

(3) See also Fuentes (2016) for a detailed analysis of the circumstances and profile of the porteadoras in Ceuta.

3. From a Medieval Christian Vanguard to a European High-Tech Fortress: Melilla's historical background

by Antonio Sáez-Arance

s Melilla a 'critical borderland city' (Guia 2014: 10) or just a mid-sized Spanish town like any other? The Spanish exclave located on the north coast of Morocco, at the northeast edge of the Rif Mountains is, along with Ceuta, one of two permanently inhabited Spanish dependencies on the African continent. Spain does not consider these dependencies to be colonies or overseas possessions, but rather as integral parts of the Spanish territory. Consequently, Melilla is a Spanish city in all respects and, since 1986, has also been part of the European Union (EU). However, although it never belonged to what is nowadays the Kingdom of Morocco, Melilla (along with Ceuta and all other small Spanish coastal possessions) has been claimed by the Moroccan state and considered to be an 'occupied territory'. From the Spanish perspective, Melilla has played an important role in the nationalist historical narrative promoted by the Francoist regime (1936-1975) and for decades has had a place in the collective imagination mostly as an undesirable destination for young conscripts from the Spanish mainland. Today, the city enjoys a prominent role in the public debate on Spanish and European migration policy. Its powerful *technified* border, enforced by a multi-layered six-metre-high fence, symbolizes the persistent efforts of Spanish and European governments to create a feeling of collective security towards the seemingly 'impending flooding' by irregular immigrants from Africa and the Middle East. At the same time, *la valla* (the fence) drastically illustrates the apparent failure of the formerly inclusive project of the European Union (see Steinberger in this volume).

This contribution focuses on the historical foundations of the Spanish political discourse on Melilla. On the one hand, the undisputed affirmation of the *españolidad* (Spanish-ness) of the city, i.e. the historically grounded exclusivity and inevitability of Spanish presence in Melilla, informs all statements of local and national politicians as well as the official position of the mainstream media. Any attempt at critical legal or political questioning of the status quo, not to mention any sympathy for the Moroccan territorial claims, provokes strong reactions among the national-conservative forces in both Madrid and in Melilla. On the other hand, the political dynamics of the city, in which the staunchly right-wing and Catholic *Partido Popular* (People's Party) has used to achieve its best national election results again and again, contrasts sharply with a dominant rhetoric of multiculturalism and religious tolerance, traced back to a remote past – as remote as the seemingly undoubted Spanish origins of the city (Meyer 2005). This article will show how the ubiquitous narrative of *españolidad* helps to hide the historical complexity of the *Melillense* identity. As I argue, the truth behind the official slogan of the 'City of the Four Cultures' (*la ciudad de las cuatro culturas*)(1) is an outstanding example of invented tradition.

Rather than discussing the historical preconditions of the Spanish settlement and accepting its clearly colonial character, the entire political spectrum and the mainstream media insist that Spanish sovereignty is beyond question and justify it primarily with historical arguments. Of course, a more critical examination could put into question the Spanish perspective on Moroccan territorial claims. The Spanish position is that both Ceuta and Melilla are – and have been for four and a half centuries – integral parts of the Spanish state, since long before Morocco's independence from France and Spain. Morocco denies these claims and maintains that the Spanish presence on or near its coast is a remnant of the colonial past which should be ended. Unlike the former overseas provinces of Ifni (today Sidi

Ifni, Spanish until 1969) or Spanish Sahara (today Western Sahara, Spanish until 1975), but also the British-occupied Gibraltar, none of the Spanish exclaves and islets were ever included in the *United Nations List of Non-Self-Governing Territories*; that is, in the list of countries that, according to the UN, are still colonized. Applying a narrow, conventional concept of colonialism, it is definitely correct that we do not deal here with a typical product of classic European colonialism in Africa. At the same time, it seems to me a naive and unhistorical approach to uncritically accept the dominant discourse of Melilla's timeless *españolidad* without exploring the historical context of the Spanish presence in the city.

The political status of Melilla and Ceuta as 'ciudades autónomas'

The fact that Melilla and Ceuta, especially from an official (more exactly, governmental) point of view, seem to form a historical and political unit, represents an additional analytical problem. They are frequently mentioned in a single breath, for two reasons: On the one hand, both exclaves function as crossroads between the EU and Morocco; on the other hand, both have the same legal status as Spanish autonomous cities with almost identical government structures.(2) However, the historical background differs significantly: While Melilla was seized by the Crown of Castile, Ceuta was a Portuguese possession between 1415 and 1661 (actually, Ceuta was the only Portuguese territory which remained in the possession of the Spanish Monarchy after the abrupt dissolution of the Iberian Union in 1640). Moreover, the interaction with the neighbouring territories has been quite different in the two cities, as the North-eastern Rif region is rather rural, while the region near Tanger or Tétouan has a more urban and interconnected character.

Until 1995, Ceuta and Melilla were part of the Andalusian provinces of Cádiz and Málaga. When the new local constitutions (*estatutos de autonomía*) were

passed, they became autonomous cities (*ciudades autónomas*) – by analogy with the other *comunidades autónomas*, created as a result of the devolution process started by the young Spanish democracy in 1978. As a *ciudad autónoma*, Melilla (along with Ceuta) elects its own legislature (*asamblea*) and its own mayor (*alcalde-presidente*) every four years. Until 1995, Melilla was one of the *plazas de soberanía* (literally 'places of sovereignty'), that is, one of the Spanish sovereign territories in continental North Africa. The title referred to the fact that these territories have been a part of Spain since the formation of the modern Spanish State in the early Modern Era, and it helped to distinguish them from other African territories obtained during the nineteenth and twentieth century (colonies, overseas provinces). Besides Ceuta and Melilla, Spain also controls a number of islets along the north African coast (Vélez de la Gomera, Alhucemas, Chafarinas Islands), including the uninhabited Perejil Island.(3) Historically, a distinction has been made between the *plazas mayores* (major sovereign territories), comprising the cities of Ceuta and Melilla, and the

Figure 3.1 Map of Spanish sovereign territories. Base map © OpenStreetMap contributors.

plazas menores (minor sovereign territories), referring to the exclaves and islets along the coast. In the present, the term refers mainly to the latter. The minor exclaves are uninhabited or being guarded only by military units. They have always been administered directly by the Spanish central government.

The explanation of the legal status of Melilla and the rest of the Spanish possessions in North Africa is relevant insofar as the distinctions and catego-

rizations I have described just now have become an important element in the discursive strategy of the advocates of the city's *españolidad*. However, even though it is an obvious legal and political fact that *Ceutíes* and *Melillenses* (people of Ceuta and Melilla respectively) are Spanish citizens with equal rights, this says nothing about the concrete historical circumstances in which their hometowns have been incorporated into the Spanish state, and which were definitely different from those of mainland Spanish cities. Therefore, the first step of an empirical deconstruction of the dominant narratives of Melilla's original Spanish-ness calls for some degree of scepticism towards the mainstream interpretation. This established consensus claims that Spanish colonialism in Africa should be excluded from the historical narrative, while Ceuta and Melilla have always been part and parcel of the Spanish national community. Generally speaking, it is characteristic of the Spanish domestic engagement with this historiographical topic that authors relativize – if not completely ignore – the colonial context of Melilla's formal incorporation into the Spanish nation state, namely the drawing up of its borders and the effective settlement of Spaniards on its territory. In addition, there is no shortage of Eurocentric versions of this history, with the colonial official and Franco-supporter Tomás García Figueras leading the way (see García Figueras 1944). Still today, prestigious Spanish historians consider the Spanish city of Melilla a welcome result of European penetration and as a cornerstone of the defence of 'Western values' vis-à-vis the last social and cultural 'bastions of the Middle Ages' (implicitly referring to Morocco; see Seco Serrano 2002; Campos Martínez 2004: 9). Distancing myself from such politically inspired interpretations, I will offer a more critical and nuanced account of Melilla's history by paying attention to the role of Spanish colonialism and by placing the city's development in its global historical context.

Historical background: the ancient and mediaeval period

At the beginning, Melilla was a Phoenician and later a Punic settlement. In AD 40 it became a part of the Roman province of *Mauretania Tingitana*. As centuries passed, it passed through Vandal, Byzantine, Hispano-Visigothic and Arabic hands. In short,

Melilla's political history is quite similar to that of most towns in the Maghreb region and southern Spain. During the Middle Ages it was the Amazigh (Rif-Berber) city of Mlila. Then, it became part of the Sultanate of Fez until 1497. In that year, the Catholic monarchs Queen Isabella I of Castile and King Ferdinand II of Aragon authorized Juan Alonso de Guzmán, Duke of Medina-Sidonia, or more exactly his squire Pedro de Estopiñán y Virués to take the city, which went ahead, virtually without a fight, on 17 September 1497 (Bravo Nieto 1990). These details are significant because all this occurred only a few years after Castile had taken control of the Kingdom of Granada, the last remnant of Al-Andalus, in 1492. The end of the *Reconquista*, the reconquering of Spanish territory by the Christians, implied the cessation of military activity for many members of the Castilian aristocracy. They reoriented themselves by joining semi-private military enterprises and expeditions, both in the Mediterranean and later in the transatlantic area. In this context, the occupation of Melilla was not a singular event. During the last phase of the *Reconquista* and mainly following the fall of Granada in 1492, forces of the Castilian and Portuguese kingdoms seized and maintained numerous posts in North Africa for the purposes of trade and defence against Barbary piracy. Already in 1415, King João I of Portugal had conquered Ceuta, which marked an important step in the beginning of the Portuguese Empire as well as of the European colonial expansion at large (Russell-Wood 1992; Oliveira Marques 2001). For seventy years, the Portuguese monarchs of the House of Aviz played a leading role in North and West Africa. This changed in the last decades of the fifteenth century, when the Castilian Crown, after a long period of civil conflicts, achieved the internal pacification of the kingdom. The personal union with the Crown of Aragon allowed the Castilians not only to successfully conclude the occupation of the Kingdom of Granada and to complete the conquest of the major Canary Island (Gran Canaria, Tenerife und La Palma), but also to undertake new maritime expeditions to the west.

The reasons for the Castilian conquest of the fortress of Melilla was both of political and economic-strategic nature: On the one hand, it was a logical consequence of the dynastic politics both of Isabella and Ferdinand, namely Castilian self-affirmation in the context of the rising maritime competition with

Portugal, as well as the safeguarding of the Mediterranean interests of the Crown of Aragon. On the other, Melilla could serve as a fortification and as a trading and control post in order to prevent Muslim attempts to return to the just-(re-)conquered Catholic homeland. From a diplomatic perspective, the conquest was a partial violation of the Treaty of Alcáçovas (1479), which for the first time had divided the Atlantic Ocean and the overseas territories into two separate zones of Portuguese and Castilian influence and had also established Portugal's exclusive right to conquer the Sultanate of Fez. Thus, differing from local historians, who tend to present Melilla's conquest as a primarily 'national' event, I believe Melilla's emergence as a Spanish city needs to be understood in the context of coeval developments in world history.

The Early Modern Era

In fact, there were many other cases of patchy occupation of African territory at the time, even outside of the neighbouring area of nowadays Morocco. For instance, Oran was a Spanish *presidio*(4) even until the end of the eighteenth century (1509–1790), Mers-el-Kébir/Mazalquivir (from 1505), and for a shorter period Béjaïa/Bugía (1510–1554), Tripoli (1511–1551) and even Tunis (1535–1569) became Spanish fortresses (Cajal 2003: 95). Their function was a strategic one – in the context of the military duties of a global empire, such as the Habsburg monarchy. In this sense, the historical status of the

North African cities closely resembles the situation in other Habsburg-Spanish *presidios* in Italy, the Low Countries or the Franche Comté. None of them had a significant settlement of 'Spanish' civilians, let alone an intention of political and cultural dominion of the hinterlands. By the end of the seventeenth century, only Melilla, Alhucemas (conquered in 1673), Vélez de la Gomera (lost in 1522 and retaken in 1564) and Ceuta, as well as Oran and Mers-el-Kébir/Mazalquivir remained as Spanish territories in Africa. The latter cities were lost in 1708, reconquered in 1732, and finally sold by Charles IV to the Turkish Dey of Algiers in 1792. Máximo Cajal calls this kind of superficial colonization 'a system of *occupation restreinte*' (2003: 108). It was characterized by an intensive militarization of the Spanish presence, resulting in limited cultural exchange and bilateral processes of identity-building that were founded almost exclusively on war- and/or peace-making. For instance, during the whole early modern era, Melilla was repeatedly threatened by the Sultan of Fez and the native Imazighen in the surrounding Rif region, and was besieged in 1646, 1667, 1678-1679, 1694–1696, and 1774–1775 (Cajal: 99-100). This situation of continuous armed conflict shaped the lives and the cultural perceptions of all involved. Moreover, it made it virtually impossible to overcome a structural, mostly religiously founded mutual mistrust with deep roots in common collective experiences of conquest, occupation, and expulsion. This mistrust has been further compounded by colonial political incidents, as we will see below, and may still overshadow intercultural and interethnic relations in Melilla today (see also Friedrichs in this volume).

In the long run, the lack of a coherent colonization policy on the part of the Spaniards also had negative consequences for the economic integration and the development of modern socio-political structures in the Rif region and Morocco as a whole (De la Serna 2002: 128; Cajal 2003: 115-117). This partly explains the gradual weakening of the Sultanate of Fez starting from the end of the eighteenth century and the subsequent

Figure 3.2: Map of Melilla, 1775. Archivo Histórico de Melilla.

political interference by foreign powers such as England, France, and, to a lesser extent, Spain.

European colonialism and the effects of modern Spanish nationalism

The turning point and the very founding moment of modern 'Spanish' Melilla occurred in the first half of the nineteenth century, resulting from the polarization of the conflicts between Spain and the Sultan of Fez and the slow but effective emergence of a modern Spanish nationalism. On 6 January 1848, Spanish troops conquered the Chafarinas Islands in what can be considered as the first attempt of the Spanish government to follow the example of France and start a genuine 'national' campaign of colonial expansion into the Maghreb. Ten years later, in a context of collective exaltation during the government of general Leo- poldo O'Donnell, a new wave of armed conflicts over the borders of Ceuta led to the formal declaration of war by Spain on 22 October 1859, and to the invasion of North Morocco, specifically the occupation of Tétouan on 6 February 1860. This first Spanish-Moroccan War, also known as the so-called African War (*La Guerra de África*), ended after six months with a clear Spanish victory, the payment of war reparations by the defeated Sultan of Fez, the retrocession of the territory of Sidi Ifni to Madrid (with an explicit colonial status)(5), and, above all, with the formal recognition of Spanish sovereignty over Ceuta and Melilla in newly fixed, safe borders. In fact, the Treaty of Wad-Ras (26 April 1860) – confirmed in later arrangements with the Sultan of Fez (1861, 1894) – established the current limits of the territory and made possible the transformation of the old fortress of Melilla into a modern city. In 1863, the Spanish authorities began with the construction of a new harbour, and one year later allowed the settlement of Spanish civilians. In the last third of the nineteenth century, as Spanish regional influence expanded, Melilla became the only authorized trade centre on the Rif coast between Tétouan

and the Algerian frontier. The value and the extent of trade increased, and Spanish capitalists started considering potential investments in the hinterland. However, the settlement of Spaniards in the city only took place at a later stage, during the period of the Spanish protectorate (1912-1956).(6)

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, after the so-called scramble for Africa (Wesseling 1996), European nations had taken colonial control of most of the African continent. The recurrent military incidents (e.g. Margallo War in 1893) between the Imazighen, the Sultan of Fez, and the

Figure 3.3: Map of Melilla, 1893. Archivo Histórico de Melilla.

Spanish troops, as well as the diplomatic negotiations between France, Great Britain, and Spain concerning the colonial division of North Africa (Algeciras Conference of 1906) resulted in the definite occupation of the northern part of Morocco. The Treaty of Fez (1912) made most of the sultanate a protectorate of France, while Spain assumed the role of the protecting power over the northern part (*Marruecos Español*). The armed conflicts continued during the Spanish Protectorate (1912-1956). Thus, the roots of the discourse on Melilla's *españolidad* – and additionally, of the strong affinity of its inhabitants to the most conservative forms of Spanish national identity – can be traced back to this period of continuous threat from the Imazighen (e.g. Second Melilla Campaign 1909, Spanish disaster at the Battle of Annual in the year 1921). The Rif War 'contaminated' the Spanish cities in North Morocco, making them a central piece in the organization of the military operations against the Riffian rebels

(Cajal 2003: 146, 153; Carabaza/ Santos 1992: 49-52). The nationalist discourse that emerged in the period between 1860 (Wad-Ras) and 1925 (the French-Spanish landing in Alhucemas, putting an end to the war) was reinforced in Melilla over the years, due to the importance of the military and civil servants stationed in the city (Sánchez 2012; see also Madariaga 2008).

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, the Spanish government had seen the occupation of Melilla (along with Ceuta) predominantly as a necessary strategic risk, if not as a political and economic burden. Notwithstanding the rhetorical insistence on the Spanish-ness of the North African exclaves, the Spanish government had on several occasions, from the eighteenth century right up to the first years of Primo de Rivera's dictatorial regime (1923-1930), contemplated an exchange of the North African territories with the United Kingdom in order to regain control of Gibraltar (Cajal 2003: 108-110). This plan, however, lost all plausibility due to the expansion of Spanish economic activities in northern Morocco, in particular in the iron mines of the Rif region (see Moga Romero 2010). This brought about relative economic prosperity and the growing immigration of Spaniards from Southern and Eastern Andalusia, which demographically turned Melilla into a Spanish city. The Spanish economic expansion also linked capitalist and military interests. For example, an important aspect of the conflicts between Spanish troops and Riffian rebels from 1908 onwards was directly linked to the establishing of the *Compañía Española de Minas del Rif S.A.* near the city, as well as the exploitation of resources located clearly outside of the Spanish borders, including the construction of a railway on Moroccan territory (Madariaga 2011: 90-91). On the other side, the increasing economic activities and the emergence of a wealthy local bourgeoisie with political and cultural ambitions contributed to Melilla's appearance as a modern Spanish city as we know it today. The considerable public investments in urban infrastructure, including the planning and organization of a new downtown in rectangular house blocks and wide boulevards according to French models, were accompanied by the import of the architectural style of Catalan *modernisme*. The arrival of the architect Enric Nieto, a former collaborator of Antoni Gaudí, in 1909 turned Melilla into Spain's second most important Art Nouveau centre

after Barcelona (Bravo Nieto 1996).

The impact of Spanish Civil War on Melilla's political culture

In July 1936, General Francisco Franco used Melilla as one of his staging grounds for the nationalist rebellion against the legitimated government of the Spanish Republic. The failure of his extremely bloody putsch led to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), in which the troops of the Spanish *Ejército de África* (Army of Africa) played a key role. The Spanish Legion and the Moroccan troops of the *Fuerzas Regulares Indígenas* (Indigenous Regular Forces) spearheaded the most decisive operations of the insurrectionary forces during the war. Among their fascist and national-socialist allies, they played a central role in Franco's final victory. With the ending of the war, the 'Army of Africa' was reduced to a peacetime establishment, but was accorded a higher profile under Franco than under the previous democratic regime. The symbolic connotation of Spanish North Africa as the cradle of the 'heroic crusade against Communism' influenced the commemorative practices and the collective self-perception of the *Melillenses*. Despite the fact that the city had been centre stage in some of the first atrocities of the Francoist repression on 17 and 18 July 1936, Melilla's official memory is still characterized by a rather uncritical approach to militarism in general, and especially to Franco's dictatorship. The challenge of Moroccan irredentism after the end of the Spanish protectorate and the recognition of independence in 1956 has served as a cohesive instrument of nationalist identity politics. The – more imagined than real – risk of a Moroccan occupation of the plaza de soberanía has strengthened the acceptance of the discourse of Melilla's *españolidad*, even if the Spanish government's political practices in this regard have been anything but consistent. For instance, King Juan Carlos I and Queen Sofia did not visit the city until 6 November 2007. This was the first time a Spanish monarch had visited Melilla in 80 years, a fact that caused not only a massive demonstration of popular support by the *Melillense*, but also sparked protests from the Moroccan government. The main beneficiary of the visit was the local conservative government, which was able to consolidate its political predominance in all subsequent elections. Its success represents, down to the present day, the persistence of extreme

nationalist positions in the most multicultural place on Spanish territory. ◼

Notes:

(1) This set phrase refers actually to the special status of Melilla as a 'meeting place of four religions' (Christianism, Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism). This makes it, according to the website of the Instituto de Turismo de España, 'the perfect place to experience the atmosphere of cultural intermingling' (see: http://www.spain.info/en/reportajes/melilla_cuatro_religiones_unidas.html; last visited: 12/01/2017). Meanwhile, the slogan has been used by the tourism authorities of other Spanish cities (e.g. obviously Ceuta, but interestingly also Saragossa, with the Romans playing the part of the Hindus: http://www.redaragon.com/turismo/zaragoza/1.asp; last visited: 12/01/2017). This clearly attests to the arbitrariness of such historically grounded brandings.

(2) But there are also some differences, especially with regard to the citizenship and the social integration of ethnic and religious minorities. For example, significantly fewer native-born and foreign-born residents of Melilla than comparable residents of Ceuta are Spanish citizens. The neighbourhoods with the lowest densities of Spanish citizenship in Melilla are those with the highest concentration of Muslim residents (as found in the census tracts), whereas in Ceuta nearly all residents – regardless of religious categorization and birthplace – are Spaniards (Koski-Karell 2014: 6-11).

(3) Perejil Island was at the centre of a strange quarrel in July 2002, when Moroccan soldiers occupied it before being removed by the Spanish Special Forces one week later (Cajal 2003:213-232).

(4) The term *presidio* described between the sixteenth and the nineteenth century a garrisoned place, especially a military post or fortified settlement in areas currently or originally under Spanish control – in Spanish America and North Africa as well in Italy, France and the Low Countries.

(5) Then Ifni, nowadays Sidi Ifni, became a Spanish territory, and between 1958 and 1969 a Spanish province. Sidi Ifni is located on the Atlantic coast of Morocco, south of Agadir and across from the Canary Islands. Spain's presence in the area can be traced to a settlement called Santa Cruz de la Mar Pequeña, founded in 1476, whose importance was derived from its position in the trans-Saharan slave trade. The slaves were shipped to the Canary Islands to work in sugar plantations. Due to the frequent attacks by the Berbers, the Castilians decided to prioritize the exploration of other areas of North Africa and abandoned the region in the sixteenth Century. The territory was not effectively re-occupied by the Spaniards until 1934.

(6) In fact, there was already a tradition of Spanish emigration to north Africa, specifically to French Algeria, where half a million Spaniards had settled between 1830 and 1882, mainly coming from Andalusia and the east Spanish provinces of Alicante and Murcia (Vilar/Vilar 1999, Martín Corrales 2012).

1912

1950 er

Melilla. Paseo del General Macias y pueblo antiguo.
1918

1957

MELILLA TIMELINE

1930

1950

1920

1940

1928

1958

1928

1958

1960 er

1970

1963

1980

1970

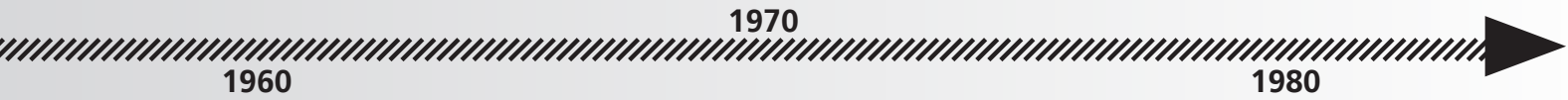1960

1980

1963

1986

1963

1987

Figure 3.4: Melilla timeline, 1912-1987. Photographs from the Archivo Histórico de Melilla.

4. Living in Melilla: Perspectives of Christian and Muslim *Melillense*

by Roxanne Friedrichs

D uring the last week of my stay in Melilla I took part in the painting of a mural in a neighbourhood next to the city centre, called El Rastro. Mural painting is one of the community activities organized by the participatory social action and research project *Kahina*, of which I was an intern at the time.(1) Together with migrants and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa who participated in the project, we painted a colourful house on a wall at a busy street corner.

The mural was located next to a daily flea market. A number of curious passersby commented that the painting looked nice and that they would be happy to live in such a big house. Originally, we drew two people sitting in front of the house, one on each side of the corner, both looking in different directions. Later we added a phrase at the bottom of the mural saying: *Podemos seguir mirando hacia el otro lado o empezar a vivir todos juntos* ('We can continue to look to the other side, or start living all together'). Suddenly, people reacted quite differently. They asked: 'Why should we live all together in this house?' or 'Why did you put a phrase there? It was more beautiful before!'. The mural suddenly became something incomprehensible and uncomfortable, as passersby apparently felt challenged by its message. Finally, a garbage collector, having

Figures 4.1-4.4: *Kahina* participants painting a mural. Melilla 2015. Photographs by Roxanne Friedrichs.

examined the mural in detail, poignantly summarized people's impressions by saying: *Pero esta casa es muy chiquita como para vivir todos juntos ahi!* ('But this house is way too small to live all together in there!'). Eventually, the *Kahina* team erased the phrase, and the mural reverted to its earlier look, as shown in figure 4.1.

The story of the mural was a key incident or ethnographic moment I experienced during my six-week internship with the social action and research project *Kahina* in Melilla during spring 2014. With the aim of combining the internship with academic research, I conducted fieldwork on the topic of social coexistence in Melilla as part of my Masters programme in Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Cologne. I later revisited Melilla in 2014 and 2015 to meet friends I had made during my internship and to update my research.

In order to contextualize the garbage collector's statement, I will first introduce Melilla's diverse population, then outline patterns of spatial and social segregation, and finally engage with the ways in which the *Melillense* (people of Melilla) characterize themselves and their city.

Melilla – 'The City of Four Cultures'

Melilla has approximately 85,000 inhabitants and is home to people of various ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds.(2) The majority are Spanish nationals of Amazigh (Rif-Berber) background, as well as Spaniards from the mainland, commonly called *la península.* Additionally, there are small Hindu, Jewish, and Gypsy communities. The two biggest religious groups are Muslims and Christians, forming the majority of the population. Besides, these permanent residents of Melilla, a large number of Moroccan traders and couriers cross the border on a daily basis, referred to as *transfronterizos* ('border crossers') or *porteadoras* ('couriers', see also Soto Bermant in this volume). Being one of the southern European extensions, Melilla is also a popular entry point to Europe for migrants and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. They form another group of mostly temporary residents in Melilla (see also Bondanini in this volume). Thus, taking into account the city's ethnic and cultural diversity and a history reaching back to the fifteenth century, it is impossible to define a 'true *Melillense*'.

During my research, I focused on the city's Muslim and Christian population and how they relate to each other. By referring to people's religious backgrounds, I here tie in with local parlance that conflates religious and cultural identities. In daily life in Melilla, it is common to hear people talking about others in terms of religious and cultural differences. This is related to the official discourse promoted by the local government that hails Melilla as *la ciudad de las cuatro culturas*, 'The City of Four Cultures'. Christians, Muslims, Jews, and Hindus are said to coexist peacefully as a positive example of multiculturalism or the ideal of *convivencia* (see also Pelican et al. in this volume). Yet, as a Muslim friend remarked, 'Basically, it's all the same culture here'.

Furthermore, referring to Melilla's historical and political status as one of Spain's exclaves, the national government has continuously emphasized the 'Spanish-ness' (*españolidad*) of the autonomous city. This is reflected, for example, by Melilla's historical monuments, such as the Franco statue in the port, which is the only remaining Franco statue exposed in public on Spanish territory today. Furthermore, the political and military presence of the Spanish state has a long history and has strongly contributed to internalizing the idea of the city's *españolidad* in people's minds and public discourse (see also Saéz-Arance in this volume).

While Melilla's supposedly peacefully coexisting population is an ever-present trope that visitors of the city will likely be confronted with, there are obvious discrepancies between public discourse and lived reality. For example, *la plaza de las cuatro culturas* (Four Cultures Square) is a neat and clean central square, located right next to a police station. At the *plaza* you can find the city's biggest tourist office, exclusively offering journeys to Europe, as well as a number of fancy cafes where the bourgeoisie and tourists can be observed taking a *café con leche* or enjoying their family Sunday. Occasionally, you can also meet itinerant Muslim nut sellers or sub-Saharan Africans offering their services as car cleaners. However, they are regularly chased away by the police. Obviously, there are clear ideas of who belongs to which part of the city. While the central square is reserved for the wealthy, poor Muslims and sub-Saharan Africans 'should' rather stay in the outskirts or the center for the temporary stay of (im)migrants (CETI).

Similarly, many interlocutors seemed concerned

with what others might say if they do not behave as expected. This includes questions of which city zones (*barrios*) as well as which bars and cafes are appropriate to visit. Depending on one's 'culture', one is supposed to remain in certain areas. I believe that minimizing contact and staying within one's comfort zone is a common practice to avoid conflict and maintain peaceful coexistence. As an acquaintance explained, when talking about the best way to come to terms with living in Melilla: 'Everybody minds his own business'.

Nonetheless, there are individuals who move between the different groups and areas, and criss-cross social boundaries. Let me take the example of a friend, a young *Melillense* who is the daughter of a Spanish mother and a Muslim father. She grew up on the *península* and moved to Melilla in her mid-twenties. As a child, she frequently spent her summer holidays in Melilla. She frequents different parts of the city and maintains ties with the Christian and Muslim communities. While she is surely not the only one, her case seems rather exceptional.

Melilla and its barrios

The city's spatial arrangement tells us much about its history and current population composition. Melilla comprises a number of *barrios* (neighbourhoods) of differing sizes; two roads can already constitute a *barrio* of their own. Generally, the Christian population lives in the central districts while the peripheral *barrios*, namely the districts IV and V, are dominated by the Muslim population. Some Muslims also live closer to, or inside, the city centre. The socio-economic gap between the centre and the periphery has historical roots in Melilla and has been the focus of the *Kahina* project. While the city centre is also the commercial centre and is characterized by Modernist European architecture, the peripheral *barrios* are marked by a run-down infrastructure and Moroccan-style buildings.

Despite the city's small size, people preferably move by car, whether going to the beach, the supermarket, or a friend's place. At the same time, Melilla's public transport is in bad condition. Its route system and timetables are poorly developed and it hardly reaches the outskirts. I believe that the intensive use of vehicles creates further isolation and anonymity within the population, and I repeatedly felt quite lonely while walking rather than driving

through the city.

When I returned to Melilla for the third time in September 2015, the rental prices in the city centre had risen once more, while the situation in the peripheral *barrios* continued to deteriorate in terms of both infrastructure and crime rate. At the same time, I also noticed positive developments, such as the construction of a pedestrian area in the centre replacing a former road, which the local population was noticeably enjoying.

The practice of spatial separation also impacts upon children's upbringing. Many of the city's playgrounds tend to be used predominantly by specific population groups, not only in the peripheries but also in attractive zones, such as the beach zone, where people of all backgrounds live and promenade. A friend told me about being insulted when visiting a playground predominantly used by Muslim children with her Christian nephew. Another acquaintance critically asked himself why he felt uncomfortable seeing his Muslim nephew playing with Jewish children, but could not find a sensible answer. Thus for many, maintaining a distance from the 'cultural other' is less of an intentional act than a habitual practice. I also noticed this when I was picked up by a group of Muslim acquaintances after having spent time with Christian friends. The encounter between the two groups obviously created a somewhat uncomfortable situation, which was managed by mutual avoidance.

Talking about Melilla

Many people living in Melilla have ambivalent feelings about the city. They describe it as a unique, but problematic place. Many *Melillense* characterized themselves as especially hospitable, an attribute frequently mentioned, particularly by Muslim interlocutors. Based on my own experiences, I can affirm a high degree of hospitality and cooperativeness within family and friendship circles. The importance of having a stable circle of loved ones was highlighted by both Muslims and Christians, and made me understand that companionship and social networks are particularly valuable when living in an island-like exclave. While the practice of hospitality tends to be limited to members of the same ethnic or cultural group, it is generally seen as a true *Melillense* quality.

Other interlocutors talked about Melilla as if it was

Figure 4.5: Barrio El Rastro. Melilla 2015.
Photograph by Roxanne Friedrichs.

Figure 4.6: Modernist architecture, city centre. Melilla 2017.
Photograph by Fátima Mesaud Barreras.

Figure 4.7: Plaza de España, city centre. Melilla 2017.
Photograph by Fátima Mesaud Barreras.

a drug. When I told a Christian woman who I had just got to know that this was already my third visit to Melilla, she warned me: 'Be careful! Once you stay here for too long, you will no longer be able to leave, even if you want to. Our original plan was to come to Melilla just for a holiday'. The city's unique charm, and a certain coziness facilitated by the many cafes and restaurants, locals' hospitality, and not least Melilla's small size, are all attributes an outsider can come to appreciate. There seems to be some truth in the *Melillense* saying that was shared with me by Christian acquaintances with *península* roots: *Vienes a Melilla llorando y te vas llorando* ('You will arrive in Melilla crying and you will leave it crying').

At the same time, people's ambivalence when talking about Melilla is undeniable. Some felt they had to justify themselves for living here. For example, when asking a friend what she liked most about her city, she answered, 'Actually I don't remember anything good about Melilla'. Later she mentioned, 'It is my hometown and I want to stay here'. Another

acquaintance complained about the spoilt and lazy character of the *Melillense* who apparently enjoy an elevated living standard and comfort, but do not care about the city's progress. But there were also more positive voices, such as my friend's comment: 'You have to get used to the city. It takes some time, but having developed a circle of friends who then become your family, you will be happy. Still, I would be fine with leaving Melilla tomorrow'.

I got the impression that many people would not mind leaving. Generally, a high degree of mobility and a sense of restlessness are characteristics I noticed in almost all *Melillense* I talked to. Many addressed their uneasiness by constantly moving in and out of the city. When talking about leisure and free time, I was told that people prefer to escape from Melilla for the weekend, either to Morocco or to destinations on the *península*, such as Málaga or Granada. There is a constant coming and going, especially within the younger generation, with individuals moving to the *península* or Morocco for work

or studies; many returning after some years. There are Christians who exclusively visit the *península* and Muslims who only travel to Morocco. At the same time, I came across Muslim families who spend their free time in their country houses in Morocco as well as on the *península* where they go for shopping or simply enjoy being abroad.

Through this constant movement, the city space is symbolically extended both to Morocco and the *península*. The ability and will to shuttle between Melilla, Morocco, and the *península* is a characteristic of many local families and forms another feature of being *Melillense*.

Yet, there is also the other side of the coin, namely limitations of space and socio-economic opportunities, which were frequently mentioned. As one friend commented, 'Melilla limits you. It's a small city. It's a border town. Thus... It has many limitations'.

Probably the most obvious limitation is the national and, concurrently, European border which strictly limits the city space, while controlling movements in and out of Melilla (see also Steinberger in this volume). Crossing the border – often involving a traffic jam – is a practice people in Melilla are used to. Everyone I talked to perceives it as uncomfortable but sometimes unavoidable. Furthermore, they complained about diverse other forms of limitation. There is, for instance, a limited offering of cultural and nightlife activities, and there are limits in the labour market and with regard to further education. I was even told that the health care system is underdeveloped, with overcrowded hospitals and underqualified staff. Simultaneously, a Muslim living in the Barrio Pinares complained about the limited offer of fruits and vegetables in the city, which motivates him to cross over to Morocco to do the weekly shopping.

Boundaries, characterizing life in Melilla, inevitably influence people's minds and actions. When I asked an acquaintance how he assesses his overall situation in Melilla, he summarized it as follows: 'It's bad. It's like having a problem at home, your parents are fighting, your sister doesn't like you and you also don't get along with the dog'. It is necessary to add that he is a young Muslim man who is studying and aspiring to a career as an official. He repeatedly mentioned that he is living between two worlds, as he is the first in his family to acquire Spanish nationality. On the one hand, he grew up in a rather tradi-tional Muslim environment with restrictions imposed by his family; on the other, he identifies with more liberal European ideas which often contradict his family's values and expectations. I noticed him struggling over which values and concepts to adopt for his own life, a situation many young *Melillense* probably confront. Similarly, living in a European city on the African continent is an obstacle and a challenge every *Melillense* is faced with.

Living in one house?

I hope that the story with which I opened this chapter, of the house that is supposedly too small to accommodate all *Melillense*, has become more comprehensible. The house can be seen as symbolizing the city as a whole; a place that maintains a certain public image, and is limited in space and highly protected; a place where uncertainties and tensions are part of everyday life, and which offers a temporary or permanent home to a diverse and dynamic society.

I suggest that Melilla's inhabitants positively manage their coexistence by maintaining a balance between proximity and distance. Melilla's village-like character, which is due not only to its small size but also to its confined location, underlines the central role of friendship and the need for social networks. Furthermore, Melilla has been described as a place of transit, where people are constantly moving in and out, and a place that one should be able to leave the next day. This gives it an island-like character, with physical and social boundaries that not only separate Europe from Africa, but also reach into the city space and into people's lives and minds.

Notes

(1) The participatory social action and research project *Kahina* lasted from 2013 to 2015. Its activities have been continued in and integrated into the programme of the local organization *oxígeno laboratorio cultural* (see Bondanini et al. in this volume).

(2) See the statistics about 'Población por comunidades y ciudades autónomas y sexo' on the website of the National Statistics Institute (INE). Online: http://www.ine.es/. (Last visited 24/03/2017)

Figure 5.1: Mural by *Kahina* and El Niño de las Pinturas. Melilla 2014. Photograph by Fátima Mesaud Barreras.

5. From *Kahina* to *oxígeno laboratorio cultural* – promoting social inclusion through art, action, and research

by Francesco Bondanini, Michaela Pelican, and Sofie Steinberger

Francesco Bondanini (Italian and *Melillense* by choice) is the founder of the participatory social action and research project *Kahina*. The project was initiated in 2012 to address social inequality and ethnic coexistence in Melilla's outskirts. While in public discourse Melilla has often been praised as an example of multiculturalism and religious tolerance, there have been indications of social tension and conflict in the city's less privileged suburbs. To counter these tendencies, Francesco Bondanini, Karima Soliman and Fátima Mesaud Barreras have designed a number of social and artistic interventions, aimed at providing participants with useful instruments to partake in the life of the city, reducing negative stereotypes and promoting social inclusion. The project was funded by the *Instituto de las Culturas* under the direction of Fadela Mohatar and realized in collaboration with the Department of Cultural and Social Anthropology of the University of Cologne (Germany). It lasted until 2015 and eventually became part of the organization *oxígeno laboratorio cultural*, also known as *o2lc*.

Kahina took root from Francesco's previous experience of researching and working in the Centre for Temporary Stay of Immigrants (CETI) in Melilla. Employing a participatory approach and using the universal language of art, Francesco carried out photography, painting, and theatre workshops in the CETI, which proved productive in many ways (see also Bondanini in this volume). He has continued this approach in the context of *Kahina* and *o2lc*, but has shifted the focus to the city's peripheral neighbourhoods. The project's goal is to transform Melilla's outskirts and increase their residents' visibility through social and artistic interventions.

Today, the project team consists of Francesco Bondanini and Fátima Mesaud Barreras. In addition, the project draws on collaborations with a variety of social actors, including NGOs, political parties, local media, neighbourhood associations, and schools. Workshops are a fundamental part of project activities. They are held in various neighbourhood associations and include photography, video, painting, theatre, radio, and urban knitting. Primary participants are children, adolescents and women living

in the Districts IV and V, as well as inmates of the local prison, unaccompanied minors, and migrants. Some of the workshops culminate in paintings in public spaces (e.g. on walls, stairs) which also serve the purpose of beautifying the area. Participants are actively integrated into the process: Through discussions in groups, participants and team members together develop ideas of what to paint, how to improve the space, and how to proceed with the action. The activities with unaccompanied minors and migrants are not only intended to make these groups more visible, but to also give them a way to express themselves, their thoughts, and their perceptions of their surroundings by means of art and audiovisual media. The activities also help as a means of distraction from an everyday life without a clear structure or certain future ahead of them.

Every month, a *Baraka* takes place. These *Baraka* are public parties with games and music for children and families in different neighbourhoods. In summer, *Kahina* organizes *cine de verano*, open air film screenings that alternate between neighbourhoods. There is only one cinema in Melilla, which – like the theatre – is located in the city centre. Francesco and Fátima sensed that in a certain way, cultural activities have been reserved for the elite, who frequent specific spaces. The parties and film screenings are intended to move cultural activities from the centre to the outskirts. Thereby, residents will be brought closer to the city's peripheries, and will overcome internal social and geographic barriers. At the same time, new cultural spaces will emerge and be appropriated by Melilla's residents.

The workshops and *Baraka* parties are often combined with the stays of artists who visit the project. Various artists from Spain and other countries, e.g. El Niño de las Pinturas

(Granada), BR1 (Turin), and Alice Pasquini (Rome) have all come to Melilla and contributed to *Kahina's* activities by infusing artworks into the neighbourhoods, and by talking and collaborating with the residents. Moreover, *Kahina* has organized photographic exhibitions, such as the market exhibition in the neighbourhood El Rastro (see Mesaud Barreras in this volume). On several occasions, the artistic material produced during the workshops (photographs, paintings, videos etc.) has been exhibited in the premises of local neighbourhood associations to promote awareness and citizen participation as well as to publicize the project and illustrate its methodological approach. Another successful project component is *Kahina's* radio project. Youngsters (girls and boys aged 14 to 16) from the peripheral neighbourhoods meet up at a small studio and produce radio shows. The broadcasts are a mixture of information and education: They invite local people who are

Figure 5.2: Artistic interventions by *Kahina*. Melilla 2013-2016. Photograph by Fátima Mesaud Barreras.

interested in coming the studio to give interviews. They also receive technical training and learn how to record, cut, edit, and broadcast the programme. At the same time, the radio works as a medium of education, democracy, and participation.

Kahina also has a research component which entails cooperation with universities in Europe, including the Universities of Cologne, Leipzig, and Granada. Students of anthropology, sociology, and history have come to Melilla and done fieldwork or internships in the project. They actively supported *Kahina's* activities and simultaneously carried out fieldwork for their research projects (see e.g. Friedrichs in this volume).

In 2015, Francesco and Fátima decided to add a new direction to the project, and founded *oxígeno laboratorio cultural*. On the one hand, they wanted to continue with *Kahina's* activities; on the other, they wanted to 'oxygenate' themselves, to develop new ideas and start new activities. They obtained funding from the foundation *Consejería de Cultura y la Obra Social 'La Caixa'*, and thus within the last two years have begun to organize lectures, and invited writers of youth literature as well as documentary filmmakers to talk about their books or films. Additionally, for about one year now, they have been organizing alternative guided tours, *Explora*, through the city's peripheries. They offer walks through neighbourhoods where they have been working over the years. These tours not only attract interested tourists, but also people who have lived in the city for many years and have never visited those areas. Each month they conduct a different tour. People can sign up and discover new places, such as the Muslim cemetery, the neighbourhood of El Rastro, the Hebrew part of the city, the settlement where the neighbourhood of *La Legión* starts, the zone of *Cabrerizas*, the marginal zones of the city, etc. A local guide informs the participants about the history of the specific sites and entertains them with local stories. Usually, the participants get to know people from the zone, talk to neighbours, and hear about everyday life in these parts of the city.

In a way, *Kahina* continues as a branch of *oxígeno laboratorio cultural*; the only difference that *o2lc* no longer limits itself to the peripheral areas of Melilla.

Figure 5.3-5.4: Artistic interventions by *Kahina*. Melilla 2013-2016.
Photographs by Fátima Mesaud Barreras.

The project objectives, however, have remained the same: Francesco and Fátima want to contribute to strengthening communication and exchange between different parts of the population of Melilla. They intend to create a city that belongs to all residents. They want to empower women, children, and marginalized people to confidently express their needs and thoughts and to visibly participate in public debates and social life in Melilla. By including the periphery in the city's social and cultural life, they want to overcome social barriers and increase harmony, and thus quality of life, for the people living in Melilla. ■

Personas Silenciosas

(Gentle People)

A photographic portrait
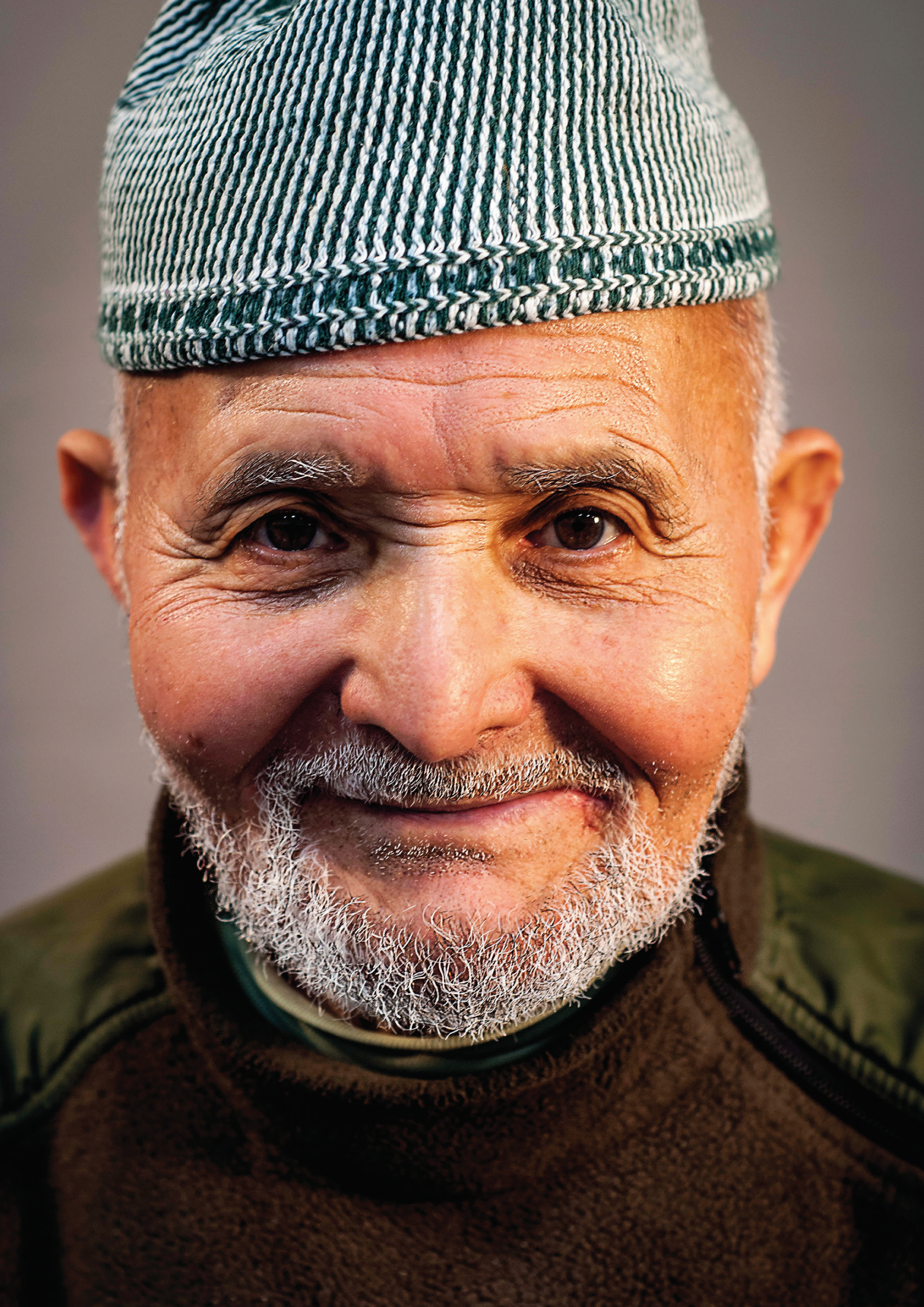of the Central Market of Melilla

by Fátima Mesaud Barreras, and Sofie Steinberger
Photographs by Fátima Mesaud Barreras

Fátima Mesaud Barreras is a technician for the visual arts. She studied photography in Barcelona and has lived in Melilla since 2008. At the moment she works at the public television station *Televisión Melilla* as a camerawoman. Fátima became part of *Kahina* (now *oxígeno laboratorio cultural*) when she started to help out sporadically as a volunteer making photos for the project. She liked the activities that *Kahina* realized in the city, so she began to document them in a professional way to build up the project's archive. In 2014 she created the photo exhibition *Personas Silenciosas* (*Gentle People*) in the Central Market of Melilla, located in the neighbourhood El Rastro.

In January 2017, Fátima Mesaud Barreras and Sofie Steinberger had an in-depth discussion about the vison and context of the exhibition *Personas Silenciosas*, on which this contribution is based. They also talked about how the exhibition fits with the subject of this publication.

As Fátima explained, many things happening in the context of the border are reflected in the market. Many of the retailers cross the border between Melilla and Nador on a daily basis. Also, almost all the goods sold in the market come from Morocco. So the market is an expression of the complex relations between Melilla and Morocco.

This publication discusses Melilla as a border town, its relationship with Morocco, and the personal memories, economic links, and political consequences connected to Melilla's geographic location. In a way, the market is also a kind of 'discussion', in that it too reflects the complexity of the city and its surroundings. Many cultures with many different viewpoints share a space in which they live together. Some things they share, others they do not; but ultimately, they have to get along. To illustrate this pragmatic and unobtrusive approach to coexistence, Fátima focused on the persons working in the market. She named her exhibition *Personas Silenciosas*, meaning 'gentle people'. ◼

The idea

The idea that led to the exhibition was Francesco's and my perception that the market had lost its role as a meeting place for the people. The market belongs to the districts IV and V and is part of the neighbourhood El Rastro in which *Kahina* was carrying out its activities. There used to be the old market, which was more in the centre of the neighbourhood. When the old market was closed, this new one was built closer to the centre of the city. We realized that the market was in a situation of stagnation, and its future was uncertain. The problem was that many people started to come from Morocco as peddlers and sell fruits and vegetables in the streets, not in the market. Obviously, the price of their fruits and vegetables was much lower than the price in the market. So, for the fruit and vegetable retailers in the market this generated a big problem when it came to selling their products, as people tended to go for the cheaper food. The city council was concentrating a lot on the face of the city, but the market was kind of left aside. We thought that it was a very interesting market, since the old one used to be the oldest in the city and a lot of people with different cultural backgrounds were working there. This market is also very central in its location, and it is complete in its function, which means that in comparison to other city markets you would find all kinds of food on offer: Vegetables, fruits, and also meat and fish. So we decided to work with it and make a kind of art work there, to make the market more interesting for people to go there.

The man in the photo is called Hassan and is the oldest, or at least one of the oldest, fruit dealers in the market. He had already been working in the old market when the city decided to build the new one. So he moved his workplace along with the market's relocation. Soon after this photo was taken, he became sick. For quite some time he could not get back to work, but when he got better he returned and now continues to work in the market. I really liked him. In a way, he is the image of the market itself. Most of the older people there have been working there for their whole life. We really liked his photo, because it expresses so much happiness. He seems to be satisfied with what he is doing. ■

The intention

W e wanted to make an exhibition that draws the attention of the public to the market. We also decided to place the focus of the exhibition on the people that work at the market. We wanted to give them more importance. At the beginning, we wanted to take photos while they were working, but after a while this seemed to us like producing a catalogue for food. What we really wanted was to make the people behind the products and the work visible. On the one hand, we wanted to make the market an interesting place again, to save it from going down. But on the other hand, we realized that we actually wanted to support the merchants. The food and the other products sell themselves one way or another. The quality is more or less the same wherever you go. They don't need to be in the focus of attention. I think the biggest significance in a market is the people that are behind the counter. The reason why you return to a market or a shop is the seller that you like, who attended to

you and treated you well, or who informed you well about the products you were buying. So, for me, they are the ones that are important. I think that whether a market is successful or not depends in a fundamental way on the people that work there. The products in the booth look more or less the same, but the people behind the counter change. That's why we decided to concentrate on the people and to make an exhibition using their portraits.

Jesús and Pablo are brothers. They were both butchers, but had different booths opposite each other, which was quite interesting. Well, each of them dedicated himself to his own work. They look similar, but actually they are quite different, as you can see by their clothes. One of them is a fan of Atlético Madrid, that's why he put on his cap. Both are likeable, but with different ways of being.
In a way they represent the young part of the market. They have the hope of continuing to work to make a living. When you talk to them, each of them will tell you how difficult the situation is, how hard it is to keep up the business, that they don't sell well, that the market is really in a bad state. However, they fight and want to continue. ■

Melika

Melika used to make Arabic pastries. She does not work in the market anymore because since we took the photos she went first to Morocco and then to live in Germany. I think she had three sons and daughters. At first, she used to make and sell pastries at home because she did not have a job. When she had earned some money, she managed to open a little booth in the market, where she worked for many hours a day. She used to complain about the amount of work and the small number of people who came to buy. In her case, the pastries were quite expensive because the ingredients you need for their production are expensive. She did not manage to keep her shop for long, and for that reason – and also because her husband wanted to – they left Melilla. Melika really liked her work and to be independent. In combination with religious practices here, such cases are delicate. She was quite independent, though; she was pretty modern and really good at what she was doing. I think she was simply unlucky.

She was a very nice woman, very warm-hearted. If she could help you, she would. When we took the photos, she was very shy. It was because she was a Muslim, she said; because she was wearing a headscarf; because she was old; because she was a married woman; she wondered how was she going to do this, said that her husband would think or do this or that, and that she needed to ask her husband first… Finally, she asked her husband and he was fine with it. He said that it was okay, since the photos that we wanted to take were just normal ones. Everybody could wear what they wanted and these photos would not bring her problems. So, in the end, she participated. But still, at the beginning it was very difficult for her. The main reason why she did not want to participate at first was that she did not think she was beautiful. So I told her that if the photo did not look good and she did not want me to put it in the exhibition I would not do so; that I would definitely ask for her permission to put up the photo. When I finally showed her the photo she said: 'Wow, how beautiful I am!' and she allowed me to include her portrait in the exhibition. ◼

Diversity

What we liked most about the market was the multicultural atmosphere there. You might not expect it, but in the same market you find people working there who are Muslim, Christian, Jewish or Hindu… Well, there are no Jewish merchants, but Jewish people go there to buy their food. The surrounding streets used to be inhabited mainly by Jewish people. This has changed, but they keep coming back to the market. It seems like the market resembles the cultural composition of the city. There are also family businesses there. You can find shops run by fathers and sons, or married couples who work there together. From the gender perspective it is obvious that you find many more men than women working in the market. I guess this has to do with the history of the work at the market; I think it used to be work that was physically much more strenuous. But with some technical changes and inventions, the work became easier.

Not everybody wanted to participate in the project; that's why you will not find all their portraits amongst the photos. For example, the Hindu merchant did not want to take part. Also, not all of the sellers in the market have Spanish nationality. There are some that come from Morocco every day to work there. There are some who have permission to work, but others do not. The latter also did not want to be photographed. Or, better put, they could not be part of the exhibition as they could not be represented as 'official faces of the market'. So, those in the photos are people who have permission to work there, Spanish or not. They are either owners of a booth or shop, which is the majority, or they are employees. Unfortunately, some of those who formed part of the exhibition do not work there anymore because of the lack of customers. This concerns mainly fruit and vegetable retailers. The butchers' business is more stable.

Those two men are friends. They work together in a butcher's shop. One is Muslim, one is Christian: Pepe and Ahmed. Pepe is the owner, Ahmed works for him. The butcher's shop is called *Carnicería Emilio*.

The process

At first Francesco Bondanini and I went to the market and we talked to the people, the merchants. We told them about our idea and asked them if they wanted to participate. At the beginning we thought that all of them should participate, but, as I said before, reality showed that not all were interested or were able to take part. We had to go to the markets several times to get to know all the merchants and to earn their trust by talking about the project and in some cases by addressing their reticence to be photographed. Some did not understand our project. They asked whether we would be paying them for the photos, what we wanted these pictures for, and what purpose the images would serve. We explained that the photos were meant for them, that we wanted to put up an exhibition with portraits of the merchants in the market with the aim of dynamizing the market; that we aimed to attract visitors who would want to see the photos and then might rediscover the market and so increase the stallholders' business. After a while, they thought it was a good idea, but they were afraid that they were not beautiful enough, that the photos would not look good. So, what we did was: We practised. We practised taking photos so they could see themselves, and lost their timidity. The photos were taken in the market. We set up a small portable studio where they would come to have their pictures taken, and we explained that everybody has his/her own beauty, and that we only had to find it. Especially the women were very shy. With the young people it was much easier… In times of social media and smartphones they had no problem with being photographed, and they were not as wary as the older merchants. In the end, they felt quite comfortable in front of the camera and found themselves pretty. So we kept trying and practising, looking for the photos we wanted for the exhibition, and finally we ended up with 27 portraits. At the inauguration of the exhibition, everybody received his or her portrait as a present.

We did not want to put them on the walls, because they would have been much less visible. We decided to hang them up, high above the booths. When you went to the first floor of the market you could see the photos, and underneath them, the booths with the merchants. At the beginning we had some problems with the material of the photo prints, as it reacted to heat, light, and humidity. In the end, however, we stabilized them with wood and it worked out well.

José and Milagros are married and have a butcher's shop where they work together. They did not want to have single photos taken, but to appear in one together, so we took the photo of both of them. Milagros was quite shy in front of the camera. Because she felt embarrassed, José was making jokes to relax her. ◼

Fina

F ina, the young woman on this photo, calls herself a gypsy. She has a beauty shop in the market. I think she is the youngest person working in the market, but she has been working there for several years now. What I really liked about Fina was her spontaneity. And, clearly, she is a very pretty woman. With her, it was very easy to take photos. It was obvious that she was used to taking photos of herself or having pictures taken of her, simply because of social media and so on. She got dressed up: She put make-up on, she dressed her hair, she wore nice clothes. Let's just say that she prepared herself very well and she was very relaxed in front of the camera.

The photo, when I see it, gives me the impression of a beautiful and sweet woman. She is the kind of person that gives you the feeling that you had known her before and are very familiar with her. We took many photos. Sitting, standing, close-ups… But when it came to choosing a photo for the exhibition, I felt that this one was most suited to her.

It's calm and earnest and, at the same time, it is a warm photo. For someone working in the market and living a stressful life, she seemed very warm-hearted, almost angelic.

Her hand is displayed in the image. When we took the photos, she wanted to show her ring, because she was either engaged or recently married – I do not remember well. Right when the exhibition was inaugurated the couple had broken up. So, when she saw her photo, she was surprised to see herself with the ring. But the hand is not only about the ring. She also shows her manicured fingernails, for example. So, her hand also shows her work and what she dedicates herself to: A beauty salon in the market. ■
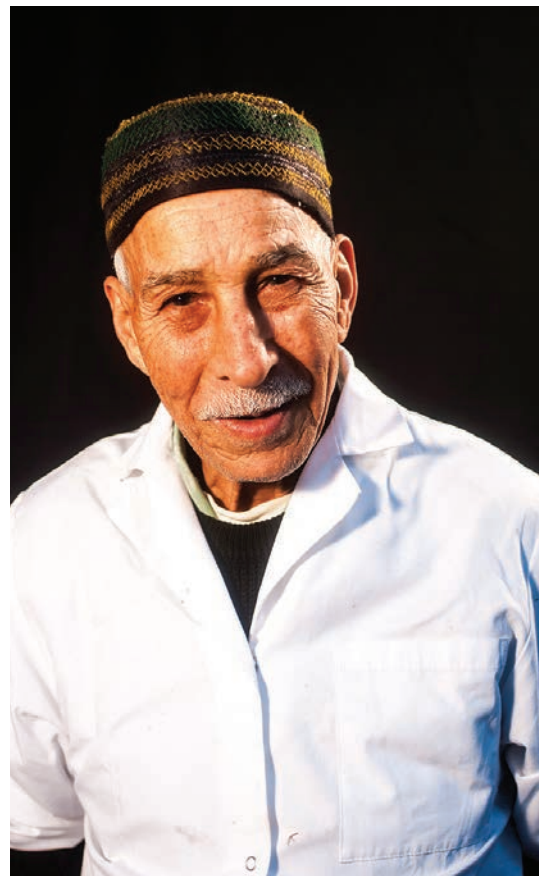
The style

A t the beginning we wanted to take the portraits in the merchants' 'natural surroundings' meaning their booths or shops. But there were two reasons why we decided otherwise: On the one hand – as I mentioned above – we wanted to make the merchants the centre of attention, not their goods. On the other hand, it would have been a Sisyphean task: It was very difficult to set up a complete lighting installation in each booth, and the conditions of space, light etc. in the individual booths and shops varied a lot. Sometimes the merchants also did not have anything to display at the time the photos were being taken. So, we decided to take individual or partner portraits without including any instruments or artefacts, and without their working devices and tools; we set up our studio in the middle of the market and they would come down to us to have their portraits taken there.

Regarding the composition, there is no elaborate composition of the photos. Technically the realization was quite plain. We wanted natural portraits, no forced postures. That's why the clothes they wear on the photos are mainly the clothes they would wear during work. We wanted photos that they could relate to and identify with, that they would recognize themselves in the images. They should be posing for themselves, for their own support. In individual cases, we decided to take the picture from a certain perspective, for instance if they were small or very tall. But basically we asked them to try different postures – looking up, looking to the side, folding their arms, thinking of something they like. Because of the problem of illumination, we saw that it wasn't feasible to photograph in the booths. So, in our studio, we tried different backgrounds: White, grey, and black. White did not work well, but the darker ones were fine. The darker backgrounds put the person at the centre of attention. The person stands out and becomes important. We varied between black and grey because we did not want the photos to look all the same.

Mohamedi is a fishmonger. He, like the man on the first photo, is one of the oldest merchants at the market. He is very recognizable because he likes to sing a lot. The people know him because of his singing. He likes Antonio Molina, a Spanish flamenco singer of the 1960s or 1970s, so he sings flamenco at work in the market. We even have videos of him singing. I think the shop is not his own. I think he works for someone else, but he had also been working in the old market before, and moved to the new one when the old one was shut down. Thus, he is also one of the veterans there.

What the image communicates, in my view, is that he is a very honest person. You see him and you feel tenderness. He is very old and he still works, and despite the fatigue he is very cheerful. This and the first picture in this publication are the photos I like the most. Together they are, in a way, the image of the market. These are the people who have built up the market and they are still working there. ■

The reactions

Paqui is one of the few female merchants. She is the owner of a butcher's shop and has one employee, Ousmane, who assists her.

t was very funny to see how the merchants reacted to the exhibition. The satisfying thing was that they all really liked their photos. But at the beginning it was quite strange for their portraits to be placed so visibly. Some were intimidated because they were asked if it really was them on the photos. Through the exhibition they became important, in a way. They did not believe this to be the case, but I really think that it is they who are the important part of the market. And

the photos emphasized this importance. Suddenly, they became known personalities in their market. I think, with the exhibition, we were able to make them feel their importance.

After getting used to that they felt quite good, I think. They received a lot of positive reactions. Men and women came up to me and said: 'Oh, my son came by and when he saw my photo, he told me that I was really good looking!' or '…came to the market and said that my photo turned out very well'. Some of the merchants that hadn't taken part came to us and said that next time they would take part in the exhibition. The result of the exhibition was just what we had hoped it would be. Many people passed by and looked at the photos, then they looked for those same faces in the booths and shops behind the counters. Many people really liked it because it was something different, and also because we did not just put the pictures on the walls but hung them up high, very visibly and in a style that was not common for photo exhibitions. I think, in a way we took some of the anonymity of the market and the people working there and turned it into a more familiar place. The market looked completely different. It had a totally new and more modern look.

For us, it was gratifying to see that this project, which was completely different in comparison to our other activities, had such a positive impact. I think it was a success for all participants. The market was given a new face and people were attracted by it. The merchants were honoured in their everyday work, and we saw that *Kahina* was able to set up various activities for a diverse audience of different ages and interests. ■

7. Melilla – a perspective from Nador

by Mostapha Boukllouâ

Unlike the other contributions in this volume, my take on Melilla is not from an academic but a biographical point of view. I was born in the province of Nador in northeastern Morocco, outside the border of Melilla. When I was two years of age, my parents and I moved to Germany, following the example of my grandfather. At the time, Germany was in need of manpower, and northeastern Morocco was one of the regions where the German Chamber of Industry and Commerce had been running recruitment programmes. While I was growing up in Germany, my parents and grandparents told me a lot about my home town, about the province of Nador, and about Melilla. By sharing some of these stories in this essay, I will contribute a picture of Melilla from the other side of the border. The stories I am presenting are based on personal experiences. They are necessarily partial and are not aimed at providing a complete or representative picture.

Geographical proximities

The province of Nador nowadays includes 23 communities (16 urban and 7 rural communities). Two of the urban communities, Beni Ensar and Beni Chiker, directly border the Spanish exclave of Melilla. While they are administratively autonomous, they are commonly seen as part of the city of Nador. This is particularly true for Beni Ensar, to the south of Melilla and north of Nador, where the main port of the region is situated. The two communities also host today's two main border posts for crossing over to Melilla. While the larger one is located in the city of Beni Ensar, the second is in the small town of Farkhana, and mostly used by the residents of Beni Chiker.

Due to the region's shared history and Nador's geographical proximity to Melilla, the people of Nador have a special relationship with Melilla, and more generally with Spain. Here it is important to remember that northern Morocco, including the region
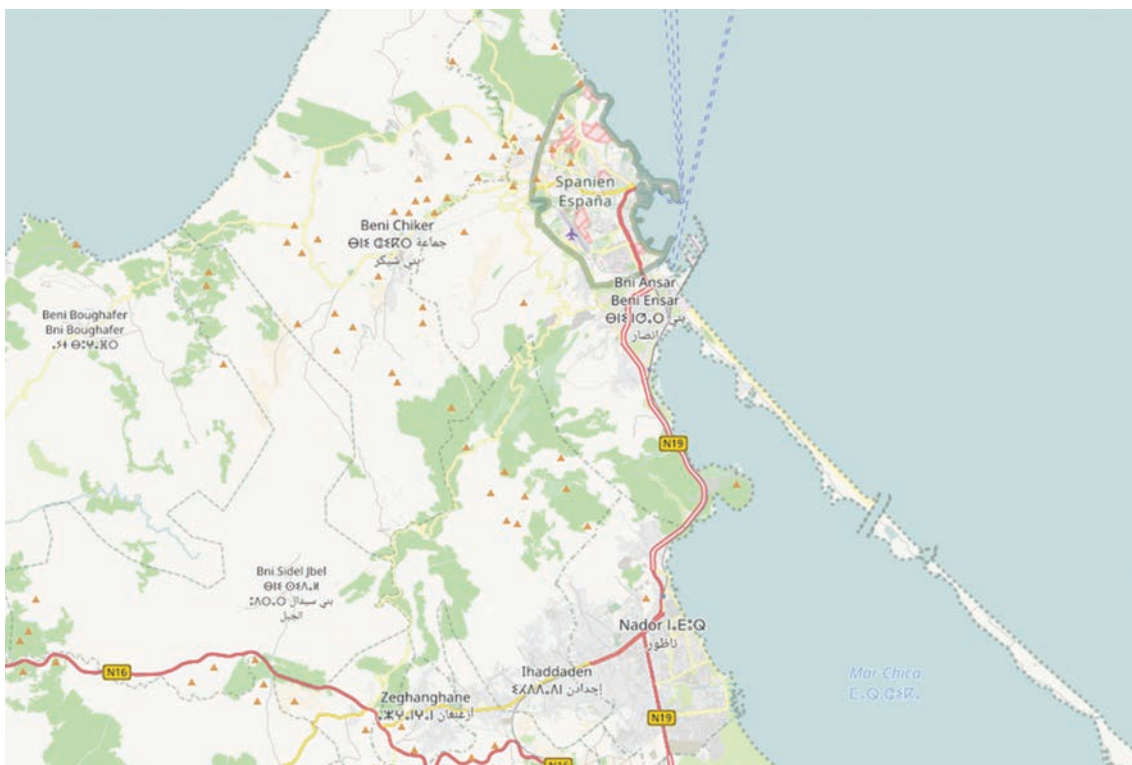

Figure 7.1: Map of the Melilla-Nador region. © OpenStreetMap contributors.

discussed here, was occupied by Spain between 1912 and 1916 (see also Saez-Arance in this volume). Furthermore, until today, the Spanish language has played an important role in this region, more than in other parts of the country. This special relationship is also reflected in the region's oral history and many of the anecdotes told by members of the older generations.

Economic and social relations:
A view from Beni Chiker

During my parents' and grandparents' youth, the nearest larger city to Beni Chiker was not Nador but Melilla. At the time, most people were farmers, cultivating fruits and vegetables for home consumption and for sale. For many locals, it was common to cross over to Melilla to sell their farm produce or to do part of their shopping. Also, Melilla was attractive due to its advanced health and business facilities as compared to the province of Nador, which lacked good commercial infrastructure – a situation that remained the case until the 1990s.

When my father was young, he used to mount his horse in the morning and ride to Melilla to sell fruits on the market. Until the middle of the 1970s, there was no fence separating Beni Chiker from Melilla. It was easy to cross the border, either by passing through one of the border crossings or by taking a shortcut through the forest. At that time, there were five border crossings (today there are only two). None of them were manned and there was no customs office. So going to Melilla felt very normal and did not require much preparation.

Back then, the social atmosphere was also very different from today. For the people of Beni Chiker, the *Melillense* were a kind of Moroccan. They were their neighbours, and sometimes friendship grew between them. Yes, the *Melillense* looked a little different, followed another religion, and spoke a different mother tongue; but they were still a kind of Moroccan. The inhabitants of northeastern Morocco are Imazighen (Rif-Berbers). They are Muslims and their mother tongue is Berber. In addition, they speak Moroccan Arabic and French, the countries' two official languages. Moreover, due to their close relationship with Melilla, many people of the older generation also master some Spanish. While the people of Beni Chiker were very aware that there had been recurrent conflict

between Spain and Morocco, they generally separated politics from everyday life. They argued that these conflicts constituted political issues, and did not really affect their relationship to the *Melillense* because they lived together and had trade.

In some cases, familiarity and friendship also grew from the fact that many Spanish men had to serve their military service in Melilla, which has long been a stronghold of the Spanish military. Generally, the military personnel were seen as a separate category from the *Melillense*, as genuinely Spanish and with few commonalities with the people of Nador. However, as the following example illustrates, this could change in a foreign context. In the 1960s, many Moroccans and Spanish were recruited as factory workers in Germany. As my father recounted, when he started working with Spanish colleagues, it felt like coming back home. As he spoke some Spanish, they approached him and asked where he came from. When he explained that he was from Nador, they told him 'Okay! Come on, you are one of us!' Many of them had been to Melilla for their military service and thus knew the region and people's ways, so it was easy to make friends.

Historical and political relations:
The example of Nador City

While my father grew up in Beni Chiker, my mother is from the city of Nador. Her experiences were somewhat different, as in the city of Nador, there has always been a notable Spanish population. During the period of the Spanish protectorate (1912 to 1956), Spanish and Moroccans were neighbours in the city. Today, one can still find a Spanish quarter there, which is recognizable by its architecture. The quarter has a square form, and the houses have one or two levels and follow the same style.

I was told by my grandparents that most of the Spanish inhabitants of Nador left the city after independence. While there were no violent incidents, they were concerned about their safety and future. Knowing the situation in other colonies, they were frightened about the fate of Nador, and more generally 'Spanish Morocco'. Most of them did not settle in Melilla, but moved to continental Spain. Here, it is important to also consider the armed Amazigh rebellion of the 1920s, led by Abd al-Karim, against the Spanish colonists. The rebellion was brutally put down and resulted in long-standing altercations

Figure 7.2: Plaza de la liberación in Nador. Nador 2017.
Photograph by Jesús Blasco de Avellaneda.

'Belgian Moroccans' whose parents mostly came from other parts of Morocco, e.g. the western coast or the Atlas Mountains.

Changing border management

From Nador city there has always been a bus going directly to the border post of Beni Ensar and further to Melilla. As we have seen, in earlier days, it was normal to go to Melilla to sell food products and, in exchange, buy industrial items. Trade relationships at the time were well-established and somewhat balanced. In the meantime, things have changed and the trade has become one-sided. Today, industrially manufactured goods (such as high-tech items, washing machines, TVs etc.) are still imported into Nador from Melilla. Moreover, as a result of EU subsidies and tax exemptions granted to residents of Melilla, foodstuffs like fruits, milk, and grain have also become cheaper in Melilla than in Nador. Many things are transported across the border, including blankets, diapers and products of daily consumption. The transport is mostly done by women, also known as *porteadores*, who carry their heavy loads on foot across the border (see also Soto-Bermant in this volume).

Similarly, the border post in Beni Ensar has transformed. The border crossing between Beni Ensar and Melilla now comprises two customs controls; one on the Moroccan, the other on the Spanish side. Between them lies a hundred-metre-wide stretch of no man's land. A few years ago, a group of refugees who passed the Moroccan customs control were refused entry into Spain. With nowhere to go, they stayed in this area of no man's land and camped there for several months, before they were finally returned to Morocco/were allowed into Spain.

Generally, there have been significant changes regarding border control and the management of refugees and migrants over the past decades (see also Steinberger in this volume). From the city of Nador, you can see Mount Gurugú, where many refugees used to establish temporary settlements in the wild, waiting for their chance to enter Melilla. In

between the two nations (see Saez-Arance in this volume). Yet despite these painful memories, which still remain vivid today, the attitude of the Amazigh population towards Melilla has remained largely positive, throughout both the colonial and post-colonial period.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, Moroccan inhabitants of Nador were invited to move to Melilla, because many Spanish had left their homes and returned to the peninsula. Some accepted the offer; others preferred to stay in Nador. Among the latter, some later regretted their decision, when they realized that they would have benefitted from work opportunities and a better social security system if they had left. Moreover, as compared to other parts of the country, the infrastructure in northeastern Morocco was underdeveloped, a situation that only changed in the 1990s.

At the time, there was no railway or motorway that connected Nador to Morocco's main cities, nor was there an airport or a harbour worth mentioning. In consequence, this region was oriented more towards Europe than Morocco. Melilla was seen as *la puerta de Europa*, providing a window onto Europe and Western culture. Moreover, due to the difficult economic situation of the province, a lot of young men migrated to Europe in the 1960s and 1970s, thus responding to the requests for industrial workers in Germany and elsewhere. It was in this context that my parents moved to Germany. Until today, most German citizens of Moroccan background have their biographical roots in the region of Nador; this is in contrast, for example, to the

the early days, they sometimes went from door to door to ask for food, something to drink, or money. Today, this is no longer the case, as a few years back an official refugee camp was established in Beni Chiker in compliance with changing border policies and EU-Moroccan agreements. Confining refugees to the camp has minimized their contact with the local population, and has also deterred many from moving on to Melilla. Today, it is very likely that the people of Sub-Saharan African background you may meet in the streets of Nador are former refugees who have now settled in the city.

Figure 7.3: Beach promenade. Nador 2017. Photograph by Jesús Blasco de Avellaneda.

Nador today

While in my parents' time, Melilla was the center of attraction for young Moroccans of the region, today it is Nador, with its linkages to the Moroccan diaspora in Europe. During the last years, a lot of money has been invested in the province of Nador. This is partly due to the remittances sent by migrants living and working in Europe. Many of the migrated Moroccans have invested in real estate in Nador city rather than buying or building houses in the countryside. They tend to enjoy amenities that they have become accustomed to from living in Europe. Many of these amenities are imported from Melilla

or Spain, as Moroccans residents in Europe do not have to pay customs duties when importing goods from Europe.

On the other side, the Moroccan government has invested a lot of money in the region's infrastructure; for example, the improvement of Nador's airport to become an international hub as well as the expansion of the harbour, which is now much bigger than the one in Melilla. Soon, Nador will have a newly built city centre. Moreover, there are plans to establish sustainable tourism projects, such as walking tours in the region's untouched wilderness, and a green golf course, equivalent to the famous golf course across the border in Melilla.

As a result of these and other developments, economic and social relations between Nador and Melilla seem to have been reduced as compared to the situation in my parents' and grandparents' day.

But as many families have extended networks spanning Morocco and Europe, and as long as the stories of the old days continue to be passed on to the younger generations, Melilla will continue to be part and parcel of Nador's history and future.

Figure 7.4: Street market. Nador 2017. Photograph by Jesús Blasco de Avellaneda.

8. Melilla – a border town of international interest

by Sofie Steinberger

The border surrounding the Spanish exclave of Melilla is known as one of the most secured external borders of Europe. Since the 1990s, Spain has reacted to an increasing influx of immigrants through its exclaves by introducing stricter border policies. These policies attracted international attention when in September and October 2005 about 4,000 people tried to cross the border fences of Ceuta and Melilla, with 14 dying in the attempt. Since then, Melilla and Ceuta have repeatedly hit the headlines as venues of European border-security extension (Migration-Info 13/11/2015). Nevertheless, the Spanish border regime has often been copied as an example of well-functioning border monitoring by other European marginal countries such as Greece and Hungary (Telepolis 21/09/2015; Pro Asyl 2011).

The history of Melilla can be traced back to an Amazigh (Rif-Berber) village, which gained importance when the Phoenicians started to use it as a trading post under the name of Rusadir. Over the centuries, the city passed through the hands of several empires (see also Saéz-Arance in this volume). Melilla became part of Spanish history when the necessity of keeping Portugal from controlling the Mediterranean Sea on the one hand, and the expulsion of the Muslim population from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492 on the other, led to the occupation of settlements along the North African Mediterranean coast by the Spanish troops (Cajal 2003: 96-99). When Pedro de Estopiñán conquered the fortification of Melilla in 1497, the Castilian-Aragonese crown decided to use the fortification as a trading and control post, in order to prevent any Muslim intention to return to the now Catholic homeland. During the following centuries, Melilla's history was characterized by attacks and sieges by the Moroccan sultan's troops or by the native Imazighen in the surrounding Rif region, until the Treaty of Tetouán was signed in 1859. This treaty

included the extension of the Spanish territories as well as the establishment of a neutral zone around them. However, it took more than 30 years until the final demarcation line was agreed upon in 1891 (Acosta Sánchez 2014: 17; Cajal 2003: 100-124; Remacha 1994: 231-235). This demarcation has defined the Spanish-Moroccan border throughout the Spanish protectorate down to the present day.

In this article, I shed light on the Spanish-Moroccan border regime and its development over time in the twentieth century. I show how the relations between Morocco and Spain, and Spain and the EU, have influenced the border's changing physical manifestation as well as the shifting border policies over the last 30 years. I argue that these alterations are signs of the changing political importance of the border on the local, national, and international level. Focusing on the city of Melilla, I thereby show the entanglement of national and international border policies as well as the policies' problematic nature regarding their (non-)compliance with human rights standards.

Spanish-Moroccan relations

About 125 years after the final demarcation of Melilla's border, that border, which used to be the reason for many wars between Spain and Morocco, is today the reason for very strong relations between the two countries. These relations are rooted not only in the geographical proximity between, but also in the historical legacies connecting Morocco and Spain.

As mentioned earlier, the nineteenth century was characterized by military conflicts between Spain and Morocco. These armed conflicts and negotiations between France, Great Britain, and Spain concerning the colonial division of North Africa resulted in the Spanish occupation of Morocco's northern part. The military conflicts continued during the Spanish Protectorate (1912-1956), as the

local Imazighen fought against the Spanish influence and its territorial expansion. The conflicts only ended with the Al Hoceima landing on 8 September 1925 and the suppression of the Rif Republic in 1926 under the military lead of Francisco Franco, the subsequent Spanish dictator. After that, the Spanish right-wing military strictly controlled the Moroccan and the Spanish opposition as well as the Moroccan sultan's policy until the Moroccan independence in 1956 (Cajal 2003: 133-146; Remacha 1994: 226-237).

During the Protectorate, the border existed only as a political line between the two territories and was visualized merely by landmarks (Acosta Sánchez 2014: 17-18). Workers and merchants from both sides used to cross the border on a daily basis. Attracted by the working possibilities, many Moroccans decided to settle in Melilla during the Protectorate. By then, the Rif region was an industrially poorly developed region with little infrastructure and land difficult to cultivate. However, from the moment Spain started to exploit the Rif region's iron ore mines in 1908, the region began to play an important role for Spanish labour migration to Melilla from the Peninsula and for the expansion of infrastructure (see Moga Romero 2010). Thus, the border of Melilla became a vital component of Spanish-Moroccan relations: Melilla needed agricultural goods and labour from the neighbouring Rif province of Nador. Nador in turn depended on infrastructural projects and industrial goods shipped to the growing harbour of Melilla (see also Boukllouâ in this volume). Spain and Morocco began to depend on each other.

These interdependencies did not stop with the Moroccan independence in 1956. On the contrary, in a continuous process of construction and deconstruction the links between Spain and Morocco have strengthened. The economic relations, the fishing rights, the cultural exchange, the Western Sahara conflict, the migration movements, the fight against international terrorism, and the territorial belonging of the Spanish exclaves have all become topics of continuous discussion in both countries, switching between dispute and cooperation (see Iglesias 2010; Nayma 2006).

Since Moroccan independence, the interdependencies have been used as political leverages by both parties. On the one side, Morocco pressurizes Spain by preventing Spanish fishermen from accessing their fishing territories, by cutting Ceuta and Melilla off from food and labour supply, and by disregarding migration agreements (FAZ 14/08/2010(1). On the other side, Spain threatens Morocco by reducing financial development aid, ignoring Morocco's solicitations for extended economic relations, and even reacting with a military offensive, as happened in 2002 (Wunderlich 2010: 262). How fragile the relations are and how easily the border issue can turn into a means to demonstrate political power becomes clear when analysing an incident that happened in 2014: The Spanish police accidently stopped the boat of King Mohammed VI in the Mediterranean, suspecting it to be a boat used for illegal smuggling. The following week the Moroccan police stopped their coastal patrols to prevent migrants from leaving in boats towards the Spanish coast. Consequently, 1,200 irregular migrants arrived at the coast of Tarifa within two days (El Mundo 25/08/2014, El Diario 29/08/2014). Officially, the two events were not related; behind the scenes, however, the cessation of migration control has been read as Morocco's revenge (ibid.). This assessment alone shows the importance of the migration issue and Morocco's cooperation with Spain.

With changing political relations, the physical structure of the border has also changed: Morocco's independence had turned Melilla into a border town, and the borderline marked the separation of Spanish and Moroccan territory. At first, this political separation did not have much impact on the organization of the border, since the free circulation of goods and people fostered the local economy. During the Spanish protectorate and after Morocco's independence, the border existed as a political – but not yet physical – reassurance of territorial sovereignty. Only 80 years after its final demarcation, beginning with Spain's reaction against a cholera epidemic in Morocco in 1971, was the border institutionalized as a physical barrier: The first border fence, one metre in height, was built; a rather flimsy construction, resembling a pasture enclosure. Today, however, the border has turned into a high-security zone (Acosta Sánchez 2014: 18). When in the 1990s the immigration from African countries started to increase, Spain decided to close the border. In 1992, visa restrictions on Moroccan citizens and a controlled cross-border transit between Melilla and its Moroccan neighbouring

city Nador were established. In 1998 the first *valla* (border fence) was built: Two parallel three-metre-high steel-mesh fences hemmed with concertina wire, to prevent migrants from entering Spanish territory in an uncontrolled and illegal way. Since 2005, the border has grown to a three-dimensional fence construction six metres high separating the two countries. In 2007, cobweb-like multi-layered steel cables were mounted between the second and third Spanish fences (seen from the Spanish side) (ibid.). In 2014, the third fence was extended with the *valla antitrepa*, a fence that offers no purchase for fingers or toes (Huffington Post 05/03/2014). Apart from the barriers, there are also night vision cameras and motion sensors that register any movement of people approaching the border. Heavy spotlights spot migrants that are crossing the fence (ibid.). In 2015, with the *Ley de Seguridad Ciudadana*, the border architecture was amplified by a 'fifth fence' constituted by the Spanish *Guardia Civil*, a paramilitary force with police duties. Whoever enters Melilla or Ceuta irregularly and is caught by the *Guardia Civil* can be directly pushed back into Morocco through the border gate (BOE-A-2015-3442).

This shows that Spain has made every effort to keep migrants from entering its territory. The aforementioned incident in 2014, however, also shows that despite the securitization of the border Spain is dependent on Morocco's cooperation. This cooperation has been dealt with through several bilateral treaties, agreements, and organizations (beginning in the 1990s and extending up until 2015) regarding the free circulation of Moroccan and Spanish inhabitants of the border regions, the readmission of irregular immigrants, work permits, irregular emigration, and transborder police cooperation.(2)

When in 2002, Spain started the Integrated Exterior Surveillance System (SIVE) to prevent drug trafficking and irregular immigration along the Spanish Mediterranean coast and along the coast between North Africa and the Canary Islands, this operation led to less boats arriving at the Spanish coasts. However, it redirected the migration routes towards Ceuta and Melilla (Ferrer Gallardo 2008a: 135-136). Moreover, the continuous extension of border security and the increasing difficulty involved in entering Spain made Morocco an immigration destination for those who did not manage to set foot on Spanish territory or for those who would later try to continue their trip. This became an issue of public debate in Morocco (Wunderlich 2010: 263). Thus, the cooperation between Spain and Morocco in terms of border and migration control has been of continuous interest to both countries. Furthermore, their investment in the border's securitization supports the external border reinforcement strategy of the European Union.

Figure 8.1: Border check point Beni Ensar, Spanish side. Melilla 2017. Photograph by Jesús Blasco de Avellaneda.

EU border policies

Spain's access to the European Community in 1986 and to the Schengen area in 1993, as well as the European treaties, had an incisive and lasting impact on Spain's border management. Since then, Ceuta and Melilla have represented not only Spanish but also European sovereign territory on North African soil.

The European migration and asylum policy can be divided into three phases: First, the consolidation of a coordinated policy in general until 1990; second, the cooperation of states regarding the regulation of migration and asylum until 1997; and third, the establishment of a common migration and asylum policy. Thus, in the first phase, being part of the European Economic Community (EEC), Spain had to adapt to the trade and economic provisions of the European Community and later to the regulations of passenger traffic within Europe. Smuggling and drug trafficking, which flourished around the border of Melilla since 1956, were no longer only Spain's business. Therefore, the EEC demanded stronger measures regarding border controls (Ferrer Gallardo 2008a: 135-136).

The second phase had an even more decisive impact than the affiliation to the EEC. The Schengen Agreement in 1991 increased the European interest in the exclave and Spain's external border policy. With the abolition of the internal border controls, a new political space was created within the EEC. Until 1990, the national territory and its limitations had been the business of the individual national states that kept their territorial sovereignty, as long as they accorded with the economic treaties of the European Community. With the Schengen Agreement and its expansion via the Maastricht Treaty and the Treaty of Amsterdam, immigration policy became part of a common policy at the European level. Thereby, irregular immigration became an issue of supranational security and engendered the need for European external border control (Haase/Jugl 2007; Colectivo Ioé 2001). Finally, in 2009, with the commencement of the Treaty of Lisbon, the decisions regarding legal immigration and integration were put into the hands of the EU Council of Ministers and the European Parliament (Colectivo Ioé 2001).

Beginning with the new millennium, the third phase, the establishment of a common policy of migration and asylum control began. The multiannual Tampere Programme (1999-2004), followed by the Programmes of The Hague (2004-2009) and Stockholm (2010-2014), formed the basis for the shared European migration policy (asylum, migration, and security). Several new agencies and surveillance systems were introduced, and a common judicial space, a common asylum policy, and stronger police cooperation in preventing irregular immigration were agreed upon. Treaties and agreements fostered programmes aimed at a stricter control of labour migration and irregular migration at the European external borders (Haase/Jugl 2007; Colectivo Ioé 2001; Wunderlich 2010: 254-261). With the introduction of the Dublin Treaties I-II and the registration system EURODAC for migrants all over Europe, the border control and asylum procedures became the responsibilities of the individual states. Asylum had to be applied for in the EU country where migrants first entered. Consequently, the management of asylum claims and the control of external borders increasingly lay in the hands of the European peripheral countries, such as Spain, Italy, and Greece (Wunderlich 2010: 252).

Spain, as a EU member state, was obliged to adapt its national laws to decisions regarding border management and migration made by the European Union, and was accountable to the other EU countries. The extension of the border security architecture around Melilla can thus be seen as being a result of the concluded agreements. On the one hand, Spain would be held responsible if it failed to curb irregu- lar immigration. On the other, Spain would have to take back irregular migrants who entered Europe via Spain, and to cover the costs of the bureaucratic readmission processes. However, terrorist attacks, as occurred in 2001 in New York, 2004 in Madrid, and 2005 in London, as well as the increasing number of immigrants after the Arab Spring, led to an intensification and convergence of security measures in European border and migration policy. A number of programmes were therefore developed to support the marginal member states financially and politically, such as the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund, as well as a programme to extend the transborder cooperation of police and security operations within the EU and with non-member states (Wunderlich 2010: 263-265; EU 513/2014).

The cooperation with non-member countries, espe-

cially EU-neighbouring states like Morocco, became one of the pillars of the European migration policy in the 1990s (Haase/Jugl 2007). In order to externalize the pressure, Spain originated the Barcelona Process in 1995 during its presidency of the Council of the European Union. Furthermore, it established the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, which was aimed at creating 'peace, stability and wealth', by creating 'inner security including the defence of irregular immigration' among the Mediterranean countries. Financial aid was provided by the European Union to support the Mediterranean neighbourhood and to concurrently externalize some of the border-monitoring tasks (Jünemann 2005: 8-13).

Bilateral agreements with non-member states regarding the readmission of irregular migrants, the extension of migration control, and joint training and manoeuvres were some of the strategies employed to keep migrants from entering European territory. In order to achieve a thorough migration and border policy convergence with Morocco, the European Union started capacity building, information exchange, strategic development, and institutional support. It supported the dissemination of equipment facilitating border and migration management, and promoted training in measures against human trafficking and irregular migration, as well as training in visa regulations, asylum, and readmission procedures (Wunderlich 2010: table 1).

Since the 1990s, Morocco has become an important partner for the EU and Spain with regard to migration management. Morocco, however, depends on satisfying the demands of Spain and Europe, as ongoing cooperation and financial support is conditioned on 'joint management of migration flows and on compulsory readmission in the event of illegal immigration' (Council of the EU 2002:10). If a third country does not cooperate, the EU will adopt measures with negative consequences for 'any further cooperation' (Council of the EU 2002:11). "Any future cooperation" here refers to trade expansion, development assistance, or conflict prevention, which are decisive for the Moroccan economy. In 1969, the first bilateral trade agreements between Morocco and the European Community were signed. Not only was Europe Morocco's most important import and export partner in 2015, one fifth of Morocco's exports going only to Spain;(3) Morocco also received a total of €1.1 billion for the period of 1976-1996 and another €980 million through the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership for the period of 1996-2006 (European Parliament 2007: 6). An additional €728 million were allocated by the European Neighbourhood Instrument for the period of 2014-2017 (European Commission 2016). Apart from these financial programmes, Morocco also had easy access to loans from the European Investment Bank and received additional funding under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and programmes for civil society, local authorities, and higher educa-

Figure 8.2: Border fence. Melilla 2017. Photograph by José Palazón.

tion (European Parliament 2007: 6).

The financial aid from the European Union and Spain funds a large proportion of Morocco's budget for infrastructure and education. Thus, to satisfy Spain's demands for border securitization, Morocco implemented its own immigration law in 2003 and cooperated with Spain through joint border controls and training, monthly meetings of the interior ministry, and readmission of irregular Moroccan

immigrants (Planet Contreras 2004: 387). In Melilla and Nador, for example, the Moroccan military and Spanish Guardia Civil have cooperated in professional training and operations (La Vanguardia 19/05/2015).

Morocco even took action of its own by building a border fence on the border with Algeria and installing a legalization programme for irregular migrants in Morocco. It also conducted raids, especially in the direct surroundings of Melilla, where irregular migrants tend to set up camps and wait for a chance to jump over the fence (see also Bondanini in this volume). In 2015, Morocco finished its own border fence on Moroccan territory, parallel to the three Spanish fences, in order to discourage any further attempts at crossing *la valla* of Melilla (Cadena Ser 11/02/2015, Telquel 14/07/2014).

Impacts on Melilla, its inhabitants,
and border crossers

The changing policies of Spain, the European Union, and Morocco have had a great impact on Melilla, its habitants, and those crossing the border between Morocco and the exclave. The different interests in controlling the border and people's movement have had several consequences that led to new legislations and their execution in Spain with regard to citizenship, immigration, and labour policies.

The first substantial change was the introduction of the *Ley de Extranjería* in 1985, which constituted the first law in Spain aimed at regulating immigration policy. Carlos Pereda and colleagues explain that there were two reasons for the first Spanish aliens legislation: On the one hand, Spain was in a situation of socio-economic crisis and economic recession; on the other hand, the access to the EEC demanded an overview and control over the composition of the Spanish territory's population and a clear policy regarding immigration (Colectivo Ioé 2001).

The *Ley de Extranjería* aimed to regulate residence- and labour-related issues involving foreigners all over Spain and to provide an overview of the number of foreigners living in Spain, and thereby allow a better control of immigration. Amongst other aspects, the law provided naturalization procedures as well as regulations regarding labour, residence, and freedom of movement for foreigners living on Spanish territory (BOE-A-1985-12767).

As mentioned earlier, during and after the Protectorate many Moroccans settled in Melilla while retaining their Moroccan nationality. Thus, in the middle of the 1980s around 25 per cent of Melilla's population did not possess Spanish citizenship (Gold 2000: 92). The *Ley de Extranjería* provided a special plan for its implementation concerning people from territories and countries with a special historical or cultural link to Spain: Gibraltar, the Latin American republics, the Philippines, Andorra, Portugal, and Equatorial Guinea, as well as the Sephardim inhabitants of Israel and other states. Moroccans, however, were not included in this plan. Especially in the Spanish exclaves many inhabitants were affected by this law, as some had been living and working in the city for decades. They were obliged to apply either for naturalization or for a work and residence permit in order to be allowed to stay (ibid.: 93; Belmonte Montalbán 2010: 61-65).

Thus, the introduction of the new aliens law created an invisible border, as it distinguished between neighbours, friends, and family members on the basis of their residential status. For the first time, there was a differentiation between Spanish and non-Spanish nationals and their right of residence on Spanish territory, which confronted many of Melilla's inhabitants with an unforeseen need for a change of nationality. Eighty-five per cent of Melilla's Muslim inhabitants would not have been able to fulfil the requirements to be naturalized, and would have become stateless or had to move to Morocco (Planet Contreras 1998; La Vanguardia 01/04/1986). As a result, the border gained a completely new meaning concerning its delimiting function of territoriality and sovereignty in everyday life. People were now separated by having different rights and obligations.

The subsequent public protests split Melilla's society into supporters and opponents of the law, with mutually irreconcilable positions and interests. They conflated socio-cultural boundaries between different social groups that, subconsciously, already existed. In this case, the protests accentuated the boundaries between Muslims and Christians, which turned into a question of being Moroccan-Muslim or Spanish-Christian. The mainly Spanish and Christian supporters of the law saw it as an improvement of the living conditions of parts of the Muslim society, since some of the mainly Muslim neighbourhoods did not have a sewage system or electricity. At the same

Figure 8.3.: *Transfronterizas* (border crossers). Melilla 2017. Photograph by Jesús Blasco de Avellaneda.

time, they openly rejected democratic rights, such as political participation, if this meant that a certain part of the society, namely the Moroccan-Muslims, might gain political influence. Conversely, the mainly Muslim opponents demanded a different application of the law for people of Moroccan decent who had lived in Melilla for decades or their whole lives, as opposed to Moroccan border-crossers (Belmonte Montalbán 2010: 65-77).

Finally, the law was not executed as strictly as planned, and the Muslim population of Melilla were granted similar prerogatives to those enjoyed by the other exceptional groups mentioned earlier. Yet the incident left a bad taste due to the problematic differentiation between wanted Christian and unwanted Muslim residents of Melilla (ibid.: 80).

The unwanted immigrants

Compared to other European external borders, the extent of irregular immigration to Spain is low (Open migrations 29/02/2016). Nevertheless, Spanish border security measures have been continuously reinforced. Several human rights organizations complained about the situation in the overcrowded Centre for Temporary Stay of Immigrants (CETI) in Melilla and about pushbacks having become a common practice of the Spanish border police within the last ten years (El Diario 25/11/2015). The motive for the reinforcement was the growing number of *bozas* (originally meaning 'victory' in Fula) – the jumps over the border fences, mostly by migrants from sub-Saharan Africa (Open migrations 29/02/2016). Still, the extensive border security did not prevent further irregular immigration, and *bozas* have not ceased to occur. According to human rights organizations in Morocco, in 2015, 7,485 people entered Melilla and Ceuta irregularly, 2,122 by crossing *la valla* (Amnesty International 2015:27). In this year, 3,305 Syrian refugees formed part of the irregular migrants. Subsequently, in 2015, an asylum office was instituted at one of the border crossing points of Melilla. From then on, Syrians who passed through the checkpoints could directly claim asylum. Yet the asylum office is not accessible for migrants of sub-Saharan descent: Firstly, it is located at the Spanish border post, and the Moroccan police do not let those migrants past, so they cannot reach the office; secondly, Spain does not accept them as refugees. Fernández Díaz, Spain's Minister of the Interior at that time, declared that sub-Saharan migrants in general "do not have the right to claim asylum" in Spain (Público 17/03/2015).

According to the assessment of 16 Spanish law professors, the pushbacks and the general denial of asylum violate all international human rights declarations Spain has signed, such as the Geneva Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights. The professors state that these actions also violate the Spanish Constitution, the *Ley de Extranjería*, and the Spanish asylum and criminal law. The denial deprives migrants of the right to seek asylum regardless of provenience, of medical assistance, and of an interpreter and legal assistance before any

further action may be taken against them (Martínez Escamilla et al. 2014: 2-5).

Nevertheless, Spain amended its *Ley de Extranjería* by enacting the *Ley de Seguridad Ciudadana* in 2015. The new law provides that the "*extranjeros que sean detectados en la línea fronteriza de la demarcación territorial de Ceuta o Melilla mientras intentan superar los elementos de contención fronterizos para cruzar irregularmente la frontera podrán ser rechazados a fin de impedir su entrada ilegal en España*".(4) The law also states that the expulsion will be executed respecting all international norms regarding human rights and international protection. But in fact, the law enables the border police to directly expel every person that enters Ceuta or Melilla irregularly and is caught by the police before registering at the CETI or applying for asylum (ibid.). Thus, the law aims to officially legitimate the direct sending back of irregular immigrants by the Spanish police without the usual administrative regulations of identification, first aid, or the possibility of claiming asylum.

A local representative of the Spanish government in Melilla interpreted the law even further and declared that any person that enters Spain irregularly is not considered to have set foot on Spanish territory. Thereby, this person cannot count on Spanish and European legislation, and may be expelled directly (Huffington Post 04/11/2014). This interpretation, however, would lead to a completely new understanding of territory and borders.

Conclusion

Reconsidering the historical development of Melilla's border as well as of the Spanish, Moroccan, and EU border regimes, the entanglement of national and international policies becomes very clear; and so does the border and asylum policies' problematic nature regarding their (non-)compliance with human rights standards. In a way, Spain is trapped between European treaties and agreements and its own national security requests. However, in order to prevent the costs arising from irregular immigration, the government is not afraid to use means that do not comply with its own and European normative standards. Public denials of the right of asylum for certain groups of people are not only illegal and racist but also leave *bozas* and other irregular ways of immigration as the only way to access Europe.

Spain's legalization of direct pushbacks led to a brief worried reaction by the European Union; nevertheless, the procedure has become official practice over the years, without further consequences.

Looking at the history of Melilla, however, we see that the city has not always been surrounded by a high-security border fence. Even in times of war, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the boundary between Spanish and Moroccan territory used to be visualized merely by landmarks. So, what about imagining Melilla today without a border fence? Is this still possible? Or are the highly secured borders already incorporated into our minds? Political borders define national sovereignty and epitomize the meeting points of spatially defined power structures. Among others criteria, the borderline determines political systems and belonging, often linked to identification with certain values. It decides rights and duties, and allows or denies access. These aspects are not new, and existed in Melilla before *la valla* was built. Nevertheless, Greece, Hungary and other countries are following the example and are building fences as if they were a reassurance of power and politics regarding both the inside and the outside. ■

Notes

(1) As happened in 2010 when Moroccan NGOs blocked the border crossing points, which resulted in food shortage, a standstill at many construction sites, and no service in several households in Melilla.

(2) See different legal regulations by the Spanish government: BOE-A-1992-8976; BOE-A-1996-12097; BOE-A-1997-13173; BOE-A-1997-13737; BOE-A-1997-13738; BOE-A-2012-6365; BOE-A-2013-3140.

(3) According to the Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC) almost 60 of Morocco's imports come from European countries, while 63% of Morocco's exports are sold to European states. . Online: http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/mar/show/all/2015/ and http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/import/mar/show/all/2015/ (Last visited: 16/05/2017).

(4) Translation by the author: "foreigners that are detected at the border line of the territorial demarcation of Ceuta or Melilla trying to overcome the border barriers in order to illegally cross the border can be rejected in order to prevent their illegal immigration to Spain". (BOE-A-2015-3442).

9. Migration on the Borders of Europe: The case of Melilla

by Francesco Bruno Bondanini

I arrived in Melilla on 11 July 2010, the same night that Spain won the World Cup. I came to do my PhD research and to further my academic career. Something similar happened to Ben(1), one of my research participants. He is my age and from Cameroon, and came to find work and achieve a bright future. I arrived at the town on the fast ferry from Malaga. He got in hidden in the back of a car after a long journey through Africa. Similarly to Ben, I had been living in Melilla for many years; but unlike him, I could freely decide when to enter and leave. When Ben got to Melilla, he applied for asylum. To leave and continue his journey, he had to wait for the Spanish government to decide, if he was going to be released to the Spanish mainland or expelled back to his home country. The Spanish government took several years to decide, and finally rejected his application for asylum.

As I will show in this contribution, being an asylum seeker or irregular migrant in Melilla means being stuck in transit and relegated to the margins of society, often over an extended period of time. We may thus refer to Melilla as a 'limboscape', which Ferrer-Gallardo and Albet-Mas describe as the 'transitional space where (some) migrants must face the uncertain process of waiting on the EU law' (Ferrer-Gallardo and Albet-Mas 2013: 4). In the following, I will present the perspectives of migrants living in the *Centro de Estancia Temporal de Inmigrantes* (CETI) of Melilla. The CETI is a camp for the 'temporary' stay of (im)migrants which was built at the end of the 1990s and is situated at the outskirts of city. I will describe the context within which the migrants live: Melilla, the border, and the CETI, and illustrate migrants' views by drawing on ethnographic interviews and artistic workshops conducted between 2010 and 2012.

Melilla

Melilla is a complex space, with many paradoxes. It is a small city that occupies twelve square kilometres, with a population of 86,000 inhabitants.(2) It is a Spanish exclave, geographically situated in Northern Africa, with one side bordering the Mediterranean Sea, the other Morocco. The city is surrounded by a huge fence enclosing it like a fortress. Since the fifteenth century, it has represented a crucial point of a frontier in the Mediterranean that supposedly separates two worlds: Christianity and Islam; Europe and Africa (see also Mateo-Dieste 2006: 148).

This peculiar space is not only widely perceived as a doorway to Europe, it is also branded *la ciudad de las cuatras culturas* ('The City of Four Cultures') by the government of Melilla, and is officially praised as a place of cultural and religious coexistence. At the same time, cultural symbols and religious differences mark social disparities that are palpable in the city's various neighbourhoods (see also Friedrichs in this volume). Melilla is a museum of heroism and *españolidad* (Spanish-ness), as reflected in the classicist architecture of the city centre, as well as in street names and public monuments, some of which commemorate the period of dictatorship (see also Sáez-Arance in this volume).

The varied relations with nearby Morocco influence everyday life in the city: Every morning 25,000 to 30,000 *transfronterizos* (border-crossers) – people who work in Melilla but live in neighbouring Moroccan towns – cross the border to reach their workplaces (APDHA 2014: 35). At the same time, hundreds of *porteadoras* (couriers) transport goods across the check-point of Barrio Chino as part of the so-called *comercio atípico* (cross-border trade, see also Soto-Bermant in this volume). Furthermore, Melilla – like Ceuta – has become internationally known as a 'key hub of irregular sub-Saharan migration toward the European continent' (Ferrer-Gallardo and Albet-Mas 2013: 1). At any one time,

there are at least some 500 migrants and asylum seekers hosted in the CETI of Melilla; most of them coming from sub-Saharan African countries, Algeria, and Syria. While they cross the border in a variety of ways, Melilla has become infamous because of migrants' unfaltering and concerted attempts to jumping over the fence (*bozas*).(3) However, the recurrent 'migrant crisis' in Melilla is much more conspicuous in international than in local media. In Melilla's public spaces and in local perception, migrants are largely invisible.

The border

Almost 20 kilometres separate Nador from Melilla, and one hundred metres of 'no man's land' separate Morocco from Spain at the checkpoint of Beni Ensar. These one hundred metres prepare people to become different types of migrants when crossing the border: There are those with an EU visa or passport who are free to enter and leave; the *transfronterizos* who cross with a special pass; and people who come as irregular migrants and often end up spending months or years in the CETI.

The entitlement to cross the border is highly selective: Open to goods and certain kinds of people, but closed to others. Moreover, the border selects the mobility of people: Irregular migrants have to jump, swim, hide, or pay money to get in. The border's ongoing securitization – enhanced with border police, a helicopter, a quadruple fence, and a moat on the Moroccan side – makes the city appear like

a fortress (see also Steinberger in this volume). Migrants staying on the nearby Mount Gurugú on the Moroccan side study the ways to cross the border and reach the dreamed-of goal, Europe.

The ways to get into Melilla are manifold: Migrants enter by swimming, by inflatable boat, hidden in cars or trucks, with false Moroccan identity papers, jumping over the fence, or crawling through water pipes. Many people from Northern Africa and Syria entered through border checkpoints with false documents. Their situation changed when by the end of 2014 an asylum office was opened at the checkpoint of Beni Ensar, allowing Syrian refugees to apply for asylum in Melilla, while this option has been denied to other migrants. Men often live on Mount Gurugú and try to cross the border via the sea or by jumping the fence. Their female counterparts tend to wait in the nearby city of Nador and generally reach Melilla hidden in cars, for which they have to pay large amounts of money.

Migrants' narratives: The journey as an 'adventure'

Where there is a border, there is also border crossing – regular or irregular (Khosravi 2010: 4). During my fieldwork in Melilla, I had the chance to conduct workshops and interviews with migrants and asylum seekers in the CETI, using audiovisual and artistic media. These tools nourished the creativity of research participants, helped to build trust, and to link up with migrants' experiences. I organized participatory workshops aimed at the joint produc-

Figure 9.1: View on Melilla from Mount Gurugú. Melilla 2017. Photograph by Jesús Blasco de Avellaneda.

The decision to leave

Death in the desert

Haggling the price of the boat. Reaching the beach to head off to Europe

Figure 9.2: Video production 'The Journey' by migrants in the CETI. Melilla 2011. Photographs by Francesco Bondanini.

tion of amateur films, a photo exhibition, and a theatre play. After a few introductory classes, I asked the participants to write and film a story. Some of them described telling moments of their journey, starting with the decision to leave, the witnessing of death in the desert, and the joy of arrival.

The journey is often at the core of migrants' narratives, and they speak about it in terms of an 'adventure'. Their stories are different from one another; sometimes similar with regard to the places they pass through, but diverse in the ways in which they do it, and the difficulties they encounter on the route.

The subjects of the films were chosen by the filmmaker-migrants themselves and were developed in groups, following the guidelines provided during the workshop. Later, the authors explained their motives for talking about the journey: They wanted to explain in an autobiographical way the dangers they were willing to endure in order to reach Europe. Another part of the film showed the preparations for the journey: How they haggled with the boat sellers, then headed to the beach, while dodging the Moroccan police who guard the border. And, finally, how they got into the boat to cross the

Moroccan sea.

The journey, or the 'adventure', as the migrants generally call it, is often told with heroism and exaltation. ChuckB, a young man from Guinea, explained:

We are doing this film because many African people are so tired. We pass through Morocco and the mountain called Gurugú; we suffer; [it] is a very bad place. [To reach Europe] we buy a boat and try to put it in the water and cross. This is the reason for the film: To show to the Spanish people, to the Europeans, and to the world, how the black people can spend [risk] their life to enter Europe. Because in our country we are suffering and that is why
everybody here is trying to get into Spain and to get to Europe. (ChuckB, November 2010).

In another part of the interview he highlighted the importance of video and performance to reveal the dangers of the migration journey:

In this film we are showing, to you, an example of what happens to us during the trip. Because when we are up in the mountain [Gurugú], nobody can see us. And

if someone can find us, they take us to prison. That's why when we enter [Melilla], we have to show you an example of the reality we live [experience]. (ChuckB, November 2010)

The notion of the migrant as 'adventurer' is particularly important in order to understand the transformation process that migrants go through when they reach Melilla and are put up in the CETI for an extended period of time. Michael, a migrant from Cameroon, describes 'the adventurer' as follows:

An adventurer is somebody who is just going, doesn't even know where he is going to. Yes, [as] an adventurer you are just going, you can go everywhere. Like now, if I am lucky and I have got my paper, I just leave Melilla tomorrow, I go to Spain. [If] I see that it is not good, I leave
Spain, I go to another country and I leave again, I am just going. Yes, that is an adventurer. (Michael, November 2010)

I met Michael a few times during my fieldwork. After a year, when I went back to Melilla, he was still there, washing cars and waiting for his turn to leave the city. We chatted about his migration journey, how he got here, and also about the future:

Francesco: You were in Libya and then you said, let me go to Melilla. How did it work?
Michael: Let me go to Spain, but I didn't know it was like this. I didn't know it because I've never come here,
I never have been here before.
Francesco: You thought this [Melilla] was near to the rest of Spain?
Michael: The time I came, I waited on top of the Gurugú, where they showed us, to all of the people [there], 'that is

Spain'. So I was thinking that when I will enter here, I thought, it's Spain, it's finished. I didn't know that when I will enter here, it [will start] another problem, because I have never been here before [...]. When I arrived here, I was very happy, even if I had no money to call my people. I had to wait for some time, about one or two months to call to say that I am now in Europe, I said I am in Europe, I am in Spain [...]. I was happy [...], but after a long time it's very difficult. (Michael, November 2010)

Michael's words were often repeated by other migrants I interviewed. They reached Melilla as 'adventurers' with the idea of leaving soon and moving to other countries. But after a while in the city, they started to feel trapped: Their mobility has been blocked and their 'adventure' stalled.

Similarly to the above video workshop, I coordinated a theatre play developed by a group of ten migrant-actors living in the CETI. The play was called 'My Adventure' and was divided into three parts, which depicted different phases of the migration endeavour: daily life in the country of origin and reasons to leave; the trip and its dangers; the migrants' arrival and stay in Melilla. 'My Adventure' was a dramatic piece, told with ironic overtones. Most provocative was the third act, which depicted migrants' lives in the CETI. After having overcome the dangers of the journey across the desert and the sea (performed in the second act), the 'adventurers' find themselves in the camp, trapped in a state of immobility and disorientation. We see the migrant-actors walking senselessly up and down the stage, seemingly caged, without finding the exit. The CETI has detained and transformed them.

When the migrant reaches the CETI, he/she becomes something else. Positive values associated with the 'adventure', such as heroism and persistence, are

Self-introduction of migrant-actors.

Walking the CETI.

Figure 9.3: Theatre production 'My Adventure' by migrants in the CETI. University of Granada. Melilla 2011. Photographs by Francesco Bondanini.

Figure 9.4: Entrance to the *Centro de Estancia Temporal de Inmigrantes of Melilla.*
Photograph by Francesco Bondanini.

erased. In the CETI, migrants are arguing, fighting among themselves, and passing their time playing cards. Their status and character have changed: The adventurer who cannot move is no longer adventurous.

The CETI

The *Centro de Estancia Temporal de Inmigrantes* of Melilla became famous in October 2014 with the publishing of a photograph taken by José Palazón, which shows the golf course next to the CETI, while in the background eleven migrants are sitting on top of the border fence, watching the golf players. (4) This picture came to represent the stark contrast and social disparities between those entitled to enjoy Europe's affluence, and those restricted to being onlookers. Indeed, the picture tells us a lot about global inequalities and the attitude of contemporary European politicians towards migrants and refugees trying to reach Europe (see also Steinberger in this volume). Furthermore, besides entertaining affluent tourists and residents of Melilla, the golf course serves to enhance the monitoring of the border zone, as it lies between the fence and the CETI.

The CETI of Melilla was initiated in 1999, with the capacity to host 480 residents.(5) As described on the website of the Ministry of Employment and Social Security of the Spanish government, the two CETIs of Ceuta and Melilla were established by the public administration as devices for the provisional acceptance of immigrants and asylum seekers. They are aimed at providing basic social and medical services and facilitating identification procedures, while the Spanish authorities are deciding on the residents' administrative status and further proce-

dures.(6)

The camp is composed of a section with dormitories where men, women, and families are hosted, as well as a refectory and facilities for medical, psychological, and legal consultation. In addition, there are classrooms where Spanish language courses, legal training, and cultural activities are offered, as well as a playing field. The camp is delimited by railings, admission is restricted to residents and workers, and the residents' exit and entry is overseen.

Over the years, the composition and size of the camp's population have fluctuated significantly. Initially, the camp was devised for roughly 500 residents, mostly migrants from Algeria and sub-Saharan African countries. In 2010, when I first visited the camp, the population was composed of three major groups: Asians, Northern Africans, and Sub-Saharan Africans. At the end of the same year, almost 200 people from Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan left the CETI and were moved to the Spanish mainland; some had spent five years in the camp. In 2011 and 2012 the majority of the residents were from Algeria, Nigeria, and Cameroon. In 2013/14, the profile of the population changed again, when refugees from Syria started to reach Melilla and were hosted in the camp. Soon the CETI became seriously overcrowded, with some refugee families pitching improvised makeshift tents in front of the camp. By March 2014, the CETI's population had reached more than 1,900 residents; three times as many residents as it was originally designed for (APDHA 2014: 24). In total, almost 5,000 people entered Melilla in 2014, the majority from Syria and sub-Saharan African countries, as well as a good number from Algeria (Lara 2015: 31). Eventually, due to international pressure, Syrian refugees were

provided an easier and quicker way to reach the Spanish mainland than other migrants in the camp. When in 2016 the Balkan route was blocked and Syrian refugees had to find other ways to reach Europe, the CETI returned to its original population of 500 residents.

Migrants' perspectives:
Waiting for the moment to leave

Most migrants in the CETI spend their time waiting, longing for the moment to leave, either released to the Spanish mainland (most often as irregular migrants) or expelled back to their home country. To kill time, they play cards or football or participate in voluntary activities, such as the artistic workshops that resulted in the above film and theatre play. Only a few migrants regularly exit the CETI to visit the city or spend time in public spaces. A handful go to the city centre to look for occasional work, such as monitoring parking lots or cleaning cars. However, these opportunities are scarce, and many feel uncomfortable outside of the CETI, or simply wait for their turn to continue their journey.

For most migrants, the CETI represents a sort of open detention centre where they may spend years before knowing what will happen to them. In the camp, their journey is interrupted, and they lose their freedom and the quality of being 'adventurous'. They are given food and a place to sleep, and their daily schedules are assigned. They know the date when they entered the camp, but the date of their departure is undefined. They find themselves in a prolonged, seemingly permanent state of transit.

In interviews, I often wondered how migrants cope with life in the CETI. ChuckB, like other interviewees, interpreted the long stay in the camp as unfair and compared it to staying in jail:

I understand, but sometimes is not good, because man is not supposed to live in a prison. To stay here one year, two years, is like you are stopping his life. (ChuckB, November 2010)

Ben explained that he tries to cope with the situation, although sometimes it is hard to do so. He reflected on his last year in Melilla as follows:

Ben: I made enough friends since I arrived here. I sympa-thize with many people of many nationalities, and in the

CETI I have many friends. I try to get along with many people because it's the best way not to become crazy. But for me occasionally it becomes difficult. Well, during the first year I've done what I could. I participated in Spanish language courses, I have also participated in the Semana Santa, I learned to dance Sevillanas [...] I also did painting courses and have done farming training. Well, in my ind, I thought that after all that, I could easily leave, but I see that nothing changes, it's always the same situation. And it gets worse, I try to be strong but the situation intends to affect me [...] The problem is that I am blocked here, I can't go further or back. And it hurts.
Francesco: Do you think you will be staying here much longer?
Ben: I don't know. (Ben, March 2011)

Ben's situation – like that of many others – was characterized by a lack of information: Nobody informs them when they will leave the city. It seems that their irregular status does not give them the right to know. Being an irregular migrant in contemporary Europe comes close to the condition that Stonequist noted as characteristic of the 'marginal man': 'The individual who through migration [...] leaves one social group or culture without making a satisfactory adjustment to another finds himself on the margin of each but a member of neither. He is a marginal man' (Stonequist 1937: 2). Green, talking about the 'marginal man', stated that 'while all of us experience periods of transition and conflict, the period of crises for the marginal man tends to become permanent' (Green 1947: 167). Similarly, migrants in Melilla live at the margins of society. They are permitted to live, but without taking part in the city's social life and without having control over their future. Their present is characterized by uncertainty and frustration; they are kept in limbo, not knowing when and how their stay in the city will come to an end – a situation many find hard to endure.

As a result, migrants' narratives were characterized by anxiety and a preoccupation with rumours about their imminent release to mainland Spain or their deportation to their home country, inspiring both fear and illusion. The possibility of being deported was ever present in migrants' minds and raised countless questions and doubts: Could being from one nation or another enhance their chances to be sent to mainland Spain? Could being married, having children, collaborating with the police, or

being an asylum seeker be crucial for being able to leave the camp? Was the consul informed about their situation, and could his visit change their fate? I put the following question to Michael, who at the time of the interview had spent two years in the camp:

Francesco: Imagine if they deport you, what will you do in that case?
Michael: Deportation, oh my God, it will be bad, it will be very bad for me if they can deport me back to my country. But I don't think I will stay in that country. [...] I think I will be there for just one week and leave again. I will leave again, because it's not a country in which one would want to live. There are some people who have somebody who can help them in many aspects of life. But people
like us: nobody, we have nobody. Oh my God, we are finished. (Michael, August 2012)

Comparing his own situation to mine, Michael emphasized his condition of being an irregular (in his own words, 'clandestine') migrant:

Michael: We currently have no other choice. A clandestine person does not have a choice, like me. For example, you, you are an adventurer; you are moving from place to place in search of something, for a purpose, but we are not
the same as you. We are clandestine, illegal immigrants; we also move from place to place, but we do not know what comes after. (Michael, August 2012)

Despite all the dangers, uncertainty, and discontent that Michael had to endure, he envisioned his journey as having a happy ending: *'I see myself with a bright future and in a place [where] I will feel very happy'.*

Concluding reflections

As I have underlined, the situation of migrants in Melilla is characterized by uncertainty and marginalization, which shape their day-to-day lives and self-understanding in multiple ways. While in the CETI, migrants are in a 'limboscape' (Ferrer-Gallardo & Albet-Mas 2013: 4), forced to wait for the Spanish government and EU law to decide on their future. My fieldwork has shown that their 'temporary' stay may last for several years, and may turn into a prolonged, seemingly permanent state. I have thus come to think of irregular migrants and asylum seekers in Melilla as 'non-persons' stuck in a transit situation' (Bondanini 2014). Let me explain what I mean: Starting with the last, the term 'transit' was repeatedly mentioned by my interview partners. For migrants in the CETI, their journey has not yet come to an end, they are simply waiting to resume their 'adventure' and continue in whichever direction. The term 'stuck' refers to the migrants' frustration with being deprived of the freedom to move on and take control of their future. Finally, the term 'non-persons' here has two meanings: On the one hand, it refers to the migrants' lack of information and the restriction of their personal growth and economic capacities as 'adventurers'. As repeatedly pointed out by migrants in the CETI, 'eating and sleeping is not living'. On the other hand, the term 'non-persons' refers to Stonequists' (1937) concept of the 'marginal man'. Similar ideas have been shared by Dal Lago (2004) describing the dehumanization of migrants; by Khosravi (2010) when writing about 'illegal travellers' in terms of 'depoliticized bodies'; and by Agamben (1995) regarding his notion of *nuda vita* as naked life devoid of sovereignty.

In this sense, migrants in Melilla are 'temporarily' disenfranchised: they have little or no chance to participate in the public sphere, and are relegated to the city's margins – geographically, socially, and virtually. At the same time, however, they are part and parcel of Melilla's contemporary history and the city's residents. ■

Notes

(1) All names are pseudonyms.

(2) See the statistics about 'Población por comunidades y ciudades autónomas y sexo' on the website of the National Statistics Institute (INE). Online: http://www.ine.es/. (Last visited 24/03/2017).

(3) According to the yearly report of the *Asociación Pro-Derechos Humanos de Andalucía* (APDHA), jumping over the fence accounted for roughly 42% of all entries into Melilla in 2014 (Lara 2015: 32). The same year, 2,102 people jumped over the fence, as compared to a total of 1,182 jumps over the previous ten years. This exceptionally high number was due to two incidents, each of which involved 500 people organizing themselves to collectively storm and jump over the fence. Eleven people lost their lives in these attempts, while a total of 44 people died during the previous ten years (García Casanova 2015: 50).

(4) Ironically, the golf course (built in 2008) was supported with more than €1.1 million by the European Regional Development

Fund to 'strengthen economic and social cohesion' in the EU (The Guardian, 23/10/2014).

(5) For a description of the migration situation prior to the establishment of the CETI, see the documentary 'El inicio de la inmigración en Melilla' ('The beginning of the immigration to Melilla'), which appeared on the local Spanish television programme 'El Retrovisor' (21/03/2012). Online: http://inmusa.es/video.php?v=38946988, (Last visited: 30/10/2016).

(6) Gobierno de Espana n.d. Guía Laboral - Actuaciones dirigidas a inmigrantes, solicitantes y beneficiarios de protección internacional, apatridia y protección temporal. 37.3. Centros de Estancia Temporal de Inmigrantes (CETI). Online: http://www.empleo.gob.es/es/Guia/texto/guia_15/contenidos/guia_15_37_3.htm. (Last visited: 30/10/2016).

10. Concluding remarks: Melilla – a small place with large issues

by Michaela Pelican

The extent to which globalizing processes affect local life-worlds should also not be exaggerated. It may sometimes appear more comprehensive than it actually is. (Eriksen 2015: 376)

Truly, Melilla is an excellent example of what Eriksen (1995) has termed "small places, large issues". As a mid-sized town with 85,000 inhabitants and an area of 12.3 km², situated on the North African shore of the Mediterranean Sea, Melilla is a rather small and geographically somewhat remote place. In political and social terms, however, it is a place where a number of large issues converge and which has served as a testing ground for policy interventions. As illustrated by the contributions to this volume, Melilla is – and for long has been – at the heart of contentious debates on identity, coexistence, inclusion, and exclusion at various scales. These centre around pivotal questions of national identity, ethnicity, religion, and migration: What does it mean to be *Melillense*, to be Spanish, to be European? How can one relate to religious, ethnic or political 'others'? How to deal with cultural complexity and social inequality? How should international borders be managed?

In concluding this special issue, I wish to consider possible ways of how to conceptualize the Melilla case in relation to academic debates on ethnicity and diversity.

Ethnicity as a political resource

In my reading, Melilla is an ideal place to study both the historical dimensions and the contemporary realities of identity politics. Adopting a classical anthropological approach, I understand ethnicity as a collective identity that is essentially relational and processual. Moreover, I see ethnic and cultural identity as a resource that can be used to frame political demands and to include/exclude individuals and groups from access to resources (see

also Pelican 2015, University of Cologne Forum "Ethnicity as a Political Resource" 2015). Frederik Barth is often seen as the leading figure of modern theories of ethnicity. In a frequently cited piece, he (1969) suggests to focus on group boundaries as the primary locus of defining ethnic identities and difference. Furthermore, he interprets ethnicity as a specific form of social identity, constructed under particular historical and political circumstances.

In Melilla, identity discourses take various shapes: Being located at the historical frontier between the Spanish Empire and the Sultanate of Fez, and at the contemporary border between Spain and Morocco, life in the city has been characterized by cultural complexity and ethnic encounters. Often these have been framed as encounters between distinct religious-ethnic groups, between Christian Spaniards and Muslim Imazighen (Rif-Berbers). This framing has a long history, dating back to the medieval period, and has continuously been endorsed by political actors, both on a local and national scale (Friedrichs, Sáez-Arance in this volume). However, ethnic identities are more complex than the official discourse suggests. As Boukllouâ (in this volume) has shown, identifications can change situationally; for example, when *Nadori* and Spanish migrant workers in Germany congregate on the basis of being familiar with Melilla and of communicating in Spanish. Similarly, transnational mobilities and family relations across the Spanish-Moroccan border have engendered cross-cutting ties as well as multiple and hybrid identifications (Friedrichs, Soto-Bermant in this volume).

While there is room to accommodate Spanish-Moroccan ties and identities, the situation is different for refugee-migrants in the *Centro de Estancia Temporal de Inmigrantes* (CETI). Relegated to the city's margins and restricted to a temporary stay, they are virtually excluded from Melilla's social life and from recognition as *Melillense* (Bondanini in this volume).

Barth's interactionalist approach has been taken further by Brubaker (2004) who, in a radically constructionist perspective, outlines the pitfalls of 'groupism'; that is, the tendency to treat ethnic groups as substantial entities to which interests and agency can be attributed. Furthermore, he draws attention to the role of ethnic entrepreneurs, including organizations and individuals, in the politicization of ethnicity and related identities.

The main drivers of identity politics in Melilla are political actors and institutions at the local, national, and international level. These include the city government that promotes a multiculturalist vision, the Spanish conservative People's Party with its anti-immigrant rhetoric, as well as EU bodies in charge of border policies (Sáez-Arance, Steinberger in this volume). Besides framing the city's population in terms of distinct religious-ethnic categories, these institutions seek to endorse Melilla's disputed Spanish-ness and to confine the fringes of European sovereign territory. In addition, there are alternative actors whose visions for Melilla differ from the political mainstream, like critical journalists and artists as well as civil society and human rights organizations. As they often depend on public funding, their capacities to influence public discourse are limited. Yet with their activities, they try to give voice to the city's more marginal groups, including women and children in neglected neighbourhoods, refugee-migrants and unaccompanied minors, as well as to enhance their capacities to claim belonging to Melilla (Bondanini et al. in this volume).

Diversity and ethnic coexistence

The second scholarly theme I wish to discuss in relation to Melilla is diversity and its management. As explained by Faist (2015), diversity may mean a variety of things, including a demographic description, an ideology, a set of policies, or a political theory of modern society. What they have in common is a normative goal, namely to overcome social inequalities based on cultural markers with the help of public policies. Faist uses the term 'heterogeneities' to denote cultural and social markers, such as ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender and class. Furthermore, he draws attention to the ways heterogeneities and inequalities are related, and emphasizes the need to consider both dimensions and their interconnections in studying and managing diversity. This also applies to the case of Melilla whose population is diverse not only in terms of cultural heterogeneity but also, and significantly, in terms of social inequality.

The popular portrayal of Melilla as 'The City of Four Cultures' reflects the local government's multiculturalist approach. While the slogan selects and emphasizes some of the city's cultural heterogeneities, it ignores the concurrent social inequalities. At the same time, Melilla's government has promoted selected measures of cultural recognition and economic redistribution; for instance, some of the activities of *Kahina*, that were sponsored by the *Centro de las Culturas de Melilla*. Conversely, only limited provision is made to enable marginal groups to participate in political decision-making, which, besides recognition and redistribution, is a third and crucial dimension of producing equalities (see also Faist 2015).

Another notion often invoked to describe ethnic coexistence in Melilla is the Spanish term *convivencia*. While today positively connoted as an expression for living together in harmony and peace, the notion's intellectual history involved phases of colonialist expansion and violent conquest (Pelican et al. in this volume). The equivalent academic concept is conviviality, which delineates minimal sociality in the context of diversity (Heil 2015). Different from *convivencia*, the analytical term conviviality is devoid of normative connotations. It centers around everyday practices of coexistence that encompass both cooperative and conflictual social situations. Thus, as Heil (2015) notes, conviviality does not only refer to friendly relations, but also to strategies of coping with heterogeneities and inequalities, the outcomes of which remain uncertain. Moreover, the limits of conviviality and its capacity to embrace social inequalities is an empirical question, and may vary by context.

Several contributors to this volume (Boukllouâ, Friedrichs, Soto-Bermant) have argued that everyday life in Melilla and the border area with Nador has been characterized by an unobtrusive and pragmatic approach to coexistence, which centres on relations of economic and social exchange. The photographic portrait of the Central Market of Melilla and its *personas silenciosas* (gentle people) provides a beautifully illustrated account of current practices of conviviality in Melilla (Mesaud Barreras and Steinberger in this volume). At the same time,

living together also entails ambivalent feelings and conflictuous situations. Some may trigger aggressive reactions, such as school children who, frustrated with the city's inadequate public transport system, repeatedly threw stones at the bus running the line to the suburbs (Friedrichs 2017). Other situations may be met with avoidance or indifference, thus pointing to the uncertainty and fragility of conviviality when coupled with social inequalities.

Melilla – a fractured city?

In concluding, I will reflect on my fleeting experience of Melilla as a fractured city – a town composed of rather distinct and seemingly unrelated spaces; an impression that resonates with the city's portrayals by the authors in this volume.

While Melilla's residents may imagine their city as a coherent social and cultural space, it comprises architecturally and socially distinct spaces that appeal to different audiences. To tourists, Melilla appears in the costume of a spectacular modernist architecture, concentrated in the city center (figure 4.6). Visitors may easily overlook the CETI, the border fence, and the long queues at the border check points, which are dramatic sights in their own ways, located at the city's fringes (figures 2.1-2.2, 8.1-8.3, 9.1). They mostly appeal to an external, politically driven audience, while receiving little coverage in the local media. The peripheral neighbourhoods, such as Barrio El Rastro (figures 4.1-4.5), stand out by their Moroccan style architecture and are hardly known by people other than their residents.

Through community activities, such as media projects, neighbourhood walks, and bike tours, organizations like *Kahina* and others try to integrate these separate urban spaces, and to build 'communities of place'. The long-term effects of their attempts to engender mutual understanding and positive engagement deserve to be studied further. They depend on the interplay of various factors, including structural inequalities, histories and characteristics of local and migrant populations, as well as the local politics of place (see also Phillips 2015).

Each in its own way, the contributions to this volume have provided convincing analyses of the complex layers of identity politics, of everyday practices of ethnic coexistence, and of the socially and spatially fractured character of Melilla. I believe,

however, there is still more to be learnt about the ways in which these seemingly separate discourses and spaces intersect and reinforce each other. We may enquire in more detail, how the presence of refugee-migrants in the CETI informs processes of internal differentiation and exclusion within the *Melliense* category. Finally, we may wonder: How would identity politics change in the future, if Melilla was no longer at the margins of Europe? ∎

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Documentaries and Exhibitions

Security with traffic (influx control). Artist: Jane Alexander, curator: Pep Subirós. Part of the exhibition „*Apartheid: El mirall sud-africà*" (Apartheid: The South-African mirror), exhibited in the Centro de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona 26/09/2007 - 3/02/2008.

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The Land Between. 2014, 98 min. Director: David Fedele.

Those who jump/Les sauteurs. 2016, 82 min. Directors: Moritz Siebert, Estephan Wagner and Abou Bakar Sidibé.

Authors

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Palazón, José is a human rights activist and photographer. Originally a teacher for business administration, he started to get involved with unaccompanied minors who came from Morocco to his hometown Melilla. In 1999 he founded the organization PRODEIN in order to defend the rights of minors, but also other migrants and refugees suffering from human rights abuses in Melilla. For his work with PRODEIN, but also for his commitment as observer and chronicler of the border situation in Melilla, he received the human rights award by ProAsyl (2007) and the award Ortega y Gasset for outstanding photojournalism by the newspaper El País (2015).

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