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The role of social media in Maghreb after the Arab springs between migrants and associations: the case of Boukhalef (Tangier, Morocco)

Tiziana Chiappelli - Federico Trentanove

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Special Issue

**Mediterranean Network
Publics and Citizenship.**

Civic engagement, political participation and
cultural practices in the social media landscape
in the Mediterranean area

Stefania Manca - Maria Ranieri
Editors

RiMe 15/1

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Indice

Luciano Gallinari <i>Di Storia e Social Media</i>	5–6
Stefania Manca – Maria Ranieri <i>Editorial</i>	7–9
Afef Hagi <i>La naissance du mouvement antiraciste tunisien: nouvelles pratiques militantes à travers les réseaux sociaux. Une étude qualitative</i>	11-32
Sami Zlitni - Fabien Liénard <i>#TNelec: les élections législatives en micromessages</i>	33-51
Tiziana Chiappelli - Federico Trentanove <i>The role of social media in Maghreb after the Arab springs between migrants and associations: the case of Boukhalef (Tangier, Morocco)</i>	53-79
Maria Ranieri - Francesco Fabbro <i>Primavera Araba a Primavalle. Un'esperienza di educazione ai media e alla cittadinanza nell'era dei social network</i>	81-99
Juan Bautista Martínez Rodríguez - Elisa Hernández Merayo <i>Medios de comunicación y nuevas prácticas ciudadanas de adolescentes y jóvenes</i>	101-116

Zoran Lapov

117-140

Media, Minority, Visibility: Gurbet Roma in a Virtual World

The role of social media in Maghreb after the Arab springs between migrants and associations: the case of Boukhalef (Tangier, Morocco)¹

Tiziana Chiappelli - Federico Trentanove²
(University of Florence)

Riassunto

L'articolo si focalizza su avvenimenti di cui gli autori sono stati spettatori durante il periodo di ricerca svolto in Marocco (quartiere di Boukhalef, periferia di Tangeri, agosto 2014): gli attacchi subiti dai migranti che vivono nel quartiere da parte di cittadini marocchini. Gli autori mostrano in forma narrativa il ruolo che i social media usati da reti transnazionali di migranti e associazioni hanno svolto nella diffusione delle informazioni. Scopo dell'articolo è di dare una ricostruzione dei fatti e di come sono stati raccontati via Twitter, nel quadro della situazione migratoria in Marocco.

Parole chiave

Migrazioni (transnazionali / subsahariane), frontiere (Nord Africa/Europa), Primavera Arabe, social media/Twitter, nazioni-città-quartieri di transito.

Abstract

The article focuses on events of which the authors have been spectators during their research work in Morocco (district of Boukhalef, outskirts of Tangier, August 2014): the attacks suffered by migrants living in the district carried out by Moroccan citizens. The authors show, in a narrative way, the role of social media used by migrant transnational networks and associations in the dissemination of information. The purpose of the article is, to provide an initial reconstruction of the events and the way they have been told via Twitter in the framework of the general migrants situation in Morocco.

Keywords

(Transnational/sub-Saharan) migrations; borders and frontiers (North Africa /Europe); Arab Springs; Social media/Twitter; transit nations/cities, neighborhoods.

¹ This research was conducted as part of the SpringArab project (*SpringArab. Social movements and mobilisation typologies in the Arab spring*, FP7-PEOPLE-2012-IRSES), a MARIE CURIE ACTIONS program in International Research Staff Exchange Scheme (IRSES) of the European Union. This essay reflects the authors' opinions and the Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

² Of this paper, born from a close collaboration between the authors, Tiziana Chiappelli has edited § 1, 4, 5; Federico Trentanove has edited § 2, 4.1, 4.2. Both authors have written paragraph 3, which introduces the key concept of the research.

1. Tangier, August 2014 - 2. Morocco between Arab uprisings and international migration - 3. Boukhalef: a transit neighborhood - 4. The incidents in Boukhalef: a narration through Twitter - 4.1 The narration via Twitter - 4.2 New uprisings - 5. Virtual connections: crossing borders without conquering real space - 6. Bibliography - 7. Curriculum vitae

1. Tangier, August 2014

SpringArab. Social movements and mobilisation typologies in the Arab spring. Our purpose was to lead a theoretical and on-site research concerning the social movements and the new migrations after the Arab uprisings. This on-site research followed a previous work, developed in Tunisia during the two last years, and focused on two primary aspects. On the one hand, the social movements and the role of women In August 2014 we began our work in Morocco with the IRSES project in the democratization processes³. On the other hand, the new routes of international migration which resulted from the changed situation in North-African countries, especially in relation to the great social and political instability in Libya and the hardening of European borders (see below, notes 5, 6 and 7). Besides these two primary aspects, we also take into consideration the thousands of people moving towards Western countries for various reasons, people who left Africa and the Middle East months –sometimes even years – before, and slowly moved toward the Mediterranean because of wars, terrorism and poverty in their countries of origin. Europe seems to be not at all – or very little – aware⁴ of this well-known and documented situation, at least in political and social terms. Thus, thanks to *SpringArab* project, we had the opportunity to spend part of our research stay in the Northern part of Morocco, close to the Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla⁵. Our goal was to prove directly

³ The results of this first part of the research have been partially reported in T. Chiappelli “Amina, Il ruolo delle Femen in Tunisia e il corpo nudo delle donne”. A further article, that develop a discourse analysis of Boukhalef facts as reported by social media and commented in on line forums, is forthcoming. The article includes further developments occurred in Boukhalef and Tangier during the following year grace the observation of the outskirt developed during an additional research stay in Summer 2015.

⁴ The topic is a burning issue and has a prominent role both in everyday news sections and in the political debate. After repeated sinking of boats in waters near Lampedusa, on April 19, 2015 the death of about 900 people has turned the topic of the reception – or not – of migrants into a key point of the Italian and European Agenda. Unfortunately, the problem is still unsolved. For an interesting discussion on the concept of frontiers and the new global scenario, see F. I. Engin, *Citizens Without Frontiers*.

⁵ For more information about Ceuta and Melilla regarding migration issues, see for example CCDH *Rapport sur l'établissement des faits relatifs aux événements de l'immigration illegale. Événements*

if and how the composition of the groups of people moving toward the Spanish territories was changing. Furthermore, we wanted to understand, by studying many sources – some of which had been acknowledged in literature – the claim that Morocco had changed from just a crossing point into a place of stay for migrants.

The barbed wire barriers erected around the two Spanish *enclaves* in Africa are many kilometers long. The army cruelly monitors them through electrical, acoustic and optical sensors, which are meant to detect the presence of anyone or anything 24 hours a day. The barriers are well known because of the repeated violent events, which happened at the hands of the Moroccan and of the Spanish Army. These episodes took place under the eyes of the European Agency *Frontex*, later *Triton*, which was entrusted the control and the security of the borders of the Schengen countries⁶. It is estimated that at least 4.000 people died while trying to cross the borders or avoiding them by facing the sea. Human rights violations have often been reported, such as the ones communicated by *Doctors without Borders*, which tried to prove the abuses suffered by migrants at the hands of the security forces of both countries⁷. According to the humanitarian agencies, the strong repression of the thousands of Sub-Saharan migrants, who regularly gather by the barriers, has become even stronger over time⁸.

de Ceuta et Melilla durant l'automne 2005 or Amnesty International, *Spain and Morocco: Failure to Protect the Rights of Migrants in Ceuta and Melilla One Year On*.

⁶ Created in 2004 and headquartered in Warsaw, Frontex was still perfectly operating during our research work. It had specific purposes in the borders management: it «promotes, coordinates and develops European border management in line with the EU fundamental rights charter applying the concept of Integrated Border Management». According to its *mission* it is responsible for: «Joint Operations (...) Training (...) Risk Analysis (...) Research (...) Providing a rapid response capability (...). These teams are kept in full readiness in case of a crisis situation at the external border. Assisting Member States in joint return operations (...) Information systems and information sharing environment (...)». See: <<http://frontex.europa.eu/about-frontex/mission-and-tasks/>> (23/11/2015)

⁷ For an overview of the cases, see for example <<http://www.meltingpot.org/Ceuta-e-Melilla-le-porte-serrate-dell-Europa-sull-Africa.html#.VWUIU6ihqInI.>>(23/11/2015) Along with the beatings inflicted to migrants, who are left on the ground without being helped, it is often reported the procedure of taking people to the border to Algeria and leaving them in desert places, even in winter.

⁸ Many websites and independent information agencies, as well as non-profit associations talk about «greater repression against Sub-Saharan migrants» or even about «war against migrants and refugees». See for example: <<http://information.tv5monde.com/info/melillaceuta-repression-accrue-contre-les-migrants-subsahariens-4919>>; <www.migreurop.org/article1252.html>; Human Rights Watch, *Spain: Deportations to Morocco Put Migrants at Risk*, <<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2005/10/12/spain-deportations-morocco-put-migrants-risk>>(23/11/2015) etc.

While they wait to try to cross these barriers or the sea, the migrants often camp in the neighborhood of Tangier, the closest city to Ceuta, which overlooks Spain. They settle in the peripheral areas of the city or to a lesser extent, they hide in the curvy tiny streets of the souk. If the wait for *the right occasion* to cross becomes too long, the migrant settlements become more stable and better acclimated⁹. Women¹⁰, who have children or are pregnant, are encouraged to have greater contact with the local community associations. These organizations are designed to assist women, focusing especially on health and medical assistance, as shown by our research. Therefore, during our on-site research, along with visiting the areas occupied by the migrants, we interviewed members of the “local” community associations. We discovered that they were actually transnational and cross-border associations, characterized by joint headquarters (Morocco and Spain) and a significant participation of volunteers and employees coming from Europe¹¹. It was right during our stay when the events we recall in the present article occurred in Boukhalef.

2. Morocco between Arab uprisings and international migration

After December 18, 2010, following the uprisings that shook the entire area, great attention was given – especially by social scientists – to the Southern part of the Mediterranean Sea, mainly to the area of Maghreb. Social, political and cultural changes were observed, *in* and *among* these nations and there was a growing interest in research and analysis of uncensored data which had not been tempered

⁹ M. Mghari, *L’immigration subsaharienne au Maroc*; M. Mghari - M. Fassi Fihri (Eds.), *Cartographie des flux migratoires des Marocains en Italie*; Migration Policy Centre, Morocco.

¹⁰ Many important report are been published on women situation in Morocco: see for instance: M. Cherti “British stories of Nigerian Cinderellas are no fairy tale”; Open Society Justice Initiative - SOS Racismo Madrid - Women’s Link Worldwide ACODI, *Shedding light on the invisible / Los derechos de las mujeres migrantes: una realidad invisible*(Report); Médicos sin Fronteras – MSF, *Violencia Sexual y Migración*; Defensor del Pueblo, “La trata de seres humanos en España: víctimas invisibles”; G. Fernández Rodríguez de Liévana - P. Soria Montañez *et al.* (eds.). *La trata de mujeres y niñas nigerianas: esclavitud entre fronteras y prejuicios*; K. Kastner, “Nigerian Border Crossers: Women Travelling to Europe by Land”; F. Sarehane - N. Baba - A. Ezzine (Eds.), *Traite transnationale des personnes: État des lieux et analyse des réponses au Maroc*; Women’s Link Worldwide, *Migrant Women in Hiding: Clandestine Abortion in Morocco / Mujeres migrantes en la clandestinidad: El aborto en Marruecos*.

¹¹ The authors are currently investigating this aspect. The existence of joint Moroccan and Spanish/European community groups shows how tight the relationships between the two countries and continents are even in the non-profit field, much beyond every wall or border we want to establish.

with by the dictatorial regimes that had marked for decades the political organizations of the countries (we refer in particular to Tunisia and Libya)¹².

This combination of movements, uprisings and revolts, crying out for a process of democratization of society, infiltrated every aspect of society and spread across countries, almost as if it were a plague, and did not forget Morocco. Anyway, thanks to the democratic changes integrated into the constitution by King Mohammed VI, protests did not give rise to violent civil wars nor to military coups. In fact, after a moment of turbulence and because of the outcomes of the revolts in the neighboring countries, on July 1, 2011, King Mohammed VI proposed a new Constitution. The constitution encouraged a different management of the executive power and transferred a set of jurisdictions to the head of the government. The Moroccan population favorably accepted the reforms of the constitution. They perceived them as the beginning of a longer process of revision of state powers towards an extension of democratic principles. Even though the king would take control over the decision-making process and the head of the government needs his approval, the process of the extension has begun. As a matter of fact, in this way, Morocco managed to limit the wave of internal protests and to reinforce its image of a stable and moderate monarchic country within a continent and a geopolitical area ravaged by tension, war and revolution.

For many years, the geographical position and the history of Morocco have made it a key point for those people trying to improve their economic situation, looking for better living conditions as well as for a more stable socio-political climate¹³. The two Spanish *enclaves* and its proximity to the Spanish coasts have made Morocco an extremely attractive country for migrants¹⁴ coming from all over Sub-Saharan Africa, especially from Central-Western Africa. Moreover,

¹² For a critical debate about the Arab springs we suggest, among many others, the monograph number T. Chiappelli - A. Hagi, "Primavera araba: autunno islamico?" edited by both members of the project *SpringArab* linked to the present paper. For a more complete bibliography, see A. Hagi - G. Campani, *Conflitti sociali e religione nel Mediterraneo*. The volume follows research works within the project *SpringArab*.

¹³ For further information, see the Moroccan migration profile written in June 2013 by the Migration Policy Center, available at: <http://www.migrationpolicycentre.eu/docs/migration_profiles/Morocco.pdf> (23/11/2015).

¹⁴ In our intent to make the paper narrative and not analytical, we will use the general term "migrant" to refer to the interpretive category of *mixed-migrant*. This category considers migrants from a *fuzzy* point of view, underlining the mixed nature of the motivations that pushed them to migrate as well as the uncertain and changeable goals of their migration process. For further information: N. Van Hear, *Policy Primer - Mixed Migration: Policy Challenges*; S. Nanni, "«The land between»: sognando l'Europa tra Spagna e Marocco"; S. Volpicelli (Éd.), *L'attitude des jeunes au Maroc à l'égard de la migration: entre modernité et tradition*; M. Lahlou, *Migrations irrégulières transmédiannées et relations entre Maroc - Union européenne*.

Libya's political instability and the wars in the neighboring countries, along with the changes in the European procedures for the reception of migrants – especially of the asylum seekers – has made this flow of migrants towards the country rise considerably¹⁵. Big Moroccan cities, especially those situated in the key areas along the route, have become migration *hubs*. When not completely entrusted to criminal organizations, migrants face the migration process independently and day by day. From time to time they evaluate the possibilities they meet and face the often unintentional process of approaching Europe through well-defined stages¹⁶. Due to this, the concept of *transit nations* in reference literature has been, if not replaced, at least placed alongside the idea of *transit cities*¹⁷: places which assist the migrants in the process of organizing and re-organizing themselves from time to time. These places become the destination of a kind of migration that is unplanned and unstructured¹⁸ *ab initio*.

3. Boukhalef: a transit neighborhood

The present article¹⁹ uses an even more specific concept that, in our opinion, accounts for greater accuracy if compared to the one of *transit cities*: the concept of *transit neighborhoods*. According to our experience, *transit neighborhoods* are areas within an urban and suburban space that, for some reason (economic, socio-cultural, urban “planning” etc.) have become, more or less temporarily, the settle grounds of migrants, and work as *hubs* of networks, offering permanent or migratory possibilities. If we consider the city of Tangier, one of Morocco's

¹⁵ The Europe-Africa migration phenomenon changes constantly, due to political instability. For this reason, today it is difficult to offer a stable reference point. See, for example, the differences between the article written by Ph. Fargues - Ch. Fandrich, *Migration after the Arab Spring* and the news items of the last years. For a more general overview, see also: P. Pitkänen-A. İçduygu - D. Sert (Eds.), *Migration and Transformation: Multi-Level Analysis of Migrant Transnationalism*.

¹⁶ We still refer to the concept of *mixed-migration* that considers migration as a process organized through stages, which depend on the contingency of the events, the migrant faces and on the chances, he meets. This process makes migrants rewrite the goals and aims of their travel.

¹⁷ G. Marconi, “Transit Cities in Transit Countries: steering the consequences of US and EU closed doors policies”. See also: M. Cherti - P. Grant, *The Myth of Transit, Sub-Saharan Migration in Morocco*.

¹⁸ Through stays or breaks, for example to rest, recover money by working or to re-plan the migration process as well as to mend/create networks.

¹⁹ A further article written by the authors, that develop an in-depth discourse analysis of Boukhalef facts as reported by social media and commented in online forums, is forthcoming. The article includes the reconstruction of further developments that occurred in Boukhalef and Tangier during the following year, thanks to a new observation of the district developed during an additional research stay (Summer 2015).

most important transit cities²⁰, we could observe how the majority of migrants live in the Boukhalef neighborhood or in some parts of the *suk*. Boukhalef is located at the edge of the city. It is far from the hectic life of the city center and situated in an area close to the airport. The *suk*, on the other hand, is located in the heart of the city and is characterized by precarious living conditions, a high density of inhabitants and is hard to control because of its structure (the branches of alleys, internal passages, connections between roofs etc.). These are the two real reference points for migrants coming to Tangier, transit neighborhoods where they spend their life and where social tensions are often to be found.

In particular, Boukhalef is a residential neighborhood. It is still under construction and it resulted from a housing bubble similar to ones experienced in Europe. It developed in a very short time, during a great expansion of the building market. Due to the crisis in the real estate sector it had not found buyers for hundreds of buildings that had been planned for the middle class, and were therefore costly. Since unsold, many flats have been offered to the designers, firms and building crew as payment for their work: houses in return for unpaid salaries. As they were non occupied buildings, often belonging to people who were not residents of the area (many firms come from other cities or regions of the country), a certain procedure was established, which, according to the reports of migrants and some associations²¹, puts the good relationship between migrants and local people to the test. According to the reports of several sources, people and local organizations occupy empty houses by changing locks and renting them to migrants. This operation creates a clear and predictable controversy between migrants and legal owners. The latter claim that their houses have been illegally occupied, while from the point of view of the migrants, although not to the legal owners, they are paying the agreed rent each month and therefore refuse to leave the flats where they live. As a matter of fact, Boukhalef²² is turning into a *black* neighborhood, where Sub-Saharan migrants from several countries and origins settle and create their own world of relationships and small businesses. It is a transit neighborhood which more and more takes on the features of a stable residence, or at least of a stabilized one.

²⁰ Since it is close to the Spanish coasts and the enclave of Ceuta.

²¹ This information has not been confirmed by public authorities nor by official agencies, although the depositions we collected during our research converge.

²² For more details on Boukhalef, see also E. Loreti, "Marocco. Il quartiere non è il massimo...".

4. *The incidents in Boukhalef: a narration through Twitter*

2014 has seen a strengthening of the collaboration between Morocco and Spain, officially set forth on August 27, 2014 during the meeting of the two Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Tétouan²³. They had reinforced an agreement between the two countries on the management of the migratory phenomenon, setting as an objective the realization of six-monthly meetings. During summer 2014, both the migration attempts by sea towards the Spanish coasts and the ones by land towards the two *enclaves* had been dramatically reduced thanks to an accurate control of the Moroccan territory. Such control, as we have mentioned already, has turned out to be extremely aggressive. According to *El Confidencial*, the auxiliary forces used for that purpose, employed severe forms of violence:

(...) the punishment, which include beatings and stones, leaves them [the migrants, AN] bleeding and with fractures in arms and legs, before they are taken by bus to cities like Rabat or Casablanca. From there, they leave for Tangier or Nador for another attempt²⁴.

In this cold and cruel context of border control, we have documented the accounts of a series of events, which are strictly connected to the bloody actions arisen from them. In the week of August 11, 2014, a rumor had been circulating (at different levels and through different tools, such as SMSs, Twitter, posts etc.) about a possible two day-long lack of surveillance of the Moroccan coasts, a factual moment of temporary passage²⁵. Because of this information, which spread quickly among migrants, for two days Tangier had seen a great amount of people flocking to the coast. They left from the beaches of Tangier's city center, using boats and different kinds of makeshift vessels. Here is the true testimony of a female operator working for an association. We interviewed her about the situation:

The week was unbelievable (...), all the massive arrival of people, during that week there were two days without Moroccan surveillance on the strait. So the rumors spread and people were leaving, I saw people in the square, I saw people

²³<http://www.lasexta.com/noticias/sociedad/espana-marruecos-reiteran-colaboracion-inmigracion-ilegal_2014082800167.html>, (23/11/2015);<<http://www.abc.es/espana/20140827/abci-espana-marruecos-interior-201408272006.html>>, (23/11/2015).

²⁴«El castigo, con palos y piedras, les deja sangrando y con fracturas en brazos y piernas antes de ser trasladados en autobuses a ciudades como Rabat y Casablanca, desde donde vuelven a subir a Tánger o a Nador para volver a intentarlo», <http://www.elconfidencial.com/mundo/2014-08-14/una-promocion-de-48-horas-para-llegar-a-las-costas-espanolas-en-balsa_176229/> (23/11/2015).

²⁵*Ibidem*.

with big bags and inflatable dinghies and the pump to inflate (...) with no control and no one saying a thing. (...) So the rumors spread and they came out from lots of places, they left from everywhere (...) to reach the port of Tangier. Boats were leaving from every side, they came by bus.²⁶ (Consuelo-fictitious name-, operator of an association for migrants, interviewed on 19.08.2014).

4.1 The narration via Twitter

We can see how this temporary lack of control has been reported via Twitter. Activist Helena Maleno from the NGO *Caminando Fronteras*, popular for her commitment to migrations, reports the rumor circulating among migrants' networks and the consequences which had arisen from it. In this way, an information network flowing uninterruptedly from migrants to the web, web magazines²⁷ and associations, was established; a self-feeding network, which created a short-circuit (Image 1).



Image 1: Two tweets by Helena Maleno on 12.08.2015

Another direct consequence of this information – the fact that there are no controls at the border and that many migrants are attempting to cross – is that the homeowners, taking advantage of the migrants' absence, came to the Boukhalef neighborhood (see *infra*, § 3) entered the houses and began throwing the occupants' belongings out of windows (Image 2).

²⁶ «La semana era increíble (...), toda la llegada masiva de gente, la semana pasada ubo dos dias que no hubo vigilancia de parte de Marrueco en el estercho. Entonces se corrio la voz y la gente se iba, yo vi a la gente en la plaza, vi gente con la bolsa grande, el bote dentro y el inflador (...) sin control ninguno y nadie dicia nada. Entonces se curio la voz y salian de muchos sitios se iban de todo lado (...) hasta la parte del puerto de tanger. Salian pateras de todos lados se iban con el autobus».

²⁷ Many of these newspapers report Helena Maleno's news, as to mark the strong connection they have with associations and activists working in the area.



Owners of the houses throwing belongings of migrants who entered Tarifa away.

Image 2: Tweet by Helena Maleno, 12.08.2015











Migrants and activists have reported these facts live via Twitter. This episode triggered a set of tensions that existed already in the city. Following the migrants' protest over the episode, on the night of August 15, a group of Moroccans organized an attack in the neighborhood of Boukhalef – both on the streets and in the houses. The purpose was to scare and send immigrants away from the neighborhood: many were severely beaten, others were hit with machetes, and five of them were taken to the hospital due to injuries.

The Sub-Saharan migrants were deprived of goods and belongings. Everything was burnt, even their extremely precious personal documents²⁸. Activist Helena Maleno, who was there at the time (she is the only “Western” witness), had been assaulted and had only managed to run away owing to a human wall created by the migrants. Here are the series of Tweets of that night (Image 3).



Waiting to be able to get back home with their kids and to see if someone will come and bring justice.

²⁸http://www.elconfidencial.com/mundo/2014-08-16/marroquies-contra-subsaharianos-en-tanger-a-golpe-de-machete_176938/ (23/11/2015).

<p> Helena Maleno @HelenaMaleno 2g Siguen las agresiones en boukhalef y nadie protege a los inmigrantes.</p> <p>← ↻ 48 ★ 13</p> <p> Helena Maleno @HelenaMaleno 2g Quemando, agrediendo mamás y bebés y la policía marroquí no llega.</p> <p>← ↻ 49 ★ 16</p>	<p>More aggression in Boukhalef and no one protects the migrants</p> <p>Burning, assaulting mothers and children and the police does nothing</p>
<p> Helena Maleno @HelenaMaleno 2g Se han negado a arrestar a mis agresores a los que he identificado, imaginad si esto me pasa a mí qué no puede pasar a una subsahariana</p> <p>← ↻ 387 ★ 92</p> <p> Helena Maleno @HelenaMaleno 2g Me agredían, me tocaban las tetas al grito de puta española vete a tindouf delante del comisario de policía.</p> <p>← ↻ 415 ★ 88</p> <p> Helena Maleno @HelenaMaleno 2g He podido salir, pero allí están los demás, su "delito ser negros". Los machetes, las piedras sobre las cabezas, es horroroso</p> <p>← ↻ 171 ★ 36</p> <p> Helena Maleno @HelenaMaleno 2g Los machetes, las piedras, las agresiones sexuales, todo se pasa delante de la policía que se niega a intervenir.</p>	<p>They refused to arrest my assailants whom I had identified, if this happens to me imagine what could happen to a Sub-Saharan woman</p> <p>They assaulted me, touched my boobs while saying "Spanish bitch go to Tindouf" in front of the police inspector</p> <p>I managed to run away, but the others are still there, their "crime being black". The machetes, the stones thrown at the heads, it's awful</p> <p>Machetes, stones, sexual assaults, everything happens in front of the police, who refuse to intervene</p>
<p> Helena Maleno @HelenaMaleno 2g @Lis_Coops llorando a lágrima viva, x los que he dejado en el barrio y que no pueden salir. No sabemos a quién llamar ni qué hacer</p> <p>← ↻ 58 ★ 17</p> <p> Helena Maleno @HelenaMaleno 2g Si hoy estoy viva es gracias a los compañeros subsaharianos que han hecho un cordón de fuerza, y han recibido los golpes</p> <p>← ↻ 499 ★ 162</p> <p> Helena Maleno @HelenaMaleno 2g Esto estaba preparado, algo pensado para desesperar más a los subsaharianos. Necesitamos presión desde fuera, nadie va a protegerles.</p> <p>← ↻ 171 ★ 51</p> <p> Helena Maleno @HelenaMaleno 2g el policía me empujaba hacia el machete, el mismo con el que degüellan los corderos. Otro a mi lado golpeaba una cabeza con una piedra</p>	<p>@Lis_Coops crying my eyes out for those I left in the neighborhood and can't leave. We don't know who we should call nor what we should do</p> <p>If I am alive it is thanks to the Sub-Saharan comrades who made a human wall and were hit</p> <p>It was organized; it was something planned to infuriate the Sub-Saharans. Even more. We need pressure from outside, no one is going to protect them</p> <p>The police officer pushed me towards the machete, the same one used to slaughter lambs. Next to me someone was hitting a head with stones</p>

<p>Helena Maleno @HelenaMaleno 2g Pararon tres autobuses con mujeres y niñas subsaharian@s a golpe de machetes. La policía no hizo nada #Marruecos</p> <p>← 416 ★ 92</p> <p>Helena Maleno @HelenaMaleno 2g Entran a las casas, queman y roban. La policía les deja #Marruecos</p> <p>← 180 ★ 40</p> <p>Helena Maleno @HelenaMaleno 2g Escondid@s en las casas, dispersos y escondidos, huyendo del fuego, machetes y piedras. La policía se ha ido, les ha abandonado.</p> <p>← 112 ★ 27</p> <p>Helena Maleno @HelenaMaleno 2g Cinco personas heridas con machetes en el hospital.</p> <p>← 82 ★ 19</p>	<p>Three buses with Sub-Saharan women and kids stopped with use of machetes. Police did nothing #Morocco.</p> <p>They come into houses, burn them and steal. Police allows them #Morocco.</p> <p>Hiding at home, missing and hiding, running away from fire, machetes and stones. Police have gone, they abandoned them.</p> <p>Five people taken to the hospital after being injured in machete attacks</p>
<p>Helena Maleno @HelenaMaleno 1g "Estoy encerrado en la casa, las escaleras están llenas de gente con machetes", la ratonera de #Boukhalef #tanger</p> <p>← 88 ★ 14</p> <p>Helena Maleno @HelenaMaleno 1g "Quieren que nos echemos al agua como locos, eso es lo que quieren, o eso o vivir agredidos constantemente", disturbios en #Boukhalef</p> <p>← 40 ★ 10</p> <p>Helena Maleno @HelenaMaleno 1g "Nos tiran piedras de nuevo, quieren que algo se pase. La policía los deja hacer. Quieren que pase algo", disturbios de nuevo en boukhalef.</p> <p>← 62 ★ 7</p>	<p>"I'm locked at home, stairs are full of people with machetes", the death trap in #Boukhalef #Tangier</p> <p>"They want us to throw ourselves into the sea as if we are crazy, this is what they want, this or a life of constant attacks, riots in #Boukhalef</p> <p>"Again they throw stones at us, they want something to happen. Police let them do it. They want something to happen", new riots in Boukhalef.</p>

Image 3: Tweets by Helena Maleno from 12.08.2014

This series of messages was the result of mobilizing the international network that is connected to migrations. Here are some tweets, two days after the events (Image 4).







<p>Tweet popolare</p> <p> Gaspar Llamazares @GLlamazares 19h Exteriores no pedirá explicaciones a Marruecos de agresiones a la activista Helena Maleno. Son sólo derechos humanos. goo.gl/LLrezT</p> <p>99 25</p> <p> Alternatiba @alternatiba 2h "Estamos pagando a Marruecos para que haga el trabajo sucio con la inmigración" @HelenaMaleno</p> <p>Helena Maleno: "Estamos pagando a Marruecos para que haga..." eldiarioAnd</p> <p>2 1</p> <p> feministesindignades @feministesb... 2h "Sufrí un ataque racista y machista pero hay mujeres que lo padecen a diario" @HelenaMaleno en #Tanger lasexta.com/videos-online/...</p> <p>1</p>	<p>Exterior (Foreign Ministry, AN) is not going to demand an explanation for the assault of activist Helena Maleno. It's just a matter of human rights.</p> <p>(Retweet, AN) "We are paying Morocco for the dirty work with immigration" @HelenaMaleno</p> <p>(Retweet, AN) "I have been the victim of a racist and sexist assault, but there are women who suffer this everyday" @HelenaMaleno in #Tangier</p>
<p> Silvia Camesella @SilviaCamesella 27m Atacan en #Marruecos a la activista española @HelenaMaleno y a varias mujeres subsaharianas periodismohumano.com/migracion/atac... @phumano @fondogalego</p> <p>1</p> <p> Tanquem els CIEs! @TanquemEls... 53m RT @antignonia_info: AGRESIÓN EN MARRUECOS A .@HelenaMaleno, EXTERIORES NO PEDIRÁ EXPLICACIONES antignonia.com/2014/08/17/agr...</p> <p>3 1</p> <p> auxijl @auxijl 2h España no pide explicaciones a Marruecos por las agresiones a la activista Helena Maleno #MachismoMata goo.gl/LLrezT vía @laSextaTV</p> <p>3 1</p>	<p>Activist @HelenaMaleno assaulted in #Morocco along with many Sub-Saharan women</p> <p>Retweet @antignonia_info: ATTACKS IN MOROCCO TO @HelenaMaleno, EXTERIOR IS NOT GOING TO DEMAND AN EXPLANATION</p> <p>Spain does not demand an explanation from Morocco for the attacks to activist Helena Maleno #SexismKills</p>



Image 4: Tweets from 16.08.2014

It is important to note that the larger portion of tweets, written in response to the narration of these cruel events, were focused more on the attack of the Spanish activist, paying special attention to the accounts of violence against women²⁹, as opposed to focusing on the aggression toward the Sub-Saharan migrants. International pressure achieved the effect of making the police forces intervene (Image 5).

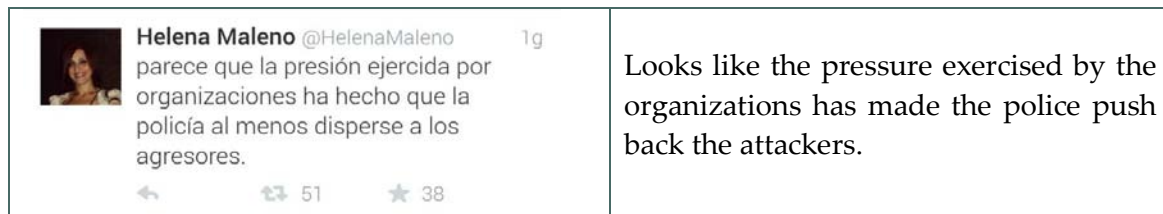


Image 5: Tweet by Helena Maleno, from 17.08.2014

4.2 New uprisings

These episodes were followed by some days of silence: everything seemed quiet and peaceful until the tensions that were brewing underneath the surface exploded with greater violence on August 29, 2014. Once again, here are Helena Maleno's declarations. Even though she was not physically present in Boukhalaf, she was in constant contact with the migrants (image 6).

²⁹ No wonder if one of the first reactions has been posted by *Feministesindignades*.

<p>Helena Maleno Garzón @HelenaMaleno · 29 ago "la ambulancia está en el barrio, al menos ellos vienen, no como la policía" #Tanger #racismo #ViolenciaDeGenero</p> <p>Helena Maleno Garzón @HelenaMaleno · 29 ago A confirmar la gravedad de las heridas de un migrante atacado en la puerta de su casa x 10 marroquíes armados con machetes #Tanger #racismo</p> <p>Helena Maleno Garzón @HelenaMaleno · 29 ago "he visto una masa de negros corriendo desde todos las dos del barrio, después bandas de marroquíes armados, estoy vivo de milagro" #Tanger</p> <p>Helena Maleno Garzón @HelenaMaleno · 29 ago Brutales agresiones contra población migrante han comenzado de nuevo en Tánger. La pasividad continúa. #StopRacismo #Stopviolenciadegenero</p> <p>Helena Maleno Garzón @HelenaMaleno · 29 ago @Ines_herrerros @naranja_p @AlejandraMarPor para #EmpresasMalvadas @inditexgroup es un buen ejemplo. Nomino a @14kilometros y @patucafvicens</p>	<p>The ambulance is in the neighborhood, at least they came, not like the police" #Tangier #Racism #VAW</p> <p>I confirm the seriousness of the injuries suffered by a migrant who had been attacked in front of his door by 10 Moroccans armed with machetes #Tangier #Racism</p> <p>"I'd seen a crowd of black people running from every side of the neighborhood, followed by gangs of armed Moroccans, it's a miracle I'm alive" #Tangier</p> <p>Brutal aggressions against the migrant population started once again in Tangier. Indifference keeps going #StopRacism#StopVAW</p>
<p>Helena Maleno Garzón @HelenaMaleno · 29 ago "1 coche de policía llega al barrio, habla con los agresores, se va y los agresores comienzan a entonar excitados cánticos racistas" #Tanger</p> <p>Helena Maleno Garzón @HelenaMaleno · 29 ago Inmigrantes en #Boukhalef #Tanger, piden llorando que se llame a la policía marroquí para que pare la locura.</p> <p>Helena Maleno Garzón @HelenaMaleno · 29 ago Uno de los inmigrantes nos hace llegar la foto de su amigo, víctima de los machetes de #racismo en #Tanger</p> 	<p>«1 police car arrives in the neighborhood, talks to the aggressors, goes away and the aggressors start singing excited racist songs» #Tangier</p> <p>Immigrants in #Boukhalef and #Tangier begging to call Moroccan Police to stop this madness</p> <p>One of the immigrants forwards us a pic of his friend, victim of machetes #Racism in #Tangier</p>

<p>Helena Maleno Garzón @HelenaMaleno · 30 ago A noche en #Boukhalef.</p>  <p>41 3</p>	<p>Tonight in #Boukhalef</p>
<p>Helena Maleno Garzón @HelenaMaleno · 30 ago Anoche en #Boukhalef, Tánger.</p>  <p>53 4</p>	<p>Tonight in #Boukhalef, Tangier</p>
<p>Helena Maleno Garzón @HelenaMaleno · 29 ago "Los agresores no tienen miedo de la policía, se saben impunes" #racismo #Tanger</p> <p>41 10</p>	<p>«Perpetrators are not afraid of police, they know they won't be punished» #Racism #Tangier</p>
<p>Helena Maleno Garzón @HelenaMaleno · 30 ago Sigue en la UCI el inmigrante de costa de marfil al que le machacaron la cabeza. No es reyerta es #racismo en #Tanger</p> <p>29 5</p>	<p>The Ivorian migrant hit on his head with a machete is still in ICU. It is not a scuffle it is #racism in #Tangier</p>
<p>Helena Maleno Garzón @HelenaMaleno · 30 ago "Se organizaron al salir de las mezquitas tras el rezo, como hace 15 días. Viernes de sangre y de yihad decían" #Tanger #racismo</p> <p>42 7</p>	<p>«They planned it while leaving the mosques after praying, just like 15 days ago. Bloody Jihad Fridays they said» #Tangier #racism</p>
<p>Helena Maleno Garzón @HelenaMaleno · 30 ago Anoche completaron lo que no pudieron hace 15 días. Mi agresor, que no fue detenido, era uno de los cabecillas anoche. #Tanger #racismo</p> <p>84 19</p>	<p>Tonight they completed what they could not do 15 days ago. My aggressor, who was not arrested, was one of the bosses tonight. #Tangier #racism</p>
<p>Helena Maleno Garzón @HelenaMaleno · 30 ago "Degollado como un cordero así murió nuestro amigo senegales" #Tanger</p> <p>39 5</p>	<p>«His throat cut as if he were a lamb, so died our Senegalese friend» #Tangier</p>
<p>Helena Maleno Garzón @HelenaMaleno · 30 ago A la espera de confirmar fallecidos en #Boukhalef. La policía hablaba entre 1 y 3 muertos en ataques racistas. #Tanger.</p> <p>77 5</p>	<p>Waiting for the police to confirm deaths in #Boukhalef. 1 to 3 people died in racist attacks- #Tangier</p>


<p>Helena Maleno Garzón @HelenaMaleno · 30 ago Visualiza traducción Mi agresor se pasea a estas horas con 2 personas más x Boukhalef, llevan machetes envueltos. Estará preparando impunemente nuevos ataques?</p> <p>45 12</p> <p>Helena Maleno Garzón @HelenaMaleno · 30 ago Desde lejos parece ya espeluznante. Queremos saber cuántas personas fueron detenidas y por qué llegaron tan tarde? youtube.com/watch?v=CmBFyG...</p> <p>YouTube</p>  <p>مواجهات بدمج العرقان www.tanja24.com Visualizza sul sito</p> <p>9 5</p>	<p>My aggressor walking around Boukhalef with two other people, hiding some machetes. Are they planning a new consequence-free attack?</p> <p>Looks terrifying even from a distance. Don't we want to know how many people have been arrested and why they got here so late?</p>
<p>Helena Maleno Garzón @HelenaMaleno · 30 ago NO SON ENFRENTAMIENTOS, SON AGRESIONES. NO SON HERIDOS, SON AGREDIDOS. NO ES 1 MUERTO ES 1 PERSONA ASESINADA. Así se habla del #racismo</p> <p>49 23</p> <p>Helena Maleno Garzón @HelenaMaleno · 30 ago Al menos un detenido marroquí x las agresiones racistas, hay que acabar con la impunidad del #racismo en #Tanger</p> <p>18 12</p> <p>Helena Maleno Garzón @HelenaMaleno · 30 ago Los inmigrantes dan las GRACIAS a la PROTECTION CIVIL MAROC y a los MÉDICOS DEL HOSPITAL MOHAMMED V de #Tanger x su humanidad anoche</p> <p>21 10</p> <p>Helena Maleno Garzón @HelenaMaleno · 30 ago Las autoridades senegalesas estuvieron presentes hoy en Tánger. Los países africanos tienen que pedir que el #racismo asesino termine</p> <p>8 6</p> <p>Helena Maleno Garzón @HelenaMaleno · 30 ago La policía POR FIN está en Boukhalef y ha prometido detener a los que lleven MACHETES #racismo #Tanger</p> <p>13 8</p>	<p>THEY ARE NOT FIGHTS, THEY ARE AGGRESSIONS. THEY WERE NOT INJURED, THEY WERE ASSAILED. IT'S NOT JUST A PERSON WHO DIED, IT'S A PERSON WHO WAS KILLED. This is the way we talk about #racism</p> <p>At least one Moroccan arrested for the racist aggressions, we have to stop the impunity for #racism in #Tangier</p> <p>Immigrants THANK the MOROCCAN CIVIL PROTECTION and DOCTORS OF THE HOSPITAL MOHAMMED V of #Tangier for their humanity last night</p> <p>Senegalese authorities were in Tangier today. African countries must request this racist killing to stop #racism</p> <p>AT LAST police have arrived to Boukhalef and have promised to arrest those carrying MACHETES #racism #Tangier</p>

Image 6: Tweets by Helena Maleno, from 29.08.2014

5. *Virtual connections: crossing borders without conquering real space*

This was the live narration. It is evident Twitter managed to document an episode, which would not have reached the news section. Activists, migrants, associations, police forces, government and common people in Morocco, Europe and other places have heard about it. The mere fact of using images and continuous comments to bring to public attention something which was happening on the outskirts of a city, a hardly visible, *transit* place, and toward the population of black migrants, kept marginalized, underlines the amazing potential that informal tools offer in terms of information and social participation³⁰, as well as their abilities of crossing borders (national, social, cultural, linguistic ones etc.). The messages, delivered though smartphones, tablets, and computers spread so fast that they pressured the security forces to suppress the fights³¹.

Despite this, the outraged, but virtual protests, carried out by associations, activists and migrants, were not followed by concrete actions. Helena Maleno was left isolated as we read in the first episode. The migrants living in the neighborhood protected her but neither her appeals nor her rough narration resulted in the physical mobilization of an on-site helping network and support. The use of Twitter has enabled to spread the news of the bloody events in real time, preventing them from being hidden and forcing the police to intervene in order to restore peace. From this point of view, Twitter has played an important role of information and documentation, which was inconceivable before the digital era. What was not taking place, however, was the next step, namely the mobilization of the civil society. Unlike the Arab Spring³², which saw local people using

³⁰ As reference books, see: P. Sheldon, *Social Media. Principles and Applications*; A. M. G. Solo, *Handbook of Research on Political Activism in the Information Age*; G. Ziccardi, *Resistance, Liberation Technology and Human Rights in the Digital Age*.

³¹ For the role of ICT in the social sphere in Arab world, see for examples, among many other studies: B. Etling (Ed.), *Mapping the Arabic Blogosphere: Politics, Culture, and Dissent*; D. Eickelman - J. Anderson (Eds.), *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere*; K. Hafez (Ed.), *Arab Media: Power and Weakness*; L. Hudson - A. Iskandar - M. Kirk, *Media Evolution on the Eve of the Arab Spring*; M. Ishani, "The Hopeful Network"; T. Kharroub - B. Ozen, "Social media and protests: An examination of Twitter images of the 2011 Egyptian revolution"; D. Khoury "Social Media and the Revolutions: How the Internet Revived the Arab Public Sphere and Digitalized Activism".

³² About the Arab Spring and the use of web and social network in processes of democratization see *Arab Human Security Development Report 2009*; *Arab Media Outlook 2009-2013*; *Arab Social Media Report 2015*; A. Bayat, "A new Arab street in post-Islamist times"; Idem, *Life as Politics: How Ordi-*

the web to organize themselves both as groups and as individuals, the narration of the violations of the rights of the migrants has not touched in an immediate and strong way the feelings of popular indignation.

Even the associations for human rights, which were active in the area, have not been able to organize themselves *in real time* in order to react to the violent attacks carried out in Boukhalef, and have failed to bring its support to migrants and to the activist. In other words, the virtual connections created, although they persuaded (or forced) the police forces to intervene, did not result in strong or immediate protests in real spaces. The online discussion of the events lasted until October 2014 because of the strong effect of an article published in French³³. To this day, the discussion has not been able to facilitate action, nor has it been able to put public pressure on the political choices of the two states and of Europe. Racism within the Moroccan population has sometimes been discussed. Debates among the Moroccans who had migrated to Europe, Europeans (mainly Spanish and French) and Sub-Saharan migrants living in Europe took place and involved many Senegalese migrants. But even this burst of indignation as well as the dispute over the role of North African countries in the migration process of Southern migrants soon cooled off, or at least it will remain cooled until the next violent episode.

Twitter has therefore played a crucial role in the documentation of the events, pressuring instantaneously the government forces, fulfilling its role of *disseminator of news*, and highlighting the power of its influence³⁴. Unfortunately, the

nary People Change the Middle East; Idem, Social Movements, Activism and Social Development in the Middle East; Idem, Street Politics: Poor People's Movements in Iran; Ch. Beckett, "After Tunisia and Egypt: towards a new typology of media and networked political change"; N. K. Chebib - R. M. Sohail, "The Reasons Social Media Contributed to the 2011 Egyptian Revolution"; S. Cottle, "Media and the Arab uprisings of 2011"; C. A. Frangonikolopoulos - I. Chapsos, "Explaining the Role and the Impact of the Social Media in the Arab Spring"; J. Preston, "Movement Began With Outrage and a Facebook Page That Gave It an Outlet".

³³ T. Dauda - K. Caminando, "À Tanger, des Noirs africains Attaques à la machette", <<http://observers.france24.com/fr/content/20140901-tanger-attaques-machette-noirs-africains-maroc-violence-racisme-migrants>> (23/11/2015) This article and the online reactions to it are analyzed in the forthcoming paper by the Authors: "«Vous n'avez qu'à dire que vous n'aimez pas les noirs» - «La plus par des arabes ne sont pas comme ça»". Analyse d'un débat on line sur le racisme anti-noirs en Maroc".

³⁴ See the interesting point of view of S. Aday - S. Livingston, "Taking the state out media relations theory"; N. Alsayyad - M. Guvenc, "Virtual Uprisings: On the Interaction of New Social Media, Traditional Media Coverage and Urban Space during the 'Arab Spring'"; Dubai School of Government, "Civil Movements: The Impact of Facebook and Twitter"; V. Carty - J. Onyett, "Protest,

effect has not lasted more than a couple of tweets. The non-activation of the civilian population it is not due to the tool used³⁵, but rather to a number of reasons related to the situation of marginalization of sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco. Such causes, according to the current state of our field research, can only be assumed and need to be investigated more thoroughly. But the online debate that followed the publication of the above-mentioned article, “À Tanger, des Noirs africains Attaques à la machete”, shows the tendency of the Moroccan population to distrust sub-Saharan immigrants, as well as a general difficulty of Morocco in considering itself as a destination for migration and not (only) as a country of emigrants³⁶. Due to a lack of space, we could not present a deep qualitative analysis of such important phenomena³⁷. Anyway, there is something crucial to underline here: the difference between the use of a more political, virtual space associated to a typical social network like Twitter and its users (where no tweets were directed against African migrants), and the public debate shown by the replies to the above mentioned article, which offered other kinds of considerations (many of which were discriminatory and racist). The authors believe that this would be a hint for a more dedicated analysis.

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³⁵ See the interesting the article of N. Fenton, “Mediating solidarity”, pp. 37-57.

³⁶ On that topic, see the two interesting analysis by H. De Haas, “Morocco: From Emigration Country to Africa's Migration Passage to Europe”; “Morocco: Setting the Stage for Becoming a Migration Transition Country?”. See also: L. Feliu Martinez, “Les migrations en transit au Maroc. Attitudes et comportement de la société civile face au phénomène / In-transit migration in Morocco: attitudes and behaviour of civil society”, pp. 343-362.

³⁷ See note 26.

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7. Curriculum vitae

Tiziana Chiappelli, PhD in Qualità della Formazione (University of Florence) and in Theorie et Pratique du Sens (University of Paris VIII), since 2004 has worked for the Department of Educational Sciences and Psychology of the University of Florence. Her research work has involved national and international projects. As an experienced researcher, she has mainly investigated the processes of socio-cultural inclusion and exclusion of minorities, with focus on migrants, gender and cultural differences, educational systems and active citizenship processes. She has been researching in many European and non-European countries. Her areas of interests include Northern Africa and Ivory Coast (democratization processes through education and social and female movements) and Latin America (management of cultural diversity, formal and informal educational processes). She is the author of many essays on her areas of interests, as well as member of scientific committees and international conferences, such as the International Humanities Studies Journal; ScieConf, Religioni e Società.

Federico Trentanove was awarded a Bachelor's degree in Anthropology from the University of Bologna. He was later selected for the Ethnography school within the project Proyecto Antonio Raimondi (University of Bologna and Castello Sforzesco of Milan). Thanks to it, he carried out his first anthropological research work in Peru in 2005. Following a dissertation and two further re-

search-experiences, he was awarded a scholarship for a two-year long research master at the EHSS Paris. In Italy, he works for the research project funded by Regione Toscana and CeRISC Migranti irregolari as well as for the socio-sanitary services: with focus on the access to socio-sanitary services, interaction and critical issues. He wrote a chapter of the book *Zone d'ombra, Migranti irregolari, operatori e servizi socio-sanitari. Un'indagine a Prato.* (Bonanno). From 2011 to 2013 he cooperated in the projects NaMe of ASL Firenze (Local Health Authority) involving narrative medicine. He works for the University of Florence in many research projects funded by the European lines since 2014. Within these projects he investigates migrations in Italy, Tunisia, Morocco and Argentina. Since 2015 he is a member of the Board of Directors of the Italian Society of Narrative Medicine (SIMN). Along with these activities, he has been working in the intercultural area as trainer for health workers and teachers of Italian schools (topics: medical anthropology, narrative medicine, religion and health, cooperative learning, inclusive -, Italian as a second language), an Italian as a second language teacher and as an operator in the reception of asylum seekers "Emergenzaprofughi".

